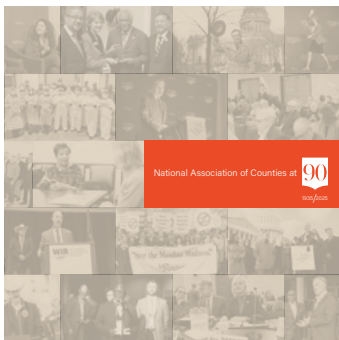


# Dedicated members drove NACo's early days

by **Charlie Ban**  
senior writer

For the first two decades of NACo's existence, the organization was unrecognizable to the modern county official.

Right down to the name. Founded in 1935 as the National County Officers Association, the organization sought to assert county governments'



place in the intergovernmental system as the federal expansion resulting from New Deal reforms. Counties ran the risk of being pushed out of the way by cities and states, but nationwide, county officers were intent on defending their jurisdictions and contending that they knew best how to manage local government affairs. Counties were catching up to other levels of government that had organized nationally well before, along with state associations of counties that were already at work in their capitals, some for decades.

Past presidents worked part

time as agents for the National County Officers Association, and later the National Association of County Officers, but what became NACo saw its member-driven approach to advocacy born out of necessity—the association had no employees. But a stalwart group of officials were dedicated enough to take long train or bus rides to meet annually and guide the association forward.

NACo is marking its 90th anniversary in 2025, starting with the Annual Conference in Philadelphia City and County, Pa. Conference attendees will receive a copy of "National Association of Counties at 90," a history book chronicling the association's development and experience a NACo history exhibit in the Great Hall at the Philadelphia Convention Center. Throughout 2025, *County News* will publish excerpts from NACo's 90-year history.

## Foreword: Counties Rise

As the United States prepares to celebrate 250 years of independence, America's county government leaders are marking 90 years of coming together through the National Association of Counties (NACo)—nearly a century of powering the nation from the ground up.

See **HISTORY** page 4



# Historians, inspirational speakers to headline 90th Annual Conference

by **Mary Ann Barton**  
editor

American historian and biographer Doris Kearns Goodwin, best known for her in-depth and engaging works on U.S. presidents and leadership,

will address NACo Annual Conference attendees at the Saturday, July 12 General Session.



Goodwin began her career as a White House fellow during President Lyndon B. Johnson's administration and later served

as a member of Johnson's staff. Her close access to historical figures and firsthand experiences shaped her distinctive writing style, blending personal insight with meticulous research.

Goodwin's literary acclaim

See **ANNUAL** page 3

# Q&A: James Gore looks back on his year as president of NACo

by **Meredith Moran**  
staff writer

**Q: The theme of your presidency has been "we" — we the counties, we the leaders and we the future. What led you to center your presidential spotlight on unity?**

**A:** I know that [unity] is how we get things done locally, and it is what our country desperately needs. Disagree-

ment does not have to be divisiveness, and we are at each other's throats each and every day — in the news, on social media, at our public forums, in our local communities —

and it's exhausting. The overwhelming sense of everyday outrage is exhausting. I always tell people, 'Even if you think



**Gore**

this is the worst time in the history of this country, look back to when in one generation, we had two world wars, the Spanish flu and the Great Depression. So, get some context and get back to work.' And, we have to work together, because

See **GORE** page 2



## 'We the People': NACo President James Gore talks leading during divisive times

From GORE page 1

our kids deserve it.

We have to acknowledge that when we come together as NACo members, we have huge disagreements, and yet this is a place where we have to focus on the things that we can agree upon, rather than divide us. Because if we lose the ability to talk about the things that we agree upon, then we lose the ability to communicate and to partner overall.

What we need to do is come together, because we are kicking off the 250th anniversary of this country, and we're celebrating the 90th anniversary of NACo. So, for me, as somebody who believes in the Constitution, the Bill of Rights and the rule of law and 'We the People' — this is all about 'we.' Let's remind ourselves that for 90 years, NACo has been dealing with the chaos of the pres-

ent day each and every day, so how do we have context at the same time that we are locked into the current storm?

**Q: A common phrase at NACo is "if you've seen one county, you've seen one county." Your work with the U.S. Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Service took you to underserved communities across the country — from the Mississippi Delta region to tribal reservations in Alaska. Was there anything you learned from those travels that you feel helped set you up for the shift from serving Sonoma County to all of America's counties, parishes and boroughs?**

**A:** What I learned is that the only real truth is ground truth — what's going on in the communities, what people are seeing in their lives. What's needed on the ground should



NACo President James Gore, a Sonoma County, Calif. supervisor, speaks to NACo members during the 2025 Legislative Conference. Photo by Denny Henry

always direct our efforts.

One of our former governors used to talk about the principle of subsidiary, that governance should be as close to the people who are governed as possible. I go to NACo, and I bring my ground truth, and other people bring theirs, and I find absolute purpose in yes, sharing best practices, yes in negotiating and identifying policies, but I also find absolute resonance with the camaraderie of being with people who deal with what I deal with every day.

Vivek Murthy — who spoke to NACo at one point, the former Surgeon General — he said that his prescription for America, in these days of an epidemic of loneliness, is purpose, service and relationships. And that's what I find at NACo, and I want people to know that that can be there. As much as I love going to the individual affinity groups and caucuses that rally around issues in common, I love going and seeing somebody from Wyoming in a cowboy hat sitting next to and

having a great conversation with somebody from Prince George's County in Maryland. That's the stuff that gives me hope.

**Q: At last year's Annual Conference, you encouraged county officials to find camaraderie, shared purpose and "joy within the mess." How do you find joy within the mess?**

**A:** My family. At my funeral, I really could care less if they talk about my work as NACo president or as county supervisor, I want them to say, 'Great husband, great father and great friend.'

To do this work, you have to have enough of — I'll just say it — an ego to get involved and to

put yourself up to the trial and the pain and everything of it, but you've got to check yourself before you wreck yourself, because as soon as we step out of office, the phone doesn't ring as much. I work my butt off, and yet at the same time, I work hard and play hard. I also fish and hunt with my family and hike and disappear into my inner circle, my tribe.

**Q: What has been the most challenging aspect of your time as NACo president?**

**A:** If you step up, you never get to decide what the world's going to bring you. All the natural and man-made disasters

See GORE page 3

# SNAP/STATS



## National Park and Recreation Month

### PARK FACTS

No. of visitors to national parks in 2024: .....331.9 million

Increase from 2023: ..... 6.36 million

Recreation visitor hours in 2024: ..... 1.4 billion

Most visited month: ..... July

Least visited month: ..... January

Source: National Park Service



"I don't just take this as a cool little art project, I take this as a mandate for action," Gore said about his daughter Opal's artwork "We the People."



**From GORE page 2**

that we deal with each and every day — we just seem to be in this cyclone of crises. State legislatures around the country are taking away local control on pivotal issues of land use, taxation, programs and we're in danger of still having to serve everybody in our community without the resources and the authority to do it. So, it's a pivotal time in our nation's history to make sure that we still govern from the ground up.

**Q: Has there been a specific moment that stands out to you during your NACo presidency that was particularly rewarding, where you felt 'This is why I do this'?**

**A:** At the Legislative Conference, we had thousands of people in the audience, and we went over the first 100 Days [of the Trump administration]. And two people spoke — one was saying we weren't doing enough to protect, defend and even expand health and welfare programs, and the other person said we were clueless, and we weren't on board with the new administration and what they were doing — and the fact that we, as a group of individuals who are Democrats, Republicans and Independents sitting on that panel, did not take the bait, and we instead reaffirmed that this is why we're here. Everybody can disagree with each other, but our job is to protect and strengthen America's counties, no matter what administration it is. So, to me, that was an important moment. I like the moments of challenge, not the moments of parades and accolades.

