

A Team Rubicon member helps with clean up after tornadoes struck DeKalb County, Ill. in April. A nonprofit organization, Team Rubicon (TR), based in Los Angeles, rapidly deploys military veterans to disaster sites. In honor of Veterans' Day, read more about how TR helps counties and how counties help veterans in a County News special Hot Topics report, inside. Photo by Josh Walker, Team Rubicon

NACo briefs Congress on behavioral health issues

BY BRIAN BOWDEN

ASSOCIATE LEGISLATIVE DIRECTOR

The figures may surprise you: Nearly one in five adults — or 43 million American — have a diagnosable mental illness, yet less than half receive treatment.

Nearly one in 10—or 21 million adults — has a substance abuse disorder with only about 10 percent

receiving treatment. Meanwhile, approximately 8.5 million adults have both a mental health and substance abuse disorder.

Supply is clearly not meeting demand. More than half of the nation's counties report not having a practicing behavioral health worker, according to research by the federal Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA).

Counties' essential role in behavioral health was the major theme of a congressional briefing hosted by NACo and the National

See **HEALTH** page 2

NACBHDD

Cherryl Ramirez, president and executive director of Association of Oregon Community Mental Health Programs

Off-year ballot initiatives go to pot in two states

By Charles Taylor SENIOR STAFF WRITER

Statewide initiatives and referenda are always fewer in oddnumbered years, but those that made it onto Nov. 3 ballots have significant implications for counties in their states.

This year brings the smallest number of off-year initiatives in the past 15 years, according to John Matsusaka, director of the Initia-

tive & Referendum Institute in Los Angeles. Twenty-two statewide propositions in seven states will be voted up or down on Election Day, and there will be scores of local questions considered at the county level.

If there's a common theme to tease out of the small crop of ballot questions, marijuana legalization - and related issues — continues

See ELECTION page 18

Local leaders join forces to curb prescription drug abuse, heroin

Obama's announcement of local, state and federal efforts to address the growing problem of opioid misuse and abuse, local leaders announced a new cooperative purchasing agreement to expand public agencies' access to potentially lifesaving opioid withdrawal medications.

NACo, the National League of Cities and United States Conference of Mayors, with the U.S. Communities Purchasing Alliance and Premier, Inc., have secured industry-leading discounts for naloxone and medications containing buprenorphine.

These medications help prevent painful withdrawal symptoms when a person stops taking opioid drugs. The program pools the purchasing power of more than 62,000 agencies in state and local government and the nonprofit

"Medication-assisted opioid treatment programs can mean the difference between life and death," said National Association of Counties President Sallie Clark, commissioner, El Paso County, Colo. "Counties are uniquely situated at the intersection of the local

In conjunction with President health, human services, justice and public safety systems. We see firsthand the devastating effects of prescription drug abuse and heroin use. This is a non-partisan issue, and we are implementing smart strategies to address this growing problem in our communities.'

See OPIOIDS page 2



When the smoke has cleared and the news crews have left, the real work begins for counties as they reclaim the land damaged by wildfire Page 4

National Day of Service slated for April 5, 2016 ▶ Page 5

Robert Wood Johnson Foundation soliciting entries for Culture of Health prize Page 6

High court refuses to hear Utah case about R.S. 2477 roads ▶ Page 16

2 | November 2, 2015

Opioid abuse at epidemic level

OPIOIDS from page 1

Additionally, as part of its Safe and Secure Counties Initiative, NACo is working with state associations of counties to develop policy recommendations and promote promising practices to address the opioid epidemic plaguing communities.

Obama held the community forum in Charleston, W.Va., Oct. 21 where he announced a broad range of efforts aimed at addressing the prescription drug abuse and heroin epidemic.

More than 40 provider groups, he said, including physicians, dentists, advanced practice registered nurses, physician assistants, physical therapists and educators have committed to: • have more than 540,000 health care providers complete opioid prescriber training in the next two years

• double the number of physicians certified to prescribe buprenorphine for opioid use disorder treatment, from 30,000 to 60,000 over the next three years

- double the number of providers that prescribe naloxone—a drug that can reverse an opioid overdose
- double the number of health care providers registered with their State Prescription Drug Monitoring Programs in the next two years, and
- reach more than 4 million health care providers with awareness messaging on opioid abuse, appropriate prescribing practices, and actions providers can take to

be a part of the solution in the next two years.

According to the Office of National Drug Control Policy, more Americans now die every year from drug overdoses than they do in motor vehicle crashes and the majority of those overdoses involve prescription medications.

Health care providers wrote 259 million prescriptions for opioid pain medications in 2012—enough for every American adult to have a bottle of pills.

Opioids are a class of prescription pain medications that includes hydrocodone, oxycodone, morphine and methadone. Heroin belongs to the same class of drugs, and four in five heroin users started out by misusing prescription opioid pain medications.

NACo releases priorities for behavioral health services reform at Capitol Hill briefing

HEALTH from page 1

Association of County Behavioral Health and Developmental Disability Directors (NACBHDD), Oct. 28.

At the Capitol Hill event, NACo and NACBHDD presented a new fact sheet outlining why behavioral health matters to counties and outlined counties' priorities for behavioral health reform.

After opening remarks, NACo

QUICK TAKES

TOP 5

COUNTIES WITH

MOST VETERANS

President Sallie Clark discussed her Safe and Secure Initiative and how counties invest \$70 billion in community health systems, such as behavioral health, to keep residents healthy.

She emphasized how counties are at the nexus of health care, human services, and justice and public safety systems, highlighting NACo's involvement with the Stepping Up initiative to reduce the number of people with mental illness in county jails.

Clark urged Congress to join with counties to achieve successful behavioral health reform.

Cherryl Ramirez, NACBHDD president and executive director of the Association of Oregon Community Mental Health Programs, provided an overview of county behavioral health systems, which exist in 23 states and serve 75 percent of the U.S. population.

She emphasized the importance of sustaining funding for SAMHSA's block grants, which help support county-based prevention and treatment services.

Medicaid, which counties help finance, remains the largest

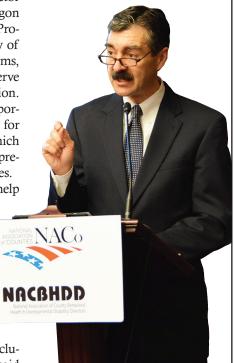
source of funding for behavioral health services and treatment. However, Ramirez pointed at multiple challenges that counties face with Medicaid financing including the Institute

of Mental Disease (IMD) exclusion, which prohibits Medicaid from paying for psychiatric care in facilities with more than 17 beds, and the Medicaid inmate

exclusion, which prohibits Medicaid from paying for health care while individuals are detained in county jails before they go to trial and are declared guilty. She asked Congress to enhance Medicaid flexibility to allow counties to provide efficient delivery of care at the local level.

Robert Sheehan, executive director, Michigan Association of Community Mental Health Boards and former executive director of the Community Mental Health Authority of Clinton, Eaton and Ingham counties,

See **HEALTH** page 18



Robert Sheehan, executive director, Michigan Association of Community Mental Health Boards

PRESIDENT'S PERSPECTIVE By Sallie Clark

The past weeks have reminded me of something Helen Keller said: "Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much."

Collaboration was a key theme at recent meetings I attended on behalf of NACo. I visited San Diego County, Calif. to participate in a meeting with the National Congress of American Indians. The meeting brought together elected officials and key representatives of tribal, state and county governments to discuss issues of common concern. Relationship-building with local governments was a particular focus along with the role that crossjurisdictional cooperation and coordination can play in creating safer, shared communities.

Counties support government-togovernment relations that recognize the roles and unique interests of tribes and other governments to protect all members of our communities and to provide services beneficial to all. In order to do this, collaboration is essential.

This meeting was an excellent opportunity for me not only to share the county perspective but also to learn about some of the cooperative solutions being implemented in various communities to address priorities including law enforcement and public safety, child welfare, early childhood development and foster care, and emergency preparedness and response.

I was also honored to attend the National Council of County Association Executives (NCCAE) Annual Meeting in Baldwin County, Ala. State associations of counties understand the importance of intergovernmental collaboration, and they are a cornerstone of NACo's work, especially for our member outreach, peer exchanges, legislative advocacy coordination and research.

Counties know that being involved in our state associations is an effective way to impact legislation and policies in state capitals. We also know that what happens in state capitals often originates in Washington, D.C. and eventually makes its way to the county level. That's one of the reasons why we are working hard to advocate for counties at the federal level — to have a meaningful seat at the table to implement changes before and during rulemaking and legislative processes.

During the meeting, NCCAE members discussed confronting challenges facing counties and states, and we heard from experts on several topics from criminal justice reform to property taxes, from medical costs to schools.

We look forward to collaborating



NACo President Sallie Clark and National Congress of American Indians President Brian Cladoosby discuss collaboration on child welfare, emergency management and public safety. Photo courtesy of Sallie Clark

more strongly with state associations, especially with civic engagement and public awareness, advocacy, leadership development, innovation sharing, enterprise solutions and much more.

Congratulations to the 2015–2016 NCCAE officers: President Tim McGuire (Michigan), First Vice President Eric Johnson (Washington), Second Vice President Ross King (Georgia), Third Vice President Vivian Parsons (West Virginia) and Immediate Past President Roland Dartez (Louisiana).

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Beverly Schlotterbeck
(202) 393-6226 • FAX (202) 393-2630
Published biweekly except August by:
National Association of Counties
Research Foundation, Inc.
25 Massachusetts Ave., N.W.
STE. 500, Washington, D.C. 20001
(202) 393-6226 | FAX (202) 393-2630
E-mail | cnews@naco.org
Online address | www.countynews.org

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Mail subscriptions are \$100 per year for non-members. \$60 per year for non-members purchasing multiple copies. Educational institution rate, \$50 per year. Member county supplemental subscriptions are \$20 each. Send payment with order and address changes to NACo, 25 Massachusetts Ave. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20001.

POSTMASTER: send address changes to County News, 25 Massachusetts Ave. N.W., Ste. 500, Washington, D.C. 20001

(USPS 704-620) ■ (ISSN: 0744-9798)

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November 2, 2015 3





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WHEN THE SINGKE CLEARS

Counties face the long-term environmental effects of wildfires

By ALIX KASHDAN

DIGITAL MEDIA ASSOCIATE

The 2015 wildfire season has been labeled among the most destructive in the past two decades. More than 8.8 million acres have burned. Homes have been destroyed and lives lost. Yet, after the fires are extinguished and the smoke clears, the problems associated with wildfires are far from over.

Fueled by large accumulations of dry brush and other matter, wildfires cause significant long-term environmental damage such as deforestation, soil erosion and changes in the make-up of the ecosystem's plant and animal species. For some communities, damage to the soil can be especially dangerous: When plants burn and their roots are degraded, the resulting destabilized soil can lead to more frequent and harmful mudslides, landslides and floods. In 2010, for example, massive flooding following a wildfire occurred in Coconino County, Ariz.

In June 2010, the Schultz Fire burned 15,000 acres in Coconino County. Mountainous terrain, which is the natural watershed for the county residents living in neighborhoods downhill, was torched by the intense blaze, leaving behind a burned and desolate landscape. Just two weeks after the fire — nowhere near enough time for the county to adequately re-stabilize the soil in the area monsoon rains flowed straight down the scorched mountainside and led to massive flooding in the neighborhoods below.

While the fire had not destroyed any buildings or lives, the

ensuing flood severely damaged many homes and claimed the life of a 12-year-old.

After the initial firefighting and flood response, the county embarked on an effort to address the long-term causes and consequences of the disaster. Officials, working with county residents, determined that environmental restoration was the best approach. "We identified the opportunity to restore the watershed," explained Lucinda Andreani, deputy director, Coconino County Public

Works Department. "We wanted to restore the mountain to its natural state so that water would never again flood the neighborhoods below the watershed."

Restoration was best for the long-term environmental health of the area, and it also mirrored the community's values, where the region's natural heritage is prized, she said.

The county collaborated with scientists and other experts from across the country on its restoration efforts. Restoration involved filling in eroded flood channels called alluvial fans, where water naturally spreads out. The mountain's alluvial fans were eroded up to 25 feet in some places. "We had to fill those channels back in," said Andreani. "Normally, it would take 50 to 75 years for those channels to fill in naturally. We studied fires from 60 to 70 years ago and developed a plan to mimic the natural cycle of sediment absorption, restoring our alluvial fans in five years instead of 50."

In addition to restoring sediment to the eroded channels, Coconino County stabilized the alluvial fans with underground logs that force water flowing in concentrated streams to spread out. The county has also reseeded the watershed with natural vegetation. "Absorption of water has been amazing, and we're getting nice regrowth," Andreani said.

