June 27 - July 10, 2024
50 cents at newsstands Vol. 39, No 51

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The Official Guide to NEW ENGLAND LGBTQ+ pride PART 3

The Battle to Protect IVF

by Dana Rudolph | drudolph@mombian.com
contributing writer

I started my family more than two decades ago via in vitro fertilization (IVF), and I've watched with growing alarm as the U.S. Supreme Court's Dobbs decision that overturned federal abortion rights two years ago has also endangered access to this common fertility technique. Jennifer Klein, director of the White House Gender Policy Council, spoke with me about the threat and the Biden administration's response.

The risk to IVF became clear this year when the Alabama Supreme Court ruled on February 16 that frozen embryos should be considered "children." Almost all IVF providers in the state immediately halted services, fearful of liability. State legislation was quickly passed to provide legal immunity to IVF providers and patients—but some lawmakers and advocates remain concerned that it still does not sufficiently address the state's constitutional definition of embryonic personhood, as CNN reported (3/7/2024).

The question of embryos also played into the June 12 vote by the Southern Baptist Convention, representing the country's largest Protestant denomina-

see **MOMBIAN,** *page 4*

MA House Passes Parentage Act, Advancing Bill for Senate Approval

Submitted by Massachusetts Parentage Act Coalition

On June 12, the Massachusetts House of Representatives today voted unanimously to pass an act to ensure legal parentage equality, better known as the Massachusetts Parentage Act (H4672), historic legislation that will protect LGBTQ+ families, and children born through surrogacy and assisted reproduction, in forming the legal bond of a parent-child relationship. The bill now advances to the Massachusetts Senate.

"We are grateful that these long-overdue protections have passed the House and will now take this important step toward becoming law in Massachusetts," said Polly Crozier, Director of Family Advocacy at GLBTQ Legal Advocates & Defenders. "We are grateful for Speaker Ron Mariano's leadership in advancing the MPA and for the many hours of work dedicated to this legislation by Chairman Michael Day through his leadership role on the Judiciary Committee. All families in Massachusetts, including many LGBTQ+ families, are one step closer to having the legal protections and security they deserve. As this bill advances, we look forward to working with the Senate - where we have strong bipartisan support - and the Senate President, who is also a longtime supporter of LGBTQ equality."

The MPA updates Massachusetts statutes to clarify who can be a parent and how to establish parentage. This bill is critical to ensuring that all children can access the security of legal parentage, regardless of the circumstances of

see **PARENTAGE,** *page 4*

GUEST OPINION

Sen. Markey Introduces Legislation to Support LGBTQI+ Older Americans

Sen. Markey in the Boston Pride Parade 2024. Photo by Bay Windows Staff.

Submitted by Sen. Markey's office

Senator Edward J. Markey (D-Mass.), a member of the Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions (HELP) Committee, today introduced the Elder Pride Act, legislation to support LGBTQI+ older adults and older adults living with HIV. The legislation would establish

see **MARKEY,** *page 2*

BOSTON PRIDE 2024 PHOTOS

All photos by Bay Windows Staff.

BOSTON

JUNE 30

PRIDE IN THE PARK COMMUNITY CRUISE

Boston Harbor Now will be hosting its Pride in the Park Community Cruise, a free cruise around Spectacle Island for members of the LGBTQIA2S+ community! Featuring a round-trip scenic ferry ride from Boston to Spectacle Island. Drag performances hosted by Mizery McRae. Live DJ sets by DJ WhySham. Lawn games by Stonewall Sports. STI & HIV Testing through the Multicultural AIDS Coalition. Health Resources from the Boston Public Health Commission. DIY Mocktail Bar. Sweet Treats from Ula Cafe. Sunset views of Boston Harbor and the city skyline. After-hours access to the Spectacle Island.

Bostonharborislands.org/event/pride-in-the-park.

