



First Friday News & Views



Monthly Newsletter of the First Friday Breakfast Club, Inc.

October 2023 / Volume 28 / Issue 10

Next Meeting
Friday
October 6
7:00 a.m.



Location
Hoyt Sherman
15th & Woodland
Des Moines



October
Speakers
Coming Out
Panel



Website
ffbc Iowa.org



Come Out! Come Out!

by Byron Huff, Board President

Join this Friday's breakfast meeting in-person or via Zoom to hear a panel of LGBTQ+ individuals talk about their coming out journeys!

National Coming Out Day origins can be traced back to October 11, 1987, the date of the March on Washington for Lesbian and Gay Rights; this was the second queer march on the Capitol and marked the unveiling of the AIDS memorial quilt. The 1987 march aimed to draw attention to the federal government's inaction in confronting the AIDS crisis and the Supreme Court's 1986 ruling upholding Georgia's anti-gay sodomy law. Protesters demanded legal recognition for gay and lesbian couples, funding for AIDS research, the abolition of sodomy laws, and an end to the U.S. support of South African apartheid.

Every year on **October 11**, individuals around the world come together to celebrate National Coming Out Day. This special day is dedicated to raising awareness and promoting acceptance of the LGBTQ+ community, as well as encouraging those who are still in the closet to embrace their true selves; it's a day of courage, vulnerability, and love.

National Coming Out Day was first observed in 1988, marking the anniversary of the National March on Washington in 1987. The event was organized by LGBTQ+ activists Rob Eichberg and Jean O'Leary ([excellent article that gives more history](#)), and its primary goal was to empower LGBTQ+ individuals to come out to their friends, family, and coworkers in an effort to create a more inclusive and understanding society.

Coming out matters because we all know coming out is an intensely personal and often challenging process. It involves disclosing one's sexual orientation or gender identity to others, which can be met with various reactions, both positive and negative.

Coming out is important because:

- **Coming out allows everyone to be their authentic selves. Living in the closet can be emotionally exhausting, and coming out is a vital step towards self-acceptance and self-love.**
- **We reduce stigma because every coming-out story contributes to breaking down stereotypes and reducing the stigma associated with being LGBTQ+. By sharing their experiences, individuals humanize the LGBTQ+ community, fostering empathy and understanding.**
- **Coming out opens doors to forming supportive networks of friends, allies, and fellow LGBTQ+ individuals, leading to stronger connections and a sense of belonging.**
- **The more people come out, the closer we get to a world where LGBTQ+ rights are fully recognized and respected. Coming out has been instrumental in advancing LGBTQ+ rights over the years.**



[continued on page 2]

["Come Out! Come Out!" continued from page 1]

We can all celebrate National Coming Out Day by:

- If you are an ally, take this day as an opportunity to show your support for your LGBTQ+ friends and family members. Let them know you stand with them, and educate yourself on LGBTQ+ issues.
- Encourage open and honest conversations about LGBTQ+ topics. Create a safe space for discussions and learning within your community.
- Remember that coming out is a deeply personal journey. Always respect an individual's choice of when and how to come out, and be supportive regardless of their decision.
- Educate yourself about LGBTQ+ history, rights, and issues; you are never too old to learn! Knowledge is a powerful tool in promoting acceptance and understanding.
- If you are an LGBTQ+ individual, know that there is a vast network of support available to you. Seek out friends, family, or LGBTQ+ organizations that can provide guidance and understanding.

National Coming Out Day is a time to celebrate diversity and the bravery of those who have taken the courageous step to come out. It's a day to raise awareness, build understanding, and promote love and acceptance for the LGBTQ+ community. By embracing authenticity, fostering support, and continuing to educate ourselves, we can all contribute to a world where everyone can live openly and authentically, regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity.



NATIONAL COMING OUT DAY

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 11 | 5:30 P.M.

RITUAL CAFE

1301 LOCUST ST, DES MOINES, IA 50309

JOIN US FOR:

- The reading of the City of Des Moines National Coming Out Day proclamation
- Music and socializing
- A safe and welcoming space to "come out"

ALL ARE WELCOME!



Briefs & Shorts



Thanks to **Ken Hanson** for introducing our September speaker, **C.J. Petersen**. Thanks to **David Cotton** for managing our website, to **Nicholas Williams** for managing our Microsoft IT infrastructure, and to **David Wilfahrt** for managing FFBC's finances. Thanks to **Wade Petersen** for his work as our newsletter editor. *Thank you to all our contributors to the FFBC newsletter!*

The **deadline** for the **November newsletter** will be **October 23**. If you have something on your mind to share, type it up and email it to Wade (wadecpetersen@gmail.com) by the deadline.



Fundraising efforts are ongoing to fund our scholarship program. To date we have awarded over **\$450,000** for scholarships to Iowa high school seniors who have done remarkable, courageous things to reduce homophobia and teach about LGBTQ issues in their schools and communities. Please consider a tax-deductible **contribution** online or by sending a check.



