

Eight Honored, Over \$200,000 Raised During Gala for Open Sky's Safe Homes Program for LGBTQIA+ Youth

Submitted by
Open Sky Community Services

Open Sky Community Services announced that more than \$200,000 was raised during its gala on April 4 to benefit the Safe Homes program, which is celebrating 30 years of serving LGBTQIA+ youth. Open Sky honored eight individuals and organizations during the event with its 2025 People of Courage Awards for

see **OPEN**, page 4



The 2025 People of Courage Awardees gather onstage at Open Sky's Safe Homes Gala in Worcester on April 4, 2025. Eight individuals and organizations were recognized for their outstanding actions in support of equality and justice in Central Massachusetts. Photo courtesy of Open Sky Community Services.



U.S. Supreme Court LGBTQ+ Book Case Is About More Than Just Books

by Dana Rudolph | drudolph@mombian.com
contributing writer

The U.S. Supreme Court will hear a case on April 22 about whether parents have the right to opt out of their children before LGBTQ+-inclusive books are read in public school classrooms. It's about more than just books, however, as newly filed amicus briefs show.

The case began when Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) in Maryland added several LGBTQ+-inclusive picture books to its supplemental curriculum in 2022. The books had been evaluated by a committee of staff members through the district's usual process and were in-

tended as optional titles for teachers to recommend or read to students if desired.

A group of parents, however, brought a lawsuit in 2023 against MCPS, claiming that the school

see **MOMBIAN**, page 3



When they come for you What's your deportable offense?

by Richard J. Rosendall | rosendall@starpower.net
contributing writer

You might think I would be worried. After all, my 2015 year-in-review was titled "Year of the Arsonist," the arsonist being Mr. Trump. It was illustrated by a photo of the 1933 Reichstag fire.

I have been no kinder since. Thus you might wonder when I will be dragged off to a torture prison in El

Salvador.

Why would our bold, world-straddling ruler be concerned with an obscure scribbler? He recently slighted the country of Lesotho, which he said no one ever heard of. (He routinely assumes that everyone else is as ignorant as he.) I heard of it, which officially makes me nobody.

Still, I'm the sort of person who gets shot in a movie for not keeping my head down. Trump may have started with Venezuelans, but sooner or later he'll move on to disrespectful gringos.

I am probably safe as long as fa-

see **ROSENDALL**, page 2

NH Congressman Pappas announces bid to succeed fellow Democrat in US Senate



U.S. Rep. Chris Pappas, D-N.H., announces his bid to succeed retiring U.S. Sen. Jeanne Shaheen, a fellow Democrat, Thursday, April 3, 2025, in Manchester, N.H. Photo by Robert F. Bukaty/AP.

By Kathy McCormack
Associated Press

next year.

"I'm running for Senate because our economy, our democracy, and our way of life are on the line, and New Hampshire deserves a senator who is grounded in the people, places, and

CONCORD, N.H. (AP) — Four-term Congressman Chris Pappas of New Hampshire announced his bid Thursday to succeed retiring U.S. Sen. Jeanne Shaheen, a fellow Democrat,

see **NH**, page 7

In Scotus Brief, AG Campbell Defends Use Of LGBTQ+ -Inclusive Books In Public Schools

Submitted by
AG Campbell's office

Maryland, to incorporate LGBTQ+-inclusive books into their curricula without offering parents an opt-out option.

BOSTON — Massachusetts Attorney General Andrea Joy Campbell has co-lead a coalition of 19 attorneys general in filing an amicus brief in the Supreme Court of the United States to defend the discretion of public schools in Montgomery County,

The brief was filed in support of the respondents in Mahmoud, et al. v. Taylor, et al. and argues that the use of curricula with LGBTQ+-inclusive

see **AG**, page 5



"What in the faggotry are you talking about?"

—Gayle King quotes a Matteo Lane joke to his face. While many people have their panties in a bunch over Gayle's use of the word "faggotry", Matteo gets the last word. "I love you Gayle King".

Photo by Troy Hallahan.

more in Billy Masters on page 6!



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Rosendall

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mous people like Rachel Maddow are not being purged; but at any moment, any of us could become desaparecido at the whim of Trump's zealots.

Making people disappear for disagreeing with a wannabe tyrant would be a blatant violation of the First Amendment. But constitutional niceties are not a concern for this lawless regime.

There is something that makes some people determined to control others. I know trans women in Nairobi who have been arrested for wearing women's clothes. I cannot believe Donald wants to be outdone by the president of Kenya.

