NACo President Glen Whitley Initiative:  
County Government Works:  
*An Initiative to Raise Awareness and Understanding of Counties*

Examples of How Your County Can Raise County Awareness

Counties across the country are facing tough times in a troubled economy. Now more than ever, it is crucial that counties develop dynamic ways to promote essential and effective county services available to residents who are struggling to make ends meet. Many families, seniors and veterans have fallen on hard times. By promoting available county services, counties can help foster good will and strengthen communities despite shared hardships.

Though many counties concentrate coordinated publicity efforts during National County Government Month (NCGM) each April, it is important to promote county services throughout the year. NACo President Glen Whitley is encouraging all counties to do just that through his 2010-11 Presidential Initiative, “County Government Works – An Initiative to Raise Awareness and Understanding of Counties.”

The following are actual examples of how counties celebrate NCGM. However, these innovative and fun efforts can be used all year around to best fit meet your county’s needs.

**Davis County, Utah**

*Davis County* focused its NCGM activities on the theme “Healthy Counties.” Each week, the county commissioners hosted meetings highlighting different aspects of the county’s health programs and how county residents are positively impacted by them.

- During the first week, the “Healthy Employees” meeting focused on the county Personnel Office’s Wellness Program, which helps employees stay healthy to keep county healthcare benefit costs low.
- In the second week, county commissioners reviewed county health programs and services for babies, families, adults, and senior citizens in a “Healthy People” meeting.
- The third week focused on the environment and prevention. The “Healthy Environment” meeting showcased programs tied to ongoing improvements with air, water, proper food handling, and good waste management practices. The “Healthy Prevention” meeting touched on immunizations, communicable disease control measures, and public health emergency planning policies.
- The fourth and final week focused on “Healthy First Response” programs, presenting
information on the Davis County Sheriff Office’s long-term policy that all deputy sheriffs be certified in both law enforcement and paramedic response.

Davis County’s month-long efforts to promote county health programs are a great example of how to publicize county services for its residents. This model can be utilized for other health-related programs, but it could also be used to showcase your county’s green government and energy-saving initiatives or another program area.

**DeKalb County, Georgia**

**DeKalb County** hosted a number of events to raise public awareness and engage students and other residents in county life. Though many events related to the “Healthy Counties” theme of NCGM, community health was just one aspect of the county’s efforts to increase public awareness. Events ranged from environmental awareness efforts to youth involvement initiatives, engaging the public in county life throughout March and April 2010.

- To kick off NCGM, DeKalb County released the 2010 “Status of Health in DeKalb Report” and announced a series of health fairs, clinics, and other events throughout the month.
- The county hosted a Youth Empowerment Session, focused on healthy living. Through this program, CEO Burrell Ellis and Heart of DeKalb Youth Fellows discussed health challenges faced by today’s youth, including body image, self-esteem, and education development.
- The DeKalb Police and Fire Headquarters hosted a show on public safety. It showcased the county’s public safety capabilities and taught the public about how the county protects its citizens.
- Ellis honored individuals across the county who make a difference in their communities. The first annual Community Heroes Awards recognized leaders in the categories: Community Service, Environmental Change, Communities for Better Health, Youth Volunteer, and Neighborhood Empowerment.
- To conclude the month, Keep DeKalb Beautiful Great American Clean Up events were hosted in neighborhoods countywide.

These events showed a variety of services and programs available to DeKalb County residents. While the main focus was Healthy Counties, the county also showcased a number of other issues and took time to recognize how its citizens make a difference in their communities. Raising awareness of county programs, while recognizing community leaders, could make a difference in the public’s perception of your county government.
Cochise County, Arizona

Cochise County embarked on a month-long campaign to raise awareness about healthy living and county services. As a large rural county, it is a challenge to disseminate information across the county. NCGM provided the perfect opportunity for Cochise County to spread the word about county programs and services, quality recreational programs, and healthy living activities across the county.