A special thank-you to those FFBC members and friends who have chosen to designate FFBC through the **Donor Direct** program of **United Way**. Contributions through United Way are tax deductible. Those who have chosen this means of supporting FFBC have gone to the trouble of completing their United Way campaign worksheet by designating FFBC as the beneficiary of their generosity. FFBC is an eligible recipient of such funding designations.



United Way

Iowa Should Not Gang Up on People Who Are Different

- submitted by John Hale and Terri Hale
- reprinted from *The Des Moines Register*

LGBTQ Iowans: There's nothing wrong with you.

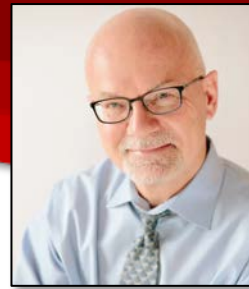
"In Nature, a flock will attack any bird that is more colorful than the others because being different is seen as a threat...." That's a phrase from a now-trending music video titled "The Village" from an artist known as Wrabel. It tells the story of a transgender teen and the intense emotional challenges faced as they struggle with their own thoughts and feelings, unsupportive parents, community, church, and school. It's a powerful video that everyone should watch, regardless of your views on LGBTQ issues, political leanings, faith, etc.

Wrabel's message to the LGBTQ community — especially trans kids — is "There's nothing wrong with you. There's something wrong with the Village." The Village is that part of society that endorses efforts to discriminate against, if not erase, the LGBTQ community — in particular those who are transgender.

In Iowa, Republican legislators introduced a record 29 anti-LGBTQ bills during the most recent session. Twenty-nine bills that called for blocking access to basic human rights for our LGBTQ friends, children and families, co-workers, and neighbors.

These measures called for everything from taking away the right to same-sex marriage, to censoring teachers from using words — and librarians from having books — that acknowledge the existence of LGBTQ Iowans, to denying parents and their doctors the right to make life-saving decisions for transgender kids.

Each bill, whether it became law or not, sent destructive messages to the LGBTQ community: "You are not wanted here. You don't deserve the same rights



John and Terri Hale own The Hale Group, an Ankeny-based advocacy firm working for better lives for all Iowans. Contact them at terriandjohnhale@gmail.com

As allies, we're disgusted by the attacks on our LGBTQ friends and colleagues. We're tired of the holier-than-thou attitudes of many elected Republicans and candidates.

guaranteed to others, including the right to love who you love. You don't have the freedom to flourish in Iowa."

Why the attacks on the LGBTQ community? Simply put, they are easy pickings. The LGBTQ population is outnumbered. They do not have immense political power, though it is growing. Misinformation, distortions, and confusion lead people to fear what they do not understand. Like the colorful birds in the quote above, being different is seen as a threat to life as many have known it. Many Republicans are capitalizing on that fear, riling up their base of voters and promising that, if elected, constituents can count on them to deal with what they insinuate is a clear and present danger.

This is Iowa in 2023: a horribly divided state, and as anti-LGBTQ legislation shows, a religious state that too often doesn't practice what is preached — to treat others the way they want to be treated, to show some charity and be kind; to love and accept others for who they are.

We're blessed with wonderful friends in the LGBTQ community who are making tremendous contributions to their workplaces, neighborhoods, communities, states, and nation.

They've told us how the bills, and accompanying rhetoric, make them feel. Some plan to leave Iowa. Others plan to never move here.

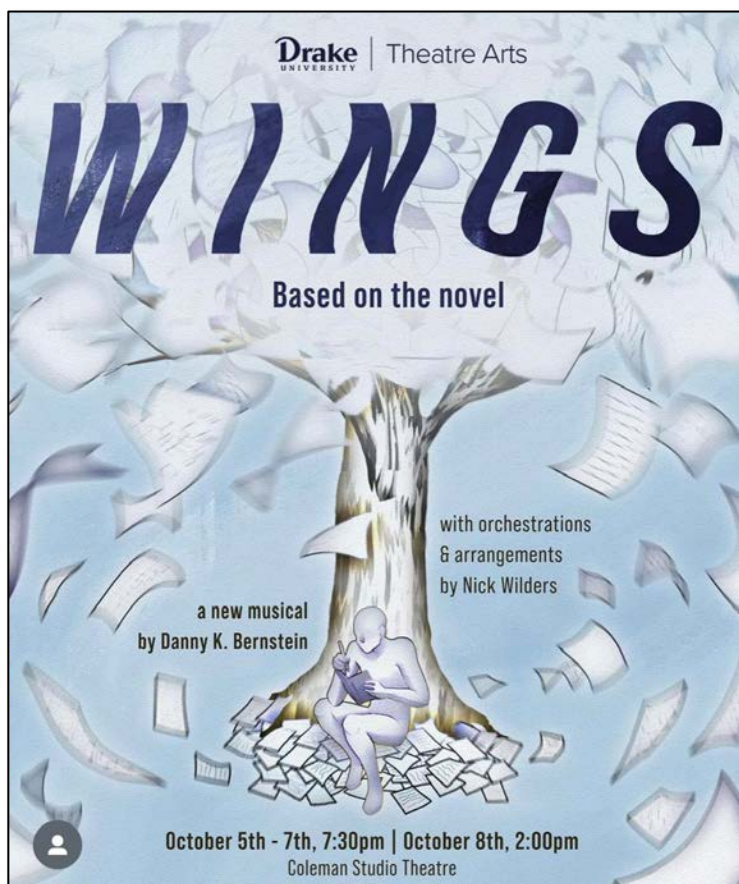
As allies, we're disgusted by the attacks on our LGBTQ friends and colleagues. We're tired of the holier-than-thou attitudes of many elected Republicans and candidates. **Enough is enough.**

We can all take action to stop it.