JULY 4–8

BOSTON BLACK PRIDE

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lesbigayurbanfoundation.org

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Walthampride.org

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JULY 20

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capecodpride.org

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SEPTEMBER 7

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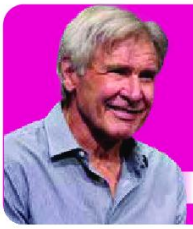
prideworcester.org



"I got your back, kid."

— Harrison Ford's response when Anne Heche told him she was considering coming out around the time their film "Six Days, Seven Nights" was being released. This anecdote is part of a longer essay in "The Hollywood Reporter" by public relations guru Simon Halls (that's Mr. Matt Bomer to you).

more in Billy Masters on page 6!

Photo by Gage Skidmore, via Wikimedia Commons.

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Markey

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an Office of LGBTQI Inclusion within the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to advocate, coordinate activities, recommend policies for, and collect data on LGBTQI+ older adults.

The bill would also establish a rural grants program to serve the unique needs of rural LGBTQI+ older adults, including through education and training, community outreach and creation of community spaces, and improved cultural competency.

"After years of exclusion and discrimination from health care settings, workplaces, and their local communities, LGBTQ+ older Americans deserve the protections their neighbors are afforded," said Senator Markey. "Queer and trans elders should be able to age with dignity, grace, and surrounded by community. The Elder Pride Act will ensure that all older adults are able to have access to the care and services they need."

Cosponsors include Senators Bob Casey (D-Penn.), Ron Wyden (D-Ore.), Alex Padilla (D-Calif), and Tammy Baldwin (D-Wis.).

"Older LGBTQ+ Americans have paved the way for equality their entire lives, persevering and fighting against discrimination and standing up against bigotry, regardless of the obstacles in their way," said Senator Bob Casey (D-Pa.), Chairman of the U.S. Senate Committee on Aging. "After a lifetime of fighting for equality, Congress has an obligation to ensure they are protected. The Elder Pride Act will establish an Office of LGBTQ+ inclusion in the Department of Health and Human Services to ensure that these brave Americans get the services and support they deserve."

LGBTQI+ elders have fewer sources of support compared to their cisgender and heterosexual peers, face higher poverty rates, and experience poorer health care outcomes and access. And the need to coordinate LGBTQI+ services and activities from HHS to local area agencies on aging (AAAs), designated agencies that serve older adults in cities and counties across the country, is only growing. The number of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and intersex (LGBTQI+) older adults is estimated to increase to

7 million by 2030. Fewer than half of AAAs report they would be able to offer or fund LGBTQI+-specific services.

Earlier this Congress, Representative Suzanne Bonamici (D-Ore.), Chair of the Congressional LGBTQI+ Equality Caucus' Aging Issues Task Force, introduced the

Elder Pride Act and the Ruthie and Connie LGBTQI+ Elder Americans Act, two House of Representatives bills which contain the provisions of Senator Markey's legislation.

Endorsements include: SAGE, Human Rights Campaign, National Center for Lesbian Rights, MAZON: a Jewish Response to Hunger, interACT, National Council on Aging, Gerontological Society of America, American Society on Aging, Justice in Aging, National Women's Law Center, National Association of Nutrition and Aging Services Programs, Grantmakers in Aging, Grantmakers in Health, Alzheimer's Foundation of America, LeadingAge, Whitman-Walker Institute, Fenway Health, New England Rural Health Association, Transhealth.

"NCOA applauds Sen. Markey for introducing the Elder Pride Act. We believe that every American deserves to age well, regardless of who they are or who they love. This legislation would make progress toward ensuring that LGBTQI older adults have equitable access to aging services through dedicated federal coordination and targeted grant programs, with a focus on rural populations. We know LGBTQI older adults and those living with HIV experience higher rates of social isolation and poverty, as well as barriers to health care. Now is the time to act, and we look forward to working in a bipartisan manner to advance the Elder Pride Act," said Ramsey Alwin, President and CEO, National Council on Aging.