- Several events were scheduled throughout the county to promote wellness and healthy lifestyles, including blood pressure clinics, a county-sponsored Jog-A-Thon for middle school students, and farmers’ markets.
- Cochise County hosted “April Pool’s Day” at local hardware stores. These events featured water and swimming safety lessons for young people from fire department representatives.
- The Cochise County Active Adults Program, a free, grant-funded wellness program for residents with risk factors for chronic diseases, hosted several events during the month. Active Adults focuses on teaching residents about ways to improve their overall wellness and enjoy healthy lifestyles.
- Cochise County employees made several presentations at libraries and other county facilities about county services. They also distributed printed materials at each outreach event and released press releases each week.

Cochise County’s outreach efforts are a great example of how a county can educate the public and provide information about what the county does for them every day at the same time. Though these activities were scheduled as a part of NCGM, many of them could be replicated throughout the year.

Prowers County, Colorado

In Prowers County, county officials focused on making county meetings and activities more visible during NCGM. This also taught students about government in action, giving them a real life civics lesson.

- During NCGM, Board of Commissioners meetings were held on the campuses of schools throughout the county. Students were given the opportunity to ask county leaders about the responsibilities and operations of county government. Other local officials were also invited to participate in these meetings and assemblies.
- Commissioners also ate lunch with the students, discussing everyday issues with them in an informal setting.
After the meetings, local media interviewed commissioners, students, and school administrators and aired the interviews on a local radio station. The program received a lot of positive feedback, and plans are underway for similar activities next year.

Prowers County’s meetings at schools throughout the county are a great example of how your county can raise public awareness of county business and educate students at the same time. By getting students involved in their government, they can become more active citizens in their communities. This is a great way to inform future leaders across the country, and this model can be used to engage students in government throughout the year.

Carroll County, Maryland

Carroll County engaged its residents in NCGM in a variety of ways, aiming to show their residents how county programs can work for them and help them save money in the long run. Throughout the month, they hosted events across the county and positively promoted health and community development.

- Carroll County’s premiere event for NCGM was an Energy Savings Expo, hosted by the county’s Sustainable Carroll Office, Carroll Community College, and the Carroll County Times. Residents were invited to learn about how they could save money by shopping for an energy provider and bring their power bills to learn to calculate actual projected savings.
- The county recognized its volunteers and longtime employees. Volunteers were recognized at the local community center, and employees were lauded for their exceptional work during the past winter’s historic storms.
- The Department of Economic Development hosted the Maryland State Agricultural Commission. They toured local farms and agribusinesses, showcasing local agriculture around Carroll County.
- The county held a ribbon-cutting and dedication ceremony for Bark Hill Park.
- Throughout the month, community budget meetings were held at county buildings and libraries around the community to involve residents in the budget planning process.

These events throughout NCGM are a great model for showing how your county’s services can be valuable to your residents. Carroll County did an excellent job promoting their programs and serving their communities.
Cumberland County, North Carolina

Officials in Cumberland County organized a number of events around the “Healthy Counties” theme of this year’s NCGM. Working to promote both employee benefits and other services available to residents, a number of events were scheduled throughout the month.

- Throughout the month, Cumberland County promoted the NACo Prescription Discount Card program, making cards available to residents at displays around the county.
- The county hosted an employee wellness fair. Participating employees got the opportunity to save money on health insurance premiums and screened for high blood pressure, cholesterol, and blood glucose. The county also released the newsletter Healthy Connection.
- Air Quality Month was celebrated during the annual Dogwood Festival. During the festival, student winners of a poster contest were honored, and the importance of air quality was featured during the county’s monthly television segment.
- The County Health Department and Mental Health Center displayed information at the Courthouse and conducted vaccination clinics throughout the community.
- County officials promoted county programs through the media, including a radio talk show appearance by the Public Health Department Director and “Cumberland Matters” newspaper columns in the Fayetteville Observer.

These county-promotion strategies are a great example of ways that your county can increase awareness about your programs throughout the year. Cumberland County did an excellent job laying the foundation for greater county awareness among its residents.

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