

**Outword's Year In Review Begins on Page 12**

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# outword



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Mukelisiwe Goba as Rafiki.  
The Lion King North American Tour  
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# The World Remembers Rob Reiner

Hollywood and cultural history lost one of its most distinctive voices on December 14, 2025, when filmmaker, actor, and activist Rob Reiner and his wife, Michele Singer Reiner, were found dead in their Brentwood, Los Angeles home in what authorities are investigating as a double homicide. The couple were discovered by their daughter; their son has since been arrested in connection with the killings.

Reiner's career shaped generations of audiences and storytellers. From his Emmy-winning role on "All in the Family" to directorial classics including "This Is Spinal Tap," "Stand by Me," "When Harry Met Sally..." "The Princess Bride," "Misery," "The American President," and "A Few Good Men," his work consistently centered empathy, moral clarity, and the courage to stand up to power.

Beyond film and television, Reiner was a committed advocate for progressive causes, including LGBTQ+ rights and social justice, using his public platform to push California and our country towards a more inclusive and humane society.

After California's Proposition 8 passed in 2008, banning same-sex marriage, Reiner backed a high-stakes litigation strategy that some other LGBTQ+ advocates saw as too risky.

Reiner founded the American Foundation for Equal Rights, which brought together a bipartisan attorney super-duo, Republican Ted Olson and Democrat David Boies, and searched for same-sex couples who would have the best case to challenge the ban.

Reiner approached Kris Perry, who worked on First 5 on the county and state level, and her partner, Sandy Stier. That early childhood connection paved the way for Perry to be named plaintiff in the lawsuit that ultimately overturned Prop 8.

Friends, colleagues, and family remember



Rob and Michele not only for their professional accomplishments, but for their devotion as parents and their generosity as community members. Tributes have emphasized the warmth, conviction, and integrity that defined their private lives as much as their public ones.

Their violent deaths have left loved ones and fans reeling. In moments like this, grief calls for truth, restraint, and compassion—space to honor lives well lived without spectacle or distortion.

Instead, aspects of this tragedy were quickly exploited for political cruelty, especially by the president. His public statements mocked and weaponized the loss and stripped away basic human dignity at the moment it was most needed.

Rob Reiner spent his life telling stories about conscience and consequence. Honoring him now means insisting on truth, refusing to normalize cruelty, and remembering that even amid deep division, our shared humanity must come first.

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## Senator Wiener Condemns Trump's Move To Ban Gender Affirming Healthcare

The Trump Administration released a draft rule to ban gender affirming care across the U.S. by withholding federal funding from hospitals that provide it. The American Medical Association and other major medical associations continue to support access to this care because it has been shown to sharply reduce suicide attempts, anxiety, depression, and substance abuse among LGBTQ youth. If finalized, the new rule would put thousands of LGBTQ young people at risk.



Senator Wiener  
Image licence Shutterstock

**Senator Wiener issued the following statement:**

"This illegal proposal is designed to eliminate health care for transgender youth by threatening to destroy hospitals that provide that care: care that has long been validated by physicians and medical associations and that is provided with parental support. These health care decisions should be made by the young people, their parents, and their physicians, not by the government. This is an extreme overreach and blatantly illegal.

"This repugnant plan is just a proposal with many steps remaining before it is finalized. Hospitals need not and should not comply while it is being considered by regulators.

"Trump and his ideologues want to erase trans people from existence. That's always been the plan. We won't let them.

"To all the trans kids and their families who are living in fear right now: we see you, we have your backs, and we will fight for you."

## California LGBTQ Lawmakers Push Back on Federal Rules Targeting Trans Youth Health Care

The California Legislative LGBTQ Caucus is forcefully opposing two newly proposed federal rules that, if adopted, would dramatically restrict access to medically necessary health care for transgender youth across the country.

The proposals, issued by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services through its Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS), would prohibit the use of federal Medicaid funds for gender-affirming care for patients under the age of 18. In addition, hospitals and medical providers that continue to offer this care could risk losing both Medicaid and Medicare funding altogether—a penalty that could jeopardize services far beyond transgender care.

According to the Caucus, the intent of the rules is not simply to limit federal funding, but to pressure hospitals into abandoning gender-affirming care entirely by threatening the financial stability of entire health systems. Many hospitals rely on Medicare and Medicaid reimbursements to keep their doors open, meaning the loss of funding could impact emergency rooms, maternity wards, cancer treatment, and other essential services for millions of patients.

In a statement responding to the proposals,

the Caucus described them as "willfully cruel and inhumane," arguing that they disregard decades of established medical research and consensus. The group also emphasized that the rules would strip parents of the right to make informed medical decisions for their children in consultation with licensed doctors, instead placing those decisions in the hands of politicians. The Caucus specifically criticized Donald Trump for promoting policies that override families and medical professionals.

While pledging to challenge the proposals through legislative, legal, and administrative avenues, the Caucus reassured families that gender-affirming care remains legal and protected in California. The group said it will continue working with community partners, fellow lawmakers, and Gavin Newsom to defend access to care.

The message to transgender youth and their families was direct: California will continue to fight for your safety, dignity, and right to thrive.



A photograph of two women of Asian descent hugging warmly. The woman on the left has short dark curly hair and is wearing a maroon top. The woman on the right has long dark hair tied back and is wearing a grey tank top. They are both smiling and looking down at each other. The background is a softly blurred indoor setting, possibly a home or a community center. A large, semi-transparent circular graphic is overlaid on the image, framing the women and the text.

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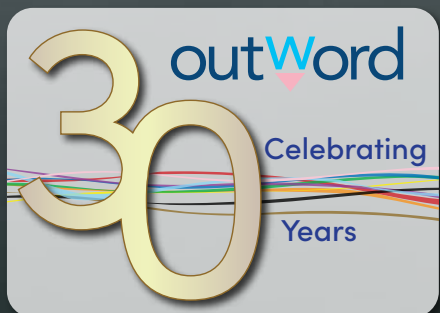
For 30 years, Outword Magazine - Sacramento's longest-running LGBTQ+ publication has been a trusted voice, sharing stories, uplifting our community, and keeping you informed.

Now, more than ever, LGBTQ+ media matters, especially given the ruthless attacks our community has already suffered. This is why we've launched a subscription and reader support donor service to help keep Outword as a resource that ensures vital information continues to flow.

Please consider making a contribution, in the dollar amount that works for you, using our relaunched Outword Rainbow Fund. Every contribution will make a difference and with a simple, and secure transaction, you can show your support.

We are proud to be one of the LGBTQ+ voices for the Sacramento community over the years, and we are committed to continuing for years to come. Let's not let our voices be silenced. Help us continue getting the Word Out.

Thank you, from the Outword team.



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# LGBT Center's End of Year Letter to the Community

by David Heitstuman, Executive Director,  
Sacramento LGBT Community Center

As 2025 comes to a close, many of us are taking a moment to catch our breath. This year has brought both joy and uncertainty, nationally and locally, and within our own lives.

For nearly five decades, the Sacramento LGBT Community Center has existed to create a region where LGBTQ+ people thrive. We've carried those values from the yellow house by the railroad tracks to our home in Lavender Heights today. Even as the landscape around us continues to shift, our doors remain open every day as a place of belonging, safety, and connection, whether someone is walking in for the first time or returning to a space they've known for years.

