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— IN THE SHADOW OF GRIEF —

Forging forward, without her biggest booster



Bethany Welch, cradling a photo of her and her stepfather, Joe Walker, from her high school dance, graduated from the University of Connecticut School of Nursing earlier this month. The momentous day came a few weeks after Walker was murdered in the Lewiston, Maine, mass shooting.

STORY BY IVY SCOTT | PHOTOS BY ERIN CLARK | GLOBE STAFF

Third of three parts.

STORRS, Conn. — Bethany Welch’s graduation from nursing school was supposed to be a joyful culmination of a year of late nights, tough exams, eye-opening clinics, and more hurdles than she’d ever thought herself capable of overcoming. Filled with the buzz of celebration, a giant lunch with her family, and the long-awaited flipping of the tassel, the day was almost perfect: The only thing missing was her dad.

Striding across the stage at the University of Connecticut School of Nursing graduation earlier this month, Welch wore a cap glittered with the words

“

It’s weird without my dad.
But I definitely feel supported,
and a lot of love.”

BETHANY WELCH

“Lewiston Strong” and “This One’s For You Dad.” Where other graduates paused onstage for a photo with their diploma cover, she held a framed photo in her arms of her stepfather, Joe Walker, one of 18 victims of Maine’s deadliest mass shooting.

“It’s weird without my dad,” she said. “But I definitely feel supported, and a lot of love.”

Welch, 23, said she owes her interest in medicine to Walker, her biggest cheerleader since he first met her mother and entered her life when she was a little girl. Many days in the two decades since, he eagerly listened to her plans for the future and encouraged her to stay the course. When he was ripped

LEWISTON, Page A8

In a reversal, the Biden administration plans to more aggressively pursue thousands of small businesses with past-due pandemic loans. A2.

Israeli forces bombarded towns and refugee camps in Gaza, killing dozens. A3.

The Celtics sent the Detroit Pistons to their NBA-record-tying 28th straight loss. C1.



Bringing in the rain

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Comics and Weather, **G6-7.**
Obituaries, **C11.**

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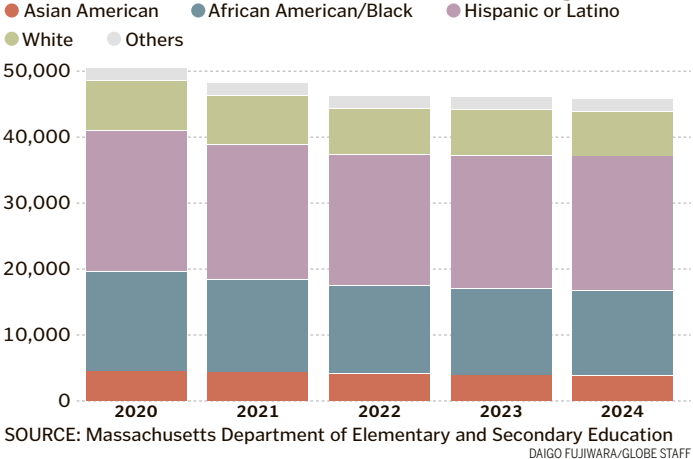
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Boston Public Schools enrollment by race



Migrants slow decline in enrollment at BPS

But students bring challenges of different sort

By Niki Griswold
GLOBE STAFF

For nearly a decade, Boston Public Schools has experienced a steady decline in student enrollment, complicating its multibillion-dollar effort to rebuild aging buildings and staff for a population largely from low-income households and with high needs.

But there’s been one source

of new students that has helped mitigate this drop: an influx of migrants who have surged into Massachusetts over the past year.

And for the current academic year, those new students helped keep the overall decline below 1 percent, according to state data released in December, to 45,742 students as of Oct. 1. Nonetheless, it is the ninth consecutive year of declining student numbers.

While the additional migrant students raise hopes the district’s classroom numbers

ENROLLMENT, Page B4

Professors share a plan for Harvard — and leaders listen

Group says school should step away from taking stand on social issues

By Mike Damiano
GLOBE STAFF

CAMBRIDGE — Just before winter break, four prominent Harvard faculty members met for a private dinner with two of the university’s most powerful leaders.

Landing the dinner meeting was something of a coup for the faculty members who are co-

leaders of a campaign, launched last spring, to reverse what they see as a rising culture of self-censorship, decreasing tolerance for dissenting views, and a tendency for the university to take official positions on the issues of the day.

When it was launched in March, the campaign might have seemed quixotic, even con-

trarian. But in the midst of campus tumult in recent months with bitter debates over anti-semitism, pro-Palestinian speech, and the future of the school’s president, Claudine Gay, their dinner engagement with Tracy Palandjian and Paul Finnegan, members of Harvard’s insular governing board known as the Corporation, was a sign that their views have taken on new relevance. It was a marker that such efforts are being dis-

HARVARD, Page A9

Citing Jan. 6 role, Maine joins Colorado in finding Trump ineligible for ballot

By Jenna Russell
and Ernesto Londoño
NEW YORK TIMES

Maine’s top election official on Thursday barred Donald Trump from the state’s primary ballot, the second state to block the former president’s bid for reelection based on claims that his efforts to remain in power after the 2020 election rendered him ineligible.

In a written decision, Secretary of State Shenna Bellows said Trump did not qualify for the ballot because of his role in the Jan. 6, 2021, attack on the US Capitol, agreeing with a handful of citizens who claimed that he had incited an insurrection and was thus barred from seeking the presidency again under the 14th Amendment of the Constitution.

“I am mindful that no secretary of state has ever deprived a presidential candidate of ballot access based on Section 3 of the 14th Amendment. I am also mindful, however, that no presidential candidate has ever before engaged in insurrection,” Bellows, a Democrat, wrote.

Last week, Colorado’s Supreme Court ruled in a 4-3 deci-

MAINE, Page A6