

## Struggles for Steward reach far beyond Mass.

Health care chain dogged by legal problems, hospital closures, even supply shortages

By Emma Platoff and Dana Gerber  
GLOBE STAFF

For 40 years, Texas Vista Medical Center had been a lifeline for the majority-Hispanic, low-income communities on the south side of San Antonio. It was the nearest emergency room, the birthing center where local babies were delivered, the destination for those who didn't have ready transportation to the other side of the city, where most hospitals are clustered in the sleek Medical Center area.

Then, last March, parent company Steward Health Care shocked the city when it announced it would shut Texas Vista, "barring takeover or significant government relief."

Bail us out or we will leave. That was the message from Steward executives, ac-

cording to Peter Sakai, who leads San Antonio's Bexar County. Sakai and other local officials who met with the company said the news came too late for them to prevent the closure — and the company gave them no options beyond an eight-figure bailout. Sakai said he had too

► **Steward CEO's yacht says a lot, writes Brian McGrory. A15.**

many doubts about Steward's finances to favor buying the hospital.

Steward disputes that local officials were blindsided. But the closure represents an increasingly familiar story for the hospital chain. The for-profit health system has shut a number of hospitals in

**STEWARD, Page A15**

"They waited until the last minute, when they knew that this population was so vulnerable already. The sad reality is that this was just another business that didn't really care for people. They were more interested in profiting."

ADRIANA ROCHA GARCIA  
San Antonio city councilor

### BY THE NUMBERS

30+ hospitals  
9 states  
40,000+ employees



## Empty seats threatening to bring down the house

Pandemic accelerated decline in season ticket subscribers, a financial lifeblood for theaters

By Don Aucoin  
GLOBE STAFF

It was a weeknight in early September, and the cast of New Repertory Theatre's "A Raisin in the Sun" were giving a performance to remember.

But precious few spectators were on hand that night to forge those memories. Half of the seats were empty, even though New Rep had hedged its bets by staging "Raisin" in its 90-seat Black Box Theater rather than its 339-seat Main Stage in Watertown.

One month later, New Rep announced it was closing after four decades as one of the most prominent theater organizations in the Boston area.

Its demise was not caused by a single performance playing under capacity. But New Rep's fate underscored the high stakes Boston-area theater companies are facing as they launch into the second half of the 2023-



PHOTOS BY JONATHAN WIGGS/GLOBE STAFF

24 season. For some of them, it's a battle for survival. If COVID-19 was an earthquake, what theaters are now trying to cope with is an ongoing series of nerve-racking aftershocks.

"I think we're going to see other companies going under," said Christopher V. Edwards, artistic director of Boston-based Ac-

**THEATERS, Page A14**

"It feels as if we're an endangered species," said Courtney Sale of Merrimack Rep. Christopher V. Edwards of Actors' Shakespeare Project said, "I think we're going to see other companies going under."

## Teacher strife could extend beyond Newton

Communities brace for militant posture from frustrated unions

By Deanna Pan, Mandy McLaren, and Christopher Huffaker  
GLOBE STAFF

With the longest teachers strike to roil a Massachusetts community in three decades finally over, parents, school officials, and community leaders may now be wondering: Where will educators walk the picket line next?

The Newton teachers strike, which ended Friday, tested the limits of support for public education in Massachusetts — a progressive state known for its public schools — at a time when educators, burned out and beat-

en down by a bruising pandemic, are demanding better pay and benefits to keep up with the staggering costs of living here.

► **Newton winners, losers. B1.**

But there's a mismatch between what communities claim they want and what they're willing to pay for. Moreover, municipalities are hamstrung by state law that limits their ability to raise taxes to meet teachers' demands.

It's a recipe that portends more strikes in districts where contract negotiations are stalled. **STRIKE, Page B4**

## Therapy for deafness targets genetic flaws

Millions with inherited hearing loss could benefit

By Jonathan Saltzman  
GLOBE STAFF

Scientists in the United States and abroad are reporting encouraging results in restoring hearing in children born with a rare form of deafness, raising the prospect that gene therapies — some developed in Massachusetts — may someday help millions of people with inherited

hearing loss.

Five studies, including at least three with ties to Boston, are using rival gene therapies to treat a hearing disorder caused by mutations in a single gene, called otoferlin. Experts say the results of the studies — which have reported gains in hearing among small numbers of children — prove that gene therapy can treat this form of inherited deafness, which affects an estimated 200,000 people worldwide.

The early results, investigated by researchers at Boston Children's Hospital, are promising. **DEAFNESS, Page A13**

## S.C. primary has no place for Southern charm

By Jim Puzzanghera  
GLOBE STAFF

WASHINGTON — John McCain had just upset George W. Bush in the 2000 New Hampshire Republican presidential primary, setting up a pivotal showdown in South Carolina. And the gloves were about to come off.

"We were warned that grassroots politics in the state could get really ugly and really nasty so we thought we were prepared for the worst," recalled Dan Schnur, who was McCain's communications director. "But we had no idea."

McCain was hit with anonymous smears delivered by phone and fliers falsely asserting his adopted daughter from Bangladesh was his illegitimate child and raising his wife's past prescription drug addiction. A Bush

**TRUMP, Page A12**

► **Biden cruises to an easy win in S.C. primary. A12.**

**The Grammys tonight could be the Taylor Swift show** after a big year for women. Check out who'll win, and who should. **Sunday Arts, N1.**

**Any new restaurant in Boston needs a liquor license, but good luck getting one.** **Globe Magazine.**

**Converting to a net-zero home can be expensive but it's well worth the upfront cost,** say people who've made the change. **Metro, B1.**

**US airstrikes are testing whether Iran will escalate or stand down.** **World, A2.**

### Shining amour

**Sunday:** Full sun again. High 37-42. Low 23-28.

**Monday:** Another one. High 35-40. Low 23-28.

Sunrise: 6:55 Sunset: 5:01

**Complete report, B10.**

VOL. 305, NO. 35

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Suggested retail price  
\$6.00



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