The restoration project is

almost complete, with a thinning project of one strip of trees still underway. To fund the massive, five-year effort, the county used county funds and funding from the Natural Resources Conservation Service, the U.S. Forest Service and the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

"We've raised millions of dollars — it's unheard of to raise the amount we needed," explained Coconino County Supervisor Liz Archuleta. "The restoration plan we presented was innovative, and people wanted to help."

The county initially spent around \$10 million to fight the Schultz fire and an additional \$30 million on mitigation. "One of the key messages from our experience is that there's a cost after the fires that isn't always considered," Andreanisaid. "In this case, it was triple what it was to fight the fire." What's more, in a study of the full cost of the fire, the Ecological Restoration Institute at Northern Arizona University estimated that

SpeedRead » » »

- >> Wildfire's impact can alter the soil's structure
- Coconino County paid \$10 million to fight the massive Schultz Fire in 2010.
- » It has spent \$30 million remediating the damage in a model restoration effort.

the true total cost was between \$133 million and \$147 million—a large portion of which was due to the devaluation of properties in the flood zone.

Another key takeaway is that the area's fire and flood risk has decreased dramatically.

"Water has not overwhelmed the measures we've put in place," Archuleta explained. "We're protecting people's lives, and we're also protecting county infrastructure. Rather than spending millions of dollars on road cleanup every year, we looked long-term. We won't constantly have to do road maintenance after floods."

What's more, she added, the county does not have to mobilize massive resources every time the area experiences heavy rain. Officials can monitor the situation, but there has been no flood runoff from the watershed area.

Coconino's project has had wider-reaching effects as well, helping to promote environmental protection in other communities. The county seat of Flagstaff, after seeing Coconino County's success, passed a ballot measure two years after the Schultz Fire to raise money for its own forest health projects.

"If the same thing had happened in Flagstaff," Archuleta said, "the impact would have been over \$1 billion because there's so much more development than in Coconino County.

"Their ballot passed with about 75 percent of the vote."



Water runs through an alluvial fan, aided by extra precaution logs. Photo courtesy of Coconino County, Ariz.

ASSOCIATION NACo • CountyNews November 2, 2015 | 5

County leaders join effort to recognize national service



AmeriCorps volunteer takes on tutor duties

BY WENDY SPENCER, CEO

CORPORATION FOR NATIONAL AND COMMU-

In Maryland, more than 550 Senior Corps volunteers serve through the Montgomery County RSVP program, where they tutor students, beautify county parks, deliver meals and offer free tax services. Last year, $these \,volunteers \,completed \,4,500 \,free$ tax returns yielding \$4.2 million in refunds for low-income and elderly county residents.

AmeriCorps members serving through the Barnstable County AmeriCorps program in Massachusetts last year completed 366 natural resource projects, improved 700 acres of parks, built or improved 67 miles of trail, and educated thousands of citizens on how to be prepared when disaster strikes.

These are just two examples of how the nation's counties are using AmeriCorps and Senior Corps to meet local needs and strengthen their communities.

To highlight this impact, county officials across the nation will participate in a day of recognition on Tuesday, April 5, 2016, to shine the spotlight on AmeriCorps and Senior Corps and thank individuals

The Mayor and County Day of Recognition for National Service is a partnership between NACo, the National League of Cities, Cities of Service, and the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS), the federal agency that administer AmeriCorps, Senior Corps, and other programs. Last year, more than 500 county leaders participated in communities — and the fiscal in the day, part of the overall total of 2,786 local elected officials representingmorethan 150 million Americans who participated in the annual effort.

"Every day, AmeriCorps members and Senior Corps volunteers are making a powerful difference in counties across the country," said NACo Executive Director Matt Chase. "We are pleased to support this recognition gov/

day and encourage county officials to sign up to participate."

County leaders and other local officials will participate in a variety of activities on April 5, including visiting national service programs, thanking volunteers, hosting roundtables and communicating about national service through social media.

Why a County Day?

By shining the spotlight on the impact of service and thanking those who serve, county officials hope to inspire more residents to get involved in their communities.

"County leaders work hard every day to get things done and respond to the needs of their constituents," said Wendy Spencer, CEO of the Corporation for National and Community Service. "They know first-hand the value of national service. We are pleased to partner with county leaders to strengthen service efforts in their

CNCS annually engages more than 5 million citizens in service at 60,000 sites across the country through its programs. While most national service members serve through nonprofits, counties are eligible to sponsor AmeriCorps and Senior Corps programs, and

National service programs provide a variety of services, including supporting food banks and homeless shelters, restoring parks, strengthening public safety and juvenile justice services, tutoring and mentoring students, and managing other vol-

Given the many social needs constraints facing government at all levels - national service and volunteerism are smart strategies to meet local needs. By joining this national day of recognition on April 5, county leaders will not only say thanks for a job well done, they will encourage more citizens to get involved.

Learn more at www.nationalservice.

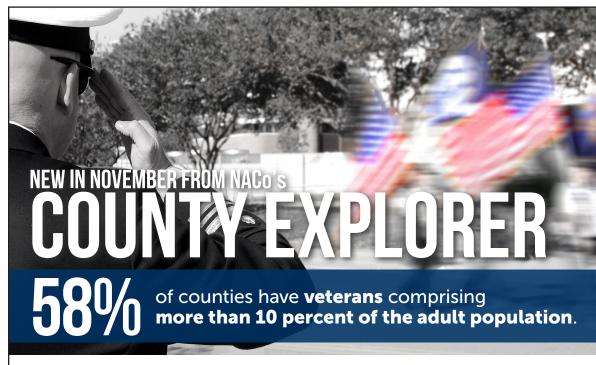






Welcome, Butts County, Ga.

NACo's newest member county, Butts County, Ga., boasts that it is home to the oldest state park in the country, Indian Springs, and the oldest barbeque restaurant at the same site in the state. The 187-square-mile county was named for Cap. Samuel Butts, a Virginian who was killed in the Battle of Calabee in Alabama during the Creek Indian War of 1811-15, according to the New Georgia Encyclopedia.

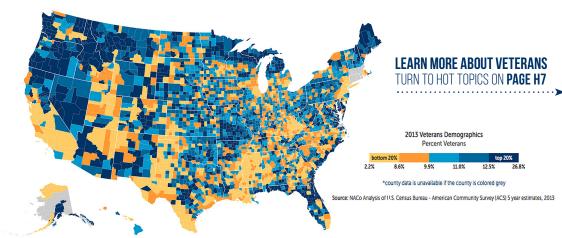


of counties have higher veteran unemployment rates than the overall county unemployment rates.

counties received within their jurisdiction over \$50 million in Veterans Affairs benefits, as of 2014.

of counties have 1,000 residents or more reporting ethnicity of two or more races

counties have at least a quarter of their residents 65 years or older.



www.NACo.org/CountyExplorer

6 | November 2, 2015 CountyNews • AND NACO

Profiles in Service

Jerry Doucette

NACo Board of Directors Board Chair; Alger County, Mich.

Number of years active in NACo: 6 years

Years in public service: 8 years Occupation: Worked 40 years as an electrician in power plant generation

Education: College courses

The hardest thing I've ever done: In the 1960s while serving in the Michigan National Guard, I was sent to control the riots in Detroit, which consisted of being in the middle of gunfire.

A dream I have is to: Help make Alger County a better place for the next generations and to live to be 100 years old.

You'd be surprised to learn that: My wife and I were honored as Parade Marshals for the City of Marquette's 4th of July Parade. I am also a NOAA Weather Watcher for Lake Superior.

The most adventurous thing I've ever done is: Become one of the survivors to complete "The Road to Hana" with its 617 curves, 56 bridges, and 52 miles of highway in Maui, Hawaii during last year's NACo Board meeting.

My favorite way to relax is: Reading a good book while lounging in my recliner.

I'm most proud of: My three sons being wonderful fathers to their children and raising them to become respectful young

Every morning I read: Morning Prayers and then my email.

Three people (living or dead) I'd invite to dinner:

Pope Francis, President John F. Kennedy, ■ and Vince Lombardi (former Green Bay Packers coach)



My favorite meal is: Our New Year's Eve tradition of cooking steak and shrimp outside on the grill while standing in a snowstorm, then warming up with my wife's homemade French onion soup.

My pet peeve is: People not willing to work for what they

My motto is: "Take the road less traveled." (Robert Frost).

The last book I read was: A novel by James Patterson

My favorite movie is: Saving Private Ryan and Twister

My favorite music is: from Kenny G and Elvis Presley with my favorite song being, My

My favorite president is: John F. Kennedy

My county is a NACo member because: Our county consists of a large amount of public land encompassing both the Hiawatha National Forest and Pictured Rocks National Shoreline. A large portion of our budget is dependent on PILT. NACo allows for interaction among all counties to voice the needs and interests of county governments in a variety of areas through policy making, exchange of ideas, leadership, services and programs.

Building a culture of health in Buncombe County, N.C.

By Andrew Whitacre

HEALTH ASSOCIATE

N.C. was selected as one of six communities to receive the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) Culture of Health Prize. Through an open process that elicits hundreds of applications from across the country, the prize recognizes communities that have made significant strides in addressing the many factors that influence health.

Communities are selected based on criteria that include taking a long-term approach that identifies and addresses gaps among populations disproportionately affected by poor health outcomes, engaging in multi-sector partnerships23 across the community, mobilizing and aligning resources, and measuring results.

Prize recipients receive \$25,000 and opportunities to highlight their story nation-wide.

Buncombe County, home to Asheville in the foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains, focused its efforts on community health by building a diverse county-wide coalition of partners intent on improving the lives of its residents.

The county's work centers around the Public Health Advisory Council, which was created by the Buncombe County Health and Human Services Department in 2013.

Members include the local YMCA, Asheville Chamber of Commerce, health care professionals, transportation leaders, environmental groups, and others who took aim at making healthy

programs and policies.

One of those programs, Success In 2014, Buncombe County, Equation, addresses long-term issues that impact childhood poverty. Through advocacy supporting this program, over \$1 million in cuts to the county's child care subsidy resources were spared.

> The county also supports the Family Resource Center, which provides families food pantry access, parenting classes, emergency financial assistance for rent and other expenses, and eyeglasses for children.

Another program, Rainbow

"The RWJF Culture of Health prize has sharpened our community's collective vision."

— Jan Shepard, Buncombe County

in My Tummy, was created at Asheville's Verner Center for Early Learning as a way to improve the quality of the food offered to children in child care. The program is a national model that has children process." eating fresh, nutritious foods made from scratch and offers a curriculum for parents and caregivers to learn to create healthy food options for their children. The program is implethe county.

Even though Buncombe County was recognized with the prize for its accomplishments, the prize has

choices easy through innovative also opened up opportunities to strengthen and further the county's

> "The RWJF Culture of Health prize has sharpened our community's collective vision. It has become a touchstone for our shared intention of building a healthier community aligning our efforts and resources," said Jan Shepard, Buncombe County's Public Health Division director.

> Buncombe County Commissioner Holly Jones said, "The prize has given us a platform for how to talk about what the health of a community looks like, and it strengthens our ability to galvanize businesses and community members around a shared vision of building a healthier community."

> "The RWJF Culture of Health Prize shines a spotlight on communities that are making great strides towards better health and inspiring others to do the same," said Risa Lavizzo-Mourey, M.D., president and CEO of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. "We're proud of counties like Buncombe for the incredible work they've done, and RWJF is looking forward to counties across the country sharing their stories as part of the 2016 application

Applications for the 2016 RWJF Culture of Health Prize are open through Nov. 12, 2015. In 2016, up to 10 communities will be selected to receive the Prize. All counties are mented in 14 child-care centers in eligible to apply. There will be two phases before finalists are selected. Communities selected to receive the prize will be announced next fall.

> To learn more about the prize or apply, visit www.rwjf.org/prize.



Buncombe County, N.C. Board of Commissioners take time to recognize efforts in the community to prevent child abuse and neglect. Photo courtesy of Buncombe County, N.C.

NOVEMBER 2, 2015 | H7 Hot Topics ASSOCIATION NACo • CountyNews

CountyNews ODICS

COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO WILITARY & VETERANS RESOURCE CENTER HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES AGENCY CHILD SUPPORT SERVICES NORTH INLAND LIVE WELL CENTER

SERVING THOSE Counties play convening role with water **WHO SERVE**

By CHARLIE BAN SENIOR STAFF WRITER

Cumberland County, N.C. is home to Fort Bragg, along with roughly 50,000 veterans. Given its Tarheel setting, the best metaphor for its, and many other counties' veterans service office is that of a point guard, putting veterans in the right place to get what they need.

"We help them with claims and refer them to other agencies that can assist them with their issues." said Eric Redrick, the county's veterans service director.