**Q: What work that NACo has accomplished from the past year, or that it's currently working toward, excites you the most?**

**A:** NACo is not just a small nonprofit or trade association. It's a \$35 million organization that has \$90 million in reserves and, with NACo EDGE, is leading the charge on cooperative business solutions for America's counties. So, nurturing that process — because it's not quick, the NACo EDGE re-deployment — honoring the work and supporting what I see going on internally, that these

are solutions that lower costs for counties and also bring in revenue for NACo. These are not just sponsorships and pay-to-play programs, it's an underpinning for our entire organization.

Externally, absolutely the Intergovernmental Disaster Task Force. I am a big believer that too much of our work is stopping negative things from happening to counties, so in this degree, it's taking our lessons learned and it's building a new playbook, and it's appointing people to the task force who have the political connections in Congress or are in congressional districts that are important. We created that and put all these people at the table with real experience before FEMA reform came up from the administration, so it's a perfect example of being ready to roll instead of reactive. That's what I love about it.

**Q: Entering your NACo presidency, what advice did you find helpful and what advice would you share with NACo presidents of the future?**

**A:** You can be authentic and you can lead, but you have to learn what's going on at NACo already, before you want to change things and improve things. You can't go just tinkering around. You have to saturate yourself into the organizational opportunities and challenges and strengths and weaknesses and not just go flying from the cuff.

There's so much work that people don't see that's imperative — that people have good experiences when they come to the conferences, or that we're effective with the administration. There's a reason we're relevant, and it's because of the team and the day-to-day work, not just when we do fly ins. And at the same time, we make NACo as an organization fly. It's the members who are the ones who make the policy changes possible.

With me not traveling as much [as former NACo presidents], I have taken this as a mandate to deploy more the executive committee, so that the regional reps are fully engaged, that the second vice, the first vice and the past president are more engaged. It's all about team, so act like it and have your actions promote that. **EN**



Historic Washington Square is an urban oasis near the Liberty Bell Center. Photo by M. Kennedy/Visit Philadelphia

## Former Philadelphia Eagle player to take the stage

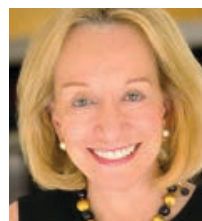
**From ANNUAL page 1**

grew with the publication of her first book, "Lyndon Johnson and the American Dream," which offered a nuanced portrait of the complex 36th president. She later gained widespread recognition for bestsellers such as "Team of Rivals: The Political Genius of Abraham Lincoln," which inspired film director Steven Spielberg's Oscar-winning film "Lincoln." Her works often highlight the human side of leadership, examining how personal character and relationships influence decision-making and political success.

Over the decades, Goodwin has become a respected public intellectual, frequently appearing on TV as a commentator on politics and history. She has received numerous honors, including the Pulitzer Prize for History for "No Ordinary Time: Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt: The Home Front in World War II." Through her books and public appearances, Goodwin continues to educate and inspire audiences with stories of perseverance, power, and the enduring lessons of American history.

Goodwin will be joined July 12 by Doug Bradburn, also a

historian and president and CEO of George Washington's Mount Vernon, in Fairfax County, Va., a role he has held since 2018. He earned his BA in history and BS in economics from the University of Virginia and completed a PhD in history at the University of Chicago.



**Goodwin**



**Bradburn**



**Lawson**



**Dorenbos**

Prior to his current appointment, Bradburn was founding director of the Fred W. Smith National Library at Mount Vernon (2013-2022), a hub for scholars and public engagement. He's also contributed significantly to academic life as a professor and graduate studies director at Binghamton University, in Broome County, N.Y. Bradburn has also authored several well-regarded works on early America, notably on George

Washington's leadership and the nation's founding era.

### Sunday, July 13

At Sunday's General Session, conference attendees will hear from inspirational speakers Lisa M. Lawson and Jon Dorenbos.

Lawson has served as president and CEO of the Annie E. Casey Foundation in Baltimore since 2019. A seasoned leader with deep experience in the philanthropic, corporate and

nonprofit sectors, Lawson previously held senior roles at the Foundation where she helped oversee its signature programs such as the KIDS COUNT Data Book and the Race for Results series.

Before joining Casey, she spent 14 years at UPS, rising to president of the UPS Foundation. Under her leadership at Casey, the Foundation has launched transformative initiatives like Thrive by 25°, a \$3.5 billion effort to align child welfare, juvenile justice reform, economic opportunity and community development for 14- to 24-year-olds, incorporating adolescent brain science into policy and program design.

Also speaking on Sunday, Dorenbos is a former NFL long snapper turned professional magician and motivational speaker. Born in 1980 in Harris County, Texas, he overcame childhood tragedy and adversity by mastering magic — becoming a coping mechanism and lifelong passion.

He carved out a 14-year NFL career, highlighted by two Pro Bowl nods with the Philadelphia Eagles, an iron-man streak of 162 consecutive games, culminating in an honorary Super Bowl LII ring after a health scare forced retirement in 2017.

Shortly after retiring, Dorenbos placed third on Season 11 of "America's Got Talent," appeared frequently on HBO's "Real Sports," and has since turned his unique story and skills into a thriving career as a keynote speaker — blending magic, humor, resilience and inspiration into his shows. **EN**

## 'National Association of Counties at 90' history book will debut at NACo Annual Conference

### From HISTORY page 1

Counties in the United States began with eight shires in colonial Virginia in 1634 and now total 3,069. Our counties, including parishes in Louisiana and boroughs in Alaska, maintain essential transportation and infrastructure, safeguard public safety and justice, and play an essential role in public administration, including elections, that keep our democracy strong. In every corner of the country, we are unique, yet we are all governments in action.

Before the Great Depression, we were largely fragmented. But as the federal government expanded and the demands on local services grew, county leaders knew we needed a unified voice. In 1935, a few pioneering county officials came together to form NACo—to ensure counties had a seat at the table in our evolving intergovernmental system.

Since then, we've spoken louder, acted smarter and stood stronger—together. From a laundry room office in the Mayflower Hotel to a lasting presence in the halls of Congress and the White House, we've advanced the message that counties are not just implementers—we are innovators. We've pushed back on unfunded mandates, fought for our fair share and led through every challenge.

We've risen to the moment—again and again. We lent personnel and salvaged resources like gasoline during World War II. We strengthened civil defense during the Cuban Missile Crisis. We delivered critical services through recessions, disasters and terrorist attacks. And when the COVID-19 pandemic hit, our health departments, first responders and local leaders were ready. In the recovery, we've been entrusted with the tools to rebuild—and we've delivered.

Through NACo, we've forged a stronger national voice and a deeper connection to each other. And at our own pivotal crossroads, we reaffirmed that our collective voice matters—and we're stronger together than apart.

We've proven that we not only have the charter to gov-

ern, but the will and vision to lead effectively. By strengthening our counties, we strengthen America. Because when counties lead, America thrives.

Counties matter—yesterday, today and for the next 250 years.

### Counties Convene

Counties were under attack.

That's the attitude Milwaukee County, Wis. Clerk George F. Breitbach took when he invited county officials to a Cook County, Illinois meeting to organize a national group of county officials: the National County Officers Association.

Although counties in several states had already bound together to keep pace with their legislatures and governors, with Nebraska leading the way in 1894, no national organization had served the same purpose for a form of government that predated both state and federal bodies.

The first convention, held Oct. 16-19, 1935, focused on the decentralization of government. The meeting included a speech by Iowa journalist W. F. Parrott, titled "Better County Government." Salt Lake County, Utah Attorney Harold E. Wallace, serving as vice president, summed the mood up that government should not be turned over to state and national bureaus, owing to county officials' closer relationship to the people. Wallace noted that several state governments had taken over all road supervision, leaving county officials without a voice in their regulation, construction or maintenance.

Those early years repeated the consistent theme of preserving county authority.

In 1937, the association incorporated in Wisconsin, and the annual meeting in Milwaukee County drew 200 attendees. Attendees adopted a resolution censuring opponents of the county system of government, defending it as most expressive of the liberties of the people and their right to



The Ogden Standard-Examiner covered the 1939 Annual Conference in Weber County, Utah via radiophone.

self-government.