"The Elder Pride Act would take vital steps in ensuring that LGBTQI older adults have the equitable and inclusive support they are afforded under the programs laid out in the Older Americans Act. Establishing an Office of LGBTQI Inclusion will address the unique challenges members of the community face through promoting aging services, offering grants, and in advocacy work. In addition, the rural outreach program will fill a large void in meeting the needs of people without access to reliable infrastructure," said James Appleby, BSPharm, MPH, ScD (Hon), Chief Executive Officer of the Gerontological Society of America.

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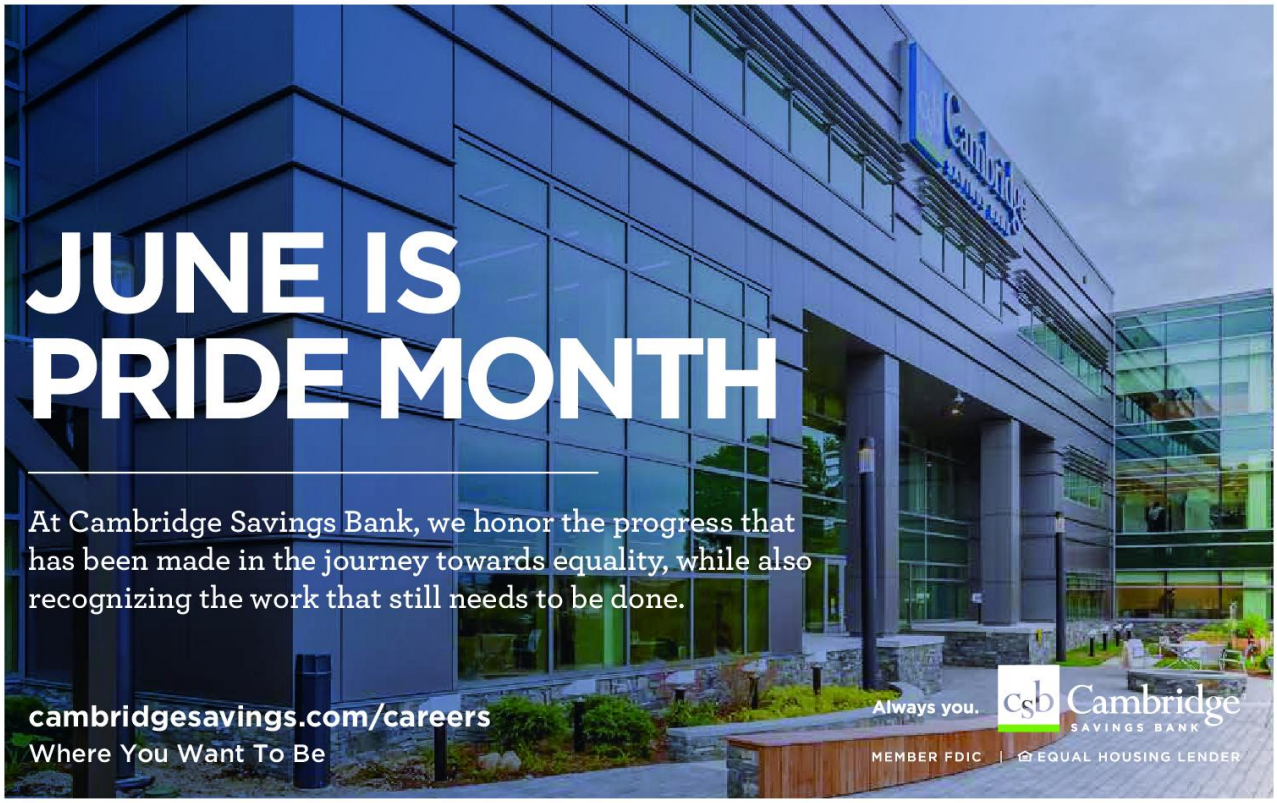

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Fenway Health hires Jordina Shanks as CEO

Submitted by Fenway Health

The Fenway Health Board of Directors is thrilled to announce today that it has hired Jordina Shanks as Fenway Health's next CEO. Shanks has been serving as Fenway Health's Interim CEO since March. Prior to that she served three years as Fenway Health's Chief Operating Officer.

