



FROM BROTHER CAPTAINS TO GODMOTHER SISTERS: IT'S A FAMILY AFFAIR ON THE UPCOMING *CELEBRITY ASCENT*SM

BELOW DECK'S CAPTAIN SANDY YAWN AND HER SISTER MICHELLE DUNHAM ANNOUNCED AS THE SHIP'S GODMOTHERS

MIAMI (Aug 7, 2023) – [Celebrity Cruises](#)[®], the award-winning premium cruise line pioneering resort travel at sea, is thrilled to unveil the Godmothers for [Celebrity Ascent](#), launching this November. Today, Celebrity Cruises announces that Captain Sandy Yawn, best known for her appearance on Bravo TV's hit series, *Below Deck*, alongside her sister Michelle Dunham, founder of the Jacksonville School for Autism (JSA), have been selected as co-Godmothers of the upcoming ship. The sisters will now join the industry's first brother Captains, Dimitrios and Tasos Kafetzis, who were announced earlier this year as the chosen duo to jointly take helm of the new vessel.

Captain Sandy and Michelle will now join an illustrious group of admired, purposeful and inspirational women who hold the role of Godmother for a Celebrity Cruises ship. Godmothers of the previous *Edge*[®] Series ships include Simone Biles, 19-time World Champion and seven-time Olympic Medalist who christened the most recent ship, *Celebrity Beyond*, in 2022; Reshma Saujani, founder and CEO of international nonprofit Girls Who Code who named *Celebrity Apex* in 2021; and Malala Yousafzai, Nobel laureate and activist, who introduced the revolutionary ship class when *Edge* launched in 2018.

"We are honored to have Captain Sandy and her sister Michelle join the legacy of Celebrity's Godmothers, as they are both inspirational women who have dedicated their lives to making a positive impact in the world," says Laura Hodges Bethge, Celebrity Cruises' President. "Captain Sandy's life story is one of resilience, leadership and strength, as a pioneer in the maritime industry and as an inspirational role model for young women. Her sister Michelle is a tireless advocate for children with autism and shows us what is possible when you follow your vision for a better world. Both women live by Celebrity's values, and we have no doubt they are the perfect choices for *Ascent*."

One of the most time-honored traditions at sea, the Godmother is the spiritual embodiment of a vessel - she is the woman who inspires, protects and positively impacts the lives of everyone who sails onboard. During *Ascent*'s official naming ceremony on December 1, 2023, both sisters will bless and christen the ship, bringing good luck and protection for the crew and all passengers onboard.

About Captain Sandy Yawn:

Captain Sandy is the embodiment of resilience, surviving a life-threatening accident, cancer and struggles with addiction before launching her career in the yacht industry. Her unwavering integrity and courage have earned her an outstanding reputation, and her remarkable leadership and bravery during a catastrophic fire and pirate threat off the coast of Yemen, led to her receiving the prestigious Distinguished Crew Award from the International Superyacht Society in 2006.

As a best-selling author and motivational speaker, she is passionate about sharing her life stories to inspire others in overcoming obstacles and pursuing their dreams, and she serves as a powerful female role model determined to leave her mark in a male-dominated industry. Beyond her successful yachting career, she actively contributes to philanthropy, ocean advocacy, and children's education, showcasing her commitment to creating a positive impact on society.

"As I embark on this remarkable journey as a co-godmother of the *Celebrity Ascent*, I am deeply honored to represent not only the spirit of leadership but also the strength of women empowerment," says Captain Sandy Yawn. "This role serves as a reminder that women can steer their destinies with grace and determination, commanding the seas of possibility and inspiring others to follow their own paths with courage and conviction. I am so honored that my sister and I can share this distinction. She has always been my biggest inspiration in her selfless pursuit to help my nephew and other families impacted by autism."



About Michelle Dunham:

Michelle Dunham is the co-founder of the Jacksonville School for Autism (JSA), alongside her husband Mark. Michelle developed the model for JSA to give her son, Nicholas, the best opportunity to learn. Established in 2005, JSA is a not-for-profit private school as a full-service K-12 educational center for students and young adults with autism spectrum disorders, with a focus on whole child development and individualized programs that encourage both family and community involvement. JSA is as unique in its approach as the children they serve. Interwoven into the very fabric of what their program stands for is the necessity for each student to develop independence while improving the quality of their lives. Removing the layers of isolation, they are creating an inclusive environment for each student to be themselves in order to educate, engage and inspire. In March of 2020, JSA relocated to an expansive campus that embraces the lush landscape and provides both the staff and students with frequent opportunities for engagement with the outdoors and the introduction of a vocational gardening program.

"It fills my heart with immense pride to stand as co-godmother of the Celebrity Ascent, alongside my sister, Captain Sandy Yawn. As we embark on this journey, much like Celebrity Cruise Line's commitment to delivering exceptional vacations and enriching lives, we embrace the same spirit of compassion and positive change," says Michelle Dunham. "Together, we aspire to elevate lives, create boundless possibilities, and set sail towards a brighter, more inclusive future for all who grace our path through the charities we founded, Jacksonville School for Autism and Captain Sandy's Charities."

For more information on Celebrity Cruises, or to book a Celebrity cruise, visit www.celebrity.com, call 1-800-CELEBRITY, or contact your trusted travel advisor.

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About Celebrity Cruises:

Celebrity Cruises, owned by Royal Caribbean Group (NYSE: RCL), reimagines cruising by pioneering resort travel at sea. Recognized for its iconic "X", the Celebrity cruise experience is both refined and relaxed, merging contemporary design, amenities, and entertainment, with world-class, personalized service that makes travelers feel at home anywhere in the world. The cruise line transports travelers to nearly 300 destinations, across all seven continents, and up to eight destinations in one voyage. Multi-award winning, Celebrity is the first cruise line with ships to earn Forbes Travel Guide's four-star rating and has also been voted "Best Premium Cruise Line" for 15 consecutive years in the Travel Weekly Readers Choice Awards. For more information, visit CelebrityCruises.com.