You may counter that what someone chooses to wear is no conceivable threat to anyone. I am sorry, but if you think Trump can be persuaded with facts and reason, you must think Greenland belongs to Denmark, and Canada is an independent country. By the time you come to your senses, I may have been given a free ride across the Gulf of America.

Lesotho is a lovely country. This does not matter to Trump, who thinks anything he doesn't know is either irrelevant or a shit hole. Please excuse my vulgarity, but I am discussing high matters of state.

I doubt that Trump could find El Salvador on a map any more than he could find Lesotho. Which I guess is fine with him, since he has no interest in getting back any of the people he ordered abducted and removed from our blessed land of liberty. I have no tattoos at all, incidentally, but that would likely be taken as proof that I am concealing my sinister intentions.

Were you aware, by the way, that it was a deportable offense to have a tattoo? Trump invents entire laws out of his fevered brain, just as he declassifies documents by thinking about them.

He apparently thinks his 2024 election victory allows him to blame everything on Kamala

Harris. That makes no sense; but who am I to have an opinion?

As a former federal employee who took an oath to defend the Constitution, I appear to have a clearer understanding on that subject than members of Trump's cabinet. Secretary of State Marco Rubio said we don't want legal immigrants writing op-eds critical of the president. He deems it appropriate for masked men to abduct people off the street and drag them to prison with no due process.

Trump often hurls charges of treason at his Democratic opponents. But he has also directed the charge at Miles Taylor, a former Homeland Security official in his first administration, for criticizing him, and ordered the DOJ to investigate him.

Former Trump defense lawyer Alina Habba, now acting U.S. attorney of New Jersey, has threatened Gov. Phil Murphy over immigration enforcement.

This is getting scary.

Large crowds gathered in cities across the country on April 5 to protest what this administration is doing. The sight of hard-won rights and earned benefits being snatched away has mobilized the public and given the lie to Trump's absurd claim that his 49.8% popular vote plurality gave him a sweeping mandate for the wreckage now underway.

Americans are witnessing a truly sinister attack on our nation from within – in service of oligarchs – and they don't like it. The habit of speaking our minds is too ingrained to be snuffed out so easily.

I understand the talk about fleeing overseas, and do not fault others who make that choice. Many, however, do not have that option. As for me, I cannot surrender freedoms for which generations have fought. Indeed, millions of Americans getting their backs up and refusing to bow to tyranny may be all that can save our republic.

Richard J. Rosendall is a writer and activist at rrosendall@me.com.

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MAKING PEOPLE DISAPPEAR FOR DISAGREEING WITH A WANNABE TYRANT WOULD BE A BLATANT VIOLATION OF THE FIRST AMENDMENT. BUT CONSTITUTIONAL NICETIES ARE NOT A CONCERN FOR THIS LAWLESS REGIME.

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violated their religious freedom by not giving them the chance to opt out their children from classroom readings of the books. The specific titles they named as objectionable were the picture books "Born Ready: The True Story of a Boy Named Penelope"; "IntersectionAllies: We Make Room for All"; "Prince & Knight"; "Uncle Bobby's Wedding"; "Love, Violet"; "My Rainbow"; "Pride Puppy"; "Jacob's Room to Choose"; and "What Are Your Words?"

After a federal district court and appeals court both denied the plaintiffs a preliminary injunction that would have required the district to temporarily grant the parents' request, the parents asked the Supreme Court to take the case, *Mahmoud v. Taylor*, which it did.

We've seen a similar case before. In 2008, four parents claimed that the Lexington, Mass., public school district violated their constitutional rights by putting LGBTQ+-inclusive picture books in its elementary school curriculum. In that case, *Parker v. Hurler*, the 1st Circuit Court of Appeals in a unanimous ruling wrote, "There is no free exercise [of religion] right to be free from any reference in public elementary schools to the existence of families in which the parents are of different gender combinations." The Supreme Court refused to hear the case.

In *Mahmoud*, amicus briefs in defense of MCPS were filed in early April by most of the major LGBTQ+ organizations, along with numerous civil rights, educational, publishing, and faith organizations, plus a bevy of legal scholars, 19 attorneys general, and more. Here are a few of their arguments, showing some of the case's many ramifications.

A brief from GLBTQ Legal Advocates and Defenders, the National Center for Lesbian Rights, the Human Rights Campaign, Family Equality, COLAGE, FreeState Justice, GLSEN, and The Trevor Project explains that the books help develop students' English language skills, but also "foster skills of civility and respect that are needed in a functioning school system and a healthy democracy." Conversely, LGBTQ+-only opt-outs "[send] a troubling message to students that some families are less worthy of acknowledgment and respect than others." Creating an opt-out system, too, "would impose an unworkable administrative burden on schools and undermine educators' ability to focus on their core teaching responsibilities."

