

## Counties reach out to diverse recruits to shore up firefighting teams

by **Meredith Moran**  
staff writer

The effects of firefighter shortages are being felt nationwide, as counties struggle to staff their fire services amid increased need and rising call volumes.

Counties across the country, including Wake County, N.C., Kershaw County, S.C. and Mariposa County, Calif., are getting more intentional about the shortage by diversifying their fire services, creating programs to recruit younger people and more women and people of color.

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, roughly 95% of career firefighters in the U.S. are men and about 85% are white — those numbers are even higher in Wake County, at 97% and 94%, respectively. The county leveraged \$2.3 million in American Rescue Plan Act to address both its firefighter shortage and its diversity gap, partnering with Wake Technical Community College and six county fire departments to recruit a wider demographic to their fire services department.

The funding allowed the county to, for the first time, pay people going through the 38-week EMT (emergency medical technician) and firefighter

academy training, with the exception of the city of Raleigh and town of Cary, which have separate fire services and previously provided pay throughout the training process.

“We looked at what some of the challenges that our fire services folks were facing, and we looked at the demographics and we recognized that there’s a large population of people who haven’t been recruited for positions like this, they may not even be aware,” said Wake County Manager David Ellis.

“We had one huge barrier in place ... that’s 38 weeks that we were asking folks to not receive a check or any benefits, so we changed that and just got out and knocked on doors of our partners out in the community and just really put the word out about the program and how we really wanted to engage a population that hadn’t previously been engaged in fire services.”

Darrell Alford, Wake County’s Fire Services and Emergency Management director, said the county recognized it needed to update its recruitment strategy, which had traditionally been letting people know of openings through word of mouth and postings on the fire services’ website. To engage

See **RECRUITING** page 3

## Colorado county’s dirt roads shine for cyclists seeking thrills



**Cyclists pedal up a gravel road in Las Animas County, Colo. The county roads, located in a scenic area, attracted 700 entrants for The Rad Dirt Fest last month.** Photo courtesy of Life Time

by **Charlie Ban**  
senior writer

Las Animas County’s roads form the skeleton of the largest county in Colorado. They connect a community fueled by metallurgical coal mining, farming and ranching, but also hold the potential for a new and unexpected economic growth. And they’re not even paved.

Bicyclists have flocked to the county seat of Trinidad over the last three years to ride in the shadow of the Spanish Peaks, and the wheels are moving for outdoor recreation to become a bigger part of the local scene.

“It is spectacular, both the gravel itself and just the vistas,” said Tamira Jenlink, event director for the last two years of the Rad Dirt Fest. “We can ride courses that are almost entire-

ly off-pavement — that’s what our cyclists want. And 90% of that gravel is some of the best gravel in the state. Just how it’s maintained... the county does an amazing job.”

The natural setting helps.

“It’s fantastic climbing,” she said. You pair it with the scenery and it’s such a stunning combination. You find your-

See **ROADS** page 4

## ‘Singing cowboy’ commissioner connects with Texas constituents

by **Meredith Moran**  
staff writer

Once deemed “the most recognizable face on the Houston music scene” by *The Houston Chronicle*, Presidio County, Texas Commissioner David Beebe can more recently be found discussing county

roads at a Marfa coffee shop, strolling across the county seat with his Border Collie Australian Shepherd mix — who may or not be sporting her “Vote for Beebe” sweater — or cooking chili at the Presidio County Courthouse.

Beebe fell into public service after moving to Marfa in

2007 to convert an old funeral home into a music venue. Running into inconsistent zoning regulations, Beebe decided there needed to be more transparency in government and started regularly attending city council meetings and

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‘In small counties, we’re just regular people trying to be public servants’

From TEXAN page 1

posting summaries on his blog, which led to him actually serving on the Marfa City Council, and then later as Presidio County’s Justice of the Peace and his current role as county commissioner.

Beebe has kept that mission to increase transparency through his own public service and holds regular “office hours” at local coffee shops and restaurants to discuss what’s going on in the county and how it affects residents.

“You can just come and ask me questions or come and listen to other people or share your criticisms, suggestions, small things, whatever,” Beebe said.

“... We’ve got a lot of statewide legislation that’s affecting what we do here on the border, so there’s a lot to cover and to consider, and it’s all real confusing, so it’s my job to get

educated and try to break it down for people about sort of how things are going.

“... I think the public often-times thinks that elected officials are not available, and the honest truth is in small counties, we’re all just regular people trying to be public servants.”

Another way Beebe connects with Presidio County residents is through music — both his own performances and DJing his own radio show “Night Train Express.”

Beebe has played in numerous bands and in what he deems to be thousands of shows since he started performing original music and covers in high school.

Now Beebe primarily performs Ranchera music, a popular Texas/Mexican border genre, with his musical partner Primo Carrasco.

The duo released their second album in 2022, and Beebe

said the music has helped him build a relationship with the community, particularly with Presidio County’s Hispanic population, which makes up about 80% of the county.

“Music is a bridge, so if somebody hates you because you’ve made a decision on the commissioner’s court that they disagree with, but they see you the next weekend playing at the Marfa Lights Festival, they’re probably not going to hate you as much,” Beebe said.

“There were people who would not talk to me who now they feel like we’re on the same page because we know the same music. “It’s kind of crazy actually, but music is one of those things that when it’s done right and for the right reasons, there are no losers.”

Beebe has been DJ’ing for Marfa Public Radio every Tuesday from 9 p.m. to midnight since 2008. He plays what he describes as Southern soul and R&B classics and has many loyal listeners — some of whom are incarcerated at a prison within the radio station’s broadcast range and who he’s received letters from on and off over the past decade.

“There’s a maximum-security prison within our listening range and the inmates that are on good behavior are permitted to purchase an earphone and can listen to the radio in their cells on the earphone after 8 p.m.,” Beebe said. “Those guys of course don’t have email or telephones, but they can pay to mail letters, so I have a group of prisoners that listen to the show every Tuesday and they write in and give requests and thank me profusely.

“... When something like good songs on the radio can be the highlight of their week,



Presidio County, Texas Commissioner David Beebe (above) plays with his band, performing a popular Texas/Mexican music genre that has helped him build a relationship with his community.

that just tells you how bad things are over there, but it also means this radio show is having an effect on people that value that, and that’s real cool.”

