

NACo Legislative Conference expands online

by **Charlie Ban**
senior writer

As the Biden administration and the 117th Congress set their feet down in Washington, D.C., so are America's counties. As the COVID-19 pandemic continues, it won't be possible to meet in person for the 2021 Legislative Conference, but NACo members will not lose a step this winter.

In fact, with a packed sched-

NACo 2021 VIRTUAL LEGISLATIVE CONFERENCE

ule and a refined remote video platform, the 2021 Virtual Legislative Conference will make NACo programming available to more county leaders than ever before.

With speakers from throughout the federal government, registrants will be well equipped to navigate the changing national landscape as important policies, county responses to the pandemic and economic rebuilding all come to a head.

"This year, NACo's Legisla-

See CONFERENCE page 2

COUNTIES OPEN MASS COVID-19 VACCINATION SITES



The Snohomish County, Wash. Vaccination Task Force launched the Everett Activity Center mass vaccination site in partnership with Boeing. The site has the capability to administer 10,000 vaccines per week. Photo by Marian Lockhart/Boeing

by **Rachel Looker**
staff writer

From Disneyland in Orange County, Calif., to Six Flags in Prince George's County, Md., and even to the Texas Motor Speedway in Denton County, Texas, mass vaccination sites are popping up across the

country for vaccinating large numbers of people as more doses become available.

In Gwinnett County, Ga., the state's largest mass vaccination site opened at an 80,000-square-foot former Sears store at the Gwinnett Place Mall.

Gwinnett County Chair-

woman Nicole Hendrickson said Gwinnett's health department, which is a state agency, approached the county about finding a potential location for a mass vaccination site. The health department was administering vaccines at its building, which did not offer enough space for social

distancing or monitoring patients.

While the county had already purchased the mall, the former Sears anchor store was not part of the purchase. Hendrickson said they got a deal from the property owner to

See VACCINES page 3

From sharecropper's son to county leader: Waymon Mumford

by **Charlie Ban**
senior writer

The issues have changed in Florence County, S.C. over

25 years of the Rev. Waymon Mumford's tenure on the County Council, but his approach hasn't.

Whatever he does, he adds a personal touch.

"When you say you're going to do something, you try to do it if at all possible," he said. "If you can't do it, go back and explain why it didn't work out. That means you

end up calling people with bad news sometimes, but they hear it from you."

Even as he sees people's patience waning relative to the pace of government, a pace he says is necessary to make sure the county does right by taxpayers, he works as the glue to keep people connected to their

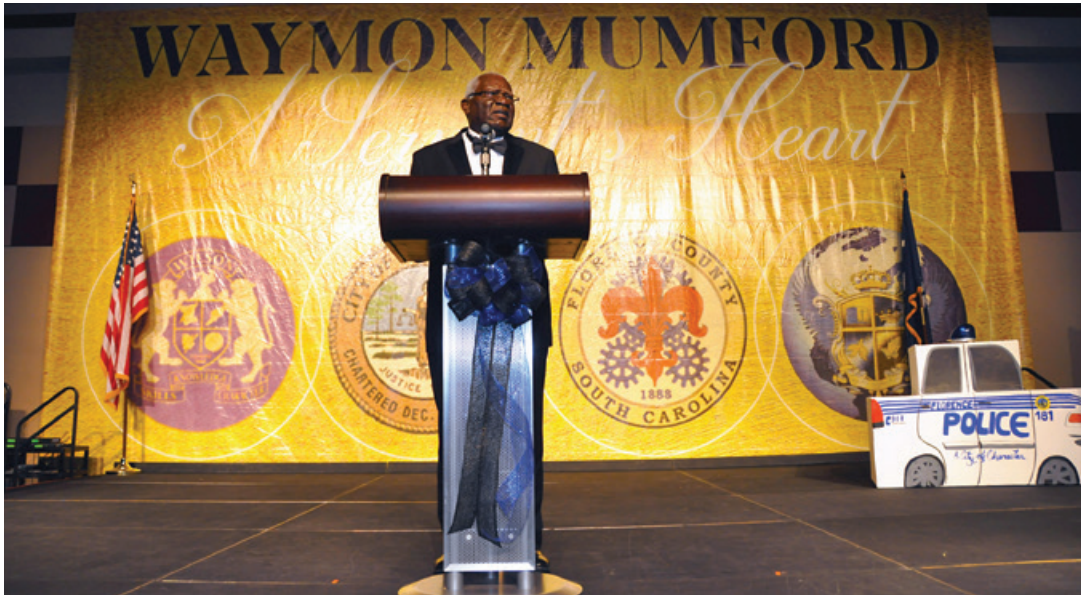
county.

