

# WISCONSIN STATE JOURNAL



## Supreme Court

Liberals argue in legal filings that GOP is seeking to nullify election results by asking justice to recuse

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## WILL MARKS FALL?

Wisconsin transfer quarterback Mordecai could break program records in Phil Longo's Air Raid offense

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## War in Ukraine

White House: Putin, Kim Jong Un have discussed N. Korea providing munitions

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## Election misinformation

Federal judge finds Rudy Giuliani liable in election workers' defamation suit

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Thursday, August 31, 2023

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TROPICAL WEATHER | 'ALL HELL BROKE LOOSE'

# Idalia slams Southeastern US

Widespread reports of flooding, damage to buildings and trees

TERRY SPENCER  
Associated Press

PERRY, Fla. — Hurricane Idalia tore into Florida at the speed of a fast-moving train Wednesday, splitting trees in half, ripping roofs off hotels and turning small cars into boats before sweeping into Georgia and South Carolina as a still-powerful storm that

flooded roadways and sent residents running for higher ground.

"All hell broke loose," said Be-lond Thomas of Perry, a mill town located just inland from the Big Bend region where Idalia came ashore.

Thomas fled with her family and some friends to a motel, thinking it would be safer than riding out the storm at home. But as Idalia's eye passed over about 8:30 a.m., a loud whistling noise pierced the air and the high winds ripped the building's roof off, sending debris down on her pregnant daughter,

who was lying in bed. Fortunately, she was not injured.

After coming ashore, Idalia made landfall near Keaton Beach at 7:45 a.m. as a high-end Category 3 hurricane with maximum sustained winds near 125 mph. The system remained a hurricane as it crossed into Georgia with top winds of 90 mph. It weakened to a tropical storm by late Wednesday afternoon, and its winds dropped to 65 mph by Wednesday evening.

As the eye moved inland, high winds shredded signs, blew off roofs, sent sheet metal flying and

snapped tall trees. One person was killed in Georgia. No hurricane-related deaths were officially confirmed in Florida, but the Florida Highway Patrol reported two people dying in separate weather-related crashes just hours before Idalia made landfall.

The storm brought strong winds to Savannah, Georgia, on Wednesday evening as it made its way toward the Carolinas. It was forecast to pass over Charleston, South Carolina, early Thursday morning before turning east and

heading out to the Atlantic Ocean. Idalia spawned a tornado that briefly touched down in the Charleston suburb of Goose Creek, the National Weather Service said. The winds sent a car flying and flipped it over, according to authorities and eyewitness video. Two people received minor injuries.

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■ Inside: Idalia is the latest in a list of destructive storms starting with the same letter. A7

HELPING THE HOMELESS | AN EXTREME SUMMER



JOHN HART, STATE JOURNAL

Jessica Mathis, director of development for Porchlight Inc., looks over the hundreds of beds awaiting the evening's influx of homeless men at the city's temporary shelter at 2002 Zeier Road near East Towne. The shelter set a record by hosting 270 guests on Aug. 22.

# Heat adds stress to services

DEAN MOSIMAN  
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On a recent sweltering day, 225 homeless people jammed into The Beacon day shelter Downtown, with many in the evening retreating to emergency shelters or back to campsites, cars and other spots unfit for living.

As federal COVID-19 money and the hotel rooms it funded

fades, and low-cost housing is hard to come by, the number of homeless people in the Madison area remains high — sometimes setting records at area shelters. Many others, especially families, continue to double up out of sight, making them harder to count, advocates said.

While it's difficult to pinpoint how many are homeless

in the community this summer, the need is straining support systems such as the The Beacon and emergency shelters. The men's shelter near East Towne, for example, saw a record 270 guests on the night of Aug. 22.

It doesn't help that being outside this summer has been especially brutal. Canadian

wildfires have prompted a number of air quality advisories, and a mid-August heat wave gave Madison its highest temperatures in a decade. Another hot streak, with high temperatures in the 90s, is forecast for the upcoming Labor Day weekend.

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LEGISLATURE  
ECONOMIC  
DEVELOPMENT

# New audit critical of WEDC direction

TODD RICHMOND  
Associated Press

The performance of Wisconsin's troubled economic development agency has slipped over the past three fiscal years after showing promising improvement, according to a review that the Legislature's auditors released Wednesday.

