

The Boston Globe

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 17, 2020

'It's incompetence. That's what gets you hitting your head against the wall.'

KAY DUDLEY, a former chairwoman of the Massachusetts chapter of MADD whose daughter was killed by a drunk driver

Reforms targeting bad drivers have failed before

Twice in the past 3 decades, Mass. passed laws to crack down. But it wasn't enough.

By Laura Crimaldi
GLOBE STAFF

First, there was 10-year-old Lacey Packer of Reading, killed by a drunk driver as she sat on the back of her father's motorcycle on the edge of a highway. That was 1989. Then there was Haley Cremer, 20, killed by a driver with a suspended license as she jogged in her

hometown of Sharon in 2014. Both times, the families channeled their grief into passing state laws to force the Massachusetts Registry of Motor Vehicles to crack down on habitually bad drivers by better tracking their atrocious records. But neither law could save seven motorcyclists from dying on a lone-

ly New Hampshire road last year allegedly at the hands of a drugged driver from Massachusetts who should have been taken off the road long ago because of his bad driving record. It turns out that, despite promises made in the wake of tragedy, parts of both laws weren't enforced, seriously undermining reform efforts that span three decades. That inaction has allowed an unknown number of dangerous drivers from Massachusetts to stay

on the roads — including Volodymyr Zhukovskyy, who had a long trail of crashes behind him before he allegedly killed seven people when he drove his pickup truck into a group of motorcyclists in Randolph, N.H., last year. "What happened? How could this be? Again?" said Gordon Packer, the father of Lacey, at his home in Raymond, N.H. The "Lacey Packer Bill" had promised to bring the Massachu-

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HURRICANE POURS IT ON



GERALD HERBERT/ASSOCIATED PRESS

Hurricane Sally came ashore Wednesday near the Florida-Alabama line with winds over 100 miles per hour, and dropped up to 3 feet of rain in Pensacola (above). Later downgraded to a tropical storm, it was moving at an agonizingly slow pace, bringing fears of disastrous flooding across a stretch of the Deep South. **A2.**

Staying at dorm-hotels has its ups and downs

CHRISTOPHER MUTHER
COMMENTARY

The line for the elevator at the Westin Copley Place was the length of a small parade. Although at this parade, smiles were replaced by masks and slightly irritated expressions. The elevator arrived every few minutes with a pleasant chime, four students would step in, the line would inch forward. On and on it went.

In 20 years, "I waited in line for 30 minutes for an elevator to take me to my room at a luxury hotel" will be the new "I walked 10 miles through the snow to get to school." The night I stayed at the Westin Copley Place, I could see the frustration on the faces of some of the 800-plus Northeastern University students who are staying there this semester. One student complained she once waited 45 minutes for an elevator.

Also, yes, you read that correctly. I entered the belly of the beast and booked a room at the Westin Copley. *That* Westin. The Westin where 11 Northeastern students were ejected for violating school policy and gathering in a single room. The school has clamped down on student gatherings to help slow the spread of COVID-19.

About a half-dozen Boston colleges have booked blocks of hotel rooms this fall to allow more room for social distancing in the dorms.

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Struggles with mental health could get worse as winter looms

Seasonal depression just one more stressor

By Hanna Krueger
GLOBE STAFF

By the first day of summer in Massachusetts, daily cases of COVID-19 across the state were dwindling. Restaurants ordered picnic tables and string lights in bulk. Drive-in theaters, once a novelty of yesteryear, were cool again. Coastal towns prepped for an onslaught of pesty beachgoers.

And in the warm days that followed, Massachusetts embraced the credo of one of the state's most ardent nature lovers, Ralph Waldo Emerson: "Live in the sunshine, swim in the sea, drink in the wild air." But any semblance of normalcy achieved through socializing and recreating outdoors will become in-

creasingly elusive as daylight wanes and temperatures dip.

"We need to hunker down and get through this fall and winter because it's not going to be easy," Dr. Anthony Fauci, director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, said last week.