The 6,000-person Presidio County is unique in that in many respects, it’s your average rural, West Texas county,

aside from its county seat of Marfa. The small desert city has been dubbed “the country’s coolest art town” by Vogue magazine and is known for its sculptural art, like the Prada Marfa installation, and has not one, but two NFT (dig-

See TEXAN page 12

SNAP/STATS

Firefighter Shortage

STATISTICS	BY THE NUMBERS
No. of fire depts in United States:.....	29,542
Percentage that are volunteers: .....	65%
No. of depts all-volunteers: .....	18,873
Depts. that are “some volunteers:”.....	5,335
Depts. that are “mostly career:” .....	2,549
Depts. that are all-career: .....	2,785
Cost-savings from use of volunteers: .....	\$46.9 billion

Source: National Fire Protection Association

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# Mariposa County partners with high school to promote firefighting as a career

From **RECRUITING** page 1

a wider audience, the county created a grassroots campaign, working with non-profits and faith-based organizations, putting on expositions at community centers and advertising on the radio to get the word out about open positions in fire services.

"In order for somebody in the past to go through the [fire services] academy, you had to be still living with mom and dad or your spouse had to be supporting you, something to where you didn't need to get paid for 38 weeks, so that was one of the first barriers," Alford said. "The next thing was changing the way that the fire departments were recruiting ... We met with some [people of color] who were already in the fire service in Wake County, and we asked them, 'What drew you to this profession and what can we change to make it better?'"

"We also had some workshops for the fire chiefs where we kind of changed cultures, you know, maybe not asking a fireman to live within the fire district. [Previously] that was some of the rules – if you were going to serve on X fire department, then you had to live within so many miles of X fire station, so changing that culture, recruiting more women and making the departments look more like their communities."

Following the recruitment push, Wake County Fire Services received more than 1,000 applications for 36 positions. For the next fire services academy training, which starts this week, the county has received more than 900 applications for 18 positions, according to Alford.

There were 200,000-plus more volunteer firefighters across the country in 1984 than there were in 2020, while emergency call volumes tripled in that timeframe, leaving volunteer firefighters overworked and burned out.

The pandemic exacerbated that issue further, making it even more difficult for rural counties like Kershaw County, S.C. that function primarily through volunteer firefighters.

"A lot of times, people don't really know the fire services are volunteer in their area, a lot of people just have that perception of, they call 911, somebody is going to show up," said Will Glover, Kershaw County fire chief. "... COVID put a huge damper on us as far as recruiting and maintaining [staff]. During that time, the fire service took a hit on volunteers, and since then, we've been struggling to try to catch up."

As a response, Kershaw County Fire Service has hired a recruitment and retention officer and been more intentional in getting the word out about needing volunteers through a TV recruitment campaign and billboards.

"We're not the only fire service that's struggling to bring in new volunteers — across the nation, it's become an issue and I think there are so many different things that play into it," Glover said. "I think that being a volunteer now, there's more training requirements than there used to be 30 to 40 years ago, so there's a lot of time requirement and ... I feel like the work-life balance, people value that 'life' side more than the 'work' side now, and it's hard to commit so much time to volunteer."

Kershaw County also part-

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Following a recruitment push working with non-profits and faith-based organizations, Wake County saw 1,000 applications for 36 positions.

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ners with the school district on a junior firefighter program for high schoolers to get a younger crowd involved in fire services, which has an increasingly aging workforce, particularly in rural areas.

According to a 2020 study by the National Fire Protection Association, more than a third of volunteer firefighters in rural areas are 50 or older.

Mariposa County, Calif. has a similar program in partnership with Mariposa County High School, Grizzley Fire, which provides training to students as young as freshmen in high school who are interested in becoming firefighters or emergency medical responders.

Due to increased demand, Mariposa County also created

'Extra-Help' part-time paid positions last year to help out California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (Cal-Fire) firefighters and volunteers.

"Fire Services responds to way more than just fires," Glover said. "We respond to medical calls, hazmat calls, wrecks, so call volume has gone up and to supplement that a little bit you've seen fire departments hire on paid staffing, which, 15 years ago, if you had three paid departments in an area, then they got all of the applications, well now those three departments have to compete with seven more departments that have now put full time staff in order to try to supplement the volunteer side a little bit, so there's more competition."

Mariposa County has also opened up "medical emergency response only" volunteering as an option, according to Mariposa County Supervisor Rosemarie Smallcombe. These volunteers would be able to perform CPR or set someone's arm in the case of an emergency, but wouldn't be the ones to respond to the fire itself.

"At least two-thirds of the calls for our fire department are medical, so we added a 'medical-only' responder in order to augment the resources that we have available to re-

spond to those kinds of calls," Smallcombe said. "And that's particularly important because Mariposa County, like a lot of rural areas, has a fair number of older folks. The California Department of Aging says that 40% of our population is 60+, so that emergency medical response is a big part of that."

"And that's particularly important because Mariposa County, like a lot of rural areas, has a fair number of older folks. The California Department of Aging says that 40% of our population is 60-plus, so that emergency medical response is a big part of that."

Former Fire Chief Richard C. Kline of Plymouth, Minn., writing in *Fire Engineering*, said volunteer firefighter programs are using incentives to attract new volunteers.

That might come in the form of both tangible and non-tangible "rewards," such as employee recognition programs, childcare, gift vouchers, tuition reimbursement, cash bonuses and professional development opportunities. Health and fitness programming is one more enticement.

A survey shows fire department-sponsored fitness programs would help recruit new volunteers and promote teamwork. **CN**





# Opportunity knocked for Las Animas County after years of vigilant road maintenance

From **ROADS** page 1

self in some kind of an environment that brings out that pioneering part of you and it's challenging you to see what's around that corner. It engages you with how beautiful it is."

The roads swelled at the end of September with more than 700 people from around the country as they rode 110-, 70- or 40-mile loops. And plenty of family members came with them, some from Austria, South Africa or Switzerland.

"It's an opportunity to gain exposure and then showcase the magnificent work that our county employees do on the county roads," said Felix Lopez, chairman of the county commission. "We have two state parks for their families to explore. We have beautiful architecture, and we have a vibrant culture. We might not have a shopping mall, but we're proud of what we offer."

The county's economic model is similar to Lake County, where Jenlink lives and manages 14 Life Time's cycling and running races and serves as interim president of the Lake County Economic Development Corporation. And the seats of the respective counties offer parallels. The Leadville 100 footrace started in 1983 in response to a mine's closure, with support from then-Lake County Commissioner Ken Chlouber.

"Trinidad, much like Leadville, has a little bit of that boom and bust," Jenlink said. "They've really been looking for the thing that stabilizes that economy."



