

outword



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Bonta Defends Transgender Students' Restroom Rights

resource: Attorney General Bonta release

California Attorney General Rob Bonta has joined a coalition of 19 attorneys general in supporting transgender students challenging an Idaho law that prohibits them from using school restrooms consistent with their gender identity.

The coalition filed an amicus brief arguing that Idaho's House Bill 264 is unconstitutional and that inclusive restroom policies, including those used in California, protect transgender students without compromising the privacy or safety of others.

"Idaho's law is an unconstitutional threat to the safety and privacy of transgender and gender-conforming students," Bonta said. "No one should feel uncomfortable or be afraid to use a public restroom because of their gender identity."

HB 264 prohibits transgender people from using restrooms and other sex-separated facilities consistent with their gender identity

in certain public institutions, including Idaho's public universities and community colleges.

Two transgender college students challenged the law in federal court in July 2025, arguing that it violates their rights under the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment as well as federal civil rights protections. The students are seeking a preliminary injunction that would prevent Idaho from enforcing the law against them while their lawsuit proceeds.

Bonta and the other attorneys general are urging the court to grant that injunction. Their brief argues that the Idaho law unfairly stigmatizes transgender students and denies them access to common school facilities based on their gender identity.

The coalition also points to states such as California as evidence that inclusive policies can be implemented without jeopardizing other students. Since 2014, California schools have been required to allow students to use sex-separated facilities consistent with their gender identity.

The Idaho case is the latest in a series of legal actions by Bonta involving LGBTQ+

rights. Last year, he joined an amicus brief supporting a transgender boy seeking access to the boys' restroom at his Indiana high school. In June, Bonta also released the California Department of Justice's annual "State of Pride Report," outlining its efforts to defend LGBTQ+ rights.

Joining California in the Idaho brief are attorneys general representing 17 other states and the District of Columbia.



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ON THE COVER
Ginger Minj will perform in "Hairspray" the musical, here in Sacramento
Photo by Jackson Davis

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The Long Fight Against Big Tobacco's Impact on Gay and Bisexual Men

Most men's health conversations focus on fitness and routine screenings. However, the greatest preventable threat has been hiding in plain sight for decades: commercial tobacco. Big Tobacco's legacy of targeting queer communities has led to higher tobacco-related mortality rates for gay and bisexual men.

For Bob Gordon, MPH, former Project Director at California LGBT Tobacco Education Partnership, improving men's health means confronting this persistent threat. Gordon has helped advance smoke-free protections and LGBTQ+ focused tobacco prevention. He reflects on the tobacco industry's lasting impact on gay and bisexual men's health, offering resources to those who want to stop the cycle.

Q1. How did the tobacco industry target LGBTQ+ communities, and what impact does that have today?

A. Big Tobacco worked hard to become part of LGBTQ+ culture. In the 1990s, the queer community regularly gathered in bars allowing smoking. It was so ingrained in queer social norms and identity that when California's smoke-free workplace law extended to bars in 1998, it was especially challenging to enforce. Big Tobacco sold a sense of belonging that we are still working to undo today.

Q2. What specific health consequences do gay and bisexual men face from higher smoking rates?

A. Smoking remains a leading cause of preventable disease. Quitting is a powerful way to add years to your life. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, gay and bisexual men smoke at higher rates than their heterosexual peers and face a greater risk of chronic health conditions.

Decades of the tobacco industry's targeted marketing and the effects of discrimination, and stigma shaped these disparities. They are not inevitable. Every person deserves access to the support they need to reclaim their health.

Q3. Why can quitting be especially difficult for many gay and bisexual men?

A. During the 25 years I led The Last Drag, a free LGBTQ+ smoking cessation program, I met many people who had overcome incredible challenges. Yet, they often told me cigarettes were the hardest habit to break as smoking is deeply intertwined with socializing, connecting, and coping with stress.

Today, social norms are changing. This year at Pride, I noticed something I hadn't seen in years – very few people smoking. That's real progress.

Q4. What makes effective cessation support different for LGBTQ+ communities?

A. A small meaningful change was when Kick It California began asking participants their sexual orientation and gender identity to better understand participants' lives and communities. Signaling that LGBTQ+ people's experiences mattered.

Q5. Which tobacco control efforts have made the greatest difference in protecting gay and bisexual men's health?

A. I'm especially proud of organizers working on smoke-free Pride celebrations. More broadly in California, smoke-free laws, tobacco sales restrictions, and public education campaigns have shifted expectations and health outcomes, demonstrating that policy change works.

Instead of lecturing to the public, some of the most powerful campaigns asked, "When did smoking become part of us?" This reframing helped people see the industry's influence and see smoking as less of a personal choice.

Q6. What advice would you give someone who is ready to quit smoking?

A. Quitting smoking is a process, and it's okay if it takes more than one attempt. I often share what I call the "Five Ds":

1. Distract - Do something with your hands or mouth to replace the habit.
2. Deep Breath - Practice deep breathing techniques.
3. Delay - Wait out the craving; it will pass.
4. Dialogue - Talk to someone who has successfully quit.
5. Most importantly, Don't give up!

You don't have to figure it out on your own. Kick It California offers Californians free quit coaching, personalized support, and practical resources to help you quit smoking.

Bob Gordon, MPH
Fmr. Project Director at California LGBT
Tobacco Education Partnership



Setting the Record Straight on California's Supplier Diversity Program

CPUC provided and originally ran on their website

Recent criticism of California's Supplier Diversity Program paints an inaccurate and misleading picture of a longstanding initiative designed to expand participation in the state's private-sector procurement marketplace and promote competition. Rather than examining the program's actual purpose, structure, and results, the recent criticism has relied on inflammatory rhetoric and selective facts to suggest that California utilities are awarding contracts based on identity rather than business performance.