This year, we continued to serve thousands of community members through affirming mental health support, sexual health services, youth programs, advocacy, cultural events, and housing support. From youth finding joy and confidence at Q-Prom, to community members accessing therapy, to elders finding connection through support groups, each of these moments is why we keep going.

At the same time, we are facing real challenges. Like many nonprofit organizations, especially those serving LGBTQ+ communities, funding for critical programs is shrinking, limiting services for our community. We expect a nearly \$2 million loss in funding in 2026. These cuts are not a reflection of the impact or quality of our work, but they do require us to be thoughtful, strategic, and transparent as we plan ahead to ensure the survival of the Center and its core programs.

What we do know for certain is this: the need for our services is not going away. LGBTQ+ youth continue to face disproportionate rates of housing instability and mental health challenges. Our trans and gender-diverse community members continue to navigate a world where access, safety, and dignity cannot be taken for

granted. Seniors, families, and individuals across our region continue to look for spaces where they are safe and affirmed.

Because we are a nonprofit, our ability to meet these needs depends on community support. Donations, grants, and partnerships allow us to pay staff, keep programs running, and ensure that the people who walk through our doors receive culturally competent care. Investing in your community directly supports counselors, youth advocates, shelter staff, outreach workers, and the programs that foster safety and belonging.

Despite the challenges, there is much ahead to look forward to. Planning is already underway for Sacramento Pride 2026, and we are continuing to strengthen partnerships, expand training and education opportunities, and advance advocacy efforts that protect access, safety, and dignity for LGBTQ+ people across our region.

If you can help support this important work, please make a donation at [saccenter.org/donate](http://saccenter.org/donate) by December 31.

To our community: thank you. Thank you to the volunteers, donors, partners, staff, and community members who continue to show up — especially when it matters most. Your trust and support remind us that we are not doing this work alone.

As we enter a new year, our commitment remains the same: to show up with honesty, care, and courage, and to ensure that LGBTQ+ people across the Sacramento region know they belong, today and always.

With gratitude,

**David Heitstuman (he/him)**  
Executive Director  
Sacramento LGBT Community Center



The Sacramento LGBT Center recently convened a community meeting to address the attack on Alvin Prasad and others in and around Midtown. Community members were invited to attend and engage in a discussion with a panel of local representatives, including the Center's director David Heitstuman, City Councilmember Phil Pluckebaum, representatives from the Sacramento Police Department, and the Midtown Business Association. The two-hour meeting at times grew tense, reflecting the seriousness of the concerns raised, but overall panel members expressed satisfaction with the information shared and the opportunity for open dialogue.

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## More Than Services: How Sunburst Projects Builds Family and Belonging in Our Community

by Jacob Bradley-Rowe, CEO

The bustle of the holiday season is upon and as we dash from one thing to another, don't forget to take time to pause for a moment, reflect, and reconnect with what matters most. For many of us, that means family. At Sunburst Projects, family is not defined by tradition or bloodlines alone—it is defined by community, compassion, and the shared responsibility we hold for one another.



Sunburst Projects was founded on the belief that no one should have to face life's hardest moments alone. While our work is rooted in providing essential HIV-related services, our mission has always extended far beyond delivering care. It is about creating a welcoming, affirming space where every person—regardless of background, identity, or circumstance—feels respected, supported, and understood.

Over the past five years, that vision has come to life in powerful ways. The Sunburst Projects community has grown from serving just 78 individuals to supporting more than 1,600 people across the region. This growth reflects not only an increased need for services, but also the trust our community has placed in us. With the continued support of donors, partners, and advocates, Sunburst Projects has expanded access to critical programs including mental health services, individualized case management, and free, confidential HIV testing through the Sunburst Clinic.

This progress is not the result of one person or one organization—it is a shared achievement. It belongs to the clients who place their trust in us, the supporters who invest in our mission, and the staff who show up each day with compassion and care. Many members of our team reflect the communities we serve, bringing lived experience, cultural understanding, and authenticity to their work. For countless clients, our staff are more than service providers; they are trusted allies and, often, an extended family.

Every day, Sunburst Projects witnesses

stories of resilience and courage. Young people walk through our doors to take the brave first step of learning their HIV status. Parents balance their own health needs while caring for their children. Individuals facing stigma, isolation, or uncertainty find not only services, but dignity and hope. These stories are the heart of our work and a reminder of why community-based care matters.

As we look toward 2026, Sunburst Projects remains committed to ensuring that our community continues to grow stronger and more connected. The need for compassionate, accessible services remains urgent, and the landscape for nonprofit funding is increasingly uncertain. Yet, our values remain steadfast. We believe that care should be delivered with respect, trust, and humanity—and that everyone deserves to feel safe and supported when they ask for help.

Sunburst Projects exists because of a community that believes in showing up for one another. This holiday season, we are reminded that generosity is not only about giving—it is about belonging. Together, we can ensure that everyone who turns to Sunburst Projects is met with care, stability, and a true sense of family.

As we move into a new year, we extend our deepest gratitude to those who make this work possible and wish our community health, connection, and hope in the season ahead.

To learn more about our work and organization, visit [www.SunburstProjects.org](http://www.SunburstProjects.org)

Sunburst Projects mission is to serve the HIV community through compassionate care and services.

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# Building Trust Through Action: Sacramento Police and the LGBTQ+ Community

resource: [City of Sacramento Police Department web site](http://City of Sacramento Police Department web site)

In a city where visibility and safety go hand in hand, the Sacramento Police Department has taken meaningful steps toward strengthening its relationship with the LGBTQ+ community. Overcoming decades of mistrust rooted in past harms doesn't happen overnight, yet SPD leadership recognizes that an inclusive approach to public safety is essential for Sacramento's diverse residents. At the heart of this effort is the department's LGBTQ+ Outreach program, which underscores the belief that every person in our community has the right to live without discrimination or fear.

Central to these efforts are the LGBTQ Liaison Officers — trained SPD personnel who serve as trusted points of contact for community members and advocates alike. The expansion of this liaison program signals a shift toward accessibility and responsiveness, inviting open communication about concerns, events, or experiences related to policing.

SPD has also focused on internal education. Gender awareness classes have been implemented to help officers and staff better understand the lived realities of transgender and nonbinary individuals. These trainings reflect a collaborative spirit: Sacramento's LGBTQ+ groups have helped shape curricula, fostering mutual learning rather than one-sided instruction.

Public safety and community celebration intersect in visible ways too. SPD's development of rainbow-themed Pride patches worn during June reflects not only seasonal recognition, but a broader commitment to affirm all identities within the city's ranks and beyond. Officers have marched in Pride parades, attended local LGBTQ+ business events, and partnered with community centers to support youth and seniors alike.

Efforts to address bias-motivated incidents are also part of this work. Since 2021, Sacramento's hate crime policies have been updated to ensure that bias crimes are documented and investigated with the seriousness they deserve, backed by a specialized task force focused on these sensitive cases.

Sacramento's path toward inclusive policing isn't merely symbolic — it's built on ongoing dialogue, shared training, and meaningful presence in community spaces. While challenges remain, the evolving partnership between SPD and the LGBTQ+ community illustrates a future where trust is forged not only in policy, but in everyday interaction. For more information and/or to report an incident, visit: [City of Sac Police web site](http://City of Sac Police web site).

## California Launches New Queer-Designed Youth Mental Health Program

The California Department of Health has launched This Is Me, a new outreach campaign to support youth mental health created directly with queer youth to better meet their needs and expand access to trusted resources. This effort marks a new model for how states can bring LGBTQ young people into the design process to ensure programs reflect real experiences and priorities.

