



SGN

The Holiday Issue



INFLATING INCLUSIVITY

HO-HO-HOW ONE
TEEN CREATED
PRIDE SANTA PG. 3



DECK THE SHELVES

WRAP UP THE
BEST READS OF
THE SEASON PG. 6



OH WHAT FUN

COZY & COOL
WINTER ESCAPES
IN WASHINGTON PG. 10



COAL IN THE STOCKING

ARTS & AID FUNDING
SLASHED IN SEATTLE'S
BUDGET PROPOSAL SEC. 2 PG. 7



UNWRAPPING GENDER LIBERATION

REFLECTING BEYOND
THE BINARY SEC. 2 PG. 10

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"Why can't Santa be someone else?": One kid's vision to make Christmas more inclusive

BY LINDSEY ANDERSON
SGN STAFF WRITER

PHOTOS COURTESY OF INCLUSIVE CHRISTMAS

While most teenage boys are busy playing video games and scrolling through TikTok, 17-year-old Cason Dean is busy running his business: a corporation that sells inclusive, inflatable holiday decor.

With the help of his family, Dean, a high school junior in Brooklyn, N.Y., has designed and marketed several unique holiday decorations. In just two years, the business has grown from local holiday vending markets to now working with major retail stores, like Walmart.

Dean got the idea for Inclusive Christmas a few years ago after taking note of the holiday decorations he saw in his community. "Every year my dad goes to Home Depot and loves to buy a ton of Christmas inflatables. Some may find it tacky, but I love it. I think it's a good tradition that our family does," he explained. "I came up with this idea because I noticed there weren't any Christmas inflatables that represented anyone who celebrated Christmas that was not a white male, and I wanted a Santa figure of some sort that better represented my family and my background, which is when I came up with Inclusive Christmas."

Dean's first idea was an Asian Santa. When the Deans looked online to see what kind of Asian Christmas representation they could find, they were shocked to discover that very little existed. When they did find Asian decorations, they were distasteful at best and incredibly offensive at worst. "It was all stereotypical and borderline racist stuff," he said. "We were just like, 'Oh, we should do something about that.'"

The same year Dean launched Asian Santa, he also created Pride Santa. "We have things to represent the identities of all sorts of people. People put up their country's flags, people put up Pride flags in front of their houses," Dean explained. "People have so many things that belong to them that represent who they are, and if these

people also celebrate a holiday like Christmas — or in the case of Hanukkah Hank, Hanukkah — would like an inflatable that represents themselves, obviously that's something that should exist, not just for a specific set of people but for everyone who celebrates the holiday."

Pride Santa stands six feet tall with a jolly smile and a bright red hat, but red isn't the only color on his coat. His inflatable parka is lined with all the colors of the rainbow. "This community has been historically underrepresented in media and pretty much everything," Dean said. "We thought people would enjoy having a Pride Santa to show that they celebrate this holiday and are a part of that community."

Last year, Inclusive Christmas introduced three more designs: Black Santa, Hanukkah Hank, and a female Santa, named Sandra Claus. "Santa has historically been a white man, right, who is married to Mrs. Claus, and I think since there are so many different people who celebrate the holiday, why can't Santa be someone else?" Dean asked.

Responses

Dean found that the inclusive Santa decorations make great conversation starters and allow people the space to talk about the communities they are proud of. While Inclusive Christmas has had some pushback from those who believe Santa Claus must be a white, heterosexual, man, the reaction to the products has been overwhelmingly positive.

Seeing negative responses online only made Dean more determined to expand his collection of Inclusive Santas. "We started an Instagram ad campaign, and people were writing such vulgar things in the comments," he said. "It made us realize why it was so important to make this product. These people will never realize why it's

important if there's nothing like it on the market. Without these inflatables, we won't change the narrative that Santa is just a white man."

Despite designing, marketing, and selling a new line of holiday decorations, Dean still manages to go to school, where he keeps a relatively low profile. Most of his friends don't even know he is secretly an entrepreneur. "Those he has shared this with are more than supportive. 'Some people even come up with designs to submit in the future, like we had a Blind Santa submission, where the reindeer is the guide dog. We've had a lot of interesting submissions, mainly from my peers at school. They have their opinions about the business,'" he said.

Other than Walmart, Inclusive Christmas is exclusively sold online. This year,

Dean hopes to get his products into Home Depot and Wayfair, but as of right now, the business still has a small local presence, appearing at neighborhood holiday markets, as well as New York's Christmas in America store and on Etsy.

Dean has found that many of his sales ship to states where culture wars continue to target inclusivity. "At a market, we had a hospital purchase a pack of Black Santas for [its] hospital gift shop, from Alabama, and that was a big surprise for us. But I would say a majority of our sales have been in states where people are less represented," Dean said.

Seeing the impact inclusive Christmas has had on marginalized people only inspires Dean to keep working hard to show the world that anyone can be Santa Claus.



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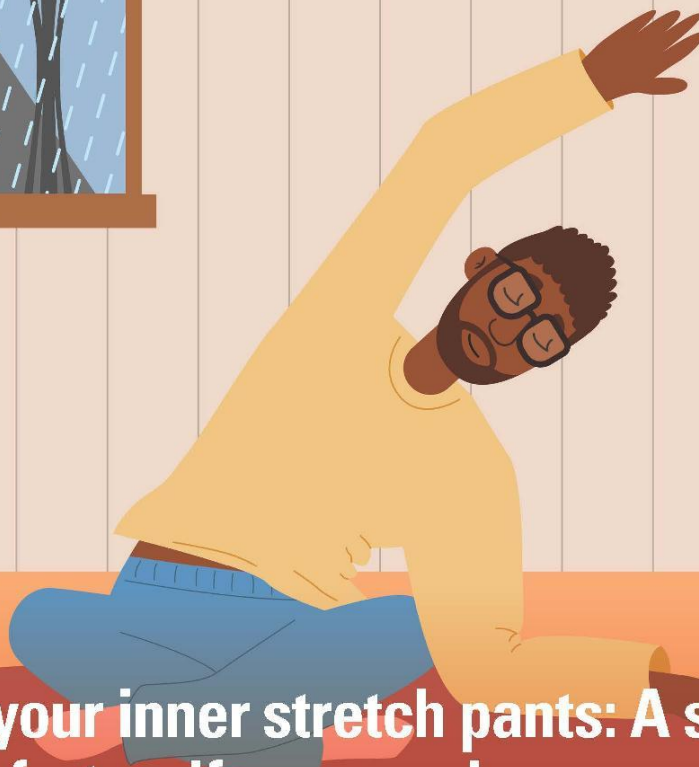
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Embrace your inner stretch pants: A season of comfort, self-care, and community

