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MONDAY, NOVEMBER 28, 2022



PHOTOS BY CRAIG F. WALKER/GLOBE STAFF

The Sandy Hook memorial in Newtown, Conn., opened earlier this month.

In new Congress, historic diversity

GOP recruitment helped party take over House

By Shannon Coan
GLOBE CORRESPONDENT

WASHINGTON — Republicans just won the House majority in the midterm elections, but Lori Chavez-DeRemer sees the party's increased diversity in Congress as its "biggest accomplishment." Chavez-DeRemer is part of that change. The granddaughter of a Mexican immigrant and the former mayor of Happy Valley, Ore., she is heading to Washington to represent a district in the state that became more competitive after a Democratic primary challenger ousted the incumbent. She's one of three Latina Republicans elected to the House in November, helping to nearly double the number of GOP Latinas in Congress next year. "The Democrats often owned that they were the party of minorities, but that's really not the case if you talk about values," said Chavez-DeRemer, citing faith, family, and freedom as among the values most important to non-white voters. "I find that that is the values of the Republican Party, and now we're reflecting that with the newest members of this freshmen class." When she and the other new members take the oath of office in January, they'll be part of the

CONGRESS, Page A6

A place of reflection

In recalling unspeakable violence, Sandy Hook memorial offers tranquility

By Brian MacQuarrie
GLOBE STAFF

NEWTOWN, Conn. — Children laugh and play outside the rebuilt Sandy Hook School, only a quarter-mile from a network of interconnected paths that lead to a new granite basin, where water flows counter-clockwise around a sycamore tree in a planter. Twenty-six names are etched into the stone, reminders of the horror, and the loss, that occurred nearby a decade ago. Visitors to the site, enveloped in profound silence, pause before the names to read them and reflect. This is the newly opened memorial to the 20 first-graders and six educators who were gunned down Dec. 14, 2012, at the Sandy Hook Elementary School. There was no official ceremony when the memorial opened to the public on Nov. 13. There will be no official obser-

SANDY HOOK, Page A7



Some visitors offer flowers in the water, whose motion carries the blossoms around a newly planted tree, meant to symbolize the 6- and 7-year-olds who died at their school.

'We are a community that has transformed the tragedy into something meaningful.'

PO MURRAY,
chair of Newtown Action Alliance

China faces unrest from deadly blaze, COVID rules

Defiance reaches levels not seen in years, analysts say

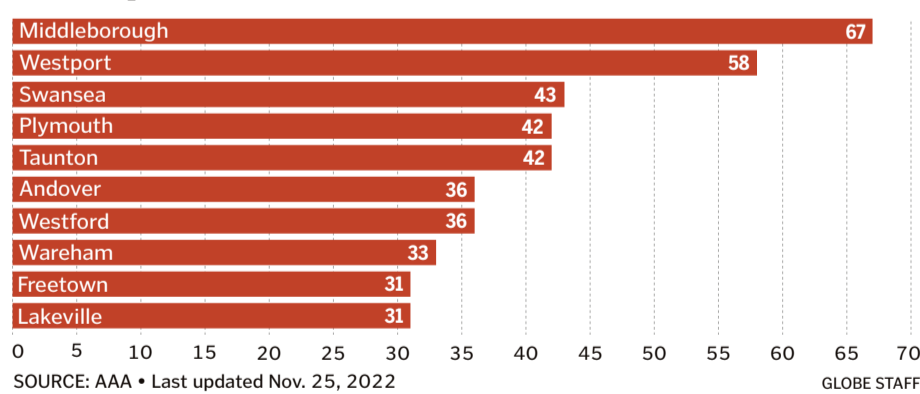
By Chris Buckley, Vivian Wang,
and Chang Che
NEW YORK TIMES