Those referrals may be to other county departments — employment, the federal Department of

number of nonprofit organizations to spend it in local shops, paying a focused on helping veterans — generally helping them to navigate the bureaucracy.

Quantifying veterans service funding is difficult, because the benefits the veterans obtain are paid to them, not through the county, but Martin Carroway County, veterans service officer (CVSO) for Redwood County, Minn., said the benefits don't go unnoticed.

"In politics and government, we like numbers," he said. "If you can show you can save the country money or make the county money; you're a valuable asset. We make the county money in a way you have to be creative to see. If a veteran gets Veterans Affairs or a ballooning \$1,500 from disability, they're going they just went back home, blended communities, or anywhere else we

mortgage, that money is coming back into the community."

Getting the Word Out

The consensus among county veterans service officers is that communication about federal benefits has increased substantially in the 21st century, so the outreach efforts are largely targeting at older veterans who don't keep tabs on what is available to them, though those CVSOs also agree that a much more comprehensive explanation of benefits is necessary. The better the military does, the less counties will need to do as follow-up.

"They came off active duty and

back in, went to school, got a job and lived their lives," said Jim Duff, Veteran's Service Office director for Milwaukee County, Wis. "Most veterans don't connect up with the VA as part of their lifestyle. They're anonymously living next door, and they're who we're trying to find."

Those veterans, while eligible for benefits, often don't seek them out after a few years of leaving the service and finishing school.

Duff said the key to outreach efforts was "zig" where more veterans "zag" — to go where veterans are least likely to hear of updates to their benefits the way they would at VFWs or American Legion posts.

"We target a lot of retirement

IN THIS EDITION

Defense Secretary Ash Carter calls on counties to help veterans reintegrate into the community. Page H8

Female veterans face special challenges when they come home. Page H11

County veteran service officers ease the way in civilian life. Page H14

can reach a lot of people over 50 who have lost touch with what they can get from the government."

Chief among them are Vietnam War veterans, who, given their reception when they returned, can be hesitant to acknowledge their cold service record or seek help from the government, but Carroway sees things improving dramatically for them.

"The Iraq and Afghanistan wars are the best thing to happen to Vietnam vets," he said. "They put veterans' issues back into the forefront, in Congress' mind. How are we going to treat these veterans? There was a lot of recognition of what they did wrong after Vietnam, and the pendulum of appreciating veterans' service, despite disagreement with the war(s), is swinging back in veterans' favor."

Susan Lewis, an assistant veterans service officer in Travis County, Texas, said she meets a lot of veterans who, despite leaving the service with a less than honorable discharge, have benefits coming to them they don't expect.

'And (the prototypical veteran) feels like the military wanted nothing to do with him when he left the Army; he doesn't want anything to do with me," she said. "A lot of people don't know that if you have a bad discharge that doesn't mean you can't get disability."

Carroway warned, however, that county veterans service offices have to be prepared for the fruits of their outreach labor.

"When you do a good job of reaching the veterans, you become inundated on rather short notice," he said. "Your phones are ringing off the hook, your foot traffic is crazy, and you can't take the appropriate amount of time."

As in Cumberland County, N.C. that means not just explaining benefits, but doing complete evaluations and filling out forms for the veterans.

"We don't just handle their claims, we file them and make sure anyone who comes in gets exactly what they deserve," Redrick said. "We're with them every step of the way."

See **OVERALL** HT page 13

Hot Topics H8 | NOVEMBER 2, 2015 CountyNews • NACo

Carter counts on counties

Department of Defense Secretary Ash Carter spoke about the important role counties and their communities play for the nation's military at NACo's 2015 Annual Conference in Charlotte-Mecklenburg County, N.C.

Here's what he had to say.

(Remarks are excerpted from his speech.)

entire industries.

President Hokama, thank you much for that wonderful introduction, for your leadership of the National Association of Counties, and thank you for inviting me here today and all of you for coming. Because what you do in your counties and your communities is so important. And not just to our country, but — and that's the point I want to make — our military.

Our people and technology are vitally important, and I'll continue to spend a lot of my time and attention on them. But I want to focus today on the third reason why we're the world's finest fighting force: the foundation of community and support we receive from counties and families nationwide, from all of you and the people you represent.

You and your communities are a source of our military's enduring strength, because you provide our men and women in uniform with the preparation, the care, and the purpose they need to defend our country.

It may not always be obvious to everyone, but our military Service members, veterans, families, and survivors are part of almost every community in America. And frequently, their local issues are your local issues. They visit the same parks and museums as you do. Their kids go to school with your kids. They're our neighbors, our community leaders, and most of all, our friends.

And some of them are also colleagues, because hundreds of thousands of Americans serve in the National Guard and Reserves. As some communities know firsthand, when disaster strikes storms, earthquakes, tornadoes, and the like — they pitch in, laying sandbags, clearing debris, keeping security, conducting search-andrescue. And more importantly, when we call on them for other operations — like we did for the long wars in Iraq and Afghanistan -they serve as a vital complement to our active-duty forces.

By stepping forward in times of need, Guardsmen and Reservists from your communities uphold one

of our oldest traditions. ... Militias were raised from local communities, and neighbors and friends went to war together, while back home, their parents, siblings, and

communities rationed food and

clothing, tended victory gardens,

gathered scrap metals, or retooled

That's no longer the case anymore. We have fewer Americans serving, and fewer who are personally connected to those who serve on our behalf.

All this means that the community foundation we have today must similarly evolve for the future. This isn't the World War II-era, and because of what DoD is doing to build the force of the future. transitioning out of the military will look different from how it did 70 years ago — or, for that matter, 10 years ago.

We know we can't push a one-size-fits-all career model anymore, and we can't keep pushing a one-size-fits-all, onestop-shop community foundation anymore, either. As we've seen in recent years, each community's different, and the foundations of preparation, care, and purpose they provide to Service members and their families should be different too. People from urban areas and rural areas may have different ideas of what their community should look like, just as a model that works for Riley County, Kansas may be different than one that's right for Florida's Miami-Dade.

Still, in a future where each community's foundation will be different, and uniquely tailored to reflect their local civic traditions, resources, and populations, there should be some elements that they have in common.

For example, let's make a future where more Americans nationwide strive not only to support our troops, but to also know our troops—and not just when they come home, but from the moment they start to contribute to our mission

Let's make a future where this relationship is a two-way street, where both military and civilian communities contribute to each other, share ideas and best practices that can benefit all of us.

NACo's new partnership with Vets' Community Connections is a great example of how we can get closer to that community foundation. By taking the initiative to provide local Service members, veterans, and families with personal, human connections to their own communities — by engaging with the many existing community resources and tools, making them work together in a smarter way — Veterans' Community Connections is making a real difference in the lives of our people, and we're grateful.

Let me tell you what else you can do, because your communities are the front lines of the effort.

As you see more of our military Service members, veterans, families, and survivors, I ask that you embrace them as they join your communities, and empower them with opportunities to continue leading lives of meaning and purpose.

It won't be very hard, because they already tend to be more civically engaged. According to one recent study, veterans are 20 percent more likely to give to charity, they volunteer 30 percent more hours a year, and they're three times more likely to join a service or civic organization. To be clear, they aren't looking for handouts. The 9/11 Generation volunteered to serve at a time of war, and they have a strong desire to continue making a difference in the world. All that it takes is finding the right opportunity.

Maybe your school board needs a fresh perspective. Maybe your county fair needs new people to help organize it each year. Maybe your son or daughter's scout troop or sports team needs a mentor they can look up to.

In all these situations and so many more, I encourage you to seek out and ask your citizens to seek out someone who's served — whether they're on active-duty, Guard or Reserve, a veteran, or a military family member. Harness the invaluable experience, global perspective, and extraordinary talent they bring to the table, talent you've invested in and helped develop. Because when you grab hold of our people, you'll never forget it, and you'll never regret it.



Connecting vets and communities pays double dividends

By Charles Taylor
SENIOR STAFF WRITER

What's a homeless veteran to do? He receives a job offer but needs eyeglasses that he can't afford to do the work. He calls a county 2-1-1 information line, but they don't know of a veterans' service organization that provides free eyeglasses.

Doug Wilson recounts this true story when explaining the need for a new initiative called Vets' Community Connections (VCC). Its goal is to help military vets and their families connect with resources — beyond traditional "official" agencies — and with community members where they live. A former Pentagon official, he founded the initiative with Kari McDonough, who has worked with vets as a volunteer.

VCC is being piloted in three counties — San Diego, Calif., Maricopa, Ariz. and St. Joseph, Ind. — as a community-based initiative. Programs are slated to be up and running by early next year, McDonough said.

Robert Muth, chairman of the board of the San Diego Veterans Coalition, said VCC won't duplicate existing programs.

"I think it's an important overlay on what we already have in place here in San Diego," he said. "A lot of the organizations that are focused on veterans, and do that all day are fantastic and are members of our coalition. However, this is a chance for citizens or professionals to be able to do more."

VCC will enable community residents to answer vets' questions based on their own professional and life experiences, McDonough said, providing a more personal touch. These might include inquiries about veteran and military family relocation, education, health, opportunities for community service, how to get their kids involved in youth sports — or which local businesses offer military discounts.

Research conducted for VCC by the San Diego Area Chamber of Commerce found that veterans don't want another website, nor do they wish to call a phone number and be directed to "press 1 for this, press 2 for that. They don't want voice mazes, they just want a human." Wilson said.

The components of a local program will include:

• Creating a VCC Advisory Board, comprising community leaders who will guide, support and promote the initiative. • Forming a Community "Veterans' Team" of individuals who agree to answer questions in their areas of expertise, providing a "human response" to veterans or their families, and

• Designating a Vet Connector (or connectors) who can personally make referrals to the relevant member of the Veterans' Team.

VCC officials have identified the most likely place to house the function is within local 2-1-1 or 3-1-1 call centers — resource lines for local services — as will be the case in San Diego County and St. Joseph County, respectively. Those two counties are furthest along in their planning, McDonough said, and are expected to launch by early 2016. Both are in the process of enlisting community members to sign up as volunteers, and databases are being compiled, she said.

South Bend, Ind. is the St. Joseph County seat. There, Brian Pawlowski, deputy chief of staff for Mayor Pete Buttigieg — both are vets — will coordinate with county officials, including the veterans service officer, Kevin Kelsheimer. "He's really been helpful in getting us tied in with all the other veterans organizations that he utilizes," Pawlowski said.

To gauge the initiative's success, McDonough said "performance measures" will be evaluated through surveys: How many veterans used the Vet Connector and their degree of satisfaction with the experience? For community members, did their interactions help them feel more connected to veterans and understand their needs and issues?

McDonough said the idea for VCC began to take shape about two years ago, when she and Wil-

son were introduced because their mutual interest in helping veterans to transition back into civilian life.

As he was leaving the Pentagon, Wilson said he witnessed a "general frustration" among veterans returning from Iraq and Afghanistan, who felt the folks back home viewed them "either being heroes who walked on water, or crazy people."

In a meeting over coffee in 2013, Wilson and McDonough sketched out an outline for the initiative on a napkin. Since then, they've attracted support from the VA, Chamber of Commerce, Give an Hour, Wounded Warrior Project and NACo, she said. Wounded Warrior Project offered to fund the initiative.

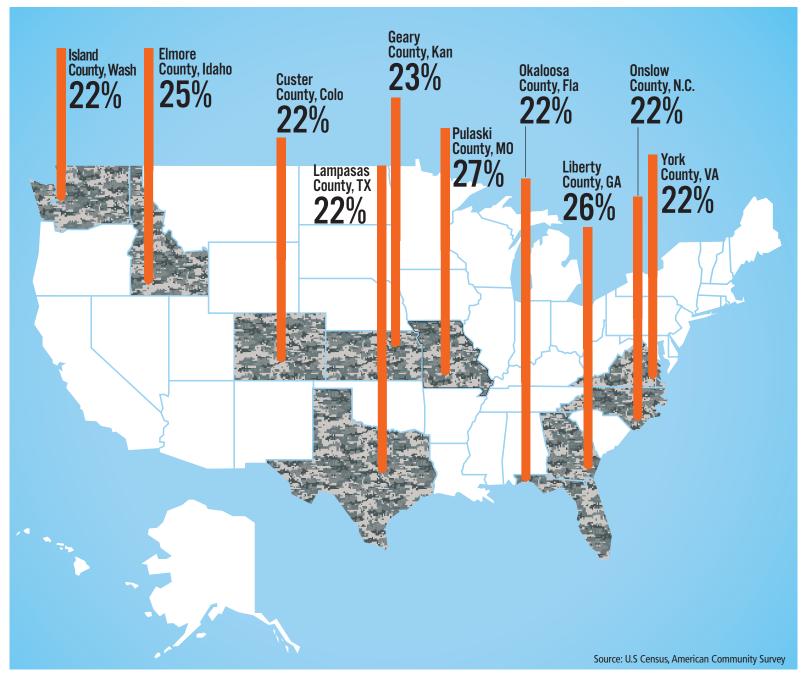
Wilson said that county elected officials can play a key role as conveners. "County and city officials spend a lot of time on issues having to do with returned vets and

their communities," he said. "But what they don't always realize is that they have a bully pulpit, and that they can bring together local leaders to talk about volunteering their own time and reaching out into the community...."

