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No. 805 • November 26, 2026
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Part One







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Dolores Huerta: A Lifetime of Advocacy

Civil rights icon Dolores Huerta, whose tireless organizing transformed the lives of American farmworkers and inspired generations of activists, died at her home in Bakersfield on October 28 at age 96. Her legacy extended well beyond the labor movement, including decades of steadfast support for LGBTQ+ equality.



Photo by Chris Allan

Huerta is best known for co-founding the National Farm Workers Association with César Chávez in 1962. The organization later became the United Farm Workers, and Huerta helped organize historic strikes and boycotts that improved working conditions and secured collective bargaining rights for agricultural workers. Her rallying cry, "¡Sí, se puede!" became a lasting symbol of hope and determination.

Earlier this year, Huerta shared a painful chapter of her own story. In March, at age 95, she revealed that Chávez had sexually abused her, ending a silence of 60 years that she kept out of concern for the farmworker movement. The disclosure fit a lifetime of speaking out for women's rights and for people who face abuse and discrimination.

Less widely recognized was Huerta's commitment to LGBTQ+ rights. A longtime board member of Equality California, she advocated for marriage equality, campaigned for Proposition 3 in 2024 to remove the ban on same-sex marriage from the California Constitution, and worked to build bridges between Latino and LGBTQ+ communities. She understood that the struggle for dignity and equal treatment crossed cultural and political boundaries.

Her advocacy continued well into her 90s, demonstrating a remarkable commitment to social justice. In 2012, President Barack Obama awarded her the Presidential Medal of Freedom, recognizing her exceptional contributions to American society.

Huerta also made history, on Monday, November 16, as the first woman and the first non-elected person to lie in honor in the California State Capitol Rotunda in Sacramento. The public paid their respects from 12:30 to 6 p.m.

For the LGBTQ+ community, Huerta left a particularly meaningful legacy: a reminder that equality is strengthened when communities stand together, and that the fight for justice belongs to everyone.

The List



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Dickens Street Faire

Black Friday

Downtown Sac Ice Skating Rink

Holiday of Lights Parade

The Snug

Native Arts & Crafts Market

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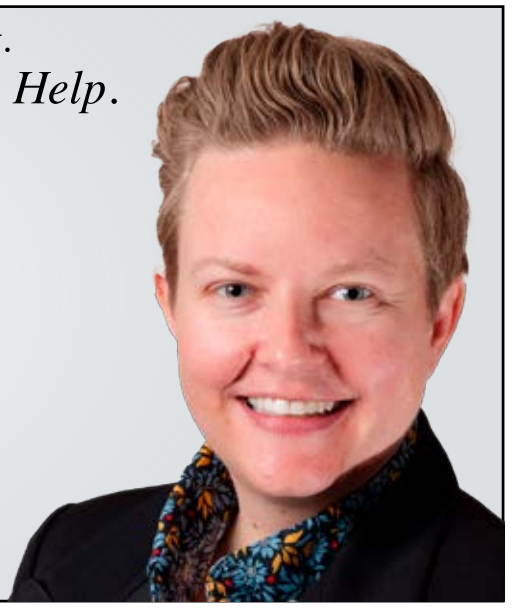

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ON THE COVER
It's Holiday shopping time.
Julie, Fred and Ron share some wish list items they are crossing their fingers for...

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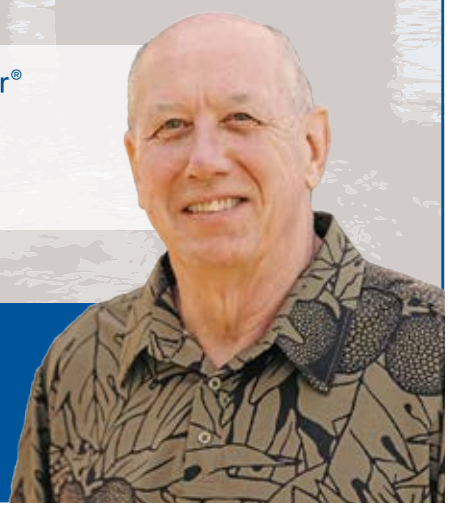

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U.S. Votes to Remove LGBTQ+ Protections from UN Resolution on Unlawful Killings

In a troubling reversal of longstanding American policy, the United States joined 68 other countries in an unsuccessful attempt to remove references to LGBTQ+ people from a United Nations resolution condemning unlawful killings.

On November 13, the UN General Assembly's Third Committee narrowly rejected an Egypt-led amendment that would have eliminated explicit references to sexual orientation and gender identity from a resolution addressing extrajudicial, summary and arbitrary executions. The amendment failed 74 to 69, with 24 countries abstaining.

The United States voted in favor of removing the language, marking the first time since the references were introduced in 2002 that America has supported their deletion.

The resolution calls on governments to investigate unlawful killings, prosecute those responsible and provide justice for victims and their families. It specifically recognizes populations vulnerable to targeted violence, including LGBTQ+ individuals.

According to Outright International, more than 230 targeted killings of LGBTQ+ people were documented worldwide between January 2020 and July 2026. The organization cautions that the actual number is likely considerably higher because many killings go unreported or uninvestigated.

The vote represents a dramatic departure from previous American leadership. In 2010, the United States helped restore references to sexual orientation after they had been removed during earlier UN negotiations.

Equally concerning is the shrinking margin of victory. A similar amendment failed 78 to 47 in 2024, suggesting growing international support for eliminating explicit recognition of LGBTQ+ victims.

The committee ultimately approved the full resolution, with its LGBTQ+ references intact, by a vote of 131 to zero, with 47 abstentions.

However, the battle is not over. The resolution moves to the full General Assembly in December, where another attempt to remove the language remains possible.

At its heart, the controversy raises a fundamental question: Shouldn't every human being, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity, have the right to live without fear of being murdered simply for who they are?

Newsom Proclaims Transgender Day of Remembrance in California

Governor Gavin Newsom officially proclaimed November 20, 2026, as Transgender Day of Remembrance in California, honoring transgender people whose lives have been lost to hatred, discrimination and violence.

In his proclamation, Newsom reaffirmed California's commitment to protecting the rights, safety and dignity of transgender and gender-nonconforming people, particularly amid rising anti-LGBTQ rhetoric and intolerance.

The governor highlighted California's efforts to create safer communities, strengthen anti-hate programs, protect access to healthcare and advance equality.

"California will always fight for our LGBTQ community's right to live their lives out loud," Newsom declared.

The transgender pride flag was also raised over the State Capitol in recognition of the day.

Newsom emphasized that Transgender Day of Remembrance is not only an opportunity to mourn those lost, but also a call to action against hatred and discrimination, and a reminder that everyone deserves to live safely and openly.



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Seniors Helping Seniors Shares 10 Signs An Older Loved One Needs Extra Support This Holiday Season

Seniors Helping Seniors®, a full caregiving provider that supports needs that keep seniors living at home longer, is sharing its list of "10 Things to Look for When Visiting Elder Family Members During the Holidays." The holidays may be the first time in months that adult children or other loved ones have spent extended time with aging family members, revealing subtle changes that signal they need extra support for daily tasks as they age.

"These changes don't necessarily mean someone needs extensive care or to leave their home," explains Steve LeClair, owner of Seniors Helping Seniors in the Greater Sacramento Region. "Sometimes a little assistance with companionship, transportation, meal preparation, or household tasks can make a meaningful difference in helping someone remain safe and independent."

These tips include:

1. Changes in appearance or personal hygiene/grooming: Are they wearing clean clothes, bathing regularly, hair managed, and maintaining their usual grooming habits?
2. Mobility and fall risks: Are they having difficulty getting out of chairs, navigating stairs, or walking steadily? Are holiday decorations, rugs, or clutter creating additional hazards?
3. Nutrition and food preparation: Is the refrigerator stocked with fresh food? Are they eating regularly, preparing meals safely, and maintaining a healthy weight?



4. Medication management: Are medications organized and being taken as prescribed? Are there expired prescriptions or signs of missed doses?
5. Memory and cognitive changes: Are they repeating questions, forgetting appointments, becoming confused with familiar routines, or showing changes in judgment?
6. Social isolation and emotional well-being: Have they withdrawn from friends, hobbies, or regular activities? Do they seem unusually lonely, anxious, or less engaged?
7. Household upkeep: Are laundry, dishes, cleaning, pet needs (litter box, food areas clean) and other routine household responsibilities being maintained at their usual level?
8. Financial management: Are bills being paid, mail being opened, and finances being managed appropriately? Are there signs of confusion or vulnerability to scams?
9. Driving and transportation: Are there new dents on the car, concerns about driving ability, or difficulties getting to appointments, grocery stores, and other activities?
10. Changes in independence: Are everyday tasks that were previously manageable becoming more difficult, such as shopping, cooking, bathing, dressing, or managing household responsibilities? This may include auto maintenance, if the family member is still driving.

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California's Capitol Dome To Go RED for World AIDS Day

by Joyce Mitchell

California lawmakers and staff are pulling together plans to commemorate World AIDS Day, December 1st by illuminating the State Capitol RED. Senator John Laird (D-Santa Cruz) authored legislation signed into law by Governor Gavin Newsom in 2023, proclaiming that December 1st be officially recognized and observed as World AIDS Day. The dome turned RED two years ago.



