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outWord

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The holiday season is nearly upon us, and at *Outword*, we're getting ready to celebrate with a little shopping, some festive fun and one of our favorite traditions of the year. Whether you're looking for the perfect gift or an opportunity to spread some holiday cheer, we've got you covered.

First up, our annual Holiday Shopping Guides return with two special editions, arriving November 26 and December 10. We'll be filling our pages with gift ideas, unique finds, festive food and drink, entertaining inspiration and plenty of suggestions to make holiday shopping a little more enjoyable. From practical presents to those wonderfully unexpected discoveries, we'll be doing our best to help you find something special while introducing you to businesses and products worth knowing about.



And speaking of holiday traditions, mark your calendar for Friday, December 11, when *Outword's* monthly Liquid Therapy Happy Hour takes on a particularly festive purpose.

We'll be gathering at Badlands, 2003 K Street from 5:30 to 7 p.m. for our annual holiday toy drive benefiting WEAVE's Winter Wonderland. We're asking everyone who joins us to bring a new, unwrapped toy to help make the season brighter for those WEAVE serves. Toys for all ages are welcome, including gender-neutral options. (Something simple, without a lot of pieces, works best).

Liquid Therapy has always been about catching up with friends and starting the weekend off right. Our December gathering adds something extra: the opportunity to make a meaningful difference – like being a "Guncle" for the day – all while enjoying the company of wonderful people and some delicious beverages.

So, keep an eye out for our upcoming Holiday Shopping Guides, make your own gift list, and save the date for happy hour on December 11. The holidays can be hectic, but there's always room for a little generosity, good company and a reason to celebrate.

Let us be the first to wish you Happy holidays from all of us at *Outword!*

The List



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Movember

Elk Grove Gobble Wobble

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A Seat at the Table

Outword Staff

PUBLISHER
Fred Palmer

EXECUTIVE ASSISTANT TO THE PUBLISHER
Julie Ebe

ART DIRECTOR/PRODUCTION
Ron Tackitt

GRAPHIC DESIGN
Julie Ebe
Ron Tackitt

EDITOR
editor@outwordmagazine.com

ARTS EDITOR
Chris Narloch

SALES
Fred Palmer

CONTRIBUTING WRITERS
Chris Allan
Matthew Burlingame
Diana Kienle
Chris Narloch
Ron Tackitt

PHOTOGRAPHY
Chris Allan
Ron Tackitt

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Outword Magazine Inc.

Mailing Address
1026 Florin Road, #344
Sacramento, CA 95831

PHONE: (916) 329-9280
www.outwordmagazine.com
fred@outwordmagazine.com

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A Blue Wave, a Historic Election, and a Brave, New Hope for Equality

The 2026 midterm elections delivered a stunning political shift across America, as voters handed Democrats major victories, reshaped Congress and made history in ways that would have seemed almost unimaginable just a few years ago. For the LGBTQ+ community, the results offer something that has been in short supply lately: a renewed sense of hope.

The much-discussed "blue wave" turned out to be more than a political prediction. Democrats reclaimed control of the House and Senate, while voters in several states elected groundbreaking candidates whose victories challenged generations of political tradition.

Perhaps one of the most significant victories came in Michigan, where Democrat Abdul El-Sayed defeated Republican Mike Rogers to become the first Muslim elected to the United States Senate. The Michigan-born physician and former public health official overcame a campaign marked by attacks on his religion and progressive politics. His victory represents a remarkable rejection of the notion that someone's faith or background should determine their place in American government.

In New Hampshire, Chris Pappas made LGBTQ+ history by becoming the first openly gay man elected to the U.S. Senate. His victory is particularly meaningful at a time when LGBTQ+ rights have increasingly become political targets. Pappas joins a growing number of openly LGBTQ+ elected officials whose presence helps ensure our community has a voice where national policy is made.

Women also shattered political barriers across the country. In Georgia, former Atlanta Mayor Keisha Lance Bottomsbecame the first Black woman elected governor in American history, a milestone nearly 250 years in the making. In New Mexico, Deb Haaland became the nation's first Native American woman elected governor, while Minnesota's Peggy Flanagan became the first Native American woman elected to the U.S. Senate.

Texas voters elected Gina Hinojosa as their first Latina governor, unseating Republican Greg Abbott. Her victory could have particularly significant implications for LGBTQ+ Texans, who have faced years of restrictive state policies targeting transgender people and other members of the community.

In Illinois, Juliana Stratton won election to the Senate, joining Tammy Duckworth to make Illinois the first state represented by two women of color in the U.S. Senate. These victories are not simply historical footnotes. They represent a fundamental expansion of who gets to lead this country.

Transgender representation also marked an important milestone in this election. In Delaware, Sarah McBride, the first openly transgender member of Congress, won reelection, while transgender candidates made history in state legislative races across the country. Their victories carry particular significance at a time when transgender Americans face increasing political attacks and challenges to their civil rights. Having transgender voices at the table, rather than simply being the subject of political debate, is an important step toward a more representative government.

California also made history, electing former Attorney General Xavier Becerra as its first Latino governor since 1875.

But beyond the celebrations, what does all of this mean for LGBTQ+ Americans?

With Democrats reclaiming Congress, the political landscape in Washington changes considerably. Legislation targeting LGBTQ+ rights will face stronger opposition, while efforts to protect marriage equality, prohibit discrimination and defend transgender Americans may find a more receptive audience.

Congress also holds the power of oversight, giving Democratic lawmakers greater ability to investigate federal policies affecting LGBTQ+ healthcare, education, military service and civil rights protections. The power of the purse could become equally important when federal funding decisions threaten programs serving vulnerable communities.

Still, winning an election is not the same as winning lasting protections. The courts remain influential, state legislatures continue to shape LGBTQ+ rights, and meaningful federal legislation will require cooperation that may prove difficult even with Democratic majorities.

What makes this election particularly remarkable is not simply that Democrats won. It is who won. Women, people of color, religious minorities and LGBTQ+ candidates demonstrated that the American electorate is far more diverse than the political establishment has historically reflected.

For a community that has spent decades fighting to be seen, heard and protected, that matters.

The blue wave may not solve every problem facing LGBTQ+ Americans, but it has changed the conversation. And after years of watching hard-won rights come under attack, the possibility of moving forward again is something worth celebrating.

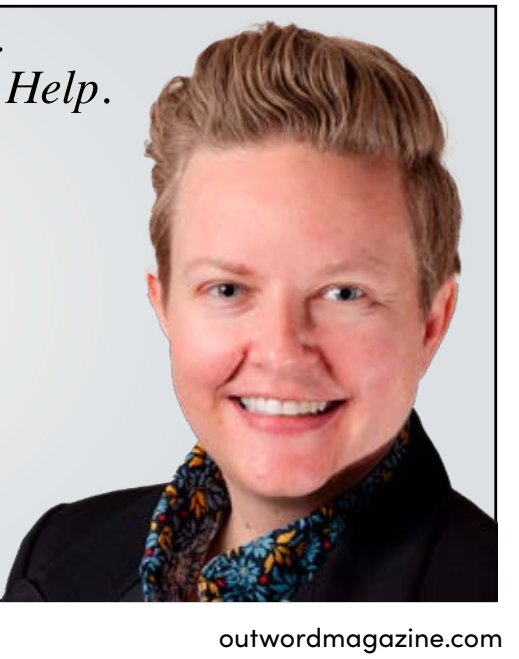
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Bonta Questions Meta Over Suspension of No Kings Instagram Account

California Attorney General Rob Bonta has joined 13 other attorneys general in demanding answers from Meta after the company mistakenly suspended the Instagram account of the No Kings Coalition, a national protest movement that has organized demonstrations and encouraged political participation.

The suspension occurred October 17, 2026, during a period of heightened political activity and organized efforts to encourage early voting ahead of the November election.

Meta acknowledged that the suspension was an error, attributing it to a sudden increase in account activity that its automated systems apparently mistook for bot traffic rather than legitimate interactions among users.

The incident has raised concerns about social media platforms' ability to distinguish genuine political organizing from automated activity, particularly during election cycles when online communication can play a significant role in voter engagement.

"Millions of Californians rely on social media to organize, read news, and obtain information about upcoming elections," Bonta said. He emphasized the importance of keeping communication platforms accessible for political expression, especially during critical voting periods.

In a letter to Meta, the attorneys general requested a detailed explanation of how the suspension occurred, when the company became aware of the mistake and what actions were taken to restore the account.