**Rad Dirt Fest participants cover one of the smoother and flatter gravel roads in Las Animas County, Colo.** Photo courtesy of Life Time

A 2017 study conducted by Colorado Mountain College estimated that the Leadville Race Series brings \$15 million annually to the local community. In 2019, the U.S Bureau of Economic Analysis found that outdoor recreation accounted for 3.1% of Colorado's state gross domestic product, putting the state in the top 20% nationally.

The Headwaters Economics research firm found that recreation counties' economic benefits include both short-term support for tourism-related businesses and longer-term support by recruiting new residents who may be business owners, entrepreneurs, or workers. It helps boost earnings per job across a community. Those new jobs could include concessioners or small-scale manufacturing that support growing the recreation sector.

"Trinidad could really benefit from that opportunity of something like that, that helps

stabilize the economy but also maximizes on the outdoor recreation potential," she said.

The start in Las Animas County was not promising, though. In 2021, the inaugural event, which drew more than 650 cyclists, coincided

don't want them around here again," Lopez said. "Since then, we have had many discussions, many interactions between the community and organizers that have generated a lot of mutual respect and now both can pretty much coexist and

are really attempting to do and this happened to us without even going out and hiring a marketing firm," Lopez said. "I think this could be the birth of a different economy that we were not really planning here in Trinidad."

While Jenlink is excited to hear the community engagement work has paid off — she made 15 trips to Trinidad from Leadville ahead of this year's race — she is cautious not to rush in too fast.

"Right now, Lake County is overwhelmed by the events because our infrastructure doesn't quite match the demand," she said. "That's been one of the pieces of working with Trinidad and Las Animas County: Thinking about how we do this so that we don't get so big before you have the infrastructure in place to handle some of these events — is there enough lodging and capacity? That sends a message to res-

**"We can create a diversified economic exposure in development that most counties are really attempting to do and this happened to us without even going out and hiring a marketing firm." - Commissioner Felix Lopez**

with the middle of antelope hunting season. Cyclists also surprised a lot of locals, both on the roads and with some minor private property incursions. When Jenlink joined the race management company in 2022, one of her first priorities was improving the relationship with Las Animas County.

"We had quite a few farming and ranching community members who said, 'If this keeps going the way it is, we

thrive on both ends.

"The ride was two days ago, and I haven't gotten any phone calls from residents. That's a good sign."

Lopez appreciates the veritable windfall of attention the county has received from the endurance community — all because the county road and bridge crews do their jobs well.

"We can create a diversified economic exposure in development that most counties

idents that we're not saying, 'Suck it up, yeah, we're going to bring this in because it's getting us revenue.' On one hand, that is true, we need to maximize that revenue, but it can be done with a lot of care.

"I think overall, Las Animas County is in a really good position to do that and to empower their businesses and residents to participate."

**See *ROADS* page 12**



Looking to hire county staff?  
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# On Mental Health Day, invest in employee mental wellbeing



by **Chelsea Sweithelm**

Did you know that Oct. 10 is World Mental Health Day? According to the World Health Organization, the goal of this annual observance is to “raise awareness of mental health issues around the world and to mobilize efforts in support of mental health.”

As burnout, anxiety and mental exhaustion rates reach record levels, improving mental wellbeing in the workplace has been a major focus for employers across the globe.

The statistics surrounding mental health and substance use challenges in the workplace are staggering.

Globally, an estimated 12 billion working days are lost every year to depression and anxiety at a cost of \$1 trillion per year in lost productivity. Untreated mental illness costs U.S. organizations a staggering \$3.7 trillion every year.

And approximately 10.8 million full-time employees face substance use challenges.

Despite the numbers, fewer than 10% of employees feel their workplace is free of stigmas surrounding mental health — a perception that can discourage them from asking for help.

You can make an impact and create a healthier workforce for county employees. #BeTheDif-

ference for county workers with strategies for fostering a happy, healthy work environment.

- Invest in wellbeing programs that focus on mental and physical strength such as gym memberships, meditation or yoga classes, virtual fitness apps, spa services or telemedicine apps.
- Offer continuing education courses to develop professional skills. This tells employees you care about their professional growth.
- Provide wellness stipends and paid time off to help employees prioritize their mental wellbeing. Wellness stipends are taxable benefits paid to employees to help cover wellness expenses, such as copays at the doctor or massages.
- Train yourself and your colleagues in mindful and empathetic leadership. Practicing these skills in your own interactions creates a ripple effect that benefits the entire organization.
- Survey employees for feedback on how their organization

can meet their mental health needs. Benefits such as mental health vacation days can go a long way toward supporting employee mental wellbeing.

- Bring Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) at Work to your workplace. This skills-based mental health training program teaches employees how to notice and support a co-worker who may be experiencing a mental health or substance use challenge or crisis in a work environment and connect them with appropriate employee and community resources.
- After successfully completing MHFA at Work, employees will be able to recognize and respond to signs and symptoms that may indicate a mental health or substance use challenge in a colleague or friend.

Taking these steps shows employees that you care about more than their productivity.

To learn more about offering MHFA to your county employees, visit [MHFA.org/NACo](https://mhfa.org/NACo). And, join MHFA in honoring World Mental Health Day on Oct. 10, by taking action to make wellbeing for all a global priority. **CN**

*Chelsea Sweithelm is the communications manager at the National Council for Mental Wellbeing.*



## CYBERSECURITY MONTH

# Counties can lead during Cybersecurity Awareness Month

by **Rita Reynolds**

It's that time of year again. Cyber Security Awareness Month!

Hard to believe that it has been 20 years since the inauguration and raised awareness of cyber security became official.

So much has changed in these 20 years, from the onslaught of social media and the invention of the cell phone to the proliferation of internet-connected devices such as cameras, baby monitors and digital assistants.

No wonder that our society is faced with a barrage of cyber threats every day.



Consequently, the importance of cyber defenses has become even more critical for both work and personal lives. Rising to the challenge has been the goal of various national organizations, including the author of cyber awareness month, the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA). In recent years CISA has partnered with the National Cybersecurity Alliance. This partnership has allowed for more resources, toolkits and guidance to be made available so that you can build a strong cybersecurity education campaign for your employees and other stakeholders.

For this year, the focus is on four key behaviors. These themes sound familiar because they have been a focus in years past. And they still are.

