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2025 LGBTQ+ Year in Review

By Sue O'Connell and Bay Windows Staff

Boston Pride 2025. Photo by Sage Orville (www.sageorville.com).

PART 1

Massachusetts

In 2025, Massachusetts remained a national leader on LGBTQ+ rights even as political headwinds intensified across the country. From major legislative victories to sobering community challenges, the year reflected both progress and urgency for LGBTQ+ residents.

Landmark Laws Take Effect

One of the most consequential changes came with the **Massachusetts Parentage Act**, which took effect on January 1, 2025. The law modernized decades-old parentage statutes, replacing outdated, gendered language and expanding legal protections for LGBTQ+ families and families formed through assisted reproduction. It strengthened recognition of de facto parents, improved clarity for surrogacy and IVF families, and expanded access to Voluntary Acknowledgement of Parentage beyond genetic parents. The legislation passed unanimously, underscor-

see **YEAR IN REVIEW,** *page 2*

Year in Review

LGBTQ Parentage Progress in 2025 and What Lies Ahead

by Dana Rudolph | drudolph@mombian.com
contributing writer

Photo via Adobe.

Despite increasing anti-LGBTQ+ rhetoric and policies across the United States, 2025 saw several states pass parentage legislation that will help make LGBTQ+ families more secure. Polly Crozier, director of family advocacy at GLAD Law, spoke with me about the progress and what might be in store for 2026.

First, let's recap: Hawaii, Illinois, and Oregon passed legislation this year to ensure equality and paths to

see **MOMBIAN,** *page 4*

Reiner's empathy beats Trump's bullying

Upholding truth in the bleak midwinter

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

Rob and Michele Reiner. Public domain photo, via Wikimedia Commons.

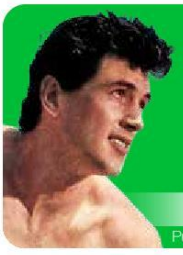
It is a sunny and cold morning in Washington as I walk to the bakery for coffee. The Christmas tree near the Dupont Circle fountain is sparkling. Merchants are setting up for the day's business at the Dupont Holiday Market on a blocked-off portion of New Hampshire Avenue.

As I sit in the bakery with my coffee, a man bundled against the cold sips his on an orange crate by the curb. The din of conversation inside, even the barista calling out orders, is a comforting contrast to the silence of mornings spent at home.

We are social animals by nature. I remember the mental health strain caused by the COVID-19 shutdown in the spring of 2020. A desire to avoid that level of isolation drives me outdoors each day as much as any particular errand.

One positive thought that occurs to me is that most of us are better socialized than the resident of the White House.

see **ROSENDALL,** *page 4*



"He did have a legendarily large penis. It wasn't the prettiest one I'd ever seen, but it was the biggest."

- Armistead Maupin on the late Rock Hudson. You know what they say — beauty is in the eye of the beholder. It sounds like you might have needed two hands to beholding Rock's dick!

more in Billy Masters on page 6!

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Year In Review

Continued from page 1

ing broad bipartisan agreement on the need to protect modern families.

Massachusetts also strengthened its role as a refuge state for healthcare access with the signing of **Shield Act 2.0** in August. The law limits cooperation with out-of-state investigations targeting legally protected reproductive and gender-affirming healthcare and tightens restrictions on health data sharing. It also expands protections for providers and health professionals involved in delivering that care, reinforcing Massachusetts' commitment to safeguarding patient privacy and medical decision-making.

In June, the state enacted an **LGBTQ+ Long-Term Care Bill of Rights**, explicitly prohibiting discrimination in nursing homes and long-term care facilities based on sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, intersex status, or HIV status. The law requires staff training, respect for residents' chosen names and pronouns, nondiscriminatory admissions and rooming practices, and access to appropriate care for transgender residents—addressing long-standing concerns about safety and dignity for LGBTQ+ elders.

The Legislature also moved in July to repeal **archaic criminal statutes** historically used to target consensual same-sex intimacy. While unenforceable for decades under constitutional law, these provisions had remained on the books, a symbolic reminder of past criminalization.

Lawmakers additionally advanced **name-change privacy reforms**, aimed at reducing public exposure in the legal name-change process—an issue with significant safety implications for transgender people and others seeking confidentiality.

