

The Boston Globe

Serving our community since 1872

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 19, 2023

CRADLE OF DOUBT



Wearable devices designed to keep babies safe have flooded the market in the past decade.

High-tech baby monitors raise questions about co-sleeping risk

Doctors also worry about false hope they protect against SIDS

This story was reported by Deirdre Fernandes and Liz Kowalczyk and edited by Patricia Wen. It was written by Fernandes. Third in a three-part series.



The new generation of baby monitors hitting the market doesn't just tell parents when their infants are crying. These high-tech devices can track a baby's pulse and breathing, and are designed to alert parents if their little one rolls over, or hasn't moved for 20 seconds.

The price tag for such close health supervision is hefty, with the devices costing between \$130 and \$550. But for those who can afford it, the expense feels insignificant compared to the horror parents hope they will help prevent: sudden infant death syndrome, commonly known as SIDS.

This may be a false hope. Top pediatricians warn that the physical and biological events leading to SIDS deaths remain poorly understood, and that none of these devices, which can be clipped onto a baby's diaper or wrapped onto a foot like a sock, has been demonstrated to lower the risk of sudden sleep deaths.

And their use may have unwelcome, even harmful, side effects: The flow of data tracking a baby's vital signs may fuel unwarranted anxiety, even panic. Some parents have

INFANT DEATHS, Page A10

RFK Jr.'s atypical path to ballot

Campaign relies on volunteers to get signatures

By Tal Kopan
GLOBE STAFF

LINCOLN, Neb. — As a coterie of Nebraskans giddily walked away from taking their pictures with Robert F. Kennedy Jr., a campaign volunteer thrust a clipboard into their hands.

Tucked in with a blue, white, and red "Kennedy 24" bumper sticker and a postcard-sized QR code to make donations were instructions to collect signatures from Nebraska voters to get the Kennedy scion on November's presidential ballot.

The idea, the campaign said, was for every attendee to gather a page of signatures and return them — a task several attendees excitedly embraced.

One quoted a wellness guru's podcast on which she first heard Kennedy, citing the host's fervor for Kennedy as her own.

"He said, 'I lay my sword down to you,' and that's just how I feel," said Krissy Lowndes, 29, a self-employed jewelry maker from Omaha who did not vote in the last presidential election. "Like, I

KENNEDY, Page A6

Streaming solace, support

Bomb threats bind Christian, Jewish congregations in fellowship

By Brooke Hauser
GLOBE STAFF

NORTHAMPTON — Rabbi Riqi Kosovske opened her email Nov. 19 to find a bomb threat against her synagogue. Grabbing her phone, she felt her fingers couldn't move fast enough. But soon, she made the calls that swiftly brought first responders to the scene. The threat was eventually determined to be a hoax — and it became an unlikely catalyst for connection.

Three weeks later, Kosovske and her congregation received support from first responders of a different kind when they entered their sanctuary for a Ha-

nukkah celebration to find it transformed: A rainbow of about 150 ribbons fluttering from the ceiling were covered in messages: "You belong," "May all who are mourning know they are not alone."

The display was a gift organized by the new minister of Florence Congregational Church, which shares space in the building with the synagogue, Beit Ahavah.

"I told my congregation, this is part of loving our neighbor," said Pastor Marisa Egerstrom.

The bomb scare led to deepened conversations between the rabbi and pastor whose congregations also share a simi-

lar dedication to social justice.

Beit Ahavah is housed inside the historic, white-clapboard Florence Congregational Church. In addition to the church and Reform synagogue, the property also includes a preschool, and is managed by the nonprofit Bombyx Center for Arts & Equity, which took over in October 2021 as part of a six-year lease-to-purchase deal. (The church was struggling, according to the pastor, and currently has around 25 members. The synagogue has 80 to 100 member-households.)

It's "an unusual institution," Bombyx

RIBBONS, Page A7



SUZANNE KREITER/GLOBE STAFF

In Northampton, Rabbi Riqi Kosovske (center) was hugged by Bombyx executive director Cassandra Holden. Pastor Marisa Egerstrom (right) and her congregation surprised Kosovske's synagogue with ribbons offering messages of love.