But then, a deafening pause. A pause this year California is ignoring. President Donald Trump announced the federal government will no longer observe World AIDS Day. It's the first time the U.S. has not participated in the day since first created by the World Health Organization in 1988.

There was no RED Ribbon outside the White House. Federal employees were warned not to mark the day. The government said it was modernizing its approach to countering infectious diseases and that "an awareness day is not a strategy."

HIV/AIDS still claims tens of thousands of lives each year. World AIDS Day recognizes the millions of people who have died in this pandemic. Awareness is crucial since HIV is 100 percent preventable.

Yet, in addition to cancelling World AIDS Day, the White House slashed HIV/AIDS funding. That included dismantling programs such as PEPFAR (President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief) and USAID (US Agency for International Development).

While California, New York and Florida account for the states with the most people living with HIV/AIDS, ironically, if you count federal districts, Washington DC has the highest per capita rate in the nation per 100,000 for new diagnoses. That's in Trump's very own backyard.

While the President has cancelled World AIDS Day, the White House still finds value in recognizing other special days such as World Autism Awareness Day, Manufacturing Day, and Diwali, the festival of lights.

Making America Great Again clearly is a debatable federal goal. But here in California, health and wellness is for all - not just the rich and famous. Thank you Senator Laird for leading the charge.

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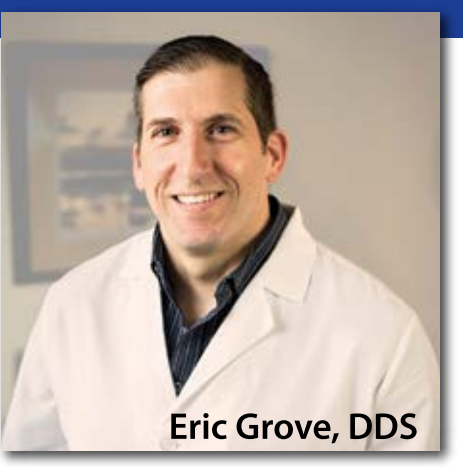

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World AIDS Day: The Generation That Never Got to Grow Old

Every December 1, World AIDS Day asks us to remember those lost to the epidemic, honor those living with HIV and recognize the progress made in treatment and prevention. But for generations of gay men who lived through the darkest years of AIDS, the day carries another, deeply personal meaning.



AIDS robbed our community of an extraordinary number of men who never had the opportunity to grow old. They never experienced retirement, the pleasures and frustrations of aging, or the simple privilege of living out a natural lifespan. Their futures were taken from them, along with everything they might have contributed to the world.

For many who survived those years, growing older wasn't something they expected. Some genuinely believed they wouldn't live past 35. Planning for retirement or imagining life at 60 or 70 seemed almost pointless when the possibility of dying young felt so real.

Now, those who made it through are discovering what it means to grow old. Some are embracing it beautifully. Others are struggling with the physical, emotional and financial realities of aging, sometimes without the preparation or support they might otherwise have had.

Medical advances have transformed HIV treatment and prevention, but they cannot restore the lives lost or erase the lasting impact of those years.

This World AIDS Day, we remember not only the people who died, but the lives they never got to finish.

And perhaps we should also recognize that growing old, with all its challenges, is a privilege many of our friends were denied.





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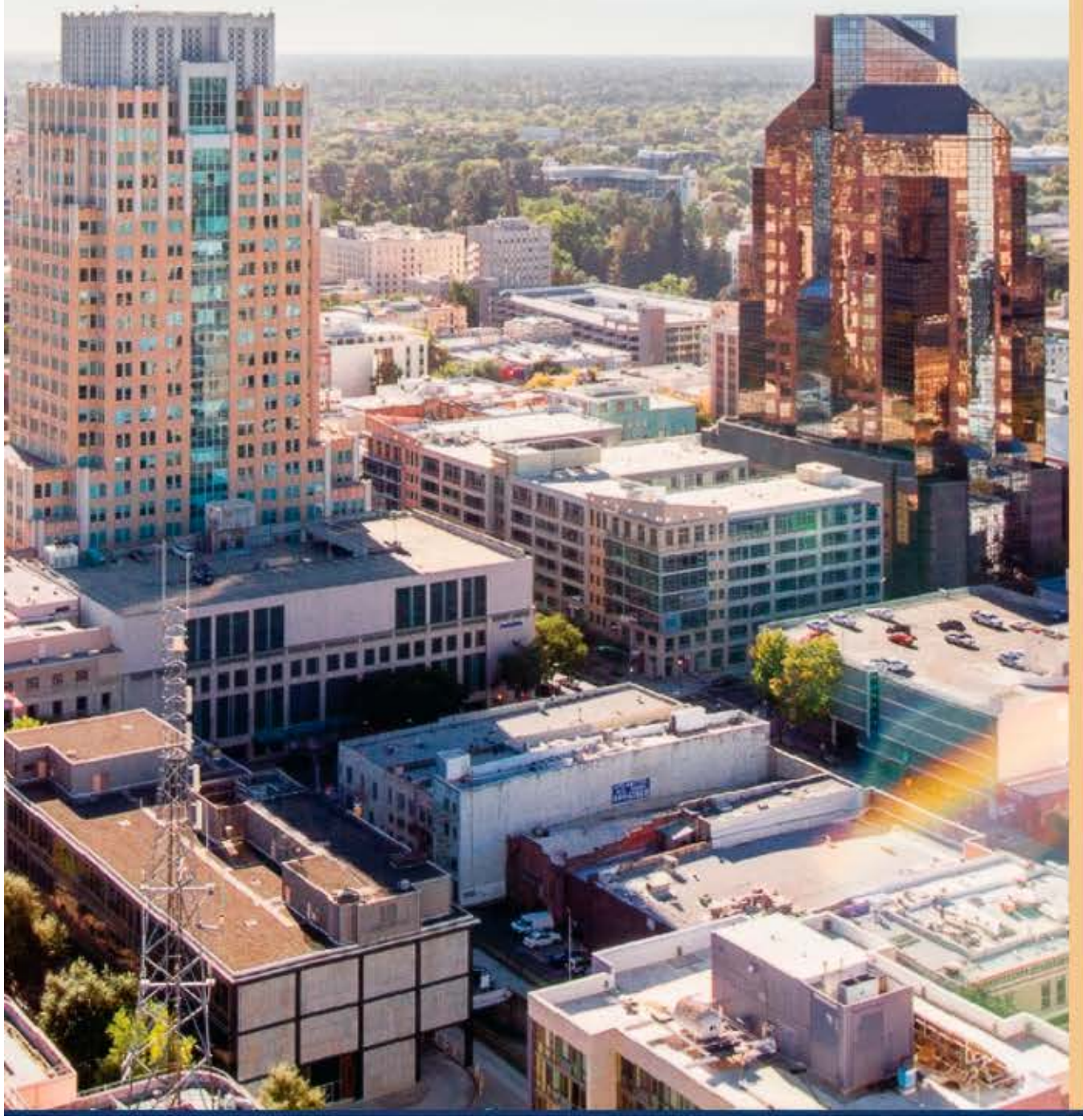

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Thanks be to Roller Derby

words and images by Chris Allan

Outside Foothill Skate Inn on Auburn Blvd, a giant white neon roller skate glows year-round. Twice a week, the beacon draws Flood Water Roller Derby, a small, fierce community that loves to skate, push, crash, block and jam.

It is also, by any honest count, a queer family. "I definitely think it's the majority," said Coach Alicia Ward, derby name Lapis Ass-uli, of Flood Water's roster. "There's maybe two straight people."

Roller Derby is a tough sport. Helmets, mouthguards, and pads are mandatory, and bruises come with the territory. Newcomers begin in "Shark School," but it's open to anyone, "even if you've never skated your whole life," said Lapis.

On November 8, the team headed to the Andy Morin Sports Complex in Folsom, where Flood Water hosted South Sound Roller Derby of Centralia, Washington. Announcer Calamity Wren served up plenty of sass as fans browsed snacks and team merch. Skaters applied face paint and pulled on torn fishnets, while Lapis sported a "Chaotic Derby Slut" t-shirt. Opening the event, "Don't Stop Believin'" felt less like a pop anthem than a collective vow to stand up to a world that keeps trying to knock outsiders down.

Olivia Hexberg skates as Someone, a name she has tattooed inside her lower lip. She's been with Flood Water for a decade. "Before the whistle, you're chatting and laughing with each other," she said. "Then the whistle goes, and you're at each other's throats. Then the whistle goes again, and you're back to being friends." Derby, she explained, "gives people an opportunity to find a community and shine."

If you've never witnessed a bout, it's full-contact, relentless, and can run for nearly two hours. A small army of referees, sporting derby names of their own, blast a steady code of whistle calls. Two jammers try to break through eight blockers to score, as the skaters collide, fall, push, pull, throw arms around each other, and finish each jam sweaty and winded. Flood Water lost a tight bout, 195-178, but the high fives with South Sound went on anyway. To a non-skater, it felt like women's motorcycle club meets rugby, on skates, plus glam.

