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Human Rights Campaign Celebrates Advances in LGBTQ+ Policies One Year Into Biden-Harris Administration

The Human Rights Campaign (HRC) is celebrating the advances that have been made in LGBTQ+ rights under the Biden-Harris administration. Since day one, the Biden-Harris White House has taken concrete, meaningful steps to reverse the anti-LGBTQ+ policies of the previous administration, while also working to ensure government agencies don't discriminate on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity, and increase LGBTQ+ representation at all levels of government.

"We at the Human Rights Campaign want to thank President Biden and Vice President Harris for their principled and committed policies in support of LGBTQ+ rights," said HRC Interim President Joni Madison. "For a community that is all too often under attack from a variety of regressive, self-serving actors, having strong LGBTQ+ allies in the White House has been a comfort to the community. From rolling back discriminatory policies and providing affirmative non-discrimination protections, to appointing LGBTQ+ people to prominent positions, to continuing to share the message of the importance of LGBTQ+ inclusion and equality, this administration has been as consistent in advancing the cause of progress as any we have seen. There's still a lot more to be done, and we at HRC look forward to working with the Biden-Harris administration and partners in Congress to ensure that essential reforms - including the LGBTQ+ protections in the Equality Act and the voting rights safeguards currently before the Senate - become the law of the land."

Some of the highlights of policy advancements during the administration's first year in office relating to LGBTQ+ rights include:

On his first day in office, the president issued an executive order that required the federal government to align its policies with the Supreme Court's landmark Bostock decision.

In June 2020, the U.S. Supreme Court of the United States affirmed that discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity is a form of prohibited sex discrimination. However, the Trump Justice Department failed to adequately instruct the federal government to implement the ruling, leading to dangerous misinterpretations. That state of affairs was addressed via President Biden's first-day order.

Within their first week in the office, the White House put out an executive order repealing the Trump-era ban on transgender military service and ensuring transgender service members are able to serve openly.

After extensive study by the Pentagon, the Obama administration and the leadership of the Pentagon moved forward with the elimination of the transgender military ban and allowed transgender service members to serve openly. In July 2017, President Trump announced a full ban on Twitter without any consultation with Pentagon leaders. President Biden, in his first week in office, issued an

executive order reversing the ban.

The Department of Housing & Urban Development withdrew a Trump-era proposal to gut the equal access rule.

The federal agency withdrew Trump-era proposed changes to the Equal Access Rule (EAR). The Obama administration's EAR ensures non-discrimination protections in HUD-funded housing and programs based on both sexual orientation and gender identity. It also protects LGBTQ+ families and ensures people seeking emergency housing are housed safely in accordance with their gender identity.

The State Department announced changes to passport gender markers to include intersex, non-binary people. The first such passport was issued in October 2021, with the expectation that routine applications will be taken in 2022.

President Biden in June announced the establishment of an interagency working group led out of the White House to coordinate policies to advance safety, economic opportunity, and inclusion for transgender people.

Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg became the first Senate-confirmed member of the president's cabinet to be openly LGBTQ+. The former mayor of South Bend, Indiana, and presidential candidate was confirmed on a bipartisan basis with a vote of 86-13.

Dr. Rachel Levine was confirmed as Assistant Secretary for Health at the Department of Health & Human Services and promoted to four-star admiral.

Levine, became the first openly transgender person to be sworn into a Senate-confirmed position in March. Levine was further recognized through promotion to four-star admiral of the U.S. Public Health Service Commission Corps, becoming the country's first openly transgender four-star officer.

HRC's timeline of the LGBTQ+ related policies and achievements during President Biden's first year details these and other noteworthy milestones paving the way toward a more equitable future for all LGBTQ+ people.

Even after achieving a number of LGBTQ+ firsts with the range of appointments in the first year of the Biden administration, there remain positions that no openly LGBTQ+ person has ever held. Greater representation of this growing population within the ranks of government will serve to ensure that key marginalized groups are better served and treated equitably.



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How to Get Free STD Kits - Provided by New State Law

By Joyce Mitchell

Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STDs) have climbed to an all-time high for the sixth year in-a-row throughout California and the country. COVID-19 is making it more difficult to see a doctor and that means people are going undiagnosed and untreated. Knowing your status is imperative to slowing the spread of STDs. Contracting an STD can have long-term serious health consequences for you and your sexual partners.

That's why California legislation was written to provide people with free at-home STD test kits. The bill was signed into law by the Governor and took effect January 1, 2022. California goes on the map as the first state to require insurance plans to pay for the kits to help quell the STD epidemic that has raged as public health departments focus on COVID-19.

The law is referred to as cutting-edge in terms of reducing stigma patients sometimes experience when trying to get care. It allows individuals to have more control over their health. It also provides an additional free test kit - if requested - for a partner who can remain un-named. The goal is to bring down barriers for STD testing and eliminate out-of-pocket costs.

