

The Journal Times

Election day is today

A number of critical elections are on ballots across Racine County. Scan the QR code to find out what's on your ballot



VIEW: A look at what will be on ballots in Racine County and across Wisconsin Tuesday **NEWSVU**

2nd annual expo

How nurses and other health-focused professionals are reaching out **LOCAL, PAGE A7**

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Jessica Diaz, one of the leaders of Racine Interfaith Coalition's Racine Immigrant Support Initiative, smiles during RIC's annual fundraiser banquet in October 2020 as she is awarded for her efforts in helping keep 110 undocumented households in Racine from falling homeless. To the right are RIC Co-President Linda Boyle and Maria Morales, who co-leads the Racine Immigrant Support Initiative with Diaz. On Wednesday, Diaz became a U.S. citizen.

On Wednesday, she became a U.S. citizen; today, she will vote

ALEX RODRIGUEZ alex.rodriguez@journaltimes.com

RACINE — Jessica Diaz came to the United States when she was 6 years old. She has never left.

Her family came to Kenosha from Palmar Chico, a small town in Mexico, to work in the cabbage fields.

On Wednesday, 30 years after her arrival, Diaz fulfilled a decade-long journey. She became a U.S. citizen, just in time to do something she had wanted to do for years: vote.

Today, Tuesday, Aug. 9, she plans to cast a ballot for the very first time.

While she has been working on her citizenship, Diaz never stopped working to improve the lives of people like her in the Racine area's Hispanic community. Diaz is the vice president of the Racine Interfaith Coalition, a nonprofit organization that works to inspire and mobilize faith-based congregations to social justice. But since she was not a legal citizen yet, Diaz had to approach different aspects of



SUBMITTED

After a 10-year journey filled with hurdles within the U.S. immigration system, Jessica Diaz earned her citizenship Wednesday and is ready to vote in Tuesday's primary election.

polling and voting from different angles, having to opt out of things like nomination signatures and the actual act of voting.

That is how she began canvassing.

"To me, voting is very important," Diaz said. "We like to complain a lot about our local government, we like to complain a lot about how things don't really work out. I tell people 'Why don't you ask questions? Why

don't you go out and vote?' If you're worried about your health care, reach out."

After moving to Racine 17 years ago, Diaz became active in nonpartisan canvassing, urging people to go out and vote more.

Since her youngest son was 6 years old, the same age his mother was when she came to the U.S., he would come along with her while she canvassed during the first campaign of Racine Mayor Cory Mason in 2017.

"I brought him (her son) along to the campaign because it was so important to me. This is our mayor and our city, so I taught my son how to canvas," Diaz said. "He loves it. He would run up to doors and knock on them and talk to voters."

More votes for others

Diaz believes that every U.S. citizen should have the right to vote and that taking it away from felons is wrong. She has worked with EX-Incarcerated Peoples Organizing's Unlock The Vote! campaign, an effort aimed to return the voting rights to people with felony convictions.

"Being someone from a different country, I just couldn't believe that they could take your rights like that, where if you go to prison and on are extended

supervision you couldn't vote," Diaz said. "I just couldn't understand the logic behind it ... that's not right. How is it you go to prison, pay your dues and lose your citizenship status? You kind of get dehumanized. It's just so weird to me."

This election season, Diaz worked as the co-chair of WISDOM's Statewide Immigration Task Force while she was also prepping for her big day.

After about 10 years, that big day came. According to Diaz, her citizenship ceremony felt like a drive-thru.

Diaz had her citizenship ceremony at the Milwaukee Field Office of the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services agency. In 15 minutes, a group of 10 people were brought into a room where they handed in their paperwork, were sworn in, welcomed to the United States, asked to read a statement, got a picture taken and were sent out for the next group to be sent in.

In 15 minutes, her 10-year journey had come to an end.

Becoming a citizen is not easy

A common misconception

Please see **CITIZEN**, Page A3

Drop boxes still legal, just not for voting

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RACINE — On the afternoon of Tuesday, Aug. 2, about 40 protesters chanted outside the Racine County Law Enforcement Center in Downtown Racine, demanding access to the vote be expanded rather than limited.