BY ALAN MOTLEY

KEVIN LOONEY @KLOONEYCREATE

As the leaves turn vibrant shades of orange and red, and the crisp Seattle air carries the scent of rain and pine, there's a comforting call to swap out our summer wardrobes for something a bit more forgiving. Who else is ready to trade zippers and buttons for the cozy embrace of an elastic waistband?

I, for one, relish the arrival of the colder months. I have an unabashed love for layers—I swear I own more jackets, sweaters, and sweatshirts than any one person reasonably should.

The ritual begins: brewing endless cups of tea, drawing long, luxurious baths with heaps of Epsom salt, and bringing out my plush, pillow-like down comforter. During the fall and winter, most days you'll find me at home, curled up on the couch, listening to vinyl records as the rain patters against the windowpane. My home is my nest, a sanctuary where I feel so comfortable that I rarely feel the need to leave. This is me, fully embracing my inner stretch pants.

But even when I do step outside, I've learned to take my mental stretch pants with me. Carrying that sense of comfort, authenticity, and self-assurance wherever I go is essential. It's about embracing who I am, whether I'm nestled at home or navigating the bustling streets of Seattle. For at least a couple of months, I get to step back from the pressures we often feel—especially as Gay men—to look perfect for that sunny trip to Madison Beach's Gay side. There's a certain freedom in allowing ourselves to unwind, indulge in good food, and let go of the incessant need to be "on" all the time.

Of course, come spring, I'll probably scramble to get back into shape two weeks before the first sign of sunshine. But for now, it's time to reflect and gift ourselves a

little self-care.

We all know the holidays can be hectic. Whether you're navigating the complexities of your born-in family or celebrating with your chosen family, the dynamics can be as varied as they are intense. So why not take this time to prepare for the crazy—and hopefully happy—moments ahead?

Self-care and comfort: Embracing the stretch

In the spirit of relaxation and self-love, let's explore how embracing our inner stretch pants can lead to a more joyful, stress-free season. From letting loose and unwinding to navigating the holidays with ease and connecting with our community in comfortable settings, it's time to prioritize what truly makes us feel good.

There's something liberating about slipping into a pair of stretch pants: the way they move with you, accommodating every bend and stretch without constraint. It's not just about physical comfort; it's a metaphor for giving ourselves permission to relax and be authentic. In a world that often demands perfection, especially in the LGBTQ+ community, where image can feel paramount, embracing our "stretch pants" is a rebellious act of self-love.

Self-care isn't a luxury; it's a necessity. It's about more than spa days and scented candles (though those are delightful); it's about acknowledging our worth and treating ourselves with kindness. In the hustle of daily life, we can easily forget to check in with ourselves. Are we eating well? Getting enough sleep? Taking moments to breathe and just be? Let's allow ourselves the grace to prioritize our well-being without guilt.

Breaking free from expectations

Societal pressures have a sneaky way

of creeping into our minds. The expectation to look a certain way, achieve specific milestones, or constantly be available can be overwhelming. But here's a little secret: it's okay to set boundaries and say no. It's okay to choose what makes you happy over what others expect of you. Wearing stretch pants isn't just about physical comfort; it's a statement that you're choosing yourself over external judgments.

For me, my home is where I can truly be myself, free from external pressures and expectations. Even when I step outside, I've learned to take my mental stretch pants with me. By holding onto that inner comfort, I'm able to break free from societal expectations and live life on my own terms.

Tips for self-care

- **Mindfulness practices:** Start or end your day with a few minutes of meditation or deep breathing. Apps like Headspace or Calm can guide you if you're new to mindfulness.

- **Create a cozy space:** Transform a corner of your home into a relaxation haven. I collect vinyl records and have a dedicated space where I can put on a record and comfortably take it in. Soft lighting, plush pillows, and your favorite throw can make all the difference.

- **Indulge in hobbies:** Remember that hobby you've been meaning to pick up again? Now's the time. As a musician, I find myself working on new song ideas during these quieter months. Whether it's picking up an instrument, painting, writing, or any creative outlet, immersing yourself in activities that bring you joy can be incredibly fulfilling.

- **Stay connected:** Reach out to friends or join online communities. Sharing experiences and laughs (virtually or

safely in person) can boost your mood and reinforce that you're not alone.

- **Move your body:** This isn't about hitting the gym, unless that's your thing. Dance in your living room, practice yoga, or take leisurely walks in the crisp autumn air. Movement releases endorphins and helps alleviate stress.

- **Set digital boundaries:** I'm a heavy tech user, and I know how easy it is to get sucked into screens all day. I try to force myself to disconnect at times, whether it's turning off notifications during certain hours or designating tech-free zones in my home. Limiting screen time, especially before bed, can improve sleep quality and overall mental health.

Letting loose and unwinding: The art of relaxation

In our fast-paced world, the idea of slowing down can seem almost radical. We're encouraged to hustle, stay busy, and always be reaching for the next goal. But what if we gave ourselves permission to pause? To let loose and unwind without guilt?

Relaxation isn't just a luxury—it's vital for our mental and physical health. Chronic stress can lead to a host of issues, from anxiety to burnout. By intentionally setting aside time to relax, we're improving our well-being and recharging so we can be our best selves in other areas of life.

But as a Virgo, sometimes I can get too relaxed and disconnect from everyone for days at a time. We Virgos tend to cherish our alone time and often have to nudge ourselves to be more social. Let's just say, the act of unwinding is not an issue for me! While it's wonderful to enjoy solitude, it's also important to find a balance and stay connected with the world around us.