Shanks was selected from a diverse pool of more than 90 applicants, with the support of executive search firm Spencer Stuart who conducted a nationwide search for Fenway's next CEO.

"Since joining Fenway Health in 2021, Jordina has expertly led efforts that have improved access to care for our patients and clients. She has also led and implemented strategies over the last 24 months that have dramatically improved the financial performance of the organization," said Fenway Health Board Chair Scott Walker.

"As Fenway Health continues to adapt to a post-pandemic healthcare environment that impacts health care organizations in Boston, in Massachusetts, and across the country, we have every confidence in Jordina's ability to lead Fenway Health in both innovative and sustainable new directions in the years to come."

Shanks is a healthcare expert with over 30 years' experience in a variety of settings in the Greater Boston area. She has a proven record of improving patient safety, quality, provider, patient, and staff satisfaction, as well as increasing profitability. Since joining Fenway Health in 2021, she has employed a data-driven approach to assess and respond to issues and concerns, encouraged innovative, staff-driven solutions, and held racial and health equity at the center of all business decisions.

Prior to joining Fenway Health, Shanks served as Chief Operating Officer at Mattapan Community Health Center and at Planned Parenthood League of Massachusetts.

"I am deeply honored to step into the role of CEO to serve Fenway Health. I am inspired by the compassionate clinicians and staff who show up every day for our patients and each other, despite navigating the challenges that are affecting many health care organizations. I am proud of the high-quality affirming care that welcomes patients as their authentic selves," said Shanks.

"Fenway Health plays a critical role as a leading provider of care, education, research, and advocacy for LGBTQIA+ people and those affected by HIV and our impact is felt across the country. Looking ahead, we will continue centering racial and health equity and engage in deep partnership with community organizations to meet the needs of those who continue to face staggering barriers to care. Fenway is here for every member of the LGBTQIA+ community and people living with HIV."

Mombian

Continued from page 1

tion, to condemn the current practice of IVF because it may create excess embryos that are frozen or destroyed.

A whopping 86% of Americans believe that IVF should be legal, however, according to a CBS News/YouGov poll in early March. "These attacks on IVF are a direct result of Republican elected officials advancing a really extreme agenda, which is out of step with the vast majority of Americans," Klein said. "This is not a controversial issue, although it seems to have become one."

On February 29, Senator Tammy Duckworth (D-IL), an Iraq War veteran who used IVF to have her two daughters, sought Senate approval for a bill she had introduced with Senator Patty Murray (D-WA) to establish a federal statutory right to IVF and—critically—to an individual's use or disposition of their gametes and embryos.

Duckworth attempted to move the bill forward via unanimous consent, but Senator Cindy Hyde-Smith (R-MS) blocked it, asserting in a statement her "strong support of IVF," but expressing concern that the bill ran counter to "our goal to protect life and religious freedoms."

Senators Ted Cruz of Texas (R-TX) and Katie Britt (R-AL) then on June 12 attempted a unanimous consent vote on their own IVF Protection Act, which would have withheld Medicaid funds from states that prohibit IVF, but said nothing about the disposition of gametes/embryos. Klein explained that the bill "allowed restrictions on embryo storage, implantation and disposal, so it wouldn't actually provide meaningful access to fertility services." Murray therefore blocked it.

Democrats countered with the Right to IVF Act, introduced in early June by Senators Duckworth, Murray, Cory Booker (D-NJ), Mark R. Warner (D-VA), and Tim Kaine (D-VA). This incorporated Duckworth and Murray's earlier IVF bill along with three other bills, which as a whole would create a federal right to IVF access and gamete/embryo disposition, lower costs by requiring insurers to cover IVF, and further expand IVF coverage options and access for veterans, service members, and federal employees. Senate Republicans, however, blocked that bill on June 13.