Two dead as powerful storm hits New England

Hundreds of thousands lose electricity, flights halted at Logan, trees toppled

By John R. Ellement,
Marianne Mizera,
and Nick Stoico
GLOBE STAFF

A powerful storm slammed New England Monday with torrential rains and strong winds, causing at least two deaths as well as widespread damage, halting flights at Logan International Airport for several hours, and leaving hundreds of thousands of people without power.

Across the region, ferocious winds toppled trees and powerlines and littered streets with debris while heavy rain caused coastal flooding and made some roads impassable.

In Hanover, Mass., an 89-year-old man died when "high winds and rain" caused a tree to collapse around 9:47 a.m., trapping him inside a trailer on In-

dustrial Way, said Plymouth District Attorney Timothy J. Cruz's office.

In Windham, Maine, a 40-year-old man was fatally struck by a part of a tree while clearing debris from his roof, WMTW-TV reported.

In Bartlett, N.H., the Saco River rose about 10 feet. South of Boston in Scituate widespread power outages forced officials to close schools on Tuesday, while in Clinton, Maine, winds tore the roof off a tractor-trailer. In Ashfield, just east of the Berkshires, nearly 5 inches of rain fell.

Flooding was so intense in Providence that the waves forced the gates off a storm drain. And in Somerville, murky water overtook at least one neighborhood

STORM, Page A7

PEAK WIND GUSTS

A Category 1 hurricane is 74-95 miles per hour.

90 m.p.h.
Farmington, Conn.

64 m.p.h.
Provincetown

63 m.p.h.
New Bedford

55 m.p.h.
Blue Hill Observatory

SOURCE: National Weather Service Boston

GLOBE STAFF



JESSICA RINALDI/GLOBE STAFF

An Iron Tree arborist cleaned debris Monday outside of a Lynnfield home after a tree fell on the house, destroying the bedroom and three cars.

'This new declaration opens the door to nonliturgical blessings for same-sex couples, something that had been previously off-limits for bishops . . . and deacons.'

THE REV. JAMES MARTIN

Priests may bless same-sex couples, Pope Francis declares

But Vatican emphasizes rule isn't the same as a sacrament of marriage

By Jason Horowitz
NEW YORK TIMES

ROME — The Vatican said Monday that Pope Francis had allowed priests to bless same-sex couples, his most definitive step yet to make the Roman Catholic Church more welcoming to LGBTQ+ Catholics and more reflective of his vision of a more pastoral, and less rigid, church.

►Area clergy, activists respond to move. B1.

The Vatican had long said it could not bless same-sex couples because it would undermine church doctrine that marriage is only between a man and a woman.

But the new rule made it clear that a blessing of a same-sex couple was not the same as a marriage sacrament, a formal ceremonial rite. It also stressed that it was not blessing the relationship, and that, to avoid confusion, blessings should not be imparted during or connected to the ceremony of a civil or same-sex union, or when there are "any clothing, gestures or words that are proper to a wedding."

Blessings instead are better imparted, the Vatican says, during a meeting with a priest, a visit to a shrine, during a pilgrimage or as a

POPE, Page A5

Texas Governor Greg Abbott has signed a law allowing state law enforcement officials to arrest migrants, setting the stage for a potential federal showdown. **A2.**

The United States and other nations are creating a force to protect ships transiting the Red Sea after several tankers have been attacked by drones and ballistic missiles fired from Houthi-controlled areas of Yemen. **A3.**

Actor Jonathan Majors has been found guilty for assault and harassment against his ex-girlfriend. Marvel and Disney dropped the "Creed III" star from all upcoming projects. **A6.**



Just beaming

Tuesday: Sun, some clouds. High 45-50, low 27-32.

Wednesday: Sunny. High 40-45, low 30-35. Sunrise: 7:09. Sunset: 4:13.

Obituaries, **C9.**
Comics and Weather, **D5-6.**

VOL. 304, NO. 172

*
Suggested retail price
\$3.50

