

UNDER

Frederick News-Post reporter Nancy Lavin interviewed three undocumented immigrants who live in Frederick.

THE

The interviews, conducted through an interpreter, are intended to highlight their experiences in light of local, state and nationwide discussion about immigration enforcement.

RADAR

The people are only identified by their first names as a condition of the interviews. These are their stories.



LIDIA: Seeking refuge from violence

In her native Guatemala, Lidia was aboard a local transit bus when a group of gang members ambushed the bus and killed the driver.

Bus driver killings had become a common occurrence there, often used by local gang members as a form of extortion. But it was the first time Lidia had been a passenger on one of the targeted buses. She was seated directly beside the bus aide, who was also killed.

Lidia said she had a nervous breakdown. She feared the gang members would hunt her down

(See LIDIA A6)



ISABEL: Reuniting with family

Isabel entered the U.S. six months ago with a tourist visa secured in her native Costa Rica. But the visa has expired, and she's still in Frederick, where she lives with her daughter.

Her daughter immigrated to the United States first; Isabel followed. Isabel was diagnosed with breast cancer, and hoped her daughter could help care for her if they were together again.

Since moving to Frederick, she's found work in child care and gets medical treatment through a local foundation that

(See ISABEL A6)



ALAN: Pursuing the American dream

Alan had no documentation when he crossed the border from his native Mexico into the U.S., but he was not caught. He's remained under the radar of federal immigration officers and local law enforcement since he moved to Frederick three years ago.

He came in pursuit of the American dream: a better job, education and more opportunities.

Alan has learned enough English to speak conversationally, enough to get by in his job in landscape and construction.

(See ALAN A6)

Making Frederick a safe haven: Local activists, aldermen consider a sanctuary policy for the city

By **NANCY LAVIN**
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A movement to declare Frederick a safe, welcoming city for undocumented immigrants is gaining traction.

A report published in December by the Immigrant Legal Resource Center counted at least 39 cities and

approximately 364 counties across the country that consider themselves sanctuary jurisdictions.

A new grassroots advocacy group called Safe Haven Frederick introduced a petition on Feb. 14, published online and circulated in paper form, aimed at making Frederick a sanctuary city. In a single week, the

petition amassed 500 signatures, according to Alicia Barmon, Safe Haven's founder and organizer.

Safe Haven began as a dozen residents meeting in Barmon's downtown office in the wake of the November election. It has grown to more than 300 members on its

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Lidia

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and kill her, too, because she saw the crime. So she fled, taking her baby, who was 8 months old, with her as she traveled north toward the United States. She had considered applying for a visa, but when the "trauma" happened, she didn't want to wait. When she crossed the border, she was caught and detained for a few days before federal officials released her. That was in November 2014. Awaiting the court hearings that will determine if she gets deported, Lidia has remained in the U.S. She's built a life in Frederick, where she lives with her husband and son, who just turned 3. She lives a normal Frederick life, shopping in local stores and seeing local doctors. She takes nightly classes to improve her English.

Her biggest wish, she said, is to become a legal resident, improve her English and find work as a nurse, which was her job in Guatemala. She's afraid she'll be deported, a fear that intensified with the 2016 election cycle and new president. But even recent anti-immigrant comments and policy proposals aren't enough to make her consider returning to Guatemala, an environment far worse than anything she's faced here.

Isabel

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offers health services. She also recently started taking English classes. Her daughter, who taught social studies in Costa Rica, now works cleaning houses. They both envisioned a better life in America, but have found it hard to make that dream a reality. It's hard to find work, Isabel explained. She also disagreed with perceptions that immigrants take jobs away from Americans. Immigrants are hard workers, too, she said, and they're often willing to do dirty jobs that Americans won't — cleaning houses, for example.