Who We Are: New Data on LGBTQ+ Massachusetts

A major report released in May by the Fenway Institute and the Boston Foundation offered the most comprehensive snapshot yet of LGBTQ+ life in Massachusetts. It found that **9.1% of adults** identify as LGBT+, up from 7.2% in 2016. Among young people, the numbers were significantly higher: **23.2% of high school students** identified as LGBTQ+ or unsure, and **23.4% of adults ages 18–24** identified as LGBT+, compared with fewer than 6% of adults age 45 and older.

The report also highlighted persistent disparities. LGBTQ+ residents were more likely to report fair or poor health and to delay or skip medical care due to cost. Food insecurity emerged as a critical concern, affecting **56% of LGBTQ+ households**, compared with **34% statewide**, according to data cited in the report.

Pride, Visibility, and Community

Despite ongoing challenges, Pride celebrations across Massachusetts drew large crowds and reaffirmed community resilience. **Boston Pride for the People** returned on June 14 under the theme *"Here to Stay,"* with Big Freedia headlining. Organizers and local media described massive crowds, with attendance estimates approaching roughly one million spectators.

Across the state, dozens of Pride events took place throughout June, including in Cambridge, Salem, Worcester, Springfield, Holyoke, Provincetown, and at Boston Black Pride—reflecting the geographic and cultural diversity of LGBTQ+ communities statewide.

Ongoing Challenges

Even amid legislative progress, serious challenges persisted. Advocates continued to raise concerns about gaps between Massachusetts' supplier diversity goals and actual spending with LGBTQ-owned businesses. Housing insecurity remained acute, with community organizations reporting that demand for safe, affirming housing for transgender people far exceeded available capacity.

Looking Ahead

In 2025, Massachusetts demonstrated that state-level action can still meaningfully expand LGBTQ+ protections and improve lives—even as national debates grow more polarized. The contrast between state progress and federal developments became increasingly stark, setting the stage for the broader national story of LGBTQ+ rights that unfolded this year.

Look for Part 2 at www.baywindows.com or in the Jan. 8, 2026 print edition. We'll examine the national landscape in 2025, including federal executive actions, court decisions, and congressional fights that reshaped LGBTQ+ rights across the country.

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BRANDED CONTENT

Coaching Confidence

How Belle Ives Is Helping Boston Plan Ahead

When Belle Ives talks about money with clients, she is really talking about life. The Middleton based financial advisor still remembers being a 21-year-old college athlete who wanted a career that actually helped people. That search quickly became a calling as she realized how unpredictable life can be and how thoughtful planning plays a vital role in protecting the people you love.

Today Belle is a financial advisor with Northwestern Mutual and one of the only LGBTQ+ advisors in her office. She has intentionally built her practice around LGBTQ+ professionals and families across Greater Boston. Many of her clients come to her because they want someone who understands what it feels like to be the only queer person in the room and still be taken seriously about money.

"Queer clients are often carrying a lot when they sit down for that first conversation," Belle says. "Maybe it is student loans, the cost of living where they feel safe, or the high costs of starting a family. There can also be money habits that formed during stressful times, like coming out. My job is to make that space feel safer and more hopeful."

Starting a family is one of the biggest topics she hears about. Some clients are navigating fertility treatments, adoption or legal work. Others are trying to understand which partner's benefits to use or how much parental leave they can take. Belle helps them sort through those choices and build a plan that balances near term needs like child care with long term goals such as retirement.

She also sees how closely money and mental health are connected. Many LGBTQ+ clients apologize for "not knowing enough" or assume they need a certain amount saved before working with an advisor. Belle works to debunk that idea and meet clients exactly where they are.

MANY OF HER CLIENTS COME TO HER BECAUSE THEY WANT SOMEONE WHO UNDERSTANDS WHAT IT FEELS LIKE TO BE THE ONLY QUEER PERSON IN THE ROOM AND STILL BE TAKEN SERIOUSLY ABOUT MONEY.

Outside of meetings, Belle is a longtime field hockey coach *(fifth from left in the photo below)* and, more recently, an NCAA college referee. She is also a regular presence at local LGBTQ+ events and markets. That coach's mindset carries into her practice, where she emphasizes small, consistent steps that build meaningful progress over time.

For Belle, being visible as a queer advisor is part of the work. Her goal is to give LGBTQ+ Bostonians a place where their whole story is welcome and to help them build financial plans that reflect the lives and families they are creating.

To connect with Isobelle Ives, ChFC®, RICP®, a financial advisor with Northwestern Mutual, call 781-224-1658 or visit her online at www.northwesternmutual.com/financial/advisor/isobelle-ives.