The reality is very different.

A Nearly 40-Year-Old Voluntary Economic Development Program

California's Supplier Diversity Program was established following the passage of Assembly Bill 3678 in 1986. The legislation directed certain California utilities to develop plans for increasing opportunities for businesses that historically faced barriers to participation in major procurement markets. The California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) subsequently implemented General Order 156 (GO 156), creating what is now known as the Supplier Diversity Program.

For nearly four decades, the program has operated with a consistent objective: expanding competition and ensuring that qualified businesses have access to procurement opportunities within California's utility sector.

Far from being a new political initiative, the program has been supported across multiple gubernatorial administrations, regardless of political party, and has become an established component of California's economic development strategy.

The program fosters a competitive marketplace by encouraging investor-owned utilities, community choice aggregators, energy service providers, and prime contractors to include diverse firms in their procurement. This includes businesses owned by:

- Disabled Veterans
- Persons with disabilities
- Women
- Minorities
- Lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender

The Program Is About Expanding the Procurement Marketplace

One of the most significant inaccuracies repeated by critics is the suggestion that utilities are required to award contracts based on ownership characteristics.

This is 100 percent wrong. The Supplier Diversity Program forbids utilities from using set-asides, preferences, or quotas. It does not mandate contracts or guarantee procurement awards to any business.

Instead, GO 156 establishes voluntary procurement goals and reporting intended to encourage long-term outreach and inclusion of diverse suppliers in competitive bidding processes.

Utilities remain responsible for selecting each vendor based on business needs, technical qualifications, pricing, reliability, safety, and performance. Participation in the program does not exempt any supplier from meeting procurement standards.

In other words, a company holding a diverse supplier certification gives no advantage in obtaining a contract. It simply provides visibility and access to opportunities that might otherwise be difficult for smaller businesses to discover. And any other vendor can request the same outreach assistance.

Diversity Certification Is About Business Ownership, Not Personal Preference

Critics often attempt to trivialize certification processes by characterizing them as government officials "verifying sexual preferences."

This misrepresents how supplier certification works.

Supplier diversity certification verifies ownership and control of a business by individuals who belong to designated categories established by California law and policy. Similar certification processes exist nationwide for women-owned businesses, minority-owned businesses, veteran-owned businesses, and disabled-owned businesses.

Certification programs are not unique to California, nor are they unique to LGBT-owned businesses.

The purpose of certification is to ensure that companies claiming eligibility meet established standards and that procurement reporting remains accurate and transparent.

Expanding Competition Benefits Utilities and Consumers

The Supplier Diversity Program is grounded

continued on page 25

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Civic Health Month

by Zach Basler
Vice President, Stonewall Democratic Club of Greater Sacramento

When someone recently told me August is Civic Health Month, I have to admit my first thought was “There is absolutely nothing healthy about American civics right now.”

I may have even rolled my eyes... just a little. Before I dismissed it, I decided to do something I wish more of us would do these days: I decided to do my research. The more I learned, the more I found myself getting behind the concept.

Civic Health Month isn't about pretending everything is okay or asking us to ignore the challenges we're facing. It's about recognizing that healthy communities are built by people who choose to participate. It's a nationwide initiative focused on showcasing the critical links between voting and civic participation.

Yes, voting and voter registration are a huge part of civic health. But it's also about volunteering for a local nonprofit, serving your community, attending a city council or school board meeting, joining a neighborhood cleanup, mentoring someone, or simply having respectful conversations with people who don't always share your point of view.

As someone who wears a few different hats (a REALTOR®, an LGBTQ+ advocate, and a community volunteer), I've learned that change almost never actually starts in Washington, D.C. It usually starts much closer to home. It starts when neighbors decide to show up for one another. And let's be honest. There's a lot happening in our country right now. It's easy to become overwhelmed, frustrated, or convinced that one person can't make a difference.

I refuse to believe that we don't have power. Every movement, every nonprofit, every neighborhood association, every elected official, and every community organization started because someone decided to get involved.

So here's my challenge to all of us this August: don't try to fix everything. Just get up and do something. Volunteer for an hour. Attend one public meeting. Register one voter. Support one local organization. Introduce yourself to a neighbor. Come to a Stonewall Dems meeting. Find one way to leave your community a little better than you found it.

Because civic health isn't really about politics, but rather about people.

And healthy communities happen when ordinary people decide they're willing to do something extraordinary: show up.

Zach Basler is a REALTOR® with Coldwell Banker Realty, Vice President of the Stonewall Democratic Club of Greater Sacramento (sacstonewall.org), and serves on a variety of community non-profits.

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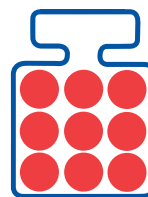
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Play Ball! WPBL's Debut Season Is Notably Queer

Words by Chris Allan,
photo courtesy of Women's Pro Baseball League

For the first time in more than 70 years, women's professional baseball has a league of its own — and its rosters are stacked with LGBTQ+ talent. The Women's Pro Baseball League, the only professional women's baseball league in the U.S., opened its inaugural season August 1, and it runs through playoffs in late September at the Robin Roberts Stadium in Springfield, Illinois.

Amanda Gianelloni, second baseman for the San Francisco Firebells



"We are so excited to finally announce the WPBL's first four teams — New York, Boston, Los Angeles and San Francisco," said Justine Siegal, Co-Founder and Commissioner of the WPBL, in a press release when the teams were announced. "Each of these cities are storied sports cities and we can't wait to connect with the fans who live there and baseball fans across the country."

