Library remembers victims of violence

It might be hard to build a bond between a soccer-loving boy growing up in Belfast, Northern Ireland, and a Dorchester girl with nothing but a summer of play on her mind.

But when Frank Rowntree, 11, and Trina Persad, 10, met nearly identical fates, dying innocently in violence that gripped their neighborhoods, they were united as tragic symbols.

Some 36 years after Rowntree was shot amid the conflicts in Northern Ireland, and six years after Persad was killed in gang crossfire in a Dorchester park, their symbols — and those of others who died before their time — met in one place.

This month, the Boston Public Library has hosted “The Remembering Quilt,” a tapestry of memorials to victims of Ireland’s sectarian struggles. Buttons representing many of Boston’s homicide victims hang in the same room, creating together a unique memorial to memorials.

Each of 300-plus squares on the quilt honors a victim, creating within “a sense of each individual ... and of how they touched those closest to them,” according to Relatives for Justice, which organized the project.

Led Zeppelin album covers grace one square. Kitty Irvine’s pays homage to a love of bingo, cigarettes and McGurk's Bar. And Denise Ann Dickson, just 5 years old when an armored British vehicle ran over her, is remembered skipping rope.
Persad’s face sits steps away as part of the Button Project, created in 1994 by the Louis D. Brown Peace Institute as a traveling memorial to homicide victims. Both she and Rowntree, across the way, are smiling.