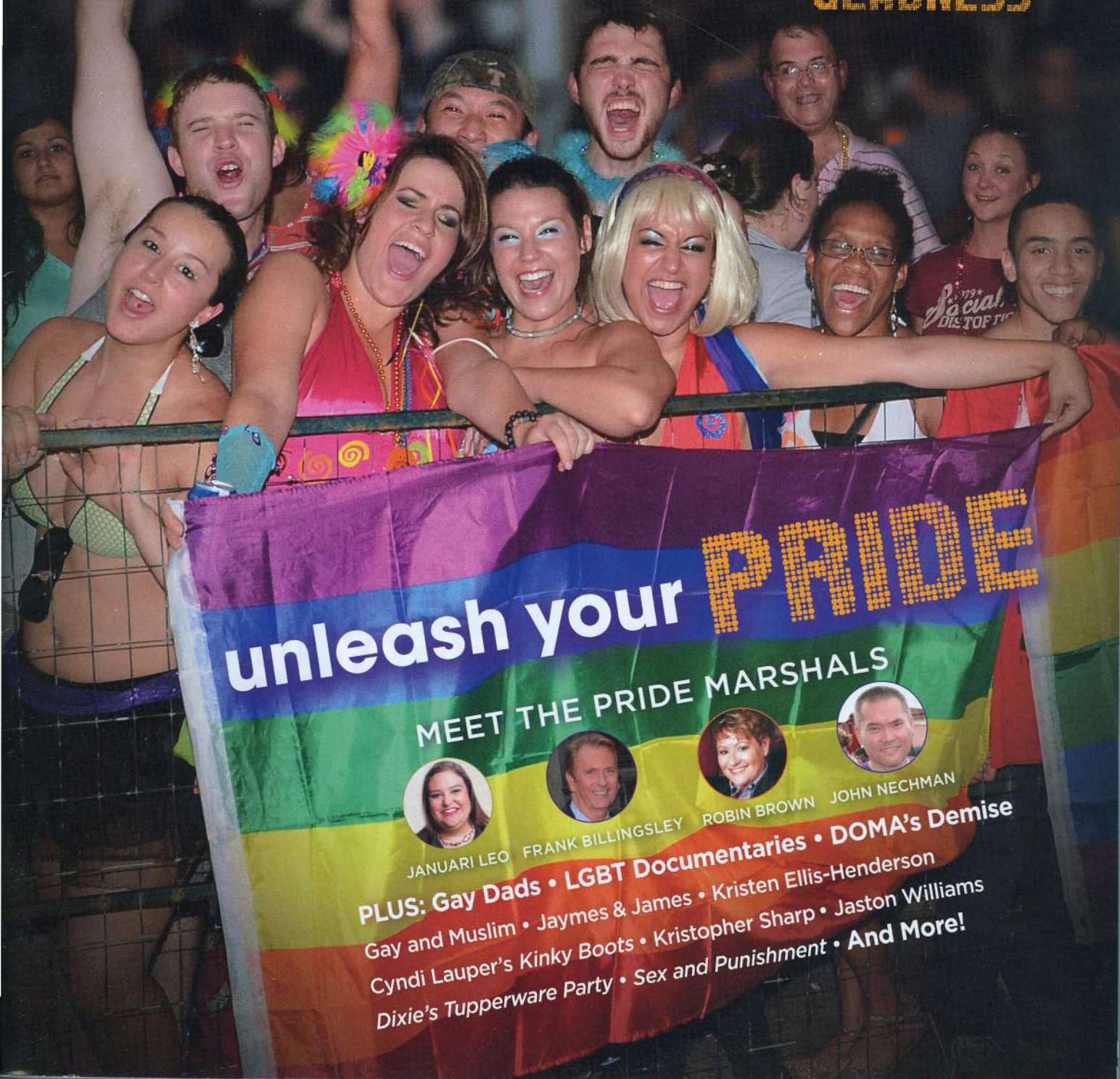


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JUNE 2013

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FRANK BILLINGSLEY



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Gay and Muslim • Jaymes & James • Kristen Ellis-Henderson
Cyndi Lauper's Kinky Boots • Kristopher Sharp • Jaston Williams
Dixie's Tupperware Party • Sex and Punishment • And More!

It's Pride Month!

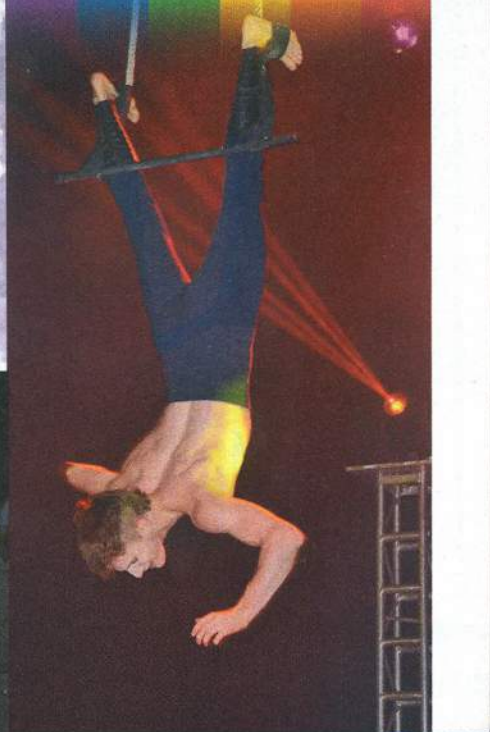
We'll show you our pride if you show us yours

Compiled by Marene Gustin

Photos by Dalton DeHart

For more than thirty-four years, Pride Houston has been a central part of our LGBT community. Sure, you know you're going to stake out seating early for the Pride Parade that closes the annual Pride Week on June 29, but you can also celebrate Pride all month long. Check out this list of events and get ready to par-tay.

Pride Calendar of Events →



Thelma Houston (pictured above) stole the show at Discovery Green during last year's Rainbow on the Green. Other events pictured here from last year include the Pride Superstar competition, Wonderland Houston, a fashion show, and the Pride festival.



It's Pride Month!

continued from page 39

June 1

HOUSTON PRIDE BAND

The Great Outdoors Concert, the final concert of the 2012–2013 season. Resurrection MCC. resurrectionmcc.org

LESBIAN HEALTH INITIATIVE HEALTH FAIR

Offers no-cost screenings, including PAP tests/well person exams, mammograms, blood screenings, heart and vascular risk assessments. Legacy Community Health Services. lhihouston.org

FIRST SATURDAY QUEER BINGO

Tequila, tacos, and drag queens at El Real Tex-Mex. The Houston LGBT Community Center hosts this monthly charitable bingo game. El Real Tex-Mex. houstonlgbtcommunitycenter.org

June 2

PFLAG HOUSTON RECEPTION HONORING REV. JIM BANKSTON

St. Paul's United Methodist Church. pflaghouston.org

MONTROSE SOFTBALL LEAGUE SEASON PLAY

Week 8. Houston Sportsplex. montrosoftballleague.com

June 4

CONVERSATIONS WITH THE DIRECTOR

Museum of Fine Arts, Houston presents therapist Dr. Ruth Westheimer and MFAH director Gary Tinterow. This discussion marks the second event in the new series that brings an eclectic mix of cultural figures to the Museum's Brown Auditorium three times a year. MFAH. mfah.org

June 6

PRIDE SUPERSTAR COMPETITION: ROUND 5

An official event of Houston Pride Week, this competition has showcased amazing LGBT artists that you have experienced not only at Pride Houston events, but at other LGBT events around the city. South Beach. southbeachthenightclub.com

ALLEY THEATRE ACTOUT

See *Sherlock Holmes and the Adventure of the Suicide Club* and enjoy fabulous pre-performance mixers with music, socializing, complimentary cocktails, and appetizers. Tickets available for purchase online. Alley Theatre. alleytheatre.org