Over the past year, critical federal programs serving LGBTQ youth — including the National LGBTQ Youth suicide hotline — have been shut down, leaving young people with fewer places to turn at a moment when mental health challenges remain high.

This Is Me was co-created with a collaborative of LGBTQ youth who informed every major campaign decision, from what resources should be available to how the campaign should look and feel. The program focuses on improving mental health outcomes by delivering support in ways queer youth identified as most effective. Check [out the web site](http://out the web site) for more info!



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# The Best Books of 2025

by Terri Schlichenmeyer - The Book Worm

This past year, you've often had to make do. Saving money here, resources there, being inventive and innovative. It's a talent you've honed, but isn't it time to have the best? Yep, so grab these Ten Best of 2025 books for your new year pleasures...



## Nonfiction

Health care is on everyone's mind now, and "A Living: Working-Class Americans Talk to Their Doctor" by Michael D. Stein, M.D. (Melville House, \$26.99) lets you peek into health care from the point of view of a doctor who treats "front-line workers" and those who experience poverty and homelessness. It's shocking, an eye-opening book, a skinny, quick-to-read one that needs to be read now.

If you've been doing eldercare or caring for any loved one, then "How to Lose Your Mother: A Daughter's Memoir" by Molly Jong-Fast (Viking, \$28.00) needs to be in your plans for the coming year. It's a memoir,

but also a biography of Jong-Fast's mother, Erica Jong, and the story of love, illness, and living through the chaos of serious disease with humor and grace. You'll like this book especially if you were a fan of the author's late mother.

Another memoir you can't miss this year is "Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea: A Veteran's Memoir" by Khadijah Queen (Legacy Lit, \$30.00). It's the story of one woman's determination to get out of poverty and get an education, and to keep her head above water while she goes below water by joining the U.S. Navy. This is a

story that will keep you glued to your seat, all the way through.

Self-improvement is something you might think about tackling in the new year, and "Replaceable You: Adventures in Human Anatomy" by Mary Roach (W.W. Norton & Company, \$28.99) is a lighthearted – yet real and informative – look at the things inside and outside your body that can be replaced or changed. New nose job? Transplant, new dental work? Learn how you can become the Bionic Person in real life, and laugh while you're doing it.

The science lover inside you will want to read "The Grave Robber: The Biggest Stolen Artifacts Case in FBI History and the Bureau's Quest to Set Things Right" by Tim Carpenter (Harper Horizon, \$29.99). A history lover will also want it, as will anyone with a craving for true crime, memoir, FBI procedural books, and travel books. It's the story of a man who spent his life stealing objects from graves around the world, and an FBI agent's obsession with securing the objects and returning them. It's a fascinating read, with just a little bit of gruesome thrown in for fun.



## Fiction

Speaking of a little bit of scariness, "Don't Forget Me, Little Bessie" by James Lee Burke (Atlantic Monthly Press, \$28.00) is the story of a girl named Bessie and her involvement with a cloven-hooved being who dogs her all her life. Set in still-wild south Texas, it's a little bit western, part paranormal, and completely full of enjoyment.

"Evensong" by Stewart O'Nan (Atlantic Monthly Press, \$28.00) is a layered novel of women's friendships as they age together and support one another. The characters are warm and funny, there are a few times when

your heart will sit in your throat, and you won't be sorry you read it. It's just plain irresistible.

If you need a dark tale for what's left of a dark winter season, then "One of Us" by Dan Chaon (Henry Holt, \$28.00), it is. It's the story of twins who become orphaned when their Mama dies, ending up with a man who owns a traveling freak show, and who promises to care for them. But they can't ever forget that a nefarious con man is looking for them; those kids can talk to one another without saying a word, and he's

going to make lots of money off them. This is a sharp, clever novel that fans of the "circus" genre shouldn't miss.

"When the Harvest Comes" by Denne Michele Norris (Random House, \$28.00) is a wonderful romance, a boy-meets-boy with a little spice and a lot of strife. Davis loves Everett but as their wedding day draws near, doubts begin to creep in. There's homophobia on both sides of their families, and no small amount of racism. Beware that there's some light explicitness in this book, but if you love a good love story, you'll love this.

Another layered tale you'll enjoy is "The Elements" by John Boyne (Henry Holt, \$29.99), a twisty bunch of short stories that connect in a series of arcs that begin on an island near Dublin. It's about love, death, revenge, and horror, a little like The Twilight Zone, but without the paranormal. You won't want to put down, so be warned.

If you need more ideas, head to your local library or bookstore and ask the staff there for their favorite reads of 2025. They'll fill your book bag and your new year with goodness.

Season's Readings!



# Running on Love: Cal Calamia at the CIM

photos and text by Chris Allan

The bleachers on Capitol Mall are packed in the misty December air. The California International Marathon (CIM) crowd cheers as bib 12827 comes flying down the street in his black and lava spandex just an hour and fifteen minutes after leaving the exchange zone. Typically a solo marathoner, Cal Calamia takes first place today with his partner in the co-ed open relay division and second overall in a field of 412 teams. He beams as he finishes his 12.8 mile run, having completed one more step in a much bigger journey.



Approaching finish line Cal Calamia



Cal with Zach

"That was too easy! I'm not even in pain right now!" whoops Cal. "I feel amazing. It's a beautiful day out there. Fast course, great competition." He grins as we go find Zach Litoff, today's running partner and an All-American steeplechaser in his own right.

At 29, Cal Calamia is a transmasculine, nonbinary marathoner who uses both male and gender-neutral pronouns. He's the first known non-binary athlete to complete all six World Marathon Majors - Berlin, Boston, Chicago, New York City, Tokyo, London - taking first or second in each. His fastest time was Berlin, 2:41:59, likely making him one of the fastest nonbinary marathoners in the world.

Even though CIM is a gender-friendly race - with a non-binary division since 2022, gender-neutral restrooms, unisex shirt sizes, volunteer training - Cal's already qualified for his 2026 marathons. Instead, he told *Outword* that he's here for the vibe.

"The energy around the race is so electric," he said, "I've got a bunch of friends and community members that show up, so it's

hard not to want to be a part of it. And when I saw that they'd added a relay division, I just was super excited to do that."

Cal's actively bringing more collaboration into the often solitary world of marathon running. He started the Non-Binary Run Club in San Francisco, which participated in the Broken Arrow Skyrace this year. "It's been so magical to just feel safe to be on a gender-aligned team, which is something that most of us really never have had the experience of before," he says.

Beyond running, Cal writes poetry, holds an MFA in Creative Writing from the University of San Francisco, and taught there as an adjunct. Thanks to time studying in Madrid, he's bilingual in Spanish and English, and has also taught in local public schools.

"Trans youth are some of the most vulnerable and targeted folks in our society, in our country today. So a lot of what I do, I keep doing because I want to create a brighter future and more possibilities for the trans young people that will come after me."

But it's his activism in the running world that draws the most attention. Cal helped push the Bay to Breaker, Boston and Chicago marathons to include nonbinary divisions. He also gained notice for receiving the first-ever therapeutic-case exemption from the USADA. The ten-year exemption came after a grueling and invasive process, but it allowed him to compete in the male, nonbinary or open categories in any USATF-governed event while undergoing testosterone therapy as part of his transition.

So, what drives this passionate, radiant force of a runner?