Alan

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Many of his co-workers are also Spanish-speaking immigrants, which helps, he said. His boss knows he's undocumented, but has supported him. Alan works hard, as do his immigrant co-workers. But the American workers do, too, he said. He doesn't want to be deported, but he isn't too worried about it happening. He noted that there are many other undocumented immigrants living in Frederick. He still is cautious, though, especially when it comes to driving. He knew of Frederick's participation in federal immigration enforcement, and doesn't want a

Both she and her daughter plan to apply for citizenship, but haven't yet. She was unaware that Frederick County, through the Frederick County Sheriff's Office, has partnered with the federal government on immigration enforcement through the 287(g) program. Trained deputies and correctional officers perform certain functions of immigration enforcement with oversight from the Department of Homeland Security and Immigration and Customs Enforcement. Isabel hoped that as long as she was careful — avoiding anything that would attract law enforcement's attention — she could avoid deportation. Asked if she was afraid, she answered in a single word: yes.

traffic stop to lead to his deportation. The longer he's stayed here, the harder it has become to even consider what life would be like if he was forced to re-rupture and gang violence abound. A few times in Frederick, he has felt discrimination because of how he looks, and the language he speaks. He recounted a trip to McDonald's with a friend, a fellow Hispanic immigrant. The cashier walked away, refusing to take their order. His friend called after the cashier in English. Alan smiled as he recalled the shock on the employee's face at hearing his friend's perfect English. They were able to order after all.

Naloxone

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overdose deaths were reported in the state, according to the department. Eighty-six percent of the deaths were heroin- or opioid-related. Fifty-one people died of heroin overdoses in Frederick County last year. It's the continuation of an unfortunate and deadly trend. According to the state health department and legislative analysts: ■ Opioid-related deaths have more than doubled since 2010. ■ The number of heroin-related deaths has more than tripled between 2010 and 2015. ■ The number of fentanyl-related deaths has increased nearly twofold since 2012. "This is a public health emergency ... people are dying," said Delegate Erik L. Barmon, D-Prince George's. "In an emergency, I think its incumbent upon us to do everything we can to remove any barriers to treatment." He's the sponsor of a separate Naloxone-related bill, which would make the reversal drug — which is also known as Narcan — more readily available by removing a training certificate requirement to get a prescription. As of earlier this month, 42,084 people have received Narcan training through the state program since March 2014, according to an analysis from the nonpartisan Department of Legislative Services. Statewide, there have been 45,498 doses of naloxone dispensed and the drug has been used 1,572 times. "As a law enforcement professional who still serves and works our streets within our communities, I have seen the effects of the opioid crisis firsthand," Falden, an officer with the Frederick Police Department, testified last week. "I have notified loved ones that

their family members are not coming home. And I have been a part of watching and being a part of the miracle ... in my eyes ... of Naloxone and how it reverses the effects of the opioid on the human body." Falden's bill incorporates recent co-prescribing recommendations at the national level. In 2016, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention issued guidelines recommending the co-prescribing. The Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act, passed by Congress in 2016, makes federal grants available to establish co-prescription programs. General Assembly members are sifting through several pieces of legislation this session aimed at addressing substance abuse. Gov. Larry Hogan's "2017 Heroin and Opioid Prevention, Treatment, and Enforcement Initiative" includes state funding priorities and a package of three bills: ■ The Prescriber Limits Act would limit opioid prescriptions upon an initial consultation or treatment to a seven-day supply. ■ The Overdose Prevention Act would expand the analyses by county fatality review teams to include non-fatal overdose data in addition to the fatal overdose data they currently review. ■ The Distribution of Opioids Resulting in Death Act would create a new felony charge that would allow police and prosecutors to seek up to 30 years imprisonment against sellers of opioids or synthetic opioids when the drugs lead to death. Delegate Eric Bromwell (D), vice-chairman of the House Health and Government Operations Committee, opposed the bill hearings last week and said the committee was working to move good ideas from several bills forward. Follow Danielle E. Gaines on Twitter: @daniellegaines.

Sanctuary

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Facebook page, with biweekly meetings. Safe Haven also co-sponsored two recent rallies in Frederick, one in solidarity with immigrants and another with the Muslim community. Safe Haven is working with several members of the Frederick Board of Aldermen to introduce a resolution establishing a sanctuary policy for the city. At least one local church might also adopt a sanctuary policy. At the state level, lawmakers are considering a similar measure, as well as one that would do the exact opposite, to force local governments to participate in federal immigration enforcement. The two bills were heard in Senate committee hearings Tuesday. None of the Frederick County Council members had introduced, drafted or even requested information on a sanctuary policy for the county as of Thursday morning, according to Ragen Cherney, the council's chief of staff. There has been no public indication any council members plan to do so.

