



TEXAS COUNTY EXPANDS HOMELESS EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM. PG. 4



TREATMENT COURTS HELP KEEP FAMILIES TOGETHER IN W.VA. PG. 7



CALIFORNIA COUNTY'S ONE-STOP SHOP RECYCLES WASTE. PG. 13

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION *of* COUNTIES

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Former NACo President Harvey Ruvin dies at 85

by **Charlie Ban**
senior writer

When Metro Dade Commissioner Harvey Ruvin ran for NACo leadership in the early '80s, his campaign paraphernalia from the Florida Association of Counties proclaimed him "a man for all counties."

And while he gladly fought on behalf of all as he worked his way up to his term as president from 1987-1988, his heart was in South Florida. Five years after his tenure as NACo president concluded, he pursued a new job as the county's clerk of courts, a role he held for 30 years until his death Dec. 31 at age 85.

"It was a tremendous benefit to Miami-Dade County to have the president representing us in Washington and elsewhere," Merrett Stierheim, the former Miami-Dade County manager, said at Ruvin's memorial service.

Demonstrating that he was a man for all counties meant communicating how his passion for environmental preservation would not alienate the majority of Florida's rural counties, while not compromising the values that drove his 1972 county commission candidacy. It was an opportunity for him to exhibit his powers of persuasion.

"Environmentalists were not well perceived by most county officials and Harvey was very much an environmentalist," said John Thomas, who served as executive director of the Florida Association of Counties when Ruvin was running for NACo office and executive director of NACo during Ruvin's presidency.

"It took a while to help a lot of the commissioners in Florida understand why — that even if it wasn't important in their own counties — it was important in some counties and particularly large urban counties. But he did."

Ruvin's environmentalism, which included a push for renourishment of Miami Beach, also provided a window into his fairness, Stierheim said. When artists Christo and Jeanne-Claude planned a project to surround 11 islands in Miami's Biscayne Bay with 6,499,800 square feet of pink polypropylene floating fabric, Ruvin was sternly opposed to it. But he eventually took a meeting with the pair and, convinced it would not harm the marine life, "helped sway many naysayers."

Ruvin was motivated to pursue NACo leadership following what he saw as an inadequate

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Artwork by 10th grader Alayna Garst of Williamstown High School in Wood County, W.Va., pictured above, adorns the cover of the 2023 NACo calendar. The calendar features the winning artwork from students who entered NACo's "I Love My County Because" student art competition, sponsored by NACo and Americans for the Arts. See all of the winning artwork on pages 8 and 9.

Erie County, N.Y. faces deadly 'Blizzard of the Century'

by **Charlie Ban**
senior writer

Counties throughout New York rushed to help Erie County navigate a snowstorm that killed 38 people in late December, more than half who died nationwide during storms that dumped four feet of snow on the Buffalo area and spread

dangerously cold temperatures throughout much of the country.

Erie County, meanwhile, took over some responsibility for clearing more than one-third of Buffalo's roads of more than four feet of snow, and County Executive Mark Poloncarz is exploring trying to take responsibility for clearing

city roads in the future. For the second time in two months, the county declared a driving ban to reduce unnecessary travel. Drivers abandoned hundreds of cars, including tractor-trailer rigs and buses. Poloncarz said he was nearly hit by a car driving through

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Getting the band back together: County defenders rock the holidays

by **Charlie Ban**
senior writer

A cartoon fox and hound spend all day chasing each other around, but when the clock hits 5, they clock out and say, "See you tomorrow!"

That's how Leo Masursky

looks at the relationship he and his colleagues in the Pima County, Ariz. public defender's office try to strike with their rivals, the county's prosecutors.

After a two-year hiatus forced by the COVID-19 pandemic, the "Misfit Toys" got

the band back together in December 2022 and were out again on the county courthouse yard, playing a selection of holiday tunes for the benefit of all. Especially the prosecutors.

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Harvey Ruvin focused clerk terms on increasing modernization, accessibility

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federal response to helping Dade County assist Cuban migrants during the Mariel boat-lift and broken promises to rebuild the Liberty City neighborhood after the 1980 Miami riots. He clashed philosophically with the Reagan administration, pointing out how the federal disinvestment would leave counties without the support to tackle social problems.

“We know at the local level that when you dismantle the social support structure, those needs don’t disappear,” he said in June 1987.

A Florida native, Ruvin maintained a law practice while serving first as mayor of North Bay Village and then county commissioner for 20 years.

“I couldn’t count the number



Then-Miami-Dade County Commissioner Harvey Ruvin in a late 1970s NACo photo.

of times he came to Washington to testify on environmental issues,” Thomas said. “Harvey

has been one of the most active and successful elected officials at the local government level working on environmental issues. We’ve had passionate environmental elected officials that they were totally ineffective, often their own communities, and but Harvey was remarkably effective at every level.”

Ruvin waged a year-and-a-half battle on behalf of the general revenue-sharing program, nearly saving it in 1986 thanks to his relationship with House Rules Committee Chairman Rep. Claude Pepper (D-Fla.), before House Speaker Tip O’Neill (D-Mass.) removed local governments from the bill at the last minute.

The only reason it was so close, Thomas said, was because of the strength of the relationships and coalitions Ruvin built, Thomas said.

“Among NACo, the National League of Cities and U.S. Conference of Mayors, Harvey had by far the best connections,” he said of the general revenue sharing battle.

Ruvin’s 30-year tenure as clerk of the courts encom-

passed a vast array of constitutional duties, and he harnessed technology to make services more effective, cost efficient and accessible. He was beloved by his staff of 1,200 employees, Luis Montaldo said at his memorial service, addressing all-staff communications to his clerk’s office family. Montaldo, who served as Ruvin’s general counsel for 17 years, has been appointed interim clerk.

“Harvey never chose the easy course or the safe course, he always fought to do the right thing, no matter what the circumstances were,” Montaldo said at the service. “He knew how important his role was acting as an arm of the court and record keeper... the neutrality. Harvey was often pressured to budge on that neutrality, but he never flinched. He knew that his ministerial role and neutral stance was integral to the fair administration of justice in our community which he cared about so deeply.”

His major achievement as clerk was digitizing and modernizing court records, real estate records, commission records and more.


“I understood that, because optical scanning technology was still new, but it was possible,” Ruvin told County News in 2018. “We just had to demonstrate that it was more efficient and served the public better. We wanted to serve people online, not in line.”

‘We wanted to serve people online, not in line.’

His innovation and drive to constantly improve services was remarkable to former Commissioner Sally Heyman, who was charged with bringing him copious notes from NACo Board of Directors meetings when he couldn’t attend conferences.

“There are so many people who don’t want to do things because it’s extra work or it’s not their job or they don’t like change, but Harvey was a ‘possibilities’ kind of guy and that, you gotta love,” she said.

His last run for the clerk’s office came at age 82, and while speakers at his service acknowledged that his dedication meant he wasn’t spending as much time with his wife Risa and sons Zach and Eric as most men his age, Risa recognized the role public service played in his life.

“Harvey’s dedication to the clerk’s office, to Dade County, to the state of Florida, to the United States, to the world we live in, was the fabric of over a 50-year legacy of service,” she said at the service. “He always felt like it was an honor and a privilege to serve his community. He leaves all the places that he touched better than he found them.” 

SNAP/STATS



Blizzards average 2.6 per season

SEASON	NUMBER
2021-2022:	11 blizzards
2013-2014:	10 blizzards
1996-1997:	10 blizzards
Seasons without a blizzard: 1986-1987; 1990-1991; 2011-2012	

Source: National Weather Service

County staff from Erie, elsewhere, offered lifelines to snowed-in residents

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the snow near his house while he tried to get into his own car.

He had high praise for the county call center personnel who responded to emergency calls from people trapped in their homes. Many of those call center personnel were taking calls routed to their homes to keep them from having to travel.

“When you’re talking to people for [several] hours who think they’re going to die, it reminds me of the beginning of the COVID crisis, when we set up our COVID hotline and people were calling, crying, ‘I have a cough, does that mean I’m going to die?’” he said during a Dec. 28 briefing on the snowstorm.