"I return all of my calls, and when I learn somebody in my district dies, I send the family a sympathy card. I might not know them, but when they run into me, they let me know how much they appreciate it. When people find out that you care, they look at you differently."

Mumford got into county service shortly after retiring from 25 years at the Florence Police

See MUMFORD page 2





Waymon Mumford speaks at the 2018 School Foundation Gala. Photo courtesy of Florence County, S.C.

From MUMFORD page 1

Department, the last four as chief of police. The son of Florence County sharecroppers, Mumford planned to go into the military or police force when he turned 21, but marrying his wife, Senora, eliminated the military quickly.

“I knew I wanted to go into public office, and I started preparing three years before I ran,” he said. “I talked to people, found people who would support me, and learned what it would take to do this job.”

What did he find out?

“You must be a people per-

son, you have to love people,” he said. “Be who you say you are and treat your constituents well, even if they don’t always treat you well. That’s the job.”

In his first year on the Council, Mumford was approached to join the South Carolina Association of Counties Board of Directors, with some prompting by County Administrator K.G. Smith.

“He knows how to talk to people, he knows how to deal with people, he’s a problem solver, he thinks logically,” Smith said of Mumford.

“He represents everyone and he provides a holistic perspective to what government should be all about.”

It’s simple to Mumford, and fundamental to his worldview.

“I only have one thing to give, and that’s my service,” he said. “If you can’t give service, something is wrong.”

He’s now the state association’s representative on the NACo Board of Directors.

Shortly after he started on the county Council, he entered the ministry and has been pastor at Central Baptist Church for 22 years, which he plans to continue for the rest of his life.

That position has given him a second perspective on the COVID-19 pandemic as both an arbiter of public health rules and guidance, but also as a pastor trying to continue working un-

der those rules.

“It’s taken a toll on every community, it’s caused us to do things differently than we did before,” he said, noting that his congregation has managed pretty well despite the circumstances. “We can’t do church in-person, but we do it on Facebook live, and we have Bible study using teleconference. We can reach people who aren’t in town, too.”

“I hope by May or June we can be back in church, but we don’t want to put people in harm’s way.”

Mumford recently got his second dose of the COVID-19 vaccine and he has also used his actual pulpit to reinforce public health messaging around the pandemic.

“It takes everyone encouraging their brothers and sisters ... families to do the right thing,” he said. “If I can come at people as a politician and as a pastor, hopefully they’re hearing one way.”

Mumford survived prostate cancer in 2007, and has been an ardent walker in his community, logging three miles five times a week, repairing to a shopping mall in inclement weather. But he doesn’t hold court on his walks.

“Walking is my quiet time,” he said. “I meditate, it’s my time to talk to the Lord. It’s better than medicine, and it’s kept me healthy all these years.” **CN**

Expanded schedule planned

From CONFERENCE page 1

tive Conference is focused on empowering county officials with the relationships and tools necessary to respond and rebuild from the COVID era,” said NACo Executive Director Matt Chase.

“We are engaging with the new Biden administration and congressional leaders, sharing the county story and pursuing county policy priorities.”

Speakers from throughout the new administration and members of Congress will be on hand to lay out their vision for where federal policy making and implementation is headed in the next year and where that will intersect with county priorities.

“As the saying goes, ‘If you aren’t at the table, you are on the menu,’” Chase said.

“The NACo Legislative Conference is about shaping our federal policy priorities, educating and mobilizing our county officials and advancing the shared policy priorities of America’s county leaders.”

