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TASTE OF R.I. FOR VP



ANDREW HARNIK/ASSOCIATED PRESS

Vice President Kamala Harris visited Wednesday to meet with small-business leaders and promote the Biden administration's economic plan. **B1.**

Mass. herd immunity will be a challenge

Experts say it's probably unrealistic, but state is clearly making progress

By Martin Finucane and Felice J. Freyer
GLOBE STAFF

Massachusetts' coronavirus vaccination campaign has been among the most successful in the country, with 57.3 percent of residents — 3.9 million people — having received at least a first shot of the vaccines as of earlier this week, according to federal data.

That progress has people wondering if the state can vaccinate enough people to reach herd immunity. Here's what some experts think about that prospect.

What is herd immunity?

Herd immunity occurs when a large proportion of a population is immune to a virus because of previous infection or vaccination. As a result, the virus can't readily spread, because its chances of encountering a susceptible person are low.

What percentage of a population would have to be immune to achieve herd immunity?

"There's no magic number," said Dr. David Dowdy, an associate professor of epidemiology

HERD IMMUNITY, Page B4

Labor Dept. signals a shift to look out for gig workers

By Jim Puzanghera
GLOBE STAFF

WASHINGTON — Tech companies like Uber, Lyft, DoorDash, and Instacart have disrupted the US economy by creating a labor force of millions of so-called gig workers. Now Washington appears poised to disrupt the disruptors, taking the first step Wednesday in what appears to be a larger battle with industry giants to give those workers more rights.

The Labor Department formally withdrew a Trump administration regulation, which never went into effect, that would have made it easier for companies to classify workers as independent contractors rather than conventional employees covered by federal laws on minimum wage and overtime.

GIG WORKERS, Page A12

Facebook ban unlikely to shake Trump's grip

Even without megaphones, his sway over party strengthens

By Jess Bidgood
GLOBE STAFF

WASHINGTON — Former president Donald Trump learned Wednesday that he would remain banned from Facebook, but being locked out of the huge social media platform didn't prevent him from sending his marching orders, as usual, to national Republicans.

"Warmonger Liz Cheney, who has virtually no support left in the Great State of Wyoming, continues to unknowingly and foolishly say that there was no Election Fraud in the 2020 Presidential Election," he wrote in an e-mail distributed to reporters, lambasting the top-ranking female House Republican, who is currently embroiled in a leadership fight.

The "de-platforming" of the former president, as Republicans like to call it, has deprived him of

►Cheney clings to her post as Republican leaders line up behind a Trump loyalist. **A2.**

beloved social media megaphones that made his political career, as well as crucial fund-raising and organizing machinery for any future presidential run. Facebook advisers' decision to keep the ban in place for now is undoubtedly a daunting prospect for Trump's apparent presidential ambitions for himself in 2024.

But it is becoming increasingly clear that the ex-president no longer needs the social media platforms that nurtured his devoted following and rocketed him to the presidency in 2016 to exert an iron grip over his party or keep his lies about election fraud in 2020 percolating among his base.

FACEBOOK, Page A6

HUNGER'S REACH WIDENS



PHOTOS BY CRAIG F. WALKER/GLOBE STAFF

In Chelsea, hit hard by the pandemic, Brenda Romero worked with staff and volunteers filling food boxes at La Colaborativa.

Even as food bank demand hits new highs, many aren't utilizing pantries

By Janelle Nanos
GLOBE STAFF

More than a year into the COVID-19 pandemic, 1.6 million adults in Massachusetts are still struggling to get enough to eat.

A new survey conducted by the Greater Boston Food Bank has found that many of the households experiencing hunger at the outset of the pandemic are still food-insecure, and many more are not accessing available programs that could help. People of color and families with children are still disproportionately experiencing food insecurity, according to the survey.

The findings serve as a stark reminder that even as COVID-19 vaccinations become more widespread and things return to some semblance of "normal," those who have been hardest hit by the pandemic will have a long path to economic recovery.

Between last October and January, the Greater Boston Food Bank surveyed over 3,000 adults in the region, and found that only one out of three people experiencing food insecurity at the time were actually using food pantries. The finding was startling to researchers, who have seen unprecedented de-

FOOD INSECURITY, Page A8



Lily Lopez carried her son Jonathan while picking up necessities at the organization.

1.6 MILLION

The estimated number of adults in Massachusetts struggling to get enough to eat, according to a survey by the Greater Boston Food Bank.

54 PERCENT

The percentage of those eligible for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) who had not signed up, despite the fact that 71 percent said they knew about the program and how to access it.

'It's really focusing on, who are we missing and how can we better serve them?'

DR. LAUREN FIECHTNER,
Greater Boston Food Bank senior adviser
of health and research

Good (clean?) fun may not be enough anymore

In COVID times, ball pits could face an uphill struggle

By Janelle Nanos
GLOBE STAFF

Andy Powell never imagined his career path would lead him to spend an inordinate amount of time cleaning thousands of plastic balls.

"Absolutely not," Powell said recently from the floor of his Urban Air Adventure Park franchise in Bellingham. The 35,000-square-foot venue full of trampolines, dodgeball courts, and tumble tracks all centers around his pièce de résistance: a



MATTHEW J. LEE/GLOBE STAFF

Andy Powell, of Urban Air Adventure Park in Bellingham, has a machine ready to clean the balls when his pit reopens.

massive, four-lane American Ninja Warrior-style obstacle course that is the venue's signature attraction.

After a nearly yearlong shut-down, Powell recently reopened his facility. But the Warrior Obstacle Course has remained closed due to specific state regulations, he explained.

"What cushions your fall if you can't make it through the course?" Powell said. "Balls."

All 250,000 of them, to be exact — small, plastic, and translucent.

Powell acknowledged the sheer volume of work involved in cleaning them. "It takes a lot to maintain your ball pit properly."

BALL PITS, Page A9



Parting, rays

Thursday: Sunny and dry. High 61-66. Low 45-50.

Friday: More of the same. High 55-60. Low 44-49.

Sunrise: 5:33 Sunset: 7:49

Weather and Comics D5-6. Obituaries, C10-11.

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Biogen's experimental medicine for Alzheimer's disease has generated "insufficient" evidence to conclude it would help patients, an influential watchdog said. **D1.**

A federal judge struck down an emergency ban on most evictions in the United States, signaling that protections may end soon. **D1.**

After 17 years underground, cicadas are about to emerge in huge numbers across 15 states, from Indiana to New York. **A4.**

Limiting warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius could halve future sea level rise from melting glaciers and ice sheets, scientists said. **A2.**