Monroe is a character performed by Tracy resident Kevin Metzger, who was diagnosed with Lou Gehrig’s disease (ALS) early in 2016 at age 44. Metzger has trouble speaking and walking – conditions that led colleagues to believe he was drunk on the job before they knew he had ALS. ALS is a progressive neurodegenerative disease that affects the motor neurons that control voluntary muscle movement, so people with later-stage ALS can become completely paralyzed and eventually can no longer breathe.

A retail manager by day and female impersonator by night, Metzger was confused, angry and depressed when he received the diagnosis. He now experiences weakness in his extremities, difficulty speaking and fine motor skill debilitation. He can no longer lift things with ease or grip items for any extended time.

“I’m dealing daily with frustration that I can’t do the things I used to be able to,” Metzger said. “I’m coming to the realization that there are limitations to my daily life now.”

His husband, Jeff Gamble, encouraged him to quit his job in retail management to focus on his entertainment career.

“At this point, I’m just trying to keep entertaining the crowd for as long as possible with the help of my cast members and friends,” Metzger said. He continues to perform at Sunday’s A Drag atop the Sir Francis Drake Hotel in San Francisco and Holotta’s Un-BOYlievable Review at Club 1220 in Walnut Creek.

“I felt we had to reevaluate our priorities and work to ensure we had the best relationship and he had the best life possible, for as long as possible,” Gamble said.

Gamble encouraged Metzger to volunteer with the summer high school internship program at the medical center where Gamble works. Together, they trained 25 young adults from underserved communities who indicated they were interested in health care.

“Kevin brought a level of authenticity, generosity and love to the program that I couldn’t have done on my own,” Gamble said. “I got to spend more time with him and watch as he made a difference in the world, rather than just sit at home alone.”

The two also have begun attending a Stockton support group through The ALS Association Greater Sacramento Chapter, the local chapter of the organization leading the fight to treat and cure ALS through global research and nationwide advocacy. The organization also empowers people with the disease and their families to live fuller lives by providing them with compassionate care and support.

Metzger and Gamble valued The ALS Association support group so much that when the group’s host passed away, Gamble helped secure conference room space for the group at the medical office where he works.

“The best you can do and hope for is making every moment count and being grateful for all the time you do have,” Gamble said.

For more information about ALS or to make a donation, visit www.alssac.org.

Current reigning Miss Gay California United States 2016, Kendra Monroe, can no longer wear heels and has trouble applying makeup and using bobby pins.