The virtual format will allow for an expanded schedule of programming of more than 100 meetings, workshops, seminars and networking opportunities spread out over

three weeks. Here’s a look at the schedule:

- Policy Steering Committee March 8-12: Standing committees will set NACo’s legislative agenda for the coming months and hear from subject-area speakers. Caucuses, commissions and task forces will also meet during this time.

- Governance Meetings March 17-19: The Policy Coordinating Committee will meet to further refine NACo policy priorities. The NACo Board of Directors will meet March 19 from 2-5 p.m.

- Workshops and Seminars March 24-26: A wide variety of workshops will address topics including public health and COVID-19, county economic recovery, infrastructure, county administration and more.

- County visits to Capitol Hill will continue remotely with Virtual Hill Day March 25, giving county officials an opportunity to take their issues to their members of Congress.

Additional programming is being planned for April. **CN**

Registration is available for individuals or groups at www.NACo.org/leg.



Boone County, Ky. Judge/Executive Gary Moore addresses members March 2, 2020 at the NACo Legislative Conference in Washington, D.C. Moore was NACo first vice president at the time and is now NACo president. Photo by Denny Henry

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County COVID-19 mass vaccination sites can offer shots to thousands of residents

From VACCINES page 1

purchase the building for the vaccination site.

The county used CARES Act dollars to pay for contractors, site plans and utilities.

“We really felt like we were making a difference here in leveraging all of our resources that were available to us, in addition to CARES Act dollars, that we’ve invested in getting this site up and running from start to finish,” Hendrickson said.

In a short three weeks, the county collaborated with its planning and development team and fire departments to set up the site, which can administer doses to 3,000 people per day. As of Feb. 11, more than 5,200 vaccines had been administered.

“It really was a team effort with a lot of our county staff just stepping up to the plate to plan and manage that site just to make sure that it was ready to open,” Hendrickson said.

The plan is for the site to be a one-stop shop offering both vaccines and testing as well as a drive-through for vaccinations.

Hendrickson said she also anticipates non-county residents from throughout the metro area traveling to the site.

“We want as many people who are eligible to be able to receive the vaccine,” she said.

Benton County, Wash., Deputy County Administrator Matt Rasmussen also described a fast turnaround time of one week for setting up a drive-thru mass vaccination site at the Benton County Fairgrounds.

The county partnered with its bi-county health district and a local incident management team that typically responds to natural disasters such as wildfires and floods.

Rasmussen, whose role is to coordinate the site, worked with various contractors to obtain resources needed to get it running.

The site opened on Jan. 25 and has administered 9,000 doses in its first two weeks. Rasmussen said it can process 200 to 300 cars per hour if needed, but they are facing the same challenges as many other counties across the country



Nurse Terri Epp administers a COVID-19 vaccine at the Everett Activity Center vaccination site in Snohomish County, Wash.
Photo by Marian Lockhart/Boeing

and do not have enough vaccines to administer.

Individuals can call or make an appointment online.

“Especially in the group that we’re vaccinating now here in Washington, which is the over 65 and people with underlying health conditions, they seem to be much more comfortable driving up and getting a shot without having to get out of their car,” he said.

Rasmussen credits the collaboration with local fire departments to successfully establishing the site.

“The biggest thing was engaging those people early and getting their help and building a really good team that was willing to work together,” he said.

In Snohomish County, Wash., the county’s vaccine task force partnered with Boeing to open a mass indoor vaccination site at the Boeing Everett Activity Center.

In the first few days, the site vaccinated 1,800 people from Snohomish County and has the capability to administer 10,000 shots per week.

“It’s just a great site for getting lots of people through at one time,” said Chris Spitter, Snohomish Health District health officer.

In Texas, the Department of State Health Services selected Washington County to be a rural regional vaccination sub hub for COVID-19 vaccines.

Washington County Commissioner Joy Fuchs said city and county departments se-

lected the county’s Expo Center and Fairgrounds as the vaccination site where over 11,600 individuals have been vaccinated in a four-week period.

As a regional sub hub, the site has also provided vaccines

to individuals from over 54 counties throughout Texas.