“We had individuals working in those call centers who weren’t trained for that [emotional support] and it was a very mentally exhausting task and I want to thank each and every one from the Erie County team who are manning those calls and I’m very proud of what you did. You have saved lives.”

The county’s complement of 72 high lifts and 119 dump trucks were part of the armada of county, state and private vehicles working on snow removal.

Every year, the county replaces five dump trucks to continually modernize its fleet, Poloncarz said.

EMS personnel completed door-to-door visits of homes that couldn’t be reached by phone to do wellness checks for 911 callers.

The National Guard also visited homes, completing wellness checks at every house that lost power for more than 10 minutes, and military police performed traffic control roles. Every caller to the county’s snow emergency hotline was called back later to follow up.

Deputy Executive Lisa Chimera called Erie County residents “part of the solution,” to the challenges posed by the snow.

“You have been great neighbors,” she said. “You have taken in strangers who are in



Snow blankets the street, sidewalks and cars as an eerie hush falls over Laurel Street in Buffalo, N.Y. as seen Dec. 24, the second day of a three-day blizzard that brought four feet of snow, hurricane-force winds and whiteout conditions. Photo by Andre Carrotflower

need.”

“At a time that we should have been celebrating with our families and our friends, we were helping each other through this incredible event,” she said.

“Thank you, to all of the people who have gone above and beyond, who have shoveled, who have delivered food, who have helped their neighbors, who have helped strangers who have been stranded — because that is what’s going to get us through all of this.”

Mutual aid from other New York counties was diverse and came from far afield.

Dutchess County sent eight crew members, a front-end loader and dump trucks. Members of the Otsego County Special Operations Team worked 15- to 16-hour shifts to help with a backlog of more than 1,000 EMS calls.

“The people we did actually make contact with were genuinely very appreciative that we were there,” said Cooperstown Fire Department Captain Michael Simons.

“The city basically shut down for a brief period of time and these calls were backing up and piling up. They were very grateful someone was there to come check on them.”

A team from the Onondaga County Health Department traveled to assist with recovery efforts.

Oswego County supplied six crew members, five dump trucks, a service truck and me-

chanic and one front loader to help with cleanup efforts.

The Madison County 911 call center has fielded calls for Erie County remotely, thanks to advanced technology. Frank McFall, director of

Madison County’s Emergency Communications department, led the initiative.

“I’ve been here 19 years and 19 years ago, we would have never been able to do this,” McFall said. **CN**

In Memoriam

Former County News writer Charles Taylor

For longtime readers of *County News*, the name Charles Taylor will be familiar. Taylor’s byline appeared from 2007 to 2017 over countless articles for the newspaper covering an array of topics ranging from opioid abuse to 911 technology.

Taylor passed away unexpectedly Jan. 6, after battling COVID.

He worked for the National Association of Counties for 11 years and was a senior writer for *County News* when he retired in 2017.

A graduate of St. Paul’s College with a degree in Organizational Management, he later studied urban planning at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

Among several communications positions in his career, Taylor worked for the *Richmond News Leader* newspaper, at ra-



Charles Taylor (center) with colleagues (l-r) Charlie Ban, Bev Schlotterbeck, Mary Ann Barton and Leon Lawrence III.

dio station WRVA in Richmond and as the government media relations manager for Arlington County, Va.

After retiring from *County News*, Taylor moved to Chestertown, Md. with longtime partner Jim Bogden, immersing himself in the community.

He served on Kent County’s social action committee, sang with the Chester River Chorale

and served on the board of the National Music Festival, serving as its board chair last year.

A memorial service is scheduled for Jan. 21 at Fellowship United Church of Christ in Chesapeake, Va.

In lieu of flowers, memorial donations may be made to the National Music Festival, P.O. Box 284, Chestertown, Md. 21620.

Harris County, Texas expands pilot program that employs homeless

by **Meredith Moran**
staff writer

Jazarus Williams had been sleeping under a bridge for about three years when he joined Employ2Empower, a Harris County, Texas program that pays those experiencing homelessness \$15 an hour in exchange for services like graffiti abatement and restriping parking lots, as well as time devoted applying to housing, healthcare and permanent employment.

“When I first got into the program, I was still sleeping on the streets, I was drinking, I was using drugs, I was suicidal,” Williams said. “Without this program, I don’t know where I’d be right now to be honest.”

Employ2Empower functions through three stakeholders — the sheriff’s office and the non-profit organization Career and Recovery Resources, Inc. run the program and county commissioners secure funding for it.

The sheriff’s office provides the participants with job mentorship, as the deputies involved with the program are chosen partially for their range of skills outside of law enforcement, like plumbing, carpentry and the ability to troubleshoot equipment, according to Sgt. Theodore Perez, while the county’s Career and Recovery Resources provides participants with referrals to supporting services.

Williams joined in September 2022 after hearing about the program through Perez and Career and Recovery Resources case manager Belinda Flores, who were looking for new participants at The Beacon, a non-profit organization serving Houston’s homeless population, where Williams would wash his clothes, shower and eat, he said.

Since then, Williams said that he has stopped using drugs and his mental health has drastically improved. Employ2Empower helped him with transportation to doctor’s appointments, provided him with clothing and



A participant in Harris County’s Employ2Empower program heads to work. Photo courtesy of Harris County

got him temporary housing. He is now in the process of getting into permanent housing and receiving his GED, he said.

“I’ve been basically homeless my whole life ... I had a real rough childhood growing up and I always just prayed that somebody would come in my life, because even my own family pushed me away — now I don’t have nobody but this place,” Williams said. “And I still need them now, so I feel like this can be something that can change the whole world for real — it’s been a great help for me.”

Employ2Empower started off as a six-month pilot program in Precinct 2 funded through Commissioner Adrian Garcia’s budget and expanded county-wide in July 2022 after the Harris County Commissioner’s Court unanimously voted to devote \$2.1 million in American Rescue Plan Act funding toward the program.

Garcia’s experience as a police officer and Harris County sheriff shaped his perspective and priorities as a county commissioner, he said, particularly in understanding how important it is to treat those experiencing homelessness with dignity.

“It was being a street cop where I saw where government fails and where government can do better to have a better impact on the communities that I was patrolling, so that street experience has just been so invaluable for the way I look at programs and policies and implementa-

‘I feel like this can be something that can change the whole world for real...’

- Jazarus Williams, Employ2Empower participant

tion of them in our community,” Garcia said.

When Garcia was elected to represent Precinct 2 in 2019, he said that he immediately started receiving complaints of the county’s homeless population under freeways, at street intersections, along the side of roads and at encampments.

“People were just adamant about getting them arrested, ‘Get the sheriff’s office out there and make them go away,’” he said.

Garcia said he knew that arresting those experiencing homelessness wasn’t the answer and had the idea to repurpose an initiative he put together while on Houston City

Council, District H Cares, which provided food and a recommendation letter in exchange for doing tasks like cleaning out weeded lots, picking up trash and cleaning out drainage culverts.

This time around though, Garcia had the budget to com-

pensate participants for not only their work, but also for time spent on applying and getting assessed for housing, healthcare and permanent employment through Career and Recovery Resources, which provides participants with digital literacy and life skills training.

“I’m very grateful for Career and Recovery’s work because they’re just magicians at being able to work with fragile individuals — they treat them with dignity and respect, they know how to engage them,” Garcia said. “They know what it takes to make a success story take place, but they also know that we can’t expect someone who’s been homeless for a period of

time to all of a sudden be able to show up at eight o’clock in the morning and be ready to work.

“And if they have been dealing with substance or alcohol abuse, you can’t expect someone to become sober on day one, so we know it’s a process and that’s why having law enforcement and social workers working closely together with peer mentors — that is the perfect recipe.”

Recruitment for the program comes from numerous sources, but one of the primary ways is through peer mentors. Employ2Empower enlists the help of those who have personally benefited from the program to spread the word, Garcia said.