- Use strong passwords and a password manager — tips

here include longer passwords or phrases that are hard to guess and are unique

- Turn on multifactor authentication (MFA) — MFA provides an extra layer of security by requiring a sec-



ond method to confirm your identity, such as a pin sent via email or cell phone text

- Recognize and report phishing — while this is becoming more difficult to recognize due to generative AI, still look for misspellings and don't respond to requests for personal and/or financial information. Rather, report the email to your IT helpdesk or support

- Update software: For your work device, remember those “pesky” notifications are intended to protect you. So, don't delay; click “yes” to install the software update

Following these themes, local government is encouraged to take action to promote cyber awareness during the month of October. Activities can include:

- Lunch-n-learn sessions based on the weekly theme
- Weekly emails with reminders and practical tips
- Games and prizes for identifying phishing emails or other cyber risky behavior
- Videos with quizzes at the end to test end user knowledge
- Social media posts
- Events partnering with local educational institutions
- Stickers, posters, infographics
- Table-top or simulation exercises

These are just a few ideas. More opportunities for education can be found through

See **SECURITY** page 7



# Family response is key to treating opioid disorders

by **Liz Ward**

Reducing barriers to opioid use disorder treatment can save lives.

With that in mind, Milwaukee County, Wis. is taking steps to make sure those resources are as close to the people who need them as possible, including strategic placing of harm-reduction vending machines in historically underinvested neighborhoods.

Community-driven efforts, facilitated by social service connection organizations like WestCare, highlight the importance of collaboration between service systems, youth engagement and environmental prevention.

Those were just some of the ideas presented when NA-Co's Opioid Solutions Leadership Network and Prenatal-to-Three County Leaders Academy met there in August.

The cohorts also toured key elements of Milwaukee

County's health and human services system, including the Penfield Children's Center, where county leaders learned about the importance of early intervention services for young children.

At Coffee Makes You Black, Opioid Solutions Leadership Network members heard from key community partners in holistic and behavioral health service provision. The discussion focused on practical strategies to address the urgency of the overdose crisis, with a focus on eliminating hurdles that prevent people from accessing necessary resources. This included creating same-day access to services and implementing a "no wrong door" approach, where those with behavioral health needs can be linked to treatment and recovery services through interaction with any organization, including county entities throughout the criminal legal system.



**Travis Landry, regional vice president of WestCare Wisconsin, Inc. speaks about treatment services in Milwaukee County, Wis.** Photo by Jennifer Anderson

Crucially, involving individuals with firsthand experience in substance use challenges was highlighted, as their insights are invaluable in understanding the complexities of

their needs.

Additional emphasis was placed on family-centered care, recognizing that families are the cornerstone of communities. Representatives and

"graduates" of the sober living homes run by Samad's House spoke to the importance of having gender-specific care

*See OPIOIDS page 8*

## RURAL ACTION

## CAUCUS

## REGISTER NOW

## SYMPOSIUM

**November 5-7, 2023**

**Greenbrier County, West Virginia**





Training available for cybersecurity

From SECURITY page 5

these additional resources:

CISA Cyber Hygiene Services: CISA offers several scanning and testing services to help organizations reduce their exposure to threats by taking a proactive approach to identify and notify organizations of occurring or emerging threats.

CISA Cybersecurity Training and Exercises: CISA is essential for keeping workers knowledgeable on cybersecurity.

These resources provide access to cybersecurity training and workforce development materials to develop a more resilient and capable cyber nation.


NCA Resources and Guides: The National Cybersecurity Alliance provides articles and other resources you need to raise awareness at home, work, school, or throughout your community.

National Initiative for Cybersecurity Education (NICE)

Cybersecurity Career Awareness Week: Join NICE in promoting awareness and exploration of cybersecurity careers by hosting an event, participating in an event near you, or engaging students with cybersecurity content!

In closing, CISA and CSA are taking it one step further by announcing the launch of a new enduring theme called “Secure Our World.”

October should not be the only month that cyber tips and best practices are shared; this effort should be year-round and 24/7.

Watch for more guidance and resources throughout the year, not just the weeks leading up to October. 

**Call to Action:** Sign up to become a Cybersecurity Awareness Month Champion. Visit CISA’s campaign partner, National Cybersecurity Alliance, to sign up for their campaign updates, newsletter, and more. Rita Reynolds is NACo’s chief information officer.

PROFILES IN SERVICE

DAN P. JOYCE

NACo Board Member  
County Judge  
Malheur County, Ore.

Number of years active in NACo: 20-plus

Years in public service: 24

Occupation: Rancher, County Judge

Education: High School

The hardest thing I’ve ever done: Deal with cancer patients, especially family members and close friends.

Three people (living or dead) I’d invite to dinner: Thomas Jefferson, Pope Francis and Gordon B. Hinckley

A dream I have is to: Complete my term of office.

The most adventurous thing I’ve ever done is: Travel – site visits.



JOYCE

My favorite way to relax is: Travel.

Every morning I read: Online news, plus Livestock Dailies.

My favorite meal is: Lamb chops with spinach salad.

My pet peeve is: People who do not know when to turn it off.

My motto is: Treat people in the same manner as you would like to be treated.

The last book I read was: “Three Rules for Living a Good Life,” by Lou Holtz

My favorite movie is: “Quigley Down Under” and “Top Gun”

My favorite music is: Country

My favorite U.S. president is: Kennedy, Trump and Truman

My county is a NACo member because: Our county is 70% federally owned – NACo membership allows us to be heard and allows us to be heard collectively in a manner we can move our issues forward.

You’d be surprised to learn that I:

Worked in Nevada on a sheep ranch and rode racehorses in Australia.



WORD SEARCH

FRANKLIN COUNTY, OHIO

Created by Mary Ann Barton

Y Q M S B S K H R E S T A U R A N T D N  
X R E W D L O U E F Y D U J I B G U R H  
H A O F T E A X P U G H S M Y N M T K F  
J E Z T R D G F A P J G S J O N N J J S  
I Q I C S I E C P L I S X I Q T C Y E L  
F B N B R I X F S X Q Q T A V H Q A X H  
P O I W P L H M W C S A V X R U X O E Z  
B U S I N E S S E O L Y H P A R G O E G  
C Z W T C A G R N U Y H N F A B T A U N  
N O G J R B N T P R V K I F V E S S P Q  
A E L E I Q H O B T F S M E Z R E F Z I  
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Q C E O Y L U C A A C T U Q Z F Z Y O Q  
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**COURTHOUSE:** There have been several county courthouses – the very first was a log jail built in 1804.