Fun ways to unwind

● **Host a cozy movie night:** Invite a few close friends over for a low-key evening. Wear your comfiest clothes, pop some popcorn, and enjoy a marathon of your favorite films. Netflix and chill is definitely a thing, and it doesn't have to involve sex — though I wouldn't hold it against you if it does!

● **Explore nature:** Take a leisurely walk through beautiful outdoor spaces. My go-to is the Washington Park Arboretum. The fresh air and natural beauty can be incredibly rejuvenating.

● **Try a new hobby:** Ever wanted to learn to knit or bake? Now's the perfect time. Engaging in creative activities can be both relaxing and rewarding.

● **Create a spa experience at home:** Light some candles, play soothing music, and indulge in a face mask or a warm bath with essential oils.

● **Digital detox day:** Unplug from your devices for a day. Use the time to read, journal, or simply enjoy the quiet. I personally approve of listening to audiobooks during this time. It's a great way to relax without the screen time, and you can immerse yourself in a good story while still giving your eyes a break.

Stress-free holidays: Navigating the season with ease

The holiday season is often portrayed as the most wonderful time of the year, but let's be honest — it can also be one of the most stressful. Between social obligations, family dynamics, and the pressure to make everything perfect, it's easy to feel overwhelmed. But what if we approached the holidays differently this year?

Who says you have to adhere to tradition? The holidays should be about what brings you joy and fulfillment. Consider what aspects of the season genuinely make you happy and focus on those. Here are some ideas:

Simplifying celebrations

● **Intimate gatherings:** Instead of large parties, opt for smaller get-togethers with people who uplift you.

● **Potluck dinners:** Share the load by having each guest bring a dish. It reduces stress and adds variety to the meal.

● **Virtual celebrations:** If distance or circumstances keep you apart, organize a virtual holiday party with games and shared activities.

Avoiding holiday burnout

● **Set realistic expectations:** Acknowledge that not everything has to be perfect. It's okay if the pie is a little burnt or if the decorations aren't Pinterest-worthy.



● **Prioritize your time:** Decide which events or traditions are most important to you and let go of the rest.

● **Practice saying no:** This is my personal favorite, and you need to understand that it's okay. It's perfectly acceptable to decline invitations or requests that add unnecessary stress.

Embracing joyful traditions

● **Create new traditions:** Start something new that resonates with you, whether it's a holiday movie marathon or volunteering for a cause you care about.

● **Focus on connection:** The heart of the holidays is connection. Make time for meaningful conversations and quality time with loved ones.

Casual community events: Connecting in comfort

One of the joys of the season is the opportunity to connect with others. Thankfully, Seattle's LGBTQ+ community offers plenty of venues where the vibe is relaxed, and everyone is welcome just as they are.

Connecting with others who share similar experiences can be incredibly affirming. These occasions provide a space to be yourself, make new friends, and feel a sense of belonging — all while wearing your favorite stretch pants, if you like!

Since the following are on different days, you can enjoy them all!

● **"Glitter 54" debut at Julia's on Broadway:** Get ready to dance the night away at the debut of "Glitter 54." Hosted by the dazzling Shay Fox, this event celebrates house and disco music spanning decades. With DJs Almond Brown and Triniton setting the vibe, it's a night dedicated to inclusivity and the joy of music. Glitter 54 is Queer, Genderqueer, Trans, and Nonbinary friendly, a space where everyone is welcome to express themselves freely.

Date: Saturday, November 9

Time: 10 p.m.–1:30 a.m.

Location: Julia's on Broadway, 300

Broadway E., Seattle, WA 98102

Admission: \$20 at the door

Age: 21+

● **Friendsgiving feast at Vermillion Art Gallery and Bar:** Join a heartwarming Friendsgiving potluck! Bring your favorite dish to share, be it a savory side, a scrumptious dessert, or a fresh salad. It's a wonderful opportunity to create memories, celebrate friendship, and indulge in good food and great company.

Date: Wednesday, November 27

Time: 6–10 p.m.

Location: Vermillion Art Gallery and Bar, 1508 11th Ave., Seattle, WA 98122

● **Thanksgiving dinner at Union Bar:** For just \$20, enjoy a hearty, delightful Thanksgiving dinner featuring turkey, mashed potatoes and gravy, stuffing, green bean casserole, cranberry sauce, house salad, and pumpkin pie with whipped cream — while supplies last. As always, Union never charges a cover, including during Pride and block parties. I personally love that — they truly make the community feel welcome without any barriers.

Date: Thursday, November 28

Time: Dinner served 4–10 p.m. (or until sold out); Bar open until 2 a.m.

Location: Union Bar, 1009 E Union St Suite C, Seattle, WA 98122

Admission: No cover charge

Age: 21+

Join the "Stretch into Comfort" Challenge

In the spirit of embracing comfort and authenticity, I invite you to join me in the "Stretch Into Comfort" Challenge!

How to participate

1. Snap a photo: Take a picture of yourself in your favorite stretch pants or comfy attire.
2. Share your comfort moment: Caption it with how you're embracing self-care and relaxation this season.
3. Use the hashtag: Post it on social media with the hashtag #StretchIntoComfort.
4. Tag friends: Encourage others to join in by tagging friends who could use a little extra comfort.

This challenge isn't about fashion — it's about celebrating individuality, self-love, and the joy of embracing who we are without pretense. Let's flood social media with positivity and support for one another.