“We ask them to help us by going back into the encampments they’re familiar with or the encampments they’ve identified — no one can speak the language better than someone who’s been there,” Garcia said. “The other part is through the sheriff’s office homeless outreach team — these are a group of specially trained deputies, and so when they get calls or complaints from the commu-

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Pima County, Ariz. attorneys bond, find common ground over musical talents

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"Everyone has court at 9 a.m., so we went out early in the mornings on the plaza and started playing," Masursky said.

"There were a few grumpy people, but most of the prosecutors were smiling and laughing. We would really hope to get a laugh out of people. We are adversaries and we really do have very serious things going on, but we're also county employees and we're people and we just try to bring in some humanity whenever we can."

SET LIST, A FEW ARE REPRISED WITH A JAZZY TWIST:

- "Christmastime Is Here" by Vince Guaraldi
- "Little Drummer Boy"
- "Silent Night"
- "We Wish You a Merry Christmas"
- "Good King Wenceslas"

Masursky credits colleague Chris Lynch with getting the band together in 2016, after Masursky, who taught himself to play the trumpet, saw his previous band, the Goats, fall apart.

Lynch, a keyboardist, suggested they start playing at an office party as a bonding exercise.

It turned out, they could actually play pretty well.

"He didn't know it at the time he asked me, but I love Christmas music," Masursky said.

"I'd like to play some different music too, but so far, it's just been the Christmas stuff. I'd like to try playing at other times of the year, but it's really a matter of coordinating around everyone else's availabilities."

When the band reformed after the height of the pandemic, they gained drummer Katie Rogers and bassist Tom Knauer. They also have jingle bell

ringers who complement the band's musical stylings: Faith Smith, Kristy Valenzuela and Alyssa Colvin.

"We obviously work really hard and know what kind of legal work we're all capable of, but it really speaks to the office culture that we have a chance to collaborate with our talents

and passions like this," Masursky said.

"People are willing to sing, and that's what takes some real courage."

The work of indigent defense can wear down even the most idealistic attorney.

The long odds and short list of resources many clients face

pile up.

That all adds to the need for relief not just away from the office, but with colleagues.

"It gives everybody a chance to connect on a different level in a different way and you know we recognize first of all how much we like the job but then also how much you know

as human beings we can relate to each other and it really does help your motivation, it helps you just kind of get reenergized, it's just a great thing all the way around.

"The best thing we can have in Pima County is both prosecutors and public defenders who are on the ball." **CN**



Performing at the Pima County, Ariz. Courthouse plaza: The Misfit Toys. From left: Katie Rogers, Kristy Valenzuela, Chris Lynch, Leo Masursky, Tom Knauer Photo by Sarah Kostick

Six months after launch, how is 988 doing?



by John Palmieri, MD
and Chelsea Thomson

Counties across the country play a key role in developing a behavioral health continuum of care to support community members living with a mental health or substance use disorder or experiencing a suicidal, mental health or substance use crisis. As one element of the continuum, counties may operate a crisis hotline or “warmline” for people to call during times of distress. On July 16, counties added another tool to this part of the continuum when the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline transitioned to the 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline. The three digits provide an easy-to-remember number that connects callers to trained crisis counselors who can triage the call, offer mental health support and provide connections to local resources.

After the transition, more people across the country dialed, texted and chatted using the 988 number and were connected with services through the Lifeline. Between November 2021 and 2022, the total number of calls, texts and chats increased 33 percent, with the number of texts increasing six-fold. Despite the increase in volume, the overall answer rate improved from 63 percent to 92 percent and average wait time to speak with a counselor

decreased from three minutes and seven seconds to 36 seconds. These trends have continued with more than 350,000 routed calls, texts and chats to 988 in September.

Counties and 988

The 988 line offers an entry point into the local behavioral health continuum of care. Local resources play a large role in community members’ long-term well-being and stability. Over the past six months, counties, alongside state, city, tribal, federal and private partners, have implemented various policies and practices to bolster local community services and access to treatment. Building local capacity through increased 911/988 interoperability, added mobile crisis teams, enhanced crisis stabilization units and increased peer-led support is critical to providing people in crisis with the right intervention at the right time and place.

Montgomery County, Ohio (Pop. 537,309)

Early in 2022, Montgomery County launched Crisis Now, a three-pronged approach to delivering crisis services. The launch included a crisis hotline and mobile crisis response teams. A crisis receiving center will open in early 2023. When 988 launched, the crisis hotline also began taking

FOR MORE INFORMATION ON 988 AND RESOURCES, VISIT:

- **Behavioral health continuum of care:** <https://www.naco.org/resources/promoting-health-and-safety-through-behavioral-health-continuum-care>
- **NACo’s Toolkit for Counties:** 988 Crisis and Suicide Lifeline: <https://www.naco.org/resources/toolkit-counties-988-suicide-crisis-lifeline>
- **SAMHSA’s 988 site:** <https://www.samhsa.gov/find-help/988>
- **SAMHSA’s partner toolkit:** <https://www.samhsa.gov/find-help/988/partner-toolkit>

local 988 calls. Over the first six months of Crisis Now, 89 percent of calls to the hotline and 77 percent of the mobile crisis responses were resolved in the community.

Philadelphia, Pa. (Pop. 1,603,797)

Philadelphia leaders have supported the transition to 988 by offering a “no wrong door approach” so community members can access 988 and related services regardless of the agency they contact. One of these avenues includes embedding behavioral health cri-

sis counselors within the 911 call centers who can join active 911 calls to deescalate the emergency and offer a connection to services. To help ensure callers can access the right intervention at the right time, Philadelphia adjusted the script for 911 call takers to improve the handoff between 911 and 988.

Burlington County, N.J. (Pop. 461,860)

After the transition to 988, Burlington County Commissioners reminded residents to call, text or chat 988 to receive immediate help during a suicidal, mental health and/or substance use crisis. With an easier-to-remember confidential number, local leaders also hope 988 reduces the stigma surrounding mental health. Last year, county commissioners passed a resolution designating the county as stigma-free in an effort to combat misperceptions about behavioral health and increase awareness of local resources.

Santa Clara County, Calif. (Pop. 1,936,259)

The Santa Clara County Department of Behavioral Health Services set up a call center with 10 employees and 75 volunteers to support local 988 response. During the transition to 988, the county streamlined the path to connect callers to local services by sending all calls to one line. This centralized process allows call takers to connect callers with the right response, which may include immediate support from the county’s adult, youth or trust teams. Since 988 launched, only three of the more than 1,700 calls to the county’s hotline have been diverted to 911.

Douglas County, Kan. (Pop. 118,785)

County leaders launched a 24-hour, seven days a week crisis line linked to 988 and new mobile crisis team to serve county residents and support 988 callers who may need in-person support during a behavioral health emergency. Additionally, law enforcement officers who re-


spond to calls requiring a behavioral health response have access to a dedicated call line to access the 988 crisis call center. Prior to the transition, county commissioners also allocated \$170,000 to hire four full-time call specialist supervisors to staff the county crisis line. Soon, local Public Safety Answering Points will have the ability to seamlessly connect 911 callers experiencing a behavioral health emergency, without a criminal or medical component, to the 988 call center.

Charleston County, S.C. (Pop. 408,235)

To ensure callers receive connection to local care and strive for a 100 percent in-state answer rate, state legislators set aside funding in the budget to support a back-up 988 call center in Charleston County. The additional center will not only increase connections to local resources for the 25 percent of calls that are currently routed to out-of-state back-up centers but also reduce the wait time to speak with a counselor.

County opportunities

To continue supporting 988 and building accessible and high-quality local behavioral health services, county leaders can consider:

- collaborating with state behavioral health partners to support linkages between state and local planning
- partnering with PSAPs, first responders and law enforcement to educate about and encourage health first responses to behavioral health crises
- promoting awareness of 988 and local services and tailoring the message for under-resourced communities, and
- Working with 988 Lifeline centers to ensure the centers have updated resource information for referral and linkage to county crisis services and community-based care. 

