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UP TO \$211 IN SAVINGS

They fled Putin's war. What's next for refugees?

Buffalo one of six cities resettling Ukrainians

By LEAH CLARK
NEWS STAFF REPORTER

When Andrii Varian first arrived in the United States in 2016, he was excited to begin working using his master's degree in mechanical engineering from his home country Ukraine.

Six years later, Varian found himself at the Dnipro Ukrainian Cultural Center on Genesee Street on a Tuesday evening. At the center, the nonprofit Jewish Family Services of Western New York hosted one of its many informational sessions to explain to community members the expectations and process of sponsoring Ukrainian citizens — and how they can help in other ways. Varian now lives in Orchard Park and works at Moog Inc. He has his green card. But he said attending the session was important to him because he wants to help his fellow Ukrainians fleeing the war in their home country.

On April 21, the Biden administration announced that 100,000 Ukrainian citizens will be allowed entry into the United States through the Uniting for Ukraine program. The announcement came following Russia's invasion into Ukraine in late February that has displaced more than 10 million citizens.

Refugees from Ukraine would be allowed entry into the United States through the Uniting for Ukraine program. The announcement came following Russia's invasion into Ukraine in late February that has displaced more than 10 million citizens.

See **Refugees** on Page A13

Throw out rule book on U.S. economy

Does it make sense now to cool off a hot market?

By BEN CASSELMAN
NEW YORK TIMES

WASHINGTON — To understand the strange, conflicting signals being sent by the U.S. economy right now, it helps to look at Williston, N.D., in about 2010. North Dakota was in the midst of an oil boom. Scores of rigs were drilling hundreds of wells, filling up train cars with crude because there hadn't been time to build a pipeline. Pretty much anyone who wanted a job could find one, even the teenagers who dropped out of high school to work in the oil fields. Wages soared. Fast-food restaurants offered signing bonuses. State coffers filled up with tax revenue.

Yet as good as the economy was, it also felt unstable. Restaurants couldn't hire enough workers. Housing was in short supply, and costly. Local infrastructure...

See **Economy** on Page A14

On fringe social media sites, Buffalo mass shooting becomes rallying call for white supremacists

By CAITLIN DEWEY / NEWS STAFF REPORTER

While most of the world reacted with horror to the racist May 14 massacre at a Buffalo supermarket, one shadowy corner of the internet — the corner frequented by the accused gunman in the lead-up to his attack — continues to celebrate the murder of 10 Black people and goad each other to similar acts. A meme, a mock-up of the front page of the New York Daily News, shows a photo of Payton Gendron beside a series of bold-faced headlines, including "the mass shooter we've been waiting for" and "could you be next?" Another image imposes jokes over a still frame from the gunman's livestream of the attack, showing the moment one woman was shot in the head. Yet another takes the form of a "help wanted" poster addressed to white men.

Some already live for our people. Would you KILL for them? It asks. The reaction does not surprise counterterrorism researchers, who have repeatedly warned that a network of anonymous message boards and encrypted messaging channels are incubating the next generation of white supremacist terror. But the challenge, they say, is interrupting these networks before they can inspire the next shooter. Some

SEE **SOCIAL MEDIA** ON PAGE A12

Babies are eligible for Covid shots, but rates of vaccination for very young still low in WNY

By SANDRA TAN
NEWS STAFF REPORTER

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration gave the green light for children as young as 6 months old to get the Covid-19 vaccine in June, but there haven't been many takers.

In Western New York and across the state, less than 5% of eligible infants and toddlers, up to 4 years old, have received even a single dose of either pediatric Moderna or Pfizer vaccine.

Dr. Steven Lana, a pediatrician and senior partner at Delaware Pe-

diatrics in Buffalo, said that early on, he had longer discussions with parents who were resistant to getting their children vaccinated. But that's less true now.

"They've had their minds made up," he said. "They're just not interested in the conversation."

Many others who were undecided are taking a wait-and-see approach, he said. They don't want their children to be among the first to receive a new vaccine, like the one available now for children ages 6 months to 5 years, which received emergency use authorization in mid-June.

Lana and other pediatricians say they can only stress that the vaccination is safe and that the time to get children vaccinated against Covid-19 is now.

Children of all ages have the lowest Covid-19 vaccination rates, compared with adults of any age group, according to state data.

While infants and toddlers have the lowest vaccination rate by far, only 39% of children ages 5 to 11 have received even a single shot of the vaccine.

That percentage climbs to 65% in children ages 12 to 17.