Defining sanctuary

What "sanctuary" means varies by jurisdiction. Some sanctuary policies, often at the county or state level, might focus on limiting local officials' cooperation with federal immigration detainers. At the city level, sanctuary declarations might prohibit local officials from asking about a person's immigration status. Other municipalities might not have a formal policy or resolution, but informally follow these practices, the Immigrant Legal Resource Center report stated. Barmon described the type of sanctuary city policy that Safe Haven is pushing for as a "don't ask, don't tell" policy, similar to the former policy about gay people serving in the military. She acknowledged that federal immigration laws supersede local policy; a city or county cannot actually stop immigration detainers from being used to deport undocumented immigrants. A resolution would simply formalize what she said is already a common practice. The Frederick Police Department already codified this policy. But the rest of the city — local government, schools and employers — have never adopted a similar declaration. Referencing the number of sanctuary cities and counties nationwide, Barmon said, "We should be one of them."

"It's the right thing to do," she said. Alderman Michael O'Connor, in a phone interview Tuesday, said most of the discussions he's had with fellow aldermen focused on a similar interpretation of "sanctuary." He said the draft resolution would adopt the police department's policy citywide. O'Connor, a Democrat who is running for mayor, said that at least three of the five aldermen support the concept. The language, including the term "sanctuary," remains in draft stages. "For me, it's a statement of support for the residents of our community who work, who live, who go to school, who pay taxes ... in the city," he said. "The reality is, for people in our community who are here, regardless of their documentation, they should not have to live in fear."

Asked if the city's resolution might take any additional measures to protect undocumented immigrants within its borders, O'Connor said he wasn't sure. The exact language and extent of the policy was still being determined. The Rev. Eliezer Valentin-Castañón, senior pastor at Trinity United Methodist Church, said that next month, he and other church leaders will discuss details of becoming a sanctuary church. The parameters of a policy were not yet defined, he said. Valentin-Castañón envisioned a sanctuary church as a place for undocumented immigrants to seek refuge, as well as a resource to connect them with lawyers and civil rights organizations. He noted that most churches don't have the space to house people overnight. "The most important thing is the statement you're making to protect your immigrant brothers and sisters," he said.

Potential conflicts Abdul Konare, an immigration attorney with offices in D.C. and Frederick, supported the idea of protecting undocumented immigrants in Frederick. Konare serves on the board of directors for Centro Hispano de Frederick and volunteers his legal services to organization clients, many of whom are undocumented. But Konare said that declaring Frederick a sanctuary city means nothing as long as the Frederick



Alicia Barmon, Safe Haven Frederick's founder and organizer, in her Frederick office.

County Sheriff's Office continues to participate in elements of federal immigration enforcement. Trained deputies and correctional officers can perform certain functions of immigration enforcement under oversight from the Department of Homeland Security and Immigration and Customs Enforcement as part of its 287(g) program. Since 2008, Frederick County has placed 1,444 ICE detainers on jail inmates, 1,299 of those inmates were placed into immigration proceedings by ICE. Even if Frederick's policy is to refrain from asking about a person's immigration status, that question becomes part of the process for anyone who is arrested or charged and taken to the Frederick County Adult Detention Center. A sanctuary policy for Frederick directly conflicts with this program, Konare said. Barmon disagreed. "I don't think that should be a deterrent to formalize ... that we are a safe haven," she said. Local policies may become irrelevant depending on what happens at the state level, O'Connor noted.