"Love is sort of the center of everything that I do. I grew up in a place where it wasn't super clear to me that I was worthy of love for the person that I am and my varying identities. So it's been really important to me to honor my younger self and sort of flip that narrative for everyone else."

Like many before him, Cal moved from the Midwest to San Francisco, exploring the LGBTQ+ community and beginning his transition. Today he's single and queer and

fabulous.

So fabulous that in 2024, the California State Assembly honored him with its first Transgender Trailblazer award. With the focus on his groundbreaking work, Cal nevertheless is very clear that his work is part of a continuum.

"There have always been trans and non-binary people in the world that have been pushing to be included and pushing to be seen. I am similar in a sense to this relay. I am carrying the torch and passing it along from the person behind me to the person in front of me."

Despite the current barrage of hostility towards trans athletes, Cal Calamia is a shining, joyful light this holiday season. He's part of the first generation of trans and nonbinary athletes finding love and success, and his story offers a powerful counter-narrative of connection, visibility, and hope.

"We deserve to show up 100% as ourselves," he says, "and be loved for who we are."



# Looking Back at 2025 - Outword's Year In Review by Ron Tackitt and George

With 2025 on its way out the door, we wanted to take a look back at what we have been up to here at *Outword* over the past twelve months. From our special themed issues to community milestones, each edition reflected where we were at the time—and what we thought would matter most to our readers. Altogether these snapshots form a running record of a year lived in real time, grounded right here in Sacramento. And if you click the image, you can read that issue that slipped by you.



The Health & Body issue framed wellness as strength and care, along with connection to your community. Anchored by A Legacy of Compassion, the cover story honored Dr. Francisco Garcia's decades-long commitment to inclusive, accessible healthcare—reminding readers that true health is as much about humanity and values as it is about the physical body.

Inside, the issue balanced substance with fun, from a look at red light therapy as a modern wellness tool to the playful pop-culture mix of “Thirsty Vampires & Singing Lions,” blending entertainment news with witty commentary. Add in the return of the Queer Eye Fab Five, and this issue delivered our signature mix of insight, joy, and community connection.



This issue arrived with unmistakable star power on the cover, spotlighting Tina – The Tina Turner Musical as it made its Sacramento debut. We highlighted the production as both a celebration of Tina Turner's music and a reflection on a life shaped by perseverance, creativity, and reinvention.

Inside, the issue shimmied between culture and current events. Coverage of the Stonewall National Monument controversy addressed efforts to erase transgender history, while Oscar-season commentary that leaned openly toward pro-trans ideas offered a timely counterbalance.



This special issue was anchored by a stark, emotionally charged cover image capturing the devastation of the Los Angeles wildfires. We focused on Ways to Help, giving readers clear, practical resources to support displaced residents and animals. Those resources are just as needed and valid today, so taking another look is warranted.

Inside, the issue shifted thoughtfully between advocacy and culture. A strong stand against Meta's harmful content policies reminded readers why vigilance still matters, while “Sasha Velour Reveals All” brought creativity forward by weaving drag, history, and personal voice into a moment of reflection and resistance.



The Traveling special issue opened with a sun-washed cover spotlighting “Sunsational Sitges, Spain,” inviting readers into a relaxed and welcoming seaside escape just outside Barcelona. Chris Allan gave us personal travel insight with practical guidance through her words and wonderful photography. She showed Sitges as a place where great food, walkable streets, and an easygoing LGBTQ+ vibe come together.

Inside, the issue leaned into practical travel coverage. “Adventure on the High Seas” offered a clear look at LGBTQ+ cruising and how to choose the right experience, while the Mexico City feature provided a detailed guide to neighborhoods, food, culture, and nightlife. Together, this issue gave readers solid ideas for where to go next and how to make the most of their trip.



The Romance & Weddings special issue led with a tender, intimate cover image celebrating love in its most grounded and genuine form. Framed as both a Valentine's moment and a reflection of everyday partnership, the cover focused on connection and the quiet power of simply being seen together.

Inside, the issue featured great ideas for planning that wedding—or simply planning the weekend's activities. “Five Things to Do to Ensure a Great LGBTQ+ Wedding” offered practical guidance for couples planning their own events, while lighter moments—like “Saturday Night Live Turns 50” and a Valentine's spotlight with Cheyenne Jackson—kept the pages playful and full of heart.



We featured Kylie Minogue, front and center on the cover, timed to her “Tension Tour” stop in San Francisco. We highlighted Kylie's continued presence as a pop mainstay, pairing the release of Tension II with her return to the stage—she was, obviously, in control of her moment.

Inside, the issue blended culture and community-focused reporting. Coverage of HIV/AIDS prevention concerns and poppers access sat alongside lighter features like Mid-Century Modern premiering on Hulu and Broadway Backwardsreimagining classic show tunes.





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# Looking Back at 2025 - Outword's Year In Review



The Homes & Gardens issue opened with a calm, inviting cover featuring John Nicolaus' backyard, setting a seasonal tone focused on outdoor living. "Country Garden Spring Refresh" offered practical ideas for creating a pollinator-friendly, low-maintenance garden suited to Northern California, all just in time for spring.

Inside, readers found useful guidance on enjoying and improving outdoor spaces, alongside timely pieces like the launch of the #IAM campaign and early looks at Sacramento Pride's planning. The result was an issue that felt rooted in place, attentive to the moment, and comfortably lived-in rather than aspirational for its own sake.



The California Pride special issue arrived with a playful, sun-loving dog in sunglasses and holding a pride flag in his mouth. It certainly sets the tone for Pride season all across the state. Both joyful and informative, this issue included a wide-ranging guide to California Pride events. It was designed to be shared and used all month long—bookmark that webpage!

Inside, standout features included "Trans, Intersex Children and Their Families Face Complexity," offering a thoughtful, deeply human look at care and support, alongside coverage of SGMC honoring Matthew Shepard and Pride planning details for Sacramento and beyond.



The Green Issue opened with a tranquil Placer County landscape on the cover, setting a reflective tone with Memories of Green: A Beautiful Placer Weekend. The cover story focused on slowing down and reconnecting—with nature, local food, and small-town spaces—offering a grounded look at sustainability as something lived and experienced, not just discussed.

Inside, the issue balanced environmental focus with civic and cultural engagement. "Politics Are Personal" delivered a deeply felt personal essay underscoring how policy shapes real lives, while reporting on Californians embracing EVs and innovative solar-over-canal projects kept the spotlight on practical steps toward a greener future.



The Sacramento Pride special issue arrived with full celebratory confidence, featuring Roxxy Andrews on the cover ahead of her Pride performance. This issue included the official program for Sac Pride and set the stage for a packed Pride event.

Inside, the issue balanced celebration with substance. Readers found thoughtful reporting on Pride Month's changing landscape alongside deeply personal pieces like "He Has Always Been My Son," as well as cultural highlights including Books for Pride and a full slate of Sacramento Pride events across the city.



The Senior Pride special issue opened with a confident, welcoming cover spotlighting Senior Pride Sacramento and its Info and Event Program. The cover story focused on aging with strength and visibility, centering older LGBTQ+ adults and the importance of community resources and personal dignity as people move through later chapters of life.

Inside, we included in-depth coverage of the Senior Pride LGBTQ+ Resource Fair, reflections on mental health and resilience, and previews of Pride celebrations across the region—from Davis and Placer Pride to events throughout California.