Reasons for resistance

The vaccination landscape is very different now than it was in 2020 and early 2021, when vaccines were scarce or non-existent, and Covid-19-related fatalities were high. Then, the narrative was that adults, especially seniors, were at high risk for serious illness and death, recalled Dr. Steven E. Lipshultz, pediatric chief of service at Kaleida Health and president of the URMD Pediatrics Medical Group.

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WEATHER
Breezy, hot. High 86, low 74.
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CELEBRATING LIFE

Terry had her chance to ring the Victory Bell.



Terry rings the bell on June 8th 2022 celebrating completion of both her chemo and radiation treatments.

Help us celebrate our survivor's story of triumph over cancer



THE BUFFALO NEWS



CONTINUED FROM THE COVER



With decades of Ukrainian cooking expertise, it's easy to see why, from left, Alexandra Savka, Stefania Lemeshivska, Christine Moroz, Lidiya Ghynska and Olga Bula contributed their time and talents to a March fundraiser by making meals to sell, benefiting the Dnipro Ukrainian Cultural Center.

Buffalo News file photos

Refugees must have U.S. sponsor, can stay 2 years

REFUGEES • from A1

lowed to stay in the U.S. for a temporary two-year period under a humanitarian parole status. They also would be required to have a private sponsor in the U.S. — an adult with lawful immigration status in America.

But the responsibilities of sponsoring refugees can be demanding. So Jewish Family Services of WNY is creating groups of five or more volunteers called sponsorship circles to provide support systems for sponsors and refugees. Ukrainians would be able to rely on a larger group of people in cases where their official sponsor cannot.

Jewish Federations of North America and the Shapiro Foundation are providing grants to refugee resettlement agencies in six cities as part of Uniting for Ukraine. Buffalo, which has long welcomed refugees from around the world, is one of those six cities.

Local organizations such as the Buffalo Jewish Federation, Foundation for Jewish Philanthropies and an anonymous philanthropist decided to match the initial grant and raised the overall total to \$250,000.

Jewish Family Services of WNY has begun planning its response to incoming Ukrainian citizens resettling in the Buffalo area.

There are about 237 Ukrainian citizens now in the Buffalo area, said Molly Carr, CEO of Jewish Family Services. The organization has been able to connect with about 50 who are in different stages of the process.

Carr realized that the organization would have to change its usual response plan for refugees.

Unlike most other refugee programs, Uniting for Ukraine requires other private sponsors



Supporters like Bill and Judy Graf of Buffalo keep Ann Serediuk and the Dnipro Ukrainian Cultural Center busy helping Ukrainian refugees, more than 200 of whom are now in Buffalo.

in the U.S. Carr says the process for private sponsorship can be confusing and that's why Jewish Family Services began hosting informational sessions to break down the process for those interested in sponsoring Ukrainian citizens.

"The reality of the work that we do is it's a very heavy lift, and there are a lot of elements of things that need to happen for these individuals when they arrive here in the U.S. that we're finding that sponsors are just not prepared for," Carr said.

Prior to their arrival, Ukrainian citizens must have a sponsor. The sponsor has to be at least 18 and have lawful status in the U.S. and

meet minimum financial requirements.

Sponsors are expected to help the refugees with an array of tasks. They are responsible for finding them housing, financial assistance, food, setting an initial medical exam, connecting to resettlement agency services, enrolling children in school, reporting a physical address and applying for employment authorization. They also have to help them file paperwork to obtain a Social Security card.

Some sponsors are Ukrainians in the United States applying on behalf of their relatives still in Ukraine. However, many are people who have connected with Ukraini-

an citizens through online forums and social media.

The website ukrainewelcome.us/connect is a popular site that allows both Ukrainians and potential sponsors to sign up and connect with each other. According to an attendee of a Jewish Family Services informational session, the site has reached its maximum of accounts for Ukrainian citizens but is still in search of potential sponsors.

While sponsors have many responsibilities, they can apply for government assistance on behalf of Ukrainians to help. Some benefits include cash assistance, Medicaid, low-cost health care, nutrition and food assistance, and job training.

Many of these programs are available through local refugee resettlement agencies such as Jewish Family Services, Journey's End Refugee Services, International Institute of Buffalo, Jericho Road Community Health Center and Catholic Charities.

Jewish Family Services provides specialized counseling services for adults and children, including cultural orientation training. Also, legal technical support is provided to sponsors to assist with the paperwork they file directly to U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services.

The Ukrainian citizen or their sponsor will be responsible for their passport and airfare to the United States. Those who are struggling to cover airfare can reach out to resettlement organizations such as Jewish Family Services or miles4migrants.org for help.

The process for Uniting for Ukraine can take as little as a month, faster than usual immigration processes. But it's also more limited. Uniting for Ukraine does not offer Ukrainians a way to renew their parole status after their two-year stay.

