

Tips for Tough Times- Media Scan

October 9, 2009

Prepared by NACo's Research Division

Yolo County, Calif.

A federal program to help find and enroll children who are uninsured but eligible for low-income health care, awarded \$399,900 to the Yolo County Children's Alliance, it was announced Friday. The grant will go to the Alliance and its partners: CommuniCare Health Centers, RISE Inc. and the Yolo Family Resource Center. It will help fund active outreach enrollment of children up to 18 years old in health insurance programs such as Medi-Cal, Healthy Families, Kaiser Child Health Plan and Healthy Kids. Yolo County's award is its share of the \$40 million in competitive grants awarded to 69 recipients in 41 states and the District of Columbia by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The Yolo County Children's Alliance said its partners will send out "health access specialists and certified application assistants" to a "broad range of community events" and visit families in their homes, where staff can provide "one-on-one assistance" with insurance applications.

<http://sacramento.bizjournals.com/sacramento/stories/2009/09/28/daily74.html>

Dallas County, Texas

Paper is going the way of the floppy disk and the typewriter in Dallas County courts. The district clerk's office is converting files for the county's criminal, family and civil cases to electronic form and destroying the old-fashioned versions. Most documents will eventually be viewable anywhere via the Internet. The new system could save time and money for attorneys, the clerk's office and the public, said Dallas County District Clerk Gary Fitzsimmons, who is overseeing the switch. Among the potential savings are storage costs for court files. Documents from old cases, however, will remain warehoused. Fitzsimmons said it is not cost-efficient to scan them because three-fourths of cases requested from the clerk's office were from the last two years.

<http://www.dallasnews.com/sharedcontent/dws/dn/latestnews/stories/101109dnmetpaperless.480cd48.html>

Cook County, Ill.

Cook County Board President Todd Stroger wants to hear the siren call of "Lights, camera, action" just a little bit more around these parts. So his staff is working on plans for a Cook County film office, aimed at

eliminating the bureaucracy filmmakers navigate when obtaining permits to shoot ads, movies and television shows in the forest preserves and unincorporated parts of the county. "It's designed to cut out some of the red tape which can be extremely costly to production companies," said Stroger aide, Johnathan Winbush. Simply put, time is money when crews have to spend days not only scouting out locations but searching for the right people for a road-closure permit. Chicago already has a film commission for the city, and the county is not looking to duplicate that effort. But in addition to the 69,000 acres of forest preserve and unincorporated areas, Cook County's film office plans to eventually handle film-related permitting for the 128 municipalities under the county umbrella.

<http://www.suntimes.com/news/politics/1815161,CST-NWS-film09.article>

Milwaukee County, Wis.

Milwaukee County CIO Dennis John plans to propose replacing some 4,500 desktop PCs with thin clients beginning next year. The big step is in some respects a necessity because of a possible \$2 million cut in the county's IT budget. Like many state and local governments, this Wisconsin county is seeing difficult times. Its proposed budget for 2010, starting Jan. 1, would require cutting nearly 400 jobs in IT and other areas, reducing the county's overall workforce to 5,256 people. Previous cuts across government agencies have made it difficult to fund the replacement of old PCs.

The county is supposed to be on a five-year replacement cycle, but a lack of funding has left some users with PCs that are six or seven years old, said John. To stick to the five-year replacement schedule, the county would have to replace 900 PCs a year at a cost of \$1,000 per machine. But the best the county can afford now is 150 new PCs a year. "We have been neglecting our PC replacement program dramatically," John said. Moving to thin clients would save the county more than \$400,000 over the course of five years, he estimated. "It's a significant issue for us," he noted.

http://www.computerworld.com/s/article/9139142/Facing_big_budget_cuts_county_turns_to_thin_clients_SaaS

Santa Cruz County, Calif.

Santa Cruz County leaders see new light for a struggling effort to make solar panels more affordable for thousands of local homeowners. Instead of going at it alone, administrators of a proposed county-run solar financing program are now looking to join a soon-to-be-launched statewide financing effort. The move would remove the prohibitively high start-up costs for the county, yet still advance the local ambition of improving energy efficiency by making cheap loans available for solar and other home improvements.

The county Board of Supervisors on Tuesday approved plans to participate in the statewide financing effort — a pilot program that would initially offer a limited amount of financing for both homeowners

and local businesses but could grow to provide larger sums. Residents of cities and the unincorporated areas will likely be eligible. The loans, up to \$75,000 worth for homeowners, would be available for permanent energy improvements ranging from solar panels to new heating and cooling systems to more efficient windows and insulation

http://www.mercurynews.com/breaking-news/ci_13505738?nclick_check=1

Arlington County, Va.

Arlington County will refinance up to \$258 million in general obligation bonds next week, the board decided Tuesday. "Interest rates have dropped dramatically since last summer. We've been monitoring them and realized we had about \$250 million in bonds that could be refinanced at lower interest rates," said Michelle Cowan, assistant chief financial officer for Arlington County. Cowan said refinancing could save the county more than \$7 million over the life of the bond issues and about \$500,000 per year in interest.

<http://washington.bizjournals.com/washington/stories/2009/10/05/daily56.html>