County road networks also featured prominently, and attendees heard from Frank R. Wilson, representative of the federal accident prevention conference, who presented results from surveys indicating that speed and youth were the greatest contributors to the 35,000 automobile fatalities every year. Attendees voted for the best orator of the conference, honoring Milwaukee Mayor Daniel Webster Hoan, Jr.

Counties have always, in some regard, had to fight for respect. Contemporary news reports from NACo's early days were littered with items about county officials attending conferences, but those items referred to the officials' nearest cities, rather than the counties they served.

### Fueling for the Fight

A funding problem dogged the association because at the time most counties were forbidden from spending public money on association membership or out-of-state travel. A solution rolled off the printing press in the form of The County Officer, published by Allen D. Alberts of Edgar County, Ill. While counties could not spend money on member-

ships, they could buy newspaper and magazine subscriptions.

The County Officer became the association's primary fundraising vehicle, yet subscription revenue—\$3 per year—only covered production costs. Production opened the door to additional fundraising through state associations of counties. They contributed subscription revenue, editorial material and advertising revenue. Publishing an article won a free membership for the author.

Breitbach's home state of Wisconsin contributed heavily to the 56-page first edition in April 1937, with articles by Gov. Philip La Follette, who spent two years as Dane County's district attorney, Secretary of State Theodore Dammann, Dane County Clerk Austin N. Johnson and J.H.H. Alexander, superintendent of recreational publicity for the state conservation department. One article examined county employee pension plans.

Breitbach served as president for three years, until 1938, after which he served as secretary-treasurer and editor of The County Officer.

The association's 1938 meeting in Rock Island County, Ill. aimed to attract 500 attendees but saw only 60 registrants. The 1938 meeting included an address by Carl H. Chatters, executive director of the Municipal Finance Officers' Association of the United States and Canada, warning that en-

croachment by the states was increasingly endangering local revenue sources.

Meanwhile, the federal government was alternating between preserving counties and cities and planning new burdens on them to sap their authority and influence. State laws canceling county-imposed penalties, postponing sales taxes and encouraging tax exemptions were eroding property taxes, which serve as counties' primary source of revenue to this day.

"The elected officials of local communities and elected officials of states cannot be expected to stand up and cheer at the thought of raising local tax rates or devising new forms of state taxation for relief purposes if that responsibility can be transferred to Washington," Chatters said.

### The Surge

The disappointment in 1938 raised the stakes for 1939, setting up that year's meeting in Weber County, Utah as a make-or-break event in President George F. Simmons's home county, where he served as chairman of the county commission. Members sent out 25,000 invitations and aimed high, inviting Vice President John Nance Garner and FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover to speak, though neither attended.

"The challenge has been issued to us as a state as to whether or not we can successfully conduct a convention and bring the 'national' back to an association. It will be up to us to revive the National County Officers Association," Simmons said.

Not only did attendance rebound, with more than 500 registrants and \$2,500 in revenue, but the renamed National Association of County Officers attacked the new stage in its development with gusto. NACo mobilized that year to combat efforts to consolidate counties, a movement afoot at the time in Missouri.

"The nationwide movement toward the consolidation of counties and the further centralization of government in large units is a distinct threat as



*From HISTORY page 4*

well as a challenge to all county officials," Simmons wrote.

The conference even received media attention from the Ogden Standard-Examiner, which covered proceedings 45 miles away via radiophone.

A new plan hatched in 1939 counted on state associations to sponsor issues of The County Officer. The sponsoring state association pledged to collect the magazine subscription fees for each of the officers of every county in the state and to solicit advertising.

Following his term in office, Simmons traveled through-

cessor did," Simmons said in 1941, when membership grew to 1,500 individuals. "We and other county officers have in our hands one of the greatest powers in our nation."

## Strengthening the Western Flank

Advocacy gained steam on an issue that has been a throughline in NACo's operation and a galvanizing issue that drove longstanding loyalty to the organization.

Guy Cordon, a lawyer for the Association of Oregon Counties, spoke to county officials at the annual conference in Louisville about the disparity be-

trict attorney for Trinity County, Calif.

Federal land management became a rallying cry for NACo in the early days because it was a direct touchpoint between county and federal governments, though it would be 35 years until the 1976 Payments in Lieu of Taxes program codified how the federal government would compensate counties for lands administered by the Bureau of Land Management, U.S. Forest Service, National Park Service, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and some military installations.

## A Nation at War

The next year saw the United States shift to fighting World War II, and counties themselves, besides lending their personnel to the war effort,

made temporary repairs to  
save critical materials.

"I saw firsthand the fine leadership with which counties provided during the dark days of the Depression and the services they rendered during the war," said Sen. Lister Hill (D-Ala.).

On the eve of World War II, Grayson County, Texas Judge and NACo President Jake Loy in 1939 said, “County officers are the first line of defense. They must be men of courage and action, sympathetic but firm.”

In 1944, NACo leaders decided it was time to establish a Washington office, funded by subscriptions to *The County Officer*, and that members would make a major push to sign up officials from all counties nationwide as subscribers.

NACo hired a Washington law firm in 1944 to be its eyes, ears and voice in the capital. With the war following on the heels of the depression, America's county officials felt acutely their role as the government unit closest and most connected to the people.

America came out of the war with a new president—Harry S. Truman, who Jackson County, Mo. residents remembered as a county court judge (1923-1925), a role similar to a county commissioner, and later presiding judge (1927-1935), a role that was both administrative and judicial.

In 1946, the association incorporated again, and the first major article said:

"The objects and purposes

**See HISTORY page 11**



**Attendees gather at 1949 Annual Conference in Alameda County, Calif.**

out the United States, visiting Pueblo County, Colo.; Ford and Sedgwick counties in Kansas; Tarrant, Harris, Bexar and El Paso counties in Texas; Maricopa County, Ariz. and Los Angeles County, Calif. as part of his part-time role, alternately dubbed executive director or executive secretary.

Throughout its first two decades, NACo continued to operate under the same basic conditions. Its members were individual county officers who subscribed to *The County Officer*. States took turns sponsoring issues of the magazine and generating the advertising revenues that underwrote NACo activities. County officials paid their own ways, often chartering trains or bus caravans to conventions, which focused on networking, problem solving, education and advocacy with counties' federal delegations. NACo's message to county leaders: Do more for our constituents.

"No county officer can do his job by staying home or just doing the thing that his prede-

tween the value of tax-exempt federally owned land and the remittances given to the counties by the federal government. The property tax revenue of all of that land in 1941 should total \$91 million, while the government instead divided \$2.5 million among counties.

The Interstate Association of Public Land Counties formed in 1941 to advocate for a fairer share and later merged with the Western District of NACo to form the Western Interstate Region in 1978. In the 2020s, the Western Interstate Region added Minnesota and Nebraska, recognizing the prevalence of public lands in those states.

"Counties with large proportions of their natural resources held in nontaxable status therefore are at a decided disadvantage so far as obtaining property taxes for their support, compared with counties in older sections of the country where virtually all of the land is under private ownership," said Edwin J. Regan, chairman of the Interstate Association of Public Land Counties and dis-





## 2025 Best In Category Winners

### Arts, Culture and Historic Preservation

El Paso County Healing Garden  
*El Paso County, Texas*

### Children and Youth

Zero Drownings Miami-Dade  
*Miami-Dade County, Fla.*

### Civic Education and Public Information

The Fulton County Assessor's Mobile Office  
*Fulton County, Ind.*

### Community and Economic Development

Villages of Baltimore County  
*Baltimore County, Md.*

### County Administration and Management

The All-Digital DeKalb County Human Resources and Merit System Led Policy Council  
*DeKalb County, Ga.*

### County Resiliency: Infrastructure, Energy and Sustainability

Protecting the Prairie: Armand Bayou Conservation Project  
*Harris County, Texas*

### Criminal Justice and Public Safety

Okeechobee County Launching High School Heroes Into Public Safety Careers  
*Okeechobee County, Fla.*

### Financial Management

Suffolk County, NY and three-one's Bank Account Collateralization Program  
*Suffolk County, N.Y.*

### Health

EMS Tiered Response  
*Augusta County, N.C.*

### Human Services

Reducing Substance Use and Overdose Across the Continuum of Care  
*Montgomery County, Ohio*

### Information Technology

San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department Evacuation Solution  
*San Bernardino County, Calif.*

### Libraries

Nourishing Connections: How Food Literacy Fosters Stronger Communities  
*Orange County, Calif.*

### Parks and Recreation

RivCoParks Veterans' Mental Health  
*Riverside County, Calif.*

### Personnel Management, Employment and Training

Workforce Buffalo Erie Corps  
*Erie County, N.Y.*

### Planning

Improving Food Access And Health For Boulder Residents Through Municipal Comprehensive Planning  
*Boulder County, Colo.*

### Risk and Emergency Management

Howard County Call Center Training  
*Howard County, Md.*

### Transportation

Tri-Valley Seek and Save Auto Partnership  
*Alameda County, Calif.*

### Volunteers

Thurston County Fair-It Fair  
*Thurston County, Wash.*



Scan to read  
more about  
these winners.