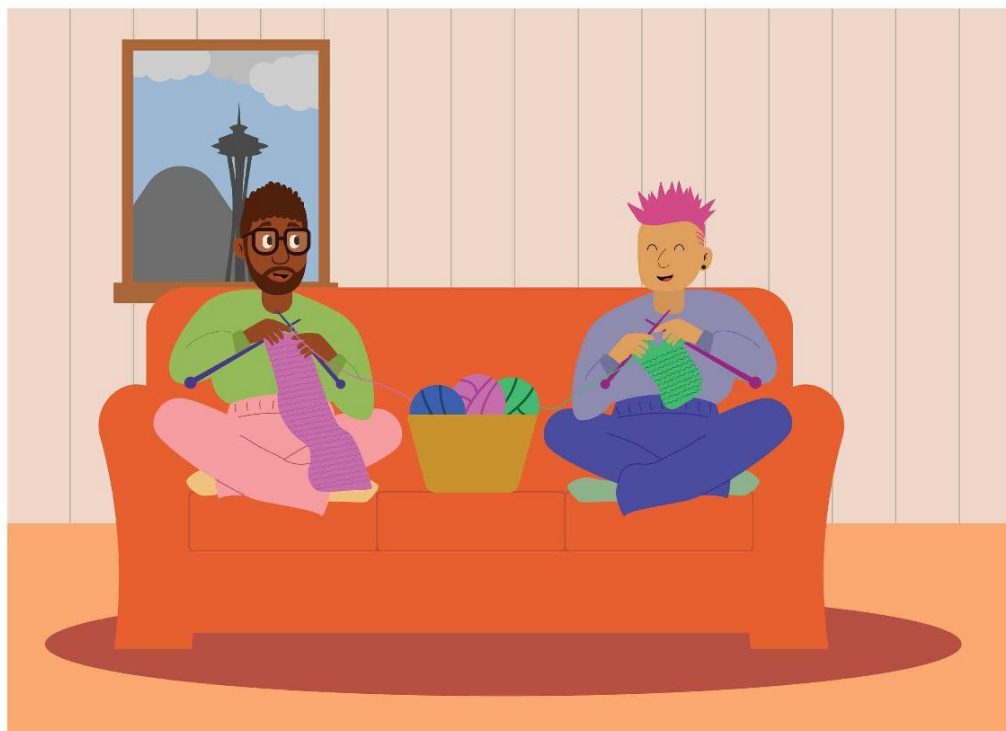
Final thoughts

As we cozy up this season, let's make a pact to prioritize our well-being. Let's normalize choosing comfort, setting boundaries, and practicing self-love. After all, life is too short to wear uncomfortable pants — or to live on anyone else's terms but our own.

So go ahead, embrace your inner stretch pants. You deserve it. Of course, I get it — when summer hits, go back to your regularly scheduled programming.

Note: All events are subject to change. Please check the event websites or contact organizers for the most up-to-date information.

Alan Motley is a nightlife columnist for the SGN, covering the vibrant LGBTQ+ scenes and stories that make our city shine after dark.





Gift guide for the voracious reader

BY LINDSEY ANDERSON
SGN STAFF WRITER

PHOTO COURTESY
PEXELS.COM

With so many gift-giving options this year, it can be hard to figure out where to start! Luckily the SGN Book Club has the perfect gift guide for all the voracious readers in your life, young and old!

While Christmas may be the “most wonderful time of the year,” it doesn’t hold a candle to the iconic campiness of Halloween. If you’re seeking the ideal book for the goth, Halloween lover, or horror fan in your life, read on!

Horror

An Education in Malice by S.T. Gibson is just the right heart-racing adventure for anyone with a dark academic aesthetic. Set in a mysterious East Coast college for girls, it follows the timid Laura Sheridan as she pursues an academic rivalry with Carnilla, her charismatic and beautiful classmate — who may be more than she seems. This vampire horror fantasy raises the question, “How far would you go to meet excellence?”

From Courtney Gould, renowned PNW horror writer and author of *The Dead and the Dark*, comes the next spooky Sapphic adventure. Fans of *Yellowjackets* and *Girl, Interrupted* will love her latest horror novel, *What the Woods Took*. Set in the rural backwoods of Idaho, it follows Devin Green, a troubled Queer foster kid who finds herself lost in the woods — but she’s not alone. Tormented by mysterious monsters who lurk in the dark, Devin must rely on the help of a group of troubled teens stranded alongside her to survive, escape, and break through deep-set trauma.

Fantasy

If you’re in search of the optimal gift for the *Harry Potter* fan wanting a less problematic author to support, look no further than the highly anticipated *Sunbearer Trials* duology. From the award-winning author of *Cemetery Boys*, Aiden Thomas, comes a romantic, thrilling, and magical adventure. Based on Mexican mythology, it follows Teo, a teenage demigod in a deadly competition for the honor of carrying the light to the temples of Reino del Sol. The only catch? The loser is sacrificed. The epic conclusion, *Celestial Monsters*, which continues Teo’s story, is now available nationwide.

Readers wanting a cozy fantasy duology will be thrilled to know that TJ Klune has released a sequel to the charming *The House in the Cerulean Sea*. *Beyond the Sea* picks up where the warm found-family novel left off, continuing the adventure of Linus and Arthur. Told from Arthur’s perspective, this brand-new novel features plenty of magic, mystery, and poignant

commentary about judging a book by its cover.

Historical fiction

While not as often recorded, Queer people have existed throughout history. As Queer literature continues to expand, more and more historical fiction novels depict realistic (and exaggerated) examples of LGBTQ+ lives from different periods. Fans of *Bridgerton* will love Emma R. Albon’s first book in the *Mischief and Matchmaking* series, *Don’t Want You Like a Best Friend*. Set in 1857, this novel follows Beth during her debutante season. Instead of pursuing a husband, she decides to team up with her friend Gwen to set up their single wealthy parents, avoid courtship, and “come out” in more ways than one.

Set in slightly more modern times, and based on the real experiences of Chinese immigrants, Jiaming Tang’s debut novel, *Cinema Love*, tells the multigenerational story of Chinese Gay men, the women who love them, and the risks they’re willing to take to be who they are. Longlisted for the 2025 Carnegie Medal for Excellence in Fiction, this exceptionally moving novel examines the weight secrets hold and the way memory and history haunt the present.

Rom-com

If you’re looking for a gift for the friend who binges on The Hallmark Channel each holiday season, check out Alison Cocrun’s latest novel, *Here We Go Again*. Two former friends are reunited after agreeing to a road trip with their dying mentor and former teacher. Full of cute rom-com tropes, emotional reflections on relationships, and swoon-worthy one-liners, this romantic and emotional story will thaw the ice around any romance lover’s heart.