John Palmieri, M.D., M.H.A., is a senior medial advisor at SAMHSA. Chelsea Thomson serves as the senior program manager for Behavioral Health and Justice at NACo.

Courts' substance use programs keep families together

by Meredith Moran
staff writer

Counties across West Virginia are implementing family treatment courts (FTC) as a response to the state's opioid epidemic and foster care crisis. The program, which is in 11 courts across the state, reunites parents charged with drug related offenses with their children after they have completed intensive treatment and counseling.

After she was arrested for a DUI, Mary Beth Leslie entered Nicholas County's FTC in October 2020 to regain custody of her teenage daughter. Although she's a resident of a neighboring county, which doesn't have an FTC program, she was able to participate because she was pulled over in Nicholas County.

Her best friend, who lives in a different county, fought five years for her children. "She was in recovery -- she was in a rehab -- and they took her children," Leslie said. "Most people give up then -- she stayed clean, she

fight for yourself."

West Virginia ranked highest in the nation for overall drug use in a 2022 WalletHub study that also found it is one of five states with the fewest people receiving treatment for substance use, despite having the highest amount of overdose deaths per capita. And in 2022, there more than 7,000 children in the state's foster care system, with thousands more children in need of homes than foster families able to care for them.

Leslie battled substance use for most of her life, she said, and because of experiences she had had and those she had heard about, she didn't have trust in the system and was reluctant about FTC going into the program, but it turned out to be a "blessing" for her.

"If you look at what happens in a normal system compared to the family treatment court, [the treatment court] is so much more in depth, they keep you accountable," Leslie said. "It's hard work, but it's really where

settlement with McKesson Corporation regarding the opioid epidemic, with the exception of Boone County, which is funded separately through a grant from the federal Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention.

The West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources and the Nicholas County Day Report Center also help fund Nicholas County's program, according to Callaghan.

"We competed with some other counties because there's limited federal funding for that -- we have a need for it, and our [State] Supreme Court is the one that says, 'OK, you get a family treatment court or you don't,' and we just stayed in constant contact with them and were persistent," Callaghan said.

"I think one of the biggest things I did was I already had staff -- we already had a team put together, we'd already talked to everybody about it in the county, we just had everything

to do, but sometimes you don't have a choice, and I think that was where we always felt like if we just had more to offer, especially in these cases that involve drug use, and I feel like that's what we've got, and we're really seeing it work."

Callaghan said that, prior to the creation of the program, parents involved in abuse and neglect cases would, if they qualified, go through an "improvement" period and would come back to court after 90

days for a check-in. FTC is a much more intensive process, Callaghan said, which includes recovery and life-skills classes, a curfew, drug screenings and weekly treatment court check-ins and counseling.

"I wanted to do everything in a day," Leslie said. "I was like, 'I want to get everything done right now, get my daughter back and get this over with,' so they had to slow me down and

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PROFILES IN SERVICE

RON WHITEHEAD

NACo Board Member
Public Works Director, County Surveyor
Washington County, Utah



WHITEHEAD

I'm most proud of: My family.

My favorite meal is: A good steak dinner.

My pet peeve is: I try not to let unimportant stuff bother me, so I really do not have a pet peeve.

My favorite movie is: Any good action movie.

My favorite music is: Classic rock.

My favorite U.S. president is: Ronald Reagan

My county is a NACo member because: They understand the importance of having a national voice for county government concerns.

Number of years active in NACo: Seven

Years in public service: 21

Occupation: Public Works Director/County Surveyor

Education: College Surveying Certificate

Three people (living or dead) I'd invite to dinner:
Two people -- my parents

A dream I have is to: Take my daughter back hunting moose in Alaska.

My favorite way to relax is:
Spending time at Lake Powell.



Families reunite Dec. 1, 2022 at Nicholas County, W.Va.'s treatment court graduation. Photo courtesy of Stephanie Smith

fought it. It took five years to see her kids again. So, when you watch stuff like that and you go through those situations, where people have fought and even do the right things and the system still fails them, it's hard for anyone to have hope.

"We're in a poor county in a poor state," she noted. "Most of these people don't have families or resources, or love themselves enough to fight for themselves, let alone their kids. The family treatment court brings you in with love and open arms and it really shows you that there's people out there that do care, that will fight for you if you

you're going to find the changes -- drugs are only a symptom, there are deeper issues going on in why people make these choices."

Because of FTC, Leslie was also able to see her daughter much sooner and more frequently than she would have otherwise, she said.

Nicholas County was the fifth county in the state to adopt FTC, launching in 2020, and now has the largest program, according to Judge Stephen Callaghan, who oversees the county's FTC.

Most of the funding for West Virginia's treatment court programs comes from a 2019 state

lined up. And the [State] Supreme Court finally just said, 'OK, fine.'"

The first staff member Callaghan got on board was Stephanie Smith, who at the time worked for Child Protective Services (CPS), and now works as an FTC case coordinator.

"Having come from CPS to family treatment court, I absolutely feel like what we're able to do with the families and the parents is making a huge difference and [creating] more success," she said. "None of us like terminating parental rights as a CPS worker, and I think as a judge, it's not what you want



THE MOST ADVENTUROUS THING I'VE EVER DONE IS:
Hunting moose in Alaska with my daughter.

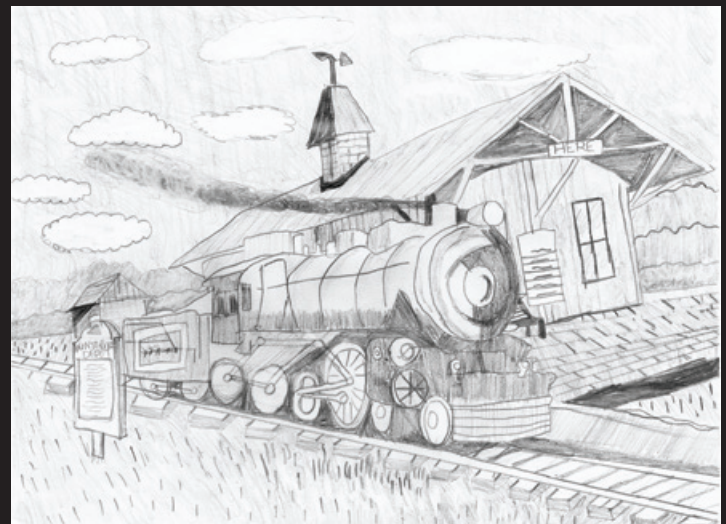
I LOVE MY COUNTY BECAUSE...

2022 ART COMPETITION

2023 CALENDAR WINNERS GALLERY



Mira Panchuk, 1st grader
Southwest Calloway Elementary School, Calloway County, Ky.



Kason Moore, 3rd grader
Chicod School, Pitt County, N.C.



Emily Clark, 6th grader
Brentwood Academy, Johnson County, Kan.



Lily Rayhart, 4th grader
Windsor Farm Elementary School, Anne Arundel County, Md.



Kesley Robbins, 5th grader
Mountainburg Middle School, Crawford County, Ark.



Kat Brickle, 12th grader
Gatlinburg-Pittman High School, Sevier County, Tenn.



Alayna Garst, 10th grader
Williamstown High School, Wood County, W.Va.



Joshua Centner, 2nd grader
West Street Elementary School, Niagara County, N.Y.



Ava Jensen, 11th grader
Gatlinburg-Pittman High School, Sevier County, Tenn.



Ciel Williams, 5th grader
Chicod School, Pitt County, N.C.



Sadey Bowen, 11th grader
Harrisburg High School, Poinsett County, Ark.



Kennedy Kirkland, 7th grader
home-schooled, Johnson County, Kan.



Emma Boyd, 4th grader
Chicod School, Pitt County, N.C.



County staff share areas of expertise

Livingston County, N.Y. Administrator Ian Coyle speaks to a local community group as part of his five-year “Conversations with the County” initiative. Photo courtesy of Livingston County

by **Charlie Ban**
senior writer

Nothing inspires terror quite like public speaking, but Livingston County, New York’s personnel are apparently fearless.