This Pride History issue centered on our LGBTQ+ History Timeline—a living record of where we've been, what we've endured, and how far we've pushed forward. Created by multiple community members over the years, it was updated to include the latest important events. Spanning decades of activism, loss, resistance, and hard-won progress, the timeline placed today's celebrations in clear historical context. It reminded us that Pride did not begin as a party, and that every right, protection, and moment of visibility exists because people before us took risks, spoke out, and refused to disappear. At a time when LGBTQ+ history is being challenged, erased, or rewritten, preserving and revisiting this timeline feels more essential than ever.





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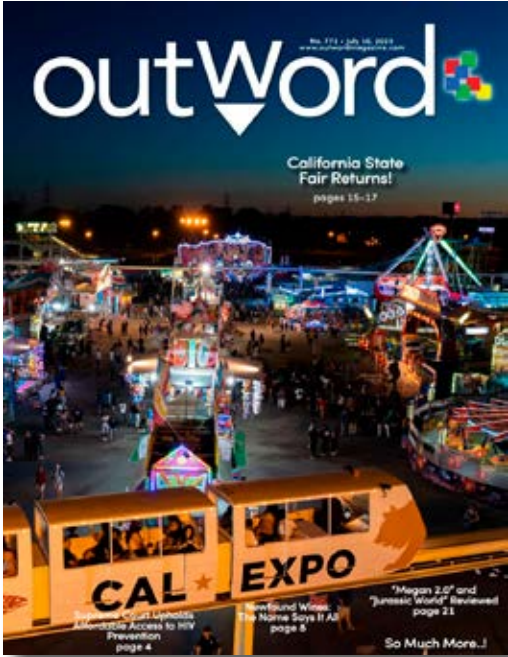
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# Looking Back at 2025 - Outword's Year In Review



The first July issue opened with an aerial view of the California State Fair at Cal Expo, highlighting the return of one of Sacramento's most loved summer events. The cover reminded readers what they actually come for each year—the fried food! Oh, and the concerts, exhibits, and people-watching.

Inside, we included a closer look at the State Fair's Toyota Concert Series lineup, a preview of Disney's Frozenpresented by Music Circus, and reviews of current films and local theater. Along with nightlife and event listings, the issue worked as an impromptu guide to summer entertainment in and around Sacramento.



With our anniversary issue, we officially marked 30 years of Outword. We acknowledged both where the publication began and the fact that we're still here. Fred Palmer reflected on three decades of publishing and community support—recognizing what it has taken to remain a consistent LGBTQ+ voice in Sacramento while keeping an eye on the work still ahead.

Inside, the issue included coverage of Florida painting over the Pulse memorial crosswalk, a major milestone with NorCal AIDS Cycle distributing \$90,000 to local organizations, and Some Like It Hot coming to Sacramento.



The Wheels & Tech issue featured a striking cover story, “Love at First Sight,” centered on Corey Egel’s beautifully restored vintage Volkswagen Beetle. Part personal essay, part love letter to analog design, the story used the car as a way to reflect on memory, craftsmanship, and the lasting appeal of machines built to be felt as much as driven.

Inside, tech-minded readers found a look at the M1 CD Player—a modern rethink of physical media—alongside Ron Tackitt’s candid take on electric vehicle culture and his real-world experience with a VW ID.4. Cultural coverage rounded things out with Studio Ghibli screenings at Tower Theatre, summer film reviews, and a packed events calendar. This issue firmly connected to how people actually live with their tech and their wheels.



The Farm to Fork issue dug deep into Sacramento's food culture, even if the cover itself was more fork(spoon) than farm. Anchored by a rich, close-up look at Hog Island Oyster Co.'s clam chowder at Napa's Oxbow Public Market, the cover set the tone for an issue focused on where we eat, how we eat, and why food remains such a powerful connector across the region.

Inside, the issue delivered exactly what readers expect from this annual favorite. Highlights included a deep dive into Sacramento's Michelin-starred restaurants, a wide-ranging guide to local favorites from bakeries to long-standing dining institutions, and a look ahead to Terra Madre Americas bringing global food traditions to the city. We rounded out the issue with restaurant reviews, food-driven travel, and community events. We celebrated Farm to Fork as a lived experience—not just a slogan.



This issue featured David Archuleta on the cover, ahead of his appearance at Sacramento's Rainbow Festival. We focused on his current music, recent releases, and continued connection to LGBTQ+ audiences as he returned to the stage for a new chapter of his career.

Inside, highlights included film coverage ranging from The Fantastic Four to the Jeff Buckley documentary It's Never Over, along with theater previews for Hair and Dracula: A Comedy of Terrors. The issue rounded things out with Out & About photo spreads and details for our upcoming 30th anniversary celebration at Badlands Nightclub.



This Arts & Entertainment special issue arrived with Taylor Swift on the cover, leaning fully into the devotion of Swifties as she headed to the big screen to promote her new album, Life of a Showgirl. We tapped into the excitement around her cinematic moment, reflecting how pop culture events like this become communal experiences for fans who show up early and know every lyric by heart.

Inside, the issue stayed firmly grounded in fall arts and culture. Highlights included a look at Stop Making Sensereturning for a special screening and Ledisi's tribute to Dinah Washington at Mondavi Center. Overall, the issue served as a wide-ranging arts preview covering film, theater, and much more in and around Sacramento.



# Looking Back at 2025 - Outword's Year In Review



The first October issue leaned fully into spooky season with a striking cover featuring The Boulet Brothers, timed to their “Sinister Soirée” appearance at Sacramento’s Colonial Theatre. The event was billed as equal parts drag, horror, and performance art. This issue signaled a darker, more sinister shift as Sacramento moved into fall and Halloween approached.

Inside, we balanced seasonal fun with substance. Highlights included coverage of Breast Cancer Awareness Month and Hispanic Heritage Month, reporting on American Airlines shareholders rejecting an anti-LGBTQ+ proposal, and updates on efforts to protect access to PrEP in California. Arts and entertainment rounded things out with Halloween film screenings, theater previews, and extensive Out & About activities around town.



The first Holiday Shopping issue of the season arrived with a fun, whimsical cover featuring a very bad puppy... or so it seemed. Just inside, however, we led with a sobering report, “Sacramento LGBTQ+ Community Confronts Violence,” documenting a brutal attack in Lavender Heights and the community response that followed. The coverage was direct, somber, and necessary—underscoring that visibility and joy coexist with very real threats, especially during moments meant for celebration.

Alongside that reporting, the issue delivered a full slate of holiday-focused content, including Holiday Shopping Guide #1 packed with gift ideas, a strong push to shop local, and community-driven moments like the annual WEAVE Toy Drive at Badlands. Seasonal culture rounded things out with theater previews, film coverage, and event listings, making the issue both a call to awareness and a practical guide for navigating the holidays together.



The Pet Issue arrived with instant charm, led by a joyful cover photo of Penny enjoying the outdoors at Lake Spaulding. The issue rightly centered on the animals who share our lives, celebrating the comfort, humor, and companionship pets bring—often without trying very hard at all.

Inside, the issue blended feel-good moments with meaningful reporting. Highlights included the annual Pet Photo Contest winners, a moving look inside The Asher House animal sanctuary, and practical resources in “You Can Be a Hero,” spotlighting local shelters and rescues. Paired with community events, fall fundraisers, and cultural coverage, the issue struck a balance between joy, responsibility, and care.