That fan connection Siegal is counting on will likely have a strong queer vibe, due to the sport and the rosters. Writer Samantha Allen, in a piece for Them (syndicated at Out.com), put the number of out LGBTQ+ players at a minimum of 18 across the league — nearly a third of the entire roster, with at least one on every team — citing a tally from Autostraddle. That number outpaces even the WNBA.

As she noted, lesbians have long been active in the world of softball, so baseball is not a big leap. "That's just like baseball except you pitch the ball overhand!" wrote Allen.

San Francisco's Firebells carry a chunk of that queer total. Second baseman Amanda Gianelloni is married to Victoria Price Gianelloni. First baseman Micaela Minner plays alongside her wife, Darcy Thompson. Pitchers Liz Gilder and Arwen McCullough, along with No. 1 overall pick Kelsie Whitmore, round out the Firebells' out players, per Autostraddle's roster count of players who are publicly self-disclosed as LGBTQ+.

The inaugural season will be played only in Springfield, chosen as a neutral site among the four team cities and home to a women's baseball history dating back to 1875. Teams will play games in their home cities starting in 2027.

Tickets and the full schedule are live now on the WPBL's site at www.womensprobaseballleague.com



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Ginger Minj is Set to Slay in “Hairspray”

exclusive interview by Chris Narloch
photos by Jackson Davis

How does a bullied fat kid who started her show business career in Christian films evolve into a recording artist, an author, and a queer drag superstar who wins Season 10 of “RuPaul’s Drag Race All Stars”?

I had the opportunity to ask Ginger Minj about that journey (and her recent starring role on the big screen) during a phone call to promote her highly anticipated debut as Edna Turnblad in the upcoming Broadway At Music Circus production of the modern musical masterpiece “Hairspray.”

Below are excerpts from our conversation.

Ginger, on behalf of the queer community in Sacramento, I want to welcome you in advance to our fair city later this month.

Well, thank you, Chris. I love Sacramento. I performed there several times, pre-pandemic, but I haven’t been there since. I can’t wait to come back.

We are very excited that you are going to be starring in one of my favorite musicals, “Hairspray.”

Me too. “Hairspray” is so timeless, and it’s kind of sad that it’s still so relevant today, maybe even more so. It has such a beautiful message about inclusion and self-acceptance, and it’s the perfect time to tell that story.

And you’re no stranger to the theatre, right? I read that you’ve done “Avenue Q” and “Sweeney Todd.”

Oh yeah, I came tap-dancing out of the womb, as my mother likes to say. That’s how I got into drag originally. I was cast in a drag role at the Orlando Fringe Festival twenty or so years ago, and I just kind of took to it.

So how did the role of Edna at Music Circus come to you.

They called and asked if I would be interested, and I said absolutely, I would love to do it. I’ve wanted to play Edna for so long, and it’s just one of those roles that always seemed to slip through my fingers, until now.

Music Circus is lucky to have you, and I can’t wait to see you tackle that role.

I have wanted to perform there for so long, and of course being a theatre baby I obsess over all of my musical theater divas. I have watched every clip on YouTube of Julia Murney as Eva Peron at Music Circus. It’s such a cool space.

I saw your movie “Stop! That! Train!” recently at our Tower Theatre, and I just about died laughing. I described it as “Airplane” meets “To Wong Foo…” in my review, and you and Jujubee were so great in it. You two have this incredible chemistry.

Jujubee is really the reason I was ever on “Drag Race” to begin with. She forced me to send in an audition tape. She is one of the few people that I can spend 24 hours with and not get sick of. We practically live together. We did our Hokus Pokus Live! Tour together, then went right into filming “Stop! That! Train!” and we just wrapped up another tour, “Licked: For Gay,” our tribute to “Wicked: For Good.”

I hope people who missed it in theaters will stream “Stop! That! Train!” because you and Ju and Ru were hilarious, and what a crazy cast. You were also in another movie, the sequel to “Hocus Pocus,” right? With Bette and Sarah Jessica and Kathy.

Yes, I was. I got to work with them in one scene. I was kind of nervous actually, but all three of them made us feel not only welcome but appreciated.

How was it growing up in Florida, by the way?

I was born in Leesburg, which is less than an hour north of Orlando. It was very rural and southern. Southern Baptist, which was a strange environment for a queer kid but particularly one who enjoyed putting on dresses and makeup.

But you worked on Christian films as a kid? Is that true?

Totally true. I was part of a children’s theatre program when I was in middle school. They were scouting for people to do these Christian VHS movies, and I also did books on tape. But yeah, I ended up getting cast to play Saul, who was blinded by a heavenly light on the road to Damascus. I’ve never seen a copy of it, but it was a wild time to be a little gay boy theatre diva, telling Bible stories in a Southern Baptist community.

Wow. So, child actor in Christian films to drag superstar. What a life...

(laughs) Well, I feel like it’s the natural progression. I traded robes for dresses and long hair for wigs!

Ginger Minj will star in the Sacramento production of “Hairspray” this August 21–30. For tickets, visit www.broadwaysacramento.com





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NorCal Gets A New LGBTQ+ Center

by Chris Allan

It just might be the newest LGBTQ+ Center in California, and The Placer LGBTQ+ Center has its official opening later this month.

The Center began providing programming at its first ever physical location at the beginning of this year, and the end of summer seemed like the perfect time to host a casual, drop-in event where the queer community and allies can see the new space.