“This has been great for our county as well as other counties in Texas,” Fuchs said.

“I see this regional sub hub as a success as we fight the COVID-19 virus.” **CN**



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Vaccine hesitancy poses obstacle in rollout



Prince George's County, Md. Executive Angela Alsobrooks receives her second dose of a COVID-19 vaccine Jan. 19; she shared the photo on social media with the hashtag #proudtobeprotected. Photo courtesy of Prince George's County, Md.

by **Charlie Ban**
senior writer

The United States will be able to vaccinate 300 million Americans after the federal government acquired an additional 200 million additional doses, President Biden announced Feb. 11.

Meeting that goal will require those people to accept the vaccine, but distrust of new medical procedures along cultural and racial lines can be a roadblock to an efficient road to full vaccination and herd immunity.

"The honest truth is that we have to have difficult conversations with folks, we have to engage them," said Dr. Raynard Washington, deputy director of the Mecklenburg County, N.C. Health Department. "We can't meet resistance from one person and then just move on to someone else, we have to get everyone."

The most important approach, Washington said, will be to not force vaccination on anybody or make them feel bad about not trusting a vaccine, but having responsive conversations that give public health practitioners a chance to inform.

"One of the most effective ways has been documenting and telling stories," Washington said. "The most effective ways to get people over the hump of hesitancy is to share other people's experiences: Why they were hesitant, why they decided to get the vaccine, what the experience looked like for them."

"People are able to identify with experiences."

It was people's experiences and the legacy of those experiences that have put public health at a disadvantage with minority communities, the decades-long Tuskegee Study casting the longest shadow.

"Patients and communities have a right to distrust health communities, health officials," Aletha Maybank said on a recent American Medical Association webinar. She is the AMA's chief health equity officer.

"It is a really rational place for them to come from, especially for Black and brown communities. There are well-documented harms, both in stories that have been passed across generations and the lived experience. And there's growing scientific evidence that tells us our systems and culture of health and medicine are impacted by racism."

Health systems are attempting to apply equity to vaccine distribution, particularly as minority communities take the brunt of the impact of COVID-19, with African Americans dying at nearly twice the rate of white patients and hospitalized at nearly three times the rate of whites, according to Centers for Disease Control and Prevention data, despite experiencing only a slight increase in community spread.

Most counties are still trying to reach older populations, and Washington said the ethnic breakdown among older Americans has delayed real-time feedback about how much vaccine hesitancy exists across demographics.

"African American longevity has played a part; we don't have many 75-plus-year-olds as other ethnic groups," he said. "We'll start to see this play out as we move into vaccinating different segments of the population."

Mecklenburg County's approach to addressing hesitancy starts with providing accurate and timely information about the vaccine, specifically around safety and its effectiveness. Because the county is home to a

large immigrant population, its materials are available in 12 languages besides English.

"We want to deliver that information to folks in a way that's understandable and culturally competent, culturally appropriate," Washington said. "We're partnering with our health care system, so we have a united front [on messaging] and we're not saying different things."

Washington said the county's health department maintains relationships with various organizations that represent racial and ethnic minorities, and that "tree of dissemination" has been an effective way to reach people's trusted messengers—whether it's a member of the clergy, a social service provider or community group leader.

"We have to make sure the sources that people regularly hear from and trust have the right information about the vaccine that they can disseminate," Washington said. "We want to reach anyone who has an audience, so we're working with faith groups, fraternities, sororities and business leaders."

Employees of the health department reach out to their own families and social groups

to get the word out, serving as unofficial spokespeople in their networks.

"We always tell people that they're some of the best messengers we have," Washington said.

The county is using a traditional media campaign, with television, radio, print, digital and social media advertising, but also billboards in targeted neighborhoods. To limit personal interaction, outreach workers are distributing informational doorknob hangers.

County and civic leaders have tried to spread the word about their own trust in the vaccine — Washington documented his own vaccination — but testimonials from regular people, spending time to explain what motivated them to trust the vaccine, goes a long way.

So too does a realistic approach. The county is upfront that some patients have reported soreness the day following their second dose and acknowledges that some people will feel that.