Klein observed that Republicans had also blocked a bill on June 5 that would have guaranteed a federal right to access contraception. She is adamant that "These attacks on reproductive freedom are a direct result of the overturning of Roe vs. Wade" and leaving matters of reproductive health to the states. Such attacks "stand in stark contrast with this administration," she said, noting that on the day of the Dobbs decision, President Biden committed to signing federal legislation to restore the protections of Roe vs. Wade as soon as a bill reaches him.

"In the meantime," Klein said, "we're doing everything we can to protect access to reproductive healthcare." This includes three executive orders and a presidential memorandum "to protect access and expand access to affordable, high-quality contraception, including over-the-counter birth control; strengthening privacy protections for patients and doctors; supporting and expanding access to medication abortion; supporting access to reproductive healthcare for service members and veterans; and supporting the ability to travel for reproductive healthcare."

The administration has also taken two actions specifically to protect IVF, she said. First, it "expanded eligibility for IVF services for certain service members and veterans," although the cause of infertility must still be a service-related health condition. Statutory restrictions mean that further expansion must be through legislation, one of the things the Right to IVF Act would have provided.

Second, the administration "expanded access to IVF benefits and coverage for federal workers," something she hopes can also serve as "a model for other large employers across the country, because one of the major issues with IVF is affordability and insurance coverage." She noted that a majority of states (29) don't require private insurance to cover any fertility services.

While any administration is limited in what it can do in the absence of Congressional legislation, Klein said that "We are working really closely with Democrats on the Hill to support their efforts."

"I remain optimistic that [IVF] is a bipartisan issue," she asserted. Citing a March 2024 Navigator Research study, she explained, "Four in five Americans say IVF should be legal, the vast majority of Americans believe that Roe vs. Wade should not have been overturned and support reproductive freedom, and we've seen that in ballot initiatives across the country in a very diverse set of states," including Kansas, Michigan, Missouri, California, and New York. "When people have the opportunity to make their voices heard directly, they are quite clear that they want the ability to protect access to reproductive healthcare."

She urged people to continue sharing their views, adding, "As we've seen from unlikely people in unlikely states, people are speaking out to make it clear that they want the right to make decisions about their own body free from politicians. There are many more opportunities to do that."

Dana Rudolph is the founder and publisher of Mombian (mombian.com), a two-time GLAAD Media Award-winning blog and resource directory, plus a searchable database of 1,500+ LGBTQ family books.

Parentage

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their birth, including through assisted reproduction and surrogacy.

Currently, Massachusetts is the only state in New England without established statutory protections on parentage.

"What we are doing today is giving a tune up to our statutory structure to reflect the modern and contemporary ways that people become parents whether they are straight or gay," said Rep. Sarah Peake during her floor speech Wednesday. "This is a bill that is good for everyone in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

"At the heart of this bipartisan legislation lies a simple yet profound principle: the recognition of legal parentage should not be contingent upon outdated norms or narrow definitions," said Rep. Hannah Kane, a co-sponsor of the bill, during her floor speech Wednesday. "It is a principle that acknowledges the diverse tapestry of modern families and affirms their right to legal recognition and protection under the law."

"Today we seek to modernize laws that currently treat parents who, despite loving and providing for their children just as much as any other parent does, we treat them as second class because of how they became a parent," said Rep. Day during his floor speech Wednesday.

Governor Maura Healey and Attorney General Andrea Joy Campbell expressed their strong support, respectively, for the legislation in April following the enactment of a similar piece of legislation in Michigan.

"We've been proud to be a national leader and trailblazer when it comes to LGBTQ+ equality, but we've got some catching up to do," said Governor Healey. "Let's pass the Massachusetts Parentage Act to make sure every family has the legal protections they need and deserve."

"Our state parental laws have not kept pace with the diversity of modern-day families, and as other states take the necessary steps to protect families, provide stability for children and advance reproductive and LGBTQ+ rights, it is clear it is well past the time for us to act and pass the Massachusetts Parentage Act," said Attorney General Campbell.

