Resilient Refugee Navigator program

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Bowling Green has one of the largest per capita refugee population in the United States, with more than 200 arriving in 2021 just before the devastating tornadoes.

In this week’s View from the Hill, Amy Bingham has details on some well-timed legislation that is making it possible for some refugees to study at WKU.

Emily Torres \WKU Senior, Navigator

Issa Mtetebawa \ WKU Freshman

John Sunnyguard \ Global Learning, International Affairs

“Studying is one of my dreams.”

“I’m paired with Issa, he’s from congo and he’s studying business.”

Senior Emily Torres is helping first year student Issa Mtetebawa figure out life at an American university.

“I show them the resources that are available for them.”

It’s a big departure for Issa who’se only been in the United States for a short time.

“In Africa, we are living in community, so we have to share many things with others but in America it’s like a private life.”

Emily is among more than a dozen WKU students who’ve been trained in the Resilient Refugee Navigator program.

“We’ve learned about how the refugees come and what all they do to come to the United States.”

“Students listen to other students…”

Associate Provost John Sunnygard says hosting refugees is nothing new for the city of Bowling Green, it’s being doing that for four decades.

WKU had already formed a task force to identify barriers refugee students face when seeking higher education.

“It includes deans, it includes faculty members, it includes financial aid, the Registrars office, people from our office to identify where we had big holes and where we have big barriers.”

Coincidentally, last year the state legislature approved the ten million Kentucky Innovative Scholarship Pilot program that took affect July first.

“It covers everything. It covers accomodations, it covers tuition and food and living expenses.”

Allowing nineteen students including Issa to realize their dream of pursuing their education after circumstances have led them far from home.

“Emily helping me so much at university. I know restaurants. I know where is library. I know where is some offices.”

With this week’s View from the Hill, I’m Amy Bingham.

Sunnygard says an even broader university refugee training is scheduled to take place in April.

Kentucky ranks 5th in the country for refugee resettlement.

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