OUT@TUTS NIGHT PRESENTS FLASHDANCE, THE MUSICAL AND DIXIE'S TUPPERWARE PARTY

Attend the first Thursday performance of these great shows, and after the performance mingle with the cast and listen to fabulous cabaret music with your LGBT friends. TUTS. tuts.com/out

June 7

THROUGH THE LOOKING GLASS HATCH PROM

Every year the HATCH youth come up with their own theme for their annual prom, and 2013's concept should lend itself to everything from the surreal and fabulous to the outrageous. The Montrose Center. hatchyouth.org

June 8

GLAMOROUS GLEE: GAY MEN'S CHORUS OF HOUSTON

For their annual Pride show, GMCH will perform a tribute to the tradition of glee-club choruses. Enjoy favorite male glee-club songs from the past and from present popular fabulous stage shows, presented as only these men can. Cullen Theatre at Wortham Theater Center. houstonfirsttheaters.com/worthamcenter.aspx

PRIDE SUPERSTAR COMPETITION: ROUND 6

An official event of Houston Pride Week, this competition has showcased amazing LGBT artists that you have experienced not only at Pride Houston events, but at other LGBT events around the city. South Beach. southbeachthenightclub.com

June 9

MONTROSE SOFTBALL LEAGUE SEASON PLAY

Week 9. Houston Sportsplex. montrosoftballleague.com

ACCT CHAMPAGNE BRUNCH AT THE SAN LUIS RESORT

Step back in time at the "60s Boob Tube Mania" Champagne Brunch. The San Luis Resort. supportacct.org

June 13

SOBE PRIDE SUPERSTAR SPECIAL EVENT

RuPaul's Drag Race contestant Alyssa Edwards judges and performs live! No cover all night. South Beach. southbeachthenightclub.com

June 14

PRIDESCAPES SHOW: THIS SIDE OF THE RAINBOW

The third annual PridesCAPES show is a song-and-dance revue featuring principal cast members from area musical repertory companies, directed by Carole Lamont,

celebrating the spirit of the diva in solo and ensemble pieces from Broadway, the movies, and the pop charts of yesterday and today. Creative Life Spiritual Center. creativelife.org

GRAND MARSHAL HAPPY HOUR PRESENTED BY BBVA COMPASS

Join the Houston Pride Celebration's Grand Marshals Robin Brown, John Nechman, and Januari Leo for a Friday evening cocktail. Hughes Hanger. hugheshanger.com

June 15

MONTROSE SOFTBALL LEAGUE'S JOCKS IN DRESSES

Benefits Legacy Community Health Services and Pet Patrol. South Beach. montrosoftballleague.com

PRAIA URBANA HOUSTON 27 FEATURING CHUS + CEBALLOS AND JULIUS

Praia Urbana is Houston's all-day outdoor electronic music festival. Last Concert Cafe. flavorus.com/prai27

JASTON WILLIAMS IN BLAME IT ON VALENTINE, TEXAS

Follow Jaston, age four, as he singlehandedly destroys a dance concert in one of the smallest towns in Texas and becomes a local star in the process. It just gets funnier, as one of The Grand's favorites regales the audience with his stories based on his own experiences growing up. The Grand 1894 Opera House. thegrand.com (See page 113.)

I CAN DO ANYTHING!

The annual screening of film shorts by, about, and for kids celebrates children, who truly can do anything because they still know how to dream! Before the screening is a special youth music performance. Aurora Picture Show. aurorapictureshow.org

June 18

CENTER SENIORS & FRIENDS POTLUCK

The Houston GLBT Community Center organizes the monthly potluck. Bethel United Church of Christ. houstonlgbtcommunitycenter.org

June 19

STACHE BASH

A chic cocktail party with fantastic nibbles provided by Melange Catering. Guests have the opportunity to show →

It's Pride Month!

continued from page 41

off their 'stache (real or fake) and the possibility of a straight razor shave provided by V's Barbershop. Complimentary grab bags given to guests. Kiehl's (Highland Village). pridehouston.org/events/stache-bash

June 20

LGBT IN AMERICA: THE LAST LEGAL DISCRIMINATION

Hosted by the Rothko Chapel, this lecture presents Councilman Joel Burns and Robert Leleux as they discuss the impact discrimination has on the community, the way younger citizens perceive these actions, and how to begin healing from bullying and homophobia. \$10 suggested donation. The Rothko Chapel. rothkochapel.org

PRIDE SUPERSTAR COMPETITION: ROUND 7

Now in its seventh season, this competition has showcased amazing LGBT artists that you have experienced not only at Pride Houston events, but at other LGBT events around the city. South Beach. southbeachthenightclub.com

June 21

RAINBOW ON THE GREEN AT DISCOVERY GREEN

Land Rover Houston Central's Rainbow on the Green presented by Legacy Community Health Services showcases musical performers and DJs at downtown's Discovery Green park. discoverygreen.com/rainbow-on-the-green

EDEN: A PRIDE GIRL PARTY

The Usual - Neighborhood Pub. theusualpub.com

June 22

PRIDE IN THE PARK

Come out to the Houston Dynamo game and show your true Pride colors while supporting your local soccer team. BBVA Compass Stadium. bbvacompassstadium.com

ELLE INDIE-FEST SUMMER 2013

It's Victoria Love's birthday party. Over 200 people attended the last event, and it was awesome. AvantGarden Houston. avantgardenhouston.com

June 23

SALVATION: A PRIDE POOL PARTY

Come wash away the sins of the past and

ones yet to come as Pride Houston presents this party. There will be an open bar and nibbles. Why sizzle in the sun if you can't get a little wet? HI-Houston: The Morty Rich Hostel. Official After Party following at FBar. pridehouston.org/events/salvation-a-pride-pool-party

June 24

DINE WITH PRIDE

When you dine today at Gratifi Kitchen and Bar, a portion of your food bill goes to benefit Pride Houston. Gratifi Kitchen and Bar. gratifikitchenandbar.com

June 25

THE DREAMGIRLS SHOW THEIR PRIDE

FBar. fbarhouston.com

ROCK THE RUNWAY

If you thought last year's Rock the Runway was swanky, you haven't seen anything yet!



Oh My Pride: grab your rainbow flags and get ready to scream, shout, and catch some beads at this year's Houston LGBT Pride parade on June 29.

This year, it features some of the hottest models in Houston walking the catwalk in this summer's latest styles in underwear, swimwear, and everything to wear on top! Free and open to the public. South Beach. southbeachthenightclub.com

June 26

REEL PRIDE PRESENTS BREAKING THROUGH

Openly LGBT-elected officials at all levels and from across the country—including the first gay U.S. senator, Tammy Baldwin—share their stories of self-doubt and triumph over multiple barriers ranging from race and poverty to gender and sexual orientation, revealing a deeply personal, rarely seen side of politicians and gay people. River Oaks Theatre. pridehouston.org/events/1673 (See page 110.)

MERRY GAY CONSULTANTS LAUNCH PARTY

Join this launch of a new business. Stereo Live. merrygayconsultants.com

June 27

PRIDE SUPERSTAR COMPETITION FINALE

Now in its seventh season, this competition has showcased amazing LGBT artists that you have experienced not only at Pride Houston events but at other LGBT events around the city. South Beach. southbeachthenightclub.com

THE ANNUAL INTERFAITH PRIDE SERVICE

The service brings together people from diverse religious traditions who join in unity to acknowledge and celebrate the spiritual presence found in every lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, questioning, and straight person. Cathedral of Hope Houston. cohhouston.org

DRAG ME TO FAME

Talented hopefuls compete for prizes and bookings hosted by Charo Beans DaBarge. FBar. fbarhouston.com

June 28

WONDERLAND HOUSTON

Follow the white bunny to a winter wonderland, benefiting Bunnies on the Bayou. Ages 18 & up. Bayou Music Center. wonderlandhouston.com

TGI PRIDE SHOW

Tony's Corner Pocket. tonyscornerpocketbar.com

June 29

The 35th Houston LGBT Pride Festival and Pride Parade

This is it, the big event! Join more than 325,000 people to celebrate who we are as a community. Montrose Blvd. pridehouston.org

OFFICIAL PRIDE HOUSTON AFTER PARTY!