Republican lawmakers created the quasi-public Wisconsin Economic Development Corp. in 2011. The agency hands out tax credits, grants and loans to businesses. State law requires the Legislative Audit Bureau to review the agency's operations every two years. The review released Wednesday covers fiscal years 2020-21 through 2022-23.

Auditors found that the WEDC's governing board failed to post minutes of board meetings in violation of its policies. Agency officials failed to update their policies to reflect state laws that require the agency to award tax credits to businesses for wages paid only in Wisconsin enterprise zones, which are geographic areas targeted for economic development.

Please see WEDC, Page A5

POLICING | MENTAL HEALTH CALLS

# More cities opt for civilian teams

Goal is to de-escalate situations with EMTs or social workers

JENNIFER PELTZ and JESSE BEDAYN  
Associated Press/Report for America

DENVER — Christian Glass was a geology geek, a painter and a young man beset by a mental health crisis when he called 911 for help getting his car unstuck in a Colorado mountain town last year.

Convinced that supernatural beings were after him, he balked when sheriff's deputies told him

to get out of his car. The officers shouted, threatened and coaxed, body camera video shows. Glass prayed: "Dear Lord, please, don't let them break the window."

They did, and the 22-year-old grabbed a small knife. Then he was hit with bean bag rounds, stun gun charges and, ultimately, bullets that killed him and led to a murder charge against one deputy and a criminally negligent homicide charge against another.

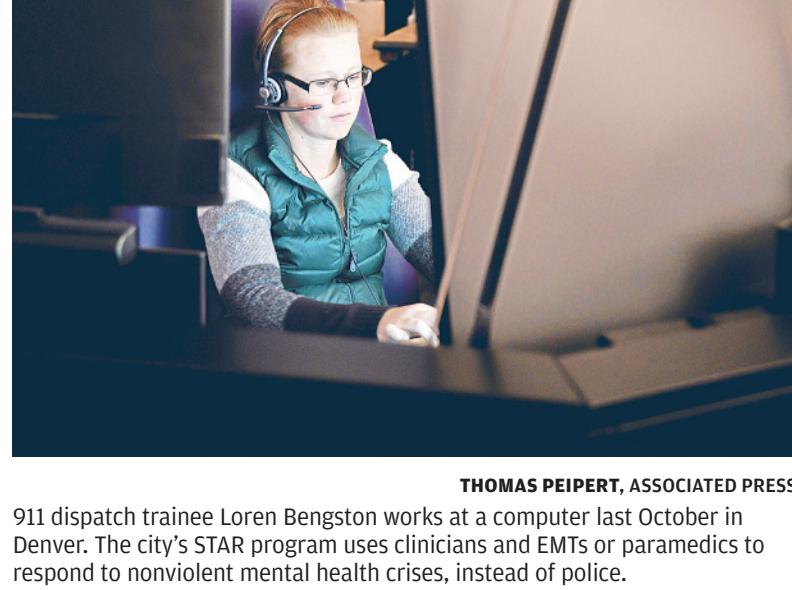
As part of a \$19 million settlement this spring with Glass' parents, Colorado's Clear Creek County this month joined a

growing roster of U.S. communities that respond to nonviolent mental health crises with clinicians and EMTs or paramedics, instead of police.

The initiatives have spread rapidly in recent years, particularly among the nation's biggest cities.

Data gathered by The Associated Press show that at least 14 of the 20 most populous U.S. cities are hosting or starting such programs, sometimes called civilian, alternative or non-police response teams.

Please see POLICING, Page A5



THOMAS PEIPERT, ASSOCIATED PRESS

911 dispatch trainee Loren Bengston works at a computer last October in Denver. The city's STAR program uses clinicians and EMTs or paramedics to respond to nonviolent mental health crises, instead of police.

## Weather

Sunny, pleasant

High 78 • Low 52

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## Homeless

From A1

"There seem to be a lot of new faces and some familiar faces that are returning to homelessness," said Brenda Konkel, a longtime homeless advocate and executive director at Madison Street Medicine, which runs the city's tiny shelter encampment on the Southeast Side. Madison Street Medicine also does medical and housing street outreach, along with medical clinics at The Beacon and the men's shelter.