"Providers can order/prescribe test kits that patients can pick up at a clinic/pharmacy, or have the kit mailed directly to their home," said Amy Moy, Chief External Affairs Officer for Essential Access Health, an agency working with Senator Richard Pan (D-Sacramento), author of the legislation. "Some of these tests must be returned to a lab for processing while other kits provide instant results at-home."

If a test comes back positive, the patient will be prescribed appropriate treatment. "We are currently working to ensure successful implementation with the state and other key stakeholders but time is needed to both increase awareness about the new benefit among patients, providers, and payors," said Moy. "We will do everything possible to get this new access point available statewide as soon as possible but it could take up to one year to have the program fully up to speed, and then we will have a successful model to share with advocates, providers, and state health systems to adapt and adopt moving forward."

According to Moy, patient demand often helps move implementation forward. The legislation is Senate Bill 306. Someone who

is insured and has a doctor could request the at-home STD kits by citing the new law. It's important everyone is educated that this law and resource exists. "For commercial health plans, the ordering provider must be an in-network provider," said Moy. "Medi-Cal patients can obtain STI services and home test kits from any willing Med-Cal provider, regardless if they are in or out of network."

STDs have increased overall but continue to hit racial and ethnic minority groups, gay

and bisexual men, and youth the hardest. In California, about half of syphilis cases are in men who have sex with men. No one is immune, even babies. Congenital syphilis rates nearly quadrupled between 2012 and 2019. Other STDs also on the rise include gonorrhea and chlamydia. Those two infections are increasing especially among young people aged 15 - 24.

lack of resources during the current pandemic. But even before COVID-19, STDs were climbing. In fact, back in 2000, syphilis rates were so low that public health officials believed eradication was on the horizon. But then cases began creeping up again. People started letting their guard down, some because of recreational drug use, others because they were not aware of the importance of using protection - and others who were just throwing caution to the wind. Again, living with an STD can have serious long term health consequences and you will likely infect others.

In some communities, the rise of mobile dating apps like Grindr and Tinder make finding a date easier than ever. People are encouraged to have fun but to do it safely. Using a condom is imperative if having sex with a new or unknown partner. Fortunately, the popularity of PrEP is preventing people



and bisexual men, and youth the hardest. In California, about half of syphilis cases are in men who have sex with men. No one is immune, even babies. Congenital syphilis rates nearly quadrupled between 2012 and 2019. Other STDs also on the rise include gonorrhea and chlamydia. Those two infections are increasing especially among young people aged 15 - 24.

Why the dramatic increase in STDs? The CDC attributes the public health crisis to a

from contracting HIV/AIDS. But it may also be a reason condom use is dropping. And that may also be contributing to the rise in STD numbers.

Getting tested and knowing your status is vital to health, whether it's for HIV or other STDs. Life is to be enjoyed. So is sex. But being sick with an STD or contracting HIV is preventable. Testing = prevention. And Awareness = Change. Play - But Play Safe.

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SMF Offers Travel Options to Fairbanks Via Alaska and Delta Airlines

By Mark Haneke

While it is still winter here in Northern California, travelers may have the itch to visit sunnier destinations. However, this is a great time of year to think differently and consider a trip to the 49th state. Experts say this is going to be a great year for viewing the Aurora Borealis – or Northern Lights – and Sacramento International Airport (SMF) can get you to Fairbanks, Alaska for the best seat in the house.

Both Alaska and Delta Airlines have one stop options to Fairbanks this winter. Fairbanks, which sits at 65 degrees north latitude, is home to mountains, rivers, lakes, wildlife, and a vibe like nowhere else. Though most visitors come to see the Northern Lights or experience the midnight sun, the city is also home to a thriving arts community, Native American culture and is a gateway to Denali National Park.

The lights are created by the perfect combination of solar wind and the earth's magnetic field.

This year looks especially promising to geophysicists because the sun's magnetic field is due to reverse in 2022 which creates the best conditions for the aurora borealis. In other words, this February and March could be the best time in a while to check Alaska off your bucket list. It takes patience and preparation, but if it all comes together, viewing this spectacular phenomenon will be an experience you'll never forget.

While you're waiting for the night sky, there are plenty of unique experiences to

keep you busy during the day. Visitors can participate in Alaska's state sport – dog mushing! Experience the thrill of running Iditarod dogs through the wilderness. Many tour companies specialize in working with guide dogs for an exhilarating experience. The wintry weather also creates ideal conditions for skiing, snowmobiling and even hiking with reindeer.

After all that exertion, sit back and relax in Fairbanks' natural hot springs. The waters at Chena Hot Springs Resort were discovered in August 1905 and became famous for curing aches and pains. The springs are different than anywhere else in the United States, consisting of sulfate, chloride and bicarbonate of sodium – a combination known for its curative powers. The resort is also home to the Aurora Ice Museum, which stays at a cool 25-degrees Fahrenheit as it's made from 1,000 tons of ice and snow. Inside, enjoy a tour of iconic ice sculptures and treat yourself to their signature Appletini at the ice bar.