At the end of the demonstration, one of the organizers, Calena Roberts, pointed to what looked like a postbox painted yellow with the words "TRAFFIC PAYMENTS" emblazoned on it.

"These folks got a drop box for traffic tickets," Roberts called out, enraged that the government is still allowing residents to deliver their money but not their votes through drop boxes.

Drop boxes are still used in Wisconsin. Just, not for elections.

Still in use, for certain things

All over Wisconsin, drop boxes continue to be treated as a secure way for members of the public to deliver important documents to the government, even though they are not explicitly authorized under state law.

You can pay your taxes via drop box. Applications for engineering permits can be delivered via drop box. Library books are often returned in drop boxes. Traffic tickets can be paid through a drop box.

You just can't vote that way, not since the Wisconsin Supreme Court ruled July 8 that drop boxes are not a legal collection place for absentee ballots.

Like with the absentee ballot drop boxes used in the 2020 election statewide, other drop boxes — in place for decades — are not manned 24/7.

- A few local examples:
 - During tax season, there's

Please see **DROPBOXES**, Page A6

InSinkEerator to be sold

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MOUNT PLEASANT — InSinkEerator is being sold to Whirlpool Corporation for \$3 billion.

Whirlpool Corporation on Monday announced that it has entered into a definitive agreement with Emerson Electric Co., the Fortune 500 company that became the parent company of InSinkEerator in 1968.

InSinkEerator, founded in Racine, is the world's largest manufacturer of food waste disposers and instant hot water dispensers for home and commercial use.

The \$3 billion deal is all-cash, the companies said. InSinkEerator will maintain its Mount Pleasant headquarters, constructed in 2017 and 2018.

InSinkEerator is headquartered in Mount Pleasant and has delivered food waste disposers and instant hot water dispensers for

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CRIMINAL CHARGES SAY

Gang rivalries led to cemetery shooting

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RACINE — Violent gang life is being blamed for the June 2 shooting at Graceland Cemetery and multiple shootings that came in the following weeks, according to a criminal complaint filed Monday.

Lamarion D. Blair, 19, of the 1800 block of Racine Street, was publicly identified Friday by the Racine Police Department as a primary suspect in the June 2 shooting in which two women were shot with in-



Blair

juries necessitating surgery. On Monday, he was formally charged with 23 counts of first-degree recklessly endangering safety as a party to a crime and 26 other felonies.

Another 16-year-old suspect and Blair are both now in custody for the shooting. The RPD said Blair has been in law enforcement custody since being

arrested less than a week after the shooting.

The 16-year-old, who is not going to be publicly identified, "has been in custody since the end of June," RPD Public Information Officer Sgt. Kristi Wilcox said in an email.

The June 2 shooting was during the burial of Da'Shontay "Day Day" King, the 37-year-old Racine man shot and killed as he fled a Racine police officer May 20; King was on foot while armed, ignored orders and appeared to be picking up a gun he

dropped when he was shot.

No specific motive has been given for the shooting, but the criminal complaint repeatedly made mention of the involved individuals' gang affiliations.

On Monday, Blair was given a \$1 million cash bail in Racine County Circuit Court.

According to the criminal complaint:

Blair is a known member of the Racine-based NFL (North Side For Life) gang, "a younger, more

Please see **GRACELAND**, Page A3



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Sold

From A1

home and commercial use for almost 100 years. The world's first food waste disposal unit was invented in 1927 by John Hammes in his basement workshop in Racine.

InSinkErator was established in 1938 and now holds a greater than 70% share in the food waste disposal industry. On a full-year basis, ending Sept. 30, Whirlpool said InSinkErator is expected to generate sales of about \$650 million.

InSinkErator has established an international presence that reaches nearly 80 countries, with subsidiaries in Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, Mexico, New Zealand and the United Kingdom.

"We are excited for the unique opportunity to add InSinkErator to our portfolio of leading brands. The acquisition is a clear accelerator of our ongoing portfolio transformation and aligned with our stated goals of investing in high-growth and high-margin businesses and Win Ameri-



Bitzer

cas," stated Marc Bitzer, chairman and CEO of Whirlpool Corporation, in a news release. "InSinkErator is not only an iconic brand with a reputation for the highest quality and performance, but also a business that is purpose-driven and shares our vision of improving life at home. We look forward to capitalizing on the significant growth opportunities we see for this business."