Come meet the people making things happen and learn what The Placer LGBTQ+ Center is all about, when The Center holds its first Open House, on Saturday, August 29th, from 1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.

For more information about The Center, please visit placerlgbtqcenter.org



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Summer in Chicago: Queer Culture & The New Obama Center

words and images by Chris Allan

The Obama Presidential Center has been the hottest ticket in Chicago since it opened its doors this summer, and we rearranged our July trip around seeing it. Imagine our surprise, however, when what stuck with us wasn't the Oval Office replica — it was how fully our community was visible inside the museum, woven into a broader story of civil rights struggles and the importance of true democracy.

We found ourselves tearing up watching archival protest footage and photos with an elated Jim Obergefell outside the Supreme Court the day same-sex marriage was legalized in 2015. Choreographer Alvin Ailey is also honored in the exhibits, James Baldwin has a Foundation space named for him, and commissioned pieces by queer artists Sam Kirk and Mark Bradford anchor the campus. Built on the South Side near where Michelle Obama grew up, it's a rare thing: a presidential center treating LGBTQ history as part of the main record rather than

a footnote.

The queer community also shows up concretely a few miles north, on Chicago's Legacy Walk in Boystown. A series of rainbow-striped pylons, including one sponsored by the Chicago Cubs, celebrates key LGBTQ figures along Halsted Street. Boystown also includes a rainbow-painted bike corral, colorful Pride crosswalks, and the Center on Halsted is the Midwest's largest LGBTQ+ community center. Of course, there is also the legendary Roscoe's Tavern, which was packed for Saturday brunch with a drag

queen on the mic.

A short bus ride north, Andersonville strikes a quieter, more day-centric tone. Clark Street mixes queer-owned shops and cafés with the area's old Swedish character, especially visible at the Swedish American Museum. The area is arguably anchored by the uber-popular Women & Children First, the feminist bookstore that's been a fixture of the neighborhood for decades. A second bus ride took us to Big Chicks, the art-lined, longtime LGBTQ bar in Uptown, where its sister restaurant Tweet served up biscuits and gravy, alone worth the detour.

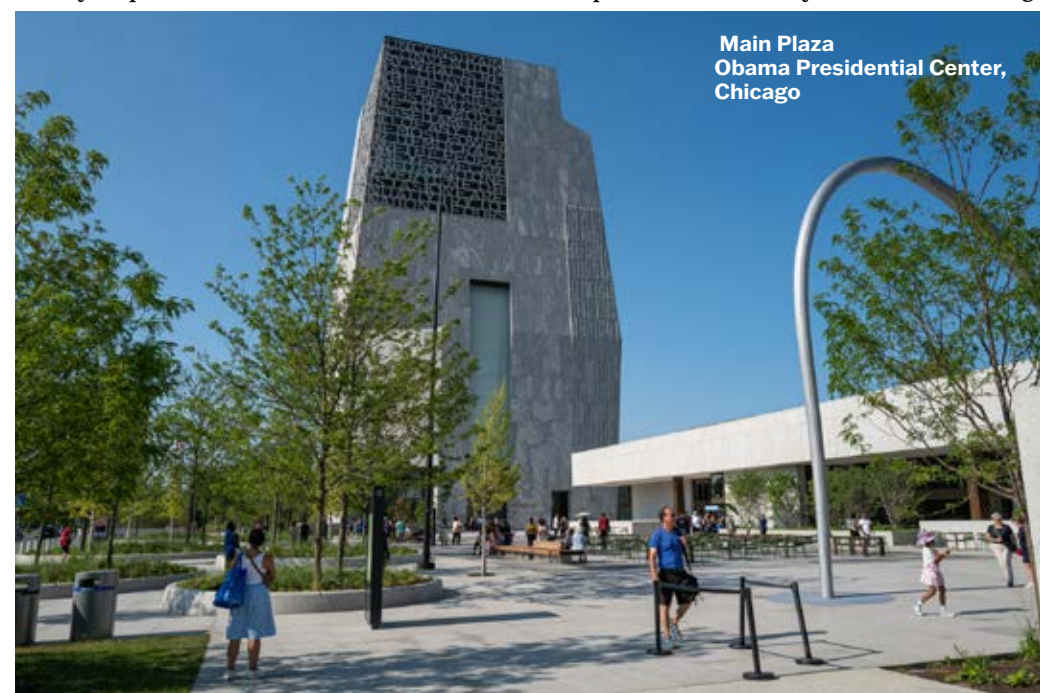
In fact, food was another one of the trip's highlights. Beard and Belly's Wisconsin-style pies, Regalia's Italian menu, and the jazz-and-lake-view ease of the Waterfront Cafe each stood out. "Taste of Chicago," the city's signature food festival, ran while we were in town, delivering Michelin-starred chef Carrie Nahabedian alongside institutions like Eli's Cheesecake — a good reminder that Chicago's food identity is both high and low at once.

Then there's Kathy Osterman Beach. I'd never spent time at a Great Lakes beach, and the water was clear and swimmable, with the breeze cutting the summer humidity. The

informally gay stretch of Osterman was packed with men by 2:00pm, with young lifeguards-in-training and families filling the shoreline, along with high schoolers running the concession stand. The whole scene felt like an Americana postcard that happened to be queer at the center of it.

Beyond the queer neighborhoods, the Wendella architecture boat tours are the classic Chicago primer, though stairs are unavoidable for those with mobility issues. Georges Seurat's massive masterpiece "A Sunday on La Grande Jatte" at the Art Institute is absolutely worth standing in front of in person. And a quick walk into neighboring Millennium Park lets you check the iconic "Bean" off your list.