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Mombian

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legal parentage for LGBTQ+ families and those formed via assisted reproduction, including surrogacy. Although the specifics vary in each state, all of the legislation is based on the 2017 Uniform Parentage Act (UPA), a model law developed by the bipartisan Uniform Law Commission and adopted or adapted in whole or part by an increasing number of states.

One notable part of the new legislation is the extension of voluntary acknowledgments of parentage (VAPs) to LGBTQ+ parents. VAPs are simple, free forms that can be completed at the hospital immediately after a birth (or later) to establish legal parentage, and are the equivalent of a court order. All states are required by federal law to have such forms for different-sex couples; the legislation passed in 2025 means that as of January 1, 2026, 15 states will explicitly allow parents of any gender or marital status to access them: California, Colorado, Connecticut, Hawaii, Illinois, Maine, Massachusetts, Maryland, Michigan, Nevada, New York, Oregon, Rhode Island, Vermont, and Washington.

In Illinois, the legislation also includes provisions that will make it easier for nongestational LGBTQ+ parents to confirm their legal parentage via adoption, without intrusive requirements like home studies and background checks. Nevada, New Mexico, and Vermont also passed such confirmatory adoption legislation this year, making a total of 12 states with these streamlined procedures (joining California, Colorado, Maine, Maryland, New Hampshire, New Jersey, Rhode Island, and Virginia).

> **"They're really pulling up the old tropes that LGBTQ people shouldn't be parents and arguments that are not based in reality."**
>
> **- POLLY CROZIER**
> DIRECTOR OF FAMILY ADVOCACY AT GLAD LAW

Crozier credits the success of this year's legislation to the many constituencies it touches. "This to me is never LGBTQ-only work at all. It never has been and never will be," she insisted. "Family law work is work for everyone. We want every child to have that security. We want every family to be respected and protected. I think the best work in states happens in that frame."

Looking ahead, Crozier predicts "positive work" in other states, which could include comprehensive UPA legislation as well as more targeted parentage reforms such as confirmatory adoptions or ensuring that two unmarried people can adopt a child. It could also encompass fertility healthcare coverage. "To me, it's the whole panoply of 'How do we make sure that people can build their families and protect their families?'" she explained.

"I think there's a lot of work happening," she said, but also warned, "I think, frankly, we're going to start seeing greater pushback." She points to the recently released plan from the conservative Heritage Foundation, "Restoring America's Promise," that builds upon their earlier Project 2025 to set goals for 2026. It includes the assertion, "Every child conceived deserves to be born to a married mother and father." That vision, Crozier said, "is obviously very exclusionary" and "not the vision of the American family that resonates in communities."

She added that she thinks extremists on the right will also push for legislation to mandate insurance coverage for "a pro-life, ideological, fertility healthcare that doesn't actually help people get pregnant" because it does not include treatments like in vitro fertilization (IVF), which "is proven to help people build their families." Additionally, she thinks we may see attempts to create barriers to surrogacy, through obstacles such as background checks, criminal record checks, and educational checks, and even bans on surrogacy itself.

"They're really pulling up the old tropes that LGBTQ people shouldn't be parents," she explained, "and arguments that are not based in reality." All told, "It's going to be a tricky year ahead."

Nevertheless, she said, "I think many states feel like there's some bread-and-butter family law work that needs to be done to protect families and give them what they need to thrive." She anticipates continuing her work to support "any state that wants to make progress in protecting children and families, expanding fertility healthcare, or updating their adoption code," and partnering with the local community members and lawyers who are leading the way.

She cautions, however, that people should be aware of bills that might look positive on the surface but have dangerous nuances. "I think we're going to be ready for it, but it's going to take a lot of work between different movements," she asserted. That cross-movement work, however, is a strength she has seen in the wake of the 2022 U.S. Supreme Court Dobbs decision that rolled back abortion rights. "The people in the LGBTQ movement working on family law, like GLAD Law, are working very closely with people in the reproductive rights movement and the fertility healthcare movement," she said. "We all see the threats, we see the commonality, we see how people are trying to impose a vision on the United States and on our very families and we all want to work together on another vision. I think that's the good news."

"It's really about all children and families in our communities," she affirmed. "It's about our common humanity and about protecting what is most dear to us."

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 1,900+ LGBTQ+ family books.

Rosendall

Continued from page 1

The widespread condemnation of the president's nasty remarks after the tragic deaths of Rob and Michele Reiner at least established a floor in terms of public civility.