Flood Water, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit founded in 2012, plays under the Women's Flat Track Derby Association. Skaters pay their own way to games as far as San Diego and Washington, with help from fundraisers. The association welcomes anyone of a marginalized gender, including trans and nonbinary skaters, regardless of presentation or gender assigned at birth.

Lapis, who is nonbinary and bisexual, said that even after knowing their identity for years, they were afraid to ask people to use their pronouns. "Being around so many trans and accepting people in derby helped me to come out," Lapis said.

Big Bird is the team's tallest jammer, soft-spoken, ponytailed and Someone's younger sibling. During the bout, they went "apex" - leaping across the inside of the track's curve to get around blockers. Big Bird is nonbinary and trans, and has skated with Flood Water for three years. After leaving the Navy, which wasn't a supportive situation, they went looking for genuine camaraderie. They found it on four wheels at the retro skate joint on the boulevard. "I actually feel like I belong."

For those of us in the LGBTQ+ community, teams like Flood Water are something to be deeply grateful for: bold, unapologetic spaces where showing up as yourself isn't just accepted, it's celebrated. To learn more or support the team, go to *floodwaterrollerderby.org/sponsorship*.













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You gotta have "Faith"

by Chris Narloch

If you were too young to attend – or you weren't even born yet – you will have the opportunity to witness the late, great George Michael's "Faith Tour" when the film of his legendary 1988 concerts comes to cinemas this December.



His "Faith" album took Mr. Michael to a whole other level of success, with hit after hit, including "Father Figure," "I Want Your Sex," "One More Try," "Monkey," "Kissing a Fool," and the classic title track.

Music fans will get an early Christmas present with this electrifying concert film, which features recently discovered, never-before-seen footage of the global superstar at the Palais Omnisports de Paris-Bercsy during the European leg of the "Faith Tour."

A triumph in archival filmmaking from Andy Morahan and David Austin, who directed many of the singer's iconic music videos, "George Michael: The Faith Tour" transforms footage assembled from a 14-camera shoot captured on 35mm film over two nights, into an extraordinary two-hour, cinematic event and audio experience.

"George Michael: The Faith Tour" hits the big screen on Friday, Dec. 11 for one week only. To find a theater near you, go to www.thefaithtour.movie



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Revel in the season with beloved holiday classics, Rudolph the Gay Reindeer, dazzling pink lights, high-kicking elves, and the entire chorus dressed in their holiday finery.

"Slay Bells & Sequins" features many joyful surprises, performances that will tug at your heart, and the signature splash of sass that you've come to expect from SGMC.

You don't want to miss this amazing holiday show, filled with beautiful melodies and a towering wall of sound that will fill the auditorium with warmth, wonder, and just a hint of mischief.

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Seattle From Above: The Space Needle & Chihuly Garden and Glass

words and images by Julie Ebe

If you're planning a trip to Seattle, I have two places you absolutely NEED to add to your list: the Space Needle and Chihuly Garden and Glass. I had high expectations for both, but I can honestly say they exceeded them!

We started our adventure at the iconic Space Needle, and from the moment we arrived, the experience was wonderful. The staff was incredibly kind, welcoming, and happy to answer any questions. Even the elevator ride was an experience of its own! In just about 43 seconds, you're whisked 520 feet into the air while the staff shares some pretty interesting facts about the landmark. Fun fact: The Space Needle was built for the 1962 World's Fair in just 400 days. Pretty impressive considering it's been standing tall over Seattle for more than 60 years!

Once you reach the top, WOW. The views are absolutely breathtaking. You can walk around and take in 360-degree views of the city, the waterfront, and the surrounding mountains. There is truly no shortage of beauty up there. I highly recommend visiting on a clear day because you can even catch a glimpse of Mount Rainier in the distance. And if you're afraid of heights, I'm telling you, DO IT ANYWAY! Between the incredible views and the glass floors that allow you to look straight down, it's an experience you won't forget. I may have questioned my bravery for a second, but it was absolutely worth it!

Once we finished taking in all that Seattle beauty, we made our way down to Chihuly Garden and Glass, and let me tell you...

This was hands down the highlight of my entire trip to Seattle.

I knew we were going to see some beautiful glass art, but I had absolutely no idea just how incredible this museum would be. The colors, the creativity, the detail, and the sheer size of some of these pieces are almost impossible to put into words. Every single room feels like you've stepped into an entirely different world.

The museum features eight galleries showcasing the work of artist Dale Chihuly, whose glass creations are unlike anything I've ever seen. One of the most impressive installations is inside the Glasshouse, where a 100-foot-long glass sculpture hangs overhead. The way the natural light shines through the vibrant colors is absolutely stunning.

What I loved most was that this wasn't one of those museums where you casually walk through, glance at a few things, and move on. You WANT to stop. You WANT to read about the artwork, learn about the artist, and understand how these incredible creations came to life. There is so much to appreciate, and every time you think you've seen your favorite piece, you turn a corner and find something even more spectacular.

The entire experience feels immersive, almost magical. From the enormous colorful installations to the intricate details in the smallest pieces, I was completely blown away. I could have spent hours just taking it all in.

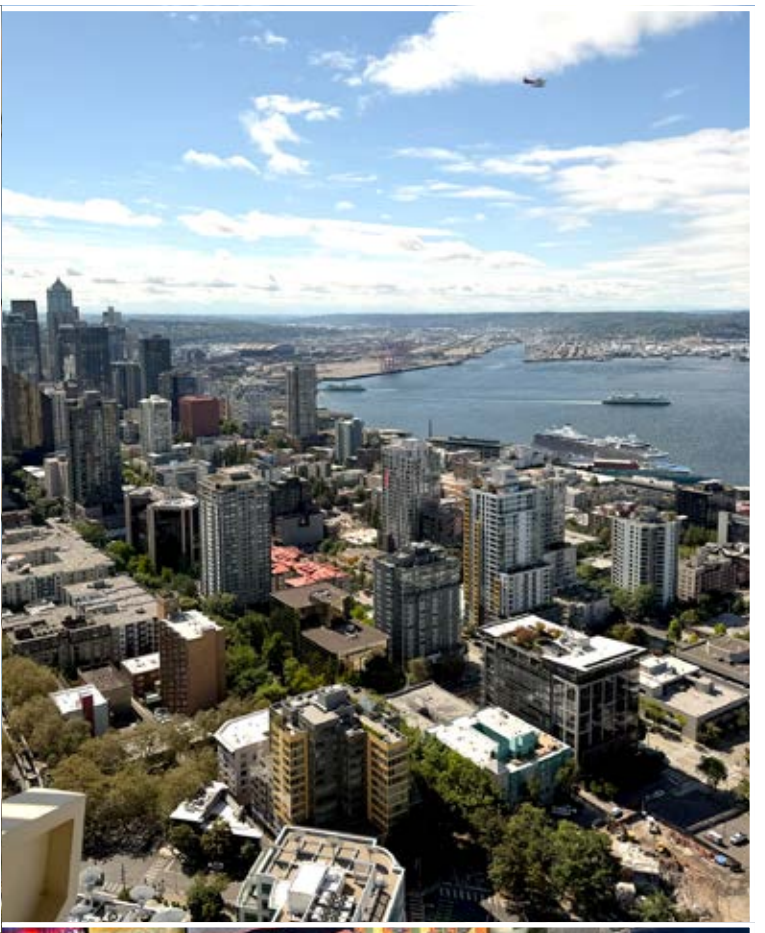
If I could give one piece of advice, it would be to allow yourself plenty of time to enjoy both attractions. Don't rush through them. Take the pictures, read the exhibits, ask the questions, and really enjoy the experience.

Seattle has so much to offer, but these two attractions are something special. The Space Needle gives you a chance to see the beauty of Seattle from above, while Chihuly Garden and Glass lets you experience beauty in an entirely different way.

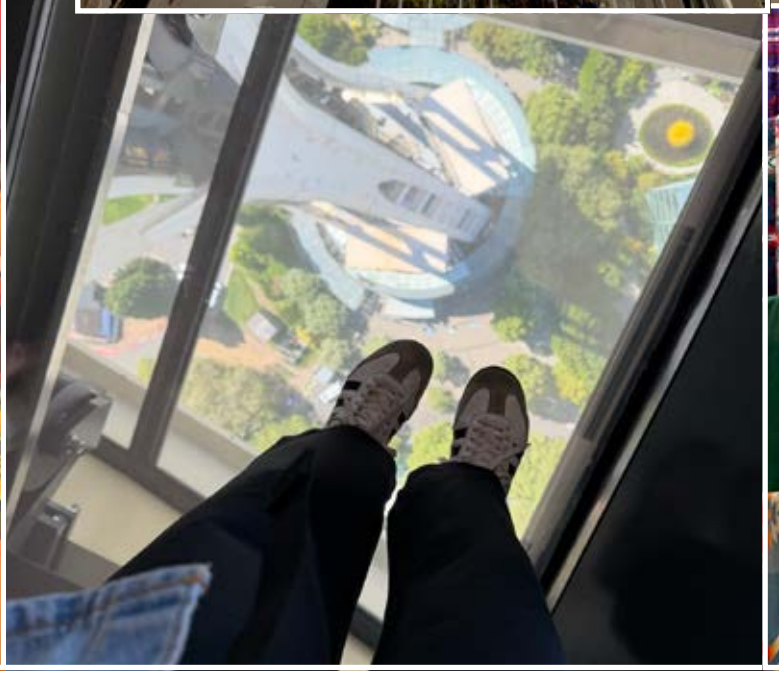
Would I do both again? In a heartbeat. Especially Chihuly. I am still thinking about how incredible it was!