With a little more “com” than “rom,” *The Guncle* is great choice, especially for fans of *Schitt’s Creek*. Steven Rowley’s national bestseller centers around “Gay Uncle Patrick” aka “GUP” as he cares for his young estranged nephew and niece in his pristine California home. The 2024 sequel, *The Guncle Abroad*, picks up four years after the original, as Patrick takes the niblings abroad on a hilarious trip around Europe, infused with Rowley’s sharp wit. It’s hard not to fall in love with Patrick through his quippy remarks and surprising moments of tenderness.

Nonfiction

Some readers prefer the drama and honesty of true stories. This year, debut author Zoe Bossiere released their memoir, *Cactus*

Country, about their experiences growing up Genderqueer in a rural Arizona trailer park. Humorous personal stories of Bossiere’s childhood are interwoven with deep examinations of gender identity, expression, and fluidity in one of the few firsthand memoirs about growing up genderfluid.

For the well-informed and politically minded reader comes GLAAD Award-winning journalist Nico Lang’s latest book, *American Teenager*. Following the real lives of Trans and Nonbinary teens, Lang examines the impact recent anti-Trans legislation has had on the kids whose lives are being debated in state congressional halls across the country. *American Teenager* is the result of a yearlong project in which Lang traveled the country to interview teens and their families and bring their stories to the forefront of the national conversation.

Young adult

It’s never too early to start reading Queer books! If you have kids or teens you’re shopping for, consider giving them one of the many books banned in the state of Florida. Naomi Kanakia’s latest YA novel, *Just Happy to Be Here*, is a story for anyone who has ever felt the pressure of being the “first.” Tara is the first Trans girl in her all-female private high school. When she attempts to join a historic sorority, she must confront what “girlhood” means, and whether female-exclusive organizations should exist at all. Written with age-appropriate language for teenagers, this book is a great read for anyone who has ever felt the need to justify their existence to the world.

Celebrated YA author Jonny Garza Villa has the perfect book for teens looking for a little romance and a lot of music. *Canto Contigo* is a teenage rivals-to-lovers tale set in the competitive world of high school mariachi. When Rafael Alvarez transfers schools in his senior year, he must compete with the handsome and talented Rey Chavez to earn back his spot as lead vocalist. The catch? Rafael and Rey have history — and chemistry — and I’m not talking about their class schedules.

Middle school

The voracious middle school reader will enjoy award-winning author Kacen Callender’s latest novel, *King and the Dragonflies*. After 12-year-old Kingston’s brother unexpectedly passes away, he becomes convinced he’s turned into a dragonfly. Following the tragedy, King must confront his relationship with his former best friend, a Queer boy his brother had warned him to avoid. Emotional and filled with difficult topics, this book is a beautiful read, and a great conversation starter with middle schoolers about mental health, homophobia, and the value of friendship. Be warned: this book contains depictions of abuse.

For a lighter read, consider gifting *Middle School’s a Drag, You Better Werk*.

die School’s a Drag, You Better Werk. Mikey Pruitt is an entrepreneur — or he will be someday, after he’s done with middle school. Mikey starts his talent agency to book future stars after meeting a 13-year-old drag queen, Coco Caliente, Mistress of Madness and Mayhem. Full of fun, friendship, and lessons about being yourself, this story will be a great gift for any young business-oriented mind.

Children’s books

It’s never too early to start learning about pronouns either, and Lindz Amer’s children’s book, *Hooray for She, He, Ze, and They*, is a delightful exploration of gender euphoria. Illustrated by Kip Alizadeh, this beautiful and colorful book is a great introduction to pronouns.

Who You Will Be is a primo read for the gayby in your life. The poetic children’s book explores the gender-neutral potential for a young baby as their parents dream about all the possibilities they have ahead. With cute drawings by Stacy Chomiak, this fun story will surely introduce a lifelong love of books to any future reader.

Nen and the Lonely Fisherman is a wonderful bedtime tale for new readers. This gorgeous Polari Prize winner relates the romance of a merman and a fisher who fall in love in the deep blue sea. Written by Ian Fagleton and illustrated by James Mayhew, this adorable story is a fun take on *The Little Mermaid*, and great for any child who has ever dreamed of being a merperson at bedtime.

• *An Education in Malice; The Dead and the Dark; The Sunbearer Trials; Celestial Monsters; The House in the Cerulean Sea; Beyond the Sea; Don’t Want You Like a Best Friend; The Guncle Abroad; King and the Dragonflies; and Hooray for She, He, Ze, and They* are available at Charlie’s Queer Books in Fremont.

• *Here We Go Again; Cactus Country, and American Teenager* on order and restocking soon at Charlie’s Queer Books in Fremont.

• *Cinema Love, Canto Contigo, and Who You Will Be* are available at Elliott Bay Book Company on Capitol Hill.

• *Just Happy to Be Here* is available at Queen Anne Book Company in Queen Anne.

• *Middle School’s a Drag, You Better Werk, and Nen and the Lonely Fisherman* are available to order from Charlie’s Queer Books, Elliott Bay Book Company, and Queen Anne Book Company.

• *What the Woods Took* comes out on December 10, 2024.