The change in seasons has many mental health experts worried that an already tenuous landscape will worsen. Six months of turmoil and uncertainty have left two out of five Americans with feelings of depression or anxiety, according to a recent CDC study. In Massachusetts, the worst of the pandemic may be behind us for now, but the trauma caused by the virus, social unrest, and economic recession still lingers.

Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts reported that use of mental health services was

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ERIN CLARK/GLOBE STAFF

Mona Vernon, a Parisian who moved to Boston, is hoping that a heavy dose of Marcel Proust will help her get through the winter. "Plan B is snowshoes," she said.

Virtual classes come with glitches

1st day of school is learning experience, technically

By Steve Annear
GLOBE STAFF

Parents across the state this week found themselves suddenly plagued by precisely the frustrations they had feared would wreak havoc on their homes-turned-classrooms, as the pandemic-inspired experiment with virtual learning began in earnest.

Hundreds of districts around Massachusetts were scheduled to begin school as of Wednesday, with virtually all of them relying on at least some online remote learning, state officials said. Most opted for a mix of at-home and in-school learning known as a hybrid model.

But going to school on a laptop came with a litany of difficulties on day one: Parents were dealing with hangry kids who weren't allowed to eat while on screen, demystifying confusing class schedules, and managing the various passwords needed to unlock an online education.

At one point Wednesday, while doing his first assignment of the new school year in Waltham, Colleen Bradley's 8-year-old son accidentally used a permanent marker to write on the dry erase board the family had purchased for in-home learning.

Later, deafening feedback came screeching out of his iPad. By the end of the day, Bradley, a freelance marketing consultant, had developed a mantra: "It's the first day. It's the first day" — just saying over and over again — "it's the first day."

SCHOOLS, Page A5

Military leaders say criticism isn't their role

But others want response to Trump's alleged attacks

By Brian MacQuarrie
GLOBE STAFF

When President Trump reportedly belittled American war dead as "losers" and "suckers," they said nothing. When he alleged that the Pentagon seeks perpetual war to benefit US defense contractors, they did not confront him.

Rarely in American history has the president been more critical of his military leadership, yet the nation's active-duty commanders have refused to challenge him publicly, even as many Americans clamor for them to do so. Instead, they have remained silent, adhering to an unwritten code to keep their policy and political opinions to themselves.

"Speaking out is a personal decision, and I prefer to keep my damn mouth shut. That came from the guys I grew up under," said Peter Aylward, a retired Army major general and Melrose native who served 35 years in the military.

"When you take the uniform off, you don't want to put the folks coming up behind you in jeopardy at all, and make the civilian leadership feel those officers are being politicized," Aylward

MILITARY, Page A4

President Trump called on congressional Republicans to support a massive economic relief bill with "much higher numbers." **A2.**

Federal Reserve policy makers signaled that their benchmark short-term interest rate will likely remain at zero at least through 2023. **D1.**

Opponents of Harvard's use of race in admissions had a new ally in court: the Justice Department. **B1.**



Fanning, out

Thursday: Some sun, warm. High 76-81. Low 54-59.

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Weather, Comics, B5-6. Obituaries, C10-11.

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A STATE OF EMERGENCY

I decided to try out three dormtels — the Westin, the W, and the Revolution — to see if students were the carefree coronavirus spreaders they've been portrayed to be, or if they're getting a bum rap.

Staying at those dorm-hotels has its ups and downs

► MUTHER
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The Westin is not only a Northeastern dorm, but you can also still stay there as a guest, at rock bottom prices. A quick run of the math: The Westin Copley has 803 rooms. Students are sleeping two to a room and there are 818 students. According to my calculations, that means there are still plenty of rooms for the Westin Copley Place to fill each night.

I had no idea what to expect staying in a dormtel. (Yes, I just made up a word, and it stays.) From what I had read and heard about how the virus is spiking at colleges around the country, I was half-expecting unmasked beer funneling in the halls and “WAP” blasting around every turn. I'm happy to report that I didn't see or hear those things.