The bill's bipartisan sponsors include Democrat Senator Julian Cyr, Republican Senator Bruce Tarr, Democrat Representative Sarah Peake, and Republican Representative Hannah Kane.

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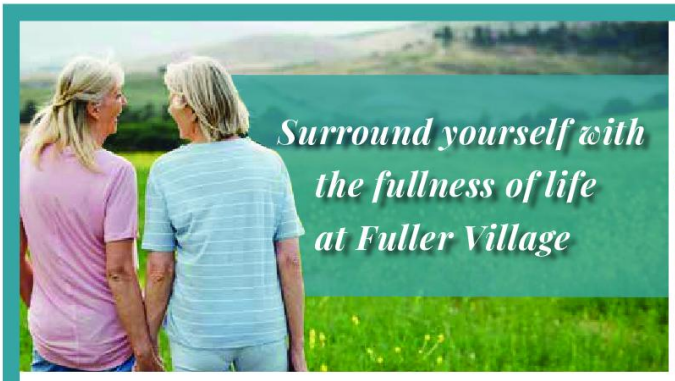

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billy masters

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Last week, **Donald Sutherland** died at the age of 88. Typically, this is not something I'd cover in this column—certainly not as a lead story. However, I was struck by this line in the "New York Times" obituary. "With his long face, droopy eyes, protruding ears and wolfish smile, the 6-foot-4 Mr. Sutherland was never anyone's idea of a movie heartthrob." Is there any need for that? Sure, they went on to say fantastic things about his talent, but at that point, who cares? I imagine my obituary will say, "Never what anyone would call conventionally attractive..." They'd probably follow that up with, "He had romantic liaisons with many famous men," or "He slept with lots of gay porn stars," or even, "He was known to have an enormous appendage." But after that opening, who cares? On the other hand, the next line of Donald's obit says this: "He often recalled that while growing up in east Canada, he once asked his mother if he was good-looking. 'No, but your face has a lot of character.'" Thanks, Mrs. Sutherland.

Then there's the arrest of **Justin Timberlake**. So much misinformation out there, we're going to bring you a few facts first. On June 18th at 12:37AM, police in Sag Harbor (Hamptons adjacent, you know) observed a 2025 BMW go through a stop sign. They also noted the car did not stay in its lane. They pulled the car over and found Mr. Timberlake "operating his vehicle in an intoxicated condition". Justin was arrested, processed, held in a cell until arraignment, and was released at 9:30AM. In the mug shot (which you can see on BillyMasters.com), he looks glassy-eyed...although still better than most of us look after retouching. Shortly after this all went public, someone posted an official-looking report that he "had traces of molly, poppers, Truvada, and coke in his bloodstream." Untrue—if for no other reason than we know no blood was taken...and nothing comes back from the lab that quickly. However, it IS true that while he was being booked, Justin said under his breath, "This is going to ruin the tour." The booking officer said "What tour?" Yes, Justin is so old (go ahead—"How old is he?"), the cop didn't even know who he was! Timberlake is due for a virtual court appearance on July 26th—ironically, the day he's set to perform in Krakow, Poland. And I think we all know rarely do good things come out of a stay in Krakow!

Following last week's Tony Awards, an interesting discussion took place on social media. Someone asked why and how **Audra McDonald** would play Mama Rose in "Gypsy"—after all, **Rose Hovick** was a real person, and was white. Of course, I defended color-blind casting, and then brought up "Hamilton". But it did get me thinking—what if the situation were reversed? Imagine the uproar if Kathleen Turner played the title role in "The Rosa Parks Story"? Still, I'd pay good money to see her get on the bus saying, "Lordy, Lordy, I sho' is tired!"