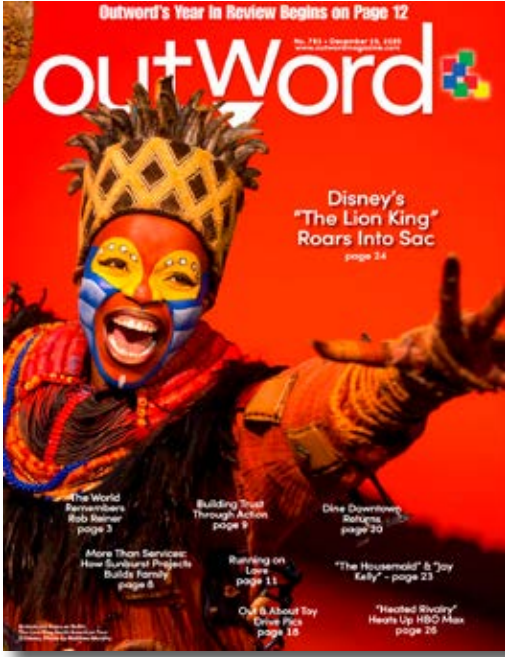
The second Holiday Shopping issue arrived with full holiday glamour, led by Christina Aguilera on the cover promoting her film Christmas in Paris. The concert film served as both a festive escape and a centerpiece holiday experience, setting the tone for an issue built around celebration and end-of-year indulgence.

Highlights included gift ideas throughout the issue, coverage of the Sacramento Women’s Chorus, The Dogs of Venice, SF SPCA’s Holiday Windows, and a packed lineup of theater, film, and music recommendations—from Black Nativity to Randy Rainbow and year-end movie reviews—making the issue feel like both a guide and a fitting sendoff to the year.



This issue featured Jonathan Bailey on the cover following his People magazine announcement as their first openly gay “Sexiest Man Alive.” The cover story focused on Bailey’s current work and visibility, capturing a cultural moment that felt both celebratory and refreshingly uncomplicated.

Inside, the issue balanced pop culture with serious news, including coverage of the Supreme Court leaving marriage equality intact, national political shifts, and international milestones, alongside arts features, nightlife listings, and holiday previews.



This is the issue you’re reading online right now! We were thrilled to use the vibrant, expressive promo image provided by The Lion King as our cover—it perfectly captures the energy of the show, which is sure to bring the house down. Go Broadway Sacramento, always.

Inside, you’ll find our 2025 year-in-review—yes, the one you’re already enjoying—along with plenty more that makes this issue special.

Outword would like to extend a heartfelt thank-you to everyone who read the publication and supported us throughout 2025. We’ll be back before you know it, just after the new year. See you then!



# Out &

**T**hank you to everyone who joined us at Outword's Happy Hour on December 12. This is something we look forward to every year—not only because it helps provide toys for families through WEAVE's Holiday Shop, but because it brings our community together in such a meaningful way before the holiday season begins. Seeing so many familiar and new faces, and watching the care and generosity that filled the room, is a reminder of why we do this. We are deeply grateful to everyone who showed up, gave what they could, and helped make the evening so special. Cheers to the New Year!





# About



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# Dine Downtown Returns For Its 21st Year

Downtown Sacramento Partnership is welcoming the new year with the 21st annual Dine Downtown, announcing 30 exceptional participating restaurants and unveiling many of the specially curated menus created for this year's event. Once again, guests can enjoy three-course dinners for just \$45 from January 9 to January 18, 2026, offering an accessible way to experience some of downtown's most elevated dining at an exceptional value.

This year's program also continues Downtown Sacramento Partnership's long-standing commitment to giving back. Opening Doors has been selected as the official nonprofit partner, receiving one dollar from every Dine Downtown meal sold. Opening Doors empowers more than 4,500 trafficking survivors each providing workforce entrepreneurship training, immigration legal services, that foster stability, self-

Launched in 2005, Dine support local restaurants season. Over the past two generated over \$7 million eateries, helping solidify vibrant culinary destination and making high-quality dining experiences more accessible to residents and visitors alike.

Dine Downtown participating restaurants and their menus for the event, are available online at <https://www.downtownsac.org/downtown-sac-experiences/dine-downtown/> and reservations can be made with the restaurants directly. For more information about Opening Doors, visit <https://openingdoorsinc.org/>. Dine Downtown is produced by the Downtown Sacramento Partnership with support from Kaiser Permanente, FOX40, Sacramento365, Yelp Sacramento, Outword Media and others.



immigrants, refugees, and year across Sacramento by development, financial empowerment, and social-support programs sufficiency, and belonging. Downtown was created to during a typically slower decades, the program has in sales for central city Sacramento's reputation as a

# Do Not Miss "Blade Runner LIVE"

by Chris Narloch

If you have never seen the original "Blade Runner" on a big screen, you can rectify that situation this January, when the Mondavi Center in Davis presents the 2007 Final Cut of Ridley Scott's multi-Academy Award-nominated cult classic.



The futuristic masterpiece will be shown on a vast HD screen while Vangelis' synthesizer-led score is performed lived by The Avex Ensemble for the first time in-sync with the 1982 motion picture.

In this stylish noir thriller, retired detective Rick Deckard (Harrison Ford) is hired to capture and kill four escaped androids who have returned to earth seeking an extension on their four-year lifespans.

Deckard's mission is complicated when he falls for Rachel (Sean Young), a beautiful replicant based at the Tyrell Corporation.

"Blade Runner LIVE" will screen on Friday, Jan. 23 at 7:30 p.m. For more information, please visit: [www.mondaviarts.org](http://www.mondaviarts.org)

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As we close out 2025, Sunburst Projects looks ahead with hope and a renewed commitment to the community we serve. The need for free, comprehensive HIV services continues to grow, and your support helps us show up for individuals and families impacted by HIV across Sacramento county every single day.

Community-based organizations are essential now more than ever. Your generosity strengthens our programs, expands access to life-changing care, and helps ensure that those affected by HIV receive the support they deserve.

This holiday season, please consider making a year-end gift to Sunburst Projects, and remember to support your local nonprofit organizations that uplift the Sacramento community. Your kindness truly makes a difference.

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# “The Housemaid” & “Jay Kelly” Plus, Another “Avatar” Sequel

by Chris Narloch

If you find yourself with time to watch a movie this holiday season, here are one or two films I recommend you see – and a couple to avoid.



## Avatar: Fire and Ash

James Cameron returns to Pandora once again in this unnecessary sequel to an unnecessary sequel. Camerson directed two terrific movies in a row (“Titanic” and the original “Avatar”), but since then he has been trapped in the land of the Na’vi, blue people with tails who must fight off yet another military invasion. The three-hour-plus film is beautiful to look at, and there is no denying Cameron’s skill with special effects. Unfortunately, he keeps repeating the same basic story in these sequels, and so I found “Avatar: Fire and Ash” ultimately frustrating. In wide theatrical release.



## Jay Kelly

George Clooney stars in this inside Hollywood story of a movie star looking back on his life and career with a great deal of regret, while on his way to receive a major tribute in Italy. The talented Noah Baumbach directed “Jay Kelly,” and the movie is watchable but not all that memorable, partly because we have seen this story before - and done better - and partly because the character of Jay Kelly is kind of a jerk. I found myself more interested in the excellent supporting cast, which includes fine performances by Adam Sandler, Laura Dern, Billy Crudup, Patrick Wilson, and Greta Gerwig. Available on Netflix.