VCC will enable local residents to do more than say, "Thanks for your service," he added. It will facilitate direct interactions with veterans at a time when few Americans know someone who has served in the military. After World War II, three out of four Americans had a personal connection to the military; today it's one in 10, according to the Pentagon.

"When people see ways in which they can interact with vets that don't take a lot of time but are very meaningful to [the veterans], some of the social costs now borne by the counties could actually go down"

COUNTIES WITH HIGHEST PERCENTAGE OF VETERANS



BCRof Rof Vets battle disasters to serve again



Vanessa Valentine and Ryan Creel, both ex-military Team Rubicon (TR) members, embrace after saying "I do" in a Home Depot parking lot in Colorado. They met on a TR deployment. Photo by Madison Kotack, Team Rubicon

By Charles Taylor SENIOR STAFF WRITER

Team Rubicon saved Ryan Creel's life, though not by plucking him from flood waters or freeing him from rubble left by an earthquake.

A nonprofit organization, Team Rubicon (TR), based in Los Angeles, rapidly deploys military veterans to disaster sites, domestically and abroad. Their mission, quite simply, is to do whatever recovery work needs to be done—be it debris removal, damage assessments or emergency structural repairs — all free of charge.

Creel was a combat photographer in Iraq, where he documented "atrocities" carried out by Iraqi insurgents, according to Bruce Harbaugh, Team Rubicon's chief operations officer. "He came back from Iraq pretty damaged and spent months in an inpatient facility" where he battled post-traumatic stress.

"Ryan has said to me with no equivocation that Team Rubicon saved his life," Harbaugh said. "I've got half a dozen stories like that, that I've been involved with directly, and dozens of others I hear about."

The organization recently received an award for social entrepreneurship from the Manhattan Institute that included a \$25,000 prize to "nurture private solutions to difficult public problems."

"Disasters are very much like war zones," Harbaugh said. "Veterans are able to lead teams of disparate individuals; they are able to work in austere environments. They are able to solve problems with a bare minimum of resources."

Counties Benefit from Rapid Response

TR has been active in counties throughout the United States since its founding in 2010. Last month, a team reported for duty in Richland County, S.C. in the wake of thousand-year flooding. That same month, another group was on the scene in Okanogan County, Wash., where fires charred the landscape, claiming the lives of three firefighters.

And Team Rubicon volunteers were in DeKalb County, Ill. in April, after tornadoes roared through the area.

"We were fortunate that they came onboard with us," said Dennis Miller, DeKalb County's emergency services coordinator. Without their help, "We'd still be there (six months later); buildings would still be half torn down, half demolished."

Volunteers have responded to scores of disasters in counties in California, Colorado, Florida, Vermont, Virginia and Wyoming, among other states.

TR is the brainchild of two ex-Marines, Jake Wood and William McNulty, its cofounders. In the beginning, five years ago, they were part of an eight-person team who traveled to Haiti in the aftermath of the January 2010 earthquake. Today, the organization says it has more than 30,000 volunteers nationwide, ready to respond at a moment's notice.

Crossing the Rubicon

Team Rubicon takes its name from the idiom, "crossing the Rubicon," as Julius Caesar did in 49 B.C. when he crossed the Rubicon River in Italy — committing to a course of military action from which there was no retreat.

The nonprofit's logo — a cross, on its side, one half red, the other white with a symbolic river running through it — embodies TR's ethos: "We bridge the gap between disasters and when traditional aid organizations get to work. We bridge the gap between military and civilian life."

Today, Team Rubicon operates on a \$7 million annual budget. Harbaugh, a former Navy pilot, isn't surprised by the growth. He has deployed on several TR missions, including responding to Typhoon Hayan in the Philippines.

"For so long, the idea of reintegrating veterans has focused on taking care of them and providing for them, and seeing them as objects of the mission," he explained. "The fact that we have flipped that whole narrative on its head and tapped into this innate desire among the millions of post-9/11 veterans to continue serving their community and the wider world — that's really been the reason behind our success and our growth." Vets from other eras volunteer as well.

Too often, returned vets with problems—from homelessness to substance abuse to traumatic brain injuries — are viewed negatively. Somehow, they come to be seen as the rule, not the exception.

Veterans are "hungry" for an organization that recognizes the value they can bring back to their communities, Harbaugh said — "the fact that they're assets, not liabilities, and have a tremendous amount left to give."

Dollars and Cents

In Washington, Maurice Goodall, who heads Okanogan County's

See **RUBICON**page H12

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Female vets face more hurdles to help

BY CHARLIE BAN

SENIOR STAFF WRITER

Women make up less than 10 percent of the overall veteran population, but sometimes they're even harder to find than the statistics indicate.

One of the persistent features of the population, which contributes to it being underserved, is that women tend to self-identify, or broadcast their veteran status, much less than men.

"Most of us don't go around wearing Navy ball caps, wearing shirts that say what branch we served in," said Stephanie Stone, deputy director of the Los Angeles County Department of Military and Veterans Affairs. "So we don't get to commiserate like our male colleagues, seeing someone else on the street and connecting on that level. They're not going to the VFW and trading war stories the way our parents did."

But that's just the surface.

"Because they don't self-identify, because they don't have an opportunity to connect with each other, they often don't know their benefits," Stone added. "We don't get to recognize them for who they are. We come home (from the service), we take off our uniform and let our hair down and nobody stops to think, and ask us if we've served."

For Sylinthia Burges, an Army veteran from the early '80s, it happens even in her office at Nassau County Veterans Services office in New York, where she is a veterans counselor.

"A lot of veterans come into my office and see me, and assume I'm just a woman that got the job, they don't realize I'm a veteran," she said. "I assure them you have to be a veteran to work here, but there are a lot of misconceptions about how much women have served, and I think more recognition might be our greatest need."

Susan Lewis, women's veteran coordinator in Travis County, Texas and a veteran of Operation Desert Storm, has had her status questioned.

"They sent me to the ladies' auxiliary at the VFW," she said of a time she lived in Georgia. "I'd come back and they'd scrutinize my ID for a few minutes before letting me in. Then they were really hesitant to talk freely; I'm not sure it was because they were going to be polite because I was a woman or they thought I wouldn't understand."

Incidents like this lead Burges to suggest it wasn't enough for

counties to simply advertise special services for female veterans, that an active outreach effort may be what it takes.

"Make sure you're targeting them specifically," she said. "Don't assume because you do a general outreach that you'll get them. They have to know they're wanted, because they often won't come out unless they know that."

An approach that capitalizes on group dynamics can help, Burges added.

"We do better when we function in groups," she said. "An all-female group can be really good. You can talk about issues you couldn't with your male counterparts."

Chief among those issues is military sexual trauma, something one-in-four female active duty veterans has experienced, according to the Veterans Administration.

But it's often not the first issue on veterans' minds.

"I very seldom have a woman who comes in here and says 'I'm having nightmares because I was raped on active duty," Lewis said. "They don't come in with that. It's another issue that stems from that trauma."

Lewis has had a lot of success partnering with the YWCA.

FEMALE SHARE OF TOTAL

"They're reputable, they've

been helping women for years and helping women veterans before people talked about them," Lewis said. "I have some women veterans who have been traumatized, and they either don't have enough time in service or they're so suspicious that if they go to the VA it will get back to their command, so the YWCA is perfect for me to send that group of women to."

Los Angeles County has held monthly programs aimed at women veterans, which draws a crowd of at least 60 attendees. Stone has counselors on hand at the events, just in case emotional trauma surfaces.

"At some point, you start making the assumption that everyone in the room has been the victim of an assault and you prepare for that, make staff available," she said.

Gender dynamics complicates another problem experienced by some vets — homelessness.

"Not only are we more likely to be homeless, but once we are, there's a much greater chance a homeless woman will be assaulted," Stone said.

Shelters often offer more problems than fixes. Space is limited, and many don't allow males over the age of 13 to accompany their mothers and sisters.

"So they have to go live with the rest of the male population in a shelter," Lewis said. "That's a terrible idea."

And the point at which homeless benefits are activated are often far too advanced, she added.

"There are not enough resources for intervention," she said. "You have to be practically living under a bridge before you get some help."

Without preferences favoring women veterans, Stone said, the

wait for housing just goes on, seemingly indefinitely.

"We stand in line with the men, we're not getting preferential treatment," she said. "The challenge is getting property owners to open their hearts and homes to veterans, to getting them to accept vouchers. There's not much material incentive because there's a lot of paperwork that goes into it, and if they put the vacancy on the open market, they'll make more money and the property will be off their hands pretty fast."

There's also a cultural battle female veterans may fight within their gender.

In Travis County, Lewis reports that some women veterans are put off by the clout and attention that military wives command and demand from the public at large.

"Some spouses — and let's

"You have to be practically living under a bridge before you get some help."

face it, 80 percent are going to be women — feel entitled; they say 'I've put up with this for x amount of years,' which is certainly true—and it's not easy being a dependent in the military — but, you didn't put on the uniform, and you didn't deploy to the Middle East," she said. "That doesn't happen with men. But could you imagine if it did?"

While the resources and general approach to helping female veterans lags, Lewis sees a lot of positives, in large part because women-specific programming is so new, it doesn't have to support years of legacy programming.

"We've come a long way, but we still have a long way to go. I'd like to see women leading more veteran organizations. Not just window dressing—leading. Making decisions, having influence."

CONTRIBUTORS

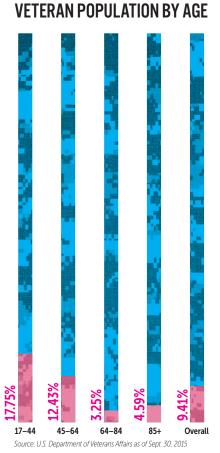
Charlie Ban, senior staff writer Brian Knudsen, research analyst Leon Lawrence III, design director Jack Peterson, legislative assistant Beverly Schlotterbeck,

executive editor

Charles Taylor, senior staff writer

FEMALE VET NUMBERS GROW

As of Sept. 30, there were 2.02 million female veterans comprising 9.4 percent of the 21.8 million total veteran population. In recent years, there's been a boom in female veterans between the ages of 17–44; 17.75 percent of the age group are female, compared with 12.4 percent in the 45–64 age bracket, and 3.25 percent ages 65 to 84.



Hot Topics H12 | NOVEMBER 2, 2015 CountyNews • ASSOCIATION NACO

Team Rubicon cuts disaster-response costs

RUBICON from page H10

Department of Emergency Management, said TR members are a

"These people are coming in at no cost to taxpayers, at no cost to the government, and they're putting their efforts forward through donations and what not, and they are helping clean up," he said. "You make the full circle. It's helping the [volunteer] that's cleaning up, it's helping the victim, and it's helping the public because of the government not having to step in and do all of this."

Team Rubicon catalogs response data for each of its missions. After Superstorm Sandy in 2012, it marshalled 350 volunteers who logged nearly 36,000 hours. The value of the work performed topped \$3.8 million; that's based on national standard costs for volunteer hours, according to Jaya Vadlamudi, a spokesperson for the organization.

TR volunteers are about 80 percent veterans and 20 percent civilians, many of them are local or state first responders, or have special skills, Harbaugh said. A byproduct of that intermingling is veterans getting the chance to interact with civilians and vice versa.

"What we've found that is one of the best things for our vets who are struggling to reintegrate and readapt to civilian society," he added, "is building those friendships, those relationships with civilians, not just for creating a personal network but for learning how to interact, how to share their story. It can be a powerful bonding experience for

"These people are coming in at no cost to taxpayers, at no cost to the government"

our veteran members."

For most disasters, the volunteers who respond come from within a few hours' drive of the location, Harbaugh said. When free air travel is required, TR works with Airlink, a rapid-response, humanitarian-relief organization that links more than 30 airlines worldwide with prequalified non-

Team Rubicon also provides training for its volunteers. It has a full-time mental health counselor and provides multi-day suicide intervention training, he said.

One of the tasks that TR responders often take on is managing "spontaneous volunteers" in the wake of disasters, those just show up and want to help. Harbaugh recalled a response to tornadoes in Arkansas where 40 TR volunteers put 3,900 civilian volunteers to work.

"That has a real effect on the way those people think about the military vets thereafter," he said.

