

Four who put it on the line

Four women from Dane County are set to pitch their business ideas borne of the COVID-19 pandemic

BUSINESS. A11

PRIME PICKINGS

Four interceptions, three sacks power No. 20 Badgers past Northwestern 35-7

SPORTS. C1



Best of REMIND Inside

Melancholy turnover

The next generation steps up to run longtime stand at Farmers' Market

LOCAL&STATE. A6

A.M. SNOW 36 • 23 FORECAST, A22 | NOVEMBER 14, 2021 | MADISON.COM

SCRAP IS BOOMING | PRICES RECOVER



JOHN HART, STATE JOURNAL

A front-end loader moves cardboard to a baling machine at Waste Management's Madison Recycling Center. Recycled cardboard sold for a record \$185 a ton in October, according to recyclingmarkets.net. "There's been more demand for boxes as we become an e-commerce society," said Jennifer Semrau, the state's recycling coordinator.

Recyclable materials are back in the black

Improving economy, home delivery fuel packaging demand

CHRIS HUBBUCH
chubbuch@madison.com

In early 2020, just before the COVID-19 pandemic sent the economy into lockdown, Wisconsin recyclers couldn't give

away scrap paper. Last month, bales of that same material were going for more than \$100 a ton, while plastic milk jugs are fetching five times what they did in 2019.

It seems reports of recycling's demise have been exaggerated. Buoyed by an economic recovery and the continued growth of e-commerce, demand for recycled consumer materials has

pushed prices to their highest levels in at least a decade.

All those plastic takeout containers and Amazon boxes have to come from somewhere, after all, and that has made recycled material more competitive.

"Most people don't realize that the commodities they recycle are a key link in the supply chain," said Jennifer Semrau, who oversees recycling for the

Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources.

Last year Wisconsin's recycling processors shipped more than 750,000 tons of used paper, plastics, glass and metals into regional and national supply chains, saving valuable space in landfills while also conserving energy and natural resources.

Please see RECYCLABLES, Page A4

COVID-19 | COLLEGE CAMPUSES

Vaccine mandates put shots in arms

Rates as low as 55% when it's voluntary

KELLY MEYERHOFER
kmeyerhofer@madison.com

Wisconsin colleges and universities that required COVID-19 vaccines for students are reporting vaccination rates no lower than 80%, while those without a mandate report rates as low as 55%, a Wisconsin State Journal survey found.

Among two dozen schools responding to the survey that did not impose a vaccine mandate, including those within the public university system, only eight achieved at least an 80% vaccination rate.

Vaccine mandates are the latest source of controversy in the deeply divisive COVID-19 pandemic. But experts say they are among the most powerful tools at this point in the pandemic to convince unvaccinated people to get the shot.

Madeleine Mant, a medical anthropologist at the University of Toronto Mississauga, has surveyed 4,600 college students about the COVID-19 vaccine at various points throughout the pandemic. She found in her research that the vast majority of students were willing to get vaccinated for other reasons, but there were some who said only a mandate would sway them to get the shot.

The University of Wisconsin System early this year came out against a mandate, a stance that frustrates some students and staff who believe a requirement

Please see CAMPUSES, Page A3

'I have lost my everything'

Afghans grapple with loss, hope as they prepare to resettle

EMILY HAMER
ehamer@madison.com

Frough Tahiry, 23, hid in dark places along the streets of Kabul in the middle of the night Aug. 27 as her country fell to the Taliban. She was alone — something she said could get her killed if the Taliban found her.

After a brief call with her parents, she stood quietly on a corner with no street lights until they came to walk her home. She said her parents "were



Tahiry

Kabul airport with a group of 147 other students from the Asian University for Women. The young women could not bring their families.

"I have lost my everything in Afghanistan. I left my home, my family, my everything. I'm thinking of starting a new life here," Tahiry said. "I'm hoping I

can find everything here again."

Tahiry is one of more than 11,000 Afghans at Fort McCoy military base in Wisconsin still waiting to be resettled into permanent homes across the U.S.

As of Nov. 8, "a couple thousand" Afghans had left Fort McCoy and more are departing each day, said Holly Kirking Loomis, a staffer with the U.S. Department of State who is leading the resettlement efforts there. Additional Afghans from abroad are not currently expected to arrive at Fort McCoy because other bases have more capacity.

