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WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 14, 2024

A second look at parents in infant sleep deaths

State says it hears calls for more compassion

By Deirdre Fernandes

GLOBE STAFF

Parents of infants who died while sharing a bed with them complain that the response of state officials to such tragedies is too often focused on assigning blame in a way that can be emotionally devastating.

The painful stories of those parents were a major focus of a Globe Spotlight Team report published in



FOLLOW-UP

benefits. Leading child advocates agree that a more compassionate approach is needed.

December that found, among other things, that the harsh treatment is more often directed at parents who rely on public health

The state's top child welfare official has been listening and said she may press for change.

"There are people who have indicated that they are not happy with the experience of the way they were treated, and we take those complaints seriously," said Maria Mossaides, the director of the Massachusetts Office of the Child Advocate.

Mossaides said she is exploring whether a trained team of law enforcement and child protective ser-

vice workers should interview parents after an infant sleep death, similar to the approach the state takes in dealing with sensitive investigations around victims of child sexual abuse.

A careful approach is essential, she said, "particularly when there are other children in the home," Mossaides said. "We are always interested in making sure we are doing this in the best manner possible."

INFANT DEATH, Page A6

Billionaire donors want a bigger say

Colleges take money while trying to be independent

By Deirdre Fernandes and Stephanie Ebbert

GLOBE STAFF

Hedge fund billionaire Kenneth Griffin, who has given so much money to Harvard that his name graces its largest graduate school, derided elite universities last month for coddling "whiny snowflakes" and said he will no longer donate to Harvard unless it gets back to educating "leaders" and "problem-solvers."

It was but the latest in a mutiny of university mega-donors now commanding the attention of higher education leaders. Billionaire donors Marc Rowan and Bill Ackman helped topple the presidents of the University of Pennsylvania and Harvard in recent months, following the leaders' disastrous congressional testimony on antisemitism and, in Harvard president Claudine Gay's case, plagiarism allegations.

They haven't let up since. Rowan emailed UPenn's trustees to suggest they consider, among

DONORS, Page A4

HAZIER SHADE OF WINTER



CRAIG F. WALKER/GLOBE STAFF

It wasn't the big snowstorm that forecasters were touting earlier in the week, but there was plenty of wild weather in Massachusetts on Tuesday. Boston didn't see much of anything, but coastal areas like Marshfield (above) were battered. Parts of Central and Southeastern Massachusetts, as well as Rhode Island and Connecticut, did get a few inches of snow, but it's becoming an increasingly rare sight, as winters continue to get wetter and warmer, climate scientists say. **B1.**

The House voted to impeach Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas, with the Republican majority determined to punish the Biden administration over the US-Mexico border. **A2.**

Israel and Hamas are making progress toward another cease-fire and hostage release deal, amid talk of an offensive, officials said. **A3.**

No dinner reservations for Valentine's Day? Here are 10 possibilities. **G1.**

Sweetheart deal

Wednesday: Sunny, brisk. High 31-36. Low 21-26.
Thursday: More of the same. High 36-41. Low 27-32.
Sunrise: 6:43 Sunset: 5:14

Weather and Comics, G6-7. Obituaries, C9.

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Pushing for new housing comes with risk

Longtime Newton city councilor swept out by anger in neighborhoods

By Andrew Brinker

GLOBE STAFF

NEWTON — It was September, the height of a tense reelection campaign, and some people were very angry with Deborah Crossley.

The longtime Newton city councilor had spent years working on a plan to open the village centers to new housing development. Now she was at a community meeting in the Nonantum neighborhood, and residents were yelling at her, claiming it would change their neighborhood

forever.

Before long, an anonymous account called Newton Needs Change started posting videos from the meet-

► **Milton housing referendum today will reverberate. B5.**

ing online. One showed Crossley typing on her phone as someone talked. It was titled "Deb Crossley ignores residents pleas."

Crossley, "was just taking notes on my phone," she recounted.

But it was the beginning of a schism that would turn residents against her. There were more angry meetings. Signs depicting eight-story apartment buildings sprouted in front yards. And in the city election in November, Crossley and two other councilors who supported the zoning plan were voted out.

"There was a lot of attention devoted to making me the villain," Crossley said. "I simply know that we as a city need to build more housing

NEWTON, Page A7

Despite heritages of conflict, a scientific partnership that works

By Robert Weisman

GLOBE STAFF

WATERTOWN — Their brainstorming began in an MIT class in 2010 when the eager undergrads shot each other emails about how to solve a bioengineering equation. It has continued for 14 years over sushi dinners, between Marvel movies, and during rowing-machine workouts.

Together, Omar Abudayyeh, 33, and Jonathan Gootenberg, 32, have probed the mysteries of genomic editing and COVID detection. They co-published 10 scientific papers, helped launch two medical-diagnostic companies, and cofound-

ed a Watertown startup, Tome Biosciences, that reengineers genes and cells to cure diseases. They also run the Abudayyeh-Gootenberg Lab at Harvard.

Gootenberg and Abudayyeh are an unusual pair, two scientists — a Jewish American and a Palestinian American — who prefer working together in a field that often draws solitary researchers and rewards individual achievement.

Even as Israel's war in Gaza has raised tensions worldwide, including in Massachusetts, there's no tension in their partnership. Both sci-

PARTNERSHIP, Page A7



SUZANNE KREITER/GLOBE STAFF

Jonathan Gootenberg (left), a Jewish American, and Omar Abudayyeh, a Palestinian American, support a peaceful end to the Gaza war.

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