Pioneer Park, Fairbanks Alaska

If you have some extra time, a side trip to Denali National Park is a breathtaking experience. A two-hour drive or four-hour train ride from Fairbanks, the park's terrain includes meadows, lakes, tundra and abundant wildlife like moose, grizzly bears, wolves, and caribou. The main attraction may be North America's tallest peak, the 20,310-foot Denali. An incredible way to end your Alaskan adventure, with awe and solitude.

Thank you for flying from SMF! Please

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Mark Haneke is the Director of Air Service Development Marketing for Sacramento International Airport as well as a seasoned expert in air service development and a savvy world traveler. His travel column appears monthly in Outword to share news on new destinations from Sacramento International Airport, peppered with some of his own personal stories and travel recommendations.

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As our lives slowly return to normal, it's understandable to still feel stressed and anxious. While getting vaccinated and wearing a mask can protect our physical health, our emotional wellbeing is still vulnerable. Old worries and questions have simply turned into new ones. Is it safe to return to work? Can my kids go back to school now? Where do we go from here?

You are not alone. CalHOPE offers free tips and tools, including a Warm Line and live chat, to help you manage stress and navigate emotional changes. Connect with us now to talk to someone who understands how you feel and can offer support.

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LGBTQ+ Adult Population in United States Reaches At Least 20 Million

In December, the Human Rights Campaign Foundation (HRC) released “We Are Here: Understanding the Size of the LGBTQ+ Community,” a report analyzing recent results from the U.S. Census Bureau’s Household Pulse Survey. Based on data from respondents in the Household Pulse Survey, a national household probability survey of adults in the United States, at least 20 million adults in the United States could be lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender - nearly 8% of the total adult population, almost double prior estimates for the LGBTQ+ community’s size. It also suggests that more than 1% of people in the United States identify as transgender, higher than any prior estimates. Additionally, it confirms prior research showing that bisexual people represent the largest single contingent of LGBTQ+ people, at about 4% of respondents.

While many attempts have been made to document the size and demographics of the LGBTQ+ community in America, they have faced significant challenges. Sampling is difficult and bias also plays a role in respondents’ answers. In the most comprehensive and often-cited study of the LGBTQ+ community prior to today’s report, the Public Religion Research Institute’s (PRRI’s) American Values Atlas suggested that 4.4% of Americans identified as LGBTQ+. Today’s estimates nearly double that number - and may still be an undercount.

“LGBTQ+ people are here - in every town, in every city, in each and every ZIP code. This data shows what we’ve suspected: our community is larger and more widespread than we could have known up to this point,” said Human Rights Campaign Interim President Joni Madison. “We’re proud to bring this data to light and set the stage for a future where all the millions of LGBTQ+ people in America enjoy full legal and lived equality. I commend the Biden administration and the U.S. Census Bureau for finally allowing researchers to count us, and look forward to seeing the LGBTQ+ community counted in further studies.”

Some top-line data points from HRC’s report include:

- Approximately 8% of respondents self-selected lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender when asked about their identity. A further 2% of participants “identify with a sexual orientation other than lesbian, gay, bisexual, or straight.” This could encompass a number of other orientations such as pansexual, asexual, and others.
- Data suggests more than 1%, or more than 2 million, people identify as transgender - an increase from prior estimates of approximately 1.4 million.
- Bisexual people made up the largest single demographic, at about 4% of respondents.
- California and Texas were the states with the largest number of LGBTQ+ adult

residents, with an estimated 2.6 million and 1.7 million respectively.

- LGBTQ+ people live in every community in every state. States less populated than California and Texas may tend to have a higher percentage of their population that identify as LGBTQ+.

While this represents tremendous progress in ensuring quality data collection about the LGBTQ+ community in the United States, much more can be done. As detailed in HRC’s “Blueprint for Positive Change,” the Census Bureau’s two largest surveys - the American Community Survey and the decennial U.S. Census - still do not ask questions about respondents’ sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI). Data from these surveys is used to allocate hundreds of billions of dollars of federal funding each year, and the absence of SOGI questions negatively impacts support for the LGBTQ+ community.

For additional information about why accurate data collection is imperative in the fight for LGBTQ+ equality, read HRC’s report, “LGBTQ+ Data Collection: A Life-Saving Imperative.” Additional information on the Household Pulse Survey can be found on the U.S. Census Bureau website. For more information on the HRC Foundation’s Public Education and Research Program, visit <https://www.thehrcfoundation.org/about/public-education-research-program>.