On a practical note, we based ourselves at Loyola, in town for my wife's Sister Spirit choral conference. We found that Chicago's 7-day CTA pass (\$20) covered every bus and train in the system except Metra. They all run often enough that a car never entered the conversation. Between the easy transit and Midwestern friendliness that showed up more than once when we looked lost, Chicago was easy to navigate and thoroughly queer-welcoming.



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Spidey Spins His Web At The Box Office

Plus, “Camp Miasma” & “Cookie Queens”

by Chris Narloch

The new Spider-Man movie has joined “The Odyssey” in killing it at the box office during an unusually lucrative August for movie theaters. If blockbusters aren’t your thing, I have several other fine films you can see this month.



Spider-Man: Brand New Day

Marvel is once again cleaning up at the box office with the latest sequel in the Spidey saga, and the new movie is a surprisingly effective installment that pulls at your heartstrings in between soaring action sequences. The only negative for me was a runtime that felt about fifteen minutes too long.

Tom Holland has clearly been hitting the gym, and he strips down to his underwear here, which is always a plus. Holland is aided by the usual suspects (Zendaya and Jacob Batalon), and that terrific trio is supported by Sadie Sink, Marisa Tomei, Jon Bernthal, Mark Ruffalo, Florence Pugh, and Liza Colon-Zayas.

“Spider-Man: Brand New Day” is playing exclusively in theaters everywhere.



Jinsei

Fans of old-school, hand-drawn animation might enjoy this Japanese indie feature, which was written, directed, edited, and completely hand-drawn by Ryuya Suzuki.

The incredibly ambitious film took 18 months to make, and it’s a total trip that tells the surreal story of a young man who journeys through time and space for 100 years, after he witnesses a catastrophic car accident involving his parents.

The movie won’t be for everyone – it’s austere-looking, often inscrutable, and features an extremely passive protagonist. If you’re in the mood for a metaphysical mind-bender, however, this film should fit the bill.

“Jinsei” is now available to rent or buy on multiple platforms.



Cookie Queens

This thoroughly entertaining new documentary follows half a dozen or so Girl Scouts as they plot to break records during cookie sale season, and, well, these little hustlers could sell ice to Eskimos. It’s all about upselling for the pint-sized pushers, and they are not above using their cuteness to clinch a sale. (The little girl with the pink glasses is especially adorable.)

Aside from the humor and charm on display, the film also hints at the possibility that some of the parents might be putting a tad too much pressure on their kids and/or living out their own dreams through their children. I totally enjoyed “Cookie Queens,” and I think you will too.

This movie opened on August 7th at Sacramento’s Tower Theatre.



Teenage Sex and Death at Camp Miasma

After the enormous and surprising success of “Obsession” and “Backrooms” recently, horror is on a roll this year. I hope that this terrific new movie by the trans and non-binary director Jane Schoenbrun will benefit from the success of those pictures because it’s one of the finest films of 2026 so far.

A movie this intelligent is hard to categorize. It’s a satire of slasher films, a psychological thriller, a very dark comedy, and a lesbian love story all rolled into one. The even better news is that Schoenbrun has the budget and the actors to realize her vision this time out.

Hannah Einbinder stars as a young director hired to reboot a tired horror brand, who travels to a remote location where the reclusive star of the first film in the franchise (played masterfully by Gillian Anderson) now lives. The pair bond - in more ways than one - over their shared love of scary movies.

The film is surreal and suspenseful but also very funny at times. (Blood erupts to such an absurd extent that it becomes comical.) Still, this is an R-rated horror flick, and you must be prepared for both sex and violence, since the movie is about two women who get turned on by horror.

“Teenage Sex and Death at Camp Miasma” opens on August 21 at Sacramento’s Tower Theatre.



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Green Valley Theatre is Back With "Disaster!"

by Chris Narloch

Known for edgy and often sexy musicals, Green Valley Theatre returns this month with a hilarious, disco-fueled spoof of '70s disaster flicks. Think "The Poseidon Adventure" meets "Saturday Night Fever."



"Disaster! The Musical" takes place in 1979, at the height of the disco craze, as New York's hottest A-listers are lining up for the opening of a floating casino and discotheque.

Also attending the event is a sexy nightclub singer with her eleven-year-old twins, a disaster expert, a feminist reporter, an older couple with a secret, a faded disco star, a pair of young guys who are looking for ladies, an untrustworthy businessman and a nun with a gambling addiction.

What begins as a night of boogie fever quickly changes to panic as the ship succumbs to multiple disasters, including an earthquake, a tidal wave and an inferno.

As night turns into day, everyone struggles to survive and, quite possibly, repair the love that they've lost – or at least escape the killer rats.

The hit musical began as an off-off-Broadway benefit in 2011, played off-Broadway in 2012 and 2013, and then transferred to Broadway for a brief run in 2016 that resulted in a Tony nomination for Jennifer Simard, who played the very funny, slot machine-obsessed nun.

"Disaster! The Musical," by Seth Rudetsky and Jack Plotnick, performs through August 30, 2026, courtesy of Green Valley Theatre, at Cosumnes River College's Black Box Theatre. All tickets are just \$25.

For more information, go to greenvalleytheatre.com/tickets

CDP Returns With "Behind the Barre"

Sacramento's Capital Dance Project (CDP) is excited to share that its talented troupe of dancers are returning with their 12th annual "Behind the Barre" outdoor festival on September 4 and 5, 2026, at the Red Museum in Midtown Sacramento.

This year's festival will once again bring together more than 30 local artists, including dancers, choreographers, musicians, and makers, for a vibrant celebration of Sacramento's creative community.

