

A home of her own — at last

Nereida Badillo’s struggles mirror those of many in Holyoke, the state’s poorest city. Latinos like her came here in droves, seeking jobs and opportunity like prior generations. But the road up has been long and steep.



Nereida Badillo peered out of her front door. It took Badillo years to be able to own a home, attending classes and saving.

STORY BY KATIE JOHNSTON | PHOTOS BY JESSICA RINALDI | GLOBE STAFF

HOLYOKE — As she stood on the front porch of a cheerful yellow house, waiting for her real estate agent to unlock the door, Nereida Badillo’s mind was racing.

The thought of finally owning a home after a lifetime of moving from one crummy apartment to the next was almost unimaginable. But the minute she walked inside on that cold December morning in 2021, she could picture her Christmas tree in the small front room. She could see her three sons, each in his own bedroom, and herself at the stove in the bright kitchen cooking rice and beans, roasted pork shoulder, and pastelón, a lasagna-like dish made with sweet plantains.

She was ready to move up — quite literally.

Up from Holyoke’s down-town neighborhoods, where the city’s large and growing Latino community has long been concentrated, held in place by poverty and prejudice. Up to higher, greener ground where mill owners who employed new immigrants by the thousands lived back in the day when this was a manufacturing hub.

Her journey, and her family’s, has been a long one, and rarely easy. In its hardships and also its present promise, her story, in many ways, is Holyoke’s story. And she knows it.

“I love Holyoke,” she said. “I



The sun set on buildings covered in murals in Holyoke. The city was once home to dozens of factories.

am Holyoke.”

The story of the city, in turn, provides a window into what has held back so many people: how rules are written and by whom, where people come from and where they settle, what color their skin is and how that can limit opportunity.

Badillo, 45, spent years getting to this point: enrolling in a program for first-time home buyers in disadvantaged communities to qualify for financial assistance, improving her credit score, and saving her stimulus checks. The stability that had

HOLYOKE, Page A12

Anger rises over hospital merger

Mass General Brigham doctors feel ‘devalued’

By Liz Kowalczyk
GLOBE STAFF

Discontent among Mass General Brigham doctors had been at a slow burn for years. But when an unexpected announcement from the chief executive titled “A message about our future” popped into inboxes one morning last month, that frustration seemed to fully ignite.

Mass General Brigham, a dominant force in Boston medicine, was launching the latest and perhaps most contentious step in its ongoing effort to merge its two flagship Harvard-affiliated medical centers: combine all departments and divisions at both hospitals in a move that executives argued would improve patient care and access.

But after years of feeling shut out of decisions amid grinding work schedules, many doctors worried the changes would lead to layoffs, demotions, and an even greater loss of autonomy. During an online “town hall” on April 4, they inundated leaders with skeptical ques-

DOCTORS, Page A16

‘We’re in a very difficult time’

Mideast war clouds
Passover celebrations

By Daniel Kool
GLOBE CORRESPONDENT

Susan Hornfeldt remembers the crowded table stretching from wall to wall at the Passover Seders her grandparents used to host in their Brooklyn apartment when she was growing up.

As her family drove down the Long Island Expressway, the now 78-year-old imagined then that every car on the road was headed for her grandparents’ home. It was a yearly chance to see the extended family and connect over a millennia-old ritual. For around a decade, she’s carried on the Passover tradition — albeit, with a smaller crowd — at her son’s home in the suburbs of Boston, joining his wife, his in-laws, and Hornfeldt’s grandchildren.

But, Hornfeldt said, with Passover slated to begin Monday evening, at a time when Israel is engaged in a war that began with the brutal Oct. 7 Hamas attack on Israel and has left more than 30,000 Gazans dead and untold more

PASSOVER, Page A16



ERIN CLARK/GLOBE STAFF

Rabbi Mendy Uminer, at home with his wife, Grunie, and his son Aaron, inspected matzah for their Seder.

Yard days nigh

Sunday: Sunny, breezy.
High: 55-60. Low: 40-45.

Monday: Still sunny.
High: 54-59. Low: 39-43.

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Deaths, **A18-23**.

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House OK’s foreign aid

The resounding — and bipartisan — votes cleared the way for \$95 billion in aid for Ukraine, Israel, and Taiwan. **A2**.

The fashion arts and jewelry curators at the Museum of Fine Arts team up for an exhibition of never-before-shown gowns and flashy faux gems. **SundayArts. N1**.

For Trump, COVID has become a four-letter word on campaign trail

By Jim Puzzanghera
GLOBE STAFF

SCHNECKSVILLE, Pa. — When it comes to Donald Trump fandom, it’s hard to top 64-year-old Edward X. Young.

It’s hard to miss him, too, at one of the 74 Trump rallies he proudly boasts he’s attended. Awaiting the start of his latest one here on April 13, Young wore a bright green Make America Great Again hat, a Trump T-shirt, a denim jacket festooned with more than a dozen Trump buttons, and a grin framed by his gray mustache and beard.

In Young’s view, the former president can do no wrong. Except when it comes to COVID.

“I think Trump’s biggest mistake — I hate to have him know that I say he made a mistake — was trusting [Dr. Anthony] Fauci,” Young said of the former federal infectious disease expert who’s been vilified by conservatives for promoting COVID shutdowns and vaccines.

But Young said Trump isn’t compounding that mistake by making another one — talking about COVID.

COVID, Page A10

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