## The Housemaid

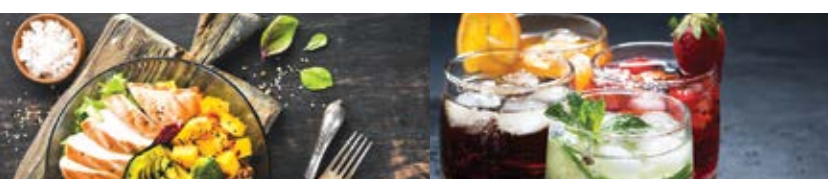
Amanda Seyfried and Sydney Sweeney appear to be having a blast playing a rich bitch and her new maid, respectively, in this sexy, twisty thriller. If you can overlook plot holes the size of the Atlantic and an overall preposterousness, “The Housemaid” is fun (if forgettable) trash with a strong supporting cast that includes Elizabeth Perkins as the mother-in-law from hell, plus Brandon Sklenar and Michele Morrone as the hunky husband and the hunky gardener, respectively. In wide theatrical release.



## The Secret Agent

Handsome Wagner Moura stars in this fantastic foreign film set in Brazil during Carnival. A historical thriller, “The Secret Agent” is a very satisfying slow burn that follows a technology expert in his early ‘40s who is on the run during the political turmoil of Brazil’s 1970s military dictatorship. Mr. Moura is superb, giving an award-worthy performance as a man fleeing his troubled past, who lands in a troubled present. “The Secret Agent” was still playing at Sacramento’s Tower Theatre when this Issue of Outword came out.





## Out & About

with Matthew Burlingame

As we step into a new year, it's worth remembering that no matter our differences, we all share this world and the responsibility of caring for it—and for one another. Community happens when we show up, listen, and find common ground, whether through art, service, celebration or reflection. Let's make the year ahead brighter by coming together, supporting local events and choosing connection over division whenever we can.

## Dec. 26

Harlow's presents the Emo Night Tour: Holiday Hangover Party on Friday, Dec. 26, at Harlow's, 2708 J St. Doors open at 8 p.m. The 21-and-up event features a full building takeover, with both Harlow's and the Starlet Room open for a high-energy night celebrating emo anthems with the tour's favorite sad crew. Harlows.com

## Dec. 31

The Crocker Art Museum, 216 O St. in Sacramento, invites families to its free Noon Years Eve celebration on Wednesday, Dec. 31 from 10:30 a.m. to 2 p.m. Enjoy creative art activities, puppets, music and a festive noon countdown to ring in 2026. Advance registration is recommended. Crockerart.org

YPCE and the City of Sacramento invite volunteers to help care for McKinley Rose Garden on Wednesday, Dec. 1, from 8 to 10 a.m. at McKinley Park, 3330 McKinley Blvd. Participants will weed, deadhead and mulch roses. No experience is needed, tools and water are provided, and volunteers are encouraged to bring a friend.

## Jan. 2

Capella Antiqua presents its annual performances of Handel's Messiah at the Cathedral of the Blessed Sacrament, 1017 11th St., on Friday, Jan. 2, and Saturday, Jan. 3. Both concerts begin at 7:30 p.m., with Friday sung in English and Saturday performed in Spanish, continuing a cherished Christmas tradition. Cathedralsacramento.org



## Jan. 3-4

Jurassic Quest roars into Sacramento on Saturday and Sunday, Jan. 3-4, at Cal Expo, 1600 Exposition Blvd. The interactive family event features life-size dinosaurs, walking dinosaur rides, fossil exhibits, a baby dinosaur show, games and hands-on activities. Advance online tickets are recommended, as availability is limited for this popular traveling experience. Jurassicquest.com

## Jan. 6

The Sacramento Rainbow Chamber of Commerce is hosting a Lunch & Networking at Roscoe's Bar & Burgers, 2007 K St., on Tuesday, Jan. 6, from noon to 1 p.m. Presented with Tri Counties Bank, the \$45 event includes lunch, a drink and lively networking. All are welcome to connect over great food. Rainbowchamber.com



## Jan. 7

Catch the sensation of Disney's The Lion King live on stage from Jan. 7-25 at the SAFE Credit Union Performing Arts Center, 1301 L St. This touring production of the award-winning Broadway musical brings the savannah to life with soaring songs, stunning visuals and unforgettable moments for all ages. Broadwaysacramento.com

Slow Down Sacramento hosts the second annual Sacramento Remembers Vigil on Wednesday, Jan. 7, at 5 p.m. at Fremont Park, 1515 Q St. The community gathering honors those who lost their lives to vehicular violence in Sacramento during 2025, offering space for remembrance, reflection and solidarity while renewing a shared commitment to safer streets for all. Slowdownsacramento@gmail.com

## Jan. 8

Drag queens take the throne at Royal Edition Drag Queen Bingo, hosted by the Sacramento Rainbow Chamber, on Thursday, Jan. 8, 2026, at Mango's, 1930 K St. Doors open at 6 p.m., with games from 7 to 9 p.m. Eight cash-only games cost \$20, with prizes benefiting CGNIE. Arrive early to claim your spot inside. Rainbowchamber.com

## Jan. 15-18

TINA – The Tina Turner Musical comes to the Harris Center for the Arts, 10 College Parkway, Folsom, with performances Thursday-Sunday, Jan. 15-18, 2026. Shows range from 2 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. and celebrate the electrifying life and hits of the Queen of Rock 'n' Roll in this inspiring Broadway-style production. Harriscenter.net

## Upcoming

Enjoy an exceptional afternoon of orchestral power when the Chicago Symphony Orchestra performs at the Robert & Margrit Mondavi Center for the Performing Arts's Jackson Hall in Davis at 2 p.m. Sunday, Jan. 18. Set to be conducted by Riccardo Muti, the program includes works by Brahms, Stravinsky and Ravel at One Shields Ave. Mondaviarts.org

Pianist and songwriter Jim Brickman performs Hits Live in Concert on Friday, Feb. 13, 2026, at 7:30 p.m. at the Harris Center for the Arts, 10 College Parkway, Folsom. The Grammy-nominated artist will play beloved songs including "The Gift," "Valentine" and "Love of My Life," blending heartfelt melodies with stories that bring friends and families together. Harriscenter.net

## Upcoming



Boy George & Culture Club bring their iconic hits to The Venue at Thunder Valley, 1200 Athens Ave. in Lincoln, on Friday, March 13, 2026, at 8 p.m. Joined by powerhouse vocalist Martha Wash, fans can expect favorites like "Karma Chameleon," "Do You Really Want to Hurt Me," "It's Raining Men" and "Everybody, Everybody." This high-energy night promises pure pop nostalgia! Tthundervalleyresort.com

*Do you have events, birthdays, or announcements to share? Feel free to send them to matthewburlingame@gmail.com.*

## Santa Claus Brought His Sack to Sac

photo and words by Chris Allan



Santa Claus roared back into town on December 13 for Sacramento's 42nd annual Santa Parade. Eschewing a sleigh, he arrived in a 1967 cherry-red Camaro convertible, courtesy of the California Automobile Museum. Misty, cold conditions likely kept attendance lower than in past years, but even so, spectators of all ages bundled up and lined the route for the hour-and-forty-minute parade around Capitol Park.