They also sought information about safeguards Meta intends to implement to prevent legitimate political activity from being mistakenly flagged or disrupted in the future.

The controversy highlights broader concerns about the influence of automated content moderation on political speech. As social media platforms increasingly rely on algorithms to identify suspicious behavior, legitimate grassroots organizations risk being caught in systems designed to combat spam and coordinated manipulation.

For Bonta and the coalition, the central question is whether Meta can protect its users from harmful automated activity without inadvertently silencing lawful political expression.

Bonta's Been Busy

Bonta Challenges Trump Administration's Proposed Changes to 2030 Census

California Attorney General Rob Bonta is leading a multistate effort to block proposed changes to the 2030 U.S. Census that could exclude millions of residents from the population count and eliminate the collection of important demographic information.

Bonta joined 23 other attorneys general and two governors in submitting a formal opposition to the Trump administration's proposal, which would exclude certain noncitizens from the census and prohibit questions about race, ethnicity and sexual orientation.

According to the coalition, the changes could leave approximately 16.1 million people nationwide uncounted, including an estimated 3 million California residents – more than 7.5% of the state's population.

"The U.S. Constitution requires that the Census count every person living in the United States," Bonta said. "The Trump Administration doesn't get to pick and choose who is included."

The census determines congressional representation and helps guide the distribution of billions of dollars in federal funding for healthcare, education, infrastructure and other public services. An inaccurate count could disproportionately affect immigrant communities and other historically underrepresented populations.

The proposed elimination of demographic questions also raises concerns for LGBTQ+ communities, as reliable population data helps policymakers identify disparities, evaluate public programs and enforce civil rights protections.

Another controversial provision would replace the longstanding practice of counting people where they ordinarily live with a residency calculation based partly on tax records and the number of days spent at a particular location.

California successfully challenged the Trump administration's attempt to add a citizenship question to the 2020 Census, an effort ultimately abandoned following a 2019 Supreme Court ruling.

Bonta says California is prepared to fight again to ensure the 2030 Census remains accurate, inclusive and constitutional.

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We'll be filling our pages of our Holiday Shopping Guides with great gift ideas, local finds, festive food and drink, holiday happenings, entertaining inspiration and a few surprises to make the season merry and bright - For everyone in the family. Whether you're shopping for someone special—or dropping a few hints about what you'd like under the tree—Outword will help make the holidays a little more fun.

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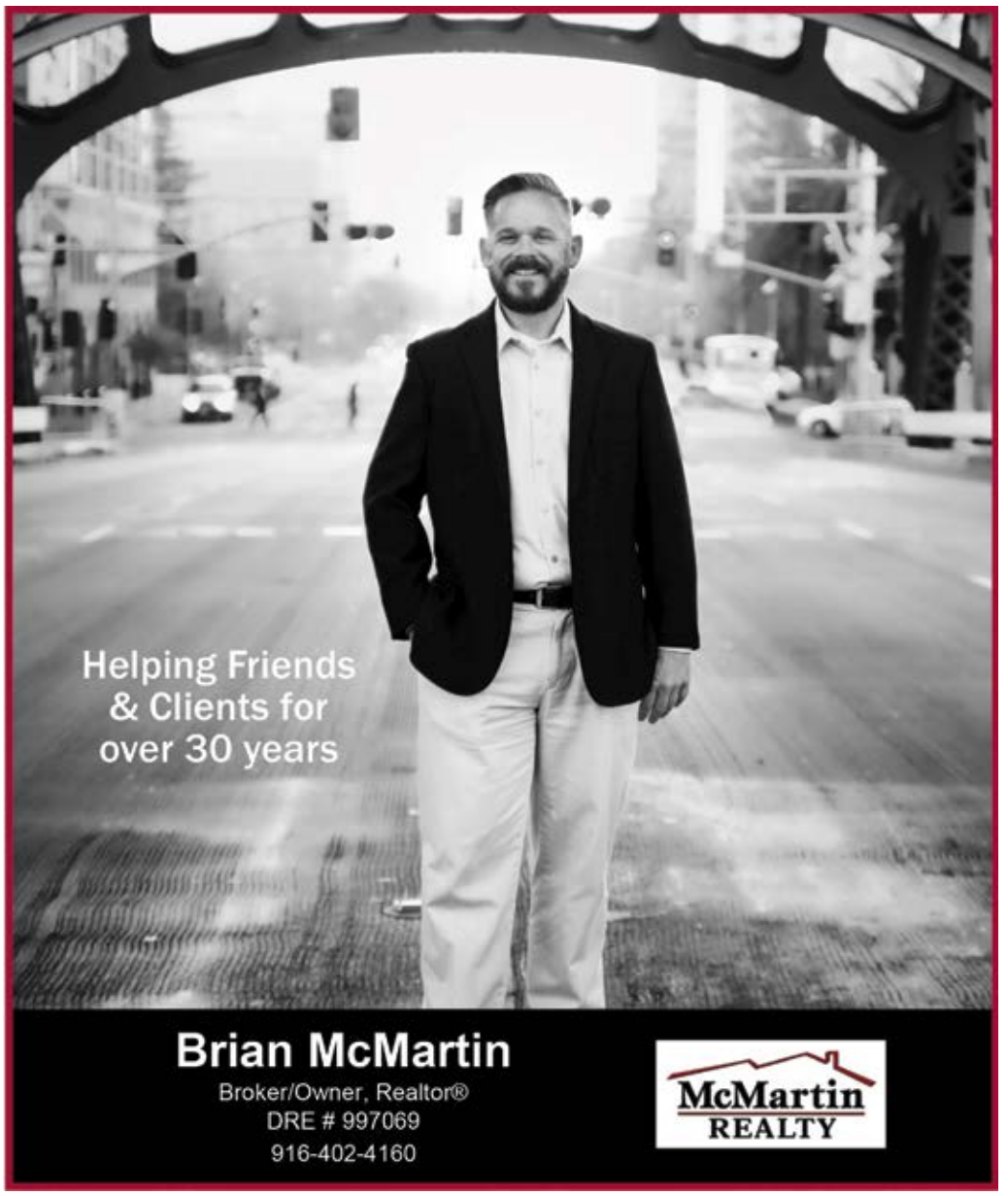
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Sacramento Welcomed LGBTQ+ Leaders from Across North America for 2026 CenterLink Leadership Summit

provided by the LGBT Center

More than 300 LGBTQ+ community center leaders, board members, advocates, funders, and partners from across North America gathered at the Hyatt Regency Sacramento in October for the 2026 CenterLink Leadership Summit, marking the first time the annual conference was hosted in California's Capital City.



Hosted by CenterLink, the Summit brought together leaders to share best practices, develop leadership skills, strengthen organizational capacity, and advance services supporting LGBTQ+ people in hundreds of communities. CenterLink's mission is to strengthen, support, and connect LGBTQ+ community centers and LGBTQ+-serving community-based organizations.

Through workshops, plenary sessions, leadership development, and peer learning opportunities, participants shared best practices, explored emerging challenges facing LGBTQ+ communities, and developed the skills, relationships, and organizational capacity needed to better serve their communities. By the close of the Summit, attendees departed with new ideas, stronger professional connections, and renewed inspiration to advance LGBTQ+ equality, wellbeing, and community in the cities and regions they serve.

The Summit's Opening Reception was hosted by the Sacramento LGBT Community Center at its temporary location in Lavender Heights, where attendees enjoyed networking, facility tours, local food and beverages, and an opportunity to learn more about the Center's programs and future headquarters expansion.

For the LGBT Community Center CEO David Heitstuman, hosting the Summit was both a professional milestone for the Center and an opportunity to showcase the city he calls home.

"Hosting the CenterLink Leadership Summit in Sacramento was an incredible honor," said Heitstuman. "We wanted people to leave knowing two things: the Sacramento LGBT Community Center is doing important work, and Sacramento is an amazing place to visit. From Lavender Heights and our local restaurants and nightlife to the arts, culture, and walkability of Midtown, attendees got to experience the best of our city, and they absolutely loved it."

The reception also offered attendees a glimpse into the Center's future. Although construction on the organization's long-planned headquarters renovation remains underway, guests toured the Center's temporary facility and learned about its youth and family programs, housing services, health initiatives, advocacy work, and community-building efforts.

"I've had the opportunity to watch the Sacramento LGBT Community Center evolve over the years, and it's remarkable to see how much the organization has grown," said Paul Moore, Executive Director of the David Bohnett Foundation, which sponsored the reception. "The reception was a wonderful reflection of that progress. The atmosphere was festive, welcoming, and full of energy. It highlighted not only the strength of the Center itself, but also the vibrancy of Sacramento's LGBTQ+ community."