- 1. Allies of the LGBTQ community:** Invite your Republican legislator(s) to meet with you. Try to get to know them as people, not just lawmakers. Ask what they believe and why. In a direct and non-confrontational way, tell your story and why you support the LGBTQ community. If their contact with the LGBTQ community has been minimal, offer to arrange additional opportunities to build relationships.
- 2. Leaders in business and industry:** Step up and speak out on behalf of your valued LGBTQ employees and customers. You have a powerful voice. Legislators may listen to you when they may not listen to others.
- 3. Republican legislators:** Before proposing or voting on additional anti-LGBTQ legislation, seek to understand and really get to know those in the LGBTQ community whose lives you may be dramatically altering.

Legislators are in their districts until the start of the next session in January. They, and we, should take advantage of this time to meet, talk, listen, and hopefully learn.

If reasonable and influential voices are silent, things will not get any better. Sadly, they could get even worse.



World premiere at Drake: Thursday-Sunday Oct. 5-8. It's queer composed, written, and orchestrated, and shares a beautiful story of self acceptance, coming out, human connection, and love. The music is phenomenal. Bring tissues. Tickets \$10 at <https://www.tix.com/ticket-sales/drakefinearts/6865>



Future Speakers

November 3:

Adam Equality Peters

Clock, Inc.

Quad Cities LGBTQ+ Center

December 1:

Rev. Gregory Neal

Gay Pastor of Grace United
Methodist Church, DSM

January 5:

Jennifer Konfrst

Iowa House Minority Leader

February 2:

Ben Page

Director, Des Moines
Parks & Recreation

March 1:

Rob Sand

Iowa State Auditor

April 5:

Melissa O'Neil

CEO, Central Iowa
Shelter & Services





'Tis the Season of Insults

by Jonathan Wilson

We are immersed in the lead-up to the first-in-the-nation caucuses in the Republican Party's nomination process for choosing a candidate for President of the United States. On the Democratic Party side, Iowa may no longer be the first state to weigh-in, and it is virtually assured that the incumbent, President Joe Biden, will be the Democratic Party candidate.

There are currently a dozen declared Republican candidates, each crisscrossing the state working tirelessly to present themselves further than others to the right of "Christian" Genghis Kahn. It's not unlike 1995, leading up to the 1996 presidential caucuses (for both parties). Bill Clinton's Democratic nomination was a foregone conclusion, but there were at least a dozen Republican candidates vying to take him on who were generating ALL of the news headlines. "Balanced" media coverage on actual, substantive *issues* was utterly impossible. One Republican candidate would say something incendiary on whatever issue, and others would weigh in and pile on, trying to be even more incendiary.

This year, it's even more unbalanced. Again, there are a dozen Republican candidates with similar, far right-wing proclivities, and the outcome on the Democratic side is a foregone conclusion. But there will be no first-in-the-nation contest on the Democratic side, so there's even less reason to give media coverage of "woke" issues espoused by the Democratic Party. Virtually all coverage is on the Republican take on whatever issues.

With this season of politics, comes a shower of solicitations for support, especially financial support. I have made the "mistake" of contributing occasionally to political candidates. Others who have done so are undoubtedly being similarly inundated with funding requests – no good deed goes unpunished.

I've seen a pattern in some of the solicitations I receive. They say that the campaign is coming up to a "crucial" funding deadline, or the campaign is falling short of the campaign's fundraising goal. I get that, but I remind myself that the deadline is not "crucial" to me, and I really don't care about the campaign's fundraising "goal." Those are legitimate appeals, but I'm of a certain age that has me being more careful about discerning what is "my problem" and what is someone else's problem. Doing so leaves me with fewer problems that I have a responsibility to address.

Beyond that, there is another pattern I've observed;

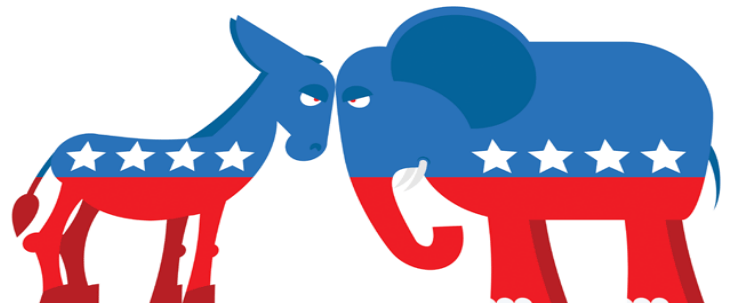


some solicitations make utterly ridiculous assertions. Things like my contribution will make me a "founding" donor (who cares?); or my contribution will make me a campaign "cabinet member" (as if there were such a thing); or my contribution will be "matched," thus doubling, tripling, or even quadrupling the "impact" of my contribution (there is no one "policing" of such undertakings by the FEC or otherwise, so there is no reasonable expectation that it's true); or my contribution will enter my name in a drawing to travel expense free to a campaign rally and a VIP meeting with the candidate (I've NEVER heard of anyone actually winning such a drawing). This latter pattern is, frankly, insulting. The sender obviously thinks I'm not all that bright, I'm not capable of critical thinking, or I'm really gullible. Or all of the above.