The Maryland Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee on Tuesday heard two bills that introduced opposing viewpoints on whether county and state law enforcement should participate in federal immigration enforcement. A bill from Frederick County Sen. Michael Hough, R-District 4, would require state or local correctional facilities that are notified by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security that an inmate is subject to an immigration detainer to give Homeland Security at least 72 hours' notice before the person is scheduled to be released. The bill would also let correctional facilities hold inmates up to an additional 48 hours to allow Homeland Security to take them into custody. An opposing bill from Sen. Victor Ramirez, a Prince George's County Democrat, explicitly states that local governments not take part in federal immigration enforcement. Ramirez's bill includes language from "sanctuary community" policies that would require the state to attempt to limit immigration enforcement at public schools, hospitals and court-houses. Neither committee had taken action on the bills as of Friday.

Ramirez said the committee will likely vote on his bill in the next couple of weeks. Hough didn't know when a vote might be scheduled on his bill. **Opposing viewpoints** Sheriff Chuck Jenkins testified on Tuesday in Annapolis in support of Sen. Hough's bill. Other local leaders have also expressed opposition to sanctuary-type policies. Martin Burns, a commissioner in Thurmont, addressed the topic during a meeting this month. Burns, a registered Republican who serves as director of the Special Programs Division for the U.S. Department of Defense, elaborated on his concerns in a phone interview Thursday. To Burns, seeking out undocumented immigrants was not a part of Thurmont's job as a town. But local law enforcement should be able to work with federal authorities when those people commit another crime, he said. Enforcing immigration laws is no different than traffic violations and juvenile detentions, he said. "This is not about immigration, in my opinion. It's about the rule of law," Burns said. He added, "If there's a process to come here legally, and if you break that law, what other laws can you ignore?"

Billy Shreve (R), a Frederick County councilman who co-chaired Trump's campaign committee in Frederick County, said he welcomed the prospect of any Democratic elected official, local or state, proposing sanctuary legislation. "It will surely lose them the election, but I don't know," he said. "Nobody would support that." He cited results of a Harvard-Harris survey provided to The

Statistics

11 million: estimate of undocumented immigrants who live in the U.S.
253,000: estimate of undocumented immigrants in Maryland
WHERE THEY COME FROM:
54 percent from Mexico and Central America
20 percent from El Salvador
14 percent from Guatemala
11 percent from Mexico
8 percent from Honduras
HOW LONG THEY'VE BEEN HERE:
Less than five years: 27 percent
Five to nine years: 34 percent
10 to 14 years: 24 percent
15 to 19 years: 8 percent
20+ years: 7 percent
WHAT THEY DO:
92 percent of children ages 3 to 17 are enrolled in school
30 percent of adults ages 18 to 24 are enrolled in school
71 percent of the labor force ages 16 and older have jobs
Source: Migration Policy Institute, using estimates from the U.S. Census Bureau through 2014 and a 2008 survey through the Population Research Institute.

Hill, which indicated 80 percent of voters think local authorities should have to report any undocumented immigrants they encounter to federal immigration authorities.

The Hill's story says the results came from an online survey of 2,148 registered voters. Shreve said a sanctuary policy would "usurp federal law." "If you have a lawless country, or someone who wants to usurp the law, then you have anarchy," he said.

Moving forward

Barmon said she hoped to present Safe Haven's petition to the city once the group gathered a "critical mass" of signatures. She named 1,000 signatures as a possible threshold, although she wasn't sure. O'Connor was uncertain when the Board of Aldermen would schedule a public discussion on a sanctuary resolution or policy, except to say he hoped it would be "sooner rather than later." Safe Haven's members are at the same time working to establish a pledge program for local businesses to declare support for immigrant customers and employees. Participating businesses would receive a decal to display in the store, similar to existing stickers and signs that declare a business as friendly to the LGBTQ community, Barmon said. The pledge is more than just a sticker. "There are some teeth to it," Barmon said. She cited training employees on unbiased service as one example of an action participating businesses would commit to as part of the pledge. Barmon also named creation of a city advisory committee that would "bring more marginalized persons to the table" as a future goal for Safe Haven. She didn't have specifics on the makeup or functions of the committee yet. She emphasized the value of these marginalized communities, including immigrants, for the city, the state and the nation. "This is not just about diversity and inclusion," she said. "This is a survival of our species thing." Staff writers Samantha Hogan and Danielle E. Gaines contributed to this story. Follow Nancy Lavin on Twitter: @NancyKLavin.