When Communications Director Sean Farnsworth canvassed the county staff to see who would be interested in participating in a speakers bureau, going out to present to local civic groups, the response surprised him.

“Within 15 minutes, the emails started coming in,” he said. “People were excited.”

The speakers bureau, launched in October, features county employees who are available upon request to address a variety of topics to civic groups. The topics include county administration, county history, public information and both the prosecution and defense’s positions in the legal system. Speakers also touch on practical topics, including resources for seniors, grant writing, workforce preparation, records management and emergency planning.

A number of counties from around the country maintain speakers bureaus, but most focus on particular areas, including health, aging, prosecutors’ offices, water issues, education and history. Other counties with broader arrays of speakers, including Broward and Pinellas counties in Florida, are significantly larger than Livingston

County.

Frederick County, Va. has a roster of speakers, and although the demand for in-person guests saw a downturn during the COVID-19 pandemic, county public information officer Karen Vacchio said the most popular requests for her speakers bureau have been for the commissioner of revenue and parks and recreation departments.

“Nobody knows these topics better than people who are doing this work every day,” she said.

That’s what has driven Livingston County to build its roster of speakers.

“We’re a small county, but our staff has a wealth of knowledge and experience,” Farnsworth said. “We’re in a position to share a lot of that with the community.”

The speaking opportunities also offer the county the chance to get its initiatives and priorities in front of engaged audiences. The genesis for the program came from County Administrator Ian Coyle, whose “Conversations with the County” series began five years ago in response to what Coyle and the county commissioners saw as public disengagement.

“We had just gotten through a budget cycle, but not a lot of people showed up to our public hearings,” Coyle said. “We figured out the best way to get out in front of what’s happening was town hall-style public en-

gagement, where we would go out and talk to people. And ‘we’ ended up being me.”

Coyle traveled monthly to libraries, diners, community centers and more, switching among the county’s 17 different towns each month.

“It’s a free-form, freewheeling discussion, with no prescribed agenda, no format, no time length,” Coyle said. “We just roll. I usually start off with updates, initiatives or projects, economic updates, then it’s just ‘Q and A.’”

The speakers bureau won’t put its participants through quite the same high-pressure environment as Coyle, given their specialized knowledge. Human resources personnel won’t be expected to answer questions about the latest public health issues to the same depth as those speakers.

“I know people are concerned with the risks of going in ‘blind,’ but it’s been fun, insightful and interactive,” Coyle said. “The fact is, we hadn’t had a lot of citizen-first engagement, and now we’re getting a two-way street of dialogue with our residents. We just had to push out into the community, rather than waiting for them to come to us on their time.”

It’s been instructive for Coyle, as he found residents are generally supportive and appreciative of county government, and the conversations leave them informed about the diverse number of responsibilities of county

government.

“My favorite part is that sometimes, folks are not aware of all the interactions they have with county government,” he said. “County government in New York really matches people throughout their life cycles and answering people’s questions gives me a chance to show them how their lives intersect with county services.”

There were times when Coyle’s approach forced him to serve as a punching bag.

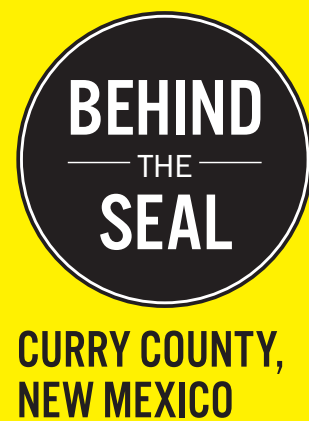
“I got a lot of comments from the public about COVID-19 business classifications, what were and were not essential businesses, and I had to explain that it was the state’s decision, not the county’s,” he said.

Getting the feedback from residents has helped Coyle evaluate how the county is doing on many of its initiatives.

“Whenever I hear people talking about the need for more broadband deployment, it validates the work that’s already in progress on the county’s part,” he said.

The fact that almost two dozen county staffers have volunteered to take the stage is testament to their commitment to the county, Farnsworth said.

“I think it just speaks to how passionate they are about serving their community and trying to better the county,” he said. “This isn’t a normal job function, but their actions go a long way to telling the story here.” **CN**



Established in 1909, Curry County, N. M. was named for the New Mexico Territory governor at the time, George Curry.

The county’s seal features the Zia sun symbol, which represents the four cardinal directions, seasons of the year, seasons of life (childhood, youth, middle age and old age) and periods of each day (morning, noon, evening and night).

Surrounded by the symbol are images of a train, a C-130 Turboprop aircraft, wheat, cattle and a windmill.



Windmills were vital to the survival of early settlers in the county, used to pump water, as there was little surface water in the area and the cows and wheat represent the county’s dairy, cattle and farming industries.

The aircraft is included for the Cannon Air Force Base in the county and the train is for Riley’s Switch, the town founded by Santa Fe Railway engineers, which is now called Clovis, the county seat.

Would you like to see your county seal featured? Contact Meredith Moran at mmoran@naco.org.

WORD SEARCH

CURRY COUNTY, N.M.

Created by: Alyxa Hawkins

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

CHEESE: Curry County is home to Southwest Cheese, a manufacturer of cheese and whey protein. Launched in 2005, they now process over 5.1 billion pounds of milk producing almost 600 million pounds of block cheese annually.

CLOVIS: The county seat of Curry County is the city of Clovis, N.M.

COURTHOUSE: The Curry County Courthouse sits in the county seat of Clovis and is listed in the U.S. National Register of Historic Places. The courthouse, built in 1936, sits at three-and-a-half stories tall and is modeled in the Art-Deco style.

CURRY: The county is named after George Curry, who served as governor of the New Mexico territory from 1907-1910. Once New Mexico became a state, he represented it in the U.S. House of Representatives.

HANNA: William Hanna, the creator of the “Tom and Jerry” cartoon, was an American cartoonist and animator born in Curry County in the village of Melrose.

HILLCREST: The county’s Hillcrest Park features a splash park, sporting fields and a dog park.

HOUK: Within Curry County sits the Ned Houk Memorial Park. Located outside the county seat of Clovis, this park is 3,200 acres and features basketball courts, ATV vehicle trails, and a

model airplane flying area. Houk was the mayor of Clovis in 1953.

LYCEUM: The Lyceum Theater is in Curry County. The 600-seat theater, built between 1919 and 1920 in the Mission Revival Style, sits on the U.S. National Register of Historic Places.

MELROSE: During the Great Depression, the village of Melrose, while only having a population of between 655-851, was granted a federal art center, the Melrose Art Center, as a part of the New Deal.

MEXICO: Curry County is located on the eastern edge of the state of New Mexico.

MOVIE: The 2016 movie “Hell or High Water” was primarily filmed in Curry County including at the Western Bank and the local restaurant Bill’s Jumbo Burger.

POPULATION: Per the 2010 census, Curry County, N.M. has a population of 48,736.

STUDIO: Within the county seat of Clovis is the Norman Petty Recording Studio. A popular recording studio for various artists during the 1950s and 60s.

TEXAS: Curry County sits on the border between New Mexico and Texas.

TEXICO: While not being the filming location for the 2008 Kevin Costner film “Swing Vote,” the movie was set in Texico, N.M.

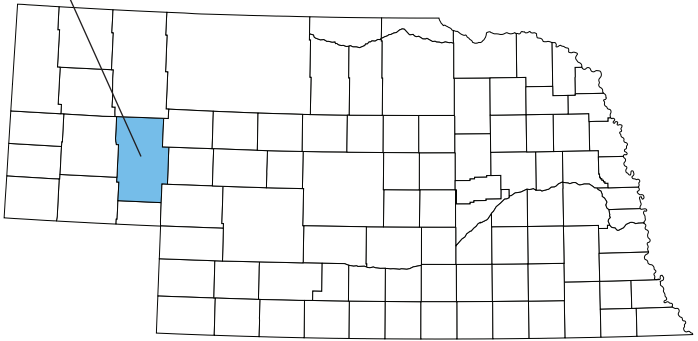
GET TO KNOW...