PEN America, in its brief, adds that an opt-out scheme "would impose a significant burden on those who want to read and discuss LGBTQ+-inclusive books—a burden not imposed on those who want to read and discuss books about straight and cisgender people,"

meaning that "the injunction that Petitioners seek is a constitutionally suspect book ban by another name."

A brief from the Authors Guild, the Educational Book & Media Association, and Penguin Random House asserts that the plaintiffs "fail to recognize that merely exposing students to books that depict a range of family relationships and identities, including some that might fall outside the boundaries of some religious orthodoxies, does not rise to the level of indoctrination."

And a brief from the American Civil Liberties Union and the ACLU of Maryland elaborates that allowing religious exemptions from classroom material is a slippery slope. Parents could then object to Shakespeare's "Twelfth Night" "because a woman character pretends to be a man," or "Lessons in patriotism could be viewed by some people of faith as improperly elevating country over God." Additionally, "Others might object to their children being in the classroom for a peer's presentation on their family tree, if the family tree includes same-sex parents."

That last argument is key. It's a very small step between restricting books and restricting what children say about themselves and their families. And it is easy to see the case as part of a wider effort to erase LGBTQ+ identities, as exemplified in the recent presidential executive order declaring there are only two genders and the efforts to remove mentions of LGBTQ+ and other marginalized people from federal websites.

Eighteen of the authors and illustrators whose books are cited by the plaintiffs issued a statement in February, saying in part, "Children need to know that there are other people like them in the world, that they aren't alone, that their hopes and fears are shared by others. And they need the freedom to read about different people with different views." This "helps prepare them to be good citizens, to navigate and succeed in a complex and diverse world."

"We have been told about children hugging our books and carrying them everywhere they go," they shared.

These books matter because the children who see themselves and their world in them matter. Organizers of a Rally for Inclusive Education, to be held outside the court building on the day of the hearing, say on their website that the case is "about the soul of public education in the United States." That's true—but I'd add that it's also about the souls and selves of our country's children.

For more on the rally, visit liveinyourtruth.org/rally-registration.

Dana Rudolph is the founder and publisher of Mombian (mombian.com), a two-time GLAAD Media Award-winning blog for LGBTQ+ parents plus a searchable database of 1,700+ LGBTQ+ family books.

PARENTS COULD THEN OBJECT TO SHAKESPEARE'S "TWELFTH NIGHT" "BECAUSE A WOMAN CHARACTER PRETENDS TO BE A MAN," OR "LESSONS IN PATRIOTISM COULD BE VIEWED BY SOME PEOPLE OF FAITH AS IMPROPERLY ELEVATING COUNTRY OVER GOD."



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their outstanding actions in support of equality and justice in Central Massachusetts.

"We are especially proud to be a member of the Central Massachusetts community, honoring so many wonderful individuals and organizations that epitomize the inclusion and belonging that has been at the core of our Safe Homes program for three decades," said Open Sky President and CEO Ken Bates. "We are so appreciative of our sponsors and supporters for making this our most well attended and successful gala yet, and for the strength and resilience of the youth, past and present, that we have had the pleasure of serving."

Open Sky applauds the generous support from its many event sponsors, including presenting sponsor Spectrum Health Systems and VIP reception sponsor Webster Five.

"Spectrum is both grateful and excited to continue to support Open Sky's impactful work through our employee-driven Community Impact Program," said Spectrum Health Systems President and CEO Kurt Isaacson. "Safe Homes provides critical support to a typically vulnerable population and we are thrilled to be a part of it. Congratulations on another successful year!"

Other speakers included Massachusetts State Senator Robyn Kennedy. The event was emceed by Ché Anderson, Assistant Vice Chancellor for City and Community Relations at UMass Chan Medical School, and Connor Hayden, Safe Homes Advisory Committee Member and Yale University graduate student.

The People of Courage Awards, in its 20th year, honored the following passionate and dedicated individuals and businesses who have demonstrated commitment and courage in support of LGBTQIA+ youth and other marginalized groups:

Skylar Mendez (she/they) of Worcester, received the Youth Award for her fearless participation in Safe Homes for the past two years and for her passionate advocacy for the queer community. Her friends and family appreciate her sense of humor and kind nature as well as her willingness to be a part of Safe Homes despite various challenges.

Matthew Gonzalez (he/him) of Worcester, received the Community Champion Award for his commitment to creating spaces where LGBTQIA+ individuals can connect and feel safe. Gonzalez is a United States Air Force veteran and founded Worcester's first queer kickball league, now part of OutLoud Sports, a nationwide league focused on uniting LGBTQIA+ athletes.