There are nasty voices among us, to be sure, especially on social media. Some appear to be bots designed to undermine public discussion. Those (whether bot or human) who reflexively defend Trump on everything drew a false moral equivalency between his nasty posthumous Truth Social post on Reiner and the claim that "the left" widely celebrated the murder of Charlie Kirk.

Many liberals deplored Kirk's murder, including Reiner, who responded with empathy. The fact that some of us also pointed out Kirk's many extreme and intolerant statements does not constitute celebration of his death, no matter how often that lie is repeated. It is monstrous to celebrate a political opponent's murder.

Aside from that is the hypocrisy of Republicans who blame all Democrats for nasty remarks made by any progressive, while they refuse to hold their own party's leader responsible for degrading and toxifying our national discourse.

To the extent that Trump's sociopathy has been normalized, we must strive to un-normalize it. This does not mean avoiding disagreements. We cannot avoid criticizing the damage to our country caused by the most unqualified presidential cabinet in history. In doing so, however, we should focus on the substance. The problem with the Secretary of Health and Human Services, for example, is not RFK Jr.'s raspy voice, but the likely dramatic spike in deaths from preventable diseases due to his attacks on vaccines.

Even Kevin Mc Daid's sharp October 10 Facebook post on Kirk's widow Erika mocked her exploitive behavior rather than her tragic loss itself: "She's going through the normal 5 stages of grief: Pyrotechnics, Merch, Podcasting, Grifting, and Acceptance."

A guiding principle in public discussions should be distinguishing truth from fabulism. One of America's two major political parties has been sabotaging our constitutional republic, and the other has not. It is Trump who has masked thugs abducting people (including American citizens) off our streets, not Democratic Illinois Governor JB Pritzker.

Trump's recently released national security strategy says, "The days of the United States propping up the entire world order like Atlas are over." If so, why is he not cutting our defense budget? The answer is he wants to bully everyone else. He has talked of taking over Greenland and Canada and retaking the Panama Canal. He seized an oil tanker off the coast of Venezuela and said he would keep the oil. He murders people in small boats far from our shores based on claims backed by no evidence. Perhaps he wants a piracy prize.

It makes no sense to dismantle the international order that America led in creating, only to replace it with one based not on cooperation but on America acting—like Trump himself—as a bully.

Kim Davis of Kentucky acted as a bully in denying marriage licenses to gay couples. Rob and Michele Reiner, by contrast, were staunch defenders of marriage equality. The difference lies in respect for others, or lack of it.

On one side of the political divide are people using the Christian label to promote cruelty that directly contradicts Christ. On the other side are people who follow His teaching to feed the hungry and welcome the stranger.

The word "weaponization" has been much in our news regarding the weaponization of government. In the bleak midwinter, as one beloved Christmas Carol calls this season, let people of faith vow to resist weaponizing their religion, and instead try practicing it.

Richard Rosendall is a writer and activist who can be reached at rrosendall@me.com.

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billy masters

Last week, the Kennedy Center Honors were given out (the ceremony will air on CBS on December 23rd). The first thing I noticed, aside from the dubious assemblage of honorees, was that the iconic rainbow ribbon holding the award since its inception was gone. Now the medal hangs on a simple blue ribbon — a curious color choice by a Republican. While many have claimed this is a "war on rainbows", the rainbow symbol is still being used. There are rainbow colors around the Kennedy Center on the medallion itself, which was newly designed by Tiffany.

This year's honorees are **Sylvester Stallone, KISS, Michael Crawford, Gloria Gaynor, and George Strait** (it's always about straight people). So once again, **Liza** got the shaft! Let me say a word about Michael Crawford, because many have pointed out he isn't a US citizen. He's British and lives in New Zealand and has never had US citizenship. But you don't need to be a US citizen to get this award. The recipient must have made a significant contribution to American culture — and certainly Crawford has. Previous non—US recipients include opera singers **Luciano Pavarotti and Placido Domingo**, dancer **Rudolf Nureyev**, and pop stars like **Paul McCartney and Sting**.

Gloria Gaynor, virtually the epitome of a one—hit wonder, was asked about accepting an award from Trump. "It's incredible to get the honor. I don't think it matters where it comes from. So that has nothing to do with the presenter. It has to do with me and my body of work and my impression that I've made on the world and being recognized for that. And anybody that is looking hopefully, hopefully can see that maybe I deserve it." Or maybe it simply means that **The Village People** were busy!!!