The fire began with a faulty power strip in a bedroom on the 15th floor of an apartment building in China's far west. Firefighters spent three hours putting it out — too slow to prevent at least 10 deaths — and what might have remained an isolated accident turned into a tragedy and a political headache for local leaders. Many people suspected that a COVID lockdown had hampered rescue efforts or trapped victims inside their homes, and though officials denied that had happened, angry comments flooded social media, and residents took to the streets in the city where the fire erupted. Now the episode in Urumqi, the capital of the Xinjiang region, has unleashed the most defiant eruption of public anger against the ruling Communist Party in years. In cities across China this weekend, thousands gathered with candles and flowers to mourn the fire's victims. On campuses, students staged vigils, many holding up pieces of

CHINA, Page A10

State eases hunting laws to clear roads of deer

The top Massachusetts towns for deer crashes



Program allows meat donation, no limits on does

By Billy Baker
GLOBE STAFF

The Monday after Thanksgiving signals the beginning of the two-week shotgun season for Massachusetts deer hunters, and this year it arrives as state officials are implementing new measures to manage a

deer population that is at an all-time recorded high, including a pilot program to allow hunters to donate the deer they kill.

New data from AAA show that deer-vehicle collisions in Massachusetts — the leading cause of deer mortality in the state — jumped 18 percent last fall, compared to the previous year. The carnage peaked during the November mating season, with an average of one

DEER, Page A5

In the news

Boston schools and police are joining the mayor's effort to reduce gun violence through a youth safety task force. **B1.**

Governor-elect Maura Healey's first major challenge will be fixing the MBTA, columnist Shirley Leung writes. **D1.**

Snow, cold, and mud added to the miseries of Ukrainians. **A3.**

The Boston Celtics topped the Washington Wizards, 130-121, with Jaylen Brown leading the way and an injured Jayson Tatum on the bench. **C1.**

The latest quest for the fountain of longevity

BU, others study 'super agers' for clues on genes

By Kay Lazar
GLOBE STAFF

Dr. Thomas Perls has for decades studied so-called super agers, people who live deep into their 90s and beyond, essentially unburdened by the typical diseases of old age. He is convinced that the secret to this remarkable longevity is passed down through generations.

But which genes harbor this power? And if researchers pinpoint the right genes amid thousands in a person's body, could

that knowledge be harnessed to develop drugs that mimic those genes and allow more people to enjoy longer, healthier lives?

That's the premise behind an ambitious new trial, the SuperAgers Family Study, (superagersstudy.org) that aims to enroll 10,000 people who are 95 years old or older and their children.

"People think everyone would have Alzheimer's and other diseases at this age, and it's not true" said Perls, professor of medicine at Boston University Chobanian & Avedisian School of Medicine, and a co-investigator of the SuperAgers Family Study.

"They have a history of aging very slowly and they greatly de-

AGING, Page A7



LANE TURNER/GLOBE STAFF

Francis St. Germain Sr. of Medford, 98, with two of his great-grandchildren, Jarren (left), 7, and Kadynce Gregoire, 3.



Rake it or leave it

Monday: Windy, some sun. High 52-57, low 29-34.

Tuesday: More sun. High 41-46, low 35-41.

Weather and comics, **D4-5.** Obituaries, **B6.**

VOL. 302, NO. 151

Suggested retail price \$3.50



A place of tranquility, to recall horrors

► SANDY HOOK

Continued from Page A1

vance in Newtown on the 10th anniversary of the shooting. But searing memories of that terrible day remain embedded in this bucolic town in western Connecticut.

“Before the tragedy, no one really knew where Newtown was, a sleepy little town that unfortunately has been defined by it,” said Po Murray, whose 20-year-old neighbor, Adam Lanza, killed his mother before bursting into the school with three semi-automatic firearms.

“Now, most Americans know where Newtown is,” said Murray, chair of Newtown Action Alliance, a gun-violence prevention group. “And if it can happen in Sandy Hook, it can happen anywhere, and it has, unfortunately.”

The memorial, nine years in the making, is intentionally understated. Its five acres of woodland, ponds, and meadows are designed to encourage visitors to reach the water basin in their own way and at their own pace. Some place flowers or floating candles in the water, whose motion carries the offerings toward the tree, a young planting meant to symbolize the 6- and 7-year-olds who died in their classrooms.