Julie's Wish List

My 2026 Holiday Wish List: Run, Recover & Repeat!

Apparently, my holiday wish list has a theme this year: running, fitness, recovery, and a little bit of fabulousness! With new running goals on the horizon for 2027, I'm asking for a few things that will help me train smarter, feel stronger, and look cute while doing it. Because who says fitness gear can't be fashionable? Here are my five picks for this year's wish list!



Bose Open Ear Headphones: Because every good run deserves an even better playlist! Open-ear headphones let me enjoy my favorite music while staying more aware of what's happening around me. And can we talk about how cute these can be? Add a few pretty charms or decorative accessories, and suddenly my headphones are doubling as jewelry. Fitness meets fashion, and I'm here for it. *LINK*



Bloon Paris Ergonomic Ball Seat: Who knew sitting could be part of my wellness routine? The Bloon Paris ergonomic ball seat is where fitness meets fabulous home décor! Designed to encourage better posture, gentle movement, and core engagement while sitting, it's a stylish alternative to the traditional office chair. Whether I'm answering emails, working from home, or just trying to sneak a little movement into my day, this chic little seat makes staying active look effortless. Because apparently, even my furniture has fitness goals for 2027! *LINK*

Garmin Forerunner 570 Fitness Watch: New year, new miles, new obsession! This beauty is basically a personal running coach on my wrist. From tracking pace and distance to monitoring recovery and helping plan workouts, it's the ultimate training companion for anyone ready to chase some big running goals in 2027. Santa, I'm putting in the miles. You handle the technology! *LINK*

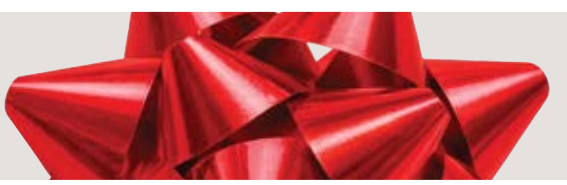




Adidas: Adi Zero Dropset PRO Training Shoe: Who says you can't look fabulous while sweating? These beauties combine speed, stability, and serious style. Perfect for hybrid workouts, strength training, and tackling whatever fitness challenges 2027 throws my way. Will they make me faster? Maybe. Will I feel faster wearing them? Absolutely. *LINK*



Solfire Yoga Class Pack: All that running and training calls for a little balance! A class pack at Solfire Yoga is the perfect gift to help me stretch, strengthen, unwind, and give my muscles some much-needed love. Because as much as I enjoy pushing myself, I'm learning that recovery deserves a spot on the calendar, too. Namaste, sore muscles! *LINK*



UPCOMING EVENTS



Dec 13

Jane Austen Tea:
December 13th
12 pm – 3 pm



Dec 19

Santa Claus will be at
The Book Den the Saturday before
Christmas, December 19th.
He'll be there to give out candy canes
and free books to the kids.

- Donations are taken on Wednesdays and Saturdays from 9am to noon.
- Special sales during the year will be posted on our website.

If you have any questions, please email bookden@saclibfriends.org.
You can also call the Book Den, 916-731-8493 between 9am and 12pm. Please be patient - we are an all-volunteer organization and not in the office past noon most days...



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www.saclibfriends.org
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off Power Inn Road
one block south of 14th Ave.



Christmas is a drag (queen)

You better not pout, you better not cry, because the world's longest running drag tour is bringing fabulous holiday cheer to Channel24 in Sactown, on Wednesday evening, December 9th.



Produced by Murray & Peter Present, "A Drag Queen Christmas" returns for its 12th year, launching a 39-city national tour this November and December.

The 2026 edition is hosted by returning fan favorite and theatre star Nina West and features an all-new merry lineup of drag superstars from the Emmy-winning "RuPaul's Drag Race" franchise.

"A Drag Queen Christmas" is the world's premiere holiday drag showcase and a sensational theatrical experience that delivers high camp, over-the-top lip-sync performances, side-splitting comedy, elaborate costumes, Broadway-style staging, and a whole lot of heart -- something we all need during the chaos of the holiday season.

With plenty of spectacular surprises in store, the show offers audiences a chance to see drag queens at the top of their game perform showstopping numbers of epic holiday proportions on theater stages across America.

Each year, "A Drag Queen Christmas" provides an annual tradition for folks from all walks of life to come together and connect, find community, and celebrate the season with joy and laughter.

This dazzling, 18+ holiday extravaganza runs two hours and offers fans the chance to add-on a VIP Meet & Greet Experience -- including early access to the venue, photos with the queens on stage, autographs, and exclusive tour merchandise.

Tickets are on sale now at *dragfans.com*

The 2026 Rock & Roll Hall of Fame

by Chris Narloch

The 2026 Rock & Roll Hall of Fame induction ceremony took place on November 14, 2026, at the Peacock Theater in Los Angeles, honoring 18 inductees across four categories.

A three-hour TV special on ABC this December 8 will feature highlights from the ceremony, including a performance of Sade's "Smooth Operator" by Sienna Spiro. (Sadly, the famously reclusive Sade did not attend the induction ceremony.)

Other highlights include Cynthia Erivo performing Phil Collins' iconic "In the Air Tonight" with Travis Barker: Gwen Stefani and Tony Kanal inducting Billy Idol: and a Run-DMC reunion with Aerosmith for "Walk This Way."

Among the milestones this year: Celia Cruz became the first inductee whose music was sung primarily in Spanish, Fela Kuti became the first African-born solo artist inducted, and two more queer artists were added to the Hall of Fame (Queen Latifah and the late, great Luther Vandross).

For more information about the Hall of Fame, go to *https://rockhall.com*



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Ron's Wish List

Part One - Ts



The holidays just got a whole lot gayer! This HO HO HOMO tee is all about spreading festive cheer, queer joy, and a healthy dose of holiday mischief. With its playful design and bold personality, it's the perfect way to celebrate the season with humor, pride, and a little extra sparkle. Whether you're rocking it at a holiday party or gifting it to your favorite homo, this tee is guaranteed to bring smiles and plenty of holiday spirit! *Get yours here*. Be sure to take a look at all the other fun tees they offer as well.



Some uncles are just a little more fun, a little less conventional, and always good for a laugh. ShawnCraft has just the gift for them! Their embroidered Funcle T-shirt delivers a little personality without making a big production of it. Made from 100% cotton, it's casual, comfortable and perfect for the uncle who appreciates a good laugh. Available in sizes small through 3XL, it's currently priced at $24.99. ShawnCraft is a small, family-owned business with plenty of other cheeky designs worth exploring. Find this one and more at *ShawnCraft.com.*



Why settle for something off the rack when you can create a T-shirt that's uniquely yours? Online printing services like Zazzle, Printful and Custom Ink can turn your favorite photograph, original artwork, clever saying or slightly inappropriate joke into wearable art. Many offer single-shirt printing, so there's no need to order a dozen. Just choose your style and color, upload your design and let someone else do the work. It's a fun way to create a personalized gift or simply wear something nobody else has. Just make sure you have the rights to any images you use. After all, being original is half the fun!



Who says a T-shirt has to be ordinary? Young fashion designer Max Alexander adds a little magic to everyday style with his Wings Meadow T-shirt. Made from luxurious Supima cotton, this super-soft tee features Max's signature logo on the front and a fabulous pair of wings across the back. It's playful, stylish and just a little unexpected — much like the designer himself! A fun way to wear a little couture without the couture price tag. $39.99 at *maxalexander.shop.*



WOOF! Sometimes one word says it all. Whether you're a bear or just a fellow who appreciates another handsome man, this cheeky T-shirt from designer SammyJay49 speaks a language many of us know all too well. A playful little nod to gay culture, it's perfect for anyone who enjoys turning heads or letting someone know they've caught their eye. *Available through TeePublic*, it's a fun, flirty gift that might even get a few WOOFs in return!

It's beginning to sound a lot like Christmas!

by Chris Narloch

My ever-expanding library of holiday albums expanded again this year, thanks to Alanis Morissette, The Gilded Age, Starbucks and Sufjan Stevens.

The Christmas music that will probably reign supreme in my home (and in my heart) this December isn't new, however, and I'm talking about Dolly Parton's final holiday album, from 2020, "A Holly Dolly Christmas." (If you don't already own it, then you're on Santa's naughty list.)

Truth be told, I like holiday music as much (or more?) than I like the holidays, so here are my picks for this season's finest new seasonal recordings.



Alanis Morissette – Good Weather for Immaculate Conception

This Canadian crooner is more of a rocker, and I would have expected an edgy holiday release from her, especially with the wacky title of the album.