# County officials urge Congress to protect SNAP, Medicaid, ahead of key votes on major policy bill

by **Meredith Moran**  
staff writer

As *County News* went to press last week, the U.S. House of Representatives was set to vote on a sweeping policy bill passed by the Senate July 1.

The Senate passed legislation that would shift costs for Medicaid and Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits onto states and counties. County officials from five states traveled to Capitol Hill June 24, prior to the bill passing, to advocate against its provisions related to the social safety net programs.

The legislation was passed in a tie-breaking vote by Vice President JD Vance. If enacted, it will push new unfunded mandates related to SNAP benefits (which were fully federally funded for 60 years) onto counties, particularly in the 10 states where counties are tasked with administering the food assistance program. Roughly 14.6 million individuals receive SNAP benefits in those states, collectively representing 34.3% of total participants.

Representatives from five out of the 10 states — Minnesota, New York, North Carolina,

Wisconsin and Virginia — spoke to members of Congress on June 24 about the grave consequences the changes would have on their constituents and county budgets.

In Meeker County, Minn., about 20% of people are on Medicaid and 17% of households receive SNAP benefits. County costs related to the social safety net programs would increase by roughly \$1 million if the legislation is enacted (which doesn't include the additional cost shifts onto the county from people who lose Medicaid coverage still receiving services).

Meeker County Commissioner Steve Schmitt was one of the local officials who traveled to Capitol Hill to advocate against the proposed changes.

"I was more than willing to set some time aside and get out to D.C. to let them know what our concerns are," Schmitt said. "Because when you're



Schmitt



Thompson

that far removed from the county government level, a lot of times they don't know the impacts — whether that be through workload or direct financial cuts or adjustments — so, it was good to get out there and let them hear a voice ... I think not being in the room would be a critical mistake."

Schmitt said he was glad to have an opportunity to share how the provisions would negatively affect people in Meeker County.

"One of the meetings that stood out to me was we were talking about property tax increases, and one of the staffers said, 'Why are you mentioning property taxes?' They weren't making the connection," Schmitt said. "And it's like, 'Well, property taxes — that's our only revenue source,' so the light bulb went on at that point, and they realized more of the concern that we had, the urgency."

The county would have to raise property taxes and/or cut existing funding for things such as upkeep to its 40 lakes and 10 county parks, along with events such as county fairs, to cover the additional costs, he said.

"Those good things that add to the benevolence of the community — that's really our only other place, besides [increasing] property taxes, to cut," Schmitt said. "And people will notice that quite quickly."

Boone County, Mo. Commissioner Janet Thompson came to Capitol Hill to share with members of Congress how changes to Medicaid would

We'll get more and more of those phone calls, visits from constituents and from the hospital association, saying, 'What do we do about it?' So, you can laugh and say, 'Well, buy a lottery ticket.' But it's ludicrous to think that the counties will be able to sustain that."

The provision could also lead to low-income families delaying or forgoing treatment due to unaffordable out-of-pocket costs. Dental care is an example of a healthcare service that will no longer be covered for Medicaid expansion adults.

"My mom was a public health physician, and her idea

**'When I look at this [legislation], I don't know whether the University Hospital and Boone Hospital will be able to survive...'**

impact her county, particularly the 17% of people who rely on the program.

If the Medicaid provisions are enacted, "we are going to have a population where health is not the norm, it's the exception," Thompson said. "And that, to me, is something that we have to talk about. We have to be candid with people about the impact that this will have on our population. And do we care? We sure as all get out should. We should care about the health of the people in our communities."

The provision that requires "Medicaid expansion adults" to pay up to \$35 per service (with exemptions for prenatal care and emergency services) would increase uncompensated care at county-owned hospitals and emergency departments.

Boone County "already gets phone calls from folks in the hospital association saying, 'Can you help us, because of the uncompensated care burden that's happening in our hospital?' because there're people who have been essentially dumped on the hospital because there's no place for them to go," Thompson said.

"Well, that burden is going to rise in every community.

was always, 'How can you treat something that's a low-level cost before it becomes a chronic disease?'" Thompson said. "... 'You treat the bad tooth, so that you don't have cardiac disease from the infection from that tooth.' That's what we're looking at."

A rural hospital in the neighboring Audrain County, Mo. closed in 2022 — in large part due to uncompensated medical care and not having enough federal support, Thompson noted — which led to those patients flooding into Boone County's hospital system. Thompson said she's not sure the hospitals can endure further strain.

"When I look at this [legislation], I don't know whether the University Hospital and Boone Hospital will be able to survive, because of the provisions that put so much burden on the state, on the providers, on everybody," Thompson said.

"I really worry about our ability to deliver health care in our state and in my county, in particular. Boone County has been known for forever as being a sort of beacon of medical care. That's no longer the case, and that certainly won't be the case when the provisions of this bill hit." **CN**



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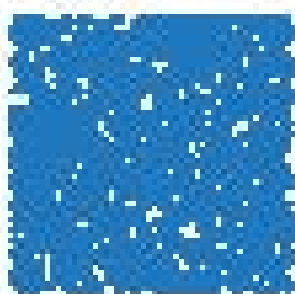


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# Counties eye remedies for residents' social isolation

by **Charlie Ban**  
senior writer

Portage County, Wis. has it all for older residents. That is, if they live in Stevens Point.

The county seat has a university, a technical school, a YMCA and more. Cultural opportunities are sometimes a walk away, or at most, a bus ride. But leave town, and they're looking at a long drive, if they drive at all. Social isolation is often a price older residents pay for living far from town. (See related story, page 13)

"When you move out into rural areas, the resources become far less dense [especially] for people with disabilities and for older adults," said Kate Giblin, senior center manager at the Aging and Disability Resource Center of Portage County. "We also contend with winter weather," which can add an ex-

volunteer opportunities and ways that we can help support people in home and community-based support."

A surgeon general's advisory on social isolation released in 2023 cited polls that show the proportion of Americans who say they could reliably trust other Americans dropped to 30% in 2016 from 45% in 1972. The advisory noted that lacking social connections can increase the risk of premature death as much as smoking up to 15 cigarettes a day and is associated with an increased risk of disease, including a 29% increased risk of heart disease and a 32% increased risk of stroke.

"We had people come to our events and say they hadn't been out of their house in months," Giblin said. "It also really served as a reminder of how isolated older adults with

a disability can be without support in rural areas."

On the other end of the age and geographic spectrum, teenagers are facing the same issue. Not necessarily the same problem — they spend their days surrounded by their peers in school — but in Loudoun County, Va., Board of Supervisors Chair Phyllis Randall said the mental and emotional development curve of the teen-aged brain may not be up to the task of steeling their psyches against the comparison curse that breeds from social media use. Randall has worked as a mental health therapist in the Prince William County, Va. justice system, which adds a professional background to her perspective. She says teenagers' life experiences have likely not added up to a point where they are armed to defend their personalities.

Randall and Sen Chris Murphy (D-Conn.) discussed the topic June 2 at NACo's Washington, D.C. office.

