

The tragic toll of Steward's neglect



BARRY CHIN/GLOBE STAFF

Concetta McCarthy visited the grave of her cousin Gilberto Melendez-Brancaccio in Mount Wollaston Cemetery in Quincy. He died at age 31 at Carney Hospital.

Gilberto Melendez-Brancaccio often became confused and seized by religious delusions when he didn't take his antipsychotic medication, and that was how the police found him, in June 2021, in a Quincy hotel, telling people he was God.

The police summoned an ambulance. "No," Gilberto said at first. "I am God." But then, as if his words and actions were operating on different wavelengths, he collected his wallet and phone, and went with the officers.

"Good," Gilberto told them, according to a police report. "I'll go to the hospital."

He was a husky 5-foot-8, with a shaved head and sculpted goatee. His eyes were stunningly dark and expressive, often caught in photos with a look of melancholy. Perhaps that was from the sad things he had witnessed in his turbulent 31 years, such as his mother being consumed by mental illness, before Gilberto himself began exhibiting signs of schizoaffective and bipolar disorders.

Patients died in hallways,
in line, and alone,
as the hospitals were
starved of staff, supplies,
and money



This story was reported by Liz Kowalczyk, Chris Serres, Jessica Bartlett, Elizabeth Koh, Mark Arsenaault, and Yoohyun Jung. It was written by Arsenaault and edited by Brendan McCarthy.

He climbed without hesitation into the ambulance.

Even amid a psychotic break, he trusted in the hospital as a place where he could count on compassion and expert care.

His trust was misplaced — betrayed, in fact.

The ambulance drove him to Carney Hospital in Dorchester, part of the national Steward Health Care chain. It was a desperately depleted hospital, so starved for resources by its corporate bosses that some employees had begun referring to it by a dark nickname: Carnage.

Carney was but one piece of the failing empire of neglected Steward hospitals, some now shuttering for good or being parceled off in a bankruptcy fire sale.

The breadth and tragic consequences of Steward's mismanagement have not yet been told in full. There has been a vast human toll, tallied in

STEWARDS, Page A12

Seclusion alleged in school discipline

Timeouts border on prohibited use, parents say

By Mandy McLaren
GLOBE STAFF

Perry Baker knew her son, Ezra, then 6, was regularly spending time in "safety" at his public special education school, something she assumed was akin to a timeout. But she never made a connection between his time spent there and the aggressive behaviors he began exhibiting in the mornings as she tried to get him off to school. The biting, hair pulling, and head butting were lost on her.

Until, that is, her son told his psychiatrist this spring about

"the cage."

It was where he went when he was bad at school, the boy explained, in toddler-like language. Ezra, who has multiple disabilities including PTSD and an intellectual disability, also has an expressive speech delay.

"I no dog," he said, to his mother's horror.

Within days, Baker, 43, visited her son's school, the South Coast Educational Collaborative in East Freetown, to see the space in question. She was led into a room adjoining her son's classroom. What she saw there repulsed her: a closet-size space, constructed out of wood, with padded walls and a narrow strip of a window, the bottom half obscured by taped-up paper. She

SECLUSION, Page A19

Housing a political — and personal — priority



RYAN COLLIERD/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES

Bethlehem housing committee member Marc Rittle (left) at his nonprofit New Bethany's food pantry in July.

By Jim Puzzanghera
GLOBE STAFF

BETHLEHEM, Pa. — Franchi Salvador just wants a place of his own, an apartment big enough for his four young children and his fiancée so they don't have to live with friends, relatives, or, as is the distressing case right now, in temporary housing for homeless families.

He took a major step in that quest about six weeks ago when he ditched his construction and home remodeling work for a job at a nearby warehouse

and distribution center. The hours aren't ideal — overnight from 7 p.m. to 5 a.m. — but the pay is much better. The \$3,500 to \$4,200 he earns a month is more than double what he was pulling in before, and Salvador, 30, figured it would be enough to rent a three-bedroom apartment.

So far, it hasn't been. His earnings mean he can only afford to pay about \$1,400 a month in rent, Salvador said he's been instructed as he conducts his search, and that doesn't go as far here

HOUSING, Page A18

MAD magazine and Norman Rockwell are as different as a Windsor chair and a whoopee cushion, but the MAD exhibit at the Norman Rockwell Museum is a delight. **SundayArts, N1.**

Jeremy Cohen, once a reluctant law student, is a fierce advocate for his canine clients and their owners. **Globe Magazine.**

The Patriots open their season at 1 today in Cincinnati; Dan Shaughnessy says what happens next is up to the Krafts. **C1.**

Pretty pair

Sunday: Sunny and dry. High: 69-74. Low: 54-59.

Monday: Sunny, warmer. High: 75-80. Low: 58-63.

Complete report, **B10.** Deaths, **A21-25.**

VOL. 306, NO. 70

Suggested retail price
\$6.00



A CUSTOMIZED APPROACH TO WEALTH MANAGEMENT

Learn more at [CambridgeTrust.com](https://www.cambridgetrust.com)

Investment advisory services and investment products available through Cambridge Trust Wealth Management, a division of Eastern Bank, are not insured by the FDIC or any federal government agency, not deposits of or guaranteed by any bank, and may lose value.

Our investment, planning, and relationship teams create an integrated plan to help build and preserve your wealth for the life goals and priorities that matter most to you.

CAMBRIDGE TRUST

— WEALTH MANAGEMENT PRIVATE BANKING —

Now Part of EASTERN BANK