Instead, "Good Weather for Immaculate Conception" is an entertaining mishmash of straightforward Christmas classics ("Ave Maria" and "O Holy Night," etc.), clever covers of pop/rock seasonal songs ("Last Christmas," "River") and some original originals, including a surprising holiday dance track that gives Cher a run for her money, titled "Christmas on the Dancefloor."

Ms. Morissette recently came out as pansexual, and to her credit she includes the vocal ensemble Trans Voices on her version of "O Tannenbaum" which is sung in German and English. Not everything here works, but the album is very eclectic and much better than I expected.



Voices of The Gilded Age – The Christmas Album

Fans of this popular, classy series on HBO Max will be in hog heaven with the release of the show's new holiday album, a collection of songs performed by 15 cast members, many of whom have Tony awards.

Audra McDonald, Brian Stokes Mitchell, Christine Baranski, Kelli O'Hara, Donna Murphy, Carrie Coon, Denee Benton, Laura Benanti, Adrienne Warren, Taylor Trensch (and others) lend their gilded Broadway voices to classic Christmas songs including "Let It Snow," "I Wonder As I Wander," "We Need a Little Christmas," and more.

Starbucks Holiday Blend 2026 – Various Artists

The coffee giant recently released its first global holiday album in over a decade, featuring mostly rising artists and fresh takes on holiday favorites.

The collection is anchored by Brandi Carlile's gorgeous take on Joni Mitchell's "River," but I also enjoyed Magnus Ferrell's catchy cover of "Happy Holiday / The Holiday Season."

The two super-soulful songs that close out the seven-track release are also dynamite: "What Christmas Means to Me" by The Womack Sisters, followed by Leon Thomas's "Soulful Christmas."



Sufjan Stevens – Worst Christmas Ever!

If you're looking for a laid-back, hipster holiday album, this compilation from Sufjan Stevens should do the trick. The quirky collection gathers fifteen of the artist's previously released Christmas songs, plus one new recording ("On This Christmas (It Only Gets Better)."

When Mr. Stevens sings "Holly Jolly Christmas," he doesn't sound all that jolly, but that is part of his appeal; he writes and sings about both the festive and the forlorn aspects of Christmas on the 100+ holiday songs he has released over the course of his career.

The artist scores on the new album with solid versions of "Silent Night" – which kicks off the collection – and "Auld Lang Syne," the next-to-last track. Sufjan Stevens clearly enjoys Christmas (or, at least, Christmas music). You might even call him the indie folk-rock answer to Mariah Carey.



Fred's Wish List

I am not big on gifts and often struggle with ideas so I keep things simple as best I can. I typically buy a few items to put under the tree that are generic, just in case someone gets me a gift and I did not plan to get them one. Bottles of Champagne work great, scented candles, small items that I have handy and if they do not get gifted then I have a treat for myself after the holidays!



One item that I love to give and could use a new set is Angel Cards. They are often found at spiritual stores or recovery stores and can easily be found on line. It is a gift that can be a special treat for anyone and even a gift for someone hosting a party. They are affirmation cards in a small deck, they can be used for a variety of purposes, each day pick a different card as a affirmation, intention, something you want to work on or something you want to give to someone. They can be used to explore you past present or future personal growth. You can interpret them anyway you like. They are sold with our without a guide book.

Nobel Saw Works

If you love to cook, having nice knives that are sharpened is a necessity. Also note buy bandaids at this time because you will need them as your knives are sharp! Yes of course the local, supermarket may offer this service for free, but I love to support small local businesses. Nobel Saw Works located at 3011 J St has been in business for more than 56 years. It is tucked in behind the building and best found by entering the back alley. They sharpen all types of knifes including scissors, even serrated knives and garden tools. The prices are fair and support a local tradesperson. Typically drop them off, and they are ready in a couple days.




The firepit at The Highlands Resort

I love travel of any kind and on my list to get or to give is *Highlands Resort* in Guerneville. You have certainly seen them in Outword as an advertiser, but they have been a decades long favorite place of mine. Adults only, amazing cabins under the redwoods and a spectacular pool area. It truly is one of the most beautiful paces on earth. Check out one of the Fairy Rings to sit in and gather your thoughts or talk to the spirits. They offer updated cabins that are amazing, some with kitchen features and seasonally tent cabins. Shopping, restaurants, art galleries, wine tasting, nightlife and beaches are just a short walk.

Aerating Wine Decanter - since I am a bull in a china shop Im not allowed to have many nice things and defiantly not allowed to wash them, but my husband broke our last and favorite one! NOT ME! This glass carafe filters wine and sediment. It is simple to use and the pieces all sit nicely so you don't lose any of them. They are available at a variety of stores including Crate & Barrel, but often found at local specialty kitchen and wine stores so buy local if you can. About $64



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The return of Johnny Depp... Plus, "Club Kid" is a must see

by Chris Narloch

It's that interesting time of the year, when theater screens are filled with year-end blockbusters like "Focker-In-Law" and the latest "Hunger Games" movie, alongside a few lower-profile but Oscar-worthy movies.

While I have not seen those two titles yet, I did catch Johnny Depp's new holiday offering ("Ebenezer") and "I Play Rocky," a feature film about the making of that iconic 1976 movie.

Also reviewed below are two smaller titles that are likely to be nominated when awards season begins later this year.



I Play Rocky

I was skeptical when I heard about this movie, a behind-the-scenes feature -- not a documentary -- about the making of the original "Rocky" film, especially since Sylvester Stallone was not involved in the making of the movie.

My fears were allayed after I saw an early screening of "I Play Rocky" with a friend of mine, and we both agreed the film was dynamite from start to finish, with the same feel-good, underdog spirt that made "Rocky" such a classic (and a huge hit).

The best part of the new film is Anthony Ippolito's remarkable performance as Sly, and he somehow managed to get Stallone's unique speaking voice down pat. (The producers were smart to go with an unknown who closely resembles the famous actor, rather than using an established star and prosthetics.)

The "making-of" details in the script are catnip for movie lovers like me, and I had forgotten what Stallone went through to get "Rocky" made. "I Play Rocky" is one of my favorite films of 2026, and it is currently in wide theatrical release.



Club Kid

I hate to beg, but I sincerely hope that queer movie fans (and fans of queer movies) will make the effort and pay to see this film on the big screen, rather than waiting to stream it at home. When modest titles this good actually get released in theaters, it's a small miracle, and since I want to see more of them get made, box office success is vital.

Actor Jordan Firstman hits it out of the park his first time at bat as a feature film director, and he also wrote and stars in "Club Kid," the story of a queer, 35-year-old party planner who parties too much himself, until a 10-year-old son he did not know he fathered comes into his life.

Firstman is first-rate here and so are Reggie Absolom, the adorable young actor who plays his son in the movie, and Diego Calva, as the main character's handsome love interest. To his credit, the writer-director makes his hero very human and flawed (but with definite potential for personal growth).

"Club Kid" is a smart, mostly realistic tearjerker with a perfect, bittersweet ending. See it at Sacramento's Tower Theatre before it's gone.



Ebenezer

Filmed in London and Ireland, the latest version of Charles Dickens' novella "A Christmas Carol" is a handsome, big-budget production with a terrific cast and a very talented director (Ti West, the fright-master behind the "X"/"Pearl"/"MaXXXine" trilogy.)

Unfortunately, the movie also comes with baggage by the name of Johnny Depp, who (in my opinion) is fine in the movie, which I thoroughly enjoyed. Judging by the hostility towards Depp in many of the film's reviews, critics seem to be "out to get" the actor, but since my job is to review movies rather than movie stars' personal lives, I will proceed accordingly.

The script of "Ebenezer" is very faithful to its source material, and the supporting cast could not be better, with terrific British actors including Sir Ian McKellen, Rupert Grint, Sam Claflin, Andrea Riseborough, and Daisy Ridley sharing the screen with talented American actors like Depp and Tramell Tillman, who is superb (and scary) as the Ghost of Christmas Present.

Ti West mostly reins in his horror impulses, although the movie earns its PG-13 rating and is definitely not for small children. If you are a fan of Mr. Depp and/or Dickens, give "Ebenezer" a try. Like me, you might be pleasantly surprised by the film, which is currently in wide theatrical release.



Wild Horse Nine

The race for Best Actor at next year's Oscars will be a tight one, with Matt Damon likely up against Andrew Scott, and John Malkovich a possible spoiler. Malkovich, who has been making movies for almost 50 years, has appeared in more than 70 films and has never won an Oscar, although he has been nominated twice as Best Supporting Actor.

Mr. Malkovich is a true character actor, and he has an incredible character to play in his latest release, a very dark and violent comic thriller costarring Sam Rockwell, in which the pair play CIA agents and hitmen.

"Wild Horse Nine" is indeed a wild ride – beautifully written and directed by Martin McDonagh and set in 1973 -- that was mostly filmed on Easter Island (Rapa Nui). The story takes place shortly before a military coup in Chile, and it also touches on conspiracy theories surrounding the Kennedy assassination.

Sam Rockwell, a terrific actor in his own right, almost fades into the background here, only because Malkovich's character is so flashy, and he plays it so brilliantly. Initially very off-putting and unsympathetic, Malkovich's hitman is never less than fascinating and, in the end, entirely pitiful.