"Some of it is because of some of the COVID programs ending, but something else seems to be going on as well," she said.

As of Aug. 30, in Dane County, the list of homeless waiting for housing included 609 singles and 72 households with children, said Torrie Kopp Mueller, the city's Continuum of Care coordinator.

While those numbers are high, they're still a bit below summer peaks during the height of the pandemic. But the reduction may be due to a policy change: People now stay on the list for six months instead of two years if they haven't accessed services. There is also still some federal money invested in programs that continue to house people.

"Anecdotally, we are seeing an aging population with mobility needs and health concerns," Kopp Mueller said. "I am hearing that it is taking longer for people to locate housing and they are needing to fill out many more applications than in the past. There has always been a waiting list for family shelter, but we are seeing more families report that they are sleeping in their vehicles or on the streets."

### Living outside

"The homeless population is a dynamic one," said Jim O'Keefe, the city's community services director. "Shelter usage has remained stable in the 200 to 215 range, which historically is on the high end. At the same time, the number of unsheltered homeless is significantly lower than pre-pandemic, meaning more people are taking advantage of shelter."

But it's hard to know how many are living outside due to constant moves because there are no legal places to be, making it hard to deliver outreach services and programs, Konkel said.

The causes continue to be a lack of housing for those with the lowest incomes; landlords who won't rent to people with blemishes on their backgrounds; lack of access to support services for those who struggle to live independently due to age, illness or disability; and a lack of access to health services, Kopp Mueller said.

Increased rents rents have dramatically increased both market rate and renewals, said Casey Becker, division administrator for housing access and affordability at the county Department of Human Services. Also, those exiting housing programs don't have many options to afford the apartment on their own after aid has ended.

Currently, outreach by nonprofit Catalyst for Change has identified 80 households in Madison and Dane County as living outside, and of those 80, about 20 are families with children, Becker said.

Nearly half of the population Catalyst is serving are children, and about 20% are Spanish-speaking. About 42% are in vehicles and 58% on the streets or in tents, she said.

Some with limited resources are legally paying for sites at campgrounds, routinely moving from campground to campground with rules, said Michael Moody and John Adams, co-founders of Catalyst for Change, a nonprofit that contracts to do street outreach work with the homeless for the city and county.

### Out of space

The number of people using The Beacon homeless day shelter, open 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. every day at 615 E. Washington Ave., has been trending up through 2023, especially people who are new to homelessness and who are older,

### How to help

Here's a list of needs from nonprofits serving different segments of the area's homeless population.

**Catholic Charities of Madison**, which operates The Beacon day homeless shelter:

Day-to-day supplies such as personal care items, ponchos, undergarments. An Amazon wish list is at [thebeaconhelps.org/wishlist](http://thebeaconhelps.org/wishlist) with items shipped directly to The Beacon. In-kind gifts such as clothing should be taken to St. Vincent de Paul, where guests get vouchers.

**Porchlight Inc.**, which operates the homeless men's shelter:

**Shelter Supplies:** All travel-size toothbrushes and toothpaste; shampoo, conditioner, 2-in-1 razors and shaving cream; deodorant; Q-tips.

Donations for all Porchlight programs can be dropped off 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. weekdays at 306 N. Brooks St.

For more information, see: [Porchlightinc.org/donate-items/](http://porchlightinc.org/donate-items/)

**The Salvation Army of Dane County**, which runs separate shelters for single women and families:

**Backpacks** for children; school supplies; baby wipes; feminine hygiene products;

hair care products; hair care products for African American guests; toothbrushes and toothpaste; baby clothing, baby blankets, baby bottles, pacifiers and monitors; towels and washcloths; socks; women's underwear.

Donations of new items can be made from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., weekdays, at 3030 Darbo Dr. For more information: [centralusa.salvationarmy.org/danecounty/ways-to-give/](http://centralusa.salvationarmy.org/danecounty/ways-to-give/)

**Madison Street Medicine**, which runs the city's tiny shelter encampment on the Southeast Side and also does medical and housing street outreach and medical clinics at The Beacon and men's shelter:

**Cash donations**; tents; sleeping bags; sunscreen; bug spray; blankets; new or gently used shoes and boots; hand warmers; personal hygiene products; shelf-stable snacks; hats and gloves.

Drop off donations 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. weekdays at 520 University Ave.