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“Personal Effects: What Recovering the Dead Teaches Me about Caring for the Living” by Robert A. Jensen

reviewed by Terri Schlichenmeyer

Pick up eggs. Milk. Macaroni. Bread. If you don’t jot down a list of things you need to find, you’ll forget something. Apples. Light bulbs. Flour. Putting things on paper helps you to remember what you need and what’s missing. But in the new book, “Personal Effects” by Robert A. Jensen, the pick-up is more personal; the items, more heart-wrenching...

Robert Jensen’s growing-up years were not what you’d “call a normal childhood.” His mother suffered from mental illness; his father treated him as “a secondary concern.” It perhaps didn’t help that there was no room for discussion about Jensen’s being a boy “who liked boys as much as girls.”

Says Jensen, “I hope you never have to see the things that I’ve seen...”

He doesn’t say that because of his personal life, though, but because of his job: Jensen is an expert in recovering human remains and personal effects when disaster,

accidents, murders, and battles occur. He says it’s not even his “first weird job,” but as the Chairman of Kenyon International Emergency Services, he knows that it’s one of the most important.

Jensen, for instance, was called to work after the Murrah Building was bombed in Oklahoma City. He’s recovered the dead for the U.S. government in Somalia; helped recovery efforts in places such as Haiti, New Orleans, and New York, and he’s worked to resolve what happened in devastating plane crashes around the world. He’s brought back the remains of loved ones to their grieving families, and he’s also been involved in the efforts to recover valuable cargo for insurance companies.

“Being prepared for a disaster is really not that hard,” he says.

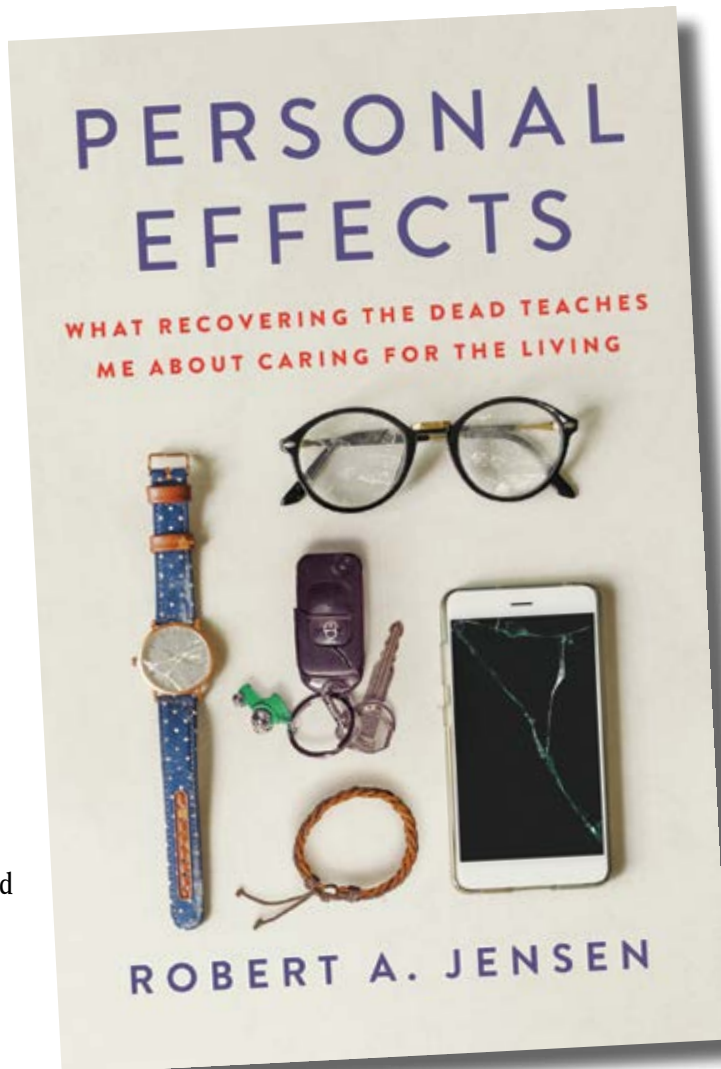
Just “don’t prepare for the last disaster that just occurred.”

Something bad is going to happen to you. If not now, tomorrow; if not then, soon. Disasters happen, as author Robert Jensen indicates, and there are things you can do to minimize the damage and hassle. But getting the information you need to do so won’t be easy, if you want advice from “Personal Effects.”

The thing is that this book is solid. For fans of the unusual, you can’t get any

more unusual than the story, both personal and professional, of a guy who searches for body parts. Jensen’s tale is thrilling, cringe-worthy, and heroic; there’s advice and little-known minutiae that only an insider would know. You won’t be able to forget the gist of this book.

And yet, man, it’s a rough read. “Personal Effects” is laden with choppy half-sentences, errant punctuation, and too much repetition – things which are relatively common, and forgivable. But then there’s the irritatingly incorrect



homonym usage, a maddening assumption of readers’ prior knowledge, and an extremely unfortunate quotation from a grieving mother that really could’ve been told better, and you’ve got a book that’ll make you sigh but not in a satisfied way.