Heath Umbreit (they/them), of Boston, was presented with the Inspiration and Innovation Award for their professional trainings and advocacy on trans inclusion in libraries at the state, regional and national level. Heath, who identifies as trans/nonbinary and genderfluid, is the Adult Services Librarian at Morrill Memorial Library in Norwood and founded the Massachusetts Trans and Gender-Diverse Library Workers Group.

Mass Youth Soccer, the official representative of US Soccer and US Youth Soccer in Massachusetts, was recognized with the People's



Oscar Oliveira Soens (from left), Safe Homes Program Director, and Massachusetts State Senator Robyn Kennedy pose at the 2025 Safe Homes Gala on April 4, 2025, in Worcester. Senator Kennedy received a standing ovation following a passionate speech on the importance of coming together as a community and supporting LGBTQIA+ youth. Photo courtesy of Open Sky Community Services.

Choice Award for fostering environments that support development, encourage dreams, and foster belonging and inclusion. The Lancaster-based organization holds an annual drive to collect toiletries, snacks, and school supplies for youth served by Safe Homes.

Jason Homer (he/him) of Marlborough, received the Public Service Award for championing the vital role of libraries nationwide in education, inclusion and community growth, and ensuring they remain essential spaces for learning for all individuals. He is the Executive Director of the Worcester Public Library, leading its seven branches and advocating for community-focused services. Homer is also President of the Worcester Cultural Coalition.

The Woo Bar & Grill was honored with the Small Business Award for creating a safe and welcoming environment for all individuals at its Worcester-based establishment. Owners Jon Pittsley (he/him) and Eddie Rocco (he/him) opened The Woo Bar & Grill in 2023 and have over 30 years of combined experience in the restaurant industry. Pittsley and Rocco also provide support to myriad local nonprofit organizations.

Shane Franzen (he/him) of Fitchburg, received the Safe Homes Partnership Award for his support of LGBTQIA+ youth at Fitchburg State University and advocacy of Safe Homes North on the campus. He spent nearly 24 years as Associate Director of Student Development at the University and currently serves as Director of Presidential Events there. Franzen is also an advisor of the Gay Straight Alliance at the university, an organization that supports and promotes the understanding and acceptance of LGBTQIA+ individuals.

New England Botanic Garden at Tower Hill, a nonprofit owned and operated by one of the oldest horticultural societies in the country, was honored with the Social Justice Advocacy and Action Award for its commitment to inclusion and belonging. The organization provides educational workshops for organizations like Safe Homes, and other youth-based and underserved groups through Project Bloom.

The annual Safe Homes Gala, which was held at Mechanics Hall and welcomed nearly 400 attendees, supports the program's educational programming, a transgender resource center, leadership training, free mental health counseling, weekly drop-ins, food and toiletry pantry, recreational activities and emergency supports for LGBTQIA+ youth ages 14 to 23. The program serves youth across Central Massachusetts, and has an active online community to serve individuals outside of the region.

Open Sky Community Services is a 501(c)3 nonprofit agency based in Worcester that has been helping individuals in our community achieve more than they imagined possible for over 50 years. The agency provides a wide range of services throughout Central Massachusetts for children, adults and families with mental health challenges, intellectual and developmental disabilities, substance use disorders, brain injury, homelessness and other complex challenges. Open Sky Community Services has over 1,300 dedicated employees and nearly 150 programs throughout the region, supporting over 8,000 individuals annually. Open Sky is committed to race equity and is on a journey to learn, grow, teach and transform. For more information, please visit www.openskycs.org.

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PO BOX E14,
Boston, MA 02127

Publishers Emeritus:
Jeff Coakley
Sue O'Connell

Editorial:
Editor-in-Chief
Sue O'Connell
sue.baywindows@gmail.com

Contributing Writers:
Judith Leblang
Billy Masters
Richard J. Rosendall
Dana Rudolph
Rev. Irene Monroe
Jules Becker

Letters to the Editor:
letters.baywindows@gmail.com

News tips:
news.baywindows@gmail.com

Calendar listings:
news.baywindows@gmail.com

Announcements:
announcements.baywindows@gmail.com

Advertising:
Display Advertising
sales@baywindows.com

Classified Advertising:
classifiedads@baywindows.com

Editorial Design Manager:
Julie Walker Palmer

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AG

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books without an opt-out option falls within public schools' longstanding authority to foster safe learning environments and does not violate anyone's right to freely exercise their religious beliefs.

