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THE SALEM NEWS

SALEMNEWS.COM

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 6, 2025

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DPH chief: Blend abortion care into primary care

By Alison Kuznitz
» State House News Service

BOSTON — With an eye toward bolstering access to care, the state's top public health official has recommended incorporating abortion care within primary care, a sector that state leaders hope to stabilize as residents struggle to connect with providers and often face long waits for appointments. In a new report, the

Department of Public Health and Commissioner Dr. Robert Goldstein wrote that, "Abortion care, particularly medication abortion and early procedural abortion, is a common medical practice that can and should be integrated into primary care."

"However, abortion care is often siloed away from primary care services, stigmatizing abortion and decreasing its availability," the report continues.

The 2022 shield law for reproductive and gender identity care tasked the DPH to consult with advocacy organization Reproductive Equity Now and produce a report on so-called abortion and maternity care deserts.

Massachusetts no longer has abortion deserts, defined as communities located beyond a 50-mile radius of a facility that provides abortion care, according to the report. Still, DPH warns there are

"significant areas of decreased access" throughout the state based on the availability of hospital-based abortion care, procedural abortion care, and abortion care after 21 weeks of gestational age.

"For each of these categories, most of Cape Cod and the Islands and parts of Western and Northern Massachusetts remain 25-50+ miles away from care," the report says. The report recommends integrating abortion care into

primary care "where possible," encouraging more hospitals to publicly offer abortion care, maintaining access through telemedicine, ensuring adequate reimbursement rates, bolstering access to training, and expanding access to culturally competent care on the Cape and Islands. Primary care already faces significant strain in Massachusetts, fueled by a dwindling workforce and declining investments in

the sector. Senate President Karen Spilka has identified primary care reform as a priority this session, but consensus legislation has not emerged over the first year of the two-year session.

Spilka last week said that Bay Staters who are "lucky enough to have a primary care doctor" can end up waiting weeks or months to get an appointment.

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Salem High educator Matt Buchanan honored for flourishing city, school gardens, mentorship



Salem High School teacher Matt Buchanan, center, was recently recognized with the SAFE Local Climate Champion Award.

COURTESY PHOTO

A climate champion

By News Staff

SALEM — Matt Buchanan, a Connect for Success program educator at Salem High School, was recently named the recipient of the Salem Alliance For the Environment (SAFE) 2025 Local Climate Champion Award.

The award was announced by SAFE Executive Director Bonnie Bain and Buchanan was honored Nov. 13 at the second annual SAFE Fundraiser and Community Awards at Cinema Salem. He received his honor alongside Stacy Kilb, Salem's Sustainability Engagement Coordinator & Energy Coach, who received the 2025 SAFE Speak Up! Award.

The fundraiser also featured a screening of the documentary "Emergent City" centered around the conflict

between residents, city officials and planners regarding the plans for a Brooklyn industrial space.

Buchanan, a Gloucester native who has taught at Salem High for 25 years, has been committed to maintaining local farms, reducing food insecurity in the city and introducing his students to the vital role local growing and farming plays in the community.

"It's an amazing honor to be selected," said Buchanan, who has long worked with Salem High students in the former Bridge Academy and currently the Connect for Success program that focuses on at-risk students in the district.

While caring for the city's gardens, he's provided jobs to many of his students, including Salem High graduate

Jorge Mueses who oversees the Salem YMCA GreenSpace at Palmer Cove.

"It's a seven-day a week commitment for eight months out of the year and full-time in the summer, but it's important work for the city," he added. "I'm honored to be recognized for seeing the environment in terms of food security and investing in our young people. I've always been very passionate about getting these kids to work."

Under former mayor Kim Driscoll, Buchanan and his company, Homegrown Urban Abundance Gardening, planned and helped construct Mack Park Farm, a 10,000-square-foot municipal food farm in Salem that opened in 2020.

SEE BUCHANAN, PAGE 3

PUBLIC DEFENDERS

Advocates form group to push for higher pay

By Christian M. Wade
» Statehouse Reporter

BOSTON — Public defenders have created a new group to lobby Beacon Hill lawmakers to increase pay for hundreds of private attorneys who represent indigent clients.

The newly formed Massachusetts Association of Private Appointed Counsel will focus on boosting compensation for so-called "bar advocates" who represent about 80% of the indigent clients in the state's court system. The group said the system faces a "crisis" that has forced judges to release defendants and dismiss hundreds of cases for lack of representation.