This event is the only *official* After Party of the Houston LGBT Pride Celebration and a sanctioned Pride Houston event. South Beach. southbeachthenightclub.com

June 30

RAPTURE: A PRIDE FOAM PARTY!

This is the *official* Foam and closing party of Houston Pride Week. Get ready to swim in the suds with hot boys and girls all around! South Beach. southbeachthenightclub.com ■

Frank Billingsley

Pride Parade's Honorary Grand Marshal

by Marene Gustin • Photos by Dalton DeHart

Blogger Mike McGuff once referred to KPRC-TV Channel 2's chief meteorologist as the Anderson Cooper of local television. Some viewers may have known he was gay, but most probably didn't—and didn't care.

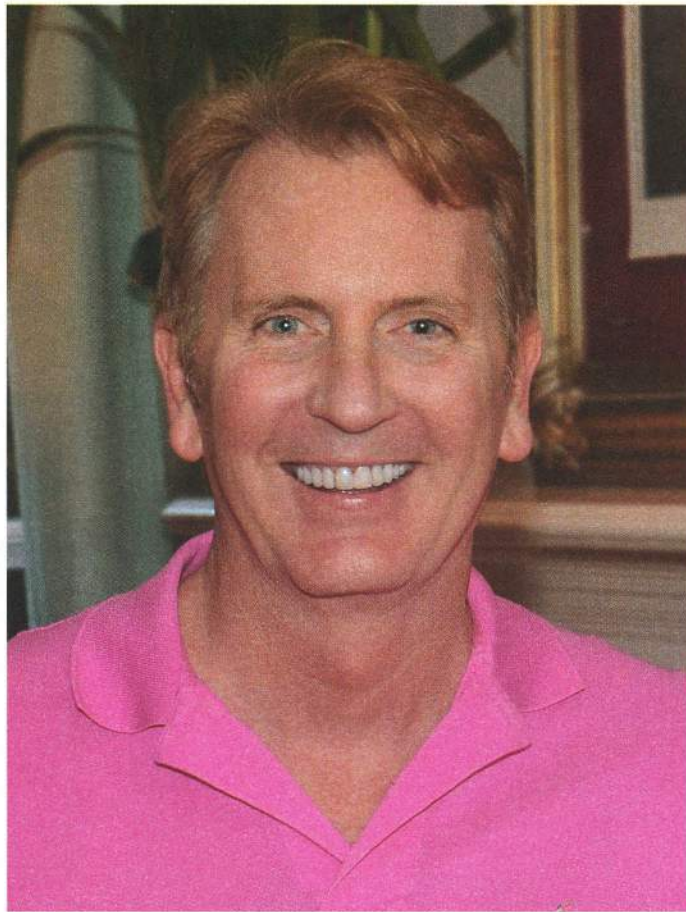
But it may have surprised a few of Frank Billingsley's viewers when local media reported his wedding to longtime partner Kevin Gilliard last December. "We never hid our relationship," says Billingsley. "We had people over to the house as part of auction items at fundraisers, and as far back as the '90s he was always my date at station Christmas parties."

Still, it surprised some when news of his wedding last December 12 was reported. He and Gilliard and about seventy friends and family, including Gilliard's twenty-five-year-old son, gathered at the Eventi Hotel in New York City for the wedding.

"Morgan came into my life when he was seven," Billingsley says of the young man. "He's a lucky boy to have three dads."

Billingsley and Gilliard met at JR's on August 12, 1995, and as Billingsley says, "Since then we've maybe been apart for ten nights."

Raised in Alabama, the charismatic, blue-eyed Billingsley studied communications and journalism at Washington and Lee University and received his Broadcast Meteorology Certification from Mississippi State University. He says he leaned toward forecasting the weather because the weathermen had



Bright and sunny: KPRC-TV's chief meteorologist Frank Billingsley rides in his first Pride parade on June 29.

more personality on air than the anchormen. "Plus," he adds, "the Weather Channel had just started with twenty-four-hour weather, and it just seemed very exciting."

He started out in Roanoke, Virginia, forecasting the weather for four years before moving to a Biloxi station and then to Texas.

The pair has two schnauzers named River and Ocean. "Because Phoenix would have been too obvious," Billingsley says, although two previous schnauzers were named Rock and Hudson.

He came to Houston in 1989 as the weekend meteorologist for KTRK-TV Channel 13 and then jumped ship in 1995 to become KPRC's chief meteorologist. "Houston is just a great market for meteorologists," Billingsley says. "We get snow here, we get hurricanes, we get

heat waves. It's a very big challenge to forecast the weather here. It's a lot easier to forecast weather in L.A. "Plus, we're a very outdoor city. People go to Memorial Park, they go to baseball games, and even outdoor weddings! So they are always interested in what the weather will be like."

And, in case you're wondering about this season's gloom-and-doom hurricane forecast, don't worry. "We've had nineteen named storms almost every season," he says. "It's not about the numbers, it's about whether or not it hits you. Make a plan, have an emergency kit, and watch me!"

Billingsley's TV schedule doesn't leave a whole lot of time for newlywed togetherness. "Kevin is in human resources. He works days and I work nights, so we aren't exactly social butterflies," he says. "We have a house in

Galveston that we're always working on, and, like every other gay couple, we love to travel and cook!"

And his favorite dish is coconut cream pie. "Kevin makes it from scratch because he knows I love it, but he hates coconut so he won't even take a bite of it," he says.

Now that's love.

The pair also has two schnauzers named River and Ocean. ("Because Phoenix would have been too obvious," he says, although two

previous schnauzers were named Rock and Hudson. So go figure.) They've always had dogs, except for a brief foray into goldfish that didn't end well. "They just ate →



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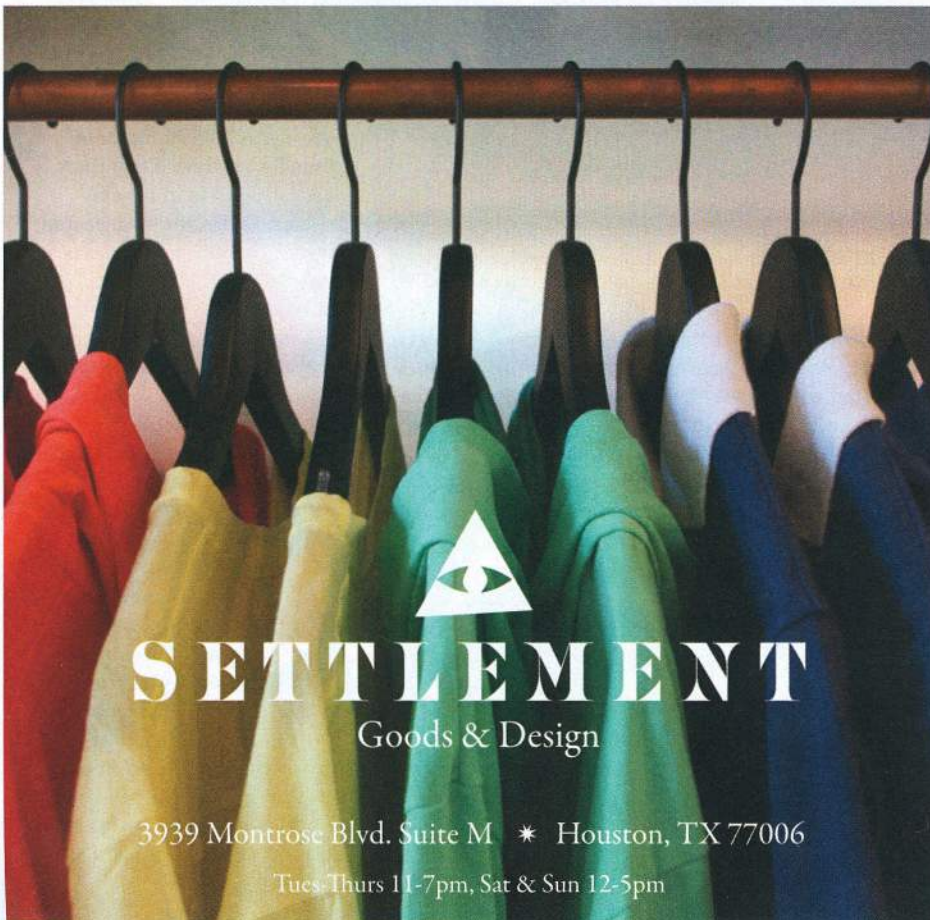