Garden County, Neb.

Welcome, Garden County, Neb.

Established in 1909, Garden County, Neb. was named for the Garden of Eden. Its county seat, Oshkosh, was at one time known as the “Sawdust Capital of the World” for its lumber industry. Oshkosh has two museums, the Rock School Museum, which houses a large collection of arrowheads and local historical artifacts and the Silver Hill Theater Museum, which was originally an opera house and now holds the bird collection of local celebrity Miles Maryott, who was a baseball player, painter, taxidermist and convicted murderer.

Garden County measures roughly 1,731 square miles and its population is around 1,847, according to the 2020



census. The county is considered to be the third best birding area in the country and birdwatchers can see Great Horned Owls, American Kestrels, Prairie Falcons and Bobolinks, among other bird species, at the Ash Hollow Historical Park and the Crescent Lake National Wildlife Refuge. The 46,000-acre refuge has 21 wetland complexes and is a big hunting and fishing destination.

Garden County was part of

the Oregon Trail and there are nine spots marked throughout the county for its historical significance in the mass emigration, including grave sites of those who died in the county on the journey and the location of The Battle of Blue Water, also known as the Harney Massacre, which was the first major clash between the U.S. Army and the Lakota Nation.

“Get to Know” features new NACo member counties.



ON THE MOVE

NACo STAFF

● Executive Director **Matt Chase** and Strategic Communications Director **Nicole Weissman** attended the Maryland Association of Counties Winter Conference in

Dorchester County. ● **Elizabeth Ward** has joined NACo as a program associate for the Opioid Solutions Center in the Counties Futures Lab. She previously served as a Lab intern and did communications and



Ward

community relations work in the Salt Lake County mayor’s office. She earned a bachelor’s degree in Political Science with minors in Economics and Environmental and Sustainability Studies from the University of Utah

and is pursuing a master’s degree in Applied Economics at George Washington University. ● **Edgar Freytes** joined NACo as a staff accountant after a stint as a finance intern at NACo.



Freytes

He is pursuing a bachelor’s degree at George Mason University. ● Chief Information Officer **Rita Reynolds** has written the forward for a chapter in the book “Securing the Nation’s Critical Infrastructure.”

SPONSORED CONTENT

CONGRESS DELIVERS HOLIDAY GIFT FOR AMERICAN RETIREMENT SAVERS: SECURE 2.0

by Mike Switzer

American retirement security has been under increased pressure as market volatility and inflation have ravaged the retirement confidence of millions of Americans in the wake of the pandemic. Recent Nationwide Retirement Institute® surveys found one-in-five older Americans have delayed or canceled their retirement due to the pandemic and one-in-10 report reducing contributions to their 401(k) to help manage expenses in today's inflationary environment¹.

The SECURE 2.0 Act of 2022 passed by Congress on Dec. 23 as part of the FY 2023 omnibus package could make a meaningful difference in helping more Americans address this adversity and improve their retirement outlook. Leaders at Nationwide — one of the largest

insurance and financial service providers in the United States — are applauding this bipartisan legislation as a significant step forward for our retirement system and powerful continuation of the momentum created by the SECURE Act of 2019.

"SECURE 2.0 provides significant enhancements that will create greater access to workplace retirement plans, which is a leading indicator of retirement preparedness and critical to retirement security," said John Carter, president and COO of Nationwide Financial. "This legislation removes barriers that keep American workers from having access to savings plans or contributing to these benefits due to complexity and competing priorities like student loan debt repayment or the need to set aside emergency savings. Lawmakers on both sides of the aisle should



Nationwide®

be commended for coming together to help this important legislation cross the finish line at a time when it's urgently needed."

Nationwide was supportive of the entire package of legislation, highlighting several key provisions which are likely to deliver immediate impact:

- An enhanced start-up and employer match tax credit that increases the tax credit allowance to 100 percent of employer retirement plan startup costs to be utilized in the year of credit for employers with 50 or fewer employees. This represents a 50 percent increase over previous state. The provision also provides a new, additional credit for small employer contributions made to a qualified plan.

- The Enhancing Emergency and Retirement Savings Act that enables workers to tap into retirement savings for emergency expenses without penalty. This provision addresses a key reason why some workers choose not to participate in their workplace retirement plan — the fear that they won't be able to access their money if they need it for a short-term emergency.

- Removal of antiquated administrative roadblocks to offer greater flexibility for 457(b) government plan participants by allowing them to adjust their deferral elections.

"We've seen firsthand how the current environment is impacting participants in retirement plans we support," said Eric Stevenson, president of Nationwide Retirement Solutions, which administers nearly 34,000 plans, protecting more than 2.6 million participants².

"Our public sector participants are exhibiting a significant increase in 'negative behaviors' which can threaten long-term retirement security. Specifically, contribution decreases are up 31 percent, contribution stops are up 17 percent and withdrawals due to unforeseen emergencies are up 25 percent year over year³. Elements of SECURE 2.0, which improve access and reduce leakage will help address these negative trends."

¹ Nationwide Retirement Institute Inflation Flash Poll, Feb. 2022

² As of Dec. 2021

³ Nationwide Retirement Solutions participant data, May 2021-May 2022

Mike Switzer is the public relations director for Nationwide Financial.

2023 NACo LEGISLATIVE CONFERENCE

>> February 11-14
>> Washington D.C.

REGISTER NOW!

www.naco.org/leg



BRIGHT IDEAS | SANTA BARBARA COUNTY, CALIF.

Santa Barbara County Creates One-Stop Shop to Reduce Landfill Waste

PROBLEM:

Waste was piling up in landfills.

SOLUTION:

Santa Barbara County recycles more than 85 percent and diverts 60 percent of its waste from landfills.

Santa Barbara County's ReSource Center, a first-of-its-kind facility in California, converts commercial and residential waste into resources, generating renewable energy and lowering greenhouse gas emissions.

The ReSource Center is projected to increase the county's recycling rate to over 85 percent and divert 60 percent of its waste from the landfill, but landfill reduction is just one of the numerous environmental benefits of the self-sufficient project. Other benefits include litter reduction and reducing dependence on petrochemical soil amendments through generating compost, according to Carlyle Johnston, the center's project leader.

"When it's fully operational, it will create enough energy to power around 3,000 homes on the South Coast," Johnston said.

What makes the center unique is its singular location, as the only operation in the state to house a materials recovery facility, anaerobic digestion facility, compost management unit and landfill.

"There's over a dozen anaerobic digestion facilities in California that do similar kinds of things — there's obviously dozens of landfills and dozens of material recovery facilities," Johnston said.

"When we were looking at doing these types of technologies, I would go to other communities, like for example, the San Francisco Bay Area, and for me to visit their anaerobic digestion facility plus the compost management unit plus a



Workers sort through waste at the Santa Barbara County ReSource Center, a first-of-its-kind facility in California. Photo courtesy of county

landfill plus a [materials recovery center] that was bringing the feedstock, that would take all day of driving from one location to another because that

Johnston.

"There's no good place for a landfill, they're all terrible, but one of the arguments I think that won the day on this is you

'When it's fully operational, it will create enough energy to power around 3,000 homes.'

Carlyle Johnston, project leader

was a minimum of four locations, so we get a lot of interest in our site being that everything is in one place."

The ReSource Center is the largest county project in Santa Barbara's history and had a 155 million municipal bond issuance, according to Johnston. Formally known as the Tajiguas Resource Recovery Project, the operation has been a long-time coming, with the Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors interest in landfill alternatives dating back to 2002. In 2007, the county hired consultants for the project and an RFP was issued in 2009, according to

can export your problems like waste somewhere else, but that doesn't magically transport it there," Johnston said. "So, the further away you send your trash, the higher environmental and financial cost that's going to be, especially in an isolated community like Santa Barbara County, which is 100 miles from L.A. and kind of in a remote area of California, relatively speaking."