"We were intentional, we included in our messaging at the top, about the second shot side effects," Washington said. "We don't want people to have the reactions and think this is abnormal. We didn't want to be unrealistic."

And the flow of information has to go both ways, and health department workers need to be sensitive to people's concerns and figure them into further efforts.

"You can't overcome hesitancy if you don't understand why they're hesitant," Washington said.

"We can learn from them as much as they learn from us. We're constantly learning."

While counties can plan robust campaigns to increase confidence in the vaccine, the supply chain is working in their favor as they refine their messaging and take the time they need to get people on board.

"Not everyone will be ready to go from day one, and in some cases it's OK we don't have enough vaccines yet, because with some people, it does take time," Washington said. **CN**

Counties provide free transportation to vaccine sites

by Rachel Looker
staff writer

For many struggling to make a COVID-19 vaccine appointment, the last thought after finally getting their name on a list is one that is key to successful vaccine distribution: “How am I going to get there?”

“There’s not a community in the country where somebody doesn’t have transportation challenges,” said David Turner, director of Oswego County, N.Y. Community Development, Tourism and Planning.

In Oswego County, a rural county around 1,000 square miles, residents who need a ride to a COVID-19 vaccine can utilize a free, on-demand call service.

Turner said the county received federal transportation assistance and allocated CARES Act money for the rural transit system.

Individuals can call and make an appointment to arrange rides to and from vaccination locations. Currently in New York, county health departments, hospitals and pharmacies are receiving vaccine allocations with each location serving as a vaccination site for different categories in the vaccine rollout plan, Turner said.

In the first few weeks, around 75 to 80 people utilized the service.

“What we didn’t want to happen was people to not even try to get an appointment because they knew that they didn’t have transportation,” he said.

With a high poverty level across the county, Turner said they were aware of the challenges many would face when seeking transportation to vaccine appointments.

“One thing that we wanted to try to ensure was that anybody who was eligible for and wanted to receive either testing or vaccinations had the ability to do so,” Turner said.

There are several challenges with vaccine distribution and transportation, according to Turner, specifically with the lack of doses and fast turnaround time from when the county receives the vaccines to notifying the public about clin-



The paratransit service and countywide public transportation in Linn County, Iowa provides free, next-day rides for county residents to obtain COVID-19 vaccines. Photo courtesy of Linn County, Iowa

ic opportunities. He said when someone finds out they have an appointment, they may not have a lot of time to figure out their transportation plan.

“It’s all very last minute,” he said. “We’re very happy to be able to make the service available, but we just have no way to plan for what the need is going to be so we’re gearing up and ready to go and just waiting for people to say ‘I need help,’” he said.

Other counties are working to tackle transportation issues to ensure residents can get to and from vaccine appointments.

In Linn County, Iowa, the county’s paratransit service and countywide public transportation, known as Linn County LIFTS, is also providing free, next-day rides for county residents.

Linn County Mobility Coordinator Terry Bergen said he sees transportation as a key partner with public health when it comes to ensuring the public is vaccinated.

“We want to use it to help people get vaccinated if that’s something they need,” he said.

Bergen said with decreased ridership levels because of the pandemic, there has been some additional capacity within the system to incorporate rides for vaccinations.

“If they find that they’ll have a transportation challenge, they call our dispatch office and that gets scheduled either on one of our normal routes or we’ll send

somebody out separately to their house,” Bergen said.

The county is specifically targeting people who are eligible in the first phases of the vaccine distribution including the elderly and those in other vulnerable categories.

“We will be available to get them rides whether it’s now or as the process goes on to other vaccination locations because we just see it as being important to all of our residents to get as many vaccinations done as quickly as possible,” he said.

St. Clair County, Ill., which borders St. Louis, Mo., is utilizing its transit services to provide free transportation to a mass vaccination site at the Belle-Clair Fairgrounds & Expo Center in the county.

“We basically wanted everybody to have access,” said Ken Sharkey, St. Clair County Transit District managing director.