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Frank Billingsley *continued from previous page*

each other," Billingsley says.

With such a cozy, longtime relationship, why did they decide to make it legal now? "We decided to get married legally because if you don't play the game you can't complain," Billingsley says. "And it's like that last week of college. You pretty much know everything, but you still want to walk down that aisle and get that diploma." Or walk down the aisle and get that marriage license.

There are now twelve states—the number seems to increase almost daily now—that recognize same-sex marriages. But Texas isn't one of them. To which Billingsley replies: "If it's good enough for the Boy Scouts, it should be good enough for the state of Texas. I thought that was a very brave vote they made. Things are changing. Eventually Texas will recognize our marriage."

What makes him most angry isn't that the state doesn't recognize his marriage but that it means that people still think being gay is a choice. "It's no more a choice than your eye color is," he says. "It bothers me that people just don't get that. Being



Out in Houston: Frank Billingsley with his husband, Kevin Gilliard, at the Marriage Equality rally in March, where he was a guest speaker.

gay is a fact of life, not a choice. It's just who we are, and the fact that some people can't recognize that and be okay with it and allow us to marry who we want discriminates against us."

As for Houston Pride Week, Billingsley is very excited about being named Honorary Grand Marshal. "I've never ridden in the parade before," he says. "We've watched it before and they have even asked me to be in it, but the parade always fell on June 22, which is my birthday and my mother's, so there were always too many conflicts."

This year, the festival and parade down Westheimer Road is June 29, making it a perfect post-birthday celebration for one of Houston's favorite weather guys.

Marene Gustin also writes about Dixie Longate in this issue of OutSmart.

From High Kicks to High Tech

After fifty years, Robin Brown shows no signs of slowing down

by Brandon Wolf

Photo by Brandon Wolf

Robin Brown was born on April 12, 1963, near Detroit, Michigan. Fifty years later, on the eve of her birthday, she was named the 2013 Houston Female Pride Marshal. "It was the best birthday present I could possibly have had," she says.

Born in the early spring, Brown was named for Michigan's famous robins. "Robins are considered the first sign of spring," she says with a warm smile. The name fits her well. Like her namesakes, Brown is cheery, hard-working, and colorful.

Athletic and Involved

Brown's parents divorced when she was eight, and although the breakup affected her, it made her stronger. She lived with her mother, who was young and very beautiful. "She was a department store 'demo girl,' then sold waterbeds, and eventually worked her way up to VP at a brokerage house," Brown says.

Despite the emotional effect of the divorce, Brown still remembers a happy school life—living in the same geographical area and attending elementary, junior high, and high school with the same group of friends. At the time, she thought the school was big—with 230 in her graduating class. But looking back, she says it seems small.

Brown's fundraising efforts earned her a seat next to singer Cyndi Lauper at the 2009 Obama inauguration.

Brown was athletic—playing golf and junior varsity basketball. On a dare, she tried out for the high school drill team, and to her surprise she secured a position.

The girls wore green sequin drill outfits, accessorized by white leather boots, white gloves, and white cowboy hats. The razzle-dazzle uniforms were typical for the type of drill team they were—high kickers.

The drill team days ended when she was hit by a negligent driver while riding her bike one evening. Brown remembers being propelled through the air, hitting the pavement, hearing the sound of squealing car tires, and seeing those tires stop just feet from her limp body. "I was carried to a nearby yard to await an ambulance," she

remembers. "Believe it or not, that's when the lawn sprinklers decided to come on." Brown recovered, but could no longer execute the high kicks.

At school, Brown took photos for the yearbook. She was president of the school's French club, and won election as class treasurer. When she graduated, she was given the fitting honor of being named "Most Spirited."

During her school years, at the age of fourteen, she also took up a job in her stepfather's golf shop. She began by sweeping floors, but it wasn't long before she proved her ability to sell shoes. She →



2013 Houston Female Pride Marshal Robin Brown shows pictures of her two famous grandfathers—on the left, King Gates, child actor in more than fifty "Our Gang" movie shorts, and on the right, Roy Brown, designer of the Edsel.

From High Kicks to High Tech

continued from previous page

quickly moved on to becoming the most successful sales clerk for golf clubs, with lots of regular customers, and nice sales commissions for her savings account.

The Grandfather Effect

Brown learned self-assurance early on. Both of her grandfathers were unique and creative, and mentored her. They both ended up working in the auto industry—one for General Motors and one for Ford. “I’ve always gotten great discounts on cars,” Brown laughs.

Her paternal grandfather was Roy Brown, the man who invented the Edsel. Despite the fact that the car became synonymous with failure, her grandfather was proud of the design he created. “And he lived to see it become one of the most iconic cars ever built, selling for over \$100,000 these days to collectors.” When

her grandfather died earlier this year, a relative texted Brown, “Your grandfather is trending on Yahoo!” (he was a headline item).

Her grandfather Brown also designed the Mercury “concept car” that became



Family: Brown in 2011 with her grandfather, Roy Brown, designer of the Edsel and the Batmobile.

Gala: Brown at the Human Rights Campaign Gala 2012 with her date, Alison Killebrew.

the Batmobile on TV. “The producers called and said they needed a Batmobile in one month. All Ford could do was take the futuristic-looking car and put Bat-markings all over it.”

Robin’s maternal grandfather was King Gates. “He was a Mensa, and graduated from college at age sixteen,” she says. He was also a child actor who appeared in more than fifty of the famous



PHOTOS COURTESY ROBIN BROWN

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"Our Gang" movie serials of the 1920s and '30s. "His mother was a secretary at Universal Studios," says Brown.

College Days and Making Love 'Somewhere in Time'

Brown studied hotel management through Michigan State University, and earned her bachelor's degree. She says college was "great, but a busy blur."

For her internship, she applied to the world-famous Grand Hotel on Michigan's Mackinaw Island, the popular resort destination that bans all vehicles except for horse-drawn carriages and bicycles. She was accepted, but turned down the offer to work at the island's lesser-known Murray Hotel.

"The Grand Hotel position was too limiting," Brown says. "At the Murray, I was allowed to experience everything—cleaning rooms, waiting tables, bartending, and working the front desk." Halfway through the summer, she was promoted to night supervisor.

The romantic cult classic *Somewhere in Time* was filmed on the island the summer before, so it was the buzz of the summer that Brown spent there. Although she had been attracted to other women for years, she found her first Sapphic experience on the enchanted isle that summer.