I've decided that whenever someone says something or writes something that you consider ludicrous or stupid, they are reaching out to an audience that is a bit more stupid than you, and they are testing to see if you are in that more-stupid group. They are insulting you and me, every time.

Money is money, I'm sure, is the sender's attitude, whether received from the bright or from the not-so-bright. I get that (the same is true of telephone scam artists and those selling pyramid scheme investment opportunities), but I have adopted a personal policy that when the "I-think-you-might-be-stupid" line is crossed by a solicitation – for Republican or Democrat – I do not contribute. It won't change the situation, but I'm of a certain age that no longer tolerates insults aimed at my pocketbook.

'Tis the season to say 'no' to insults.



October Speakers

Coming Out

Panel Discussion



Our “speakers” will be a panel about Coming Out, moderated by David Cotton, FFBC Vice President. Since 1988, October 11th of each year has been recognized as **National Coming Out Day**, marking the anniversary of the second major National March on Washington for Lesbian and Gay Rights, which took place in 1987. The panel will explore the diverse and common experiences in their coming out journeys. We hope the stories and insights shared will not only empower those in the LGBTQ+ community but also encourage allies to stand alongside them in solidarity. Scheduled speakers include: **Hillary Gardner**, **Max Movitz**, **David Naert**, and **Mike Triggs**.



Speaker Series

[Tickets are free, but you must register online]

October 12 / 6:00 P.M. / Temple Theater

Sam Schedler

Sam Schedler is a queer comedian working as a Registered Nurse in the Twin Cities of Minnesota. When off the clock, he takes to social media and provides a fresh perspective on hard-to-talk about topics like religious trauma, misinformation and LGBTQIA+ issues. Sam is passionate about making sure everyone in the room feels welcomed and valued. (great midwest moment for middle of January for humor + broader overview of health care system for LGBTQ community as both patient and practitioner).



"Even a Clock is Right Two Times a Day"

by Gary Moore



Over 40 people attended the First Friday Breakfast Club this first day of September on a beautiful morning with the promise of a much warmer afternoon. Byron Huff started out the meeting by announcing several LGBTQ+ non-profit groups' annual fundraisers approaching and all worthy of our support, including the Des Moines Gay Men's Chorus and Iowa Safe Schools.

Byron first introduced a new attendee, Chelsea Lepley, who mentioned how happy she was to now be welcomed as an allied member. She mentioned she always has been interested in public issues and began her work in high school starting the first gay/straight alliance in high school. She noted she is running for City Council in Ward 2 in Des Moines and would be happy to discuss issues with any FFBC members.

Ken Hanson introduced this month's speaker: **C.J. Petersen** -- the Press Secretary for Rob Sands, Iowa's State Auditor (which is currently the only statewide position held by a Democrat). C.J. was raised in an American Sign Language home, is hard of hearing, and has always been interested in politics. He came from a single-parent family, where his mother had to stretch a dollar. C.J. found that politics makes many decisions about how you live your lives, especially in areas that many do not realize.

When he was 16, he saw President George Bush's press secretary, Dana Perino, on Fox TV and Helen Thomas "going at it." C.J. decided then that is what he wanted to do. How many get to live their dream job and remember when they had that dream? Not many get that opportunity. Life is weird and takes you in many directions. C.J. noted he started out working for Republican candidates but eventually ended up working for Admiral Michael Franken a decade after supporting the Branstad, Kim Reynolds, and Grassley tickets.

Politics should be about how we add value to everyone's life despite their circumstances. C.J. noted that there seems to be a 20-year cycle that swings back and forth between Republican and Democratic control. With the recent defeat of an ultra-right, MAGA supporting county auditor in Iowa, maybe the pendulum is getting ready to swing back.

C.J. opened up his presentation to questions and discussion; he noted that he did not have all the answers but he did have two decades of making a difference. Even an extreme right-wing politician or an extreme left-wing politician can be an ally depending on the issue. We must all be willing to talk with people if we are to find those areas of common ground.



September Speaker

September Speaker

C.J. Petersen

Chelsea Lepley, candidate for City Council Ward 2, addressed the FFBC during announcements.