For most readers, this’ll be a deal-breaker and that’s too bad. “Personal Effects” is basically very, very fascinating, but its errors might not make it worth picking up.



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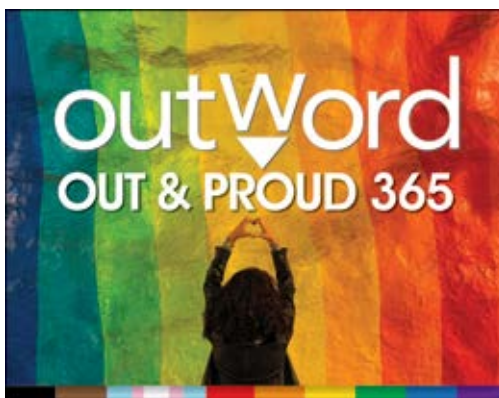


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Alan Rickman Day at the Crest Plus Charlie Chaplin in Oakland

By Chris Narloch

NorCal film buffs have two great events to choose from this February with a rare, big screen showing of one of Charlie Chaplin's classic silent movies and a posthumous local tribute to actor Alan Rickman.

Alan Rickman Day

Somebody at Sacramento's Crest Theatre must be a fan of the late, great British actor Alan Rickman because that historic local movie palace is devoting an entire day of programming to his memory.

Rickman, who died in 2016, had a remarkable international career on stage and screen that was capped off with his recurring role as Professor Snape in the Harry Potter movie franchise, for which he will probably be most remembered by film fans around the world.

I wish the Crest was showing one of those Harry Potter flicks, but the three Rickman roles chosen will display the actor's amazing versatility: his comic talent in the very funny space spoof "Galaxy Quest;" his dramatic ability in Ang Lee's superb big screen version of Jane Austen's "Sense and Sensibility;" and his memorably venomous villain in the original "Die Hard."

You can celebrate Alan Rickman with one, two or all three parts of this stellar triple feature, on Sunday, Feb. 6. For more information, go to:

www.crestsacramento.com/events

You can find many more local arts events at Sacramento365.com



Charlie Chaplin's "City Lights"

If you've never experienced the Paramount, Oakland's gorgeous Art Deco theatre, you owe it to yourself to take a short road trip this February to see one of the most famous films starring, co-written, and directed by the silent film genius Charlie Chaplin.

Chaplin again plays his iconic, hopeful tramp character, who this time out falls in love with a blind flower girl he meets on a city street.

The SF Silent Film Festival will present the cinematic masterpiece "City Lights" with live musical accompaniment by the Oakland Symphony, conducted by Timothy Brock who is the leading authority on Chaplin's music, on Saturday, Feb. 19. For details, visit: www.paramountoakland.org



Queer-Friendly Cartoon Network Show Premieres



Craig of the Creek Season Four premiered on Cartoon Network this January. As part of this premiere block, the episode "Fire & Ice" centers on Kelsey, who while writing a story for the Creek book club, comes to the realization that she may have feelings for one of her female friends, Stacks. When the others in the club point out that the characters closely resemble Kelsey and Stacks, Kelsey discovers that the story has turned out to be more personal than she realized.

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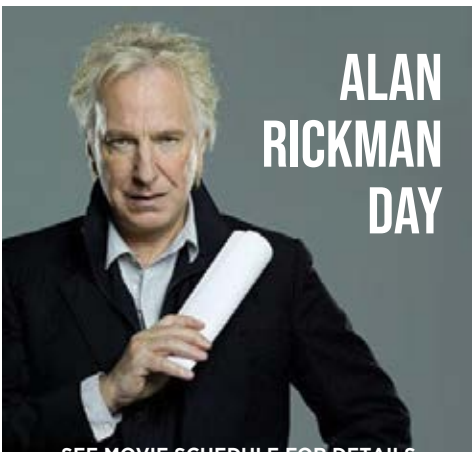
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Figure Skating Queers Up as the U.S. Team Heads to Beijing

by Chris Allan

It's been four years since Adam Rippon took the Olympics by crystal-laden storm. The witty, flamboyant 28-year-old was the first openly gay athlete to represent the U.S. at the Winter Olympics. Rippon took home a bronze medal from the figure skating team event and became a household name after declining a meeting with then U.S. Vice President Mike Pence.

By the time the U.S. National Figure Skating Championships ended in Nashville, Tennessee this January, the team going to the upcoming Winter Games is the most publicly queer yet. Forget about the appearance of not one, but two, unitards in the ranks of the female skaters (oh my!).

Consider that Amber Glenn, the 2021 U.S. silver medalist, identifies as bisexual and pansexual. Glenn, 22, was one of several skaters who had to withdraw from the competition because of a positive COVID test but was still included as the ladies second alternate on the Olympic team and will be heading to Beijing in February.