Cecilia Krayski, 88, slowly wheeled her walker down a sloping path to the memorial, past a welcome sign that characterized the site as “a special place of quiet and reverence.”

“I came to pay my respects,” Krayski said later, leaning on her walker as she climbed back up the slope. “It’s beautiful.”

JoAnn Bacon, whose daughter Charlotte was among the victims, also visited the memorial on this recent day but declined to comment.

Several other visitors were retired elementary school teachers. Most of them had taught elsewhere, but the tragedy hit home with a visceral, lingering pain.

“They could not have picked a better setting,” said Stephanie Musleh, a retired first-grade teacher who moved to Newtown a year after the tragedy. “I just thought this could have happened to any school, anywhere, my classroom, anybody’s class-

room.”

The site is not visible to traffic, and only a few, muffled sounds from the road penetrate the silence. The school where the nearby shootings occurred has been razed, and its replacement stands in a different footprint on the former building’s property.

That symbolism — at the new memorial and the elementary school — is both subtle and unavoidable. Newtown does not dwell on its past, but it cannot forget the horror, either.

Memories of the tragedy resurfaced recently in court. Far-right radio host Alex Jones, a conspiracy theorist who called the shootings a hoax, has been ordered to pay nearly \$1.5 billion in damages to Sandy Hook families who said they had been threatened and harassed because of his lies.

Daniel Krauss, chairman of the town’s memorial commission, said the scars from the shooting are indelible. His daughter was a second-grade student at the time. And although she was not harmed that day, the shootings changed the family’s life.

“December 14 was very hard for us. We became very insular afterward,” Krauss recalled. “It’s not that people go about their lives differently now, but there’s a sense that there was a tragic loss here. It’s subtle.”

There also is a strong sense of resilience, townspeople said. They cite the activism of the Newtown Action Alliance, which advocates for gun-control legislation, and a nonprofit animal sanctuary that honors Catherine Violet Hubbard, a 6-year-old who died in the shootings. Her mother, Jennifer, is its executive director.

“In losing Catherine in such a public manner, I’ve been given a gift to honor her life,” Hubbard said, overlooking a meadow at the sanctuary. “It afforded opportunities that I otherwise might not have had.”

Catherine was an animal lover, her mother said, and the sanctuary seeks to promote the bond among people, animals, and the environment in a way that reflects the compassion and care that her daughter embodied.



CRAIG F. WALKER/GLOBE STAFF

“I’ve been surrounded by goodness, and by people who have supported me with time and talent and their knowledge,” Hubbard said. “The expectation is there’s not a path forward, but there really is. There is a purpose.”

Using 34 acres of state-donated farmland, the sanctuary provides shelter and migration space for pollinators such as butterflies, hummingbirds, and bees. Free community workshops in animal care and environmental protection are held, and aid is provided for seniors to keep and care for their pets.

Future plans, Hubbard said, include veterinary and educational facilities to be located near a pavilion built with red terracotta tiles, reflecting the color of Catherine’s hair.

Hubbard said she will accent the positive on the tragedy’s upcoming milestone, even though “the more we experience these school shootings, the more they become normalized.”

“Each anniversary has brought with it different emotions,” Hubbard said. “This anniversary, I find myself looking at how much has been accomplished through the sanctuary. There is no room for grumbling in my life.”

Murray, of Newtown Action Alliance, echoed the need to press forward.



“We’ve proven to Americans that there is resilience, and that we are a community that has transformed the tragedy into something meaningful,” Murray said.

The alliance connects families and survivors from other mass shootings and also lobbies Congress on gun-control legislation. Recent successes, Murray said, include bipartisan approval for the Safer Communities Act, whose gun-safety measures include the expansion of background checks for buyers under 21.

“We are willing to do what it takes to save other communities and families from going through the tragedy that we

went through here,” Murray said.

Gazing down at the memorial, Krauss recalled the painstaking process that led to the opening.

“Our first question was, should there be a memorial? In our hearts, we knew there should be one, but we didn’t want to jump to that conclusion,” he said.