Please see TRANSITION, Page A8



ZAHRA HAKIMI

Zahra Hakimi, 18, is a snowboarder, painter and peace activist who will soon be resettled at UW-Milwaukee.

news+ membership

News+ offers exclusive digital content for our members. Discover local history at your fingertips with our new digital archives. GO.MADISON.COM/ARCHIVES

BUSINESS	A10	OBITUARIES	A17	SUNDAY BEST	D1
COMICS	INSIDE	OPINION	B1	TAKE FIVE	D4
NATIONSWORLD	B14	SPORTS	C1	TELEVISION	INSIDE



5 • 182nd year, No. 348 • Copyright 2021

Follow us online: facebook.com/WisconsinStateJournal twitter.com/WISateJournal instagram.com/wisatejournal

FREE

PLUS

UPGRADE TO RAINFALL OR HANDHELD SHOWER HEAD
*Present to designer at consult

**No Money Down, No Interest,
No Payments FOR 12 MONTHS!***

*Subject to credit approval. Financing for GreenSky® consumer loan programs is provided by Federally insured, equal opportunity lender banks. Cannot combine with other offers. Ask for details. NMLS #1192027

**LIMITED TIME OFFER!
CALL 608-413-3021**

Transition

From A1

"Right now we are focused on re-settling the people who are already here," Kirking Loomis said.

Across the country, roughly 14,000 evacuees have gone through the resettlement process so far after temporary stays at eight military bases, including Fort McCoy, Kirking Loomis said. Tens of thousands are still waiting.

The Department of State is planning for 399 of the Afghan evacuees to end up in Wisconsin, although that number is expected to increase, maybe as high as 850, said Dawn Bernay, executive director of the resettlement agency Jewish Social Services of Madison. Since August, 32 Afghans have been settled in Madison.

Though the resettlement process is picking up, the overall timeline is still unclear, a point of frustration for some Afghans who said they have been given conflicting information — or no information at all — about when they'll get to leave. Kirking Loomis said Fort McCoy expects to have evacuees on base into 2022, but would not specify a timeline beyond that.

After escaping turmoil, the Afghans say they are ready to start their new lives. Among them are interpreters, athletes, women's rights activists, former government workers, teachers, journalists, soldiers, children, mothers and fathers. They have hopes, dreams.

Tahiry wants to study economics or computer engineering. Khatera, another fellow student who asked to be identified by her first name only for her family's protection, wants to be a doctor.

Tahiry, Khatera and the other 146 students from the Asian University for Women, or AUW, all ended up at Fort McCoy together after a treacherous escape. Although the university is based in Bangladesh, the young women had been attending school online in Afghanistan because of the pandemic. Now they've been given the opportunity to study here in the U.S.

A few of the students started to get resettled this past week, the university's founder Kamal Ahmad said. The women are headed to 10 partner universities across the U.S. — including UW-Milwaukee, Brown, Cornell and Arizona State University — which have given them full-ride scholarships.

Khatera, 20, said she had no choice but to risk her life to leave Afghanistan.

"Maybe in this try, in the second time, we will die," Khatera said of their escape. "But being in Afghanistan with no hope, no rights, no education, no future, it's impossible. (That) is not the life that we want."

'Have to be brave'

It took five days and three attempts for the 148 young women to get into the Kabul airport on seven buses.

On one of the days, a bomb exploded right by the buses. Khatera said if they had been there five minutes sooner, the explosion would have hit them. "We were right there," she said.

Sepehra Azami, 25, said she was "fully ready to be the first person that will be shot." As one of the "bus leaders" organizing the women, she said she would have rather been killed herself than watch one of her classmates die.

"When this journey happened, I realized how strong I am," Azami said. "These five days (were), I would say, the most difficult and horrifying and chaotic days of my life."

On the second failed attempt, the Taliban forced the women to go back to their homes. Some found places to hide in Kabul. That's when Tahiry was on the streets alone at night.

Sometimes Tahiry still sees the Taliban in her nightmares. She hears the explosions and gunfire at the airport. She sees the Taliban man who broke into the bus full of her classmates with a gun. The one she thought might kill them for traveling, without a male member of their family, in pursuit of education.

"He said, 'Don't you have shame? Go straight back home,'" Tahiry said. "He would shoot all of us — the way, the tone that he was speaking, that was scary because he had all the men of Taliban behind his back. So we drove back home."

About 20 of the students did not make it back to the buses again that day. Ahmad said the university is still trying to get them out.

Early in the morning of Aug. 28, the Taliban finished the seven buses through a security check-point at the airport.

"I was scared, but inside of me, there was a person who told me,



Sepehra Azami teaches English to children at Fort McCoy. Azami, who plans to attend Arizona State University, said she wants to cry when she sees the school supplies on base since they remind her of the education her younger sister will likely never get in Afghanistan.



Students from the Asian University for Women take a bus as part of their escape from Afghanistan.

"You have to be brave," Khatera said. "I'm an example for my friends, for my brothers and sisters, for all the girls who remain in Afghanistan."

Warm welcome

Tahiry and Azami plan to go to Arizona State University along with 65 other AUW students. Khatera will go to UW-Milwaukee with nine others.

Milwaukee Mayor Tom Barrett and Madison Mayor Satya Rhodes-Conway both said in separate statements that all Afghans should expect a warm welcome in Wisconsin.

"With every immigrant, our city is stronger," Barrett said.