Following the close of the transaction, InSinkErator is expected to operate as a separate business as part of Whirlpool's North America Region.

"As part of Whirlpool Corporation, I am confident InSinkErator will continue to deliver innovative products and strong business results for our customers, employees and other stakeholders," InSinkErator President Joe Dillon said in a statement to The Journal Times.

Whirlpool Corporation plans



GREGORY SHAVER, FOR THE JOURNAL TIMES

People tour the new InSinkErator world headquarters at 1250 International Drive in Mount Pleasant on the afternoon of Nov. 7, 2018.

to initially fund the acquisition through available liquidity, with new debt put in place at a later date. The acquisition, which has been approved by the boards of directors of both companies, is subject to customary closing conditions that include regulatory approvals. The deal is expected to close in the fourth

quarter of 2022.

"I am excited that Emerson has entered into an agreement to sell InSinkErator to Whirlpool Corporation," Dillon stated. "The transaction builds on InSinkErator's rich history as the world's largest manufacturer of food waste disposers and instant hot water dispensers for home and

Q&A

In an email, The Journal Times asked InSinkErator: "How is the local workforce affected, if at all?"

InSinkErator President Joe Dillon replied: "The contributions and exceptional commitment of our employees have made InSinkErator what it is today, presenting the company with a great opportunity. With the support of Whirlpool Corporation, InSinkErator will continue to ensure an engaging workplace experience for our employees, and drive positive impact for our communities and all other stakeholders."

commercial use, and I look forward to the next chapter."

InSinkErator employees made the company what it is today, Dillon said.

Greenhill & Co. LLC served as financial advisor and Wachtell, Lipton, Rosen & Katz served as legal counsel to Whirlpool Corporation.

Graceland

From A1

violent offshoot of the Vice Lords street gang."

King had been a member of the 12th Street Gangster Disciples, according to police. On a nationwide scale, Gangster Disciples and Vice Lords have been rivals for decades.

Those who attended the burial told police they saw at least two shooters either in or standing outside a Chevrolet Equinox on the 600 block of Lathrop Avenue, just outside the cemetery.

The shooting was reported at 2:22 p.m.

About 10 minutes after the cemetery shooting, there was a shootout on the 2800 block of Wright Avenue between those in the Equinox and a group from the cemetery that chased the Equinox in a vehicle of their own.

No injuries were reported from the Wright Avenue shootout.

Near the intersection of Wright and Quincy avenues, the Equinox was found parked and with "fresh gunshot damage."

Inside the vehicle, fingerprints belonging to multiple individuals including Blair were found. Also found in the car were seven 5.56 rifle casings, which matched five rifle casings found near where the shots fired into the cemetery were fired from.

Police found another four 9mm handgun casings near the rifle casings outside the cemetery.

After the Wright Avenue shootout, another five matching rifle casings were found on or near the front porch of a home associated with the NFL gang on the 2800 block of Wright Avenue.

The Equinox's listed owner was Blair's girlfriend; the vehicle had Nevada license plates. Investigators said they used the vehicle's "infotainment" center and found that the vehicle had been on the 600 block of Lathrop Avenue at the time of the shooting, then immediately went to the 2800 block of Wright Avenue before parking on Quincy Avenue.

Surveillance footage from a nearby home showed two individuals running away after the shootout on Wright Avenue, one of whom was identified as Blair.

An informant told police that Blair and his girlfriend planned to leave Racine and go to Las Vegas after the shooting. Transportation Security Administration records confirmed that both Blair and his girlfriend flew to Vegas on June 4.

In Las Vegas, U.S. Marshalls took Blair into custody. He was held in the Clark County Jail in Las Vegas.

Investigators said they traveled to the Clark County Jail to interview Blair. After



MARK HERTZBERG, SPECIAL TO THE JOURNAL TIMES

Two women were shot during the June 2 funeral at Graceland Cemetery for Da'Shontay "Day Day" King.

initially denying he had nothing to do with the Equinox, he later admitted to having been in the Equinox on Wright Avenue June 2 — "I was in the car on Wright Avenue. I ain't gonna lie to you," he allegedly said — but claimed he didn't have anything to do with the shooting.