**FAIR:** The Franklin County Fair began in 1852 and takes place each July.

**GEOGRAPHY:** The county is 544 square miles.

**HISTORY:** The county was established April 30, 1803. It was originally part of Ross County.

**NEWSPAPER:** The Columbus Dispatch is the local newspaper, published daily since July 1, 1871.

**POPULATION:** The county is the most populous in the state, at more than 1.3 million, according to the Census.

**RESTAURANT:** The oldest restaurant in the county is Ringside Café, which opened in 1897. Its known for its burgers named for boxers.

**ROSES:** The county is home to the Columbus Park of Roses, one of the largest public rose gardens in the country with 12,000 rose specimens.

**THURBER:** Humorist and cartoonist James Thurber was a native of the county. His works were published in The New Yorker and made into films including “The Secret Life of Walter Mitty.”

**UNIVERSITY:** The county is home to Ohio State University, where nearly 60,000 students are enrolled. It was established in 1870.

**AIRPORT:** The Rickenbacker International Airport is owned by Franklin County.

**BENJAMIN:** The county was named for founding father Benjamin Franklin.

**BILES:** World champion gymnast Simone Biles was born in the county.

**BUSINESS:** Some of the largest employers in the county include JPMorgan Chase, Nationwide and Honda.

**COLUMBUS:** The county seat of Franklin County is Columbus, the state capital, which is named for Italian explorer Christopher Columbus.

ON THE MOVE

NACo OFFICERS

- President **Mary Jo McGuire** and Public Affairs Coordinator **Alyxa Hawkins** attended the Idaho Association of Counties Annual Conference in Ada County.
- McGuire also attended the Nevada Association of Counties Annual Conference in Elko County.
- Second Vice President **J.D. Clark** attended the County Judges and Commissioners Association of Texas Annual Conference in Taylor County.

NACo STAFF

- Legislative Director **Jonathan Shuffield** attended the Montana Association of Counties Annual Conference in Silver Bow County.
- Membership Director **Kim Hall** attended the Wyoming County Commissioners Association Annual Conference in Natrona County.



# Equitable treatment distribution requires active community engagement

From OPIOIDS page 6

for women in recovery and in finding community.

“My fight is to save lives. My fight is to show women that they can recover, recover their lives and live holistically,” founder Tahira Malik told the cohort.

Through peer-learning discussions, county leaders determined that equitable treatment distribution requires active community engagement and breaking barriers and addressing access disparities.

By leveraging cross-cutting approaches, counties can en-

sure that no one is overlooked and that services can be designed to save lives, strengthen families and contribute to thriving communities.

The national convening promoted the need to strengthen cross-systems collaboration to promote positive outcomes for children and families, especially those experiencing systemic and structural barriers.

NACo’s Prenatal-to-Three County Leaders Academy is part of the NACo Research Foundation’s Counties for Kids initiative, which supports county leaders who are committed to making investments

in infants, toddlers and their families. To learn more, visit [www.countiesforkids.org](http://www.countiesforkids.org).

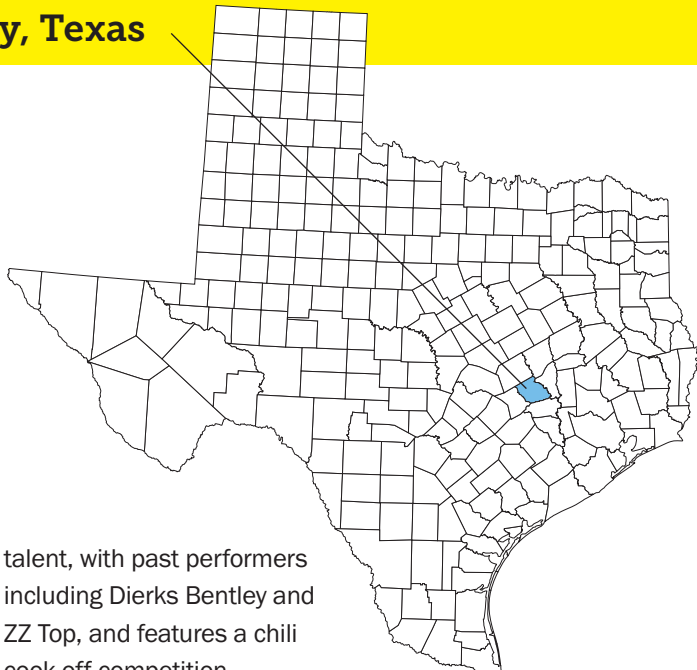
NACo’s Opioid Solutions Center empowers local leaders to invest resources in effective treatment, recovery, prevention and harm reduction practices that save lives and address the underlying causes of substance use disorder. To learn more, visit <https://www.naco.org/resources/opioid-solutions-center>. **CN**

[www.naco.org/resources/opioid-solutions-center](https://www.naco.org/resources/opioid-solutions-center). **CN**

Ward is a program associate in NACo’s Counties Futures Lab’s Opioid Solutions Center.

## GET TO KNOW...

### Burleson County, Texas



**Welcome, Burleson County, Texas!** Founded in 1846, the county was named for Republic of Texas Vice President Edward Burleson.

**The county seat of Caldwell, the “Kolache Capital of Texas,” hosts the annual Kolache Festival, which celebrates the area’s Czech heritage. The festival — which has polka music and dancing, a Kolache-eating contest and a farm equipment show —** attracts more than 30,000 people each year to the small city, which has a population of about 4,000. The city was named for Matthew “Old Paint” Caldwell, a Texas Ranger who signed the Texas Declaration of Independence.

The town of Snook, also located in Burleson County, was originally an all-Czech settlement. Its home to Sodalak’s Original Country Inn, the creator of chicken fried bacon. The dish, which is bacon-battered and deep-fried like a chicken fried steak, is served with gravy. Snook also hosts the annual Chilifest music festival, which attracts big talent, with past performers including Dierks Bentley and ZZ Top, and features a chili cook-off competition.

## Palm Beach County Public Auction (Thrift Store)



**Palm Beach County Board of County Commissioners**

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The ghost town of Brazos Bottom, better known locally as “The Bottoms,” takes up nearly one-fourth of the county. The county’s newspaper, The Burleson County Tribune, has been publishing for 134 years.

Deanville, another town in the county, has 12 statues of children in honor of the Orphan Train movement, where nearly 250,000 homeless and orphaned children in New York City in the 19th and 20th centuries were placed on trains across the country. The statues, which are in the Deanville Heritage Museum, honor the 12 children who arrived by train to Burleson County.