CenterLink CEO Denise Spivak praised Sacramento's role as host and the Center's leadership within the broader movement.

"We are incredibly grateful for the partnership of the Sacramento LGBT Community Center and their team," said Spivak. "They helped make this Summit a tremendous success, both as hosts and as leaders within our network. Sacramento consistently shares its experience, expertise, and innovative approaches with other organizations, helping strengthen community centers and develop community center leaders across North America."

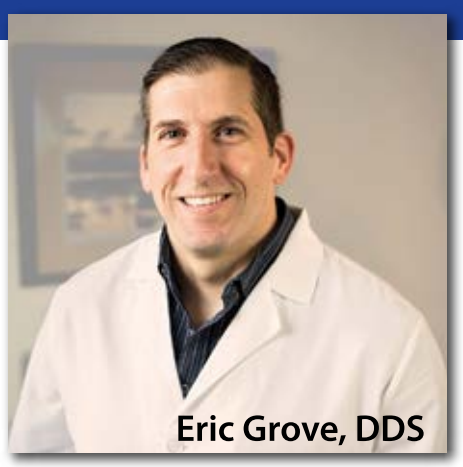
The Summit also provided visitors with an opportunity to experience Sacramento firsthand. Attendees explored Midtown and Downtown, dined at locally owned restaurants, visited Northern California attractions, and discovered why California's Farm-to-Fork Capital has become known for its vibrant arts, culture, walkability, and culinary scene.

The 2026 CenterLink Leadership Summit reinforced a core principle of the LGBTQ+ community center movement: when organizations share knowledge, support one another, and invest in each other's success, entire communities benefit.

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A Night of Frights, Friendship, and Belonging at Q-Prom

provided by the LGBT Center

This October, nearly 300 LGBTQ+ youth from across the Sacramento region came together for a night of spooky fun, self-expression, and community at Q-Prom, the Sacramento LGBT Community Center's annual free prom for LGBTQ+ young people ages 13–20.

With this year's camp-inspired Halloween theme, Q-Prom transformed into a celebration where young people could dress up, dance, make new friends, and enjoy a prom experience where they could be themselves without judgment.

For many LGBTQ+ young people, traditional school events don't always feel welcoming or affirming. Q-Prom offers something different: a space created specifically for them, where every identity is celebrated and everyone deserves to feel included.

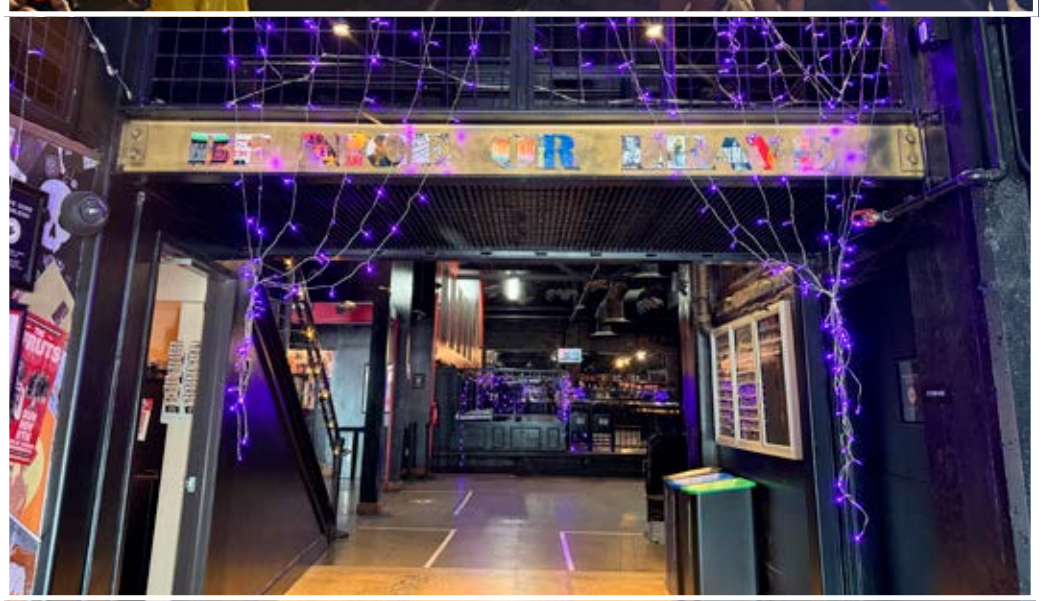
One of the night's biggest highlights was the debut performances from our drag mentees! Through the Center's drag mentorship program, young performers were paired with local drag artists who spent two months helping them develop their own drag personas, build confidence, and prepare for their first performances. The result was a celebration of creativity, self-expression, and the next generation of LGBTQ+ artists, all cheered on by a community ready to support them.

Q-Prom is just one of the many ways the Sacramento LGBT Community Center supports LGBTQ+ young people throughout the year through youth programs, mental health resources, community events, and affirming spaces where they can connect and thrive.

Learn more about the Center's programs and services at saccenter.org.

The next community building event at the Center will be Chosen Family Feast, a thanksgiving day meal where community can show up and share a meal together. Volunteer opportunities and donations are welcome to support this event. For more information, please email volunteers@saccenter.org



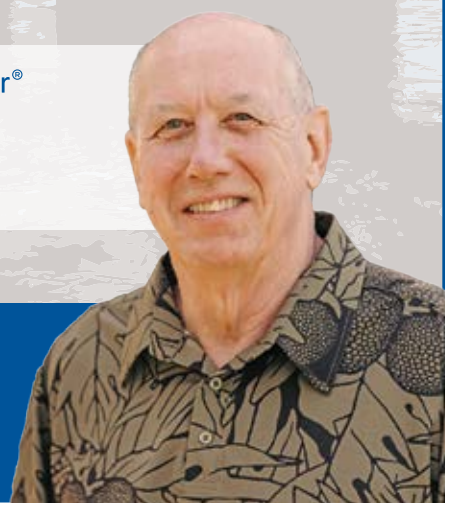




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Holiday Magic Returns to Old Sacramento Waterfront

Old Sacramento Waterfront is getting into the holiday spirit with the return of some favorite seasonal traditions, festive shopping opportunities and plenty of reasons to spend an afternoon or evening exploring the historic district.



photo courtesy of OldSacramento.com

The festivities kick off Wednesday, November 25, at 5:30 p.m. with the annual Holiday Tree Lighting Ceremony. Community performances will lead up to the illumination of the district's towering 60-foot Christmas tree, decorated with nearly 24,000 lights. The evening also marks the opening performance of the popular Theatre of Lights.

Celebrating its 18th year, Theatre of Lights transforms Old Sacramento's historic balconies into a dazzling holiday stage. The free production combines a Sacramento-inspired retelling of 'Twas the Night Before Christmas with narration by Disney voice legend Bill Farmer, best known as the voice of Goofy. Performances run Fridays and Saturdays at 6:30 and 7:30 p.m. and Sundays at 6:30 p.m., November 27 through December 20, with additional shows December 23 and 24. ASL interpretation will be available at select performances.

Holiday shopping gets a little more rewarding with Small Business Spree Bingo, encouraging visitors to explore the district's more than 150 locally owned businesses. Complete a bingo card for guaranteed prizes and opportunities to win additional rewards, including parking vouchers, ice rink tickets and museum memberships.

Meanwhile, Holidays on K turns K Street into a pedestrian-friendly gathering place featuring live music, outdoor seating, games and special activities hosted by local businesses. The festivities take place Saturdays and Sundays, November 28 through December 20, from noon to 4:30 p.m.

Whether you're hunting for a one-of-a-kind gift, enjoying the holiday lights or simply soaking up the atmosphere, Old Sacramento Waterfront offers plenty of seasonal cheer.

For complete schedules and details, visit *www.oldsacramento.com.*



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Could You Be the Next Music Superstar?

Ever dreamed of working with the producer behind some of pop music's biggest hits? Here's an opportunity that might be worth singing about.

Airtab Music has announced the return of its Open for an Icon competition, offering an unsigned or emerging artist the chance to record three original songs with legendary producer Rodney "Darkchild" Jerkins. His impressive résumé includes work with Michael Jackson, Whitney Houston, Beyoncé, Lady Gaga, Brandy and Destiny's Child.

The competition is connected to the upcoming concert film Janet Jackson: Control 40 — Four Decades of Hits, celebrating the 40th anniversary of Jackson's groundbreaking 1986 album Control. The project is being developed for theatrical release and worldwide distribution.