"They show up wondering what to expect and within minutes, they're organized and led by teams of confident and charismatic and inspiring veterans who aren't damaged goods; they're not PTSDridden — although they may suffer from it, but it's not debilitating," he said. "They're not hollow shells of their former selves; they are contributing members of society who

are good at what they do because of their time in uniform, not in spite of it."

Happily Ever After

For Ryan Creel, the former Army photographer, Team Rubicon helped him move beyond the trauma of war. He married Vanessa Valentine, an Air Force veteran he met on a TR deployment. They got hitched during another deployment -in September 2013 — in a Home Depot parking lot in Longmont, Colo. He was still a little muddy from mucking out flooded basements in nearby communities in Boulder County. Vanessa was able to change into some clean jeans.

Both now work for Wounded Warrior House, a veteran-serving nonprofit in Woodland Park, Colo., started by Creel's mother, Pamela.

Vetting the Vets' Organizations – How Counties Should Evaluate Their Partnerships

LEGISLATIVE ASSISTANT

According to the nonprofit organization Charity Watch, there are more than 40,000 nonprofit organizations dedicated to serving the military, veterans and their families, thanks in large part to a 41 percent growth in these organizations since 2008. That's over 10 organizations for every county in the United States.

Counties provide a wealth of services for veterans and their families. County Veteran Service Offices assist vets with a wide variety needs, including filing benefits claims through the Department of Veterans Affairs. Often, counties will refer veterans to nonprofit organizations for various services, such as financial planning, legal assistance or mental health counseling.

With thousands of different providers across the country, how should counties, or veterans, identify quality organizations with which they should partner?

One option counties have for evaluating these nonprofits is to take an empirical approach. National recognition of the need for standards is slowly developing, but organizations like the National Association of Veterans Serving Organizations (NAVSO) are working to serve

as a convener of best practices partnerships and referrals. focused on delivering more effective and efficient services.

Other organizations have also developed evaluation metrics. The Bush Institute, which focuses on serving post-9/11 veterans, hosts multiple online tool kits for nonprofit organizations and potential funders. These kits ask funders to consider various aspects of the organization, including community connectedness, education and employment initiatives, independent sector engagement, and efforts to aid women veterans. While counties are not directly donating to nonprofits, the same metrics can and should be used for developing

Charity Watch also grades veterans organizations based on efficiency and annually updates its list of "Top Rated Charities."

While evaluation is an important part of the process, counties should also look to leverage other resources already in their communities. Collaboration can be equally as effective.

Charlotte Bridge Home (CBH) serves as a hub in the Charlotte-Mecklenburg County, N.C. community, operating as an intake and referral source for veterans. In August, they launched North Carolina Serves, which pulled together 40 area service providers across a

While evaluation is an important part of the process, counties should also look to leverage other resources already in their communities.

10-county footprint, and both the number of veterans served and the number of providers involved continue to grow.

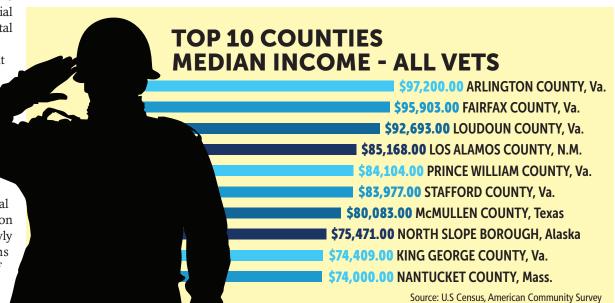
To determine which organizations would join their "huband-spoke" model, CBH convened leaders of national serving organizations along with local leaders. "This group set a series of evaluation criteria for network participation, based on available services (supply) and veteran needs (demand)," CBH Executive Director Cindi Basenspiler says. "Then we put names of organizations on the board and vetted them as a community.'

Similar to the requirements from the Bush Institute and Charity Watch, the group looked at factors like leadership, track records of success, and connections to the community. Since the onset of the North Carolina Serves program, other organizations in the area are now striving to meet those standards to join the NCServes provider list.

While Charlotte is pushing the curve with this model, other opportunities exist across the country.

Community foundations have long been involved in assisting veterans, but recently have slowed giving trends as the number of nonprofits has increased. Fundraising outlets have begun searching for state and local partners to run veterans-centered campaigns.

Counties could partner with these groups to evaluate local veterans organizations, better understand each other's work, and help identify key areas of need for veterans and military families.



ASSOCIATION NACO • CountyNews NOVEMBER 2, 2015 | H13 | Hot Topics

Notes from the Field: **Best Practices**

HOUSING

"Housing first, treatment second" is the mantra driving successful programs to house homeless vets.

A 180-degree turn from the traditional model of treating mental health issues, or addiction problems or joblessness first before finding permanent housing, rapid rehousing gets a veteran into private housing within 30 days of identifying a need, said Larissa Witt, program manager with Family Endeavors Veteran Services in Cumberland County (Fayetteville) N.C. Through funding from Veterans Affairs, Family Endeavors will pay a deposit, the first month's rent, buy bedroom furniture and then work with churches or other organizations to help furnish the home, she said.

After the veterans or the veteran and their families are settled, VA case managers move in to address the issues that got the vets into their homeless situation in the first place.

And it works. On Oct. 23. Cumberland County — home to Ft. Bragg — declared itself at "functional zero," a term that means there are "more veterans going out of homelessness than into homelessness," Witt said.

To reach functional zero status for veterans, Family Endeavors housed 280 homeless vets this year.

"That doesn't mean we will never have homeless veterans, but it does mean that we have the services and structures in place to house vets within 30 days," she explained.

So far the rapid housing strategy has held down the numbers of homeless vets. Witt said that nationwide about 25 percent of the formerly homeless will "destabilize" and return to homelessness. claiming a 75 percent success rate for the approach.

It's even better for veterans with families." If vets have children, 93 percent stay housed," she said.

Farther north in Lancaster County, Pa., the Lancaster County Coalition to End Homelessness claimed its functional zero status in July. The 26 homeless vets that were living in the street or in

shelters in January were now in permanent housing. Aggressive outreach, good data, service prioritization and a broad coalition of community nonprofits that grew from 35 mostly homeless service providers four years ago to 100 organizations now, accounted for reaching the coalition's goal earlier than expected, according to Mike Foley, the coalition's CEO. Also boosting their efforts were two Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) grants, awarded by the VA to provide services that support permanent housing.

Foley's coalition has signed onto the Zero: 2016 campaign, (formerly known as 100,000 Homes), a nationwide effort mounted by Community Solutions, a nonprofit dedicated to eliminating homelessness by helping communities improve their problem-solving skills, rethink their resources and get more done with less. He used Zero: 2016's guidelines and tools to move vets from the streets to a home.

"It's all about leveraging resources and making connections," he said of the coalition's

EMPLOYMENT

At least 22 of Iowa's 99 counties have put out the welcome mat for veterans, active duty military and their families who are seeking jobs and an affordable place to call their "home base."

Home Base Iowa (HBI) Communities is designed to connect transitioning military members and veterans with career opportunities in Iowa companies.

An initiative of Gov. Terry Branstad (R), himself a military veteran, HBI is focused on attracting veterans to the state through incentives. Benefits to veterans include no state income tax on pensions and extension of veterans' hiring preferences to private employers.

Members of the Iowa Business Council, the state's largest employers, have hired more than 1,500 veterans through Home Base Iowa since its inception in 2014, according to state officials.

To become an HBI community, at least 10 percent of businesses that are hiring must affiliate with the program; each community is required to develop an incentive package for veterans and prominently display its designation. The local governing body must pass a resolution supporting the program.

Buena Vista County was recently designated. Referring to veterans. Board of Supervisors Chairman Dale Arends told a local newspaper: "They will bring wonderful skills that we can certainly make use of in BV County and throughout the state of Iowa."

He's hopeful that the program will help attract new residents with military connections from throughout the state and the nation.

With a veteran service officer who can spend half of the work week with deputy-level access to the jail floor, the Multnomah County Veterans Service Office can reach roughly 100 incarcerated veterans a month and its assessments have shown 30-40 are due benefits of

abuse issues.

"We can try to defer sentences and get them intervention measures while they're awaiting sentencing," said Eric Ensley, program supervisor. "That jail access gives us a chance a lot more awareness of the veteran population that's afraid to announce it because they might lose their benefits (after being arrested)."

MENTAL HEALTH

which they aren't aware.

The county's five veterans service officers are then able to see inmates in the jail and can have them referred to county or outside treatment services for mental health and substance

(Charlie Ban and Charles Taylor, senior staff writers, and Bev Schlotterbeck, executive editor, contributed to this report.)

Veterans courts can divert vets from jail

From **OVERALL** HT page 7

Out-of-network Benefits

Helping veterans get the assistance they need beyond the claims-filing service can mean referring them to outside, nonprofit organizations dedicated to their issues. They number nearly 40,000, with a 41 percent increase in the number of organizations since 2008.

"Veterans issues are a popular cause these days, with a lot of attention, money and fame," Lewis said.

"You have organizations from California setting up shop in Austin, and they have no connection to the community," she said. "They come here because that's where the opportunity is, but we've been here and we, as a county, want to try to take care of our veterans.

Carroway said the habits county veterans service offices have adopted over the years make them frugal — and combined with low overhead — make them especially productive.

"If you hire someone and give them good training, you'll have decades of great work out of that officer," he said. "The work is rewarding and they can see it provide a meaningful service for veterans."

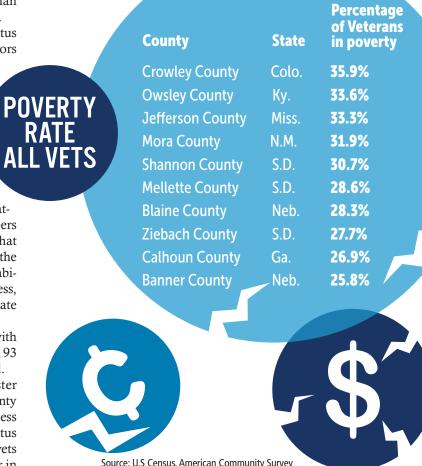
A Different Day in Court

In addition to maintaining veterans service offices, counties are helping veterans by forming veterans court diversion programs in the judicial system to intervene in nonviolent cases.

The alternative court settings, which now number more than 100 across the country, are more therapeutic than punitive and are aimed at addressing the underlying causes of the veterans' behavioral problems. Veterans court judges are more familiar with the various complications in veterans' lives— PTSD, traumatic brain injury and substance abuse, among others and have a better understanding of services available to help mitigate these problems.

Successful completion of treatment, often lasting one year, will often mean a veteran's case will be dismissed or jail time will be downgraded to probation.

Not only does this save county courts money and — with any luck, resolve mental health issues in their county's veteran population — but it also helps connect veterans with their federal benefits.



Hot Topics H14|NOVEMBER 2, 2015 CountyNews • ACCOUNTYNEWS • ACCOUN

A closer look at the role of the county verterans service officer

By Beverly Schlotterbeck

EXECUTIVE EDITOR

County veteran service officers are like prosecutors or defense attorneys. They're always building a case for their clients. That's how Jim Golgart, president of the NACo affiliate, the National Association of County Veterans Service Officers, NACVSO, sums up the mission of his association's members.

Three-quarters to 90 percent of the veterans' claims submitted for VA benefits come through a county veterans service office. The CVSOs are staffed by accredited veteran service officers, trained to navigate a bureaucracy nearly as complex as a military campaign.

They help veterans gather the necessary paperwork to support claims, file claims and assist in appealing claims that have been denied. It requires tenacity and passion, Golgart said.

He tells a story about a veteran who had served on a nuclear aircraft carrier. The man claimed radiation from the ship

had caused his leukemia and had submitted a benefit claim to the VA. It was denied. He took the news to Golgart's office, which serves the 2,200 or so veterans in Le Sueur County, Minn. Golgart did some research on the causes of leukemia and among them found exposure to petroleum products as a suspect. The veteran, as it turned out, fueled the ship's planes.

Armed with this new information, Golgart helped him resubmit his claim. This time the claim was approved.

County veterans services offices are the at-home, back-to-thecommunity stop for veterans who have served the nation, fighting its wars and keeping its peace. They are the local link in an intergovernmental chain serving the country's 21.8 million veterans.

The county veterans service office stretches back to the Civil War, but really took off after World Wars I and II, he said. The offices exist at the county level, by statute, in more than half of the states. A dozen or so states do not have CVSOs, including the District of Columbia and Virginia,



Jim Golgart, president, National Association of County Veterans Service Officers served 20 years in the Army before taking on a new tour of duty as director of the Veterans Service Office in Le Sueur County, Minn. Photo by Alix Kashdan

according to Jim Young, Vernon County, Wis. CVSO director and NACVSO immediate past president.

