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Hope, heartache

Caught in the tightening grip of Alzheimer's, a couple look to a new drug for a reprieve — however uncertain

STORY BY JONATHAN SALTZMAN | GLOBE STAFF
PHOTOS BY SUZANNE KREITER | GLOBE STAFF

Truck. Banana. Violin. Desk. Green.

Sitting behind her desk in an examining room, the neurologist slowly read the five words aloud to J. Anthony Downs and told him to remember them. Then, after putting him through other mental tasks for five minutes, she asked him to repeat as many of the words as he could.

The 62-year-old retired attorney couldn't remember a single one.



A former partner at the Boston-based law firm Goodwin and one-time law clerk to Supreme Court Chief Justice William Rehnquist, Downs, with his powerful intellect and phenomenal memory, built a patent law practice that earned millions.

But that began to change in his early 50s, when he started showing symptoms of what was ultimately diagnosed as early-onset Alzheimer's disease. At first, he forgot details of conversations he'd had with his wife, Kay Kim, lapses only she noticed. But as the years wore on, Tony started to struggle at work, losing clients until 2021 when, Kay recalled, Goodwin pressured him to retire.

Two years later, he was in Dr. Tamara Fong's examining room at Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center unable to remember those five words. His condition was declining, Fong said; he might be entering a new phase of the deadly disease.

But on that day in April 2023,



Tony Downs (top in the woods near his home, above with his wife, Kay Kim) has early-onset Alzheimer's disease.

Fong also offered Tony and Kay a sliver of hope. A new drug had been shown to delay cognitive decline — modestly but unambiguously — in patients with early Alzheimer's symptoms. Beth Israel might offer it soon.

The drug, which would be marketed as Leqembi, was considered a breakthrough on a massively frustrating clinical frontier, ending de-

ALZHEIMERS, Page A16

In Cambridge, a pre-K perk for poor and wealthy alike

By Spencer Buell and Christopher Huffaker

GLOBE STAFF

CAMBRIDGE — Laura McMaster couldn't believe her luck.

She and her husband, who was starting a pathology fellowship at Massachusetts General Hospital, were preparing for a

move to Cambridge from Atlanta with their 4-year-old daughter, Amelia. Researching their new community online, they were met with an extraordinary surprise: For the first time ever, pre-kindergarten is free this year.

"It was really, like, kismet,"

she said.

The program, she learned, would pay the full freight for every 4-year-old in the city, regardless of income, including in private, specialized schools with boutique teaching styles, among them Capucine Montessori School, a bilingual French-Eng-

lish option just down the street. It was perfect, as her husband is French, and they had been eager to find a place where Amelia could practice the language. They selected the school, and their daughter was placed there for the fall, free of charge.

PRE-K, Page A18

When police are suspects, a suspect probe

Birchmore case prompts calls for outside inquiries

By Dan Glaun
GLOBE STAFF

When Canton police officers discovered the body of 23-year-old Sandra Birchmore in February 2021, some of the first calls they made were the usual ones: to Norfolk District Attorney Michael W. Morrissey's office and the State Police detectives assigned to that agency.

Local police frequently work with county prosecutors and their detectives on routine and everyday affairs. But at times, critics say, their duties can conflict, and bias can

emerge, particularly in cases where the suspect is also a police officer.

That's what played out in the investigation into Birchmore's death, according to legal observers and her friends and relatives, after Norfolk investigators and the state medical examiner ruled her case a suicide. Since federal authorities last month charged former Stoughton police detective Matthew Farwell with killing Birchmore, the case has reignited questions over whether State Police detectives assigned to district attorneys' offices should investigate local police-involved incidents, especially when they may know officers from a local department, or even have worked

BIRCHMORE, Page A18

Trump critics back in the fold

Change of tone as governors eye their future

By Sam Brodey
GLOBE STAFF

WASHINGTON — Not long ago, there were two kinds of Republican governors: those who were all-in for former president Donald Trump's 2024 campaign and those who would have been happier if he had sat it out.

The latter was a small group, but due to their various feuds and differences with Trump these nationally prominent Republicans — Governor Brian Kemp of Georgia, Governor Spencer Cox of Utah, and Governor Chris Sununu of New Hampshire — seemed unlikely to ever vocally advocate for the former president's comeback bid.

Until they did.

In recent weeks and months, these high-profile holdouts have set aside their reservations and gradually decided to get on the Trump train — or at least get out of its way — in a show of how even MAGA-reluctant segments of the GOP appear to be coming home to Trump in the final stretch of the campaign.

Like many Republicans before them, these governors may have arrived at a simple political calculus: that backing Trump represents a sufficiently compelling opportunity to advance their own conservative views, and their

GOVERNORS, Page A12



Fall is on the horizon along with a plethora of arts events to enjoy. Check them out in the **Fall Arts Guide, N1.**

Real estate agents say autumn in an election year is a good time to buy a home. More in the Fall House Hunt edition of **Address, H1.**



Warm-up act

Sunday: Sunny and nice. High: 70-75. Low: 56-61.

Monday: Plenty of sun. High: 79-84. Low: 58-63. High tide: 9:23 a.m. 9:37 p.m. Sunrise: 6:24 Sunset: 6:53

Complete report, **A26.**

Deaths, **A20-24.**

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