Rhodes-Conway said Madison is "proud to be a welcoming city" and committed to "treating refugees with dignity, care and respect." Bernay, the Jewish Social Services director, said at least 50 Afghans will resettle to Madison, and possibly as many as 75. Other destinations include Green Bay, Wausau and the Fox Valley.

Lutheran Social Services of Wisconsin and Upper Michigan, another local resettlement group, plans to find homes for about 200 refugees in southeastern Wisconsin over the next eight weeks.

Many others will be sent to other locations around the country.

Key challenges

To get settled off the base, the Afghans have had to jump through a number of hoops.

Before entering the U.S., the evacuees went through a screening process with law enforcement and intelligence agencies, Kirking Loomis said. At Fort McCoy, they went through a medical evaluation, got vaccinated against several diseases and waited for their immunity to develop.

For most on base, the vaccine process was completed weeks ago. The holdup to starting their new lives now seems to be with processes happening off base.

"Apparently the bottleneck is with the local resettlement agencies," Ahmad said, noting that while a few of his students have left Fort McCoy, officials were not specific about the timeline for the rest. Nine national resettlement agencies determine where each Afghan will go. The agencies then coordinate with hundreds of local resettlement organizations, which provide on-the-ground support



A painting created by Zahra Hakimi.

for the evacuees, including finding housing and connecting them with schools and other services.

Wisconsin Department of Children and Families spokesperson Gina Paige said the agencies drew down their services during the Trump administration, when the U.S. let in a record-low number of refugees.

Now, the resettlement agencies are "underfunded and understaffed" as they deal with an influx of Afghan refugees as well as normal challenges, said Nan Warshaw, founder of Refugee Community Connection, a volunteer group in Chicago that provides additional support for refugees.

At Fort McCoy, resettlement is being prioritized for those who are "medically fragile," including those who are pregnant, Kirking Loomis said. People with different immi-

gration dates will also move at different phases.

But other than those considerations, the timeline is up to the resettlement agencies.

Officials are keeping families together and working to resettle Afghans in places where they have family ties or some sort of connection, Kirking Loomis said. But that presents a challenge because the places with the largest Afghan communities, such as Virginia and Texas, are in highest demand. And the resettlement agencies only have so much capacity.

"In the dark

For instance, Kirking Loomis said where she lives in northern Virginia, the housing is "really ex-

pensive and in short supply." But that's also an area that's been heavily requested by evacuees because it has a large Afghan population.

That's where Waheed, a former interpreter who worked alongside the U.S. Army in Afghanistan and asked to be identified by his first name for the safety of his family, plans to go with his wife and five children. He has two brothers and three sisters living in Virginia.

"We are excited," Waheed said a few weeks ago. "We are waiting and counting days and night."

Waheed has grown frustrated, though, with the slow pace of resettlement and mixed messages on the timeline for his family. On Oct. 24, Fort McCoy staff told him his family could leave the base in two weeks, but the next day they told him it could be months. Now he's not getting any updates.

Fatullah Wahidyar, 21, a Texas resident staying at Fort McCoy to make sure his 14 aunts, uncles and cousins get resettled, said they've also gotten little information about when they'll get to leave.

"We don't know anything more than we did the last time," Wahidyar said earlier this month.

Some base personnel have told them a few months, others three to four weeks. Wahidyar said the waiting was difficult but added that Fort McCoy is "not that bad because we have everything we need."

Torn emotions

Tahiry said she isn't feeling impatient so much as nervous about the next step. Azami said she expected the transition to the new universities will be tough.

"My mind is not fully ready," she said. "Still we are all traumatized."

Zahra Hakimi, 18, another AUW student, occasionally gets excited about the opportunities she has in the U.S. She can continue her work as an activist for peace and women's rights. She can snowboard, paint and keep up with her studies at UW-Milwaukee.

But most of the time, Hakimi said, she is preoccupied with thoughts of her family and fellow students who did not make it out of Afghanistan. Her friends cannot get visas. Her family cannot get food.

"When I see the situation in Afghanistan, when I see my friends raising their voices and nobody hears them, how can I help myself to be hopeful? I'm not. Sometimes I'm hopeless," Hakimi said.

"Sometimes my parents, they are saying, 'Oh you need to be stronger! How can I be?'"

Khatera said it was also hard for her to leave her family, but part of the reason why she left Afghanistan is so she can support them by sending money once she becomes a doctor. She also wants to start a foundation to help the poor.

Azami, who teaches English to children and other Afghans at Fort McCoy, said she wants to cry whenever she looks at the school supplies in the classrooms on base. She knows "they are just books and crayons." But to her, they're a symbol of the education her little sister in seventh grade will likely never get while stuck in Afghanistan.

"If my sister would be here, she could have all these opportunities," Azami said.

Sometimes Azami thinks it's "not fair" that she's the one who gets to go to college. But other times, she knows that she has to take his chance, even if she's feeling traumatized and empty.

"It's about my future," Azami said. "I have to be the person that I wanted to be."