Under the stars and against the unique industrial backdrop of the Red Museum, audiences will enjoy world premiere dance works, a local Maker's Market, open artist studios, food trucks, local drinks, and more.

"Behind the Barre" continues to grow as one of Sacramento's most unique cultural experiences. For tickets to this year's event, please visit

capitaldanceproject.org/tickets.html





Out & About

with Matthew Burlingame

August's warm evenings remind us that summer won't last forever, making now the perfect time to savor every festival, concert, market and community gathering still on the calendar. As the season begins its slow farewell, there's no shortage of opportunities to laugh, explore, dance and connect. So embrace these hot August nights and make a few more unforgettable memories before autumn comes calling.



Aug. 14

Stayin' alive never sounded so good! Bee Gees Fever brings its dazzling seven-piece tribute show to Miner's Leap Winery, 54250 S. River Road in Clarksburg, on Friday, Aug. 14 at 7 p.m. Featuring spectacular costumes, powerhouse vocals and disco favorites, this high-energy concert recreates the magic of the Bee Gees at the height of their fame. Break out your best '70s attire for the costume contest and dance the night away. BeeGeesFeverUSA.com



Aug. 14

Experience one of cinema's most infamous cult classics in a whole new way when Plan 9 From Outer Space with Live Orchestra lands at the Crest Theatre, 1013 K St., on Friday, Aug. 14 at 7 p.m. Watch Ed Wood's legendary sci-fi adventure on the big screen while a live orchestra performs the score, with the added fun of immersive Scent-o-Vision effects. It's a wonderfully weird night of music, movies and camp you won't soon forget. CrestTheater.com

Aug. 15

Turn up the bass and experience one of Sacramento's biggest electronic music events of the summer when Slang Dogs x Blurr VZN takes over the Colonial Theatre, 3508 Stockton Blvd., on Saturday, Aug. 15 from 8 p.m. to 1:30 a.m. Featuring Slang Dogs, Blurr VZN, MontyCler, Shmani and IIBARRA, the high-energy show combines thunderous dubstep, immersive visuals and nonstop dancing for an unforgettable night of electronic music. SlangDogsXBlurrVZN.Eventbrite.com

Celebrate the power of community at the NorCal AIDS Cycle Beneficiary Check Distribution Celebration on Saturday, Aug. 15 from 6 to 8 p.m. at the Bear & Crown British Pub, 1024 Second St. in Old Sacramento. Join riders, supporters and beneficiary organizations as proceeds are presented to local nonprofits making a difference in the fight against HIV/AIDS. NorCalAIDSCycle.org

Aug. 16

Meet your new best friend at the Amazing Adoption Event on Sunday, Aug. 16 from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. at Petco, 1878 Arden Way. Hosted by Amazing Dogs Rescue, the event features lovable rescue dogs ready to find their forever homes. Meet adoptable pups, learn about the adoption process and maybe leave with a loyal new companion. Walk-ins are welcome, or reserve a specific dog in advance. AmazingDogsRescue.org

Aug. 18

Expand your professional circle at the Sacramento Rainbow Chamber of Commerce Networking Mixer on Tuesday, Aug. 18 from 6 to 7:30 p.m. at the California State Railroad Museum Foundation, 125 I St. Enjoy light bites, a cash bar and an evening of meaningful connections with LGBTQ+ and allied professionals, entrepreneurs and community leaders. Admission is free for Chamber members and \$10 for non-members. Register today at RainbowChamber.com.

Aug. 21

Bring your appetite and your friends to Food Truck Mania - River Park on Friday, Aug. 21 from 5 to 8 p.m. at Glenn Hall Park, 5415 Sandburg Dr. Hosted by SactoMoFo and the River Park Neighborhood Association, this family-friendly gathering features some of Northern California's favorite food trucks serving everything from savory street food to sweet treats. SactoMoFo.com

Ongoing

Step inside one of Midtown's hidden architectural treasures with Coordinates: Dispatch, a unique temporary art exhibition inside Sacramento's historic 1937 Art Deco Fire Alarm Station in Winn Park. Open through Oct. 10, timed 60-minute visits showcase newly commissioned works by nearly 30 local artists that transform the former emergency dispatch center into an immersive contemporary art experience. Advance reservations are required, with admission by timed entry. MidtownSac.org

Take a walk through one of Northern California's most imaginative artistic minds when Suzanne Adan: I'm No Spring Chicken opens at Crocker Art Museum, 216 O St., through Oct. 11. The retrospective celebrates Sacramento-area artist Suzanne Adan's 80th year with 125 whimsical, surreal and often humorous works inspired by fantasy, pop culture and autobiography. CrockerArt.org

The
Word
is out.



Oct. 28

Aug. 22

Take your taste buds on a trip around the world at the Sacramento Cultural Expo on Saturday, Aug. 22 from 11 a.m. to 7 p.m. at Leone Equestrians, 6213 Excelsior Road. This vibrant celebration brings together international food vendors, live music, cultural performances, handmade arts and crafts, and traditions from around the globe. Come dressed in your favorite cultural attire and enjoy a colorful day of food, art and community celebrating Sacramento's rich diversity. TheCulturalExpo.com

Upcoming

Saddle up, Sacramento. Orville Peck—the masked, mysterious cowboy who has captivated country music fans around the world—brings his Man Turned Mule Tour to Channel 24 on Oct. 28. With his deep, velvety voice, cinematic sound and undeniable charisma, Peck has become one of the most recognizable LGBTQ+ artists in country music without ever revealing his face. Don't miss an evening of haunting ballads, soaring anthems and irresistible cowboy swagger, with special guest Abbie Callahan opening the show.