I decided to try out three

dormtels — the Westin, the W, and the Revolution — to see if students were the carefree coronavirus spreaders they've been portrayed to be, or if they're getting a bum rap. In addition to the 800 students at the Westin, more than 200 Emerson students are at the W, and a few dozen students from the New England Conservatory of Music and Bay State College are staying at the Revolution Hotel in the South End. I packed my newly created hotel sanitation kit (Lysol spray, Clorox wipes, plus enough hand sanitizer to bathe an Australian rugby team) and headed out on my adventure. I felt like a latter-day Rodney Dangerfield in “Back to School.”

It made sense to start at Northeastern since the school has been in the headlines and it's also the largest dorm-hotel hybrid in the city. During a normal fall, this hotel would cost \$300 or more a night. Currently, it can be had for about \$150 a night.

Back at the street-level bank of elevators at the Westin, I was waiting, along with the students, to get to my hotel room. I thought I could be clever and catch the elevator before it hit the ground floor — and that line of students — by going up one flight to the lobby level and getting on before others had a chance. I wasn't so clever. Many others had the same idea. One of the reasons for these lines is limited elevator capacity. Only four passengers are allowed at a time.

Despite the logjam, I was impressed that everyone was wearing a mask. Most were patient, but a few times I saw eight students get into an elevator. It was stupid college behavior, and thankfully COVID-19



The Revolution, once a YWCA, is probably more dorm-like than any other hotel in Boston.

elevator spread is rare, but the bottom line is that it's stupid.

I can't only blame students for this. After about 20 minutes I finally managed to get an elevator to my room with three students. As the doors were closing a hotel guest jumped in, ignoring the four-person rule. I looked at the students, they looked at me, and I held my breath. There wasn't a long line for the elevators at all times, but it was frequent enough to be a nuisance.

Like all hotels, the Westin has initiated strict cleaning protocols, but I have a set of my own. When I get to a room, I immediately wash my hands, rub them down with hand sanitizer, and then begin the pro-

cess of spraying and wiping down most everything in the room. I also open any windows.

If you're staying as a guest at any of the hotels housing students, there's a very good chance your interactions with them will be limited. Guests are being placed on different floors from students. However that didn't stop me from doing a little investigative work. I jumped off on a student floor to get a sense of what was happening.

Things seemed to be relatively calm. There was perhaps a tad more student movement between rooms and floors than there should be, but this was the exception, not the rule. Also I'm not a narc. OK, I'll be a narc about one thing: It's very easy

for anyone to come in and out of the hotel. Meaning students from other colleges could come up and visit without a problem. I was only stopped one time. When I said I was a guest of the hotel I was waved through without an ID check.

That was the Westin. Over at the W, it was a much calmer scene. One elevator was designated for guests, the other for students, and everybody seemed to be playing by the rules. Lines formed, but seemed to move swiftly. Much like at the Westin, I didn't see any outrageous parties happening at the W, and everyone was adhering to mask rules. Because I was on a floor reserved for guests at both hotels I never

heard the rowdy voices I was expecting. Perhaps the dismissal of the 11 Northeastern students has sent a collective shiver down the spines of party people. Or maybe I just fell asleep because hotel beds are far more comfortable than my own.

The last stop on the dormtel tour was the Revolution. You may recall that last year the Revolution was named the best hotel in Boston by readers of Condé Nast Traveler, much to the surprise of many, including me. It beat out luxury offerings such as XV Beacon and the Boston Harbor Hotel. The Revolution, which was once the YWCA, is probably more dorm-like than any other hotel in Boston. It even has shared bathrooms.

I may not agree that it's the best hotel in Boston, but it is the best dormtel in Boston. There was never a line for an elevator, it was completely peaceful everywhere, and there's even a former cafe in the hotel that has taken on the role of a space for socially distant studying.

In the event you're keeping a mental tally of all of this, I survived living in luxury dorms. In my Hardy Boys-like investigation, I learned that the hotel-as-dorm system is not perfect, and there are slips and flaws, but most of these kids are trying. Keep in mind however that this pent-up partying can only last so long. When the dam breaks, or the balloon bursts, or the party volcano finally erupts, I recommend you steer clear of all colleges, dormtels included.

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