CITY OF DES MOINES

September Meeting Photo Gallery

Photos by
Gary Moore & Wade Petersen



FFBC former Board
Member Rick Miller
and Board Member
Emeritus, Jonathan
Wilson, both now
**Legacy Award
Winners.**

LGBTQ Legacy Leader Awards

Rick Miller

FFBC MEMBER



**Photo and article from
DSM Magazine.**

Other 2023 Honorees:

Rich Hendricks

Laurie Phelan

Scott Valbert

Aime Wichtendahl

Rich Salas, ally



For the historical record, let it be known that the pie that splattered across Anita Bryant's face was banana cream. The famous beauty queen, singer and anti-gay activist had been criticizing "the homosexuals" during a press conference in Des Moines in 1977 when a protester served her the dessert with infamous gusto. "This. Went. National," **Rick Miller** said of the stunt, which galvanized the LGBTQ community across Iowa. "So thank you, Anita Bryant," he added, with a mischievous twinkle. "I call her the queen of unintended consequences."

In honor of her royal highness, the Polk County Heritage Gallery served banana cream pie at an opening reception a few years ago for an exhibition Miller curated about the history of the gay rights movement. The display with state and national timelines could have included a third about Miller himself, who personally witnessed many of the movement's key turning points. He is Iowa's gay Forrest Gump. Many of the flyers, posters and artifacts that Miller stashed away over the years are now in the archives at the Des Moines Pride Center. He didn't collect them for the sake of posterity, but future historians may appreciate his tidy, pack-rat habits.

Miller enjoyed an idyllic boomer childhood in Sac City, surrounded by friends and extended family. He was always a joiner — Cub Scouts, Sunday school — and an organizer, too. Even as a young boy, he dug out Christmas lights from storage to set up a carnival for the neighborhood kids. Other times, he invited them over for craft time with paper and chalk. So it wasn't a big surprise that he became an art teacher after earning a degree from the University of Northern Iowa. It was during his college years, in the early '70s, when he came to terms with his sexuality.

He and his parents were having lunch one day when they got into a disagreement over a *Des Moines Register* article about a sculpture at Merle Hay Mall that portrayed a naked winged man on a tricycle. Miller's parents thought it was indecent, but Miller didn't see what the fuss was about. "It led to my father saying, 'Are you queer?'" Miller said. "It took me totally off guard. I wasn't ready for that conversation at all." But he bit the bullet: "I said, 'Well, actually, they say "gay" now, Dad. And yes, I am.'" His parents weren't happy about it, but they accepted things more quickly than he had feared.

Miller landed a job in Newton, where he taught elementary school art for 32 years, and then in Des Moines, as a sub, for five more. He earned a master's degree from Iowa State in 1997 and a Newton teaching excellence award in 2001.

He joined a number of gay organizations but kept a low profile for fear of losing his job. One group, called the Gay Coalition of Des Moines, organized speakers, performances and even a phone line. He said, "People would call from Boone and say, 'Where's the gay bar?'" Other LGBTQ groups popped up later, including a chorus, a theater company, a sports league, and various activist organizations. Whenever Miller joined a group, he usually ended up on the board before passing off the duties to someone else. "'Steadfast' and 'perseverance' are extremely important words," he said. "Show up. Be steadfast in your thinking, and you can make a change in the world."

Miller is currently involved with the Des Moines Pride Center, which has launched a biography project to document the lives of local LGBTQ leaders. The Pride Center also hopes to publish a history of local gay bars and organize a bus tour during Pride month, so folks can learn about the city's LGBTQ history.

dsm

LGBTQ Legacy Leader Awards

Scott Valbert

FFBC MEMBER



*Photo from
DSM Magazine.*

Other 2023 Honorees:

Rich Hendricks

Rick Miller

Laurie Phelan

Aime Wichtendahl

Rich Salas, ally



LGBTQ Legacy Leader Honoree, **Scott Valbert**, points to his coming-out story as the origin of his efforts to make Iowa and its workplaces more inclusive.

“Looking back, I understand that the bravery and commitment of others gave me the courage to come out and the passion to try to make a difference in the community,” he says.

One of those people was Jonathan Wilson, who established the First Friday Breakfast Club. “Back in the 1990s, when Jonathan was publicly outed while serving on the board of the Des Moines Public Schools, I came out at work because I needed to let colleagues know their anti-gay remarks were inappropriate and hurtful.”

From that day forward, Scott aimed to live as authentically as possible, which included being out at work. What’s more, he committed to being involved in advancing LGBTQ+ inclusion in his workplaces, through involvement and leadership of Employee Resource Groups. He also used his various roles leading employee communications to provide positive exposure and voice to LGBTQ colleagues and those who were part of other marginalized communities.

“It’s not enough simply to be out at work,” says Scott. “Even today, there are queer folks who don’t feel comfortable or safe being their true selves at work. It’s important for those of us who are to help make our workplaces more inclusive for everyone.”