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



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Activating Taste Buds Fuji Sacramento

submitted by Randy Hartley

In search of Chocolate Cake...



Most everyone loves a piece of good chocolate cake, and I am no exception. Surprisingly, I found the as-close-to-perfect chocolate cake at a restaurant I did not expect to find it. Fuji on Broadway. There is a young baker trained by the earlier baker who retired. Jonas has turned his art into perfection. His crème brûlée is outstanding too! Fuji is a contemporary Japanese restaurant that serves delicious plates of wonderful food. The restaurant is well appointed, clean and the staff are welcoming and friendly. Check out their [website](#) for menu and hours of operation [here](#).

Let's Play a Game

submitted by Jim Lane

I've recently discovered the wonderful world of Mah Jongg, and I'm quickly falling in love with this fascinating pastime. As I learn this incredible game, I've realized something surprising: we don't seem to have a Mah Jongg group within our Lavender community here in Sacramento.



I'd love to change that! So, we are starting the "Sacramento Lavender Mah Jongg Club." Whether you're looking to meet new people or simply spend time with a welcoming community, Mah Jongg is a fantastic way to connect. It's easy to learn, endlessly engaging, and best of all, it's played around a table filled with conversation, laughter, and new friendships. I'm looking to bring together people within our community, from across the greater Sacramento area, interested in learning, playing, or sharing their love of Mah Jongg. No experience is necessary; beginners are absolutely welcome! The vision is to create a fun, inclusive group that meets once or twice a month at a local community venue, on a weekday evening or weekend afternoon. We'll learn together, mentor new players, enjoy casual games, and build a vibrant Mah Jongg community from the ground up. Interested? We'd love to hear from you!

- Curious about Mah Jongg and want to learn? Join us!
- Already know how to play and looking for others? Come play!
- Experienced player willing to teach or mentor? We'd especially love your help!

If this sounds like something you'd enjoy, please reach out. Let's create a welcoming Sacramento Mah Jongg community where everyone has a seat at the table!

Contact: Jim, LavenderMahJongg@gmail.com

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Sacramento Banana Festival Celebrates 15 Years of Going Bananas

If you've ever wondered just how many things can be made with a banana, William Land Park may be the place to find out.

The Sacramento Banana Festival returns August 15–16 for its 15th anniversary, bringing two days of food, music, culture and plenty of banana-inspired fun to Sacramento.

At the center of this year's celebration is the "Banana Foodie Experience," with more than 25 food vendors serving up homemade banana creations. Beyond the food, the family-friendly multicultural festival will feature live entertainment, youth arts and performances, horse rides from Nile Valley Ranch and dozens of local exhibitors offering everything from handmade banana soap to actual living banana trees.



The festival celebrates the cultures, music, food and traditions of countries around the world where bananas grow, making the weekend about considerably more than everyone's favorite yellow fruit.

Live entertainment will include reggae, Caribbean and Afro beats from DJ VEYN, Soul Fyah in Da Mix with RAS Danny's Reggae Allstars, RAS D, Bryson Musique and the Caribbean Soul, RAS Matthew Pailles, DJ Selekt Lou, 2026 Banana Queen S.I.A.T. (Stuck In A Tree), dancers from the Brazilian Culture Center of Sacramento and Skyeeyes The Band.

And because apparently humans shouldn't have all the fun, the main stage will also host the Best Banana-dressed Doggy Contest. There's also a Love Connection game for those looking for a different kind of a-peel. (Sorry. We had to.)

The festival is the largest annual fundraiser for the National Academic Youth Corps, a Sacramento nonprofit that has served local youth and families since 1996. Its programs, including those offered through the Sojourner Truth African Heritage Museum, use arts, education and community activities to provide creative and supportive opportunities for young people from culturally diverse backgrounds.

The Sacramento Banana Festival runs Saturday, August 15, from 10 a.m.–7 p.m. and Sunday, August 16, from 10 a.m.–5:30 p.m. at William Land Park.

Adult admission is \$10 online or \$15 at the gate. Youth ages 6–17 and seniors are \$8 online or \$10 at the gate. Children 5 and younger are free, although a free ticket is required.

For festival information and advance tickets, visit the Sacramento [Banana Festival website](#).

The Explore Midtown Pass Turns Sacramento Into a Game

Looking for an excuse to get out and explore Midtown? The Midtown Association has brought back its popular Explore Midtown Pass, a free digital passport that rewards visitors for checking out local restaurants, bars, shops and other neighborhood businesses.

Available now through October 11, 2026, the pass turns a day—or several days—in Midtown into a gamified adventure. Participants can check in at more than 30 participating businesses to earn points, unlock discounts and specials, and qualify for prizes.

Getting started is easy. Download the Explore Midtown Pass to your smartphone, then visit participating locations and scan the QR code displayed on the Explore Midtown Pass poster. Each check-in earns points, while some businesses are offering additional in-store deals and promotions.

Participating locations include plenty of familiar Midtown favorites, including Harlow's, Roscoe's Bar & Burgers, Mango's Sacramento, LowBrau, The Golden Bear, Cantina Alley, Paragary's, Cafe Bernardo, Sacramento Comedy Spot, Time Tested Books, Sugar Shack Boutique and many more.

The program is designed to encourage residents and visitors to discover—or rediscover—the variety of locally owned businesses that make Midtown one of Sacramento's most active neighborhoods.

The Explore Midtown Pass is free and available now through October 11. Download the pass and see the complete list of participating businesses at [ExploreMidtown.org/pass](#).