The St. Clair County Transit District service began in February and allows individuals to take the MetroBus or MetroLink to a transit center

where a St. Clair County Transit District Express Shuttle Bus Service will take them to the fairgrounds.

Sharkey said the county also contracted with Southwestern Illinois College for a paratransit service to transport older individuals from their homes to the vaccination site.

“We’re just going to provide as much transportation and anybody that needs a ride to get a vaccine — they’re going to have a ride here in St. Clair County,” he said. **CN**

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Washington-Reid School, one of the last three segregated schools in Prince William County, Va., served the communities of Hickory Ridge and Cabin Branch. Photo courtesy of Visit Prince William County, Va.

County establishes African American History Trail

Prince William County, Va. has linked 20 sites focused on African American History to establish an African American History Trail.

It's a collaboration of the county's Historic Preservation Division, Office of Tourism and County Historical Commission. The sites include local parks, historic sites, state and national parks, local churches and communities.

The county plans to add to the trail and offer an audio component to go along with some planned interpretive signage at each stop. The Historic Preservation Division is working with county school systems to introduce the trail in classes and camps focused on African American history. In addition to information on each of the sites, the website for the trail also includes links to Black-owned businesses in Prince William County: <https://www.visitpwc.com/history/black-history/>.

GET TO KNOW...

King William County, Va.

Welcome, King William County, Va.

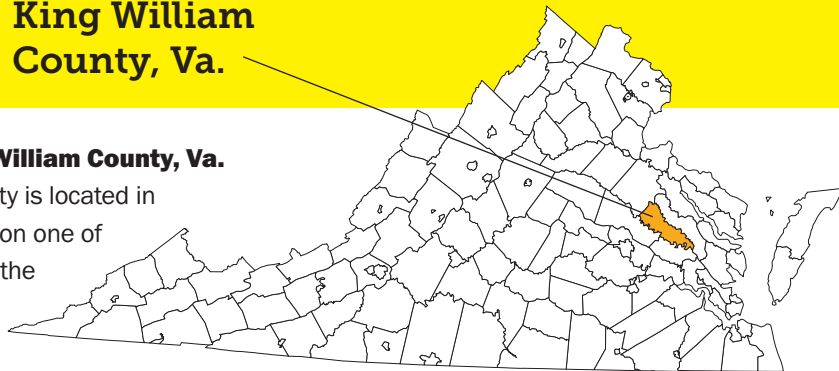
King William County is located in east-central Virginia on one of three peninsulas on the Chesapeake Bay's western side. It

was established as the 24th county in Virginia in 1702 and named for King William III. The county's population is around 17,000. Its largest town is West Point.

Prior to English settlement, **the county was part of the Powhatan Confederacy led by Wahunsonacock, also known as Powhatan. His daughter, Pocahontas, married John Rolfe,** helping secure peace between the Powhatan Confederacy and the English settlers.

King William County's courthouse, located in the county seat of King William, was built around 1725 and is the oldest public building in use in Virginia. It is also the oldest courthouse of English foundation in continuous use in the United States.

"Get to Know" features new NACo member counties.



Pocahontas



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MARCH 8-26 » BONUS CONTENT THROUGHOUT APRIL

SCHEDULE AT A GLANCE

MARCH 8-12	Policy Steering Committee Meetings Caucus, Advisory Committee and Standing Committee Meetings
MARCH 17-19	Board of Directors and other NACo Governance Meetings
MARCH 24-26	Workshops and Plenary Sessions Virtual Hill Days

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Texas winter storm: ‘Never seen anything like it’

by Rachel Looker
staff writer

February has brought nasty winter weather to counties across the country with many of the impacted areas unaccustomed to the snow and ice.

Counties in Texas have experienced ongoing winter weather in full force starting with an ice storm the second week of February that led to a 133-vehicle pile-up on a Tarrant County interstate because of icy roads.

Following the ice storm, a record-breaking snowstorm hit central Texas with much of the state later hit by an additional ice storm.

The National Weather Service declared a winter storm warning for all 254 Texas counties. Texas Gov. Greg Abbott (R) issued a statewide disaster declaration following the winter weather that left power outages, burst pipes, dangerous road conditions and Texans struggling to find ways to keep warm.