Murphy described Generation Alpha — born between 2010-2024 — as retreating from peers and friends into their smartphones. Some was hastened by public health restrictions in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, and others by social media algorithms.

"There's just something fundamentally different between virtual interaction and in-person interaction," he said. "Our bodies crave in person interaction. Kids are getting so much more of the downside than the

upside," with social media.

"The real poison is the algorithm...Kids are getting so much more of the downside [of social media] than the upside."

Government's place, Randall and Murphy agreed, is in creating the social infrastructure necessary to drive social activity and transportation options that make it easy to congregate. Loudoun County buses, for example, are free for anyone to ride.

"Counties are the place where convening happens," Randall said. "It's important for county governments to know

See ISOLATION page 10



(L-r): Sen. Chris Murphy (D-Conn.), Loudoun County, Va. Chair Phyllis Randall and NACo Chief Government Affairs Officer Mark Ritacco talk about challenges and solutions to social isolation.

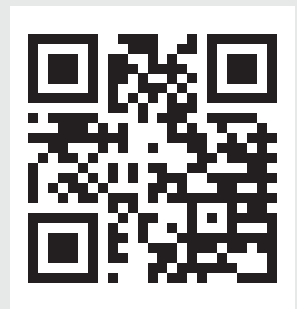
tra degree of difficulty to travel.

Giblin manages the county Rural Community Connections Task Force, which was funded by a \$58,000 grant from the American Rescue Plan Act. It wasn't much, but it was still more than she'd ever seen for that kind of programming, making it possible to host five events in three months in more remote parts of the county.

"We had been creating ways to move resources and opportunities out of the central core of our county," she said.

"We used these events to make the community aware of

**Listen to Randall and Murphy's conversation on the County News Podcast at [www.naco.org/podcast](http://www.naco.org/podcast), on your favorite podcast player or by scanning the QR code.**



"A 12-year-old girl does not realize, 'that's not real,'" when looking at social media content, Randall said.

"She feels on her inside with how somebody looks on their outside. And your inside will never compare to somebody else's outside. That then starts leading to the anxiety, to the depression, to the suicidology, because you think 'I can never be good enough for that.' And so, it's really important that not only is it pulling away from your 'connectedness,' but it's giving you a world that's not real."

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# 'How you build your community is important'

From ISOLATION page 9

that the goal to get them to the lowest tax rate possible is not always the goal. Sometimes the goal is to fund the things you need to fund, to help take care of people, whether that is libraries, whether that is parks."

Murphy stressed the need for local recreational programs for youth and a place for them to go when they're encouraged to "get outside."

"For a lot of kids out there, even if you get them off of those phones, because of our disinvestment institutions and in the places that we do tend to find each other as kids and adults, there's not that answer for them," he said.

Randall added that local land use and zoning policies could encourage development of communities with congregating areas in central locations.

"How you build your community, literally, is really, really important," she said.

"It can really combat social isolation and connectiveness in that way."

Murphy warned that increased social isolation could fray the social fabric.

"We grow first sad, then angry, then fearful, then distrustful, and without that kind of social trust, it's hard to hold a country together," he said.

Back in Portage County, Wis., Giblin wants to break down silos of county programming that segregates residents by age range.

"We do that in so many aspects of our society," she said. "A community feels more like home when it's multigenerational, the way people's households are often set up. People can bring their grandkids to events and nobody should feel out of place, or like they are outsiders. We want everyone to feel welcome and mix together."

The winter weather that makes winter transportation in Wisconsin hazardous? Portage County leaned into the punch,

putting on a cross-country skiing event.

"We only had 10 people put on skis, but we have 50 people total show up," she said.

"The best way for us to be the place people want to be is to create a festive atmosphere, something they couldn't just do at home," Giblin said.

"We could screen a movie, but we'll get much more out of a concert, with food, and something that will build bonds in the community."

The surgeon general's 2023 advisory on social isolation includes a national strategy to advance social connection, based on six foundational pillars:

- Strengthening social infrastructure in local communities
- Enacting pro-connection public policies
- Mobilizing the health sector
- Reforming digital environments
- Deepening our knowledge
- Building a culture of connection **CN**

ON THE MOVE

**NACo OFFICERS**

● West Region Representative **Joe Briggs** and Legislative Director **Owen Hart** attended the International Economic Development Council's Rural Retreat in Cascade County, Mont.



**Briggs**

**NACo STAFF**

● **Lori Dicker** has joined NACo as chief public affairs officer. She previously served as national vice president for marketing and member experience for the American Physical Therapy Association. She earned a bachelor's degree from the University of Wisconsin-Madison.



**Dicker**

● **Luis Guardia** has joined NACo as chief financial officer. He previously served as president of the Food Research and Action Center, and earned master's degrees from the University of California, Los Angeles and George Washington University.



**Guardia**



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# 'NACo at 90'

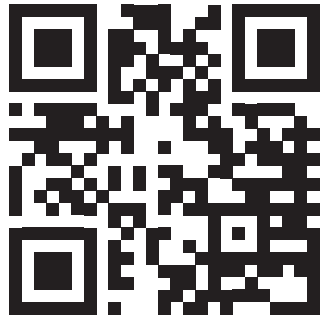
From HISTORY page 5

for which the corporation is formed are to stimulate and contribute to the continuing improvement of county government throughout the United States, including specifically increased efficiency of county government and an even higher standard of public service through the medium of county government.”

By 1956, NACo’s western constituencies were convinced enough of the value of concerted action to form the Council of State Associations. William MacDougall, general manager of the County Supervisors Association of California, was the first chairman of the new group. He and Washington State Association of Counties executive Richard Watts collaborated on a vigorous effort to establish a full-time NACo presence in Washington.

During the mid-year business conference in 1954, personally financed by St. Clair County, Ala. Judge Ward Forman and Calhoun County, Ala. Commissioner Dan Gray, the board debated plans to set an immediate goal for NACo to procure full-time professional staff support and a financial strategy to support that goal. The association had maintained part-time executive directors, often past presidents like George F. Simmons, who continued working in their home counties in places like Utah and Illinois, far from Congress and the heartbeat of the federal government. The Board of Directors also increased the cost of subscriptions to The County Officer by a dollar. 

Learn more about NACo’s 90-year history at [www.naco.org/90](http://www.naco.org/90) and listen to Charlie Ban and Executive Director Matt Chase discuss the project at [www.naco.org/podcast](http://www.naco.org/podcast) or scan the QR code.



## PUTNAM COUNTY, N.Y.

Formed in 1812 from Dutchess County in the Hudson River Valley, Putnam County, N.Y. is named for Israel Putnam, a major general in the Continental Army who fought in the French and Indian War and the Revolutionary War. He fought in major battles, including the Siege of Boston and Battle of Long Island before being appointed to smaller commands.



General Putnam is pictured on the county seal.

Would you like to see your seal featured in County News? Contact Charlie Ban at [cban@naco.org](mailto:cban@naco.org).

## PROFILES IN SERVICE

### ANTON NEFF

NACo Board Member

Owen County, Ind.  
Councilman

**Number of years active in NACo:** My county has been a member for decades and I personally become involved through my state association’s leadership positions since 2017. I am a High Performance Leadership Academy graduate and serve on the NACo Membership Committee.

**Years in public service:** 23



NEFF

**Occupations:** Council member and insurance agent

**Education:** Bachelor of Arts in Telecommunications from Indiana University

**The hardest thing I’ve ever done:** My first-ever candidacy for public office (county auditor in 2000, which I lost).

**Three people (living or dead) I’d invite to dinner:** President Teddy Roosevelt, Paul McCartney and Celine Dion

**The most adventurous thing I’ve ever done is:** For a middle school demonstration, wearing a “bite jacket” and taking four hits from our sheriff’s department K-9s.