Then there's the tall, bearded, handsome hottie Timothy LeDuc, who identifies as both gay and non-binary. LeDuc, 31, soared to first place in the pairs competition with partner Ashley Cain-Gribble. The now two-time national champions were also chosen for the Olympic team, so LeDuc is set to become the first openly non-binary athlete to compete in the Winter Games.

But it's the hugely popular Jason Brown that so many will be rooting for in Beijing. Brown, 27, who came out on an Instagram post last year that declared "Love wins," has long been revered for his unparalleled artistry, component excellence, and years of international experience.

This season, his exquisite "Sinnerman" and "Schindler's List" programs earned him multiple medals during the Grand Prix circuit before he spent a grueling 33 hours travelling from Toronto to Nashville. Brown still managed to medal in 4th place and secure his second berth at the Olympics.

"It's been a bit nonstop since that moment," he said at the press conference following the announcement, "but a lot of tears, a lot, a lot, a lot of tears, but slowly it's sinking in."

What also seems to be sinking in is Brown's new status as gay figure skating role model. He doesn't skate these days without fans waving Pride flags, and he takes their adoration very humbly,

"For me, when I see those rainbow flags flying, it still feels like it's my way of saying thank you to the people who came before me," he said during an exclusive Outword phone interview. "For me, it's almost more about the people in the stands feeling proud and comfortable to wave the flag than it is for me personally receiving that (support)."

When asked about the reactions he's had since coming out, Brown says that he has received nothing but upbeat feedback since then because of the positive circles in which he travels. When we asked him about advice he might give to a young athlete in a less supportive sport, Brown spoke of self-worth.

"I think one of the most important things is for the person to be comfortable and to really find that acceptance within themselves first," he said. "I really do think that is so, so key and so crucial."

On a more flirtatious note, Outword couldn't resist getting a little dish -- any special fellas in this artistic genius' life? And just how does a top-tier professional athlete manage to, well, date?

"First off, hella single!" he laughs. "We've been in a pandemic, and I've been training for the Olympics, so very single, but definitely open for a relationship."

He continued with a bit of relationship history. "I have to be completely honest. I'm



Newly out figure skater Jason Brown will compete for the United States as part of the 2022 Winter Olympics team.

a very, very focused person, so the only times I've ever dated were the off-season!" He says he's not sure what the future holds post-Olympics 2022, but "is really looking forward to going through that relationship process..."

Finally, it wouldn't be the Olympic Games without the always uber-glam Johnny Weir. He'll be commentating as usual for NBC in Beijing, but the two-time Olympian and three-time national

champion reached true legend status in January: Weir, 37, was formally inducted into the U.S. Figure Skating Hall of Fame. In the video package that preceded the award, Weir noted that receiving the highest achievement an American figure skater can attain made him feel "like it was okay to come as you are..."

In China this February, it appears that for the U.S. Figure Skating team at least, it is increasingly just fine to come as you are.



Ryland James Keeps it Real With "I Give Everything"

The Canadian cutie Ryland James recently came out -- and also fell in love for the first time -- and the flood of intense emotions that resulted are captured in his soulful new single "I Give Everything," which includes this killer chorus: "I wanna love you / but don't wanna lose me / cause every time I dive in deep / I give I give everything." James' strong, soulful voice really sells the song, and the dance-pop production makes you want to move your body. The platinum-selling singer-songwriter recently toured with Alessia Cara, and you can check out the fun video for "I Give Everything" here:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=qjKKvERqpzU





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Two Broadway Musicals in NorCal

By Chris Narloch

Anastasia and “The Band’s Visit,” two recent hit Broadway musicals based on successful movies, have made their way to Northern California. Read on for details.