Burleson County is in Texas’ Bravos Valley, which is often referred to as “Aggieland” for Texas A&M University, which is located in neighboring Brazos County. Texas A&M, the first public higher learning institution in the state, is also home to President George H.W. Bush’s Presidential Library, which features a section of the Berlin Wall.

*Get to Know features new NACo member counties*



Contestants vie for the top prize in a Kolache-eating contest in Burleson County, Texas.



## BRIGHT IDEAS | MONTGOMERY COUNTY, Md.

# Outdoor Workout Area, Opened During Pandemic, Caters to Baby Boomers

### PROBLEM:

During the pandemic, Montgomery County, Md. became concerned about how the vulnerable aging population would be able to exercise with a closed gym.

### SOLUTION:

Create an outdoor workout area to help revitalize and engage the county's older population.

by Meredith Moran  
staff writer

Montgomery County, Md.'s recreation department is helping its aging population stay active with its Holiday Park Senior Center, the first of its kind in the region.

Research shows that exercising outdoors has a range of benefits over working out in an indoor gym, including "greater feelings of revitalization and positive engagement, decreased tension, confusion, anger and depression," according to a study published by the American Chemical Society.

The county previously lacked an outdoor workout area specifically geared toward an aging population, so the Holiday Park Senior Center saw an opportunity to fill a void when the COVID-19 pandemic left older adults — the most vulnerable group to the virus — without a way to exercise while socially distanced. Another benefit to the outdoor nature of the fitness area is that people can use the space outside of the center's hours of operation, which fitness room where they're still a little fearful to be around people," said Sara Swarr, who manages the Montgomery County Recreation Department's senior programs and facilities.

"It also has generated a lot of response that now seniors can our open hours, as long as it's still light outside, they can still feel very comfortable coming in using the outdoor fitness equip-



A local resident works out at the outdoor gym designed for Baby Boomers at the Holiday Park Senior Center in Montgomery County, Md.  
Photos courtesy of Montgomery County



An outdoor gym created for Baby Boomers during the pandemic allows users to work out in the outdoors.

ment."

Dolors Ustrell, the center's recreation specialist who spearheaded the outdoor fitness area, has a background in social gerontology, which focuses on social participation among the elderly and helped inform her research on what workout equipment is best suited for senior citizens, she said. Ustrell said growing up in Catalonia, where outdoor fitness areas are

the norm, inspired her to look into how the county could cater specifically to its older residents. All of the equipment is also ADA compliant, according to Swarr.

"Some of our machines are universal, where seniors could sit and use a hand bike, but then also wheelchair up if you come from the reverse side to utilize that as well and we have a lot of pieces that focus a lot on flexi-

bility, stretching and mobility," Swarr said. "We have a few pieces that might have some weight to it, but the weight is adjustable and it only goes up to 40 pounds to be more friendly and easy to use for the older population."

While the outdoor fitness area was created specifically with people aged 55 and up in mind, it's open to any Montgomery County resident who wants to use it. The senior center shares the county's recreation building with the youth development office, and Swarr said she's noticed kids will come over and use the equipment with the seniors while they're waiting to get picked up — another element of socialization, she added.

The outdoor fitness area is an addition to the center's existing services, which include social programming including writing classes, board games and special interest seminars and an indoor gym and computer lab

that offers technology training.

James Monteith frequents the center and said he's seen improvements in his health since utilizing the outdoor workout space, specifically in regulating his blood pressure. It's nice to see the county investing in its aging population, he added.

"I gravitate toward the life[ cycle] machine because of my arthritis," James said. "I have a sports doctor and he says, 'When you have arthritis like that, work it.' In other words, don't strain it, but exercise. It increases the flexibility in my leg and I can walk up and down the stairs fine, and that's why it's important that we have things like this." **CN**

Montgomery County, Md.'s Recreation's Holiday Park Senior Center Outdoor Fitness Area won a 2023 NACo Achievement Award for Best in Category in the Parks and Recreation category.



# NEWS FROM ACROSS THE NATION



## CALIFORNIA

**LOS ANGELES COUNTY** Metropolitan Transportation Authority is partnering with the city of Santa Monica to create the Metro “One Car Challenge.” Starting in November, 200 residents of households with multiple vehicles will be paid a weekly stipend of up to \$119.80 for five weeks under the condition that they **use only one car**.

## IDAHO

**BONNEVILLE COUNTY** is adopting the National Sheriffs’ Association’s Inmate Growth Naturally and Intentionally Through Education (IGNITE) program, which provides job certifications and connections to **job opportunities upon release for incarcerated individuals**. Bonneville County is the first county in the state to adopt IGNITE in hopes of reducing recidivism. The program will also include substance use disorder and mental health education.

## INDIANA

The **SHELBY COUNTY** Health Department is receiving state funding to create maternal care programming and **distribute “Stop the Bleed” kits**, which prevent blood loss for people who are suffering a traumatic injury, and Narcan in schools. Indiana has one of the highest rates of maternal mortality in the country, so the funding will provide resources for expectant and new mothers, including a program that will teach mothers how to breastfeed.

## KANSAS

**WYANDOTTE COUNTY** residents charged with marijuana

possession are now eligible for the county’s new **marijuana diversion program**, which consists of watching a video on the effects marijuana can have on your health and the consequences of possessing the drug in the state of Kansas. The program is aiming to increase equity in the justice system, as first-time offenders charged with marijuana possession or paraphernalia were previously faced with a \$1,000 fine or up to six months in jail.

## MONTANA

### GALLATIN COUNTY

Emergency Management has launched a **wildfire mitigation program**, giving homeowners the tools to best protect their homes from a natural disaster. Emergency Management staff will go out to assess properties and determine the types of vegetation that should be removed or thinned out to help prevent

the spread of a potential wildfire. The program covers the cost of 60% of any of the projects suggested from the assessment, which can include hiring a contractor to trim trees.

## NEVADA

New homes built in **CLARK COUNTY** must have **indoor sprinklers** starting in March 2024, following the passage of a new ordinance, which applies to single-family homes, duplexes and townhomes. The ordinance does not apply to homes currently under construction that may require new permits.

## NEW JERSEY

The **MORRIS COUNTY**’s Sheriff’s Office will partner with the nonprofit New Jersey Reentry Corporation (NJRC) to help inmates released from the Morris County Correctional Facility successfully **re-enter and assimilate** back into the community.

NJRC will provide free critical services linking former offenders to healthcare and addiction treatment, legal services, employment, skills training and a means to re-establish identification credentials as they leave the correctional facility. The service will supplement the success of re-entry programs already underway at the correctional facility. The NJRC, with the social services staff at the correctional facility and the county’s Successful Transition and Re-Entry Program, will identify inmates who need assistance and the type of assistance required so that all individuals can be provided professional services that best address their specific needs.