This is likely the last "Kennedy Center Honors" we'll see. El Presidente and the Kennedy Center board (filled by **Trump** appointees and led by Trump himself) have voted unanimously that the Kennedy Center would soon be rechristened The Trump Kennedy Center. **Tim Shriver**, nephew to JFK, brought up an interesting point: "Perhaps the board isn't aware that the Kennedy Center is THE memorial to the president of the United States, John F. Kennedy. Would they rename the Lincoln memorial, The Jefferson?" I can answer that in one word — Yes.

Another big story last week was the death of **Anthony Geary**. If you checked out my mail sack (my sack gets lots of visitors), most people didn't know he was gay...or had a husband! **Claudio Gama** revealed that they met 30 years ago and have been married for six years. Throughout his career, Geary would take the summer off and spend it in Amsterdam — leading to speculation about a secret life, a drug problem, or health issues. In 2023, he said, "I live in the city that I've always wanted to live in my whole life and I have somebody who loves me and I have a life now that I didn't have before." Geary died three days after an operation for an undisclosed ailment.

In one of the strangest stories of 2025, it's been alleged that **John Travolta's** youngest child is actually the great—grandson of **Elvis and Priscilla Presley**. "How on earth is that possible," I can hear you cry. Supposedly Riley Keough, daughter of **Lisa Marie Presley,** donated an egg to Travolta for him to have his third child, Ben. That would mean that **Kelly Preston** was at that point as barren as the day is long. And I suppose the term "donated" is inaccurate because Keough was paid between $10—20K and also given an old Jaguar in exchange for the egg. See, Donald? Eggs ARE expensive!! This sounds like some wacky Scientology version of "Rosemary's Baby"!

Big news was made on Broadway last week. In the show "Stranger Things: The First Shadow" (a prequel to the series), the lead is Henry, part of some lab experiment not unlike the Presley/Keough/Travolta situation listed above. His "essence" is used via blood transfusions to transform numerous children. We fast—forward at the end of the play to a grown—up Henry meeting the kids. Usually, **Louis McCartney**, who plays Henry, is aged with makeup. The scene begins with him in a chair with his back to the audience. But on December 19th, when Henry got up and turned around, he was revealed to be **Jamie Campbell Bower**, who plays Henry on the series. The audience went crazy and stopped the show for several minutes, as you can see on BillyMasters.com.

We hear that **Ariana Grande and Jonathan Bailey** could reunite to do the musical "Sunday in the Park with George". Can't we let poor **Stephen Sondheim** rest in peace? To be completely accurate, they are not talking about doing a film version. They are considering a revival of the musical in London. It would likely turn up at the Barbican Theatre, which has seen summer limited runs of musicals. They are eyeing summer 2027.

Last year, a musical version of "Beaches" had a sold—out run in Alberta, Canada. Originally, the producers planned to mount a US national tour and eventually hit Broadway. Then the Majestic Theatre became available and plans changed. The musical will now hit Broadway on April 22nd and is scheduled to run through the summer.

By the by, the current "Superman", **David Corenswet**, is in talks to make his Broadway debut in a revival of "Carousel". In case you're interested.

By the time you read this, **Bowen Yang** will have left the cast of "Saturday Night Live". I'm of two minds on this topic. On one hand, congrats to anyone who gets to leave this show on their own — presumably to have a career in television or films. On the other hand, this means we don't get to regularly see either their characters or their range and diversity. While I don't begrudge **Kate McKinnon** her success in films, I bemoan her absence from the show. And, is anyone more missed than **Cheri Oteri**? Anyway, good luck, Bowen. But pop in every now and then.

Next year, something else will be missing from the small screen. "Boots" has been cancelled by Netflix. The show that the Pentagon labeled as "woke garbage" brought us all sorts of hot, fit lads scurrying to and fro. Here's a fun fact — "Boots" was the last project worked on by **Norman Lear**. Based on **Greg Cope White's** book "The Pink Marine", it centered on closeted life in the Marine Corps. But, let's face it, it centered on seeing hot guys like **Max Parker and Miles Heizer** in various forms of undress. Their hottest moments can be found on BillyMasters.com.

Speaking of fit, undressed lads, many of you have asked about **Channing Tatum's** nude scene in "Roofman", the real—life story of a guy who lived inside a Toys "R" Us. Tatum's main concern was how they would film the 90—second scene of him running through the store fully naked and not showing his "stuff". "I was na ve, I guess, and thought that there was a plan to shoot this in a certain way." When told there was no plan, he said, "What do you mean you don't know? We're gonna see stuff if you don't have a plan." As it turns out, we don't really see any stuff — at least not in the movie. But you can see all his stuff on BillyMasters.com.