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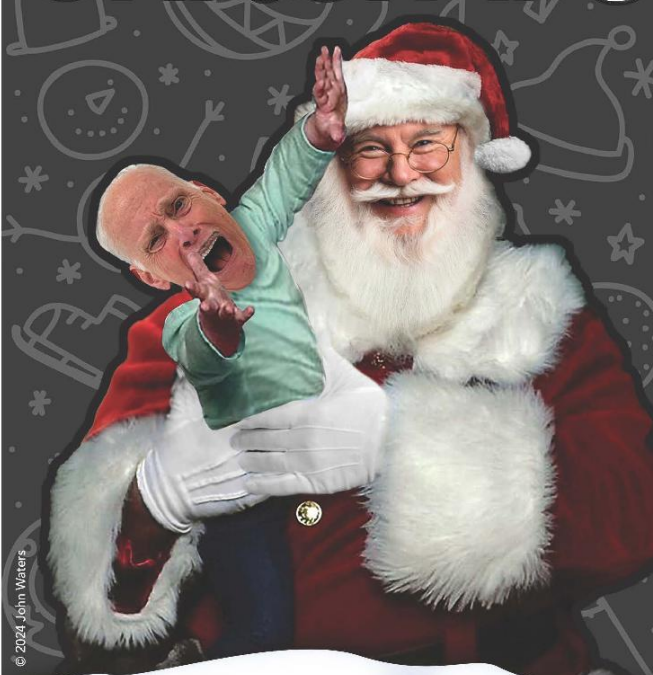
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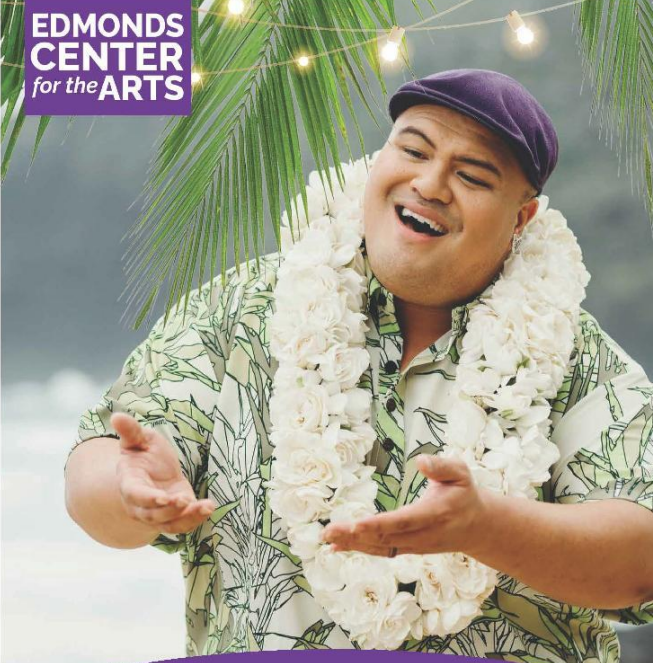
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Local organizations offering a cornucopia of LGBTQ+ Thanksgiving alternatives

BY KYLIN BROWN

WESLEY CLUB STUDENT LOUNGE SPACE
PHOTO BY KYLIN BROWN

The holiday season can be a difficult time of year for members of the LGBTQ+ community, and Thanksgiving might well be the pinnacle, often involving unaccepting family members and charged political conversations around the table that can lead Queer people to feel unwelcome in their own family's home.

But whereas traditional family Turkey Day dinners might fall short, some Seattle LGBTQ+ organizations are returning this year to help fill the gap.

Find online support, in-person meals, and chosen family through the following handful of upcoming events from go-to local nonprofits.

PFLAG Seattle

Through regular online and in-person meetings, including peer-to-peer help and special-topics meetings, PFLAG Seattle has provided support for members of the LGBTQ+ community and their families for more than 50 years.

In monthly two-hour meetings (on Capitol Hill, in West Seattle and Renton, and online), PFLAG Seattle often explores important topics and typically reserves an hour for peer support. Last month, attendees heard updates and key takeaways from state Sen. Jamie Pedersen regarding I-2081, the so-called "Parents' Bill of Rights," which was passed by the legislature earlier this year.

This month's online meeting, (Tuesday, November 26, 7-9 p.m.), however, will be dedicated entirely to support in light of the approaching holiday season.

Registration is required for PFLAG Seattle events. Find more information and register at <https://www.pflagseattle.org/events>.

Wesley Club

The Wesley Club at the University of Washington is a "reconciling" campus ministry of the United Methodist Church, welcoming LGBTQ+ college students across Seattle for social activities and study space, as well as weekly dinners.

The current executive director, Martin Saunders, said that while the Wesley Club is Methodist, a majority of its student visitors do not define themselves as Christian and that there is no expectation for them to do so.

"Whatever doctrine they walk in with, whatever doctrine they walk out with, our hope is that everybody here gets to walk alongside and see where you start and see where you end, and celebrate that along the way."

The Wesley Club celebrated its 100-year anniversary in 2023, but Saunders said most of its social gatherings these days also offer a space for activism-based discussions. Weekly Tuesday dinners, written as "supper church" in a bold black Sharpie on the student lounge's large DIY wall calendar, are a mainstay for these conversations.

"We gather every Tuesday around a big meal for our kind of community gathering. So we call it 'supper church.' This is where we all get together, we eat, we talk about different [things], either social justice, spiritual, or interpersonal, community stuff that we just navigate life through," said Saunders.

At these meals, the small, student-led group has been able to accommodate vari-

ous dietary needs, including vegan, vegetarian, and allergen-free options. The main goal, Saunders said, is to give college students a safe place to land and, of course, ensure that comes with free food.

"We always overcook, so that there are leftovers, and so students can come by throughout the week for studying, for free meals, for lunches, you know, whatever."

On Tuesday, November 26, the Wesley Club is prepared to host a Thanksgiving-themed "supper church" and invites anyone with a university student ID to join for free food any Tuesday from 6 to 8 p.m.

The Wesley Club student lounge is also open Monday-Thursday from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m., and activities are regularly shared on Instagram at @wesleyatuw.

Lambert House

Lambert House was founded in order to address the physical and mental health disparities experienced by LGBTQ+ youth, which can sometimes be aggravated by family gatherings. The social services organization hosts regular programming for LGBTQ+ and allied youth at its drop-in center and online. The drop-in center is open from 4 to 9:30 p.m. and "staffed by LGBTQ+ and ally adult role models and has board games, pool, air hockey, ping pong, art supplies, an LGBTQ+ youth lending library, video games, and more," according to the website.

On Thursday, November 21 from 6 to 7 pm, Lambert House will host a "Thanksgiving Dinner with Divas" for LGBTQ+ youth aged 11-22. Parent or guardian permission is required for youth aged 12 and younger.

The free event includes games and a home-cooked Thanksgiving meal with other LGBTQ+ and allied youth.

Youth who are new to Lambert House programs must complete a New Youth Orientation in order to attend programs like "Dinner with Divas." The orientation takes just about 20 minutes to complete and is available online or in person at the drop-in center.