**My favorite way to relax is:** Sit on my front porch when it rains.

**I’m most proud of:** My daughter, Sadie.

**Every morning, I read:** The news, e-mails and notifications

**My favorite meal is:** Bone-in ribeye steak, with mashed potatoes and vegetables.

**My pet peeve is:** Bad drivers

**My motto is:** Manage the rule, not the exception.

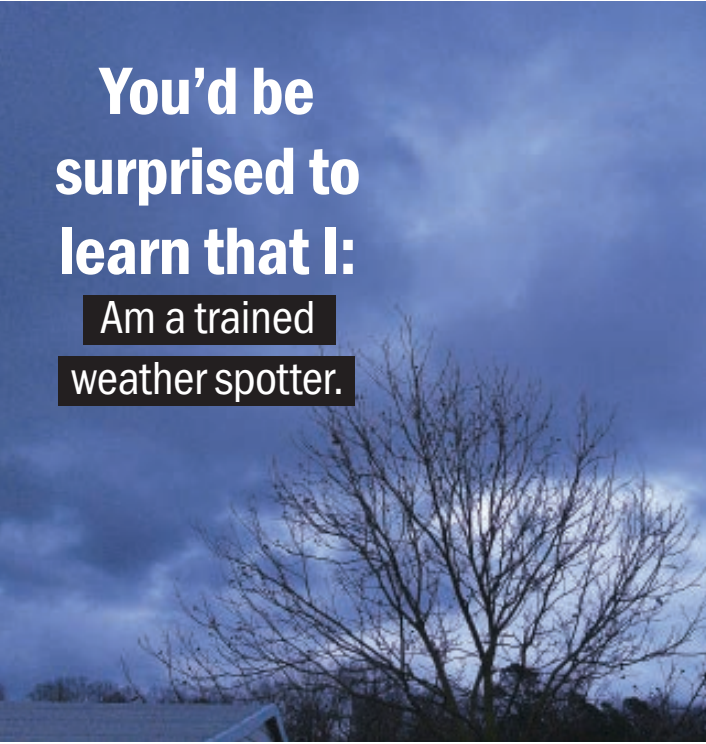
**The last book I read was:** Our NACo Board Meeting packet.

**My favorite movie is:** “Beverly Hills Cop”

**My favorite music is:** ‘80s

**My favorite U.S. president is:** Teddy Roosevelt

**My county is a NACo member because:** We can accomplish more together with our collective knowledge, work, and advocacy, than by ourselves.



## WORD SEARCH

## CITY AND COUNTY OF PHILADELPHIA

Created by Mary Ann Barton

G O R O N F V I U U Y J P H Y I E K V C  
Z R P M V X N O U W T Y L V H J A J Q S  
H W Z A J Q I Z I P I G T E C E V B Q V  
U I P H U B A F C L R Z H R T N P T U T  
W I L I Z N O F W C B O V S Q J D W J Y  
A W R T G X I S B E E O E P O T Q Z M K  
F E E S R X R S B A L S J O V T Y F Z C  
R Y G X B C U O S P E A T X M F V L Y C  
N N T B O N S F C E C F S R E M M U M I  
W F E E S H Y L H K N B I T J D P M Z T  
O U N A K D T C A F Y I O R M L P G T A  
F G E C A L P H T R I B S V S S T A B N  
G A H U G M B P O X U I A U C T V D P A  
A V O A Q T H X L W K M P Q B E S N U H  
R P H I L A D E L P H I A Q R T N U D P  
D U S G C X R G S X T D W N Y S G L P W  
E U J L X C K L C O U N T Y T O X S A M  
N J D D X D C Y X B C H M W P N J D K L  
K C J U M U D O D U J H E O R R I Q W A  
I V N S G A W P C F F C V E I T X Y W D

**BIRTHPLACE:** Philadelphia is where the Declaration of Independence and the U.S. Constitution were debated and signed, at Independence Hall.

**BUSINESS:** Philadelphia is home to two Fortune 500 companies-Comcast and Aramark.

**CELEBRITY:** Famous people from Philadelphia include actors Grace Kelly, Kevin Bacon and Kevin Hart.

**CHEESESTEAK:** The Philadelphia cheesesteak is a sandwich that originated in the 1930s and features thinly sliced beef and melted cheese on a long roll.

**COUNTY:** Philadelphia officially became a consolidated city and county in 1854.

**FIRSTS:** Philadelphia is home to numerous “firsts” including “first hospital,” “first stock exchange,” “first zoo” and “first department store.”

**GARDEN:** The oldest botanical garden in the country, Bartram’s Garden, is located in Philadelphia.

**INQUIRER:** The Philadelphia Inquirer is the area’s daily newspaper, founded in 1829, the third oldest daily in the country still being published.

**MUMMERS:** The annual Mummers Parade, held since 1901, takes place each New Year’s Day in Philadelphia. (A mummer is a type of performer.)

**MURALS:** Philadelphia reportedly has more murals, 3,600, than any other city in the country.

**PHANATIC:** The official mascot for the Philadelphia Phillies Major League Baseball team.

**PHILADELPHIA:** The name comes from the Greek words “philos” (love) and “adelphos” (brother). City founder William Penn chose the name to reflect a vision of religious tolerance.

**ROCKY:** The 1976 film “Rocky” made the steps of the Philadelphia Museum of Art famous.

**STETSON:** The famed cowboy hat actually got its start in Philadelphia, where it was invented in 1860 by resident John Batterson Stetson.

**TAVERN:** Historic Irish pub McGillan’s Olde Ale House is Philadelphia’s oldest continuously running tavern, open since 1860.

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# EXPERIENCE NACo EDGE AT THE 90TH NACo ANNUAL CONFERENCE

NACo EDGE is bringing energy, engagement and fun to the 90th NACo Annual Conference with three signature events designed to connect counties with powerful solutions — and a few surprises along the way.

### 1. NACo EDGE Solutions Center

Need a recharge, literally or figuratively? Visit the NACo EDGE Solutions Center, your one-stop lounge for learning and lounging. The center is locat-



ed in the Bridge of the Pennsylvania Convention Center, across from the NACo Store and County Explorer booth. Enjoy comfortable seating, charge your devices and meet with NACo EDGE staff and partner representatives to discover how our pre-vetted solutions can help your county save money, streamline operations and better serve

residents. Whether you're new to NACo EDGE or looking to expand your impact, this is the place to connect.

### 2. NACo EDGE Trivia

Think you know NACo EDGE? Put your knowledge to the test! Stop by our Trivia workshop on Sunday from 1:30-3:30 p.m. in Ballroom A (300 Level), for a chance to win great prizes while learning about the solutions we offer. From retirement planning

to emergency preparedness, every question brings you closer to better county services—and maybe a sweet treat. Don't forget to grab some ice cream while you play!

### 3. NACo EDGE County Fair

Step right up to the NACo EDGE County Fair! This interactive experience features classic Fair Game challenges with a NACo EDGE twist. Earn raffle tickets as you

play for chances to win exciting prizes. Along the way, enjoy cheesecake bites and pretzels while exploring how EDGE solutions are helping counties thrive. This event will take place on Monday from 2:30-5 p.m. in the NACo EDGE Solutions Center. Whether you're here to learn, lounge or play, NACo EDGE is ready to make your conference experience memorable. Come find us, connect with your peers and discover the power of partnership.

GET TO KNOW...

by Meredith Moran  
staff writer

Philadelphia County was founded in 1682 as one of America's first counties, along with Bucks and Chester, by the Quaker William Penn who founded the Province of Pennsylvania during the British colonial era. Its name comes from the combination of the Greek words "philos" and "adelphos," which translate to "beloved" and "brother," respectively, giving Philadelphia its "city of brotherly love" nickname.

Philadelphia is known as the birthplace of the United States; it was the nation's first capital and is where the Declaration of Independence and the U.S. Constitution were signed. Philadelphia County and the city of Philadelphia consolidated in 1854.

Philadelphia resident Benjamin Franklin founded the nation's first library, The Library Company of Philadelphia, in 1731; it served as the Library of Congress from the Revolutionary War until 1800. Franklin co-founded the first hospital in the city-county two decades later, and today one in six U.S.