## NEW YORK

**BROOME COUNTY** Public Health has supplied more than 1,300 portable HEPA **air filters** to schools, day cares and child-care centers to use this school year.



## ILLINOIS

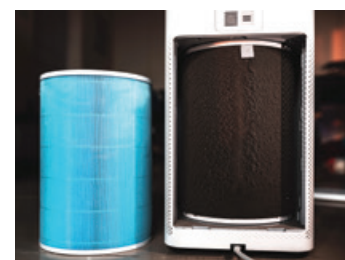
**SANGAMON COUNTY** is partnering with local grocery stores to support residents affected by recent storms, providing replacement food boxes valued at \$100 for up to 2,000 eligible households. The Community Services Block Grant program is helping **replace perishable food items** lost through the storms and power outages.

“This is a fantastic example of a caring community,” County Board Member Brad Miller told NPR Illinois. “These local businesses employ our neighbors, friends and family members. With their generosity and help from Sangamon County, this program will provide assistance to our citizens who are in need.”



## MARYLAND

**HOWARD COUNTY** is offering employment opportunities to underserved communities through its **Work on Wheels program**, which is a partnership between the county’s library system and Office of Workforce Development. The program, which offers services including resume reviews and connections to jobs and training, will function out of the library system’s STEAM Machine, a mobile classroom purchased through ARPA funding, that will travel to local shopping centers for resource days.

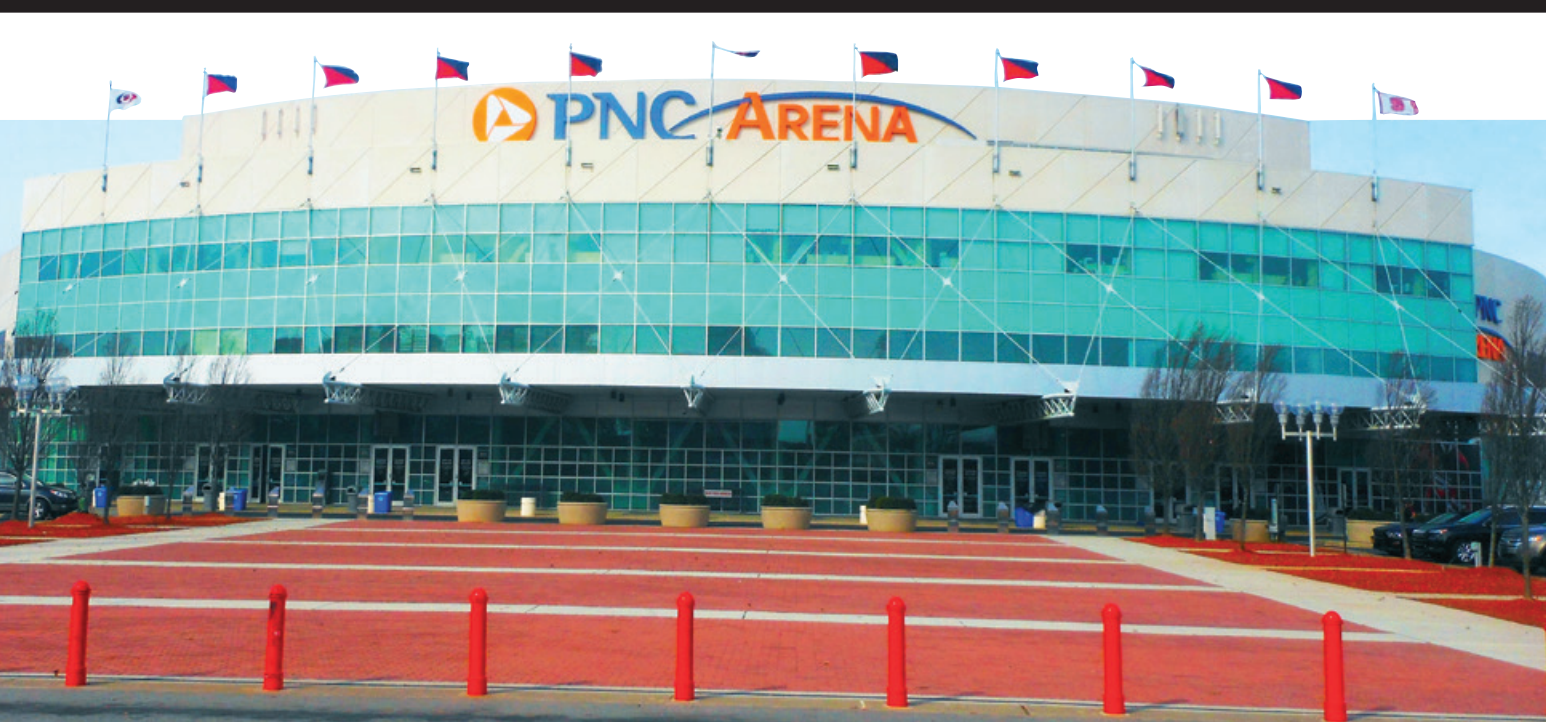


“This is something that can reduce exposure to not only COVID but those other respiratory viruses like influenza and RSV and the common cold, and other viruses that are airborne,” Broome County Public Health Director Mary McFadden said.

## OHIO

The **CUYAHOGA COUNTY** Department of Health and Human Services’ new Coach to Complete program will pair scholarship benefits with one-on-one success coaching to improve educational success and career transitions for Ohio **National Guard** members. Participants will receive up to four years of one-on-one success coaching to help them access and complete a certificate or degree. In its pilot phase, the program will serve current members of the Ohio National Guard who are enrolled or considering a degree or certificate program — as well as those who may have dropped





NORTH CAROLINA

The WAKE COUNTY Board of Commissioners recently voted on plans to **allocate revenue** generated by the taxes charged on overnight hotel stays and food and beverages

purchased at restaurants. The revenue will pay to renovate PNC Arena, which prompted the NHL's Carolina Hurricanes to extend their lease agreement through 2044; to expand the Raleigh Conven-

tion Center by 500,000 square feet; to move the Red Hat Amphitheater by one block; to subsidize the construction of a new downtown hotel and for expansion of the Cary Indoor Sports Facility.

The county will also allocate \$15.5 million over four years for a competitive funding process for smaller scale projects that will take place in late 2025.

From NEWS FROM page 10

out or paused their education.