A Stellar Professional Life

Brown went on to work for the historic Pontchartrain Hotel in Detroit for four years. It was a rare five-star hotel, and she loved the atmosphere. Asked what the secret to achieving excellent customer service is in such a demanding industry, Brown says, "You stop, you don't react, and you listen." It's a formula that has worked for her when organizing volunteers, too.

Brown's abilities were quickly noticed. In 1984, she was courted by Sonesta Hotels to work for them in Fort Myers, Florida. Soon after, she was made a national sales manager for thirteen of their facilities.

Bell South wooed her to Atlanta in 1988. And when the company bought Houston Cellular, she found herself heading for Texas. Brown says she loves Houston. "It's a great big small town."

Brown continued to be in demand by hiring managers who were aware of her skills. Since moving to Houston, she has also been employed by Automated Data Processing (ADP) and CSI Healthcare IT.

The Biggest Challenge of Her Life

Brown currently works for the Cerner Corporation, a medical software →

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From High Kicks to High Tech

continued from previous page

company that brings in nearly four billion dollars in revenue annually. One of their largest ventures is the automation of medical records, which the U.S. government has mandated healthcare providers to achieve by the end of 2014.

As the executive director of consulting, Brown works with strategy and planning. Cerner implements systems, trains employees, and provides audit services. The company stresses "accountable health care."

Their systems can monitor the performance of physicians and staff members, making sure they are providing adequate care and promoting wellness. They can also help consumers lower their insurance rates with good health practices such as exercise and improved diet. The company developed a system to monitor the onset of sepsis and has nearly eliminated this number-one killer of hospital patients.

Becoming Political

Brown's political involvement began in Houston when she joined the local chapter of the Human Rights Campaign and worked on their fundraising galas for years. Her efforts earned her a seat next to singer Cyndi Lauper at the 2009 Obama inauguration.

For the last three years, she has raised money for the Victory Fund. In the 2012 elections, 180 LGBT candidates were endorsed at the national, state, and local levels, and a record 124 were elected. One of the sweetest victories was Tammy Baldwin's rise to the U.S. Senate. "I was standing next to Mayor Parker at Hughes Hangar on election night," says Brown. "It was exciting to watch as she shared tweets with Tammy."

Brown has also been a volunteer for the Uncommon Legacy Golf Tournament. In 2011, she organized the Victory Fund's 2011 Family Picnic in Cherryhurst Park during Pride Month. The event attracted 160 people. Future picnics are not on her agenda, but she says with a grin, "I'll be glad to show someone else everything that has to be done!"

Riding Down Westheimer

Brown got the news that she was the 2013 Female Pride Marshal while celebrating her fiftieth birthday in a resort near Cancun with thirty friends. She regretted missing the announcement party, but all of her vacation reservations had been made before the date of the celebration was announced.

"I was partying with my friends when last year's male marshal Nick Brines texted me the news," Brown relates. "The whole place broke into applause, and people I didn't even know came up to congratulate me." She admits that she broke into tears when the news came. "It's the ultimate recognition by the community—real icing on the cake, after twenty years of activism."

Riding in the Pride parade isn't totally new to Brown. When her friend Fiona Dawson was marshal in 2009, Brown was riding in the passenger seat of that convertible. "The driver of the car fainted from heat stroke," she remembers. With typical "get it done" leadership, Brown took over the wheel for the rest of the ride.

Looking back on her first fifty years, Brown sums up her life as "pluralistic." "I was put here to bring diverse groups of people together to accomplish things. But I think I need to slow down," she says. "I've been having way too much fun."

One can't help but see that Brown will never stop doing either.

Brandon Wolf also writes about Pride marshals John Nechman and Januari Leo in this issue of OutSmart magazine.

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A Very Global Pride Marshal

John Nechman lives the word 'diversity'

by **Brandon Wolf**

Photo by Dalton DeHart

When talking with John Nechman, it doesn't take long before the word "global" comes to mind. The child of a bi-racial couple, Nechman himself has been in a bi-racial relationship for seventeen years. He's traveled to more than one hundred countries, and his most passionate focus is on LGBT immigration issues.

Nechman was born to a Korean woman and an American G.I. in 1965. In 1998, he found the love of his life, a Colombian citizen living in the U.S. on a student visa. Asian, American, European, African, and Latin influences are all present in his life. "Watching the Miss Universe Pageant with relatives can get chaotic!" he laughs.

An Early Baby

The oldest of four sons, the Seoul, South Korea native weighed a mere three pounds when he was delivered by a midwife two-and-a-half months early. Nechman's Korean mother had spent much of her life in Beijing, China, where her father taught college.

By the time he was seven, his family had settled in Houston where his father continued a career as an insurance agent for John Hancock. His mother taught herself English and went to work as an accountant. Nechman was enrolled at Foster Elementary School in Humble, Texas.

The family later moved to the Forest Cove area of Kingwood. The area was so new that the local high school had only a freshman and sophomore class when he began. "Our class was the first to make the full cycle of four years," he remembers.

An Athletic Youth

Nechman was a good student—popular and athletic. He played on the football, baseball, soccer, and golf teams. At fifteen, he began waiting tables at the Kingwood Country Club.

Being gay wasn't something he thought much about. As an athlete, no one suspected he might be gay. "But I remember

"Ricardo was taken aside and questioned. When [Customs officials] figured out we were a couple, he was taken to a private room and grilled about our relationship."



2013 Houston Male Pride Marshal John Nechman has traveled to more than one hundred countries, so we are lucky that he has chosen Houston as his home.

all the butt-slapping and gay name-calling that was part of the locker-room culture," he says.

Nechman was a keen enough child to have been aware of the Houston Heights gay serial killings by Houstonian Dean Corll, which took the lives of twenty-eight known victims between 1970 and 1973. He remembers that it discouraged his interest in exploring his sexual orientation.

But eventually his interest was revived when he heard activist Ray Hill's speech at the Anita Bryant demonstrations in Houston in 1977, when thousands marched through the streets and circled

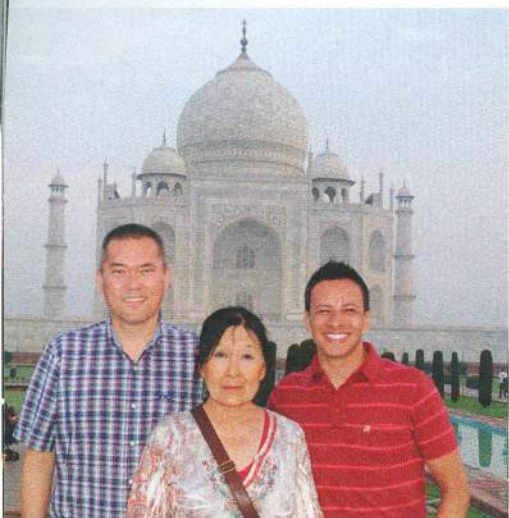
the Hyatt Regency where Bryant has performing.

"Our family had gone to Chinatown for dinner that night," Nechman recalls. "Driving home, conservative talk show host Jon Matthews came onto the car radio and started talking about the gay mob that had descended on the Hyatt." Nechman's father quickly changed the radio station. When they arrived home, twelve-year-old Nechman ran to his room and took his transistor radio into the closet to hear →

A Very Global Pride Marshal

continued from previous page

the news reports. "I heard Ray Hill addressing the crowd that had gathered by



Family outing: it was his mom's (c) dream to see the Taj Mahal, so he took her and his partner, Ricardo Ruiz (r) in April.

City Hall," he remembers.

As he grew older, he got bolder and became aware of the Montrose club district. But Houston was too close to home, and Nechman worried about being seen

in any gay place. "That made the University of Texas in Austin very appealing to me as a choice for college."