Although the case specifically focuses on policies of the Montgomery County Board of Education, the Supreme Court's decision in the case could be consequential for public schools nationwide.

"Preparing our children to engage with and thrive in a diverse society is a central premise of education. Local school districts have the right to determine that the use of LGBTQ+ inclusive books helps to foster inclusive learning environments for all our students," said AG Campbell. "I am proud to stand in defense of inclusive books, which teach our students to respect one another, regardless of, and without interfering with, their respective personal beliefs."

In March 2023, the Montgomery County Board of Education (Montgomery County) in Maryland adopted a mandatory K-5 language arts curriculum that included LGBTQ+ inclusive books and was designed to foster respect and tolerance for LGBTQ+ individuals. The petitioners filed a lawsuit and motion for preliminary

injunction challenging the policy, arguing that the lack of an opt-out option violated their First Amendment right to freely exercise their religious beliefs. They claimed a right to object to – and opt their children out of – the teaching of tolerance on religious grounds. In 2024, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit affirmed a lower court's decision to deny the preliminary injunction, finding that the challenge concerned the mere exposure of petitioners' children to LGBTQ+ inclusive books through Montgomery County's curriculum, which did not interfere with the petitioners' free exercise rights. The Supreme Court is slated to hear arguments on the petitioners' challenge on April 22.

In filing the brief, the coalition urges the Supreme Court to reject the petitioners' challenge because Montgomery County's policies do not violate the Constitution.

Montgomery County's Policies Fall Within State and Local Governments' Authority to Shape Public Education and Create Safe and Inclusive Environments for Students

The coalition argues that Montgomery County's use of LGBTQ+ inclusive books is an effort to foster a safe and inclusive environment for students and protect LGBTQ+ students from harm. The coalition further asserts that this effort falls well within the long-held and broad legal authority of state and local governments to shape public education and design educational

environments that support the success of all students.

The coalition references research indicating that LGBTQ+ students experience disproportionate levels of harm from discrimination and bullying in schools. A 2022 study found that 68% of LGBTQ+ students reported feeling unsafe at school due to their sexual orientation or gender identity and that nearly all of LGBTQ+ students reported hearing homophobic language by peers.

The coalition also references research indicating that students with access to LGBTQ+ supportive school environments, including curriculum with LGBTQ+ related topics, have experienced less discrimination, better psychological wellbeing, and a greater sense of belonging at school. As such, Montgomery County's policies are also aligned with state laws designed to address discrimination and bullying in schools and create inclusive learning environments for all students.

While the petitioners argue they should be able to opt-out of the LGBTQ+ inclusive curriculum because they are allowed to opt-out of sex-education classes, the coalition asserts that the LGBTQ+ inclusive books in question are not related to sex-education, but are rather designed to foster greater inclusivity and safety for LGBTQ+ individuals. By not allowing an opt-out option, Montgomery County affirms

its commitment to inclusivity by teaching all students to treat LGBTQ+ individuals with dignity and respect, regardless of one's personal beliefs.

Mere Exposure To LGBTQ+ Inclusive Books Does Not Burden the Right to Free Exercise of Religion

The coalition asserts that, in accordance with the Fourth Circuit's findings, the only constitutional question presented at this preliminary stage of the case is whether the mere exposure of students to LGBTQ+ inclusive books in schools violates their parents' right to freely exercise their religion. Because such exposure to contrary views through LGBTQ+ inclusive books does not force or compel the petitioners to abandon or act against their religious beliefs, the coalition argues that — consistent with Supreme Court precedent — no constitutional violation has occurred in relation to Montgomery County's policy.

The coalition's amicus brief may be viewed in its entirety here.

Joining AG Campbell in co-leading the amicus brief is Maryland Attorney General Anthony Brown. The amicus brief was also joined by the attorneys general of California, Connecticut, Colorado, Delaware, the District of Columbia, Hawaii, Illinois, Maine, Michigan, Minnesota, Nevada, New Jersey, New York, Oregon, Rhode Island, Vermont, and Washington.



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Détente. That was the word **Patti LuPone** used when she reunited with **Lord Andrew Lloyd Webber** at the 2018 Grammys. Maybe it's something about New York City, because another notable détente just took place there—this one between **Sir Elton John** and **Madonna**. First, a bit of history. The twosome has traded barbs as far back as 2004, when Elton made an acceptance speech at the Q Awards and dogged Madge's nomination. "Madonna? Best fucking live act? Fuck off. Since when has lip-syncing been live?" And that was him being nice!! An amusing exchange took place at the 2012 Golden Globes. Each had a song nominated in the same category. On the red carpet, Elton said Madonna didn't "stand a fucking chance." And then she won! Oh, the ignominy.