Learn more about Lambert House's youth programs at <https://www.lamberthouse.org>, or stop by Lambert House's temporary drop-in center and staff offices, located on the St. Mark's Cathedral campus at 1229 10th Ave. E, on Capitol Hill. Contact Program Director Brandon Knox with any questions at brandon@lamberthouse.org.

Notable additions

While no Thanksgiving-specific event is confirmed at this time, another resourceful and active organization supporting those impacted by addiction, mental health, and/or HIV/AIDS is PEER Seattle. Its already-full calendar of programs for the coming weeks can be found at <https://www.peerseattle.org/calendar>.

In addition to the organizations listed, it should be noted that Diversity Alliance of Puget Sound was to host holiday meals, but as of now, has shut down all of its regular programs, for reasons to be announced in mid-November.

Find a calendar of all upcoming events on the SGN's radar on our website at <https://www.sgn.org/events.php>.

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Washington winter getaway destinations

BY ARUL GNANASIVAM

LEAVENWORTH
PHOTO BY WU'S PHOTO LAND

As the winter approaches, it's natural to crave the warm, cozy comfort of our homes. But for those willing to brave a bit of cold, Washington offers some of the best destination getaways for the season. From cute themed towns to adventurous winter sports, there's a ton to discover near Christmastime.

Leavenworth

Just a bit over two hours from Seattle is Leavenworth, a winter wonderland best known for its Bavarian-themed decor and restaurants. Enjoy popular festive features such as Christmas carolers and German food stands, or spend some time at a reindeer farm. Added recently is the Leavenworth Adventure Park, a mini roller coaster on the side of the mountain that goes surprisingly fast.

Wanting some more adventure? Leavenworth is a popular town to stay in if you're looking to hike the Enchantments, home to over 700 alpine lakes and ponds.

Out of all the options on this list, Leavenworth is the easiest to get to. Just be sure to check the weather before you leave! Expect big crowds and limited parking, especially during the Christmas season —

it's recommended to park away from the main street and then spend the rest of your day walking.

Poulsbo

If you're seeking something more Scandinavian, on the other side of Puget Sound is the Norwegian town of Poulsbo. Known for its cute shops and central district, it's perfect for anyone searching for a retreat from the city and wanting to experience small-town life. A must-visit is Sluys Bakery, a family-owned business known for its handmade bread and pastries. Spend the rest of the day enjoying the scenic burg and soaking in the Norwegian ambience before ending the day at Valholl Brewery with a pint.

Olympic National Park

For those looking to find their nature fix, Olympic National Park is hard to beat. Miles of rainforest, lakes, mountains, and beaches all await anybody who wants a retreat. The holidays provide the perfect backdrop for the trip, painting the sky with moody, rainy clouds that feels like a different planet. There are four lodges in the park to choose from.



POULSBO
PHOTO BY CHERYL DIMOF

Wanting more comfort? Several farms lease out glamping cabins that provide excellent access to the sights while also providing a warm, cozy bed at the end of the day. Be sure to check for closures, though, before heading over to enjoy the *Twilight*-esque scenery.

Mt. Baker

Off the bat, Mt. Baker isn't for the tame. It's secluded, wet, and difficult to traverse. But for skiers up for a challenge and ready to put in some work, it can be a paradise. Planning is key: find a good spot at a nearby town, and make sure to rent a car that can power you through the whole trip. With that set, enjoy beautiful backcountry skiing and fresh powder throughout your adventure.

San Juan Islands

For those who enjoy the quiet of nature, or want to catch a glimpse of Washington's extensive wildlife, the San Juan Islands are the place to be. Just over three hours from Seattle, they are gorgeous in the fall and winter, with milder weather that is great for hiking. Visit the many wildlife museums, and then book a whale-watching tour for an almost guaranteed sighting of orcas. After a day of hiking, biking, or a scenic drive, check the local calendar for some enjoyable activities, like wine nights, climbing nights, or even a scenic flight over the islands.

From cute themed towns to snowy slopes, Washington has a ton of popular winter destinations for every kind of traveler. Especially during the colder season, when it's easy to become confined indoors, these getaways can be a great way to spend time with loved ones and experience something new. Stay warm, and happy holidays!



OLYMPIC NATIONAL PARK
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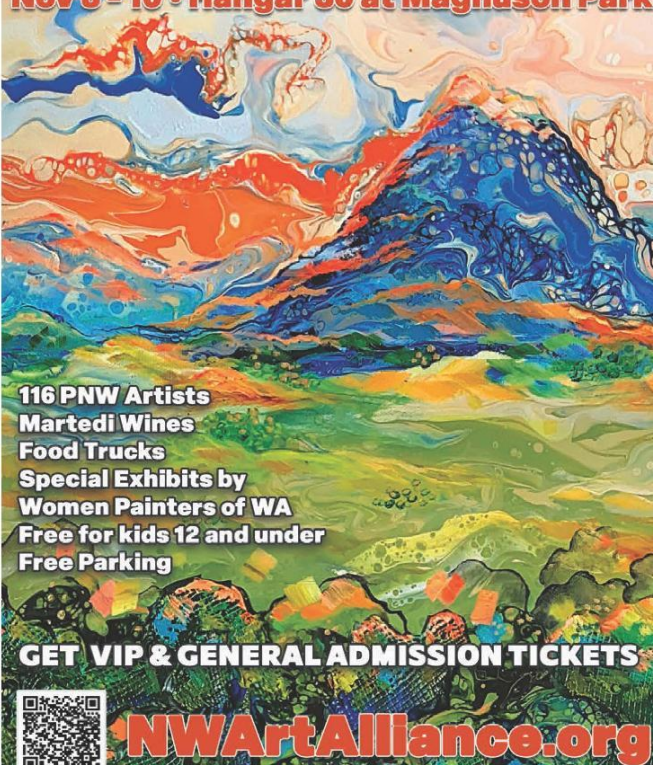