Because of the scale of the project, the county's public works department knew that establishing community dialogue around the center and its goals was essential for suc-

cess, Johnston said. So, they created a comprehensive public outreach program and held more than 150 presentations to receive input from elected officials, neighborhood associations and environmental non-profits, including national organizations like the Sierra Club and Channel Keeper as well as local ones, including Heal the Ocean and the Community Environmental Council, Johnston said.

"One of the challenges that's common for all counties is that this was done in coordination with four cities within the county, so anytime there was a change or a concept or an idea floated around this project, it had to go not just to the Board of Supervisors, but also to all four city councils as well for approval," Johnston said. "So that process took a long time and when there was contract negotiation, it had to be negotiated with the cities and the private vendor and going back between all of those entities made it a really long iterative process,

plus we had a full environmental review process which took several years."

The ReSource Center has created 100 permanent living wage jobs, some of which include mechanics, heavy equipment operators and compost specialists and since its opening in July 2021, thousands of people have toured the facility, Johnston said.

"We always wanted to make sure, because this is a publicly owned facility, that the community had access to it and wanted to promote it -- not to brag about the county's accomplishments, but so that people become more aware of the environmental impact they have in day to day living," Johnston said. "... Because Santa Barbara is an environmentally conscientious community, there's always been an interest in waste."

"Waste is an excellent starting point for any environmental issue or topic that you want to talk about, because from

See RECYCLE page 16

NEWS FROM ACROSS THE NATION

ARKANSAS

The **PULASKI COUNTY** Quorum Court recently approved a \$1.3 million budget for its 12-week **Comprehensive Opioid, Stimulant and Substance Abuse Program**, which will help provide training and counseling to detainees re-entering the community, including a class on trauma and post-traumatic stress recovery and their connection to addiction.

The funding will allow the sheriff's office to hire additional staff including a substance abuse counselor and two additional peer recovery support specialists, as well as provide numerous services for detainees, including transitional housing upon release and medication-assisted treatment for those with opioid use disorder.

FLORIDA

• **ALACHUA COUNTY** is launching an **Energy Efficiency and Weatherization Grant Program** that will support at least 15 families in making their homes more energy efficient and cost-effective. The pilot program, which will run from Jan. 16 to Aug. 18, has \$338,000 in American Rescue Plan Act dollars devoted toward it and is expected to expand to serve a larger population and receive an additional \$2.5 million in funding. To qualify, participants must rent their home in

Alachua County and earn 50 percent below the area median income annually.

IOWA

JASPER COUNTY is expanding a pilot program that **trains reserve sheriff's deputies as paramedics** through American Rescue Plan Act funds to solve its lack of emergency services personnel. In Iowa, emergency medical services (EMS) are not considered essential and there is no guarantee that an ambulance will show up when someone calls for an emergency, leaving a gap par-



CALIFORNIA

The **LOS ANGELES COUNTY** Board of Supervisors has approved a new program that will **pair shelter dogs with L.A. youth in the juvenile detention system**. The county is partnering with Paws for Life K9 Rescue on the program, which aims to both provide companionship for incarcerated youth and socialize the shelter dogs to make them better candidates for adoption.

"It's about time that programs like this be brought to these facilities and Paws for Life could not be a better program to start with," Chris Murray, a Paws for Life trainer, said to news station KTLA-TV. "It teaches maturity, which is what these young men and women need before they re-enter our society. It will help them to be safer, more productive citizens. It most certainly teaches empathy, kindness, compassion and remorse and actually gives them an entryway into showing what making amends looks like."

MARYLAND

The **HARFORD COUNTY** Health Department is launching a new program, "Free to Be," this month for local **LGBTQ+ kids ages 12-17**. The program, which will take place at the county health department's Bel Air location, will meet monthly and serve as a safe and supportive environment for Harford County's LGBTQ+ teens to so-



cialize and organize.

"It is important to give teens a place to go, where they will find like-minded individuals and feel like they belong," said Julie Stancliff, medical director of behavioral health for

the Harford County Health Department. "We are excited to be hosting Free to Be to give teens an affirming space where they can feel comfortable and share their feelings."

ticularly from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. when the county's volunteer EMS workers are at their day

jobs and can't respond to calls. The program currently has two sheriff's deputies trained and is

expected to expand to six and cover 24-26 days each month during the 18-month trial.

Voters in Jones, Kossuth, Osceola, Pocahontas and Winnebago counties passed essential funding referendums on their ballots in November.

FLORIDA

• **MIAMI-DADE COUNTY**'s Mayor Daniella Levine Cava presented resident Darryl Williams with a \$50,000 check for a total home renovation, as the winner of a county-wide campaign to provide one renovation and eight **home weatherizations** to low-income homeowners. The campaign was made possible through Miami-Dade Community Action and Human Services Department's Energy, Facilities and Transportation Division in partnership with local radio station WHQT-FM.



• The **POTTAWATTAMIE COUNTY** Board of Supervisors has approved a **Beaver Bounty Program** with the hope of curbing some of the damage created by beavers in the area. The program has found success elsewhere in the state, includ-

See NEWS FROM page 15

From NEWS FROM page 14

ing **SHELBY COUNTY**, and participants will be paid \$25 in exchange for each beaver they harvest during trapping season, which ends April 25.

“Beavers can place a lot of stress on many areas of our infrastructure, with dams preventing water to flow to designated areas,” said Board of Supervisors Chairman Brian Shea. “Pottawattamie County is responsible for maintaining many roadways and drainage ditches in our area, and some of these dams can end up causing a lot of damage, costing our county a considerable amount of money to repair. We hope this program helps in minimizing the possibility of that happening.”

NEBRASKA

HALL COUNTY is considering **taxing games of skill** to provide property tax relief. Most casino slot machines are built on chance but in skill games, the outcome is more dependent on the skills of the user, KSNB-TV reported.

NEVADA

CLARK COUNTY businesses with a **beer and wine license** will now also be allowed to serve packaged “spirit-based products” under a recently amended ordinance. Establishments that were restricted to a wine and beer license

because of size or seating can now serve drinks that are under 17 percent by volume alcohol level, as long as they are kept in their original packaging, the *Las Vegas Review-Journal* reported.

NEW YORK

- Recognizing the emotional toll and isolation inherent in the work, the **BROOME COUNTY** Office for Aging is convening an evening **caregivers chat group**. The program will be held remotely, giving caregivers the opportunity to connect with one another in the comfort of their own homes, taking care of their loved ones.

“Caregivers need a break, they need to take care of themselves in order to take care of people that they love; we want them to get the resources and the support that they need in order to continue to care for their loved ones,” Program Coordinator Shellie Spinelli told WBNG-TV.

- Even if some older residents couldn’t get out during hunting season, they’ll still reap the benefits. **MONTGOMERY COUNTY’s Office for Aging** is offering five free pounds of venison to people aged 60 and older and veterans of all ages. A local, professional butcher will be cutting and packaging the meat and the sheriff’s office will deliver it.

- Walkers, runners and cy-

clists on popular **WESTCHES-TER COUNTY** trails have a new, more advanced, way of getting in touch with emergency services following the installation of **Smart Signs QR codes**.

Signage installed at trailheads and access points include mile markers with municipality names so trail users know exactly where they are in an emergency. Every sign includes a 9-1-1 locator sticker and a unique QR code for the trail, which users can easily scan with their phones to be instantly connected to a local emergency services provider. Each mile-marker sign has been uploaded into the emergency 911 dispatch system, allowing for easy location, enabling a dispatcher to immediately identify where an emergency is occurring.

OREGON

MULTNOMAH COUNTY’s Wood Burning Device Exchange Program will help residents remove their older, smoky wood stoves and fireplaces and replace them with cleaner heat pumps for a healthier home and cleaner air. Participating homeowners will receive a financial incentive for replacing their wood burning device, ranging from \$3,000 to full cost replacement, depending on eligibility and household income.

PENNSYLVANIA

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program recipients in **ALLEGHENY COUNTY** are eligible for a study probing how **low- or no-cost public transportation** could help low-income families. The Department of Human Services will survey participants and those results will be used to analyze people’s habits using the bus and light rail system. County officials tell WESA-FM News they intend to use the results of the pilot to assess the potential for a permanent program.