The partnership leverages a Pay for Success funding model that aligns public investment in the coaching program with the achievement of specific, measurable goals. Through a performance-based contract, Cuyahoga County will release funds for the program based on how many guardsmen enroll, persist and complete their programs.

TEXAS

• HARRIS COUNTY Public Health's new pilot program aims to help the local **Latino community battle chronic diseases**.

The Latino Chronic Disease Cohort will provide participants of the pilot with resources that ultimately determine health and also focus on teaching res-

idents how to manage chronic diseases. The county has identified cancer and heart disease as the leading causes of death for the Latino community, along with higher rates of obesity and diabetes than other ethnic and racial groups, Houston Public Media reported.

• Three Texas counties have passed ordinances allowing civil action against people who **use the counties' roads** to "knowingly transport someone seeking an abortion," but also that under no circumstances should the mother in the scenario be subject to prosecution or penalty. COCHRAN, GOLIAD and MITCHELL counties have all passed similar ordinances to that effect, the *Texas Tribune* reported.

Cochran County is the first that borders a state (New Mex-

ico) where abortion is legal to have passed such an ordinance.

WASHINGTON

• In almost a year since it started, YAKIMA COUNTY Volunteer Attorney Services' **Family Support Program** has assisted approximately 200 people in finalizing their agreed divorces and custody cases in court at the status hearing. The program helps people fill out and file the correct paperwork, guides them through the evidence they can use and helps them prepare their cases to present in court.

• Three counties and their state association have filed a lawsuit against the state government, alleging it has failed to adequately fund **indigent defense**.

LINCOLN, PACIFIC and YAKIMA counties, along with the Washington State Association

of Counties, are seeking an injunction requiring the state to provide "stable, dependable, and regular ... funding" to all counties for such services, saying the state's current trial court indigent defense system violates both state and U.S. constitutions. Counties are responsible for funding 97% of indigent defense in cases filed on behalf of the state, which adds up to \$174 million annually, for which the state supplies \$6 million, according to SPOKANE COUNTY Commissioner Mary Kuney, the state association president. She said the majority of U.S. states fund at least 50% of such costs. **CN**

*News from Across the Nation is compiled by Charlie Ban and Meredith Moran. Does your county have news we should see? Contact cban@naco.org and mmoran@naco.org.*

SOUTH CAROLINA

The HORRY COUNTY Council Infrastructure and Regulations committee recently passed recommendations for **new design standards on single-family homes**. The standards will apply to subdivisions with 10 or more homes and only to single-family residences that are not entirely built out of brick or stucco. The proposal would require single-family detached structures to be constructed of materials consistent with characteristics of the neighborhood, including, but not limited to, brick, stone, wood, vinyl, fiber cement, metal, stucco and masonry siding. There would be a combination of no less than three aesthetically different styles of façade materials recommended.



MONTGOMERY COUNTY, MD.

Montgomery County, Md.'s seal, originally designed in 1902, highlights:

Two figures flanking a shield represents the importance of agriculture and manufacturing in the county

The train and factory at the bottom of the shield showcase the county's transportation and industry.



The arm holding the scales at the top of the seal represents justice

The fist is for electricity

The laurel sprigs below the shield represent reward

The Dutch Lily, the official county flower, was added to the seal in 1985

Would you like to see your county seal featured in Behind the Seal? Email Meredith Moran at: mmoran@naco.org.



# Outdoor recreation helped save Lake County, Colo.


From ROADS page 4

Las Animas County is getting into the game on stronger footing than Lake County did, by virtue of not being in the middle of an economic crisis. Having guided and watched Lake County's growth as an outdoor event destination grow over 40 years, Chlouber sees potential for Las Animas County thanks to Jenlink's professionalism and Trinidad's resources and the open communication the parties are maintaining, including the Las Animas County officials' openness to the events. While serving as a Lake County commissioner, Chlouber worked in Leadville's Climax Molybdenum Mine the day he was told the company was shutting down his site. "We lost 3,250 jobs that night in a community of 5,000. That was basically everybody," he said. "We had the highest unemployment in the nation at

"[The governor] said to get people to spend money in your town, they have to stay overnight. God, that just lit all my candles."

that time."


As Chlouber and colleagues brainstormed to combat this crisis with event planning to transition to tourism, Gov. Richard Lamm (D) gave him advice that became his guiding principle. "He said to get people to spend money in your town, they've got to stay overnight," Chlouber said. "God, that just lit all my candles. I said 'Well, by golly, if they run 100 miles, they're damn sure gonna stay overnight.' Chlouber said Leadville's endurance races have succeeded for Lake County because they start and finish in town, they

didn't ask local businesses to support them financially and the race managers were not selfish. "Those first years of the 100-mile run, I ran them every year and I paid my entry fee just like everybody else did, and it worked," he said. Lake County's population has largely stabilized at close to its pre-mine-closure levels, and the success of the events have helped make it a haven for endurance athletes who train in Leadville's high altitude. Forty years later, that legacy remains part of Chlouber's life after leaving the county commission and onto the state Legislature and into retirement. "It's something I live with every day," he said.  The Outdoor Recreation Roundtable offers a Rural Economic Development Toolkit at <https://recreationroundtable.org/programs/rural-development/>.

# Music is an ice-breaker with residents

From TEXAN page 2

ital artwork) galleries. "What the articles tend to not mention ... is the influence of second- and third-generation Texans who came from Mexico, because that's about 80% of the population," Beebe said. "The strong culture, pride in family and upbringing. Everyone's Dallas Cowboys fans, so it's barbecue and Cowboys – what is more Texas? And that's here, right alongside Donald Judd and his modern art. "... I'm trying to figure out solutions to mitigate the sort of 'Martha's Vineyard-ification' of Marfa, but that's a real good problem to have if you're a 2,000 person town in West Texas though. If you look at the alternative, it's essentially a slow death and we don't have that." Although he calls running for office "a special kind of torture," Beebe said he doesn't

feel like he'll be done with public service once his first term on the county commission is up. Regardless of whatever's next for him though, it'll be in Presidio County, he said. "I didn't think I was going to stay here for more than two or three years, but as it turned out, even though my business basically went bankrupt and I almost did too ... even though I was scraping by, I was like, 'This is such a great place to live,'" Beebe said. "... I see all the projects I'm working on right now and they're going to take incremental change of policy and procedure and also time elapsing for the changes I want to make and how we do things at the county level to take effect and become permanent. "Good things don't happen quickly kind of anywhere, but in government, good things are designed to happen slowly." 

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