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# 2026

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READING  
IN THE  
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## UPCOMING EVENTS

Jan  
10

**Members Only Bag Sale**  
Saturday, January 10th, 9am -3pm  
Appointments required

**General Public Bag Sale**  
Saturday, January 17, 9am - 3pm  
(open to the public, no  
appointment necessary)

Jan  
17

- Donations are taken on Wednesdays and Saturdays from 9am to noon.
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## "Heated Rivalry" Heats Up HBO Max

by Chris Narloch

2025 was a banner year for new series about closeted queer men discovering their sexual identities, with popular, highly acclaimed shows such as Prime Video's "Overcompensating," and "Boots" on Netflix.



The latest show getting gay boys all hot and bothered is "Heated Rivalry," a sexy new series on HBO Max about two professional hockey players who are rivals on the ice (and lovers in the bedroom).

Connor Storrie and Hudson Williams, both very easy on the eyes, costar as the competitors whose secret attraction blossoms into a passionate romantic relationship. Happily, "Heated Rivalry," which just wrapped up its first, six-episode season, has already been renewed for a second season.

## Kink, Kindly Explained (No Whips Required)

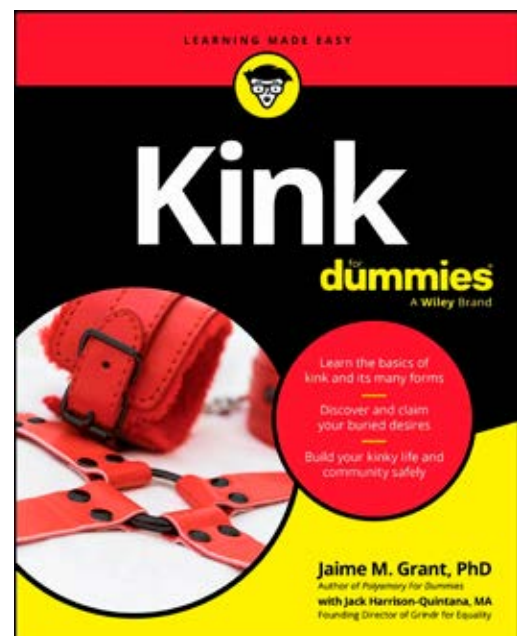
If you've ever stood in a bookstore aisle eyeing the bright yellow For Dummies spines and thought, "Sure, but... that?"—congratulations. Your curiosity has impeccable timing. Longtime queer activists Dr. Jaime M. Grant and Jack Harrison-Quintana have teamed up to release "Kink For Dummies," bringing one of humanity's most whispered-about interests into the friendliest instructional universe imaginable.

Grant and Harrison-Quintana aren't newcomers to big conversations. They've been collaborators since the late 2000s, including work on the landmark Injustice at Every Turn study for the National LGBTQ Task Force, and they've spent years leading "Desire Mapping" workshops that connect personal truth to social justice. In other words, they know their footnotes—and their feelings.

Following their earlier Polyamory For Dummies, the new book treats kink not as shock value, but as curiosity, communication, and consent—with a wink. It's educational without being preachy, playful without being pushy, and grounded in real stories from a wide range of voices.

The authors are currently on a national book tour, popping up in independent bookstores, conferences, and community spaces. Think less dungeon, more discussion circle—just with better vocabulary.

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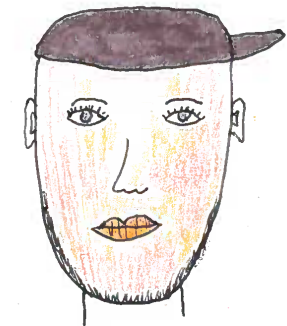
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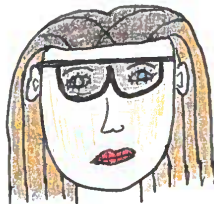
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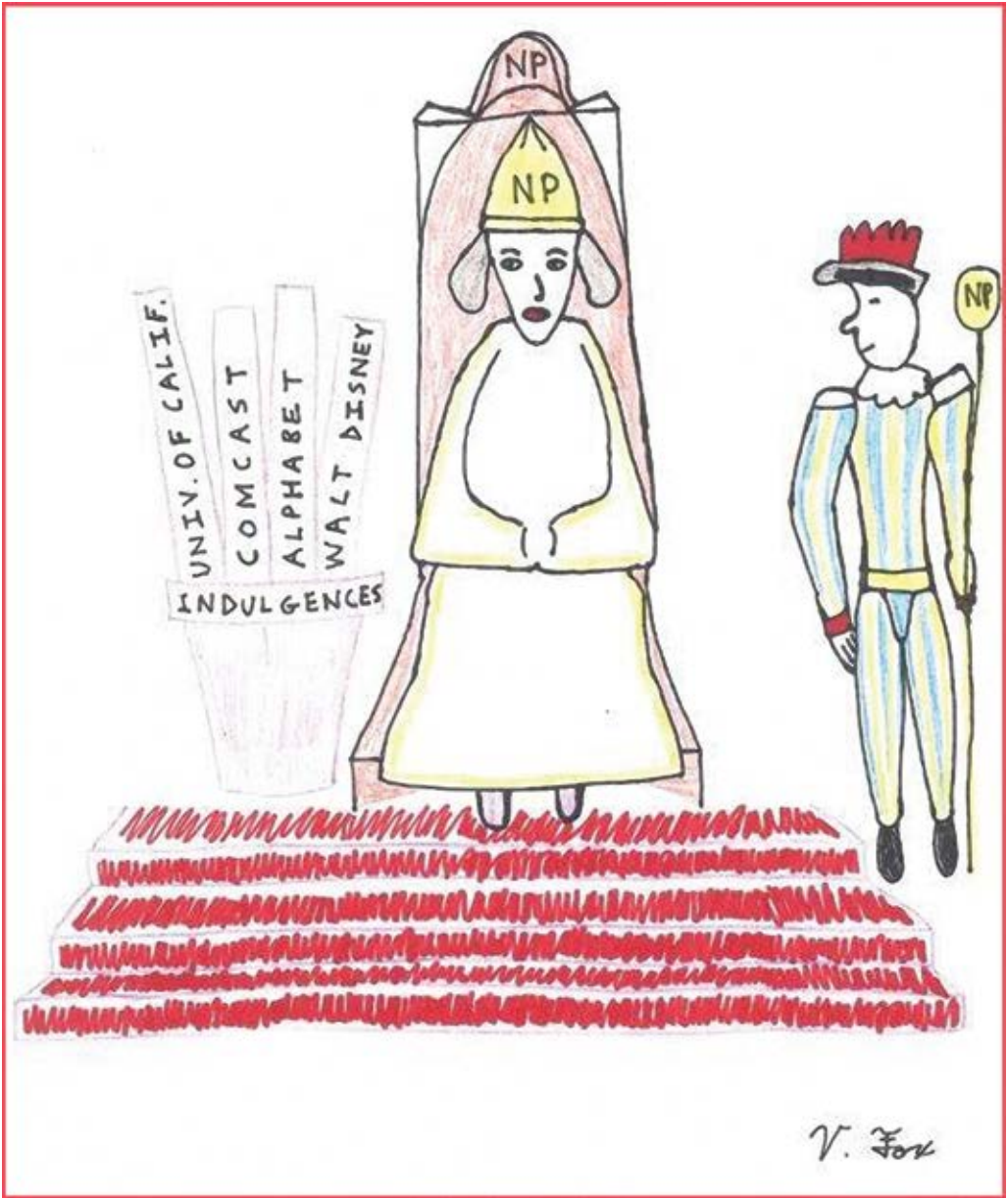
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