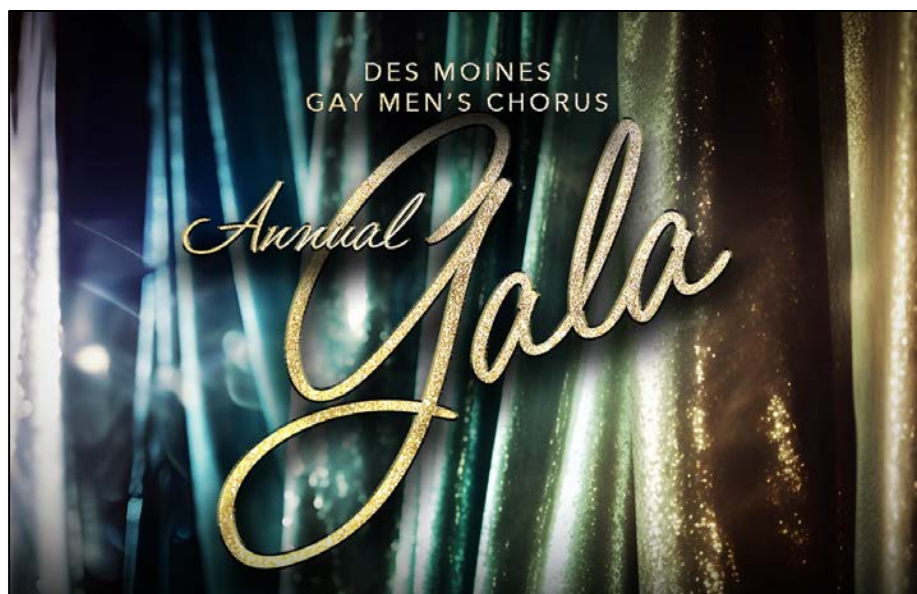
Today, Scott is a freelance communications consultant and often works with his clients to elevate their Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion efforts.

Beyond the workplace, Scott has been involved with LGBTQ+ activism through volunteer and/or leadership roles with One Iowa, Iowa Safe Schools, Human Rights Campaign, and other organizations. Today, he’s focusing his community volunteerism on organizations that aren’t specifically focused on LGBTQ issues but do have an impact on the community.

“I’ve been involved with organizations that focus on affordable housing, social supports for trans and non-binary people, and food insecurity because I believe there needs to be more LGBTQ+ representation in leadership roles within organizations that provide important services and solutions to challenges facing the LGBTQ+ community,” Scott says.

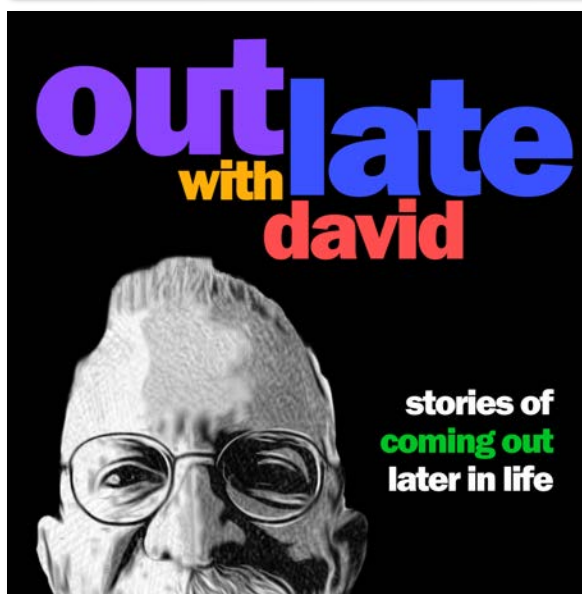
“I’m deeply humbled to receive one of this year’s LGBTQ Legacy Leader Awards,” Scott says. “There’s much work left to be done, but if those who nominated me and wrote letters of support for my nomination believe I’ve made a difference on our community and in their lives, that’s a legacy I can be proud of.”

dsm



Wednesday, October 11, 2023

Visit dmgmc.org for tickets



Join life coach **David Cotton** as he explores the complicated journey of coming out late in life. Each podcast episode of "Out Late With David" features true stories of people who've struggled for decades before finally coming out as LGBTQ+.



www.outlatewithdavid.com

FFBC Membership

FFBC membership is open to men who self-identify as gay, bisexual, or transgender, and their allies. We welcome all guests, regardless of sexual orientation or gender. Meetings are held the first Friday of every month from 7:00 a.m. - 8:15 a.m. at Hoyt Sherman Place in Des Moines. The following membership and guest rates help us cover our food and facility costs.

In-Person Meeting Rates (Members & Guests)

Annual Rate: \$180
(12 consecutive meetings)

Quarterly Rate: \$48
(3 consecutive meetings)

Month-by-Month: \$18

First Time or
One-Time Attendee: \$15

Full-time Student: \$8

There is no charge to attend via Zoom.

Payment Options

Cash or check at the meeting

Credit card prior to the meeting at www.ffbc-iowa.org; visit the Membership tab

Meeting Schedule

6:30 a.m. - Doors open
6:45 a.m. - Breakfast service begins
7:00 a.m. - Meeting begins



Unsheltered Study

by Supervisor Matt McCoy
Polk County, 1st District

As an elected official, I'm often asked to comment about individuals experiencing homelessness in the Des Moines metro. The perception among many constituents seems to be that the problem is growing and solutions are few. As a member of the Homeless Coordinating Council, I meet regularly with the City of Des Moines and advocates who provide vital services to individuals experiencing homelessness. A study released last summer incorporated personal interviews to get a better understanding of the crisis firsthand.