**Catalyst for Change**, which does street outreach:

**Sleeping bags and tents.**

For information about making cash donations, see: [catalystforchangeinc.org/](http://catalystforchangeinc.org/)

**Physical donations** can be dropped off at 2617 E Washington Ave.

crease in folks categorized as 'first-time homeless."

they are on a fixed income," she said.

### Tough choices

Need may push hard choices in the future.

"Porchlight is currently still committed to serving all male-identified folks who are seeking shelter," Sutter said, adding that staff has been setting up and removing cots in open spaces to handle spikes in use. "We certainly do not want to return to day limits. We also hope that we do not reach a point where we have to implement a waitlist. We are discussing the issue, but we are not to that point yet."

With men's shelter numbers rising and the numbers living outside still significant, and the new \$21 million men's shelter with a capacity of roughly 250 planned at 1904 Bartillon Drive on the Far East Side, the community may need to consider options. The planned shelter can't get bigger, and at some point, facilities can also hit a tipping point of too many guests, Sutter said.

"If we start to see shelter utilization nearing 300 guests per night, our community will have to have a serious conversation about a multi-shelter system for single men," she said.

"We are seeing more families report that they are sleeping in their vehicles or on the street," Kopp Mueller said.

The Salvation Army can't accommodate all families seeking shelter and currently has 61 families on a waitlist, she said.

"There are a lot of people stating that they are being nonrenewed in August, so I expect the rest of the month to keep on pace," Sorenson said.

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**Emergency shelter**

The Salvation Army is looking to create a new campus on the 600 block of East Washington Avenue that will include a 44-unit apartment building with mostly low-cost units now under construction, and a \$30 million emergency shelter and community center to complement the apartment building by providing comprehensive services to vulnerable women and children.

"The biggest need is our community does not have an emergency shelter for families," Sorenson said.

"If a family becomes homeless today, they have nowhere to go except on a waitlist. So they are forced to sleep outside or possibly in unsafe conditions. In the plans for the Salvation Army's new shelter, we have incorporated that into our design as this continues to be a large unmet need."

### Waiting lists

The lack of housing and other forces causing homelessness are also affecting women and families.

Comparisons are hard over multiple years due to capacity and other changes at the Salvation Army's single women's shelter at 630 E. Washington Ave., but a fair comparison is possible for 2022 and 2023, said Melissa Sorenson, executive director of social services.

At the women's shelter, which has a capacity of 100 and is open from 5 p.m. to 7:30 a.m. daily, use rose 23% in June compared with the same month last summer, 30% in July, and 43% in August, Sorenson said.

"We have seen an increase in the elderly population who have never experienced homelessness before being priced out of their units as

people need to be out of the cold," he said.

### A historic high

The temporary men's shelter operated by Porchlight Inc. at 2002 Zeier Road near East Towne, which is open from 5 p.m. to 8 a.m. daily and provides two meals and other services, has seen a similar surge in use.

In June and July 2019, when homeless men were sheltered in Downtown church basements before the pandemic, Porchlight saw an average 69 guests a night. For the same months in 2020, when the shelter moved to a temporary facility at Warner Park Community Recreation Center on the North Side, Porchlight saw an average 73 guests a night. For the same months in 2021 and 2022, when the shelter moved to the city's former Fleet Services building on the East Side, the number grew to 88 and then 146 a night, Porchlight Director of Services Kim Sutter said.

This year, in June and July, at the facility on Zeier Road, the average jumped to 210

guests a night, Sutter said. And this month, the trend is 231 nightly, with a historic high of 270 guests on Aug. 22.

Some of the reason is that Porchlight was still enforcing a 90-day limit for shelter in 2019, so some potential guests saved days for the winter, and, in 2020 and 2021, vulnerable population hotels for COVID were still open, Sutter said. Still, the recent increases are not only in nightly use but in unduplicated guests annually, she said.

Before COVID, the average length of time homeless for a men's shelter user was 37 days. Last year it was 50 days, and so far in 2023 it is 63 days, Sutter said.

"Each year, we hope to see that number go down as we and our community partners more effectively connect guests to housing resources," she said. "However, resources for single men continue to be in very short supply, which means that with the increase in unduplicated guests comes a noticeable increase in the average length of time homeless. We have also seen an in-

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