College and Life on the Road

Nechman enrolled at UT, and earned a bachelor's degree in business and linguistics. His parents divorced during his first year of college, and his father remarried a woman from Mexico City. "She came from a large family and I didn't know Spanish," he notes. "So I decided to study the language as a minor."

To earn money, Nechman waited tables. He also found jobs as a doorman and bartender in clubs on Austin's Sixth Street.

College was followed by three years of backpacking across Europe, visiting more than one hundred different countries. "I got by with my wits, odd jobs, and the kindness of friendly people," Nechman says.

Every summer, Nechman ended up on the Greek island of Mykonos. He slept under the stars on the roof of a disco. "Some nights I danced on the disco floor—other nights I danced on the bar," he says with a grin.

Entering the Field of Law

Nechman says he was "devastated" by his parents' divorce, but he is proud that his mother used her savings to open a pharmacy



Baby, it's cold outside: Nechman (r) and his law partner, Mitchell Katine, in Washington DC to hear oral arguments in the two marriage cases in March. They waited in the freezing cold temperatures from 2 a.m. to assure being in the Supreme Court on the two days of argument.

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in Houston's Fifth Ward. The area was one of Houston's most crime-ridden zones, but she still made the business successful. She also had a lengthy romance with an African-American gentleman who came to work at the pharmacy.

His mother was also successful at convincing her son to abandon his European wanderings and enroll at South Texas College of Law. "She bought me a dog to keep me grounded," he says. That dog, a Norwegian Elkhound that he named Björn, lived for nineteen years.

Nechman had a number of relationships with men over the years, ranging from a few weeks to deeper long-term commitments. One of those relationships, unfortunately, nearly cost him his life. An obsessive ex-lover from his years in Europe tracked him down in Houston and asked to meet.

"I showed up at the downtown YMCA and he was in a car," Nechman remembers. "Next thing I knew, there was a pistol at the side of my head." Nechman survived the attempt on his life, but did take a bullet in his upper arm. The bullet traveled about eighteen inches inside his arm before exiting.

"There was blood everywhere," says Nechman. "The EMTs couldn't figure out where I had been hit, and stripped me down to my undershorts. It was an odd feeling, standing there nearly naked and covered with blood, as local TV cameramen shot footage of me for the evening news."

Finding the Love of His Life

In 1996, Nechman went to work for Ritchie & Glass to learn criminal law. That same year, he met Ricardo Ruiz, whom he has lived with for the last seventeen years. "I first saw him in the Fiesta on Bellaire Boulevard, and it was love at first sight."

Ruiz, a native of Colombia, was living in the U.S. on a student visa. Courtship led to commitment. But unlike a heterosexual couple, there was no chance of marriage and citizenship. So Nechman quickly became interested in immigration law, and he went into solo practice for the next four years.

In 1998, the two were traveling together and had to go through U.S. Customs. "Neither of us had ever experienced problems with Customs officials before," Nechman says. "But that time, Ricardo was taken aside and questioned. When they figured out we were a couple, he was taken to a private room and grilled about our relationship." They were both shattered by the incident.

Ruiz, a dedicated schoolteacher →



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Outsmart Magazine's Favorite Therapist 2003-2013, Tony Carroll, LCSW. Tony has Houston's oldest GLBT focused psychotherapy practice. He is previous president of the Texas Clinical Society, and his partner, Dr. Bruce Smith, joins him in these presentations. Participants always say it is helpful to see a real couple at work together.

TONY CARROLL, LCSW

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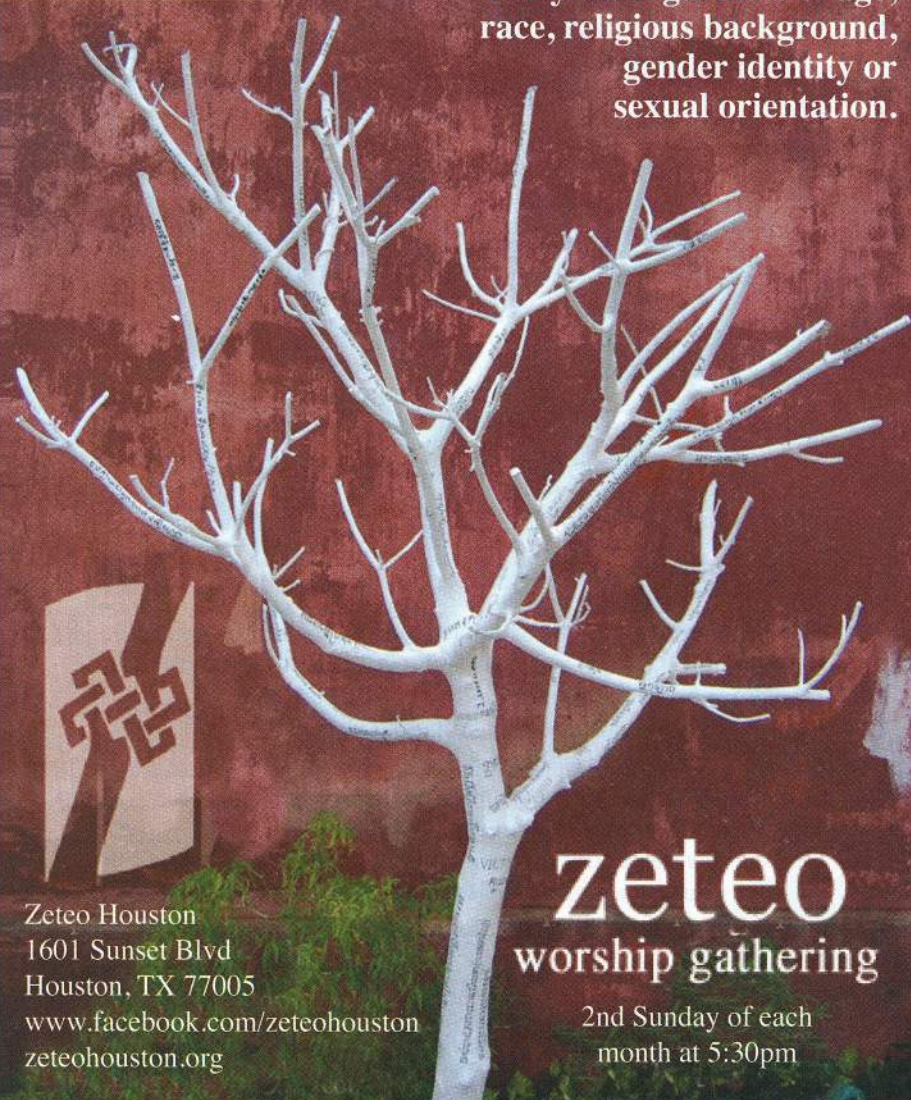
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A Very Global Pride Marshal

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who drives one hundred miles round-trip to teach in an impoverished area, hopes to gain his citizenship within the next year. "But it's cost us more than \$100,000 over the years in legal expenses to stay together," Nechman says.

Making a Difference

Nechman has been a strong leader in the fight for immigration rights for the LGBT community. Although he cheered the 2010 abolition of the U.S. travel ban on HIV-positive individuals, he emphasizes that there is still much to do. "People have little idea how much the gay community has been hassled by Customs officials over the years," Nechman says.

Nechman was present for the oral arguments in the two most famous Supreme Court cases in the past decade that affected the gay community. In 2003, he was John Lawrence's "bodyguard" during *Lawrence v. Texas*. And in March of this year he was present for the marriage equality Proposition 8 hearings. He's not sure how the justices will decide, but he hopes to be celebrating when this year's Pride Parade moves down Westheimer.