One of the misconceptions is that individuals who've become houseless remain so for a long period of time. In reality, statistics indicate that most people experiencing homelessness are only in that situation for fewer than 90 days. Some of the reasons are medical illness, change in relational status (such as divorce, separation, death, or disablement of a spouse/partner), and challenges related to mental health crises or drug and alcohol-related addictions.

Many people ask me why individuals choose to live outdoors as opposed to coming into shelter options. One of the main reasons is they have problems with other people in a confined setting. Some fear for their health and safety being around others. Many prefer to avoid the overcrowding and the negative interactions with others that occur in the shelter. Some indicate that they have issues with rules and staff at the shelter. Some of the other reasons why they choose living outdoors is being closer to nature and the freedom that it



provides without rules. Many claim that it's peaceful, calm, quiet, and be safer to be alone than be with people inside the shelter.

Some of the biggest challenges that individuals have living outdoors is severe temperature and weather conditions. Some specifically mentioned the unpredictability of weather, dealing with frostbite, the inability to cook food over fire at times, and especially the lack of bathroom facilities. There are many things that would help provide relief for those living outdoors in the winter and respondents indicated they would like to see more portable heaters, less stringent shelter rules during extreme weather conditions and more access to resources including clothing, blankets, and camping gear.

Overall, individuals would overwhelmingly like to be placed in permanent housing where their safety is assured, and they can live with family and pets that they treasure. Polk County assisted in the purchase of the Days Inn on Merle Hay Road which will be converted to permanent housing and will be run by Anawim Housing which will provide homes for more than 40 residents who are now chronically homeless. These types of solutions are expensive but necessary to resolve the challenges of chronic homelessness.

Spirit Awards

Friday, October 13th, 2023

Capital Square
400 Locust Street, DSM

Cocktail Reception at 6 PM
Program begins at 7:15 PM

Register NOW!

iowa
safe
schools

The Iowa Safe Schools' Spirit Awards

is an annual event dedicated to recognizing the successes of our LGBTQ community, friends, and allies.

This year has been particularly brutal for LGBTQ youth. We want to honor to applaud the work of our partners, community members, and students who worked tirelessly to inspire positive change. The money raised at the Spirit Awards is crucial to completing our mission and serving LGBTQ youth in all 99 counties of Iowa.

**Join us for an evening of fun,
inspiration, and celebration!**

Contact:

<https://one.bidpal.net/spirit2023/welcome>





A Haunting in Venice

A Film Review by Mark Turnage

What better way to kick off spooky season than a whodunit with a splash of horror? Kenneth Branagh's *A Haunting in Venice* takes a deep-cut Agatha Christie mystery and expands it with grim backstory, jump-scares, and menacing camera angles—but do the characters have the same charisma and excitement? *Haunting* is a showcase of both the beautiful and sinister sides of the titular city, but more characters could be given similar contrast to create a more involving central mystery.

Immaculately coiffed detective Hercule Poirot (Branagh) is convinced out of retirement by an old friend, crime novelist Ariadne Oliver (Tina Fey, with her best 40s broadcaster cadence) to attend a Halloween séance conducted by “The Unholy Ms. Reynolds” (Michelle Yeoh, not the governor of Iowa) in order to debunk Reynolds’ practice as a fraud. Reynolds is hosted by famous soprano Rowena Drake (Kelly Reilly) in an attempt to commune with the spirit of her daughter Alicia, who died mysteriously after a fall from her balcony into the canals. Poirot’s bodyguard, Alicia’s former fiancé Maxime, her former doctor Leslie, Leslie’s son Leopold (a fantastically creepy Jude Hill), Rowena’s housekeeper Olga, and Reynolds’ assistants Desdemona and Nicholas round out the séance guest list. When Poirot is nearly drowned and one of their number is found murdered soon after, Poirot seals the guests in the stately palazzo, determined to uncover the culprit before more bodies turn up (they do).

Branagh structures the components of the central mystery with good pacing (the film clocks in at just over 100 minutes) and plays with the audience’s attention span using stock horror conventions, namely jump-scares: a squawking cockatiel, doors slamming, and a ghostly apparition, to name a few. The setting itself, an exquisite but crumbling palazzo where plague-infected children were locked away and left to die, is arguably the darkest part of the story aside from the central crime, and explains the overabundance of superstition many of the characters have—even if several of the characters go overboard with their reactions to said spookiness. The central mystery itself has many, many misdirects befitting of an Agatha Christie novel, so don’t get too distracted. The arc of Poirot’s character from retired, bitter loner to restored detective could use some more dramatic polish. Yet painting *Haunting* as a gloomier *Glass Onion* or *Knives Out* is only slightly unfair, especially considering how the setting is itself treated luxuriously as a character. But aside from the “big three”—Branagh, Yeoh, and Fey (we’ll throw Jude Hill in there, he deserves mentioning)—the remaining characters don’t captivate as much. As “Clue” will tell you, every suspect should also have charisma.