That doesn't mean there is no

help for veterans. State regional veterans affairs offices and Veterans Service Organizations such as the VFW, American Legion and Amvets have VA-accredited service officers, but they are unlikely to know the community as well as a county-level officer would, and not be as facile at making connections with other nonprofit organizations in the community serving vets, Golgart said.

If a county is interested in opening its own CVSO, Golgart suggests the first steps involve a political commitment to fund the office, and a sweep of the veteran demographics in the county, including a review of the nonprofits already serving the veteran population.

In some states CVSOs are independent departments. In other states, they reside in the county health and human services department. Golgart said contacting his organization is a good way to start. It can recommend staffing levels, supply model job descriptions and address budgeting needs.

"We can help them get an idea about what's needed," he said.

(To learn more, contact Golgart at jgolgart@co.le-sueur.mn.us or at 507.357.8279 or 507.420.1937.)

UNEMPLOYMENT RATE - ALL County State Veterans Unemployment rate 77.8% **Motley County Texas** 60.5% **Issaquena County** Miss. 52.6% Washington County N.C. 52.2% **Hardeman County Texas** 48.5% **Wirt County** 43.8% **Owsley County** 43.5% **Glades County** Fla. 42.7% **Scotland County** 41.2% **Randolph County Union County**

National Association of County Veterans Service Officers can help

BY NACVSO EXECUTIVE BOARD

The National Association of County Veterans Service Officers (NACVSO) exists to provide professional education, training and networking for the local county veteran service officers.

The association's efforts led to official recognition in April 1993 by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs "for the purpose of preparation, presentation, and prosecution of claims under laws administered by the Department of Veterans Affairs."

In other words, CVSOs accredited through NACVSO can now represent veterans in obtaining their federal VA benefits. In fact, several states require CVSOs to have NACVSO accreditation as a condition of employment.

County Veteran Service Offices are almost entirely funded by counties, despite the benefits work they engage in with the Department of Veterans Administration at the federal level.

CVSOs bring significant benefits to counties. In FY14, NACVSOaccredited members were directly responsible for more than \$28 billion in federal compensation and pension benefits being paid directly to veterans. They also helped veterans receive more than \$35 billion in health care and other benefits.

Currently, the NACVSO has accredited CVSOs in 29 states and accredited state service officers in six different states.

The startup cost for a local government to implement and maintain a veteran's service office would be based on several factors and can vary considerably. For smaller counties, it could be as little as \$100,000 in salaries and operating costs. A county with just over 50 veterans brings in almost \$1 million in benefits for those same 50 veterans, making the investment a sensible use of taxpayer dollars.

From its humble beginnings, the organization has grown to more than 1,800 members in 35 states and two Native-American tribes, all of whom work with more than 8.4 million U.S. veterans and their families.

National Association of County Veterans Service Officers. For more information, visit NACVSO's website at http:// nacvso.org/ NACo • CountyNews

November 2, 2015 | 15



Map tool introduces public to assessor's wealth of county data

By Charlie Ban SENIOR STAFF WRITER

King County, Wash. has a diverse real estate market and a lot of people interested in data. Interest in both was evident when the assessor's office got an increasing number of calls from residents and businesses looking for information on any number of topics.

"We had a growing demand, especially when the economy turned, folks would come to our office and say they wanted information about how their neighborhood was changing," said Assessor Lloyd Hara.

And serving them wasn't as easy as just pulling up the data they wanted.

"They'd have to call us to get a complete report, and that would take about two hours to a week, depending on the complexity of the issue," said his community outreach manager, Phillip Sit.

A seven-month development effort compiled assessment information, along with Census data, and synthesized that data into a comprehensive mapping tool, which can be used to extract data based on user-drawn boundaries.

"You can draw the shape and it pulls the data from a multitude of census tracts and does it in real time." Sit said.

The information is useful for residents, the private sector, nonprofits and even the county government. Loaded onto tablet computer, LocalScape can go into the field with the assessor's office staff.

"That's been a real advantage for our appraisers because we're under tight budget constraints and adding another full-time employee to do data retrieval wouldn't be possible," Hara said.

But it isn't just a tool for professionals.

"That's the cool thing," Hara said about homeowners. "They can do it themselves. They can ask, 'how is my neighborhood changing,' and define their neighborhood and find out. They can see property values change over time and have easy access to numbers they would have had to dig for hours to find."

And that kind of community engagement is another of the benefits Local Scape brings to the table.

Both Hara and Sit, while speaking at NACo's Large Urban County Caucus Leadership Symposium

in King County, said the data was going generally underused when it was hard or time-consuming to access, and its presentation was a chance to prove the county was as capable of visualizing data that it gathered as real estate site Zillow, which was started in King County.

Over three years, the program will cost \$230,000 for both the development and operating budget.

Since its release in April 2015, LocalScape has found audiences beyond the private citizens, real estate industry and appraisers that it envisioned. Other King County departments, including public health, and the equality and social justice program, have contacted the assessor's office to integrate their data into LocalScape's library.

It has also given the general public a better understanding of what the assessor's office does.

Ultimately, Hara hopes to be able to move property tax payments to LocalScape, eliminating the need for postage and printing of paper tax bills.

County Innovations and Solutions features award-winning and noteworthy programs.



The Brevard County seal is dominated by exploration.

One section depicts conquistador Ponce de Leon's first European expedition making landfall on Melbourne Beach in April 1513, lush with orange trees, a crop synonymous with the state of Florida. Another includes a landscape of the moon, a result of one of several missions launched from the John F. Kennedy Space Center, which is near the county's first permanent settlement at what is now Cape Canaveral.

The seal displays the outline of the county with its 1854 founding date, though its borders were fluid at the time. Originally part of Mosquito County, then St. Lucie County, it took the name of Theodorus W. Brevard, the state comptroller.

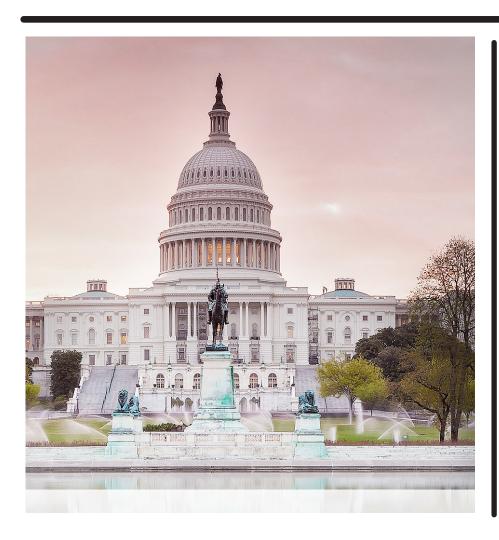
The county's boundaries

have shifted so much that what was once the northern end is the southern end of the present county, once a new St. Lucie County broke off in 1905. The original county lost western real estate to Osceola County.

The seal is reserved for "historical purposes," while a logo accompanies day-to-day transactions, according to Don Walker, the county's communications director.

In another historical tip of the hat, Brevard County has been home to the 321 area code since November 1999, when it was reassigned from the Cook County, Ill. area to celebrate Brevard County's place in space exploration, a reference to "3-2-1 liftoff."

If you would like your county seal featured, please contact Charlie Ban, senior staff writer, at cban@naco.org or 202.942.4210.





MARK YOUR CALENDAR

FEBRUARY 20–24, 2016

WASHINGTON, D.C.

MARRIOTT WARDMAN PARK HOTEL WASHINGTON, D.C.

CountyNews • AND NACo

Supreme Court won't hear Utah public lands access case

ROBIN BRAVENDER

E&E REPORTER

The Supreme Court has rejected pleas to take up a case surrounding claims to Utah roads that cut across federal lands, a move that could have broad implications for ongoing disputes in the West.

In a customary short order issued Oct. 13, the high court denied petitions from the state of Utah and Kane County — which lies along the state's southern border — to hear their appeal on a case centering on the county's rights-of-way claims made under an obscure Civil War-era law.

A federal appeals court last year scaled back the scope of the county's right-of-way claims to

roads on federally-owned land, finding that a lower court had erred in part of its decision awarding the county access to 12 of 15 roads it claimed under the 1866 law known

That law was enacted to allow state and county highways to be constructed over federal lands in the West. Congress repealed the law in 1976, but it said rights in place before that repeal must be honored.

In the decision last year from the Denver-based 10th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals, the judges said the lower court did not have iurisdiction over six of the roads it awarded to Kane County because there was no "disputed title" necessary to involve the federal courts

That decision will have ramifica-

A federal appeals court last year scaled back the scope of the county's right-of-way claims to roads on federally-owned land.

tions for the state's broader claims over some 12,000 roads, attorneys for Utah said in their petition to the Supreme Court. "This case seeks to resolve disputed title ownership to historic highways forged by those who long ago traveled West to establish homes and livelihoods," they said, "and that even today remain essential to state and local economies."

The 10th Circuit's decision, Utah's petition says, put states and others seeking rights of way in a legal "no man's land," preventing county improvement and state maintenance of roads.

Attorneys for the Obama administration had urged the high court not to take on the case.

Conservation groups have fought state and county claims to some of the routes in question.

"Lots of these claims are in sensitive places, so having these federal agencies in charge of time, place, manner of any improvements of these routes is important," said Steve Bloch, an attorney at the Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance, which has opposed state claims in a number of lawsuits.

And Utah isn't the only state where these fights are occurring, Bloch said. "It's playing out in some other states like Alaska, Idaho, Colorado and New Mexico," he said.

States and counties could use their right-of-way claims to improve and widen routes including what are now unmaintained dirt tracks or stream bottoms in areas like national parks or wilderness areas, Bloch added.

Some of the roads Kane County has claimed, for example, run through the Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument.

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Financial Services News

Trane, Democracy Live sign with U.S. Communities

Thanks to two new contract launches in recent months, U.S. Communities has intensified its status as a frontrunner in the purchasing world.

With Trane, a global company that offers air conditioning systems, services and solutions, and Democracy Live, which seeks to revolutionize the voting process with electronic balloting, U.S. $Communities \, has \, expanded \, its \, list$ of suppliers to advance its focus on innovation and diversify its offerings to users.

The contract with Trane was launched on Oct. 1. For more than 100 years, Trane has provided innovative solutions that optimize indoor environments through a broad portfolio of energy-efficient heating, ventilating and air conditioning systems, advanced controls, building, contracting, and energy services and parts support. As counties are asked so consistently to "do more with less," Trane can support U.S. Communities users from the initial design concept to re-commissioning and upgrades.

The Democracy Live contract opened Oct. 13 and offers tools to counties that allow voters to access their ballots anytime and anywhere, on mobile devices, tablets and computers. The company believes that a one-size-fits-all balloting system does not work well for election officials or voters, and seeks to offer 21st century balloting tools to each of the 200 million eligible voters in the United States.

While each of these contracts focuses on different solutions, both have proven success stories of interest to counties. Trane was able to reduce utility costs for the St. Lucie County, Fla. School District by \$5 million a year with a chiller plant and a thermal energy storage upgrade.

that the outcomes are visible and sustainable overtime. Meanwhile, Democracy Live's leadership team together with its technical and project management personnel has administered numerous projects of varying scope and complexity at the state, local and federal level.

Democracy Live is com-

By using both Trane and Democracy Live through U.S. Communities, counties nationwide will have access to these useful and exciting offerings for low pricing with high-quality service.

And in 2010, Democracy Live released its LiveBallot application that made it possible for voters with disabilities, voters in the military and Americans living abroad to access their local ballot materials online. Used in more than 500 elections by U.S. voters in over 90 countries from Antarctica to Zambia, Democracy Live is the largest provider of Web balloting in the United States.

One of the reasons why both of these contracts adhere so well to the U.S. Communities standard is that they are both geared toward highquality business practices. Trane's innovative technology can help communities transform data into actionable insights and structure intelligence, it is committed to providing a clear picture of building and system performance so

mitted to providing experience and proven expertise to assure customers of a well-managed and successful project, with sensitivity to customer time and resource

By using both Trane and Democracy Live through U.S. Communities, counties nationwide will have access to these useful and exciting offerings for low pricing with high-quality service.

U.S. Communities provides county users with access to a wide variety of competitively solicited contracts with national suppliers that have committed to providing their lowest overall public agency pricing. For more information, please visit www.uscommunites.org.

(Kelly Boggs, marketing specialist, wrote Financial Services News.)

WORD SEARCH

Brevard County, Fla. Facts

Learn more about this featured county in 'What's in a Seal?'

