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PHOTOS BY CRAIG F. WALKER/GLOBE STAFF

Students learned the gowning procedure for entering a clean room during a MassBioEd class in Burlington.

BIOTECH BOUND, BUT WITH A BLUE COLLAR

An industry shift is creating opportunities for workers with a new skill set

By Robert Weisman
GLOBE STAFF

Dennis Pacheco found himself working in the shadow of the biotech industry shortly after coming to the United States in 2012. He tended bar at a tapas restaurant in Cambridge's Kendall Square, pouring beer and mixing drinks for employees from nearby drug discovery labs.

"I had no idea what they did," Pacheco said. "All I knew was they were always having drinks and big parties. And they didn't have money problems."

A decade later, Pacheco, a 42-year-old Brazilian immigrant who'd yearned for a piece of that prosperity,

is getting his shot. He has signed on as a biomanufacturing apprentice, joining dozens of low-wage workers in the Boston area who are training for opportunities in a growing field.

Among them are Alicia Raymond, 26, a longtime coffee barista; Connor Zhong, 21, who waited tables at a Vietnamese restaurant; and 31-year-old Josh Wilkerson, who gave Breathalyzer tests at a halfway house. All are from families of modest means. And all hope to punch their tickets to the middle class in an industry where the rewards of mastering the work are great, but the stakes of failing to do so are daunting.

APPRENTICES, Page A7



Apprentice Dennis Pacheco prepared to enter a clean room at a biomanufacturing site in Lexington.

'People want to be fed the information behind what they're watching.'

MOLLY MCPHERSON

She spills the tricks of the PR trade on TikTok



LANE TURNER/GLOBE STAFF

Molly McPherson filmed a TikTok in a Boston coffee shop last month. She brings her tripod with her everywhere.

Uses celebrity cases to shed light on crisis communications

By Dana Gerber
GLOBE STAFF

In Molly McPherson's world, just about anything is a tell.

If a statement says a marriage ended "amicably," for instance, that's a sign that it was anything but. If a juicy tidbit is couched with "sources say" in a publication like The Daily Mail or TMZ, the leak likely came from the A-listers' own camp. And if a piece of unsavory news drops on a Friday, you can be pretty sure that the celebrity and their handlers hope it gets buried in the week-

end news cycle.

But if you follow McPherson, a crisis communications expert who moonlights as a celebrity PR whisperer on TikTok, you probably knew all that already.

McPherson, 54, has spent over two decades repairing dinged-up reputations as a crisis communicator, a subset in the field of public relations. Whereas many PR professionals are tasked with promoting all that a brand does right, McPherson has made a career out of cleaning up when something — or, more often, someone — goes wrong.

And for the past two years, in addition to her day job, McPherson has run a TikTok account dedicated to analyzing the PR strategies of the class of peo-

MCPHERSON, Page A6

Behind a tarnished badge in Vermont

Punished for kicking prisoner, sheriff is urged to resign by his colleagues

By Kevin Cullen
GLOBE STAFF

MONTPELIER — It is a video that went viral last year, especially in Vermont.

It shows John Grismore, at the time a captain in the Franklin County sheriff's office in rural northwestern Vermont, kicking a shackled and handcuffed prisoner, at least twice, in the groin and midsection after the prisoner refused orders to sit down. The prisoner, who was violently pushed back into his seat twice by Grismore's foot, was not injured, but in that heated moment he provided an assessment of Grismore that has proved to be prescient.

"He is so in trouble," the prisoner said.

That trouble has followed Grismore for more than a year, even after he was elected sheriff a few months after the damaging video surfaced, in the form of a state sanction and widespread calls for his resignation, even from fellow Republicans. But he has stayed at his post, defiantly insisting he is a scapegoat in a politically charged campaign against law enforcement officers in the wake of the murder of George Floyd by a Minneapolis police officer in 2020.

Not only does Grismore insist he used appropriate force in pushing back against an unruly prisoner who had spit at sheriff's deputies, he claims a thin blue line of other police officers have his back, even if they are reluctant to publicly say so in the current climate.

But that line cracked earlier this month when

VERMONT SHERIFFS, Page A10

Path to closing wealth gap long despite progress

Work toward equality still vital, advocates say, but tide has begun to turn

By Milton J. Valencia
GLOBE STAFF

Just over three years ago, then-mayor Martin J. Walsh made a declaration unlike any other in the city's history: Racism is a public health crisis in Boston.

The proclamation opened the door for unprecedented funding and resources and new ways of thinking to support residents of color in a city steeped in a legacy of segregation and bigotry. Funds dedicated to the Police Department for overtime were redirected to health programs. Millions of dollars were funneled to human rights initiatives. Financial assistance was offered to first-time homebuyers to help them remain here at a time when so many have been priced out.

Today, Boston is a far different city than it was just three years ago, with the first person of color and first woman elected mayor. City leadership is

WEALTH GAP, Page A6

Kristaps Porzingis led the Celtics to a 126-115 Christmas Day win over the Lakers in Los Angeles. **C1.**

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu visited Gaza and pledged to extend the war there as Egypt floated a proposal for a long-term truce. **A4.**

If you don't think of the business world as being wacky sometimes, think again. **D1.**

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A KEEPER OF THE LIGHT NO MORE

This week marks the end of a romantic — and sometimes harrowing — tradition. The last Coast Guard lighthouse keeper in the nation, Sally Snowman, will retire, leaving Boston Light. Snowman looks out from the top of the lighthouse on Little Brewster Island, with Boston 9.3 miles away. **B1.**



STAN GROSSFELD/GLOBE STAFF