Jerkins will help judge the competition alongside director Leslie Small and Airtab Music founder Dennis Cunningham. The initiative also supports the Save Our Musicians Foundation, which helps independent artists develop sustainable careers.

Submission dates, eligibility requirements and additional competition details have yet to be announced, but aspiring performers can keep an eye on *www.openforanicon.com*.

Who knows? The next big name in music might be someone reading this very magazine.

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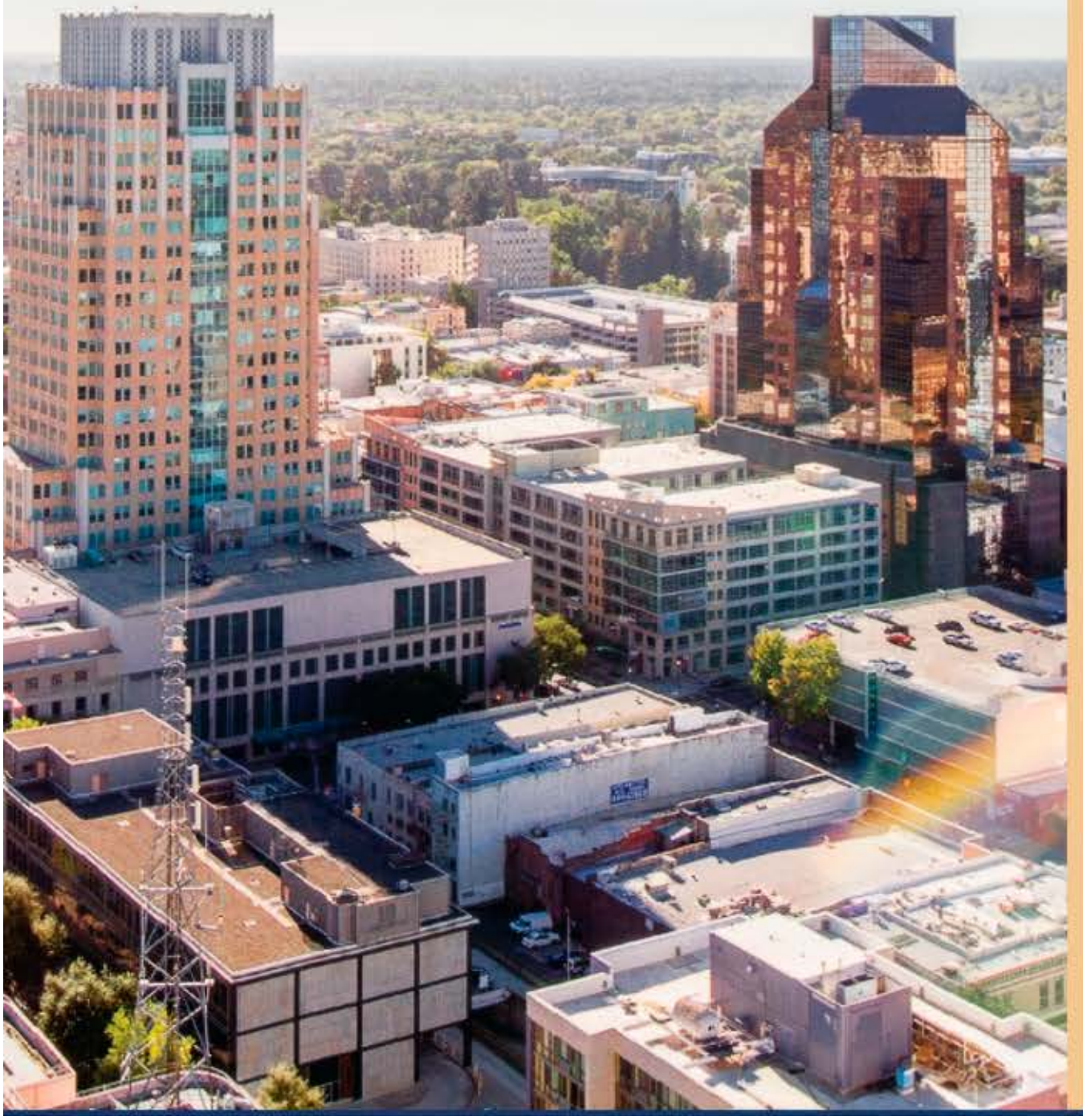
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Out & About

The Sacramento Rainbow Chamber of Commerce celebrated 25 fabulous years at its annual Boas & Bow Ties Gala on October 22, 2026, with a dazzling Disco Dream celebration! The evening was a wonderful tribute to the Chamber's incredible legacy of supporting Sacramento's LGBTQ+ business community, while shining a well-deserved spotlight on this year's scholarship recipients. It was a night to remember, marking a remarkable milestone for an organization that continues to make a difference in our community. Congratulations to the Rainbow Chamber on 25 amazing years!

Photos by: *Tia Gemmell*



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Help Sunburst Projects Put Thanksgiving on the Table

Thanksgiving is supposed to be about good food, good company and perhaps a second helping of pumpkin pie. But for some Sacramento families, putting together a holiday meal can be a financial challenge. That's where Sunburst Projects hopes the community will lend a hand.



The Sacramento-based nonprofit is launching its annual Operation Gift Card campaign, with a goal of providing grocery store gift cards to 250 families and clients who could use a little extra help this Thanksgiving.

Throughout November, Sunburst is collecting monetary donations that will be used to purchase grocery gift cards, giving recipients the flexibility to shop for the foods that best suit their families and holiday traditions.

For decades, Sunburst Projects has been an important part of the Sacramento community, providing support and services to individuals and families affected by HIV/AIDS. Its work extends beyond healthcare concerns, recognizing that access to food, stability and a supportive community can make an enormous difference in people's lives.

Operation Gift Card is one more way the organization puts that commitment into practice.

And helping couldn't be easier. Sunburst handles the purchasing and distribution of the gift cards, so supporters can simply make a financial contribution and know it will help someone enjoy a holiday meal.

Donations of any size are welcome. Contributions can be made *online* through Sunburst Projects or by mailing a check to Sunburst Projects, Attn: Operation Gift Card, 2143 Hurley Way, Suite 240, Sacramento, CA 95825.

This Thanksgiving, a little generosity can go a long way toward making sure more of our neighbors have something wonderful to put on the table.

Learn more or contribute at *Sunburst Projects' website*.



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Sip, Stroll and Savor: Yountville Loosens Up

Wine Country just got a little more walkable — and a lot more fun. The charming Napa Valley town of Yountville has introduced Sip Yountville, the region's first open-container entertainment zone, allowing visitors 21 and older to enjoy a glass of wine, beer or a cocktail while strolling through designated downtown streets.

The new program allows guests to purchase alcoholic beverages from participating establishments and take them along as they explore the town's tasting rooms, restaurants, boutiques and art galleries. Think of it as a leisurely wine tasting with a change of scenery between sips.

The designated zone operates daily from 10 a.m. to 10 p.m., primarily along Washington Street between Champagne Drive and Jackson Street, with additional sections along Yount Street and Finnell Road.

There are, of course, a few rules. Drinks must be purchased from authorized participating businesses and served in town-approved containers — no glass or metal allowed. Visitors must also meet the program's age-verification requirements, and beverages must remain within the designated boundaries.

Local businesses are already reporting positive results, including increased wine-by-the-glass sales and visitors enjoying the freedom to explore without finishing their drinks before leaving a tasting room.

For a town already celebrated for its exceptional restaurants, world-class wines and picturesque streets, the new program adds another reason to spend an afternoon — or an entire weekend — exploring.

Just remember: Sip, stroll and savor. Leave the driving to someone else.











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Sylvan Lake Vineyards Wine: Luscious Quality to Discover

words by Diana Kienle, Certified Specialist of Wine, photo by Cathy Schwamberger

Howell Mountain is more than a beautiful area in Napa Valley, California. It is also an American Viticultural Area (AVA) characterized by high elevation boundaries and delivering intense, structured wine profiles. There is a newer addition to this AVA; and, while the owner/vintner has been in the area for a long time, the vineyards are relatively new. The vines were planted in 2014 and produced lovely fruit for vintages starting in 2021. What is different about the vineyard is that vines are facing east, allowing for different sun exposure. This gives lovely fruit from a well-manicured vineyard.