F K T O E S Y Z A E L L I V S U T I T G IELMBZCASIFQXUALMYSS CNBEIWDARERDKIAFYQAN SNDUNCLMFENRSRXRYTOK OEXIDOJDVMIAEKEAEMCX C D O N A G O C R X N V C V A L F E E D YJHYNKWFDAEIILDKECT SIYTCROTNMREIRIGPAS P B I N C S I A E S B T B P R O Q P N UAWRUYMCVNEEFPMQUESV EYOUEQHEBRFLZIBHQR EMUCPBOCEROHCEIZEQX XUAHJTATHDNTOUGXKN EACITOCEMOONLAUNCHY UNHGSOHXBLSEAXCKONCY THLUEOHAEAHTAZYKGMB PEKFLRKBOASTRONAUTSB URHAOPISCZMSOTOKLCBA GCFFVZFVONMPFNEVBYTQ CPTDLMXPCMFBBLMEIGLL

AIS AND TIMUCUANS (Indian tribes who once inhabited area)

ASTRONAUTS (Space pioneers) **CAPE CANAVERAL** (Land mass, city and Air Force base name) **COCOA BEACH** (City and tourist

destination in county) FORT ANN (Fort on Indian River east

bank in 1837) **HURRICANES** (Weather phenomena common to region)

INDIAN RIVER (Part of Indian River Lagoon system

KENNEDY SPACE CENTER (Site of Cape Canaveral Air Force Station)

MOON LAUNCH (Manned mission unofficially ended the U.S.-Soviet Space Race)

SATELLITE BEACH (City aptly named for its proximity to Cape Canaveral)

SPACE COAST (Atlantic coastal region so named for area surrounding Cape Canaveral and Kennedy Space Center

ST JOHNS RIVER (Longest river in Florida; flows north)

THEODORE BREVARD (Son of state official for whom county was named)

THREE TWO ONE (Telephone area code since 1999 based on countdown sequence before rocket "liftoff")

TITUSVILLE (County seat) VIERA (City, home to county government offices)

VOLUSIA COUNTY (Neighboring jurisdiction to the north)

Created by Charles Taylor

ASSOCIATION NACo • CountyNews November 2, 2015 | 17

Guest commentary

Bright ideas lift county

Summer initiative with Google could revolutionize public service

By SUSAN S. MURANISHI

Part of life in local government is contending with public-sector stereotypes about workers who spend their days indifferently pulling the levers of a bureaucratic machine that forever rumbles on.

That's why it may come as a surprise to

learn that 70 Alameda County [Calif.] managers and front-line employees spent much of the summer inspiring each other and challenging themselves to find creative new ideas for improving local services. Partnering with the county on this outside-the-box exploration was the technology giant whose quirky name is synonymous with innovation: Google.

The unusual collaboration was the result of Google's Government Innovation Labs, a new initiative to bring the same audacious moonshot thinking to government that Google employs in its never-ending search for new innovations — driverless cars, high-altitude Wi-Fi balloons and other far-fetched concepts that just might revolutionize the way we live.

Far from a summer fling with the booming tech sector, the Google partnership was the latest step in Alameda County's extended innovation journey to develop new solutions to pressing community problems in the 21st century.

A decade ago, we convened a conference called "Vision 2016," where regional leaders worked with a futurist to identify emerging trends and ways public services could best



Muranishi

adapt to them.

Since then, county initiatives such as community and employee hackathons, a Millennial Task Force and an ambitious Climate Initiative have driven new ways to approach and solve problems.

These efforts have brought impressive re-

sults, including a suite of mobile apps providing instant access to voter registration, property, public safety and other vital information; an employee-spawned vendor invoicing system that reduces taxpayer costs by \$500,000 annually; and a new procedure using electronic signatures that has quickened the process of obtaining judicial approval of search and arrest warrants and helped catch criminals.

For the county, the Google partnership was an obvious next step. Google and the tech world's other leading disruptors have revolutionized business by bringing huge efficiency gains to customers and service providers.

We in local government yearn for similar gains as resources are hammered by budget cuts, revenues are siphoned away by public-sector partners upstream, and demand for our services grows unabated.

In May, Alameda County became one of the first two counties to participate in the Google project. The project offered a rich new opportunity to engage in "10x thinking" and explore ways to further disrupt and transform local government. Teams of county employees focused on local priorities — such as jobs, public safety and emergency preparedness — and ways to make services more efficient and trans-

Ideas emerging from the Google sessions included an integrated online portal to guide customers through multijurisdictional steps involved in obtaining government permits as well as an expanded county disaster preparedness website that leverages GPS mapping elements to strengthen communications between emergency providers and residents on the front lines.

Today, we encourage each of our 9,600 employees to think big, without fear of failure, in offering ideas for reshaping the way Alameda County serves residents. One of us just may have that idea that revolutionizes the way government serves the people.

- Muranishi is the Alameda County, Calif. administrator.
- California's Kern and Joaquin counties are also participating in the Google Government Innovation Lab.

This commentary was first published by the Oakland Tribune My Word © 2015 Bay Area News Group, Sept. 30.



CountyNews • AND NACO

Airbnb targeted at ballot box

ELECTION from page 1

to spark controversy. Ohio and Colorado voters will decide potrelated measures.

Marijuana

In Ohio, Issue 3 is a proposed constitutional amendment that would legalize the growth and sale of recreational and medical marijuana in the Buckeye State. It would also grant exclusive rights to 10 investment groups to market the drug.

The County Commissioner's Association of Ohio opposes the measure. Among CCAO's concerns is that passage would favor wealthy investors in a billion-dollar industry.

"They were concerned about

placing a monopoly in the state constitution that would give specific benefits to a small exclusive group and that it would hurt Ohio's business climate," according to Andrew Johnson, a spokesman for the association. "Certain members also had concerns about the negative impacts on public safety, social service programs, employment and workforce competitiveness."

CCAO does, however, support a related measure, Issue 2, which targets Issue 3. It would invalidate any initiative approved on Nov. 3 — such as Issue 3, were it to pass — that creates economic monopolies.

Colorado's Proposition BB, if approved, would allow the state to spend \$66 million in revenue

from marijuana taxes on several already voter-approved programs rather than refund it to Colorado residents and marijuana growers. Colorado Counties Inc. (CCI) supports the proposition.

Programs eligible for funding include school construction (\$40 million) and other state programs, such marijuana education and prevention campaigns (\$12 million). The measure also reserves \$1 million for marijuana impact grants to localities that don't allow retail pot sales, to help them deal with any adverse impacts from the drug's legalization, said Gini Pingenot, CCI's legislative director.

The initiative was triggered by a quirk in the state's Taxpayer Bill of Rights (TABOR) law which gives voters a say in how tax money is

"The state is basically having to come back and say, 'Hey, we know you (voters) already said that we should tax the hell out of marijuana; now may we please keep the money that we

collected," she said.

Focus on Counties

At the county level, California boasts a marquee contest in the City and County of San Francisco. Supporters and opponents of Proposition F will square off and decide whether to futher restrict home-sharing companies like Airbnb and VRBO, and others. Proponents say such rentals are making the city's affordable housing crisis worse by removing units from the market.

Prop F would limit short-term. private rentals to 75 nights per year. In addition, property owners would be required to show proof that a unit is authorized for home-sharing rentals. Residents who offer such rentals would also have to submit quarterly reports on the number of days that they, personally, occupy the unit and the number of days it's rented out. Renting in-law units on a shortterm basis would also be illegal.

The campaign has drawn big name support and big money. Actor Danny Glover, a San Francisco native, has filmed two video spots backing "F." In one, he says "unscrupulous landlords are misusing short-term rentals to restrict housing stock."

Airbnb, whose corporate offices are in the city, has raised over \$8 million for the "vote no" campaign, compared to just over \$300,000 for the yes crowd, according to published reports.

Five members of the 11-mem-

ber Board of Supervisors support the proposition; Mayor Ed Lee and five other supervisors oppose it, according to websites listing endorsements, pro and con. One member is listed in neither column.

In another housing-related issue, Prop I would place an 18-month moratorium on construction of any housing project larger than five units in the city's rapidly gentrifying Mission District, which was formerly more affordable to low- and middleincome residents.

The progressive city-county by the Bay also has Proposition B on the ballot; it would allow 12 weeks of parental leave for both parents of a newborn or newly adopted child. Currently they are entitled to 12 weeks between them.

Following are summaries of other noteworthy county ballot questions:

Homelessness

In Kalamazoo County, Mich., voters will decide whether to approve a 0.1 mill tax to raise funds to help homeless families. It's estimated to raise about \$800,000 annually.

Transportation

Voters in 17 of the Utah's 29 counties will consider Proposition 1, an increase in the local option sales tax for transportation by 1 cent for every \$4 spent (a quartercent on the dollar), excluding food sales. It would raise \$108 million — including \$58 million in fastgrowing Salt Lake County, where Mayor Ben McAdams supports it.

"Current revenue from the gasoline tax doesn't come close to paying the cost of transportation needs in our communities," he wrote in a newspaper op-ed. The money would fund items such as road maintenance, sidewalk and trail improvements, and additional bus service.

Coos County, Ore. voters will decide the fate of Measure 6-151. the Second Amendment Preservation Ordinance. If approved, it would prohibit the use of county funds, facilities or employees to enforce any law that violates residents' Second Amendment right to bear arms — including registration requirements, bans on assault weapons and limits on gun-magazine capacity.

(Alix Kashdan, digital media assistant, contributed to this report.)

NACo on the Move

►NACo Officers, **County Officials**

• The White House has appointed Supervisor Greg Cox, San Diego County, Calif., and Council Member Elle Cochran, Maui



County, Hawaii, to the National Ocean Council Governance Coordinating Committee. The Governance Coordinating



Committee includes 18 state, local and tribal representatives from across the United States who serve as

a coordinat-

ing body on inter-jurisdictional ocean policy issues. The term runs Oct. 13-Oct. 13, 2017.

NACo Staff

- Chris Marklund, associate legislative director, traveled to Burleigh County (Bismarck), N.D. for the North Dakota Association of Counties Annual Conference, Oct. 25-27.
- Arthur Scott, associate legislative director, represented NACo at the Southern Rural Development Center Board Meeting in Orange County (Orlando), Fla., Oct. 26¬27.
- Mike Belarmino, associate

legislative director, represented NACo at the Government Finance Officers Association Fall Conference in Murfreesboro (Rutherford County) Tenn.,

• Emilia Istrate, NACo research director, discussed the county role in economic and workforce development strategies at the SSTI Annual Conference, Oct 27-29, in Okla-

homa City, Okla. SSTI is a national nonprofit organization dedicated to improving initiatives that support



Istrate

prosperity through science, technology, innovation and entrepreneurship.

▶Coming Up

- Andrew Goldschmidt, director of membership marketing, will be exhibiting on behalf of NACo at the Kansas Association of Counties 40th Annual Conference and Exhibition in Sedgwick County Nov. 3-5.
- Alex Koroknay-Palicz, membership coordinator, will speak on behalf of NACo membership at the Upper Peninsula Association of County Commissioners 2015 Fall Conference in Menominee County, Mich. on Nov. 5–6.

Two bills in Congress show promise

HEALTH from page 2

provided a firsthand provider perspective. He highlighted how counties are tackling funding challenges with innovative solutions such as developing crisis response systems that provide psychiatric emergency care. He emphasized the unique ability of counties to collaborate across agencies, and the necessary infrastructure that must be in place. He urged Congress to help counties build effective crisis response systems in order to reduce unnecessary incarcerations.

Harvey Rosenthal, the executive director of the New York Association of Psychiatric Rehabilitation Services, underscored the need to enhance the behavioral health workforce and discussed how peer support and services can help bridge the divide between demand and supply. He outlined how peer support and services, the formal process in which those with behavioral health conditions are able to receive help from someone who has formerly had a condition, are a valuable part of service delivery in professional inpatient and community-based services.

Rosenthal urged Congress to provide immediate technical assistance and training for counties to develop peer support services while they work to enhance the behavioral health workforce of the future.

The briefing preceded a Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP) Committee hearing on mental health the next day. Meanwhile, multiple bills that attempt to improve America's behavioral health system await markup in their respective committees. The most comprehensive of these include H.R. 2646, the "Helping Families in Mental Health Crisis Act," introduced in June by Reps. Tim Murphy (R-Pa.) and Eddie Bernice Johnson (D-Texas) and assigned to the House Energy and Commerce Committee, and S. 1945, the "Mental Health Reform Act." introduced in August by Sens. Bill Cassidy (R-La.) and Chris Murphy (D-Conn.) and assigned to the HELP Committee. (See County News, Sept. 7, 2015, p. 1, "Mental Health Reform Bills Await Post-Recess Action.")

Leaders of both committees have vowed to make achieving behavioral health reform a priority in this Congress, and have indicated they may take provisions from multiple bills and assemble them into a comprehensive package next year.

November 2, 2015 | 19

News From the Nation's Counties

►CALIFORNIA

• Mandatory spaying and neutering will now also apply to cats in LOS ANGELES COUNTY. Supervisors recently voted to require residents of the county's unincorporated areas to spay or neuter and microchip their cats.