The association will be headed by Attorney Sean Delaney, who said Massachusetts was once the "gold standard" among the nation's indigent defense systems but has "crumbled" under an inability to retain and recruit new attorneys to represent poor clients.

"Seasoned criminal defense attorneys have walked away by the hundreds over the past decade," he said in a statement. "The once long waitlist to become a bar advocate has vanished as earning rates haven't even kept pace with inflation. The system stopped working because the math stopped working."

"However, now that we are formally organized, we look forward to a seat at the table with the state Legislature to collaborate on a real solution to this crisis within our court system," Delaney added.

The group includes seasoned trial attorneys, retired judges and civil liberties advocates, all with "deep roots" in the Massachusetts court system, the association said in a statement. They include retired Superior Court judges Jack Lu and Shannon Frison, and attorney J. W. Carney, Jr., who has represented high-profile clients like crime boss James "Whitey" Bulger.

Gov. Maura Healey signed a supplemental budget in August that includes a provision increasing compensation for so-called bar advocates by \$20 per hour over the next two years, bringing the average hourly pay to \$85 per hour for most cases.

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Capturing different perspectives from around the world

By Angelina Berube
» Staff Writer

ANDOVER — William Putnam has an eye for capturing unique moments from the places his travels have taken him.

Those photos are on display in the latest art exhibit at the Robb Center. Long-time Andover resident Putnam's photography display runs through the month at the Robb Center where he'll also hold a talk on Dec. 18 about the stories behind some of the photos.

From life in Tibet, tranquil sunsets and foggy mornings in Rockport, musicians busking in the New Orleans' French Quarter and the beauty of a barren winter tree on the Phillips Academy campus,

Putnam uses his photography as a storytelling tool to transport viewers into sometimes unfamiliar scenes or experiences and give them a different perspective on the world around them.

This is Putnam's largest exhibit he has curated.

Putnam, 74, retired 10 years ago and that's when he started taking photography more seriously.

But years before, his work in the health care sector took him all over the globe to places like China, India and Brazil and his travels inspired him to photograph what he was seeing around him. He lived in China for three years with his wife from 1998 to 2001 and it was a time in his life he caught the creative bug.



TIM JEAN/Staff photo

Andover resident and photographer Will Putnam has a new exhibit on display at the Robb Center. His work includes landscapes and street photography, as well as unique moments and perspectives made in the U.S., Asia, Latin America, Europe and Africa.

His oldest photos in the exhibit are from a nine-day trip to Tibet in 2001. The photos captured unique moments, telling the story of a young Tibetan girl clutching her blue teddy bear and the daily life of monks.

Putnam undertook the labor-intensive process of digitizing his oldest images taken on film with his old

Nikon camera, fixing heavily scratched negatives before they were converted to digital images. It took him a fair amount of time to just seven photos from the Tibetan series presentable. While his travels opened the door to pursue photography, Putnam said he knew he wanted his music

SEE PUTNAM, PAGE 3

Scientists: Whale spotted off Boston traveled 3K miles

BOSTON — Researchers have discovered that a North Atlantic right whale recently sighted in Massachusetts waters is the same individual reported off Ireland last year, an "extraordinary" connection showing the whale traveled 3,000 miles across the Atlantic Ocean.

While conducting an aerial survey on Wednesday, Nov. 19, observers from the Center for Coastal Studies (CCS) Right Whale Ecology Program sighted a North Atlantic right whale off the coast of Boston that scientists in the New England Aquarium's Anderson Cabot Center for Ocean Life confirmed had previously only been seen in Donegal Bay, Ireland, in July 2024, reported by the Irish Whale & Dolphin Group.

While there are rare

instances of known North Atlantic right whales from the Western Atlantic traveling to the Eastern Atlantic and back, this appears to be the first documented case of a whale initially sighted in the eastern North Atlantic and later resighted in the Western North Atlantic. The sighting suggests that historical North Atlantic right whale habitats may still hold value and that right whales continue to search widely for suitable habitat.

CCS researchers Ryan Schosberg and Annie Bartlett were conducting the center's second aerial survey of the 2025-2026 season in Massachusetts Bay when they made the sighting. The flights are designed to monitor the

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