

Dear Friends and fellow FIPPOA members:



**Introduction:** I'm Eric Sawyer, and I've been a member of the FIPPOA Board for the last 12 years. I'd love to continue to represent you and help make our shared vision of our marvelous community a reality. My love for the Pines began in 1975, when I came for the first time with a college wrestling teammate who was from Sayville and familiar with the Pines. Dwight knew I was struggling with coming out, so he brought me to the Meat Market to buy sandwiches and took me to the beach to eat lunch and take my first swim in the Atlantic. When a couple guys started making out in front of us, I asked him, "What is this place?" Dwight said, "This is a gay beach. My mom's gay friends call it 'Gay Heaven,' and this is where you belong. So get over yourself. It's OK to be gay, especially in a place like this." A straight guy from Sayville pushed me out of the closet, and onto the road to self-acceptance.

I started coming to the Pines—a lot. I was a renter for many years before I purchased 142 Ocean (aka the TV House) in 2003. I took a brief break from my work with AIDS nonprofits to recharge my batteries and renovate the house, to ensure the iconic, graceful structure would continue to adorn our beautiful beachfront. My next renovation project was my current home, at 576 Coast Guard, next door to Whyte Hall. Over 41 years, my love for the Pines has only grown into a strong desire to protect, promote, and preserve the community for generations to come, to introduce new generations to our Gay Heaven.

**HIV/AIDS Activism:** As a long-term survivor, I've spent much of my life fighting to end the AIDS epidemic and improve the lives of everyone living with HIV. I'm a founding member of ACT UP; a co-founder of Housing Works, now the largest AIDS housing and health care provider in the U.S.; and a co-founder of Health GAP, an activist group that's brought particular attention to the need to for treatment in the developing world. I've helped organize and spoken at AIDS and human rights conferences all over the world and been a frequent spokesperson on HIV issues in the media. I co-produced the AIDS documentary *A Closer Walk*, narrated by Glen Close and Will Smith. In 2008, I joined the Joint United Nations Program on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), to work as a liaison to nongovernmental organizations. Until I retired in July, I was the global point person on HIV housing issues.

I'm currently a director of the NYC AIDS Memorial at St. Vincent Park, which has just begun building a three-story sculpture to remember the more than 100,000 New Yorkers who've lost their lives to the disease. An online archive of the history of the epidemic will record the role of local communities in the response—including that played by the Pines community, which gave birth to and funded many LGBT and HIV/AIDS organizations.

**FIPPOA:** Anyone familiar with my activism knows that I throw my heart and soul into bettering the lives of our communities. As a member of FIPPOA's Board, I've been involved in many issues. As Chair of the Boardwalk Committee I worked with the Town of Brookhaven to repair our crumbling walks. We've made great progress, getting the town to rebuild many, largely thanks to the terrific leadership of Ron Martin and Jay Pagano, who shared my concern for community safety. When a close friend drowned in a riptide on September 26, 2004, I began a quest to improve water safety for the community. The Fire Department and the Pines Care Center joined the effort, and we purchased and installed life-saving ropes and buoys at all the beach access walks.

I also worked to help Ed Schulhafer's (for now unsuccessful) effort to bring professional EMT services to the Pines. With your votes, I plan to again push for EMT services and to work with the FIPFD to ensure improved Island-wide fire protection, especially in the winter when our terrific volunteer firefighters aren't here. A frequent sponsor of the Pines Party, I've volunteered many years to help with the setup. I've also organized a number of fundraisers for community organizations. I'd be happy to continue to volunteer, using my organizational and professional skills to help FIPPOA in any and all of its activities.

**Education and Professional History:** I have a Master's in Public Administration. Prior to switching to HIV activism, I worked for 14 years in for organizations including the City of Boulder, Colorado; American Standard; Citibank; and Towers Watson, a consulting firm.