Now a partner at the Katine and Nechman law firm, Nechman keeps busy with his immigration law cases. He has successfully defended many clients seeking asylum in the U.S., preventing their forced return to countries where they could be persecuted for their orientation.

Nechman is also an adjunct professor at the South Texas College of Law and the University of Houston Law Center. He has taught courses such as "Sexual Orientation and the Law" and "HIV and the Law" since 2003.

Constantly busy "giving back," Nechman has served as an officer of numerous national, state, and local legal organizations. He is a frequent speaker on immigration, business, human rights, and LGBT/HIV-related legal issues.

Handsome and fit at age forty-eight, Nechman approaches life with an outgoing nature and a humble spirit, and considers his election as the 2013 Houston Male Pride Marshal to be a great honor. "I'm very thankful to have had a clear purpose in life," he says. "And because I'm an attorney, I've been able to make a difference in many people's lives. It's been a wonderful labor of love."

Brandon Wolf also writes about Pride marshals Robin Brown and Januari Leo in this issue of OutSmart magazine.

A Vital Community Ally

Januari Leo embraces her core social values

by **Brandon Wolf**

Photo by Lynn Lane

Born in 1975, Januari Leo was only nine when the first news about Ryan White, a hemophiliac infected through an AIDS-tainted transfusion, broke in the media. "It was scary," she remembers. "And it broke my heart to see the way this thirteen-year-old boy was treated by his local community."

Leo grew up in a conservative Republican family, and although AIDS wasn't a particular subject of conversation in the house, she was already reading about it in newspapers and watching it on cable news. "I seem to always have been a truth seeker," she says.

Growing Up in Garland

Leo, the "2013 Houston Pride Ally" of the LGBT community (an honor bestowed upon a supportive heterosexual), grew up in Garland, Texas. Her father was a salesman and her mother worked as a secretary. She has one brother.

School wasn't a chore for Leo. She got good grades and had lots of friends.

With a natural inclination to media, she served as the editor of the school newspaper.

Leo was also an accomplished dancer, whether it was jazz, tap, or hip-hop. In high school, she earned spending money teaching dance to younger children. She played the flute in her high school marching band.

Later, she transferred to the band's flag corps. Dressed in orange, green, and

"No matter what happens in life, there will always be good people out there."

white, the Rangers performed at every game and traveled as far away as Colorado to take part in competitions. She remembers lots of snappy routines, but thinks that the corps' rendition of Elvis Presley's *Fever* was probably her favorite.

A Strong Sense of Social Justice

Leo says she has always had strong core values that reflect her concern for the less fortunate

in our society—public health, social justice, equal rights, empowerment, and compassion. So it was no surprise when she majored in sociology and political science while earning her bachelor's degree at University of Houston's downtown campus.

Some of her early jobs also prepared her for a life dedicated to others. She once worked as a cashier in an adult video store. She laughs at the mention of the video rental scene in the cult classic film *Clerks*. Leo

also worked for a time as a hostess at the Birraporetti's Restaurant on West Gray in Houston.

During her senior year of college she met Brian, the man whom she would soon marry. "We talked at a party and discovered we had a lot in common." Their first child was born at the end of that class year. The day before her final exams, her doctor told her to head to the hospital. "I told him I couldn't because I had final exams the next day." The doctor won.

Leo describes her husband as "the logical side" in their marriage. "He works in finance and data analysis for Merrill Lynch. Actually, it's quite common for people in social work to marry someone outside their professional circle."

In 2002, Leo started graduate school at University of Houston, working on →



The 2013 Houston Community Pride Ally, Januari Leo, has always found meaning in helping others.

A Vital Community Ally

continued from previous page

a master's degree in social science. She put that goal on hold while devoting



All smiles: Leo happily poses with her husband Brian, son Seth, and daughter Maya.

herself full-time to raising two children. In 2010, she earned her graduate degree.

Entering the Political Arena

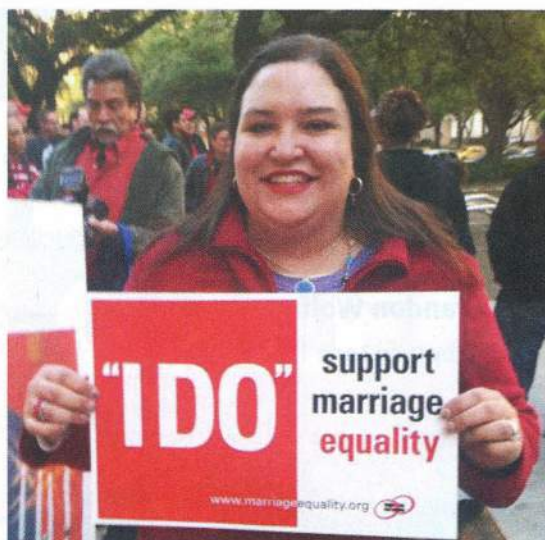
Leo's first "real" job came in 2010 when Texas state representative Jessica Farrar asked her to manage her District 148

re-election campaign. Leo had first met Farrar at a Planned Parenthood Lobby Day in Austin. "She spoke so well, and I was so impressed at her youth and sense of passion."

The 2010 election was hard fought. "Her opponent attacked her support of Planned Parenthood and the HPV vaccine. It was a horrible year for Democrats. The Tea Party nearly wiped us out. But Jessica won by an impressive 56 percent."

Election night was filled with mixed emotions for Leo. "I was very happy, but I was also exhausted." Farrar asked Leo to join her staff, but Leo had already set her sights elsewhere.

During graduate school, Randall Ellis, Senior Director of Government Relations at Legacy Community Health Services, had visited her political science class. "He



I do: Leo at Marriage Equality rally in Houston.

believed so deeply in his work with LGBT and HIV issues," Leo remembers.

Later that year, she worked with Ellis on a syringe exchange project as part of her graduate school practicum. "The bill almost passed in the Texas legislature," Leo says. "But the opposition derailed it at the last moment."

After earning her degree, Leo kept in touch with Ellis. "I found out what events he would be at, and I always



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ended up placing myself in front of him," she laughs. "I kept asking if he had a job opening yet."

Her perseverance finally paid off, and in February 2011 she was offered a job as a public affairs field specialist for Legacy. "From the day I started, I had two weeks to coordinate an HIV Advocacy Day in Austin," Leo says. It was an impressive first assignment—more than one hundred people statewide showed up to lobby for HIV issues.

Mastering the Complexities of Public Health Policy

"My job is to help people understand public health policy," says Leo. "It's all very complex. I have to study it and make it comprehensible."

Toward that end, Leo issues action alerts, puts together advocacy days, and takes part in community organizing. "I go to lots of local meetings," she says. "Many of them are after hours." She also works with the Ryan White Planning Council and often travels to Austin to testify at committee hearings.

"A really big issue now is Medicaid expansion for HIV," Leo notes. "Ryan White funding has to be re-approved at regular intervals. We'd like to see it covered more comprehensively by Medicaid. That would make the funding sustainable."

Leo loves working for Legacy. "Katie Caldwell, the director, is amazing. She's been in politics, so she understands not only healthcare management, but also the political realities."