Carr says the U.S. government has not announced a set plan of action for Ukrainian citizens if Russian President Vladimir Putin does not back out of Ukraine by the end of those two years.

"This process, while it's quick and it gets people out of danger quickly to the U.S., it doesn't have the back end of work that needs to happen to support these individuals," Carr said.

Jewish Family Services is actively seeking more volunteers to create or join sponsorship circles. Those interested should contact Jewish Family Services' Ukraine Sponsorship Coordinator Dasha Valupyska at dvalupyska@jfswny.org.

Not all pediatricians are making a push for patients to get vaccinated

VACCINATIONS • from A1

Older age groups were prioritized over younger age groups, with health professionals pointing out that children were at much lower risk than adults to become seriously ill or die.

Employers, governments and event organizers also placed tough restrictions on adults who refused to get vaccinated. As a result, the data show that among adults, 65% to 95% of adults across age groups are considered fully vaccinated in this region, though the totals still fall below the statewide vaccination rate.

But many restrictions have been relaxed or ended since then. Many adults are choosing not to get booster shots for themselves or new vaccines for their kids, especially the youngest ones, since they are considered to be at the lowest risk.

Some parents are also continuing to see and believe false

claims circulating on social media networks against the vaccine, Erie County Health Commissioner Dr. Gale Burstein said.

"I can understand how parents may become hesitant if they don't understand that their source of information is questionable and that what they're hearing is not the truth," she said.

Why vaccinate now?

While it is true that younger children are at much lower risk for suffering serious illness if they contract Covid-19, that's only one narrow angle of a bigger picture.

"There's some urgency for young children — or all children, for that matter — to get vaccinated now," Lipshultz said.

Among things he and other pediatricians ask parents to consider:

• The next surge in Covid-19 cases is expected to begin in the fall, as the weather gets

colder and more children head back to school or day care programs. But it takes two or three shots, spaced weeks apart, for children to have full Covid-19 vaccination protection.

• While young children and infants are at much lower risk of becoming seriously ill or dying from the virus, compared with adults, they are very likely to transmit Covid-19 to family members who are in close contact with them, placing others at greater risk. The latest variants of Covid-19 are highly contagious.

• Kids infected with Covid-19 can develop a rare complication called multisystem inflammatory syndrome in children, in which a child's own immune system starts attacking their body, landing some children in pediatric critical care units.

Lipshultz said more than 50 children have been hospitalized at Oishei Children's Hospital in recent months with serious symptoms related to

Covid-19

"The rate of infections has been escalating for children across the United States," he said.

Uneven outreach

Erie County has worked with Oishei Children's Hospital, reaching out to immigrant communities and promoting the ongoing Vax Visit home vaccination program, which brings the Covid-19 vaccine to both infants, children and adults where they live, Burstein said. Appointments can be scheduled by calling the county at 716-859-2929.

Lana said Delaware Pediatrics offers Covid-19 vaccination clinics, as well as shots during one-on-one appointments and annual physicals. His group offers the Pfizer pediatric vaccine, which requires three doses for children ages 6 months to 4 years, and two doses for those 5 and up. Others are offering the two-shot Moderna vaccine for children.

Lipshultz, whose UBMD Pediatrics Medical Group is home to the largest group of pediatric subspecialists in the region, said many University at Buffalo-affiliated physicians volunteer their time at clinics. They are particularly motivated to reach out to their patients, who are being treated for other serious health issues and would be at higher risk for health complications if they contract Covid-19.

"This is our mission, our life's work, and we take it very seriously," said Lipshultz, who also chairs the Department of Pediatrics at the UB Jacobs School of Medicine and Biomedical Sciences.

But in speaking with colleagues, he and Burstein are aware that not all pediatricians are making the same push. Burstein said she thinks that has likely contributed to Erie County vaccination clinics getting some parents coming to them.

Lipshultz said some pediatric offices may simply be grap-

pling with staffing problems. Medical Health Associates, the largest pediatric group in Western New York, with eight offices in Amherst, Grand Island, Orchard Park, Alden and Buffalo, lists Covid-19 resources on its website. But as of this past week, the sites shared outdated information about Covid-19 vaccine eligibility. They didn't mention the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines are now available to children as young as 6 months.

"The pediatric group websites also didn't tell families that they offer the Covid-19 vaccine. Instead, they refer families to Erie and Niagara county health departments, and to drugstore chains.

CEO Christopher Tribassi said the pediatric group does offer the vaccine to all eligible children, but how the different locations offer it is "variable." He also said families are encouraged to speak with their pediatricians about any Covid-19 vaccination concerns.