- **PIKE COUNTY’s** new Temporary Rental Subsidy Program will offer monthly subsidies to **limit housing costs** to 30 percent of residents’ monthly income — up to \$500 per month for 12 months. Participants will receive case management ser-

VIRGINIA

- **FAIRFAX COUNTY** residents must now keep their **bamboo under control**. A new ordinance, effective Jan. 1, requires property owners to contain the overgrowth to their own yards, recognizing that their root systems can spread underground up to 15 feet per year. A fine structure prescribes \$50 for the first complaint or violation, \$200 for subsequent violations and puts a \$3,000 cap on fines over a 12-month period. The county has set up a website to advise residents on the best methods to contain, prevent overgrowing and dispose of bamboo, including placing cut bamboo in trash pickup rather than yard waste, FairfaxNow reported.

vices and develop a financial wellness plan. A 2020 housing study found Pike County has the highest fair market rents in the state.

VIRGINIA

- Running two years ahead of schedule, **ARLINGTON COUNTY’s** government operations are now **powered entirely by renewable electricity**. That includes buildings, streetlights and traffic signals, leased

facilities and the Water Pollution Control Plant, now all running on electricity from sustainable sources. Much of the power comes from the county’s joint solar farm with Amazon in **PITTSYLVANIA COUNTY**.

Charlie Ban and Meredith Moran compile News From Across the Nation. Does your county have news we should know about? Contact cban@naco.org and mmoran@naco.org.

MICHIGAN

LENAWEE COUNTY’s Go for Launch! event Jan. 13 and 14 educated students in grades 8-12 on the **space industry** and provided them the opportunity to meet an astronaut and have a biology experiment selected for a future space mission. The program was sponsored by the experiential learning labs organization Higher Orbits, and supported by the Michigan Aerospace Manufacturers Association, state Sen. Dale Zorn and Avon Machining, with the intention of garnering excitement about science, technology, engineering and math education.



WYOMING

Students in **CAMPBELL COUNTY** can **explore medical careers** through the county’s health department. The Journey Program guides students through the process of becoming a Registered Nurse, Medical Laboratory Technician or Respiratory Therapist and raises awareness of those career tracks. The health department will cover costs of the associated professional development classes, Wyoming Public Media reported. Students will also be paired with mentors throughout their studies.

Courts help foster system

From FOSTER page 7

be like, 'Listen, you have to take this step-by-step, you've got to rebuild back.'"

Nicholas County requires a minimum commitment of a year for its FTC participants, but if someone goes through the program without any issues, they can finish in nine months, according to Smith.

"It's a lot of pressure, it's not easy — you don't want to get up every day and go there and do all that, but if you want a better life, sometimes you've got to fight for yourself — that's what it comes down to," Leslie said.

"I know that the children are the bottom line here, but if these people don't fight for themselves and love themselves, they're not going to be good parents anyway.

"I'll see a lot of people that skip through the system and just check the marks and do what they do to get their kid back and then they're in the same system again, because they relapse six months later, because they're not doing the real work on the inside so that they don't make those choices again."

FTC helps its participants get connected to housing, transportation and employment. Leslie said it helped her pay three months of rent while she got her footing in a new job.

"That's where the team comes in, because we all talk — 'This participant needs housing,' so there's 28 people sitting there and five of them will know a landlord," Callaghan said.

"Our team is our resource and if somebody needs baby clothes or furniture or a starter for their car, we all assess what everybody needs on a day-to-day basis.

"It's a network of people working with the community — we know landlords, we know secular rehab groups, we have churches that help us. We have a great team."

Since Nicholas County has adopted FTC, it's placed 63 children back into drug-free homes, including Leslie's daughter, after Leslie graduated from the program in August 2021. **CN**

Employment program doesn't boot participants if they falter

From EMPLOY page 4

nity about homelessness in a particular area, these deputies are dispatched, they engage them, then they'll make a call to Career Recovery and then they start the process of engaging and trying to get them into the Employ2Empower program.

"Not everyone jumps at the opportunity, obviously, and not everybody is a success story on day one."

Employ2Empower is what Garcia calls a "low barrier employment program," so participants can work on and off with the program and you're not "out" if you don't show up for a period of time.

"We know that people have been out of touch with work

discipline, so we don't expect miracles on day one," he said.

While Texas' minimum wage is \$7.25, all Harris County employees make \$15, as the basic living wage in Houston has been identified as \$14.33, and it was important that standard was held to Employ2Empower, Garcia said.



Commissioner Garcia

"When I came in as county commissioner, not all county employees were working at a livable wage, so

we made a county policy that all employees would start at at least a livable wage, and then we made sure that our contracts reflect that as well, and then just recognizing, 'Hey, if we want to end homelessness and we talk about [how] a livable wage is what keeps people out of poverty, let's apply it to Employ2Em-

power.'"

The ARPA dollars cover participant wages, programming, administrative fees and salaries for case managers from Career and Recovery Resources and deputies from the sheriff's office in the expansion. The county's four precincts are at varying levels of implementation, according to Scott Spiegel, Garcia's senior press secretary.

"We do need a little bit of a push from the individual precincts to keep this thing going to support the sheriff, to support Career and Recovery on their own end, because there's still things like vehicles and tools that are needed -- the paint doesn't just appear out of thin air to paint new roads and whatnot," Spiegel said. "We're pretty confident that over the course of this next year it'll be more like a well-oiled machine across the county."

The pilot program served 79

participants--36 of whom received additional employment support and 47 of whom were assessed for housing--including Williams. The program currently has 42 participants, according to Career and Recovery Services data.

While Garcia recognizes there's not a one-size-fits all approach to tackling homelessness, he's proud of the program's success, he said.

"I'm not naive enough to think that we can end homelessness, but I do believe that this is by far the most effective way to deal with it," Garcia said. "If we can get an individual into permanent supportive housing and then if we can get that to be self-sustaining by their willingness to work, that's a great thing ... We pay them for their work and for their time, so that we can continue to support and help them continue to move forward." **CN**

County education center offers insight into waste-sorting

From WASTE page 13

there, you can talk about greenhouse gases, climate change, linear economy, renewable versus non-renewable resources, pollution and its many different aspects —plastic pollution in the ocean, air pollution, groundwater pollution."

The materials recovery facility houses an education center, where visitors can witness everything that goes into the behind-the-scenes of trash and recyclable sorting operations.

Students from all age ranges, from kindergarten to college, tour the facility. Johnston said he thinks it's important that people understand the process — of where trash and sewage

go, where water comes from and how power is generated.

"People should have an understanding of the infrastructure of America and how dependent they are on it, because in a lot of ways, we made these things out of sight, out of mind, and that's challenging because we have in the United States a strong streak of libertarianism, and a lot of people think, 'I don't need government,' but they don't realize how much it impacts their lives because they take it for granted. 'I put my trash out on the curb, it vanishes. I ride [on] roads, I turn on my sink every day and the water comes out — I don't think about it.'"

"So, having a better under-

standing of public infrastructure in America and how that impacts our lives and the environment — it's just an important education that I think most Americans lack."

While the center's running and processing, Johnston said it'll still take another year before it reaches its goals. It's just one piece of what the county needs to do moving forward in its environmental efforts.

"The materials recovery facility has literally over a million moving parts," Johnston said. "It costs a lot of money and it does take a long time to get right, and the anaerobic digestion facility even longer to process organic waste completely, to produce compost is a three

to four-month process, and anytime we make a change, we need to wait three to four months to see what impact that change has made, so it's a slow iterative process with the anaerobic digestion facility, and so that's still working out.

"I'm optimistic that we will achieve all these goals, but it's still going to take some time. We're diverting more waste than we have before, generating electricity and we're now diverting organics from the trash which we didn't [do] before." **CN**

The Santa Barbara County, Calif. program earned a 2022 NACo Achievement Award in the Resiliency category.

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