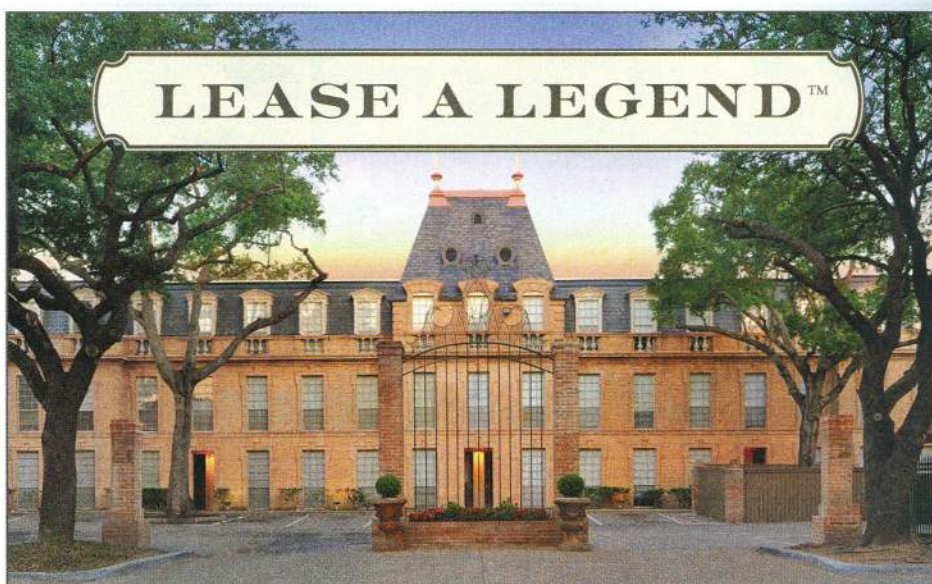
"I have been given great freedom to address issues," Leo says. She has already worked with Harvard University on a major academic study of HIV issues. Currently she is educating herself about federal HIV funding. "It's important to be at the table."

Leo says that the Affordable Care Act ("Obamacare") has already had a positive impact on Legacy. "More services are covered now, and that means we have more money to invest in broadening what we do."

The recent upswing in new HIV infection among youth concerns Leo. "Kids are getting careless," she says. "It's basically a lack of knowledge, so HIV education is very important to me."

Leo says that she is excited about being a 2013 Pride marshal. "I felt so honored when my name was announced. I admit I wasn't expecting it."

On parade night, her two children will join her on the back of a convertible as it rolls down Westheimer. "We're only supposed to have one additional person with us," Leo says. "But with two children, →



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A Vital Community Ally

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I couldn't leave one of them out, so the Pride Committee made an exception." Her husband will serve as either a banner-bearer or a wheel-watcher. It will be a special night for the family. "There are ten days of constant activity leading up to the parade," Leo says. "I'm trying to get a lot of rest before then."

The best thing about being a Pride marshal is the opportunity to advocate for her favorite causes, Leo says. Asked to reflect on her life up to this point, she feels that the word "grass-roots" is the most common thread. "I'm very community-oriented, and like to work directly with people."

Looking ahead, Leo says that things are definitely getting better—for the LGBT community and in the health services field. "No matter what happens in life, there will always be good people out there." And our 2013 Community Pride Ally is definitely one of them.

Brandon Wolf also writes about Pride marshals John Nechman and Robin Brown in this issue of OutSmart.

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Jaymes & James

Houston LGBT Pride Celebration Celebrity Grand Marshals

by Megan Smith

Photo by Gabriel Goldberg

When hunky Chippendale duo Jaymes Vaughan (l) and James Davis (r) entered *The Amazing Race*, fellow cast and audience members initially dismissed them as little more than pretty boys with six-pack abs. However, with unyielding determination to win the million-dollar prize money to help Vaughan's father fight his cancer, the pair soon became the team to beat.

Although Jaymes & James came in second place, their fans did not abandon them—they rallied behind the duo to raise over \$30,000 to help Vaughan's father.

Besides recording an album and producing a new travel show, the guys are currently using their newfound fame to help charities such as the American Can-

cer Society, the Human Rights Campaign, and Aid for AIDS. "The race gave us a platform, and it's our job to use that to help others," Davis says. "Especially since our fans did so much to help us after the race," Vaughan adds.



Vaughan, who is openly gay, and Davis will serve as this year's Celebrity Grand Marshals for the Houston LGBT Pride Celebration. "The amount of love and support we have received from the LGBT community has been beyond overwhelming," Vaughan told the *Houston Chronicle*. "And now Houston opening their arms to us as well is really just amazing. It's such a fun, exciting, big city—and we could not be more excited to actually get to perform there." ■




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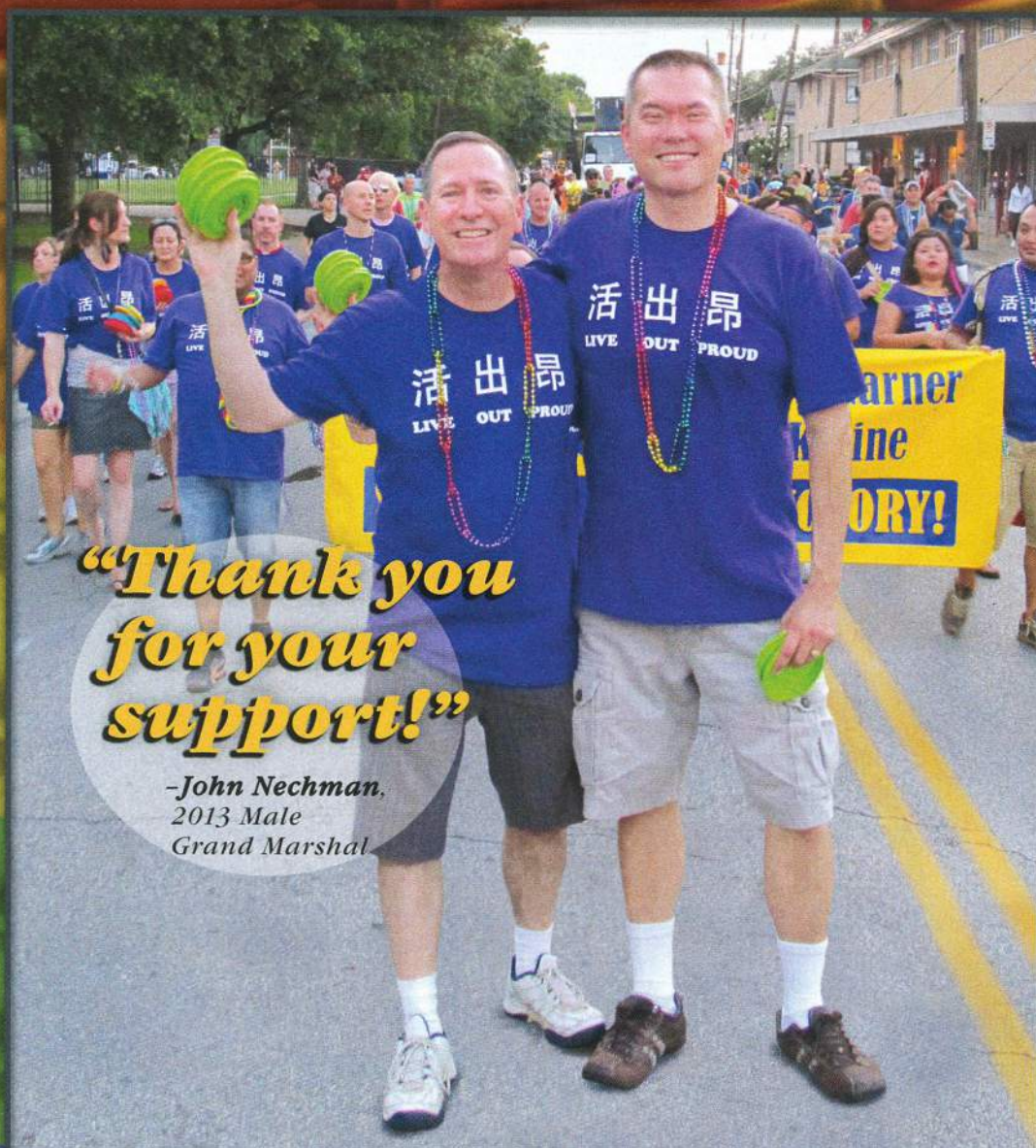
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