Time for our last installment of "Billy's Holiday Gift Giving Suggestions". If you waited this long, your options are limited. Still, you could make a big impression by hiring a celebrity to wish your loved ones a happy holiday season. Famous folk are cashing in on their fame via Cameo. People like **Mario Cantone, Carson Kressley, and Frankie Grande** are available (some more available than others). So are singers **Lance Bass, Todrick Hall, Billy Gilman and Sam Harris.** Or former "Superman" **Tom Welling** and his WB friend **James Van Der Beek** (who probably could use some cash at Christmas). "SNL" alums **Chris Kattan, Jon Lovitz, Laraine Newman,** and the aforementioned Cheri Oteri are on the site, as are "Housewives" **Bethenny Frankel** and that Countess chick. Even some of my iconic friends are cashing in — like **Fran Drescher, John Barrowman and Miriam Margolyes.** You could even employ the ever—elusive **Angelyne!** There's something for everyone on Cameo.com

When I'm promoting another website, we've definitely come to the end of yet another column. And that brings up the best idea of the year. A great gift for your special someone is a subscription to www.BillyMasters.com — the site that has been delivering for 30 years. Even during the holiday season, I'm here to stuff your stocking, or slide down your chimney, or deck your halls. Whatever you're into...I'm vers. Reach out to Billy@BillyMasters.com and I promise to get back to you before Travolta's son Ben takes the last name of Presley! Until next time, remember, one man's filth is another man's bible.

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Bowen Yang

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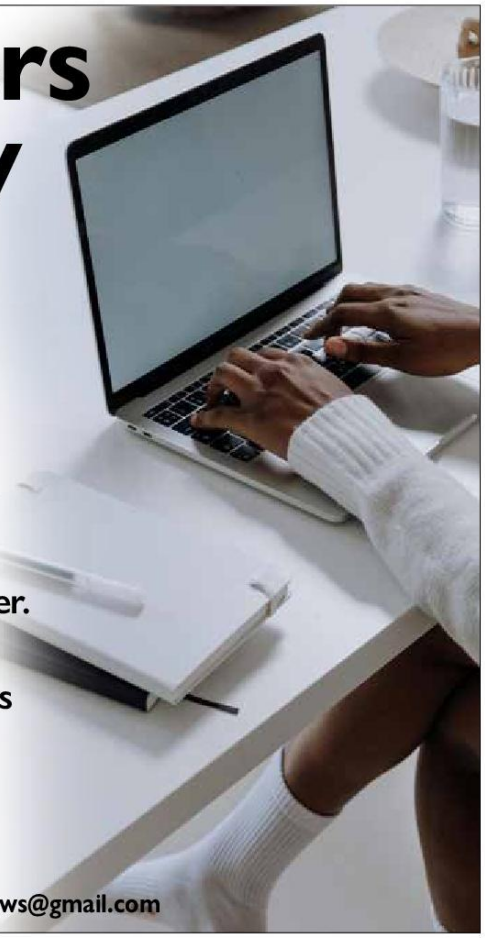

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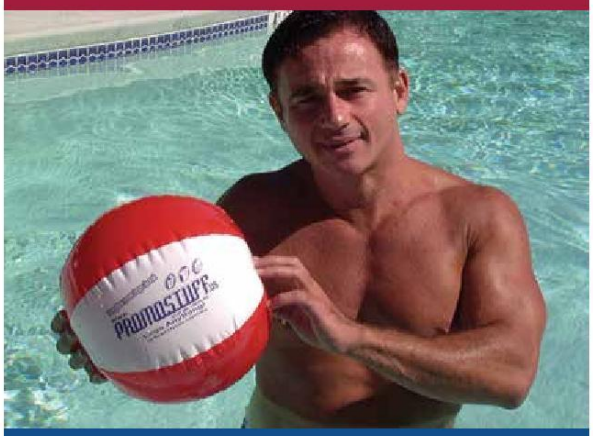
HOT IDEAS



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event invitations
wedding programs
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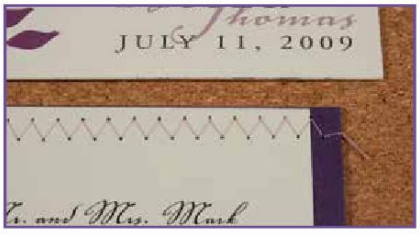

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