"Wild Horse Nine" is currently in wide theatrical release.











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Out & About

with Matthew Burlingame

As winter approaches things seem a little lighter, and there's a renewed sense of hope in the air. With the holiday season upon us, it's a wonderful time to celebrate our community, cherish those we love and give thanks for the blessings in our lives. While challenges remain, we see the possibility of brighter days on the horizon. Embrace the season, spread a little kindness and know, we at Outword are thankful for you!

Nov. 29

Who says brunch can't be a drag? Makeup & Mimosas: Drag Brunch With a Punch brings fabulous queens, outrageous comedy and dazzling performances to Punch Line Sacramento, 2100 Arden Way, on Sunday, Nov. 29, at noon. Gather your friends for a lively afternoon of laughter, glamour and showstopping entertainment as Sacramento's drag performers serve up plenty of sass. It's a deliciously entertaining way to spend your Sunday! Punchlinesac.com

Dec. 4

Make your prom dreams come true at A Prom Under the Mistletoe on Friday, Dec. 4, at the Sky Room, 2600 Watt Ave. in Sacramento. Doors open at 6 p.m. for an evening of dancing, drink specials, prom photos and holiday magic. Bring a date, gather your friends or fly solo! Dress casual or formal. Admission price is on a sliding scale. JamminJo.com



Dec. 5

Get ready for a night that's naughty, provocative and outrageously entertaining! Dan Savage's HUMP! Film Festival returns to the Crest Theatre, 1013 K St., on Saturday, Dec. 5, at 7:30 p.m. This adults-only celebration of independent erotic cinema features 90 minutes of hilarious, sexy and boundary-pushing short films. Honoring all body types, genders, and sexualities, HUMP! promises plenty of laughter and surprises. Doors open at 6:30 p.m. CrestTheater.com

Sleigh bells are ringing, and the sequins are sparkling! The Sacramento Gay Men's Chorus presents Slay Bells & Sequins: Holiday Hits With a Splash of Sass! on Saturday, Dec. 5, at 2 and 7 p.m. at Sacramento Memorial Auditorium, 1515 J St. Enjoy holiday classics, Rudolph the Gay Reindeer, dancing elves and plenty of fabulous queer holiday cheer! SacGayMensChorus.com

Dec. 9

Make the season merry, bright and full of Pride! The Sacramento Rainbow Chamber of Commerce celebrates the holidays with its Holiday Mixer on Wednesday, Dec. 9. Join LGBTQ+ business professionals, community members and allies for a festive opportunity to reconnect, make new friends and celebrate another year of community and connection. Spread some holiday cheer while supporting Sacramento's vibrant LGBTQ+ business community! RainbowChamber.com



Dec. 10

Country music fans are in for a treat when Pam Tillis, Lorrie Morgan and Lacy J. Dalton take the stage at Thunder Valley Casino Resort. These three celebrated performers bring decades of country music hits to one stage for a special evening of music and memories. From Tillis' "Maybe It Was Memphis" and Morgan's "Something in Red" to Dalton's "16th Avenue," audiences can look forward to an evening filled with familiar favorites, powerful voices and plenty of country music nostalgia. Three artists, one night, and a whole lot of great music!
thundervalleyresort.com

Dec. 11

Get ready to skate, slay and sparkle! Drag Queens on Ice returns to the Downtown Sacramento Ice Rink at Ali Youssefi Square, Seventh and K streets, on Friday, Dec. 11, from 7 to 10 p.m. Enjoy fabulous drag performances, live DJ music and the chance to glide alongside local drag royalty! Admission is $15, including skate rental, or $8 for children 6 and younger. It's a fabulous winter wonderland celebration! DowntownSac.org

Upcoming

Get ready to dance in the streets this holiday season! "A Magical Motown Christmas!" brings the unforgettable sounds of Detroit to the Crest Theatre, 1013 K St., on Saturday, Dec. 12, at 7:30 p.m. Celebrate the legendary hits of The Temptations, The Supremes, Stevie Wonder, Marvin Gaye and more, alongside Christmas favorites. Expect dazzling costumes, dynamic choreography, soulful harmonies and over two hours of musical magic! Cresttheater.com


A Magical Motown Christmas!

Come sail away on a night of classic rock! Styx takes the stage with Blue Öyster Cult and Asia Featuring John Payne on Friday, Jan. 8, at 7 p.m. at The Venue at Thunder Valley Casino Resort in Lincoln. Get ready for soaring harmonies, electrifying guitar riffs and legendary hits like "Come Sail Away," "Renegade" and "Don't Fear the Reaper." Three powerhouse acts, one unforgettable night! ThunderValleyResort.com





Don't forget!

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

Ron's Wish List

Part Two - Kitchen Stuff



For the bread lover on your holiday shopping list, Lorine's Beeswax Bread Bags offer a clever, eco-friendly alternative to disposable plastic. Made from reusable beeswax-coated fabric, they help keep bread fresh while allowing it to breathe. Available in a handy two-pack, they're a thoughtful gift for home bakers, sourdough enthusiasts, or anyone who appreciates a good crusty loaf. Practical, reusable, and a little unexpected – just the kind of gift that rises to the occasion. Find them at *LorineOfficial.com.*



There seems to be no shortage of hot sauces these days, but the offerings from High Mesa Chile Co. caught my attention. Made with flame-roasted chiles, their lineup includes Fresno, Hatch, Serrano and Habanero varieties, each promising its own combination of flavor and heat. The company offers assorted packs, which could make an interesting gift for someone who likes experimenting in the kitchen or simply believes everything tastes better with a little kick. I'm particularly curious about the Hatch and Fresno sauces, although the Habanero might require a certain amount of courage. They certainly look intriguing, but whether I'm brave enough to order a whole assortment remains to be seen. Find them at *highmesachile.co*. If you try them, let me know what you think.



Give your hardworking KitchenAid mixer a little holiday sparkle with this handsome stainless steel attachment set from Mr. Mixer. Designed for tilt-head mixers, the set includes a paddle, whisk and dough hook, all crafted from durable stainless steel that won't chip or peel like the traditional coated attachments. They're built to last and look terrific doing it, making this a thoughtful gift for anyone who loves spending time in the kitchen. At $125, it's a practical upgrade that brings a touch of luxury to everyday mixing, whipping and baking. Available at *MrMixer.store*.



We all have hundreds, if not thousands, of photographs stored on our phones and computers, but how often do we actually look at them? Online photo book services like *Mixtiles* make it easy to turn those forgotten digital memories into something you can hold in your hands. Whether it's a favorite vacation, a beloved pet, a special celebration or simply a collection of moments worth remembering, creating a personalized photo book is a thoughtful gift that doesn't require a lot of effort. With a variety of sizes, layouts and styles available from different online services, you can create something truly personal. And unlike another digital album, this one looks great sitting on a coffee table.



If you've spent any time scrolling through recipes online lately, you've probably noticed that cottage cheese has become the unlikely superstar of everything from protein-packed dips to creamy sauces and even desserts. And what better excuse to treat yourself to a shiny new blender? A good, powerful blender can turn that lumpy cottage cheese into silky-smooth goodness in seconds, while also tackling smoothies, soups, frozen drinks and whatever culinary experiment the internet convinces you to try next. It's a practical gift that might just inspire a little creativity in the kitchen. And if nothing else, you'll finally have the perfect excuse to find out whether cottage cheese really does belong in everything!



Sometimes the simplest kitchen gadgets turn out to be the most useful. These oversized stainless steel kitchen tweezers from *BIGSUNNY* might look like something borrowed from a surgeon's operating room, but they're surprisingly handy when it comes to cooking. Perfect for flipping bacon, turning delicate pieces of food, retrieving something from a hot pan or arranging a plate to look like it came from a fancy restaurant, they offer precision that ordinary kitchen tongs sometimes lack. The serrated tips provide a secure grip, and the long design helps keep fingers away from the heat. A fun, inexpensive gift for the home cook who already seems to have everything – except a giant pair of tweezers.