Philadelphia County, Pa.



doctors train in Philadelphia. The Mütter Museum, which is part of The College of Physicians of Philadelphia, was founded in 1863 by College Fellow Dr. Thomas Dent Mütter. Considered America's finest museum of medical history, the Mütter Museum displays its beautifully preserved collections of anatomical specimens, models and medical instruments in a 19th-century "cabinet museum" setting. The museum helps the public understand the mysteries and beauty of the human body and to appreciate the history of diagnosis and treatment of disease.

Philadelphia's Washington Square Park features "moon trees." In 1975, astronaut Stuart Roosa brought hundreds of seeds to the moon on the Apollo 14 mission, which were later planted in the Philadelphia park. The municipality's park system is one of the oldest and largest in the country, consisting of 63 parks covering 9,200 acres. Fairmount Park alone spans more than 4,100 acres.

Philadelphia has the oldest zoo in the country. It opened in 1874 (after being delayed

15 years because of the Civil War), and today houses more than 1,900 rare and endangered animals, including the Galapagos Tortoise and Red Panda. The Philadelphia Zoo was the first to develop specially formulated foods for

zoo animals. It was also the location of the first successful orangutan and chimpanzee births in the United States and was the first zoo in the world

to build an on-site animal care center.



A William Penn statue tops Philadelphia City Hall. The 37-foot tall bronze statue was created by Alexander Milne Calder and installed in 1894.

**Philadelphia City Hall was once the tallest habitable building in the world, and is still the largest municipal building in the country.** The city-county was also the location of the first Thanksgiving Day Parade and the first organized protest against slavery in the United States. The nation's first daily newspaper, The Philadelphia Packet and Daily Advertiser, was founded in Philadelphia in 1784 and published for just six years. The Philadelphia Tribune is the oldest continuously published African American newspaper and The Philadelphia Inquirer is the third-oldest daily newspaper still being published in the United States.

Philadelphia is known for the cheesesteak, which according to legend, was first created in the 1930s by Pat Olivieri, a hot dog vendor who started grilling beef and serving it on a roll.

There are more than 4,000 murals across the city-county, making it the "Mural Capital of the World," and its Mural Arts Program is the largest public art program in the country.



## BRIGHT IDEAS | BALTIMORE COUNTY, MD.

# Maryland County Invests in Community ‘Villages’

**PROBLEM:** Some elderly people are isolated and need help with activities.

**SOLUTION:** Create a volunteer network or “village” to help with everything from groceries to doctor’s appointment.

by Meredith Moran  
staff writer

After being diagnosed with a brain tumor, Taj-ur-Rehman was weighing whether he wanted to undergo surgery to have it removed or if he should just let it kill him. The tumor was operable, but what worried him more than the surgery itself was what he would do after. Without family in the area, he felt he lacked a support system and didn’t know how he would pay for the surgery or how he would get to doctor’s appointments. Who would help him with food or assist with any caregiving he would need in recovery?

“He had no hope, essentially,” said Rubina Ansari, program coordinator for Golden Age Village, an organization that offers resources to Baltimore County, Md.’s aging population. “He was in the mindset that, ‘My time has come, this is probably the best way for me to go — just accept that I have this tumor and that I’m not going to get better, and that eventually I’m going to die.’”

Then his “village” stepped in. To help its older population “age in place,” Baltimore County launched the Villages of Baltimore County initiative, which provided \$50,000 in grant funding to six organizations that serve cultural communities that have historically been under-resourced so that they could build out, or expand their existing, social and transportation programs specifically for older adults. Roughly 2,100 people in Baltimore County have been served through the initiative, according to Eram Abbasi, Baltimore County Department of Aging’s chief of



Village members in the Baltimore County neighborhood of Turner Station pause for a photo with Girl Scout Troop 353 by the recently established garden in Chestnut Park. Photo courtesy of Arkia Wade

community services.

“These grassroots organizations were already working in their community in some capacity,” Abbasi said. “They were providing tutoring services, they were working with children — they had a network of volunteers already in place.

“All we did was provide them with the tools and funding to say, ‘Could you also use the infrastructure that you build to add older adults as well?’”

The \$50,000 grant allowed the Golden Age Village at the Islamic Society of Baltimore to create two centers, one of which Taj-ur-Rehman is a part of. Dr. Mushtaq Khan, who is also part of the village, led the charge to create a plan of action for Taj-ur-Rehman post-operation that includes a meal train and rotating visitation schedule, according to Ansari.

Dr. Khan and another village member have also volunteered to be his primary caregivers and point of contact with his doctor while he’s recovering,

and village members have come together to raise funds for the surgery, so that it won’t be as much of a financial burden on him, she added.

‘How do we cope with building a livable community for everyone?’

“They reminded him of his importance in the community,” Ansari said. “And then when they presented everything to him and gave him that comfort ... it was enough to convince him to go ahead and schedule the surgery.”

The villages initiative is part of a national model, which grew out of a grassroots movement in Beacon Hill, Mass. and has evolved into 285 villages across 42 U.S. states and Canada and Australia, according

to Dr. Bill Kincaid, president of the Village-to-Village Network. Baltimore County adopted the village concept because it was looking for a way to reach out to underserved older adults in minority communities. Abbasi had previously established a village in her community, and thought the model would lend itself well to the department of aging’s goal, she said.

“Villages offer one mechanism of bringing people together and encouraging them to take an active role in what happens in their community and get involved,” Kincaid said. “So, it’s not just ‘you belong to the village because the village can do something for you’ — you belong to the village, because you can do something for the village and help others that are there.”

Each village in the Baltimore County initiative looks different, because they cater specifically to the population they’re serving, however all of them provide social programming of

some kind and assistance with transportation, according to Eram.

“I think it’s important for counties to realize that they have a very important role to play in fashioning a world that older people can live in,” Kincaid said. “One of the difficulties as we age, particularly because of the number of people who are [aging], is how do we cope with building a livable community for everyone? Not just for the elderly, but for everyone.

“So, one of the things that villages try to do is not only reach out to the older people in their community, but to younger people as well, who can do the volunteering to keep people in their homes.”

The Baltimore Association of Nepalese in America’s village has a clinic in which healthcare professionals in the community provide free monthly check-ups, including vision and hearing tests.

Another village partnered with a local high school’s career program. Students in the culinary program serve lunches to the village members and students in the cosmetology program provide manicure and pedicure services.

Neighborhood Companions, Inc., which serves older adults in the historically Black Baltimore neighborhood of Turner Station, recently established a community garden, which the grant funding helped make possible. In May, a local Girl Scout Troop — which is led by Neighborhood Companions’ CEO and founder, Arkia Wade — worked alongside the organization’s village members to plant fresh produce, including cucumbers, eggplant, peppers, strawberries and watermelon.

“We’re in a food desert here in Turner Station,” Wade said. “We haven’t had a grocery store in over six years, so food is a definite issue in our community, and finding healthy food is even more of a challenge.”

See VILLAGES page 15

# NEWS FROM ACROSS THE NATION

## ALABAMA

Thanks to an innovative cost-sharing program, **BALDWIN COUNTY** will see \$60 million in **highway infrastructure improvements**, with no assistance from the state or feds, WALA-TV reported. The county will match money from municipalities 50-50, up to \$30 million each by 2030.

The goal is to improve connectivity and infrastructure along stressed road systems where county and city jurisdictions overlap. "Yes, it's very aggressive, but by managing the program locally and cutting out a lot of the red tape with federal regulations and even some state regulations, we can achieve it," said Baldwin County Engineer Frank Lundy.

A new program being administered by **MOBILE COUN-**



## FLORIDA

Parents in **ORANGE COUNTY** can sign their children up for **free swim lessons** as part of a new program called Every Child a Swimmer, thanks to a partnership between the county, the Florida Department of Health and a local aquatics center.

"In 2023, the county commission approached me about what we're doing to keep children safe in the water," said Dr. Raul Pino, director of county health services. A pilot program was launched last year that attracted more than 2,000 registrations within 24 hours. Its popularity helped boost funding and expand the program.