The owner/vintner of Sylvan Lakes Vineyard is Armin Fisher, whose family has owned this property since the early 1980s. The property was originally a fruit orchard, and Armin replaced some of the fruit trees with Cabernet Sauvignon vines in 2014. While the vines and vintner are relatively young in experience, the winemaker is not. Celia Welch is the winemaker, and her history of success spans five decades. I was fortunate enough to discover Celia's wine in the early 2000s. Her personal label was Corra with the first vintage in 2004. I became an avid follower from then out. Only later did I discover the long list of wines she crafted for other wineries, including Scarecrow from its inception, Keever, Signorello Estate, and Schramsberg. This is taken from Wikipedia, and I fully concur:

In 2022, the San Francisco Chronicle described her [Celia] as a member "of an elite order of Napa winemaking consultants" along with Philippe Melka, Mike Smith, Andy Erickson, Aaron Pott, Julien Fayard, Jean Hoeflinger, Sam Kaplan, Tony Biagi and Heidi Barrett.

Sylvan Lake is a project with Celia's comprehensive oversight. Many people think that the winemaker takes over at harvest, yet that is not true. A winemaker is on site with vision, knowledge, and decision making that includes the vines' exposure to the wind and sun, the amount of sun on the grapes, the time to harvest, how the grapes are handled after harvest, how the juice is fermented and aged, and when to bottle the wine. All of these steps contribute to the evolution of the vines and the fruit and wine they deliver.

The high quality of Sylvan Lakes Vineyard wine is very present from the beginning vintages. Go to *Sylvan Lakes Vineyards* to join the mailing list. Then you will be alerted when an allocation becomes available. You can also reach out with an email to info@sylvanlakevineyards for more information about the vineyard and wine availability. It is truly worth it.

Enjoy!!

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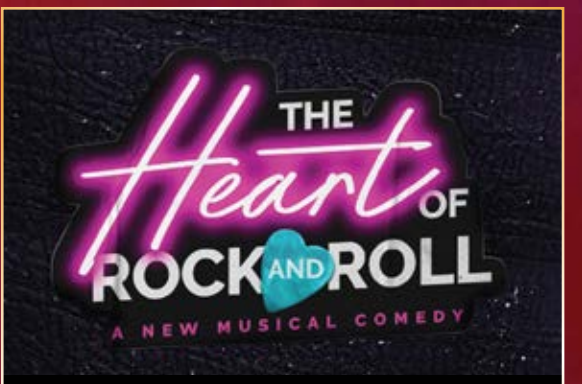


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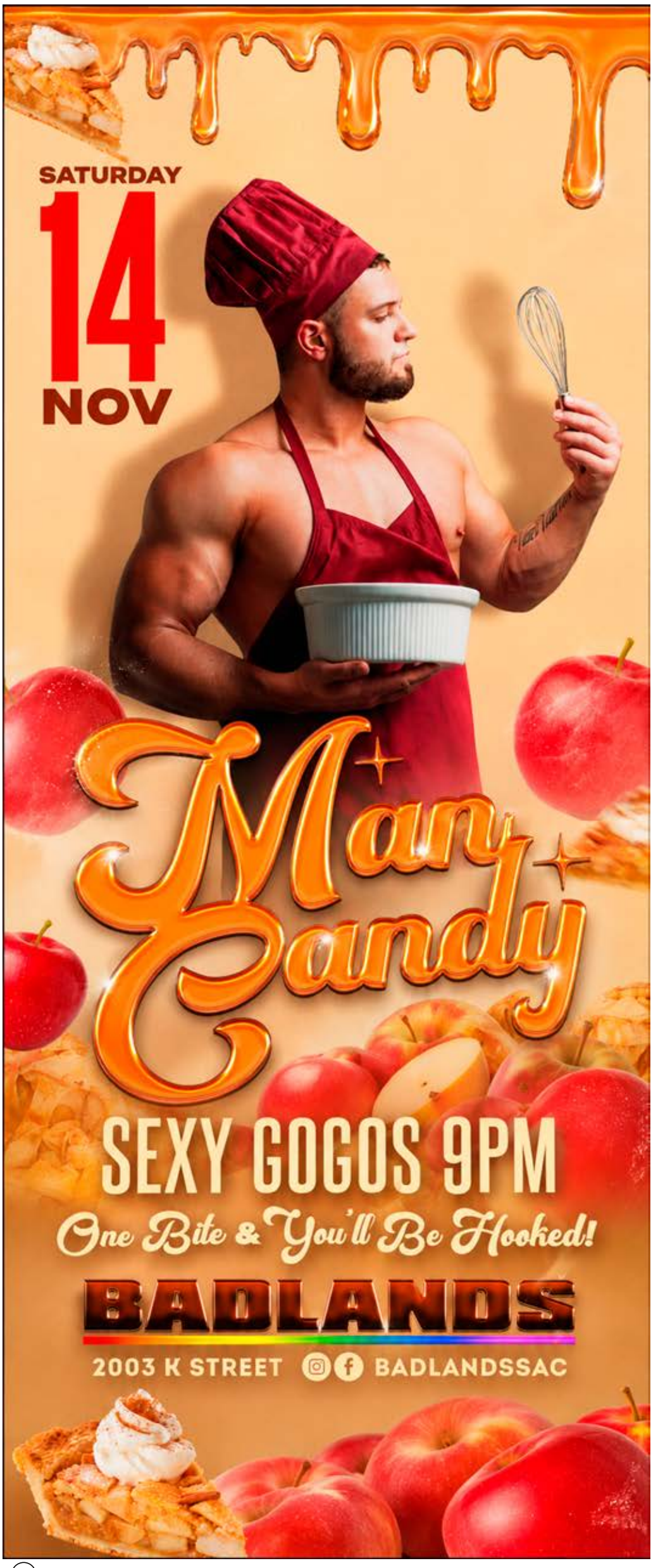
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Marilyn Monroe turns 100 at Tower Theatre

by Chris Narloch

Sacramento's Tower Theatre is celebrating 100 years of Marilyn Monroe with a four-film festival this November.



By the time you read this, the first two films ("Gentlemen Prefer Blondes" and "The Misfits") will have already been shown, but it's not too late to catch the last two titles, "How to Marry a Millionaire" and "Some Like It Hot."

Marilyn Monroe's centenary (100th birthday) was marked on June 1, 2026, commemorating 100 years since her birth in Los Angeles on June 1, 1926, as Norma Jeane Mortenson.

The rest is cinematic and pop culture history, and Ms. Monroe is arguably as famous now (or more so) than she was during her lifetime.

"How to Marry a Millionaire" (playing Nov. 18) is a fun comedy starring Monroe, Lauren Bacall, and Betty Grable as three gold-diggers who move into a New York apartment together and discover that true love is more important than money, after they date every rich jerk in The Big Apple.

The Tower saves the best for last on Nov. 25 when the theatre presents "Some Like It Hot," one of the finest American comedies ever made. In this cross-dressing classic, Monroe plays Sugar Kane, a sexy singer who befriends the new "gals" in her all-girl band – who are actually two guys in drag (Jack Lemmon and Tony Curtis) trying to elude some murderous mobsters.

U2's Sweet 16th Album Arrives

by Chris Narloch

As a longtime U2 fan, I have already ordered the band's latest record, "Carnaval de Luz," which releases this November 13.



The sixteenth studio album by the Irish supergroup, "Carnaval de Luz" (which means Carnaval of Light in Spanish and Portuguese) is receiving the best reviews in years for the band.

The new album was produced by Jacknife Lee and features a dozen new tracks, including "Torn," a duet with Dolly Parton that is reportedly the final recording by the late, great Queen of Country.

There will also be a bonus track available through iTunes, titled "Get Back to Now," and U2 will support the new album throughout 2027, on the band's "The Greatest Show on Earth World Tour."



Do not miss "La Bola Negra" Plus, "Wildwood" is wonderful

by Chris Narloch

The Oscar hopefuls are starting to make their way to Sacramento screens, and I review several of those year-end titles in this article.

I wouldn't be surprised if "The Odyssey" sweeps the Academy Awards next year, but here are several other films that should also get nominated.



Wildwood

I'm not a parent, but if I were I would purchase this movie for my kids so they could watch it again and again. The finest film yet from the folks who brought us "Coraline," "ParaNorman," and "The Boxtrolls," "Wildwood" is another masterpiece for Laika, the finest purveyors of stop-motion animation in the business.

The movie's super-cool (and eclectic) voice cast includes Tom Waits, Awkwafina, Jake Johnson, Carey Mulligan, Mahershala Ali, Angela Bassett, Richard E. Grant, Blythe Danner, and Jacob Tremblay in the very moving and entertaining story of a fierce young girl who has to brave an enchanted and dangerous forest to save her little brother from a villainess.