After making the decision, Krauss added, “one of the lessons we learned was that you really only have one chance to do this. Take your time; there’s no rush.”

And so they didn’t, gaining voter approval for a \$3.7 million project to which the state con-

The memorial pool is engraved with the names of the 26 victims of the Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting. Nearby in Newtown, Jennifer Hubbard has created an animal sanctuary that honors her daughter, Catherine, a 6-year-old who died in the shootings. “The expectation is there’s not a path forward, but there really is,” she said.

tributed \$2.5 million. Krauss said he is pleased with the result, as were other visitors to the memorial this cold November morning.

“I really think we got it right,” he said. “I see the tree in the center as life. It continues to grow and sprout. There is a sense of remembrance here, and a sense of hope for the future.”

New England also is represented well, he added, noting the memorial’s rolling landscape, winding paths, stone, and water.

“Life is a journey, and everybody has different journeys,” Krauss said, nodding at the different approaches to the basin. “This fits really perfectly in our town.”

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Seeking the fountain of health, longevity

► AGING

Continued from Page A1

lay disability with the diseases they have,” Perls said.

The study, a collaboration among BU, the Albert Einstein College of Medicine, and the American Federation for Aging Research, seeks to enroll individuals aged 95 and older, as well as those whose parents are 95 and older, and individuals whose in-laws are 95 and older.

The researchers will compare traits in super agers and their children to traits in older adults whose parents were not super agers. Researchers aim to identify inherited and natural factors that protect against human aging and related diseases.

Participants are asked for general health information and a saliva sample using a tube that is mailed to them and returned in a postage-paid envelope to Albert Einstein College of Medicine. The researchers say privacy of samples (which will be used to extract participants’ DNA) and information will be maintained by using a unique bar code rather than participants’ names.

“The goal is to amass the largest data bank of super agers so we can begin to untangle the contribution of genetics to exceptional longevity,” said Dr. Sofiya Milman, director of the Human Longevity Studies Institute for Aging Research at Albert Einstein College of Medicine and principal investigator of the study. A large data bank is needed, Milman said, because researchers believe longevity is linked to rare genetic variants, found in less than 5 percent of the population.

The data will be shared with other scientists researching healthy aging.

Among those already in Perls’ BU data bank from a separate,

ongoing study of people who live to 100 is Francis St. Germain Sr. of Medford.

St. Germain is only 98, but his father lived to 107. And his two brothers are 92 and 99.

“I had 12 children, so I have been busy all my life, and that kept me alive,” he said.

St. Germain, who was a Navy motor machinist’s mate, second class, in World War II, has 31 grandchildren, 36 great-grandchildren, and 12 great-great-grandchildren — many of whom may also bear longevity genes.

Hitting 100 is unusual, but the odds of living much longer is downright rare, Perls said.

“People who live to 100 are now one per 5,000 in the population,” he said.

Those who live to 105 and older are one per 250,000, while those who reach 110 are like unicorns: one per five million, Perls said.

Many people who exercise regularly, eat healthful diets, and refrain from smoking will make it to 90, Perls said. Beyond that is when researchers believe genetics play a larger role.

“It’s picking your grandparents well,” he said.

St. Germain counts good genes and good living for his longevity; he starts every day with steel-cut oatmeal he cooks at night, along with fruit and orange juice, and a one-mile walk.

Yet research suggests those with super longevity genes who do not maintain such a healthy lifestyle may still enjoy protection against cardiovascular disease and some other ailments.

“If the children of super agers were smokers, had diabetes, and were at risk for cardiovascular disease, being a child of a super ager was protective,” said Milman, who has studied the phenomenon.



LANE TURNER/GLOBE STAFF

Francis St. Germain’s father lived to 107.

The race to unlock the mysteries of longevity runs wide and has some deep pockets. It includes Amazon founder Jeff Bezos, who reportedly invested billions of dollars last year to launch Altos Labs in California with a goal of developing life extension therapies that can “restore cell health and resilience to reverse disease, injury, and . . . disabilities.”