As to the resolution, it's Madonna who took the high road. When she heard Miss Elton was the musical guest on "Saturday Night Live" last week, she decided to go. "I needed to go backstage and confront him. When I met him, the first thing out of his mouth was, 'Forgive Me,' and the wall between us fell down. Forgiveness is a powerful tool. Within minutes, we were hugging. Then he told me he had written a song for me and he wanted to collaborate. It was like everything came full circle." She captured the moment with a photo and posted it on Instagram with the caption, "We finally buried the hatchet." She looks good and kinda normal—Elton looks less than thrilled. But he reposted the photo and called it a "healing moment." To be continued...

Of course, it's entirely possible that Elton had no idea who he was talking to backstage at "SNL." He recently spoke about his diminishing eyesight: "I can't see my boys playing rugby and soccer, and it has been a very stressful time because I'm used to soaking it all in. It's distressing. You get emotional, but you have to get used to it because I'm lucky to have the life I have. I still have my wonderful family, and I can still see something out of my left eye." On the other hand, it should be noted that Madonna was standing on his left.

Last year, Elton John revealed some staggering statistics about the Elton John AIDS Foundation. "Since our founding in 1992, we have saved over 5 million lives and raised more than \$600 million to support over 3100 projects in 95 countries globally to end AIDS." One of those countries will no longer be Russia. The Russian general prosecutor has called the nonprofit "undesirable" and accused it of attempting to undermine Russian "spiritual and moral values with propaganda." The organization was quick to respond: "In 2024, there were over 1.2 million people living with HIV in Russia, with over 430,000 not receiving treatment. Today's decision...will undoubtedly endanger lives and disrupt critical HIV prevention efforts."

One of the biggest fundraisers for the foundation each year is Elton John's Academy Awards Party. This past year, the lovely **Belinda Carlisle** and hubby **Morgan Mason** attended. Belinda's been spending more time in SoCal lately. There are very few things that would make me miss **The Go-Go's** return to the Sunset Strip. But family issues kept me on the east coast while the girls revisited their roots at The Roxy. The reason for this rare club date was a warmup for their appearance at Coachella last weekend and next month's Cruel World festival. From the looks of it, they're having a great time. Admittedly, they are only doing five shows—I think even the **Eagles** could get through that! The Go-Go's have always been enthusiastic musicians, but what surprised me most about these shows were the vocals. With a more active performing schedule than usual, Belinda Carlisle's voice is in great shape (adjusted keys notwithstanding). But she's not alone. **Jane Wiedlin**, who has faced a variety of health issues, is exceptionally strong. They were joined by **Kathy Valentine** and **Charlotte Caffey** on some glorious harmonies that one might almost call Bangle-esque (which I know Jane hates). All the while, Gina Schock kept the beat—proving that after seven years away, she is still The Go-Go's MVP. These shows reminded us why the band has always soared above their contemporaries with a catalogue of hits rarely rivaled—let alone bettered.

As to the Coachella show, it was a bit more ragtag—like-

ly due to the heat (which seemed to get to Belinda during "Our Lips Are Sealed"). They were joined onstage by **Green Day** frontman **Billie Joe Armstrong** for "Head Over Heels". While it was fun seeing Belinda relegated to a backup singer on a Go-Go's hit, it's strange that Billie Joe didn't join them on the previous song—"Unforgiven"—which he co-wrote and recorded with them. There are always technical issues at these large festivals—and Carlisle is never one to just take them in her stride (see her appearance at LA Pride in 2012). The projected videos (likely produced by **Dan Rucks** of **Dan-O-Rama**) certainly added to the kitsch factor and provided a perfect setting. You can check out clips from both shows on BillyMasters.com.

While we're Palm Springs-adjacent, let's again talk about "Mid-Century Modern"—the gift that keeps on giving. Much has been made about **Coco Peru** being cut out of the pilot. We all talked about it...well, I talked about it. One cannot ignore a legend in her own time being relegated to an extra! Apparently, co-creator **Max Mutchnick** decided he had to address the situation on Instagram. "Sometimes we're forced to cut a character WE LOVE because of time constraints. Editing Ms. Coco Peru from the MCM pilot was heartbreaking. Somehow, you guys found out, and because Hulu is such a cool place to work they let us pull it out of the vault for YOU! Ladies and gentle femmes I give you Ms. Coco Peru on Mid-Century Modern. (And a really good joke from **Matt Bomer**.)" I don't know if I agree with all of that, but the clip is indeed fun and you can check it out on BillyMasters.com.