Redford

Texas Association of Counties Executive Director Susan Redford said she’s never seen comparable winter weather in Texas that has lasted for more than a week.

“It’s a very unique event for us,” she said.

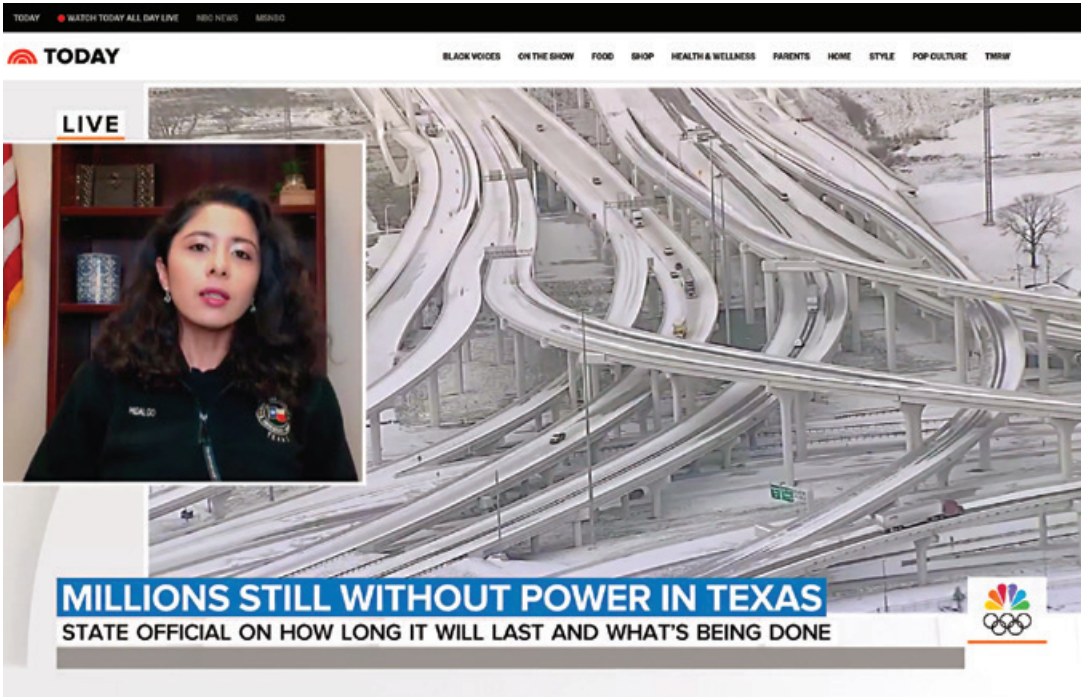
The biggest challenges facing counties during the storms and the aftermath, she noted, are mobility issues, followed by power outages, loss of water and loss of internet service.

“Roads, especially in central and south Texas, are simply not drivable,” she said. “This part of Texas is really not prepared because we don’t experience winter weather very often.”

With millions experiencing power losses, Redford said counties are calling for a reform of the state’s power grid system. Texas is one of the only states with its own electrical grid.

“It was wildly underprepared for an event such as this,” Redford said.

The power grid was at a “level 3” state of emergency, which was unsustainable and resulted in rolling power out-



Harris County, Texas Judge Lina Hidalgo discusses power outages Feb. 17 affecting more than 1 million residents. Hidalgo was interviewed on NBC’s Today Show.

ages for providers on the grid, Redford said. She added that many providers’ old infrastructure and failing transformers have not helped the situation.

It is the number one priority of counties, she said, to keep residents safe by opening emergency operation centers and providing basic needs such as food, shelter and warm water.

In Montgomery County,

Texas, Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Management Public Information Officer Meghan Arthur said the majority of the county was without power for a period of three days.

Arthur lost power in her own home for over 17 hours after the storm rolled in on Feb. 14.

County residents also experienced water loss after infrastructure issues impacted water plants, leaving county buildings without water.

“We’ve had quite an uptick on our fire calls to 911 and

we’ve had a lot of carbon monoxide poisoning,” she said.