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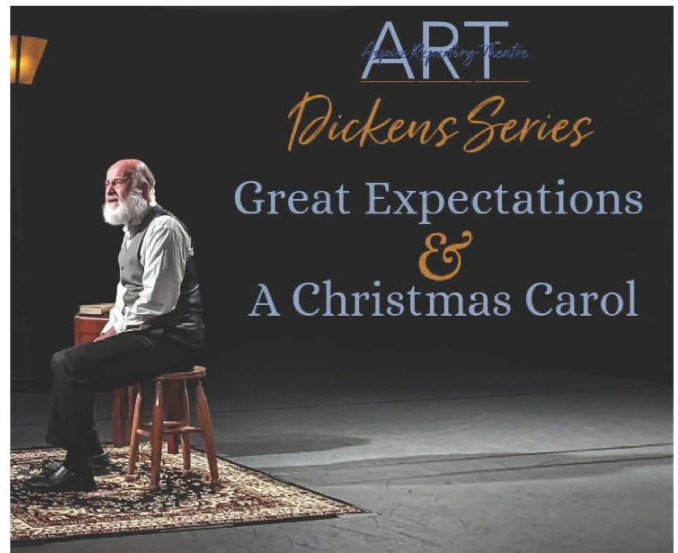
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Longtime actor brings *A Christmas Carol* adaptation and solo performance to North Seattle stage

BY HANNAH SAUNDERS
SGN STAFF WRITER

Allen Fitzpatrick, a professional actor of 50 years, is bringing his adaptation of Charles Dickens's *A Christmas Carol* to the Aspire Repertory Theatre in Northgate for one evening only in December. This will be a solo performance, which Fitzpatrick began doing only a handful of years ago. For the December 14 show, he will portray about 20 different characters.

"I liked that — the idea of shedding one actor... Being the only [one] was a little frightening, to be honest," Fitzpatrick told the SGN. "There's no one who can help you out. There's no one to lean on if something goes awry."

Dickens's 1834 tale follows Ebenezer Scrooge, a character who is visited by the spirits of Christmas Past, Present, and Yet to Come, as well as his old business partner. Throughout the story, Scrooge is shown how his unkind behavior impacted people around him, and he later transforms into a kinder man.

About four years ago, Fitzpatrick had a vision to turn this piece into a solo play written and directed by himself, since he has performed it numerous times across Washington.

"There's no costume changes. It's just a change in the attitude and the accent and the physicalization. The entire story whirls by in 60 minutes, so you change body positions," Fitzpatrick said. "They all have their own accents, their own attitudes, patterns of speech, and the way they hold their bodies and all those things, which allows me to delineate very thoroughly character to character."

It takes about one hour to set up the stage and two hours to tech the show, which Fitzpatrick said makes it easy and convenient to present to venues that may be interested in the idea.

"It's been described as a truly superb, true-to-verse performance that's highly interesting. It's deeply moving — really puts people in the Christmas spirit," Fitzpatrick said. "It's different from seeing any movie version of it, because you're right there, five feet away from a live actor who's performing, and you're being called upon to use your own imagination to create the scenes."

Fitzpatrick said this version of *A Christmas Carol* is bound to get attendees in the holiday spirit and is a guaranteed fun time.

Challenges with keeping theater afloat

The career actor told the SGN that he has seen the challenges the theater industry has faced for decades, even prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. But the pandemic shutdown of 2020 erased live theater spaces for a year and a half.

"The fact is that theater has not, in Seattle and in other cities, rebounded at all to what its pre-pandemic numbers were, and a lot ... are struggling to survive and continue being able to bring art to the citizens of the city," Fitzpatrick said.

Fitzpatrick highlighted how some theaters have cut back the number of shows they're able to offer in a year, while others have closed altogether. *Capitol Hill Seattle Blog* reported on efforts by Cornish College of the Arts students to save Kerry Hall, a historic 103-year-old studio and performance hall. A group called Save Kerry Hall formed to get Cornish to reconsider keeping the building within the arts and theater scene, rather than turning it into a multifamily unit.

The way Fitzpatrick sees it: all theaters are impacted.

"If people don't start going out to theater as a regular part of their event planning and how they spend their evenings, Seattle's going to find itself with just a tiny handful of operating places to see live theater, so ... as an artist who's made a living here in the last 18 years, I highly urge readership and everyone in Seattle to go out and buy a ticket and see some live theater, because otherwise, it might be extinct."

Fitzpatrick said Aspire Repertory Theatre is in a unique position, since it has a for-profit dance school that offers lessons to youth and adults. Although a separate component from the repertory theater, Fitzpatrick said the dance studio could be a way of keeping the doors open.

For more information and for tickets visit <https://ticketsstripe.com/AspireRepCarol2024>.



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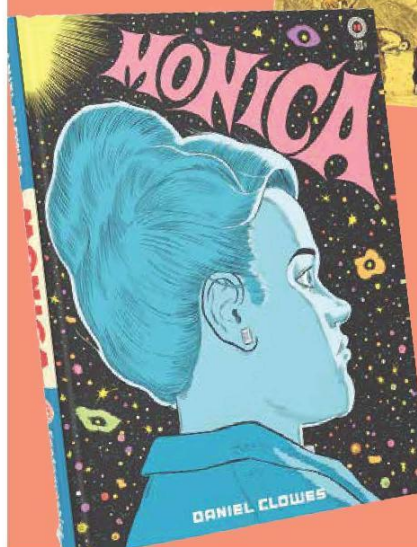
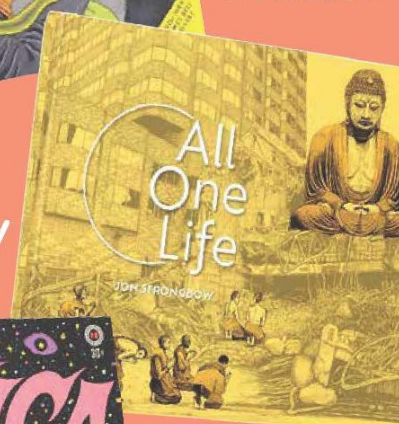


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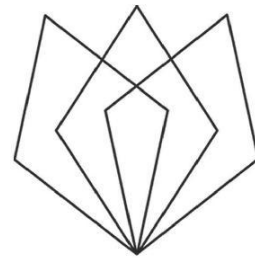
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