Speaking of television, **Deborah Norville** just announced that she will be leaving "Inside Edition" after anchoring the show for 30 years. This brought two things to mind. First, can you believe it was over 30 years ago that the whole **Jane Pauley/Deborah Norville** situation happened? Second, who knew "Inside Edition" was still on the air?

Finally, some good news for those poor, misunderstood **Menendez brothers**. As you'll recall, the former Los Angeles district attorney felt it was fair to allow the boys to have a resentencing hearing based on new evidence—which is typical protocol. Then the new DA decided he wasn't so inclined. While the wheels of justice inched along, **Governor Gavin Newsom** ordered the boys appear before the parole board for an evaluation on June 13th. After receiving their recommendation, Newsom could direct the resentencing hearing take place, or even give them a full pardon. That all may be a moot point. Last week, LA County Superior Court Judge **Michael Jesic** weighed in on the original resentencing request. While the current DA strenuously objected, Judge Jesic determined the right thing to do is to go forward with the resentencing hearing—which will take place on April 17th in Van Nuys.

I was surprised to see that **Cooper Koch** was present in the courtroom at last week's hearing. He, of course, portrayed Lyle Menendez in "Monsters: The Lyle and Erik Menendez Story". I'm told he was invited by members of the Menendez family, who he has gotten close to. He's also close with his own family. Cooper has two brothers—gay twin Payton and younger brother Walker. Walker recently posted a photo of his twin brothers about to kiss in a mockup of the "White Lotus" poster—just in time for the series finale. While he quickly deleted the pic, you can check it out on BillyMasters.com.

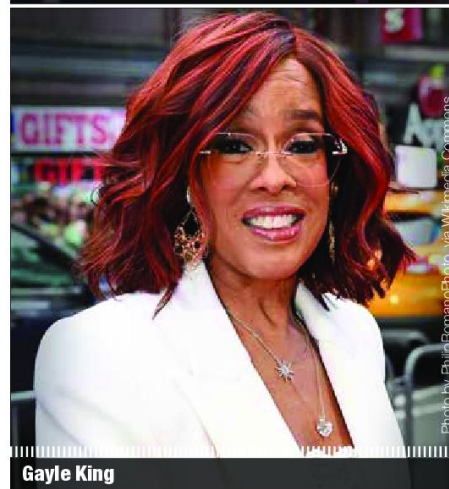
When the Koch boys are keeping it all in the family, it's definitely time to end yet another column. I've heard of brotherly love, but this is ridiculous...although I'd definitely want to see video footage! By the time you read this, **Gayle King** will be in space. Not outer space—just inner space. In fact, her whole journey will take a scant eleven minutes. Frankly, I can make you see stars a whole lot quicker (and cheaper) on www.BillyMasters.com—the site that has its share of heavenly bodies. None of my "Ask Billy" questions seemed to warrant publishing. But that shouldn't stop you from writing. Send your notes to Billy@BillyMasters.com and I promise to get back to you before Belinda remembers to hydrate! Until next time, remember, one man's filth is another man's bible.



Patti LuPone



Billie Joe Armstrong



Gayle King

NH

Continued from page 1

values of this state," Pappas said in a video announcement.

He added: "Like Senator Shaheen, I'll always put New Hampshire first. You can count on me to lead the charge to confront this administration, self-dealing billionaires, and extreme politicians who threaten our future and our ability to get things done for New Hampshire."

Pappas, 44, emerged as the most likely Democrat to succeed Shaheen, who turned 78 in January. She was the first woman elected to serve as both governor and senator in the United States. Shaheen, serving her third term in the Senate, announced in March that she would not seek reelection.

Pappas could potentially face a formidable Republican opponent. Former New Hampshire Gov. Chris Sununu is considering a run. The popular governor decided not to seek a fifth, two-year term last year.

Last year, Pappas defeated Republican former state Sen. Russell Prescott to win New Hampshire's 1st District, which covers the eastern half of the state and includes its largest city, Manchester. Pappas is from there. The district was once quite politically volatile, with party control flipping five times in six election cycles from 2006 to 2016.

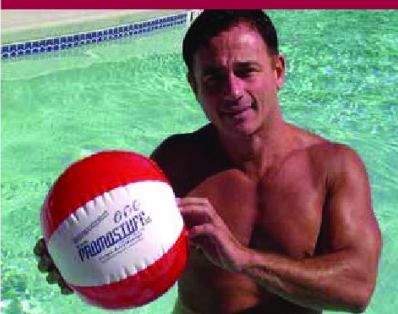
Pappas, who considers himself a pragmatic voice in Washington, touted his support from women, veterans and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce during the campaign. He made abortion rights a top issue, calling Prescott "radically out of step" and accusing him of distrusting women to make health care decisions.