If you have children, skip the awful new version of "The Cat in the Hat" currently in theaters and instead take them to see "Wildwood," which will be hard to beat when the Oscar for Best Animated Feature of 2026 is handed out next year.



The Only Living Pickpocket in New York

"The Only Living Pickpocket in New York" follows an aging pickpocket (wonderfully played by John Turturro in an Oscar-caliber performance) who lives in The Bronx with his paralyzed and catatonic wife, supporting them via petty crime as a master pickpocket.

As a desperate man who gets in way over his head after he unwittingly steals from a mob family, Turturro has never been better, and the movie's cast also includes Steve Buscemi, Jamie Lee Curtis, Giancarlo Esposito, and Tatiana Maslany.

If "The Only Living Pickpocket in New York" is no longer playing in the Sacramento area when you read this, add it to your future, streaming wish list.



Fjord

This fine foreign feature did not connect with local audiences, probably due to lack of promotion, but hopefully it will be streaming soon or find its way back into theaters if it receives well-deserved Oscar nominations next year.

A co-production of Romania, France, Denmark, Norway, Sweden, and Finland, "Fjord" is the fascinating story of a conservative, religious couple from Romania who immigrate to a progressive town in Norway and have their children removed by a protection agency, after the parents are suspected of child abuse.

Inspired by true events, the movie is a terrific example of how the culture wars have gone global and an extremely moving family drama with terrific performances by a cast that includes Sebastian Stan and Renate Reinsve as the parents in question.



La Bola Negra

If you are queer and aren't bothered by subtitles, this fantastic foreign film, a co-production of Spain and France, is a must-see. Clocking in at 157 minutes, the epic movie is inspired by an unfinished 1936 play of the same name by Federico Garcia Lorca and by Alberto Conejero's play, "La piedra oscura."

The film weaves an intergenerational story across three interconnected timelines that explore queerness, historical trauma, and the survival of art. Look for this very poignant drama to be nominated when the Oscar contenders in the Best International Feature Film category are announced next year.

"La Bola Negra" was still playing at Sacramento's Tower Theatre in 35mm as I wrote this.



Activating Taste Buds

Toasted Rooster: A Little Too Much of a Good Thing

submitted by Ron Tackitt

Everyone has a bad day every so often. I'm inclined to think that's what happened when I visited Toasted Rooster in the Arden area with a couple of friends. The restaurant was full, but not overwhelmingly busy, although by the time we left, there was a line waiting to be seated. The waitstaff seemed to be doing their best, but it took quite a while to place our orders and noticeably longer for the food to arrive.



Cowboy Chicken Fried Steak

Biscuits and Gravy

At a breakfast place like this, I like to order a longtime favorite: chicken fried steak smothered in gravy ($20.75). One of my companions ordered biscuits and gravy, while the third went with a burger and fries.

And here's where that bad day really came into play. The gravy. Oh boy, the gravy.

Someone in the kitchen apparently had a very heavy hand with the salt. I understand that restaurants season their food generously. Nobody wants to pay for bland food. But the gravy on both my chicken fried steak and my friend's biscuits was so salty it was nearly inedible. Somewhere along the line, someone should have stuck a spoon into that gravy for a little quality control. We didn't raise a fuss, but my tablemate left most of his meal uneaten.

On the brighter side, the burger, and especially the fries, were wonderful. The burger was generously sized and, according to its happy recipient, quite tasty. I sampled a French fry or two and thought they were excellent. Certainly, better than my tater tots, which were surprisingly bland. Funny enough, those could have used some of the salt that ended up in the gravy.

Lastly, the presentation of my breakfast was just odd. Everything was arranged on a bright blue plate in a way that made the meal look almost prepackaged. I like my egg yolks to run into the gravy and mingle with all those wonderful breakfast flavors. Unfortunately, getting the eggs from their designated spot to the chicken fried steak required some maneuvering, and the yolk broke before reaching its destination. Not a culinary catastrophe, certainly, but the other dishes at the table were more traditionally arranged and considerably more appealing.

I've heard lots of good things about Toasted Rooster, so I'm willing to believe we caught them on an off day. They certainly deserve another chance, although it might be a while before I make my way back to the Arden area.

Hopefully, next time someone will taste the gravy before it leaves the kitchen.

See their extensive menu at: *toastedroostercafe.com*

Las Vegas is now "Cyn City"

She may be done with touring, but Cyndi Lauper is still making music, and she hasn't stopped singing live either.



Due to demand from fans, Ms. Lauper has announced that she will return to The Colosseum at Caesars Palace in February and September of 2027 for performances of her Las Vegas residency, "Cyndi Lauper: Live in Las Vegas."

Cyndi Lauper is a pop singer and activist from Queens, New York. Upon the release of her 1983 debut album, "She's So Unusual," Lauper became a pop sensation, thanks to the success of Top 5 singles including "Girls Just Wanna Have Fun," "Time After Time," "She Bop" and "All Through the Night."

Ms. Lauper also won Best New Artist at the 1985 Grammys, and her second and third albums, "True Colors" (1986) and "A Night to Remember (1989), added more hit singles, including "True Colors" and "I Drove All Night," to her discography.

In addition to her twelve solo albums, Lauper also wrote the music and lyrics for the Tony Award-winning Broadway musical "Kinky Boots," for which she became the first solo woman to ever win the Tony for Best Original Score.

In the fall of 2024, the singer embarked on her "Girls Just Wanna Have Fun Farewell Tour" in conjunction with her acclaimed documentary film, "Let the Canary Sing."

For tickets to her Las Vegas residency, *click here*.

The Crocker Art Museum is "Gleefully Askew"

You have until this November 29 to see the first-ever retrospective of Gladys Nilsson, the bold, boundary-bending painter of unruly women – sixty years after her emergence with Chicago's Hairy Who.

The Crocker Art Museum is pleased to present "Gleefully Askew: A Gladys Nilsson Retrospective," a landmark exhibit that celebrates more than six decades of her raucously off-beat paintings, which are at once mischievous, exacting, and profoundly observant.

Women tower, teeter, zigzag, and dance across Nilsson's paintings. Limbs stretch, bodies bulge, and everyday life tips slightly off kilter. In Nilsson's hands, the ordinary transforms into the delightfully absurd.

Read more about it at https://www.crockerart.org/press/gleefully-askew-a-gladys-nilsson-retrospective



"Gigantica" by Gladys Nilsson



Out & About

with Matthew Burlingame

November is here, and the holiday season is officially underway! Sacramento is bursting with festive performances, fabulous drag shows, quirky adventures and opportunities to celebrate with friends and chosen family. As Thanksgiving approaches, it's the perfect time to reflect on the people who enrich our lives and the community that brings us together. Whether you're seeking laughter, entertainment or a little holiday magic, there's something for everyone. So bundle up, get out and make some wonderful memories!



Oddities & Curiosities Expo

Nov. 14

Step into the wonderfully weird world of the Sacramento Oddities & Curiosities Expo, Nov. 14-15, from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. at Cal Expo, 1600 Exposition Blvd. Explore bizarre treasures, taxidermy, creepy artwork, unusual antiques, handcrafted oddities and macabre collectibles. Meet fascinating artists and vendors while celebrating everything strange and extraordinary. Kids 12 and younger enter free! OddditiesAndCuriositiesExpo.com

Nov. 16

Something magical is brewing! Queer Magic Mondays invites witchy types of all identities to gather, connect and share a little enchantment on Monday, Nov. 16, from 7 to 8:30 p.m. at the Lavender Library, 1414 21st St. Whether you're a seasoned practitioner or simply curious about the mystical, this community gathering offers a welcoming space to celebrate queer magic, friendship and connection. Lavenderlibrary.com



RCC Networking Mixer at Hard Rock Casino

Nov. 17

Roll the dice on an evening of fabulous connections! The Sacramento Rainbow Chamber of Commerce hosts its Community Networking Mixer on Tuesday, Nov. 17, from 6 to 7:30 p.m. at the Kumi Event Center, Hard Rock Hotel & Casino, 3317 Forty Mile Road in Wheatland. Enjoy appetizers created by Chef Chio Saelee, a cash bar and lively networking. Admission is free for everyone! Rainbowchamber.com