Carol Burnett cemented her place in history by placing her handprints and footprints in cement. Obviously the ceremony took place at the legendary Grauman's Chinese Theatre (OK, now it's the TCL Chinese Theatre...soon to become the TCL Asian-American Theatre, I'm sure). It was a fitting site since Burnett grew up a few blocks away. The honor happened after "Palm Royale" executive producers **Laura Dern and Jayme Lemons** learned Burnett had never been given this honor. They made a couple of calls and the theatre said, "Name the day." Congrats.

Hulu has just ordered a new sitcom which will likely be "Must See TV" for my readers. "Mid-Century Modern" comes from **Max Mutchnick and David Kohan** (of "Will & Grace" fame) alongside **Ryan Murphy**—who seems to have his fingers in everything. The premise is that three gay gentlemen of a certain age decide to live out their golden years in Palm Springs. **Nathan Lane** plays Dorothy...err, Bunny. And his mother moves in as well, played by the luminous **Linda Lavin**. The hot gay who is also a bit dim (think Rose) will be the 46-year-old Matt Bomer. I'd argue that he is not "golden" by any stretch of the imagination, although it bears noting that the "Golden Girls" characters started off in their 40s and 50s. The last roommate has yet to be cast. Rounding out the cast is "a naked Gen Z housekeeper", which sounds like a combination of the short-lived Coco on "Golden Girls" and Agador in "The Birdcage". The cast will be in good hands as **James Burrows** has signed on to direct the pilot.

Hot on the heels of **Andrew McCarthy's** documentary "Brats" (about the so-called Brat Pack), Sony Pictures is exploring the possibility of making a follow-up to the classic "St. Elmo's Fire"—on the condition that the entire cast reunite. Does it have to be everyone? 'Cause, really, I can do without Mare (no offense).

Speaking of reunions, **Ben Affleck and Matt Damon** are poised to star in a crime thriller called "RIP". While they are best known for "Good Will Hunting", the duo actually collaborated on 9 films in total.

I don't want to get anyone alarmed, but I think Ben's marriage to **Jennifer Lopez** is in trouble. I know—we all thought it would last forever. When I saw she was in Italy with some girlfriends, I remembered that's what **Sofia Vergara** did just before she announced her split from **Joe Manganiello**. Must be something in the water...

Judy Gold and Sandra Bernhard revealed that they've been working on a script. The feature film is titled "Hope Falls" and would find the funny ladies playing cousins—with Sandi as the bossy one ('cause that Judy is such a shrinking violet). They started writing it during the pandemic and they'd like to pitch it to Netflix.

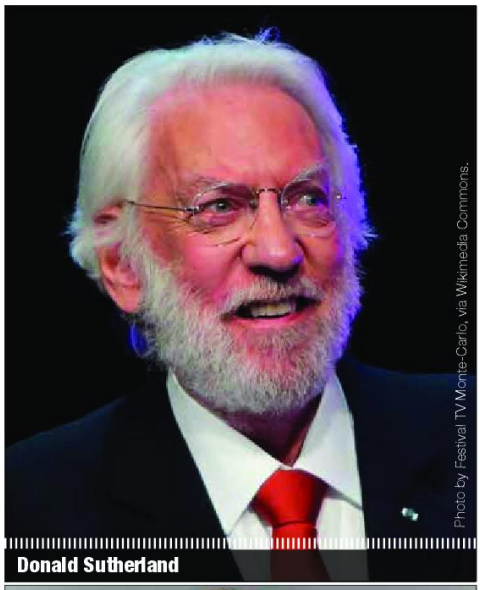
As 2023 drew to a close, **Jennifer Saunders** vowed to write "a film or series based on 'AbFab'..I want to do something related." Well, we're all getting her wish...kinda. Later this year, British television will air a two-hour tribute show called "Absolutely Fabulous: Inside Out". This will be the first time the cast has been together since the 2016 film. Saunders explained what she's looking forward to: "I loved making 'AbFab', but I can't remember a great deal. So much of this retrospective is a revelation to me!"