Longevity researcher Nicholas Schork said there are two main paths that scientists are following in their mission to discover therapies that will slow aging. One is the path followed by Perls and Milman in their Super-Agers study, trying to decipher the genes responsible for longevity so that therapies can be developed using the knowledge gleaned from how those genes work.

The other camp has turned to “repurposing.” This group of researchers studies drugs already on the market that have shown signs of staving off ailments for which they have not yet been approved.

One such study is the TAME Trial, which will test whether those taking metformin, a drug used to treat type 2 diabetes, experience delayed development or progression of age-related chronic diseases, such as heart disease, cancer, and dementia. Schork noted there are over

500 studies listed in the government’s database of ongoing trials aimed at unlocking the mysteries of aging.

“The belief is, if you could figure out the fundamental mechanism associated with aging, and slow the rate at which people age and accumulate [cellular] damage, these internal clocks that tick away throughout life, you could slow the aging rate down and you could help prevent age-related diseases,” said Schork, deputy director of Quantitative Sciences at the Translational Genomics Research Institute, City of Hope Medical Center.

But St. Germain, the 98-year-old Medford great-great-grandfather, is too busy living life to dwell on his longevity. He is scheduled for heart surgery in December, related to his atrial fibrillation, but doesn’t think that will slow him down. Instead, he is focused on May 2024. That’s when he hits 100.

He has already booked the Elks Lodge in Saugus for the celebration.

“I am making plans,” he said, “to bring the whole family.”

For more information about the SuperAgers Family Study: superagers@einsteinmed.edu

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As Gen X, boomers age, they confront living alone

By Dana Goldstein and Robert Gebeloff

NEW YORK TIMES

Jay Miles has lived his 52 years without marriage or children, which has suited his creative ambitions as a videographer in Connecticut and, he said, his mix of “independence and stubbornness.” But he worries about who will take care of him as he gets older.

Donna Selman, a 55-year-old college professor in Illinois, is mostly grateful to be single, she said, because her mother and aunts never had the financial and emotional autonomy that she enjoys.

Mary Felder, 65, raised her children, now grown, in her row house in Philadelphia. Her home has plenty of space for one person, but upkeep is expensive on the century-old house.

Felder, Miles, and Selman are members of one of the country’s fastest-growing demographic groups: people 50 and older who live alone.

In 1960, just 13 percent of American households had a single occupant. But that figure has risen steadily, and today it is approaching 30 percent. For households headed by someone 50 or older, that figure is 36 percent.

Nearly 26 million Americans 50 or older now live alone, up from 15 million in 2000. Older people have always been more likely than others to live by themselves, and now that age group — baby boomers and Gen Xers — makes up a bigger share of the population than at any time in the nation’s history.

The trend has also been driven by deep changes in attitudes surrounding gender and marriage. People 50-plus today are more likely than earlier generations to be divorced, separated, or never married.

Women in this category have had opportunities for professional advancement, homeownership, and financial independence that were all but out of reach for previous generations of older women. More than 60 percent of older adults living by themselves are female.

“There is this huge, kind of explosive social and demographic change happening,” said Markus Schafer, a sociologist at Baylor University who studies older populations.

In interviews, many older adults said they feel positively about their lives.

But while many people in their 50s and 60s thrive living solo, research is unequivocal that people aging alone experience worse physical and mental health outcomes and shorter life spans.

And even with an active social and family life, people in this group are generally more lonely than those who live with others, according to Schafer’s research.

In many ways, the nation’s housing stock has grown out of sync with these shifting demographics. Many solo adults live in homes with at least three bedrooms, census data shows, but find that downsizing is not easy because of a shortage of smaller homes in their towns and neighborhoods.

Compounding the challenge of living solo, a growing share of older adults — about 1 in 6 Americans 55 and older — do not have children, raising questions about how elder care will be managed in decades to come.

“What will happen to this cohort?” Schaefer asked. “Can they continue to find other supports that compensate for living alone?”

For many solo adults, the pandemic highlighted the challenges of aging.