Yet where this film shines (darkens?) is its starkly unsettling cinematography from Haris Zambarloukos, which transforms the “City of Romance” into an ominous city of shadows, statues, and sharp angles. Venice is a character in this film—not just in its transformation from romance to darkness, but also as an embodiment of post-WWII fallout. Nearly all the characters are directly impacted by the World War’s recent end: in finances, in livelihood, in their mental health. Poirot’s hostile attitude towards the spiritual is explained in monologue by the battlefield and world horrors he’s witnessed. And it’s easy to see the motivation for murder with each suspect, because each has been pushed to a point where they have little left to lose.

While its characters could be as darkly charming as its setting, *A Haunting In Venice* is an intriguing and entertaining mystery that benefits from its forays into the paranormal. See it, whether or not you believe in ghosts.



Board of Directors

David Cotton	Gene Larson
Jim Flansburg	Deb Madison-Levi
Ken Hanson	Wade Petersen
Brad Holland	Joe Raetz
Byron Huff	David Wilfahrt
Scott Kuknyo	Phil Williams

Jonathan Wilson (Emeritus)

Contact Us At: info@ffbciaowa.org

Officers

Byron Huff
President

David Cotton
Vice President

Joe Raetz
Secretary

David Wilfahrt
Treasurer



Newsletter Editor

WP Wade Petersen

Webmaster

David Cotton



Publication



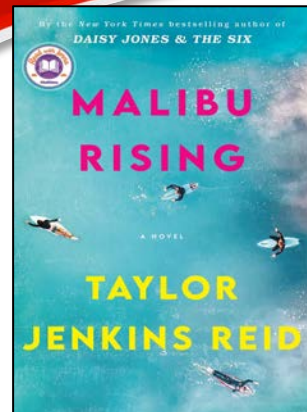
©2023
FFBC Board
of Directors

First Friday Breakfast Club
P.O. Box 41611
Des Moines, IA 50311
(515) 954-2996

Malibu Rising

By Taylor Jenkins Reid

A
Book
Review by
Steve Person



Taylor Jenkins Reid tells tales of troubled souls. Her *The Seven Husbands of Evelyn Hugo* is testament to Oscar Wilde's assessment of the three-volume novel when he has the prudish governess in *The Importance of Being Earnest*, Miss Prism, answer her pupil's question in Act Two about the content of her missing manuscript. "The good ended happily, and the bad unhappily. That is what Fiction means." That is exactly how the tale of Evelyn Hugo ended, albeit in an extremely unexpected manner. It was novel writing at its finest. I wish I could say the same for *Malibu Rising*, but it is an impossible task to find the entire cast of characters in any way redeeming with the possible exception of June.

In the prologue to the story, the author says, "Malibu catches fire. It is simply what Malibu does from time to time." The story's timeline begins at 7:00 a.m. in the present and continues through the entire day with interruptions of events in the years preceding to this day.

It becomes all too easy to forget the opening two sentences as the reader follows the family that owns a ramshackle restaurant, Pacific Fish, poised on an outcropping rock in 1956 Malibu. Itinerant wannabe singer, Mick Riva, tumbles out of the surf below Pacific Fish, and spots a beautiful young woman waiting the tables at the restaurant. Her name is June. It is from these two people that the rest of the story ensues. As he gets to know her, he asks what her ideal future would be: "A family," she said. "Two kids. A boy and a girl. A good husband, who likes to dance with me in the living room and remember our anniversary. And we never fight." They marry.

Mick Riva gets "discovered" as does the geography around Malibu. What was once a passing place along the Pacific Coast Highway, Malibu mushrooms into a Hollywood Rich Man's Paradise. June gets her wish of two children, a boy (Jay) and a girl (Nina), but Mick, not only forgetting anniversaries, crashes headlong into the Hollywood cauldron of sex, booze, and drugs. He becomes the most successful crooner of his time. When Mick's Hollywood paramour dumps her unwanted child (Hud) on June's doorstep, she raises him as if he and Jay are twins.

June's life becomes a tale of woe with mounting bills and no child support. She eventually succumbs. As the children grow into adulthood, Jay blossoms into a world-class surfer with Hud at his side as a professional photographer on the surfing circuit. Nina, a world-famous swimsuit model, marries a champion tennis player who builds Nina a glittering glass and steel house on a cliff above the ocean. Nina's champion tennis player begins to lose his championship ways and skips out.

Nina's trendy home, which she detests, becomes the most desirable place to be every year when a party with no invitations brings people from all areas of life—most of whom Nina doesn't know—to revel in expensive food, wine, liquor, and drugs. This year the party gets out of hand. An aging Mick turns up and wants to be the father he never was. Nina's missing husband arrives. Jay and Hud have a knockdown drag out fight over a girl both think they want. The partygoers trash Nina's house on the rock with the police eventually showing up but not wanting to arrest such well-known Hollywood celebrities.

The following day, with most of the revelers gone, Mick Riva, in search of his Jaguar that has gone missing, departs from the house, smoking a cigarette. He tosses the still-lit butt into the air, and it lands in a bush. I refer you to the prologue.