Nov. 18

Dark humor meets heartbreaking reality in My Mama and the Full-Scale Invasion, running Nov. 18-Dec. 20 at Capital Stage, 2215 J St. Inspired by playwright Sasha Denisova's WhatsApp conversations with her 82-year-old mother in Kyiv, the play imagines its indomitable heroine confronting Russia's invasion of Ukraine through increasingly fantastical adventures involving President Zelenskyy, drones, pickle jars and even God. A funny, moving celebration of resilience and family. Capstage.org

Nov. 20

Come together in remembrance, solidarity and love at Sacramento's Annual Transgender Day of Remembrance Candlelight Vigil on Saturday, Nov. 21, from 6:30 to 9 p.m. at Trinity Episcopal Cathedral, 2620 Capitol Ave. Presented by PFLAG Sacramento, TransFamilies Sacramento and Trinity Cathedral, this free, inclusive gathering honors transgender lives lost to violence and features guest speakers, reflection and community support. Sacgender.org/tdor

Raise a glass for a great cause! Pour It Forward, Sunburst Projects' second annual beer and bourbon tasting fundraiser, takes place Friday, Nov. 20, from 6 to 8 p.m. at a private West Sacramento home. Sample six premium bourbons or six locally crafted beers, enjoy a silent auction and support programs serving people affected by HIV/AIDS. Tickets are $50 and must be purchased by Nov. 16. Sunburstprojects.org



Nina West

Upcoming

Santa Claus is going interplanetary! Blast off for a hilariously campy screening of the 1964 cult classic Santa Claus Conquers the Martians on Saturday, Nov. 28, at the Crest Theatre, 1013 K St. Featuring a live orchestra and Scent-o-Vision, this outrageous holiday adventure lets you see, hear and even smell the movie! Doors open at 6 p.m., with the show at 7 p.m. CrestSacramento.com

Get ready to sleigh the holidays! A Drag Queen Christmas brings outrageous glamour, dazzling costumes and fabulous holiday hilarity to Channel 24, 1800 24th St., on Wednesday, Dec. 9, at 7:30 p.m. Hosted by Nina West, this spectacular celebration features RuPaul's Drag Race stars Myki Meeks, Crystal Methyd, Silky Ganache and more. Expect jaw-dropping performances, hilarious comedy and plenty of festive sass! Ages 18 and older. Channel24sac.com

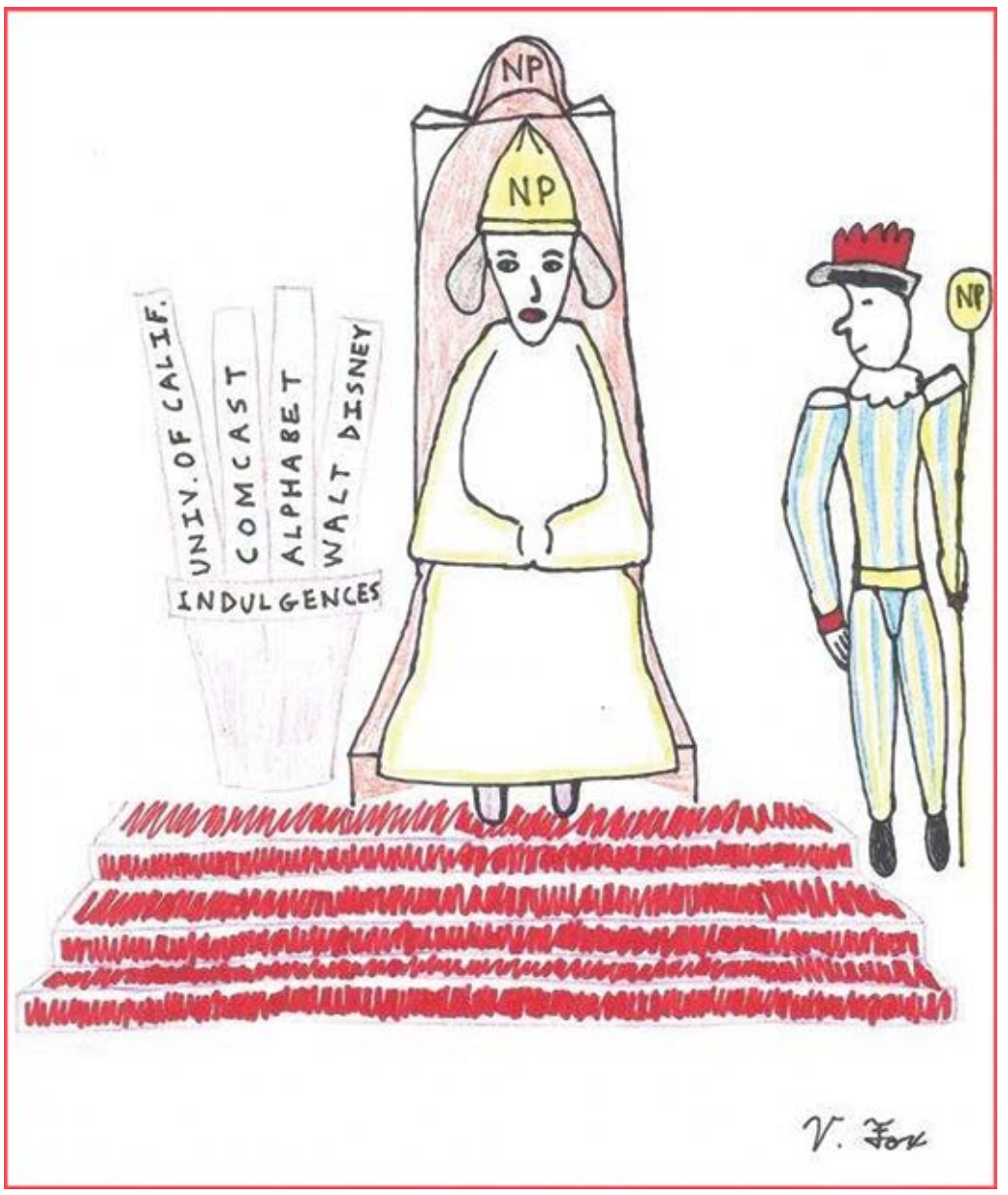


The Golden Girls Live: The Christmas Episodes

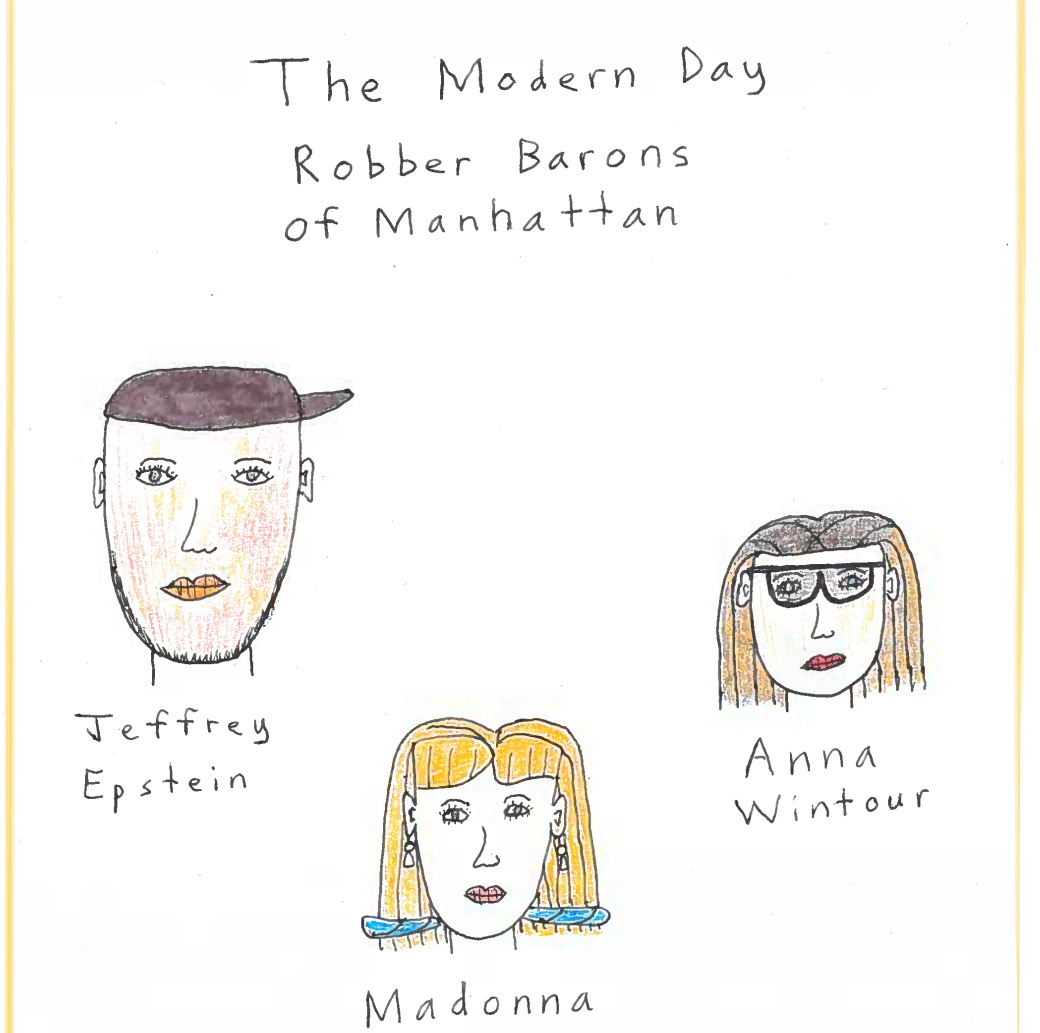
Picture it: San Francisco, Christmas 2026! "The Golden Girls Live: The Christmas Episodes" returns to the historic Curran Theatre, 445 Geary St., Dec. 4-20. Four fabulous drag legends bring Dorothy, Blanche, Rose and Sophia to life in a hilariously irreverent holiday celebration. Starring Coco Peru, Matthew Martin, D'Arcy Drollinger and Holotta Tymes, this beloved tradition promises sharp wit, outrageous laughs and plenty of cheesecake-worthy nostalgia! ATGTickets.com