Speaking of retrospectives, "The Young and the Restless" just paid tribute to **Joshua Morrow**, who celebrated 30 years on the sudser. We got to see some early clips of the pouty-lipped hunk in his very young and restless days. Then I saw a photo online of what I thought was young Josh. Nope—it was his look-alike 19-year-old son, **Crew Morrow**—who is joining the sister soap "The Bold and the Beautiful". He is a new recast for the role of Will Spencer, whose mom is played by Heather Tom, who played Josh's sister on "Y&R". Small world, isn't it? Naturally, you can check out Crew on BillyMasters.com.

Our "Ask Billy" question comes from Grant in San Francisco: *"What do you know about **Dan Welden**? He's a really hot fitness guy who I follow on Facebook. He doesn't talk about his personal life, but he's often naked, has an incredible body, and he sounds gay."*

And there you have it—no matter how much progress we make, you can't get away from a stereotype. Of course, stereotypes exist for a reason. I'd guess Dan was gay just by looking at his perfect physique (sure, the voice clinched it). I'm happy to tell you that Welden is indeed gay. But, alas, he is taken. He recently revealed, "I do have a bf and we're completely monogamous." Last week he celebrated his 41st birthday...with some photos in his birthday suit. And obviously you can see them on BillyMasters.com.

When I've got the perfect candidate for the naked Gen Z housekeeper, we've definitely come to the end of yet another column. See? I do it all—as I'm sure will be mentioned in my obit. We're full service at www.BillyMasters.com—the site that likes to give as often as receive. If you have a question, dash it off to Billy@BillyMasters.com and I promise to get back to you before someone casts me in the revival of "The Wiz"! Until next time, remember, one man's filth is another man's bible.



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Donald Sutherland

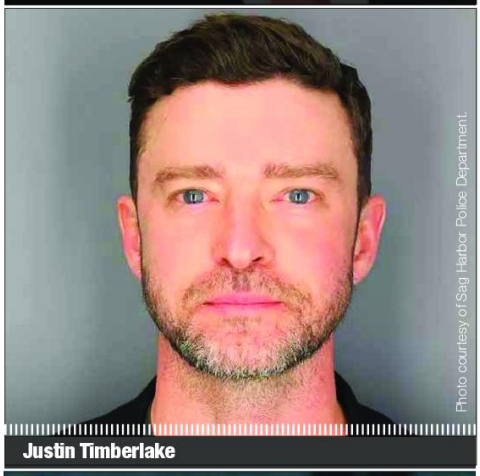
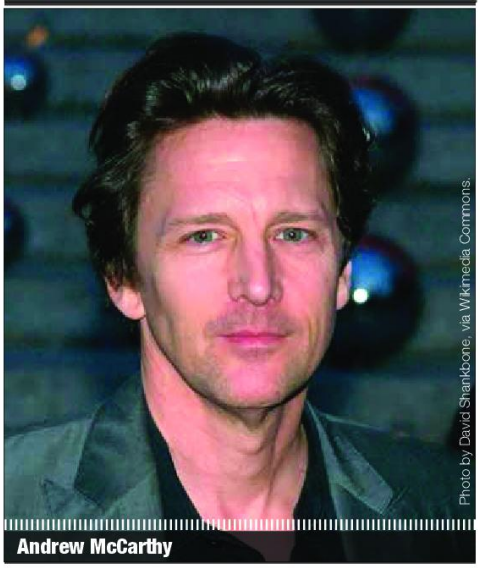


Photo courtesy of Sag Harbor Police Department

Justin Timberlake



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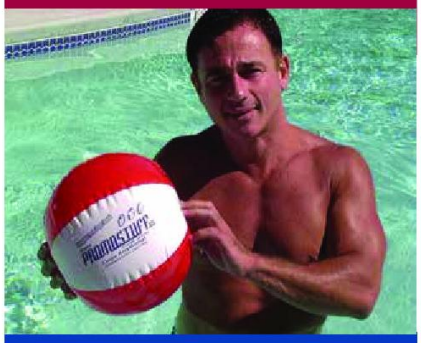

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