



PHOTOS BY MATTHEW J. LEE/GLOBE STAFF

CELEBRATING 20 YEARS IN DORCHESTER

— Lelani Jackson (top left) and Isabella Rodriguez, as well as other club members, performed a dance routine during the 20th-anniversary celebration at the Walter Denney Youth Center of Boys & Girls Clubs of Dorchester on Wednesday. Among the programs highlighted was the center's Healthy Meals initiative for the Harbor Point community.



Journalist gets Emerson honor

By Ashley Soebroto
GLOBE CORRESPONDENT

Emerson College will award veteran journalist and former Boston Globe Spotlight reporter Meghan Irons with an honorary degree during its 2023 commencement ceremony.

"The invitation was a total and complete surprise to me, and a humbling one," Irons, an Emerson alumna, said Tuesday. "I sometimes just think of myself as the young girl from Four Corners, Dorchester, and so it was such a great surprise."

A 1990 Emerson graduate with a bachelor's degree in Mass Communications, Irons is known for her work on gender and racial equity issues in various Boston neighborhoods. She worked at the Globe for more than 20 years before leaving last year to become an associate professor of the practice of impact journalism at Boston University's journalism department.

At the Globe, Irons was a lead reporter in the Valedictorians Project, which was a 2020 Pulitzer Prize finalist for Local Reporting. She also was part of an award-winning team that produced a series, "68 Blocks," exploring life in a troubled neighborhood.

Other honorary degree recipients include Dulcia Meijers, executive director of Kasteel Well; Jeff Greenhaw, longtime Emerson trustee and vice president of Sunshine Wireless; and Warner Bros. executive Pamela Abdy, who will also be this year's commencement speaker, Emerson stated in a press release.

"When conferring an honorary degree, we seek to honor individuals who have contributed significantly to the welfare of society and who have made a significant impact in their fields and this is certainly the case for Meghan Irons," said William Gilligan, Emerson's interim president. "Her groundbreaking journalistic work in Boston and her curiosity and inquiry related to

social justice issues within the city highlight her position as an unwavering champion of equity, building platforms to share all stories, from all perspectives."

Brent Smith, Emerson's dean of the School of Communication, said the degree also honors the work Irons has done to "explore [Boston], study it, write about it, and challenge it" to help improve the city.

Irons, who was raised in Dorchester and Mattapan, said she learned how to write news articles, interview people, and other news gathering skills at Emerson. She would move to Fort Wayne, Ind., to work as a reporter. "It was the Emerson connections that got me a lot of my interviews, so I never forgot that," Irons said. "It allowed me an opportunity to sharpen my interviewing skills, and also figure out what I really wanted to do in life."

After moving back to Boston, Irons said, she joined the Globe as a copy editor before eventually becoming the paper's first official social justice reporter.

"I was just writing about the people that I passed along my journey," Irons said. "The people who went to schools that were not educating them sufficiently, people who lived in neighborhoods that they are struggling to keep clean, people who are struggling to say my neighborhood is a great neighborhood."

Irons said she's most proud of the stories in which she gets to write about residents of Boston's historically neglected communities, including the project where Globe reporters followed the lives of high school valedictorians after graduation.

"I always want to let people know that even though we are a big newspaper, and we tend to follow some of the bigger stories, that in spite of all that, their voices really do matter to me."

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Center's plan to fight medical errors includes more training

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rates of health care associated infections, falls, and pressure ulcers.

The data, however, only reflect incidents in places that are tracked. There are a number of settings — such as physicians' offices — that do not collect safety data and have very few requirements to report safety events.

"As more care moves to ambulatory settings, even into people's homes, there are all kinds of safety risks. They are different than the risks you have in a hospital or nursing home setting," Fain said. "So what are we doing to address those risks at this point?"

The center brought together dozens of government, provider, and health care groups in the Massachusetts Healthcare Safety and Quality Consortium to understand the hurdles to progress and develop a plan to overcome them.

The center is seeking funding through the fiscal 2024 state budget process for a number of initia-

tives, including a pilot to implement safety monitoring regimes known as "continuous improvement systems" in places like small primary care offices, with the hope to scale the systems if proven effective. The organization also hopes to fund a curriculum around safety that is tailored to all the different roles in a provider's organization, from leadership down to the receptionist.

The largest portion of the funding would create a pilot program in six to eight hospitals to leverage an IT system to run in the background of institutions' electronic medical records to identify events as they occur and help prevent future ones.

Currently, providers must manually report safety issues into dozens of different systems, depending on the nature of the event. However, even within those systems, institutions have varying degrees of compliance with reporting.

Groups recognize that the work is difficult and comes at a time of increasing burnout and

frustration for front-line health care providers.

Dr. Doug Salvador, chief quality officer at Baystate Health, who participated in the consortium, said strategies that improve safety can ultimately lead to efficiencies that decrease the burdens on the front-line workforce. Additionally, as evidenced by the number of groups that helped develop the road map, the weight of the work will be borne by everyone in health care, not just front-line workers.

"I don't think it's just the health system and the delivery side's responsibility to solve the problem," Salvador said. "Part of the discussions in creating this road map forced all of us together to ask the difficult questions about why more progress hasn't been made, what are the real reasons for that, and what will really work? I don't see this as an impossible task, I see this as a long term task."

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Healey unveils empty frame in her office

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the Commonwealth," made the case that an empty frame would represent people whose voices "are not always represented or heard or reflected in the halls of power," Healey said at the unveiling event.

"Look forward not back for your inspiration," the students wrote. "Look at the young, the poor, the people of color, and the ones who need the most help. Look at the empty frame and then around the table and ask, 'Who is not represented here?' Then, break free from the symbolic fetters that bind you and invite them."

Healey, who is the first woman elected governor in the state and among the first lesbian governors in the country, said she also hopes visitors look at the

frame and imagine what the governor's office could represent in the future.

Velez, 14, told the Globe that she was inspired to "look at what we would want for ourselves and others in our communities."

"It would be a great opportunity to change a little bit of history," said Velez, who is in the eighth grade.

The students who participated in the essay contest also selected a portrait for Lieutenant Governor Kim Driscoll to hang in her office.

Thirteen of the student essays nominated Jane Swift, who made history in 2001 when she became the first woman to serve in the corner office after Governor Paul Cellucci resigned to become US ambassador to Canada. His departure bumped Driscoll, then lieutenant governor, into

the top job.

Her portrait, painted by Sarah Belchetz-Swenson of Williamsburg, shows Swift in a black suit standing in the governor's office, with its blue walls and white trim (restoration has returned the walls to their original green). In the portrait, she holds a stack of legislation tied with a red ribbon, which Swift said symbolized her terms as a state senator.

Swift, who attended the unveiling Wednesday, was the first Massachusetts governor to commission a female artist for her official portrait.

Driscoll said Swift is someone who "broke down a lot of barriers for us."

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