"I didn't shoot no gun," he told investigators, and he also "refused to say who picked him up after the shots were fired" on Wright Avenue.

As the investigation continued, casings identified as coming from the rifle used in the Graceland Cemetery shooting and on Wright Avenue were found "in other shooting incidents occurring after June 2."

On July 15, officers executed a search warrant on

a home on the 1200 block of Blake Avenue. Inside the home, a Palmetto 5.56 PA-15 rifle was found. By using the National Integrated Ballistic Information Network, the rifle was a match for the casings found outside the cemetery and on Wright Avenue June 2.

The Blake Avenue home is the residence of an individual whose fingerprints were found in the Equinox; the individual has not been criminal charged and is not the 16-year-old, an RPD spokesperson told The Journal Times.

A cousin of that individ-

ual is charged with homicide in the shooting death of a Dirty P street gang member, according to the criminal complaint. Dirty P and NFL members are known to violently feud.

The individual who lives on Blake Avenue, who is affiliated with NFL, was arrested June 26 in a vehicle on Chicago Street, police said.

Two handguns were found underneath his seat. NIBIN found that neither of those handguns were associated with the June 2 shootings, but that they were both "used in some of the same shooting incidents" as the rifle recovered weeks later in the Blake Avenue home.

In addition to the 23 counts of first-degree recklessly endangering safety, Blair was also charged with 25 counts of felony bail jumping and one count of possession of a firearm as an adjudicated delinquent as a party to a crime.

Citizen

From A1

about the process of immigration is that it takes a very short time and is a simple process to go through. These misconceptions are something that Diaz hears often.

"It's really frustrating when you hear people say 'why didn't they do it the right way?' or 'Why didn't they apply?' Just for my citizenship application alone, it took 13 months for me to get my first interview — that took 13 months to get scheduled," Diaz said. "It's a long, complicated process, and right now with the pandemic, everything is taking a lot longer. There's such a backlog and such a broken system. It's kind of hard to explain, but it's very complex and delayed. Everything is delayed, delayed, delayed."

A 2019 report from the Cato Institute, a libertarian think tank, states "Since 1991, when the current quotas went into effect, time spent waiting to apply for a green card (i.e., legal permanent residence) has doubled for applicants immigrating through the family sponsored and employment based quota categories — from an average of 2 years and 10 months to 5 years and 8 months." As of 2018, the entire U.S. immigration wait list was more than 4.7 million files long, and there's a backlog of more than 1.2 million



RICARDO TORRES, JOURNAL TIMES FILE PHOTO

Jessica Diaz takes a photo of her son Daniel Rodriguez and teammate Daniel Mejia with then-Racine County Supervisor Eric Hillery, back from left, Supervisor Fabi Maldonado, then-Racine Alderman Trevor Jung and Mario Martinez from the Cesar Chavez Community Center in July 2019. Diaz is a volunteer Liga Amateur de Futbol de Racine, which translates to the Racine Amateur Soccer League, which teaches kids soccer to kid ages 6 to 14.

green card applicants from Mexico.

Unless there are substantial reforms, the average wait time for a Mexican national applying for a U.S. green card is expected to be well over 30 years; in 2018, the wait time was around 21 years. The cases of Mexicans who applied for green cards that were getting approved in 2021 were usually applied for around 1999.

Diaz's fight for her citizenship might be over, but for others that are in the position she is in, there is still so much left to get through. She works at Cabranes Durkin & Longdin Law Offices, 840 Lake Ave. Suite 100, Racine. The firm represents clients who are going through the immigration

and citizenship process.

"I tell people all the time: my process may be ended, but I still have a lot of people close to me who are waiting for their opportunity to even start," Diaz said. "I have many people around me in my community, and it's just hard to see."

As a student at the University of Wisconsin-Parkside, Diaz remembers one classmate "joked" that he was going to get Diaz deported; another classmate said they believed those without citizenship are "not human."

"People actually think like that," Diaz said.

Now a citizen, Diaz next plans to go to law school — after her sons finish school themselves.



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