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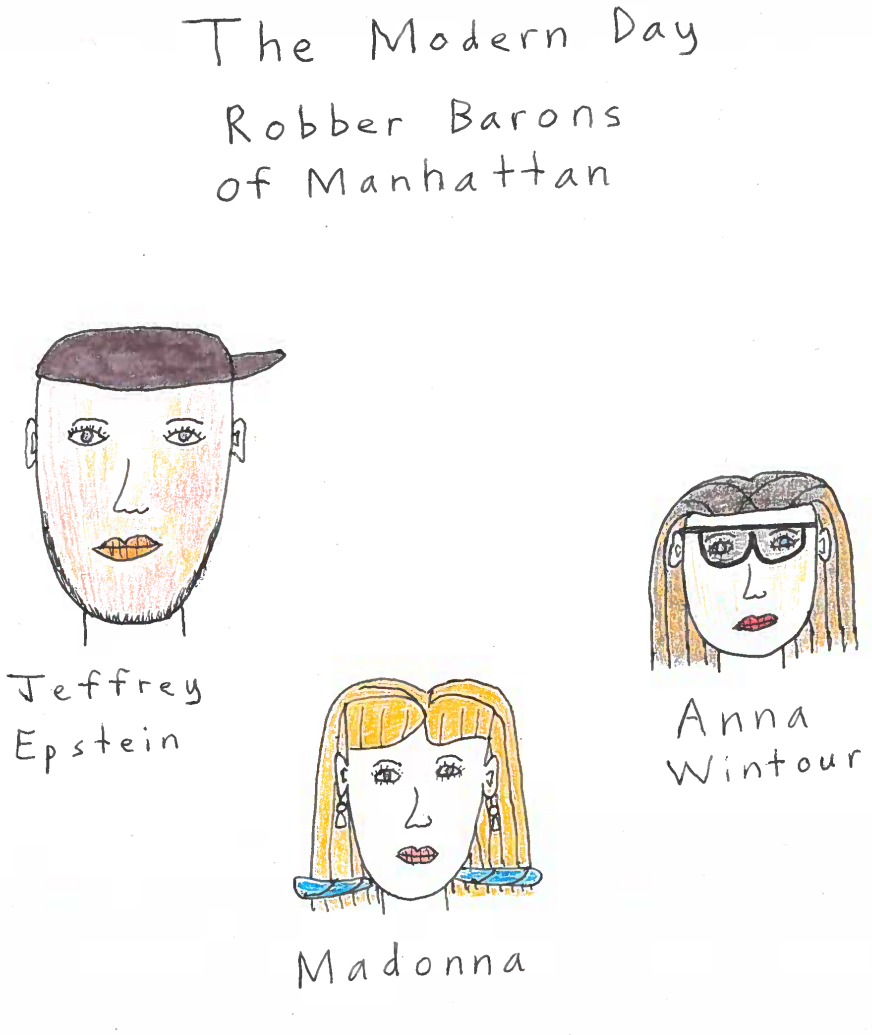

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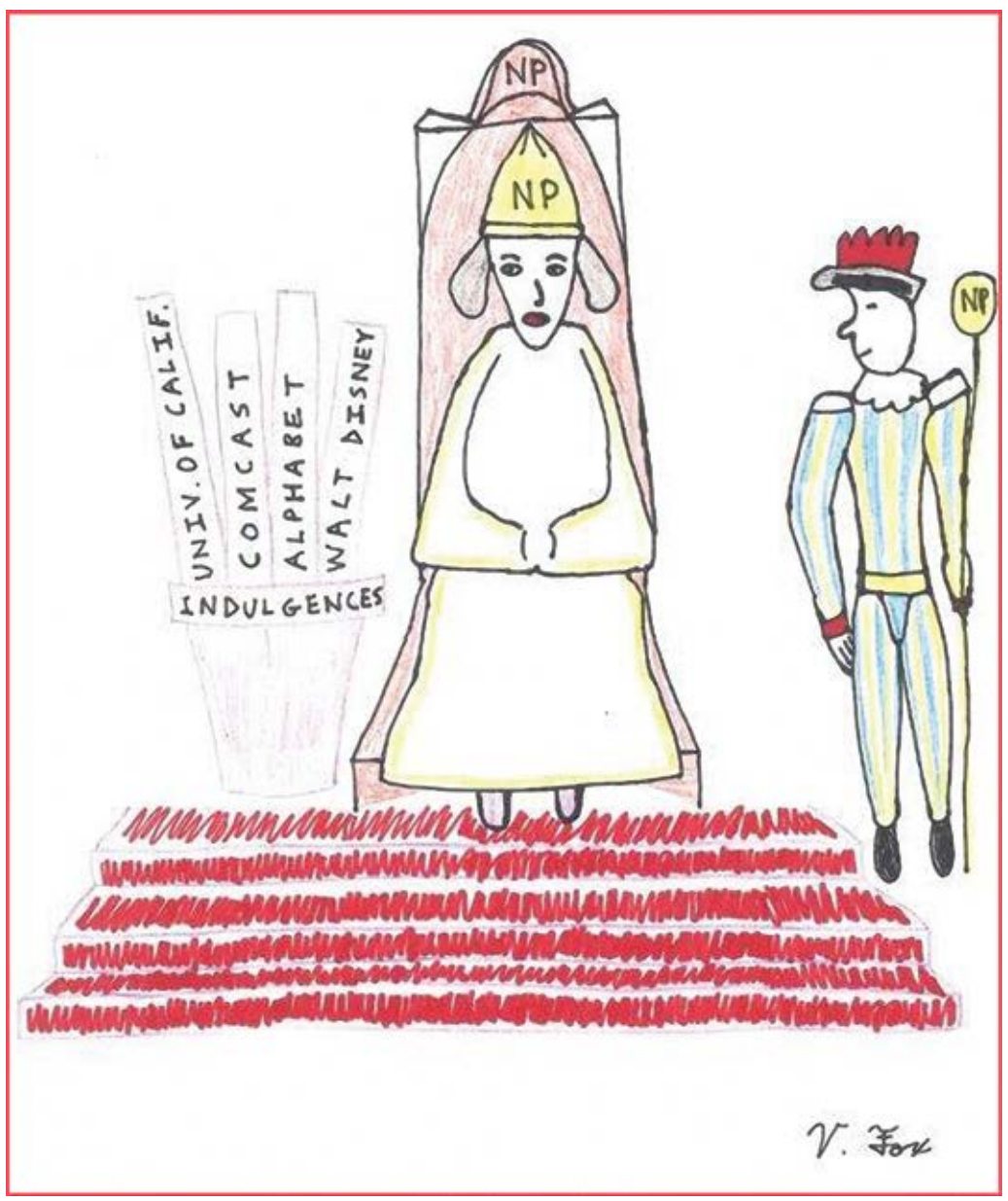

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The Word is out.

One More Issue Before We Call It a Year!

Outword's December 10 issue, Holiday Shopping Guide Number Two, will be our final issue of 2026. After that, we'll be taking a little holiday break before returning on January 14 with our 32nd annual Health & Body issue. But we're not quite finished with this year yet! If you have something you'd like to promote in our final issue, there's still time to get in on the action. Just give Fred a call, and we'll make it happen. In the meantime, we hope you enjoy this first installment of our Holiday Shopping Guide. We had a great time putting it together, finding some fun, practical and occasionally unexpected gift ideas. We hope your Thanksgiving was a wonderful one, and as the holiday season gets into full swing, we wish all of our readers, advertisers and friends a festive season filled with good food, good company and plenty of reasons to celebrate. Whatever holidays you observe, and however you choose to celebrate them, we hope they're happy ones. Thanks for spending another year with *Outword*!



A Fruitcake That Requires a Project Manager

There are two kinds of people in this world: those who enjoy fruitcake and those who have actually tasted it. But this holiday season, we're giving this much-maligned confection the respect it deserves. We're making fruitcake the old-fashioned way, with an unreasonable assortment of dried fruits, enough brandy to concern your bartender, and a preparation schedule that should probably require a building permit.

Remember, buying one at the store would be admitting defeat.

Preparation time: Three weeks, give or take a nervous breakdown.

Difficulty: Advanced. A therapist on standby is recommended.

Serves: 12–16 people, some willingly.

Ingredients

The Fruit Situation
1 cup golden raisins
1 cup dark raisins
1 cup dried currants
1 cup chopped dried apricots
½ cup chopped dates
½ cup candied cherries
½ cup candied orange peel
1 cup chopped pecans
1 cup brandy, plus more for ongoing maintenance

The Cake Itself
1¾ cups all-purpose flour
1 teaspoon baking powder
½ teaspoon salt
1 teaspoon cinnamon
½ teaspoon nutmeg
¼ teaspoon ground cloves
½ cup unsalted butter, softened
¾ cup packed brown sugar
3 large eggs
¼ cup molasses
Zest of one orange
¼ cup orange juice



Instructions (and Emotional Preparation)

Day One: The Commitment

Combine all dried fruits and candied peel in a large bowl. Pour in the brandy, stir, cover and refrigerate overnight. Have a cocktail. You've earned it, apparently.

Day Two: The Reckoning

Preheat oven to 300°F. Grease and line a 9-by-5-inch loaf pan with parchment paper, leaving an overhang for removing the cake.

Whisk together flour, baking powder, salt and spices. In another bowl, cream butter and brown sugar until fluffy. Beat in eggs one at a time, followed by molasses, orange zest and juice.

Fold in the dry ingredients, then the soaked fruit, any remaining soaking liquid and pecans. At this point, the mixture should resemble something excavated from an archaeological site.

Spoon into the prepared pan and smooth the top. Bake for approximately 2 to 2½ hours, until a skewer inserted into the center comes out without wet batter. If the top browns too quickly, cover loosely with foil.

Cool completely. Resist the temptation to throw it away.

Weeks One Through Three: The Rehabilitation Program

Remove the cake from its pan, brush with 1–2 tablespoons of brandy, and wrap tightly in parchment and foil. Store in a cool place, preferably somewhere you won't have to look at it every day. For extra food-safety caution, refrigerate it.

Once a week, unwrap, administer another tablespoon or two of brandy, and rewrap. Think of it as caring for a particularly demanding houseplant.