Anastasia

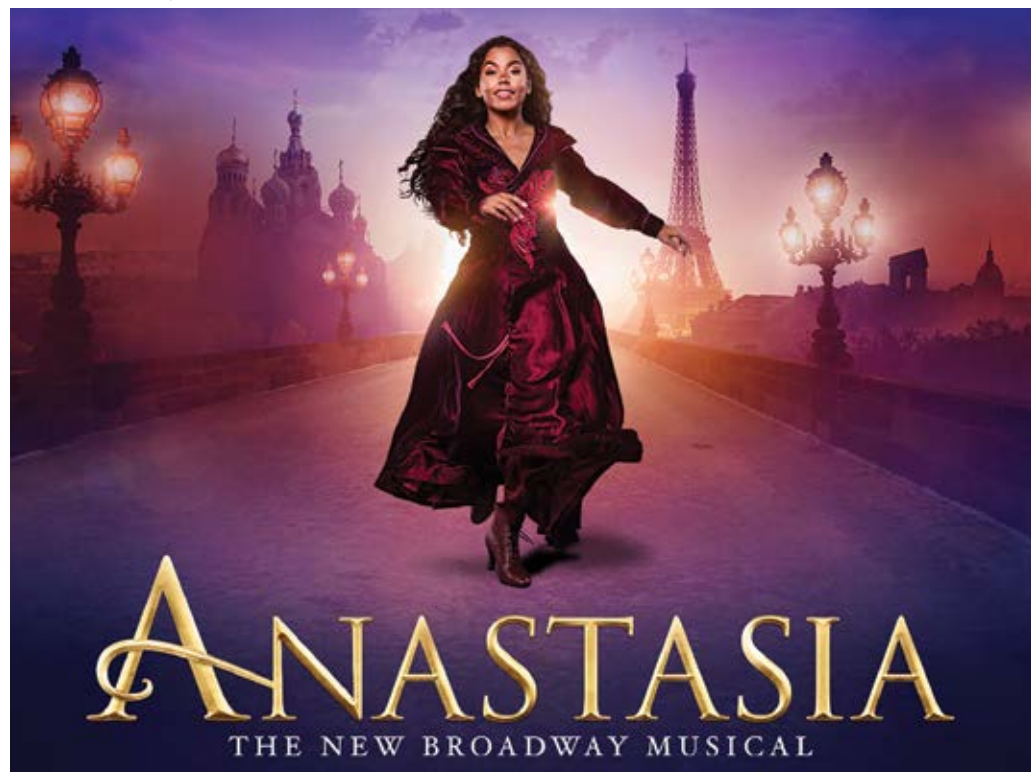
I have not seen the animated movie of the same name that this new musical is based on, but I am familiar with the excellent 1956 live-action version that starred Yul Brynner and Ingrid Bergman, and I am looking forward to this new Broadway adaptation of the story.

Inspired by actual Russian history, “Anastasia” has as its main character a young woman who has lost her memory and her family. She is then passed off as the Grand Duchess, a daughter of Tsar Nicholas II, who some people believe survived the execution of her entire family in 1918.

Is she or isn’t she the Duchess? The late, great Terrence McNally wrote the book for “Anastasia,” and the music and lyrics are by Stephen Flaherty and Lynn Ahrens, respectively.

Get caught up in the mystery when “Anastasia” performs at the SAFE Credit Union Performing Arts Center, this Feb. 1-6. For more information, visit:

www.broadwaysacramento.com



The Band’s Visit

I have not seen the 2007 foreign film the show is based on, but I have seen this Tony Award-winning musical version, which won ten Tonys including Best Musical in 2018.

The musical is absolutely worth a drive over to San Francisco to see the very moving tale of the unexpected bonds that are formed after an eight-man band from Egypt arrives in the wrong town in the middle of the Israeli desert.

The residents find that they have much more in common with the bandmembers than they expected, and the universal languages of music and dance help create the temporary relationships that result from the collision of cultures.

Everyone in “The Band’s Visit” yearns for something they miss or haven’t found yet, and the musical casts a beautiful spell that is simultaneously sad and sweet. Don’t miss it.

“The Band’s Visit” plays through Feb. 6 at San Francisco’s Golden Gate Theatre.

For ticket information, go to www.broadwaysf.com



• THE •
BAND’S VISIT

Three Foreign Films & A New “Scream”

By Chris Narloch

January and February are always a grab bag at the movies, with ragtag releases that didn't make the cut as holiday movies, plus late-arriving, awards season wannabes and shlocky sequels.

Lucky for you, Outword is here to sort it all out, and I managed to find three superb, under-the-radar films -- and one shlocky new sequel just for fun.



Scream 5

Although I enjoy a good scary movie, I am not a big fan of slasher films, unless they show us something we haven't seen before. The latest installment in the “Scream” franchise tries and fails to deliver that with a snarky, self-reflexive attempt at breathing life into a tired series of sequels that have clearly run out of gas.

At least they brought back original cast members Neve Campbell, David Arquette, and Courtney Cox, who outclass the pretty but mostly bland younger actors by a bloody mile.

The worst thing about the film is that it was clearly written by people with an impressive knowledge and respect for better horror flicks.

So why did they fall back on the same sort of cliches that they mercilessly mock throughout the film? The cops never arrive in time -- if anyone thinks to call them at all -- and future victims say stupid stuff to the killer like “Come and get me!”



A Hero

A little white lie can sometimes take a person down a huge black hole, and that is the subject of this gripping new Iranian film about a man who is determined to not have to go back to jail.

Rahim is in prison because of a debt he was unable to repay. During a two-day leave, he tries to convince his creditor to withdraw his complaint, but things don't go as planned.

The Iranian actor Amir Jadidi is sensational as Rahim, and director Asghar Farhadi turns “A Hero” into an epic morality tale that asks viewers to ponder how far they would go before finally doing the right thing.

“A Hero” is now available via Amazon Prime Video.



Belle

Rather than wasting your money on “Scream,” I recommend you see this beautiful new anime that opened in theaters recently. The big screen is the way to see “Belle,” a very colorful animated movie from Japan that was inspired by the famous French fairy tale “Beauty and the Beast.”

