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A shot at clearing his name – after death

SJC to decide if DNA test warranted in 1988 slaying

By Sean Cotter
GLOBE STAFF

Nearly four decades ago, Mary Harris was found strangled to death in a Dartmouth motel room, a mountain of biological evidence around her: bloody sheets, strands of someone else's hair, used towels, and some sort of matter under her fingernails.

At the time in 1988, there was no technology to test the materials for DNA evidence. Police instead relied heavily on witness testimony to find a suspect: Shawn Tanner, a 23-year-old from Dartmouth. A jury convicted him of murder the following year.

Since then, DNA-testing technology has caught up. Tanner didn't live to see it used.

As he maintained his innocence for decades and raised doubts about the credibility of his conviction, Tanner ultimately won a court order in 2022 to have the materials tested for DNA evidence. He died a few months after the order, and the Bristol district attorney's office has argued that without him, there's no longer a need to test the items.

Now, the state's highest court is set to weigh in on a case that seeks a yes or no at its core, while also challenging complex questions about what is owed in the name of justice: For Tanner, whose health deprived him of a final push to clear his name. For his family hoping to redeem their loved one's reputation and perhaps force the state to pay for the time it took to see justice.

It could also bring closure for families of murder victims who hope that if Tanner is in-

DNA, Page A10

Trump warns US will act if Iran kills protesters

By Abdi Latif Dahir, Sanam Mahoozi, and Leily Nikounazar
NEW YORK TIMES

President Trump said Friday that the United States will come to the aid of protesters in Iran if the government there uses lethal force against them, in a sharp escalation of remarks after days of widespread demonstrations against the Iranian government.

The comments came a day after reports from Iranian state media and activists said that at least one person had been killed in clashes between protesters and security forces, as officials tried to contain protests incited by economic distress. Since then at least two more people have been reported dead.

The demonstrations, which began among business owners and university students in major Iranian cities, have also spread to smaller towns. Several security officers have been injured in the protests, authorities said. Semiofficial news outlets and a human rights organization reported clashes and fatalities during protests in the western city of Lordegan on Thursday, though the accounts could not be independently confirmed.

If Iran "violently kills peaceful protesters, which is their custom, the United States of America will come to their rescue," Trump said in a post on Truth Social early Friday. "We are

IRAN, Page A4

'It's clear the police want to make it so uncomfortable for us that we just pack up.'

JESSI CONLEY, a volunteer from Franklin

CHARITIES SEE INTIMIDATION IN HARDER MASS. CASS LINE



ERIN CLARK/GLOBE STAFF

Elaine Mitrano, founder of the Boston Backpack Project, helped a person in need. The group says it's been told it needs a permit.

Donations can only help, groups say, but police push to get people off streets

By Chris Serres
GLOBE STAFF

It was approaching noon on the frigid Saturday before Christmas when a caravan of vehicles packed to their ceilings with backpacks of winter clothing, hygiene products, and the opioid-reversal drug Narcan arrived near the troubled intersection of Massachusetts Avenue and Melnea Cass Boulevard, also known as Mass. and Cass.

Within moments, weary-looking men and women emerged from a nearby homeless shelter on Southampton Street and began to rifle through the donated supplies. A man in his 50s struggled to balance on the icy side-

walk as he shed his threadbare tennis shoes and pulled on a fresh pair of winter boots. A woman broke down in tears after volunteers handed her a backpack and a wool scarf.

But for the third straight month, the Stoneham-based nonprofit that organizes the outreach effort — the Boston Backpack Project — had to contend with a recurring obstacle: police officers.

Since the summer, when Boston officials intensified efforts to crack down on open-air drug use and other illegal activity in the area, charities and church outreach ministries say they have been encountering rising pushback — and sometimes outright hostility — from

law enforcement.

During outreach visits, volunteers report being followed, yelled at, and sometimes ordered by police to leave Mass. and Cass, long the epicenter of the intersecting problems of homelessness and substance abuse in the city.

On the recent Saturday, squad cars with the Boston police and Suffolk County sheriff's departments, and a private patrol with the Newmarket Business Improvement District, slowly circled the block in a near-constant procession, eyeing the half-dozen volunteers and occasionally pausing to deliver orders to move their cars or to stop handing out food.

TENSIONS, Page A10

In the middle on center bus lanes

Change has helped travel times but safety still an issue

By Jaime Moore-Carrillo
GLOBE STAFF

In late 2021, buses began charging up and down dedicated lanes painted into the middle of Columbus Avenue, a busy boulevard curving along the western edge of Roxbury.

Boston planners and the MBTA gushed about the makeover and its potentially transformative impacts — speedier buses, safer streets, a neighborhood unshackled from the long, life-

sapping dominion of cars. And in the coming years, the city and the T intend to spend tens of millions of dollars threading center-running lanes through other neighborhoods.

Available analysis suggests the Columbus lanes have, in many respects, served their purpose. But some data raise questions about whether the lanes have accomplished all of their intended safety impacts.

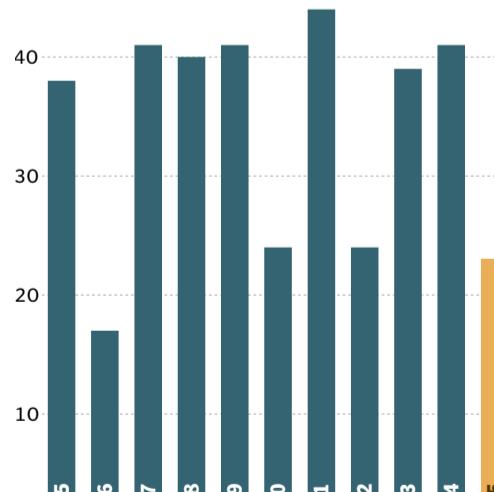
According to the T and the city, rush hour bus trips are quicker, cars speed less, and bus riders are pleased — proof that the lanes have been a "successful and impactful project," in the

BUS LANES, Page A7

Vehicle crashes along Columbus Ave., from Centre St. to Walnut Ave.

as of Sept. 14, 2025

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SOURCE: Boston Police Department

KIRKLAND AN/GLOBE STAFF

In a world of anxiety, more finding the answer in beta blockers

Lauren Perna found herself gasping for air from anxiety over her dying dog. She has been taking small doses of propranolol to try to stay calm ever since.



SUZANNE KREITER/GLOBE STAFF

By Beth Teitel
GLOBE STAFF

When Lauren Perna's beloved Chi-huahua terrier, Tessie, was dying, Perna's anxiety was so intense that she found herself gasping for air. On her doctor's advice, she started micro-dosing propranolol, a beta blocker, and even now, months later, takes it to stay calm during networking events.

"I know people are going to be asking about Tessie," said Perna, a writer who runs her own communications firm.

In Hanson, Kate Fisher, a real estate agent with 9-year-old twins and a 4-year-old, also takes a low dose of the

medication, in her case to deal with work and family anxiety that had become so intrusive she was no longer the person she wanted to be.

"My goal in life is always to be a great mom," she said, "and you look back on a lot of moments you wish you'd handled differently."

Katie Connelly takes propranolol, too, to quiet the physical symptoms of anxiety that hit when she's heading to a medical setting — an unfortunately common occurrence because of her Crohn's disease.

"I've got so much medical trauma," said Connelly, of Cambridge, "and I get super triggered."

BETA BLOCKERS, Page A7

Drop the balaclava

Saturday: Not quite as cold. High 30-35. Low 22-27.

Sunday: A few flurries. High 29-34. Low 11-16.

Sunrise: 7:13 Sunset: 4:24

Weather and Comics, D4-5.

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