## CALIFORNIA

Like all counties across the country, **SONOMA COUNTY** last week was preparing for **4th of July** festivities including parades, fireworks and much more including the largest fireworks display in the county featuring the Transcendence Theatre Company and Santa Rosa Symphony at Greene Music Center at Rohnert Park, pictured here.

**TY** is trying to encourage more **homeownership**, to help make up for the people who left after devastating hurricanes in 2020, WKRG-TV reported. The Mobile County Down Payment Assistance Program could make dozens of families homeowners in the area.

It's hoped the program will remove one of the biggest hurdles to homeownership, a sometimes unaffordable down payment. This is a grant program from HUD, sent to Alabama through ADECA and then to

the county. Applicants must meet certain income requirements, must have lived in Mobile County during the storm season of 2020 and must already be approved for a loan.



## ARKANSAS

**WASHINGTON COUNTY** announced its **Community Rebuilding Initiative**, a residential substance abuse treatment program for people awaiting sentencing, has been awarded nearly \$4,000 worth of naloxone from the Arkansas

Opioid Recovery Partnership, KFSM-TV reported.

The initiative "is one of the most important steps we've taken to break the cycle of incarceration in Washington County," said Judge Patrick Deakins.

## OREGON

**MULTNOMAH COUNTY's** experiment to offer **preschool** at no cost to families and parents could see an early demise, Oregon Public Broadcasting reported. The county's Preschool for All program was overwhelmingly approved by voters in 2020. It's funded through a personal income tax on the area's highest earners. A new effort looks to dissolve

that tax and, in turn, end access to free, county-funded preschool programs.

An amendment to Senate Bill 106, recently proposed, would bar the state's largest county from enacting any income tax that funds no-cost preschool and early learning programs. The bill calls for the county to phase out the program over the next two years.

"This really is an attempt to strip local control from our region," Multnomah County Chair Jessica Vega Pederson said at a meeting of the Senate Committee on Finance and Revenue Tuesday afternoon. "I would have wanted to see a

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## HAWAII

A grant agreement authorizing approximately \$1.6 billion in Community Development Block Grant Disaster Recovery funds to support Maui **wild-fire recovery efforts** was recently finalized by **HUD** and **MAUI COUNTY**.

The agreement allows the county to begin receiving crucial federal funds to fill gaps and address disaster recovery needs that are currently going unmet by other funding sources.

"This agreement marks a major milestone in ensuring these much-needed funds are on their way to Maui," said County Mayor Richard Bissen. "Nearly two years after the wildfires, we are ready to take the next critical step: disbursing these funds to help survivors build back stronger, safer and more resilient for the future. The County stands ready with the partnerships, processes and commitment in place to move this recovery forward."



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process that provided us with much more public engagement and a clear path to community-led decision making.”

PENNSYLVANIA

**WESTMORELAND COUNTY** commissioners are expected to launch a grant program to provide funding to **help low-income residents access the internet**. Commissioners were slated to vote on the proposal to establish a digital technology grant program, Triblive.com reported. They also are expected to award three \$15,000 grants to local agencies to enable residents to access laptops and online services.

Westmoreland County Planning Director Jason Rigone said the funds are part of the county’s effort to expand broadband access to county residents. “We want to ensure all our residents, including low-income residents, have the ability to ac-



PENNSYLVANIA

The **FRANKLIN COUNTY** Probation and Parole Department has a new officer who’s ready to put his paws to work, WHTM-TV reported. The department **welcomed their newest officer, Officer Dudley**, alongside his supervisor and primary handler, Kayla Stoner.

The department says Dudley is the first court facility dog to serve in the 39th Judicial District and will support the mission in rehabilitating individuals under court-ordered supervision, as well as assisting drug treatment courts and general criminal courts.



NEW JERSEY

The **MORRIS COUNTY** Board of County Commissioners, the County Office of Planning and Preservation and the Township of Denville recently joined the history and preservation community for the Morris County Historical Society’s launch of a new **driving tour of historic sites**.

The online guide, morriscountyhistory.org, features 18 historic sites, each of which has received more than \$1 million in preservation funding through the Morris County Historic Preservation Trust Fund. It marks the first in a planned series of themed, self-guided tours in development by the Morris County Historical Society to promote the county’s historical assets. The launch of the driving tour aligns with preparations in Morris County for America’s 250th anniversary in 2026.

cess needed online services,” he said.

UTAH

**MORGAN COUNTY** recently invited a 50 to 60-member **fire crew** to a barbecue to thank them for the proactive work they’re doing to clear vegetation and create safe passages for fire crews to exit burning locations, KSL-TV reported. Some are paid for their work and some are volunteers.

“The biggest reason I wanted to do this: for you. This never happens, right?” Morgan County Fire Chief Boyd Carrigan told the fire crews at the celebration, where residents also got a chance to thank the crew. “I’ve lived what you’re doing. I know what you’re doing. What you’re doing for this community is amazing. The community really appreciates it.”

VIRGINIA

Dozens of **CHARLES CITY COUNTY** residents filled a county meeting room last week voicing opposition to a proposed 515-acre **data center** development, WRIC-TV reported. “You’re swimming in the water with sharks right now,” one neighbor said to board members during public comment.

After some questioning by the supervisors, board member Michael Hill ultimately proposed a deferral of the decision, Richmond BizSense reported. “I would like for us to take additional time to gather more information and details, because we do hear your concerns,” Hill said, addressing county residents.

Nearby **HENRICO COUNTY** recently approved revised rules that put further restric-



WASHINGTON

To combat **homelessness**, **PIERCE COUNTY** and the Low-Income Housing Institute (LIHI) are expected to open a 60-unit tiny home village, on LIHI-owned land, *The News Tribune* reported. The 8x12 houses are insulated, contain heat and air conditioning units, beds and furnishings. The community will include case-management offices, a common kitchen, community space, security fencing, plumbed showers, laundry facilities, 24/7 staff offices, storage and parking.

tions on data centers, no longer allowing such projects as a by-right use.

WISCONSIN

A **free meal service for children and teens** was set to kick off recently in **MILWAUKEE COUNTY**.

The Summer Meal Program allows families to save money on food, ensures children have access to healthy meals and encourages participation in recreational and educational activities. Through this collaboration, The Hunger Task Force and local partners are predicted to serve more than 500,000 free meals. The program is open to children and teens (18 and under) and will be available at 180 sites.

WYOMING

Ten area entrepreneurs and their business partners have been recognized for completing the **WYOMING COUNTY Business Fast Track Program**. The graduates are bringing a diverse and dynamic array of business concepts to life, each designed to enhance community life and drive sustainable economic growth, Wyoming County Business Center officials said in a news release.

*Send your news and photos to Mary Ann Barton, mbarton@naco.org.*

Villages build community

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Local Eagle Scouts built raised beds for the garden; one of the beds was built higher than the others, so that an older adult sitting in a chair or wheelchair could also participate.

The plan is to make salad boxes and bags from the produce, which will go to older adults in the community and a local church’s food pantry.

“The people in my community struggle to put food on the table,” Wade said.

“My transportation visits consist of going to social services and food pantries and visits to the doctor that they might have neglected had they not had this service in the community.

“You have people who are trying to decide whether ‘I eat or pay for this medicine,’ so I think it’s been a long time coming, but I’m appreciative that the county is investing in communities that have been underserved for lots of years. It’s allowed me to really get the movement forward and give me a great foundation to build from. Without this money, I really don’t know what I would have done.”

The aging population is growing. The number of people in the country over the age of 100 will increase by 400% between now and 2050, according to a Pew Research Center report.

It’s not sustainable for every elderly person to be in a nursing home — there’s not enough of them to take care of everybody and there’s not enough money to pay for that level of care; villages can provide an alternative, Kincaid said.

“If we can keep people living in their homes and keep them healthy and provide the services they need and keep them independent longer, governments are going to do better, and individuals are going to do better.”

*The Baltimore County program won the 2025 “Best in Category” NACo Achievement Award in the Community and Economic Development category.*

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