“Belle” is nothing like the recent Disney versions of “Beauty and the Beast,” however, opting instead for a science fiction fantasy take on the material that retools the story for a modern, internet-obsessed audience.

A lonely, grieving high school student becomes a global superstar singer after entering a stunning virtual world where she embarks on a quest to uncover the identity of a mysterious beast who's on the run from ruthless vigilantes. The music in “Belle” is as lovely as the visuals. Don't miss it.



Flee

Get thee to the Tower Theatre before this wonderful, queer-friendly film disappears. You won't be sorry since “Flee” is classic ‘adult’ animation at its finest -- and if an animated documentary from Denmark doesn't sound like your cup of tea, I urge you to reconsider.

“Flee” follows a successful Danish academic who is confronted with an enormous secret from his past, on the verge of marriage to his long-time boyfriend. (Those past secrets will get you every time.)

The animation in “Flee” is deliberately flat, but there is nothing flat about its incredible story, which involves a harrowing tale of escape from Afghanistan. The movie is already racking up awards in three different categories: animation, documentary, and foreign filmmaking.



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David Archuleta Comes (Out) to the Crest

By
Chris Narloch



In David Archuleta's recent video for his single "Beast," the former American Idol contestant doesn't look very happy, and neither does the pretty young woman in his car. In the song, the 31-year-old singer threatens to unleash the beast inside himself, which may be code for his repressed queer side, since Archuleta recently came out as bisexual. Archuleta is also a practicing Mormon so there is a lot to unpack in his personal life. David will sort it all out on stage (or not) when he performs at Sacramento's Crest Theatre, on Tuesday, Feb. 8. For more information, go to: www.crestsacramento.com/events

A recent study released by OneVet revealed the Best + Worst US Cities for Healthy Dogs. Consequently, the study identified the cities with the highest number of dog parks. Here's how the top ten rank:

New York, NY - 145 dog parks or 1.65 per 100K people
Portland, OR - 34 dog parks or 5.21 per 100K people
Chicago, IL - 31 dog parks or 1.13 per 100K people
San Francisco, CA - 30 dog parks or 3.43 per 100K people
San Diego, CA - 16 dog parks or 1.15 per 100K people
Tampa, FL - 16 dog parks or 4.16 per 100K people
Seattle, WA - 14 dog parks or 1.90 per 100K people
Phoenix, AZ - 13 dog parks or 0.81 per 100K people
Sacramento, CA - 13 dog parks or 2.48 per 100K people
San Antonio, TX - 13 dog parks or 0.91 per 100K people
Check out the full study and the cities' rankings at www.onevet.ai/dog-fitness



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Because of the continuing trauma being caused by COVID, many of our advertisers are doing everything they can to stay afloat - that includes Outword Magazine. At the onset of the pandemic we changed our distribution model to an online-only affair. That helped us weather the storm, but we have since returned to both online as well traditional, printed copies. Thankfully, the response we have recieved after returning to print has been fantastic!

Once again we are asking that you, our readers and advertisers help us with a contribution that will be used to help keep the presses rolling. This money will assist with publishing costs, both in print and online, and help pay our staff, distribution costs and a few of our writers, among other things.

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HOW TO TREAT YOUR UNDERWEAR RIGHT

How To Treat Your Underwear Right

Intro by Ron Tackitt
Photo courtesy of Jack Adams USA

This came into my email bucket and, normally, I would have just deleted it. But, as I scrolled down I was intrigued by the message. Personally I can't imagine spending this much time cleaning any of my garments, especially not my underwear, but then again I buy my underwear based on whether or not it's on sale...

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1. Use Your Hands

Much like a lover, your underwear prefer a gentle caress over aggressive tugging and stretching. That's why it's best to avoid the washing machine altogether. To maintain the quality of our fabric's fibers, we recommend hand washing your underwear in the sink.

2: Keep It Cold

If you must use the washing machine, it's critical that you keep things cool. Hot water not only sucks the life out of your underwear, but it's also bad for the planet. Do your skivvies and our earth a solid by sticking with cold water, and only use the delicate or permanent press settings.

3: Hang To Dry

High temps are dangerous for delicate

fabrics, making the dryer a hellscape for your undies. To help them retain their stretch, shape and color, always let your intimates air dry on a rack or clothesline that's out of direct sunlight.

4: Beware Of Bleach

While your mom may have used bleach to get out unsightly stains, harsh chemicals are not our fabrics' friend. We've taken extra care to ensure our styles are breathable and antimicrobial, meaning you shouldn't stress about disinfecting. Steer clear of bleach (and fabric softener!) to keep your undies strong.

5: Change Your Underwear

This may seem obvious, but: the quickest way to wear out your favorite pairs is by wearing them too much. Switch up styles, run through your rotation and don't be afraid to go commando from time to time. (Trust us, you will learn to love the breeze.)

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