For more information about Midtown Sacramento, upcoming events and activities, visit [ExploreMidtown.org](#).



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Setting the Record Straight *continued from page 5*

in a simple economic principle: broader competition can produce better outcomes.

When utilities engage a wider pool of qualified suppliers, they gain access to:

- Additional vendors and service providers
- New technologies and innovative solutions
- Greater supply chain resilience
- Increased competition on price and quality
- Expanded access to emerging markets and communities

For this reason, supplier diversity initiatives have been adopted by many major corporations throughout the U.S., regardless of political affiliation.

The objective is not favoritism. It is to increase participation in competitive procurement processes.

Diverse Suppliers Represent a Small Business Success Story

Many certified suppliers are small- and medium-sized businesses seeking opportunities to compete against larger, more established firms.

The Supplier Diversity Program helps create awareness of procurement opportunities while encouraging utilities to look beyond traditional vendor networks.

Contrary to claims that contracts are awarded based on identity alone, suppliers must still demonstrate expertise, capacity, financial stability, safety compliance, and performance capabilities.

No utility can reliably operate critical infrastructure by ignoring these requirements.

California's essential services depend on qualified vendors delivering high-quality services. Utilities continue to evaluate suppliers on their ability to perform.

Inclusion Is Not Exclusion

Some critics frame supplier diversity as a system that disadvantages other businesses.

This characterization misunderstands the program's design.

The Supplier Diversity Program does not prohibit utilities from contracting with non-certified businesses. Nor does it allow utilities to advantage certified businesses.

In fact, the overwhelming majority of utility procurement spending continues to flow through a broad marketplace of suppliers.

The program simply encourages utilities to ensure that qualified businesses from historically underrepresented groups are aware of and considered for opportunities.

The Broader Goal: A Stronger Marketplace

The Supplier Diversity Program reflects the belief that California's economy is strongest when businesses compete on a level playing field and when procurement systems are open, transparent, and accessible.

For nearly 40 years, this voluntary program has sought to foster competition, encourage entrepreneurship, and broaden economic opportunity across California's utility supply chain.

Advancing competitive procurement opportunities for everyone by having voluntary inclusionary programs assists utilities in reaching new markets, increasing shareholder value, and controlling costs.

Federal Charges Against Minnesota Anti-ICE Activists Raise First Amendment Concerns

Fifteen Minnesota activists are facing federal charges stemming from protests against the Trump administration's immigration enforcement campaign known as Operation Metro Surge, raising concerns among civil liberties advocates about how the administration is approaching political protest.

The defendants, associated with the activist group Direct Action Minnesota, were indicted in June on charges including conspiracy to impede or injure federal officers. Four defendants face additional charges, including assault, stalking, threats and destruction of government property. All 15 pleaded not guilty in July.

The Justice Department has connected the prosecution to National Security Presidential Memorandum 7 (NSPM-7), a Trump administration directive aimed at combating what it describes as "domestic terrorism and organized political violence."

The memorandum directs federal agencies and Joint Terrorism Task Forces to investigate organizations, networks and funding sources believed to support political violence. Civil liberties organizations have expressed concern, however, that its broad language could also sweep constitutionally protected protest and political advocacy into federal investigations.

Of particular concern to LGBTQ+ advocates, NSPM-7 identifies "extremism on migration, race, and gender" among ideological themes the administration says may be associated with political violence.

The Minnesota defendants have not been charged with a crime called "domestic terrorism," and prosecutors allege conduct extending beyond peaceful protest. Those allegations remain unproven.

The larger question is how broadly NSPM-7 will ultimately be applied — and whether efforts to prosecute genuine criminal conduct could also discourage Americans from exercising their First Amendment rights to protest, organize and criticize the government.



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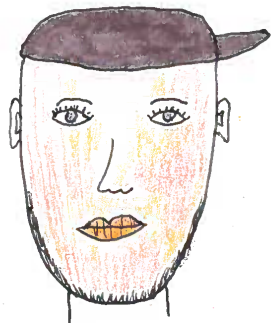
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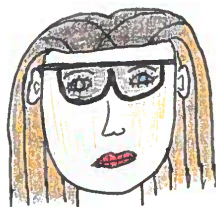
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For 30 years, Outword Magazine—Sacramento's longest-running LGBTQ+ publication—has been a trusted voice, celebrating our community and helping keep readers informed and connected.

Today, that role matters more than ever. LGBTQ+ media is essential, especially as our community continues to face hostility and erasure in very real ways.

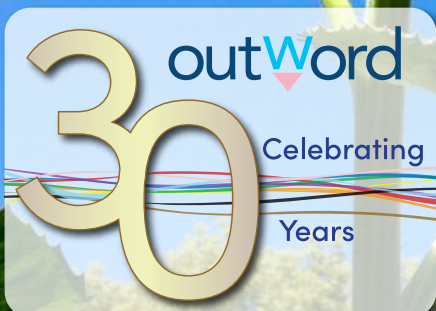
That's why we've launched a subscription and reader-supported donor program, designed to help ensure Outword remains a reliable source of information, visibility, and community connection.

We invite you to consider making a contribution in whatever amount feels right for you through our relaunched Outword Rainbow Fund. Every gift helps. With a simple and secure process, your support directly sustains the work we do and the voices we amplify.

We're proud of the role Outword has played in Sacramento for three decades, and we're committed to being here for many more. Together, we can make sure our stories continue to be told and our voices continue to be heard.

Thank you,
The Outword Team

For more information please email us or give us a call:
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<https://outwordmagazine.com/rainbow-fund/>

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