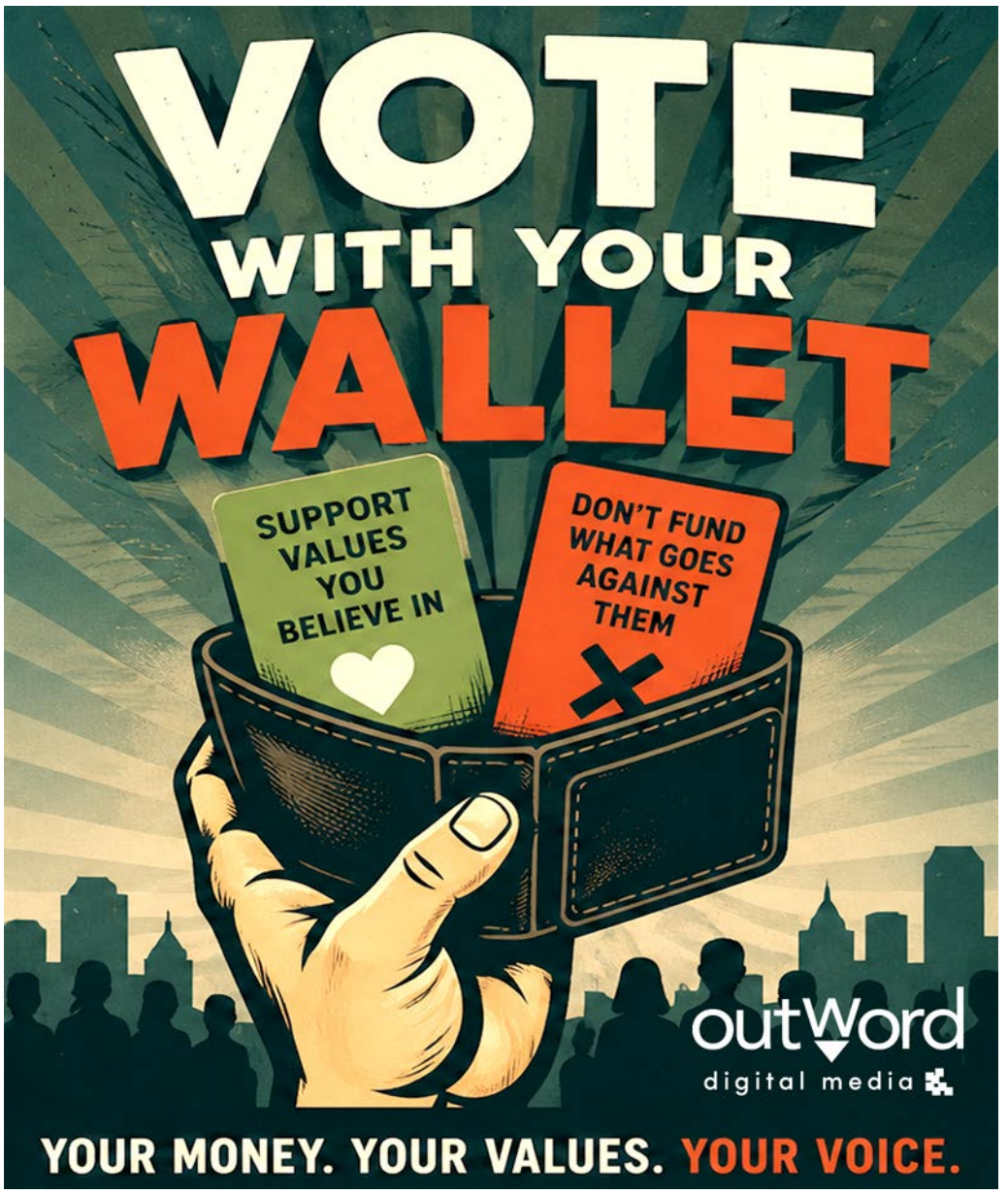
The Grand Unveiling

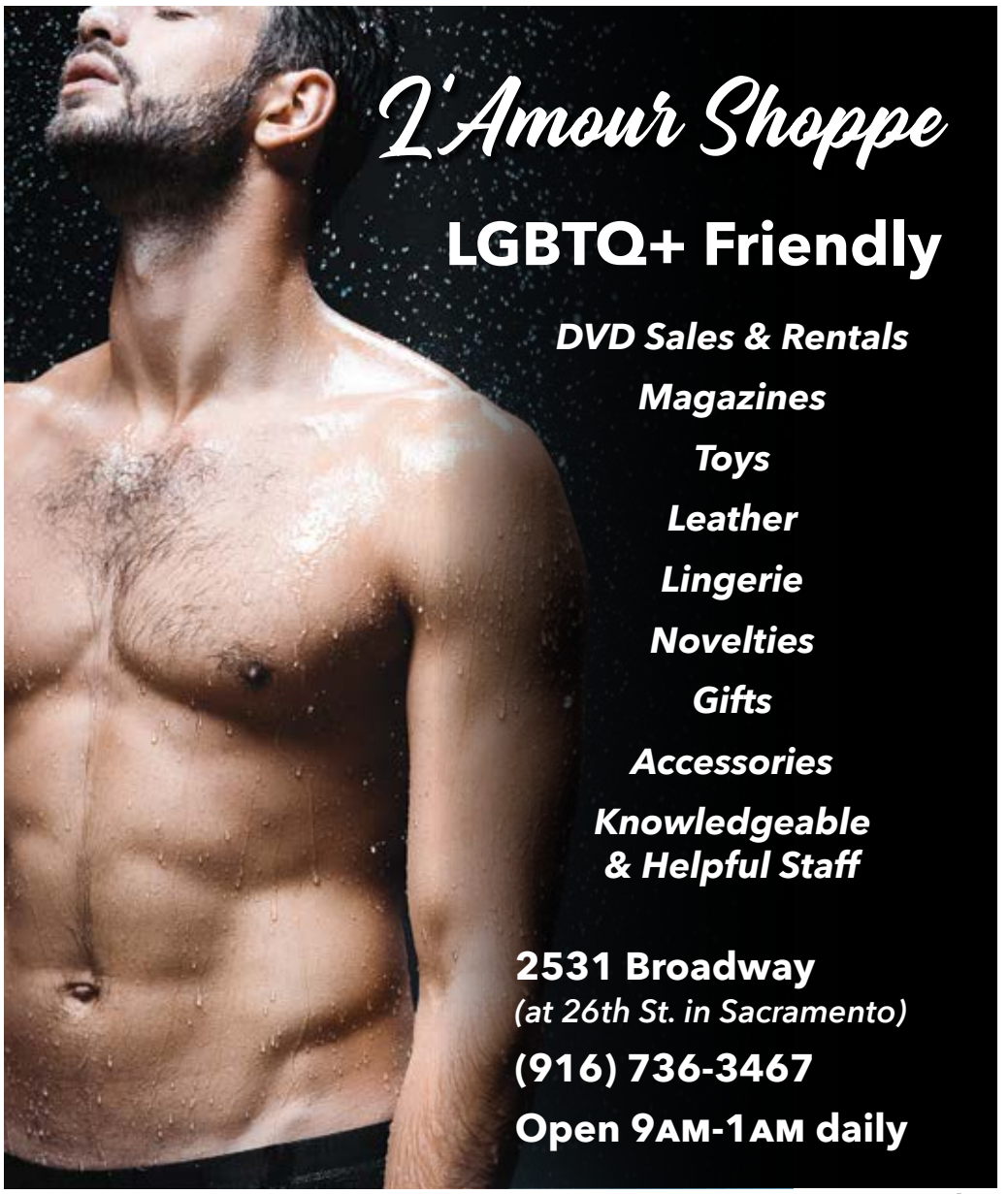
After three weeks, unwrap your masterpiece. Slice thinly and serve with coffee, tea or whatever brandy remains.

Congratulations. You've spent nearly a month preparing a dessert that most people will politely decline.

But those who appreciate a proper, rich, boozy fruitcake? They'll love it.

And if all else fails, it makes an excellent doorstop.





Centerfold

not

Centerfold





CA State Fair's two-page spread

Sunburst Projects' center spread

Ernie already has that covered.
We're talking about a gorgeous two-page spread in an upcoming issue of Outword, the perfect place to showcase your business, introduce your staff, share your story, or promote whatever deserves the spotlight.
It's bold, memorable, and surprisingly affordable.
Go ahead... make a splash. Keep your clothes on.

Call Fred today for pricing and to schedule your own centerfold.
Also, if you need design help, we can lend a hand with that too!

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shop TWO

Holiday Shopping Part Two



Artwork Deadline:
Nov. 30, 2026
Online Date:
Dec. 10, 2026



Make Sure Your Customers Know You're Here This Holiday Season!

Outword's second Holiday Shopping Guide is coming soon, and it's a great way to let your customers know you have just what they need for those last-minute holiday gifts!

Whether it's a restaurant gift card, a relaxing massage, a special book or even a wine club membership, the possibilities are endless. And best of all, shoppers can find these great gifts while supporting local businesses!

Call or email RON to secure your ad space in this last special issue of 2026!

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