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





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The Word is out.





Growlr Gets a New Owner - and a Major Makeover

Growlr, one of the best-known dating and social apps for bears and their admirers, has been acquired by Perry Street Software, the independent queer-owned company behind SCRUFF and Jack'd.

SCRUFF

Perry Street says it plans a multi-million-dollar investment in Growlr over the next several years, including a complete rebuild of the app, a modernized design and a larger presence at bear events around the world.

An all-new Growlr is expected to debut in early 2027 with a new look, logo and redesigned profiles, along with expanded sharing options in chat. The company also plans to bring back Flashes, which boost a member's visibility nearby, and expand Shouts, allowing users to reach multiple people within a selected area.

Perhaps just as welcome to longtime users: Perry Street says it intends to aggressively target bots and spammers on the platform.

The acquisition brings Growlr into a portfolio of apps specifically developed for LGBTQ+ communities. Perry Street CEO Eric Silverberg emphasized that the independently owned company does not sell user data to third-party data brokers and intends to keep advertising on its apps queer-focused.

Growlr will also become more visible beyond the phone. Perry Street plans to expand sponsorships of Bear Weeks and other bear events in the U.S. and internationally, relaunch Growlr's social media presence and introduce a bear-focused apparel line in spring 2027.

A beta program will give current Growlr members an opportunity to help shape the redesigned app before its official launch.

HIV Is No Longer a Death Sentence. But the Story Isn't Over.

There was a time when an HIV diagnosis was widely regarded as a death sentence. Today, thanks to remarkable advances in medicine, that is no longer the reality for millions of people living with the virus.

Modern antiretroviral therapy (ART) has transformed HIV from a frequently fatal infection into a manageable chronic condition. People who begin treatment early and remain in care can often expect to live long, healthy lives, with life expectancies approaching those of people without HIV.

Even more remarkable is the science behind U=U (Undetectable = Untransmittable). When treatment reduces HIV to an undetectable level and that suppression is maintained, the virus cannot be transmitted through sex. This breakthrough has changed not only HIV prevention but also the lives and relationships of people living with HIV.

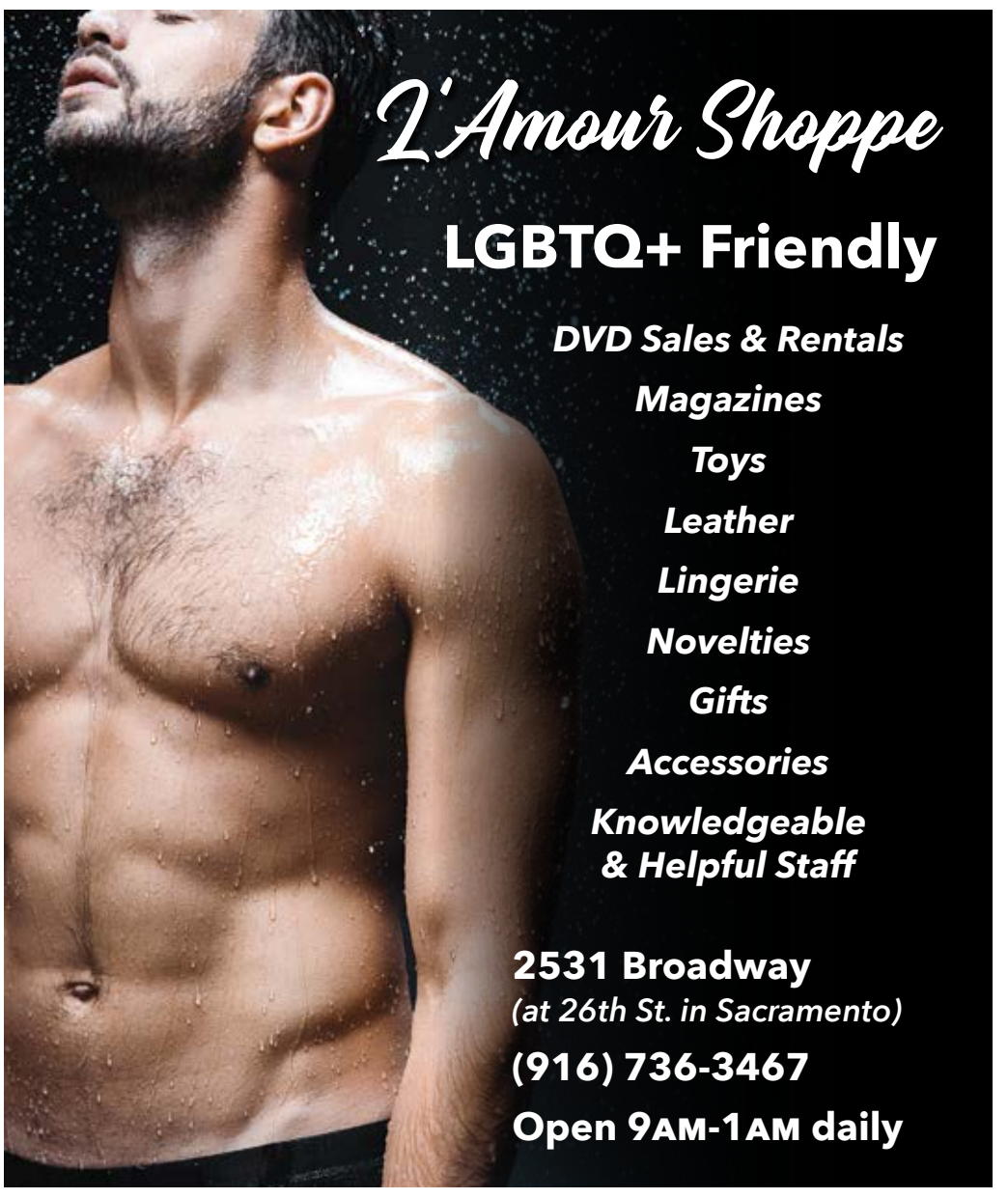
But none of these advances matter if people don't know their HIV status. Regular testing remains one of the most important tools in preventing new infections and connecting those who test positive with lifesaving treatment. Knowing you're HIV-positive today means having an opportunity to take action, begin treatment and plan for a future that earlier generations might never have imagined.

Here in Sacramento, Sunburst Projects has spent decades supporting people affected by HIV/AIDS. Through its Sunburst Clinic, the organization offers free, confidential HIV testing, with results available in approximately 20 minutes. Sunburst Projects also provides case management, mental health support and assistance accessing medications and healthcare. Its work reminds us that living with HIV involves more than managing a virus. It means having the resources, support and confidence to live a full life.

HIV has not been cured, and stigma and unequal access to healthcare remain serious challenges. But for those who remember the devastation of the AIDS epidemic, today's medical progress is nothing short of extraordinary.

The message is simple: Get tested. Know your status. And if you're positive, know that a long, healthy future is entirely possible.

For information about testing and support services, visit SunburstProjects.org or SunburstClinic.org, or call 916-440-0889.





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