In 2022, Pappas defeated Republican candidate Karoline Leavitt, now White House press secretary. During that race, Leavitt said she believed the 2020 election was stolen from President Donald Trump. Pappas said she "continues to double-down on the big lie."

He made history in 2018 by becoming the state's first openly gay member of Congress.

Pappas has helped run his family's restaurant in Manchester and was part of a state council that approves spending contracts.

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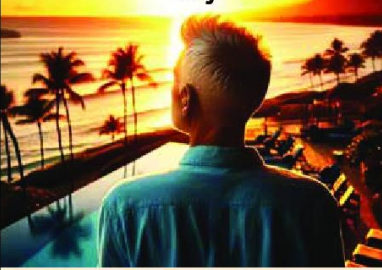
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Joseph "Jay" Bennett

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The joy of this day still echoes in our hearts.

We met when we were young—full of dreams and hope that life would be kind.

Over time, that hope became a quiet strength, carrying us through life's turns.

Our deep feelings often were silent, but understood.

You live on—in memory, in each sunrise and in all the other quiet ways you remain with us.

— GARY —

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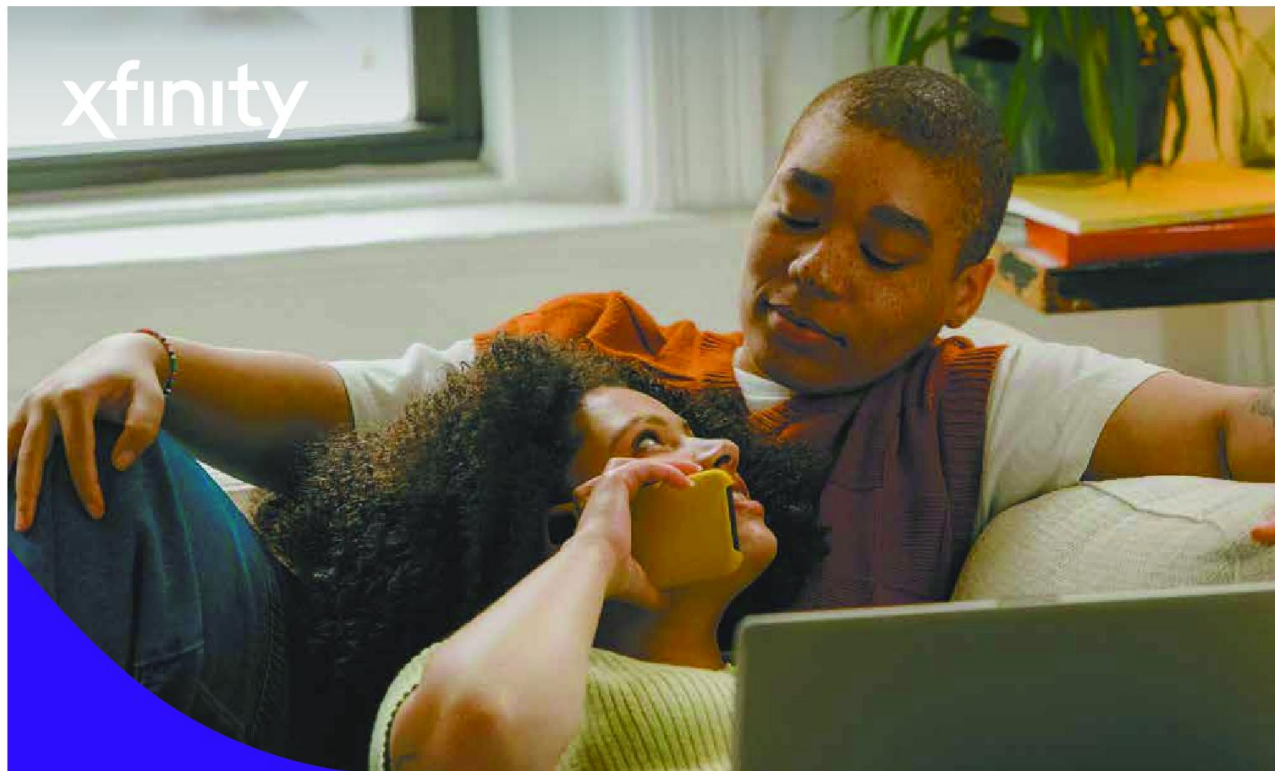
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