While the number of stray dogs euthanized in county shelters has fallen in recent years, the *Los Angeles Times* reported that last year, the number of shelter cats euthanized was about 21,000 of 29,000 cats impounded.

County residents can receive \$50 vouchers to offset the costs, up to a cumulative \$125,000. After that, low-income cat owners will still be eligible to receive subsidies.

• **SONOMA COUNTY** has released the results of its first-ever **survey of farmworker health**.

Among its findings: most farm-workers don't migrate but rather are permanent residents who live in the county with their families; they spend a greater percentage of their income on housing than those in other counties; and even though all children in Sonoma County are eligible for health insurance coverage, only 77 percent of farmworkers' kids have insurance.

"This report will be essential in highlighting areas of opportunity to improve the health of a population key to our community's economy and vitality," County Supervisor Efren Carrillo said in a statement.

The survey of 293 farmworkers was conducted between September 2013 and January 2014.

▶COLORADO

This election season, **BOUL- DER COUNTY** voters will be able to **track their mail-in ballots**' travels

The county has launched a new, free service for voters, Ballot Track, which can send notifications by text message, phone call or email when a ballot has been sent and received by the Elections Division.

"Voters will no longer need to check online or call our office to see if we received their mail ballot," said Boulder County Clerk Hillary Hall.

Voters identities remain anonymous: Ballot Track reads a unique bar code printed on the outside of the envelope, not the ballot itself.

► FLORIDA

WALTON COUNTY Commissioners have inked a deal that will result in countywide installa-



Rogers and Astaire? No, it's Millie Brammer and Charles "Buddy" Pickert gliding across the dance floor at the Dutchess County Office for the Aging's 20th Senior Prom on Oct. 19. Photo courtesy of Dutchess County, N.Y. Office for the Aging

▶NEW YORK

Some 500 seniors did indeed "Dress to Impress" — this year's theme — for the **DUTCHESS COUNTY** Office for the Aging's **20th Senior Prom**. Attendees were treated to lunch, live music, dancing, as well as prizes and cake at the Oct. 19 event.

Dutchess County Executive Marc Molinaro crowned this year's prom Duke and Dutchess, Bernard and Helen Drakeford (not pictured), whom he also serenaded with a rendition of *Flv Me to the Moon*.

"We appreciate all they've given to the county," Molinaro said, "and it's our pleasure to give back and show our appreciation for them."

Local sponsors underwrote the cost of the prom by providing donated goods and services.

tion of \$25 million to \$30 million worth of fiber-optic cable for a bargain-basement outlay. It's only costing the county \$1.5 million, Northwest Florida Daily News

reported

Per the agreement, Information Transport Solutions will allow the county to piggyback on cable it is laying. This will bring high-speed Internet service to 50 buildings, including schools, colleges, libraries, county buildings and

emergency service structures, said Rick Wilson, the county's projects and programs manager.

Some savings will be realized because the Federal Communications Commission made a one-time decision to let libraries and schools use E-Rate funding to get fiber in the ground, Wilson said.

"This kind of collaboration has not been done anywhere else in the country," he added.

ILLINOIS

COOK COUNTY's 3 percent amusement tax might be expanding to cover previously exempted forms of entertainment. Under, County Commission President Toni Preckwinkle's proposed budget for next year, the tax would be extended to cover cable television and recreational activities such as golfing and bowling.

The new revenue would help offset a predicted \$198.9 million budget shortfall by generating an estimated \$20.25 million next year, WTTW News reported.

Preckwinkle said it wouldn't be a tax increase but rather an extension to "things that weren't covered before." The budget also proposes taxing e-cigarettes.

▶KANSAS

SEDGWICK COUNTY commissioners want the state's health department to **prevent non-U.S. citizens** from receiving benefits under the federal Women, Infants and Children (WIC) program, the *Wichita Eagle* reported.

In a letter to the state's secretary of health and environment, Commission Chairman Richard Ranzau said the county "has become concerned that the WIC program provides benefits to persons who are not citizens, nationals, or qualified aliens."

Commissioner Dave Unruh, who did not support the "consensus of the majority," also sent a letter, saying the request was not the result of an official vote.

►NEVADA

The **CLARK COUNTY** Commission approved a measure that would enable **transportation network companies** such as Uber and Lyft to operate legally in Southern Nevada immediately.

That will allow them to drop off and pick up passengers at Mc-

Carran Airport for a fee. The airport will begin collecting \$2.45 every time such a passenger is picked up or dropped off.

Since Sept. 16, airport officials have issued nearly 900 citations for the unauthorized loading or unloading of passengers at the airport, according to *The Review Journal*.

►NEW YORK

• NIAGARA COUNTY will establish an animal abuse registry and require sellers to check the list before allowing an adoption.

The registry will prevent individuals who live in the county and have been convicted of animal abuse crimes from adopting, purchasing or otherwise obtaining animals from any animal shelter or pet seller. Businesses must now check the registry, which will be maintained by the sheriff's office, the *Lockport Journal* reported.

Those committing their first offense will be required to be listed on the registry for 15 years. Those committing a second offense or greater will be required to be listed for life. Those convicted will pay \$150 for the listing. If a business or organization knowingly gives or adopts an animal to a person on the list, they will face a fine of up to a \$5,000. There will be no cost to the taxpayer to maintain the roster.

• Teens can look forward to no longer being locked up for 23 hours a day as punishment for minor offenses in ONONDAGA COUNTY. County officials say they are ending the practice, which started last fall when overcrowding at the county jail meant several dozen teenagers were transferred to another county correctional facility, *The Post-Standard* reported.

All minors will be held in the central county jail, which has specialists trained for dealing with younger inmates.

▶OHIO

• CUYAHOGA COUNTY will pay for \$60.4 million in repairs and upgrades to Progressive Field and Quicken Loans Arena. County Executive Armond Budish's administration sponsored and introduced legislation to cover these costs through the sale of \$65 million of bonds that will be repaid by the county's latest 20-year tax on alcohol and cigarettes, which voters approved in 2014, the Plain Dealer reported.

See NEWS FROM page 20

20 | November 2, 2015

Lane County, Ore. employees, families can soon access in-house health clinic

NEWS FROM from page 19

The county is obligated to cover those improvements, which include a new arena roof and a new baseball scoreboard, per its respective leases with the teams.

• Roughly \$2 million may help limit the amount of **human** waste traveling on **HAMILTON** COUNTY roads.

The money will go to a redesign of an incinerator that is in danger of closing next year because of noncompliance with environmental regulations. If that happens, the county may have to transport tons of dried human waste in dump trucks to other incinerators or landfills, the *Cincinnati Enquirer* reported.

The Metropolitan Sewer District already transports about

three truckloads of sludge and two truckloads of dried waste every day on county roads and highways. Losing the Little Miami Incinerator would add about seven trucks a day to the fleet. All of the waste is a byproduct of the sewage treatment process.

▶OREGON

• LANE COUNTY employees and their families, and some county retirees, will soon have access to an **in-house health clinic**.

The clinic will be staffed by nurse practitioners and provide routine primary medical care, preventative treatments and health screenings, mostly free of charge, in hopes of reducing more expensive hospitalizations and insurance costs, *The Register-Guard* reported. Around 4,000 people will be eligible to use it.

• Buying cigarettes in MULT-NOMAH COUNTY will take a while longer under a recommendation offered to the Board of Commissioners.

Public health advocates asked the board to consider increasing the **minimum age to buy tobacco** to 21 from the current 18 during a public hearing about a licensing fee increase for tobacco retailers, according to *The Oregonian*.

The advocates argued that although minors can often get cigarettes from friends who are over 18, their social circles often don't extend beyond 21-year-olds.

SOUTH CAROLINA

Charitable organizations in **PICKENS COUNTY** are now limited in the amount of material they **can dump for free** at the county landfill.

More than 300 tons of furniture, clothing and routine waste ended up there in 2014 when it could not be resold in thrift shops, so each organization will now have to pay \$35 per ton over the 25-ton limit, according to the *Greenville News*

►TENNESSEE

A motion to fly the Confederate Flag above the GREENE COUNTY courthouse was soundly defeated 20–1. The resolution's sponsor, who cast the only vote in favor, conceded it was likely to fail.

Greene County was under control of both Union and Confederate armies during the Civil War, though according to the *Knoxville New Sentinel*, the majority of Green County Civil War veterans fought for the Union,

despite Tennessee's secession.

►WISCONSIN

DANE COUNTY Executive Joe Parisi announced a plan to expand the medical examiner's scope to **BROWN COUNTY**.

Dane County is currently contracted to cover death investigations for **ROCK COUNTY** and forensic pathology for 12 other Wisconsin counties and one county in Illinois.

Parisi told the *Daily Cardinal* that revenue from the intergovernmental agreement will pay for the cost of adding new positions to the medical examiner's office.

(News From the Nation's Counties is compiled by Charles Taylor and Charlie Ban, seniorstaff writers. If you have an item for News From, please email ctaylor@naco.org orcban@naco.org.)

The H.R. Doctor Is In

'Tis the Season of Emergencies

needs if her primary advisors are

busy counting paper clips in the

that the organization is looking

after the welfare of the caregivers

and emergency responders as much

as the welfare of the citizens they

are out protecting during and after

It can be HR which helps assure

corner of the room.

"To everything there is a season...," said the writers of Ecclesiastes. In general, these very wise people were correct, although in the case of an essential county government function, Emergency Management, an exception might well have been granted. Certainly, we are now in a season of torrential floods, huge fires in the western United States, tornadoes and, of course, the Atlantic hurricane season. However, there is always a season for great, sudden, and not necessarily predictable events like earthquakes, oil spills, radiation leaks, train derailments or biological

In most of the United States, the county level of government is responsible for the response and management of community-wide disasters. It is counties and their locally elected and appointed leaders who are expected to speak with calm assurance and provide citizens with the information and the confidence they need to truly believe that things will get better. Citizens rely on their counties to be at their best when things are at their worst.

They must be the truthful communicators that help will be on the way.

Having spent many "tours of duty" in emergency operations centers, the HR Doctor is very much aware of one particular ingredient in the recipe for effective emergency management: That is an assertive and strategic role for the human resources director.

In many counties, not to mention cities and special districts, HR remains simply regarded and treated as a giant filing cabinet.

The essential skill of HR staff members in these unfortunate organizations is regarded as the ability to alphabetize and to know which button to push to reboot the out-of-date computer system. Of course, this knowledge is tactically necessary in order to get paperwork flowing, paychecks coming out, routine transactions managed, etc. In other words, the very important role of "small HR" is well recognized.

However, leaders have increasingly recognized that "large HR" truly represents the best use of resources in the organization. They are learning that the HR director should be sitting right next to the county manager or the chairperson of the county's commission or board of supervisors.

That is a seat which for too long has been solely occupied by the finance folk. Their role is also essential, however, it can also be dominated by tactical thinking. In major emergencies, the county manager or chairperson is shortchanged in coping with strategic

the emergency. It is HR which can lead the planning for citizen needs to be met after the dust settles. It is HR which can help the top leaders deal with what could easily become a case of "dueling badges" when the feds or state officers show up at the Emergency Operations Center purporting to have the authority to take over everything in the name of FEMA. Perhaps these visitors forget for a moment that in the course of an attempted "hostile takeover," they are creating an administrative disaster within the larger disaster that brought them to the county in

In many corporations, HR is responsible for security
— formerly the purview of the facilities management or ablic works folks. In other words, curity in the old days was regarded

the first place.

public works folks. In other words, security in the old days was regarded as a matter of locks on the door and fences around the property. We have learned, however painfully and tragically, that those more simple days have passed. Security is now a matter of top-level priority, beyond what a sheriff or police chief can provide alone.

It means protection against internal sabotage by disgruntled employees, protection against mass shootings, medical emergencies or terrorism. In fact, HR and law enforcement departments are natural partners in these regards,

not only in ensuring that extremely well-qualified employees are hired at the front end of their careers, but that their behavior and performance are effectively managed by supervisors throughout their careers. It also means that HR is involved, or should be involved, in investigations when wrongdoing is suspected and in ultimate decision-making about the fate of the errant employee.

In short, the entire HR profession has been evolving over a couple of generations in government service. The changing dynamics of a strategic HR function should be recognized inside the Emergency Operations Center during a major emergency just as it is being recognized by county leaders in general as they seek out the most effective resources available to make good things happen and to put off the day when bad things happen.

Every county in America—now, rather than after the disaster has occurred—would be very well served indeed to assess how strategically capable the HR service and the HR leader are in taking the steps needed to ensure that it is prepared to assume the role, not of a filing cabinet, but of a critical, strategic resource for government agencies and the citizens.

Phil Rosenberg
The HR Doctor