Montgomery County requested resources from the state to help with the lack of water and opened warming stations as winter weather continued into the third week of February.

“We’re concerned how that’s going to continue to affect infrastructure, if it’s going to cause more problems,” she said.

In Harris County, Judge Lina Hidalgo, who went without power and water in her home

for at least four nights, signed a disaster declaration for the county where over 1 million homes and businesses experienced power outages.

Hidalgo told NBC’s Today Show Feb. 17 the vast majority of outages in the county were caused by forced state mandates of the state power grid.

“Things will likely get worse before they get better,” she said during a press conference, adding that the power outages were likely to continue as weather improved.

The Harris County Public Health Department building also lost power causing a backup generator to fail. The building was storing over 8,000 Moderna vaccines.

After distributing more than 5,000 of the vaccines to hospitals, the county jail and Rice University, Hidalgo said they received guidance from Moderna that they could re-refrigerate the remainder of the shots which are being stored for later use.

Throughout the winter weather, she warned residents to stay off the roads and store enough water to last for a few days. “I understand the frustration,” she said. “It’s an awful situation. We’re asking folks to persevere.” **CN**

WORD SEARCH

MONTEREY COUNTY, Calif.
By Mary Ann Barton

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

- ANSEL:** Photographer Ansel Adams lived in the county for more than 20 years, capturing the Big Sur coastline along with many other landscapes.
- AQUARIUM:** More than 35,000 marine species make their home at the Monterey Bay Aquarium in the county.
- BIXBY:** An iconic feature in the county is the Bixby Bridge, which offers amazing views of Big Sur. Soaring 260 feet above a canyon, it was completed in 1932 for \$200,000.
- BUTTERFLIES:** Monarch butterflies migrate to the county every autumn.
- COASTLINE:** The county has 99 miles of coastline which runs along the Pacific Ocean.
- COURTHOUSE:** An ornate courthouse was built in 1878 when the county seat was located in Monterey. A new courthouse in Salinas was built in 1937.
- CYPRESS:** A tree known as the Lone Cypress stands on a granite hillside in Pebble Beach and is a tourist-magnet.
- DORIS:** The late film actress Doris Day made her home in the county after retiring from Hollywood.

- EASTWOOD:** Actor and director Clint Eastwood once served as mayor for a town in the county.
- GOLF:** Golfers come from around the world to visit the golf courses in the county at Pebble Beach Resorts.
- HBO:** The award-winning HBO series “Big Little Lies” is filmed in the county.
- MONTEREY:** The county derives its name from Monterey Bay. The bay was named by Sebastián Vizcaíno in 1602 in honor of the Conde de Monterrey (or Count of Monterrey), then the Viceroy of New Spain.
- PINNACLES:** Pinnacles National Park is located in the county, upgraded from monument status in 2013. The park is home to more than 400 species of bees.
- SALINAS:** The county seat of Salinas is known as the “Salad Bowl of the World” for its large, vibrant agriculture industry. It was the hometown of writer and Nobel laureate John Steinbeck (1902–68), who set many of his stories in the Salinas Valley and Monterey.
- TOURISM:** Tourism is the number one industry in the county, with travelers spending an estimated \$3.2 billion in the county in 2019.

BRIGHT IDEAS | LOS ANGELES COUNTY, Calif.

Redesign of Child Protection Hotline Helps Connect Families to Support

PROBLEM:

Calls made to the Department of Children and Family Services' Hotline that do not warrant an investigation have low connection rates to voluntary supports.

SOLUTION:

Engage with community partners that help connect families to services and prevent them from entering the child-welfare system.

by **Rachel Looker**
staff writer

A multi-agency, cross-departmental collaboration in Los Angeles County, Calif. has expanded the child-welfare continuum to keep children and families safe.

The Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) Child Protection Hotline receives more than 220,000 calls for suspected child abuse or neglect each year.

Not all calls require an investigation, but many families would benefit from community support to prevent them from entering the child-welfare system.

Carrie Miller, assistant executive director for the Office of Child Protection, said the department wanted to find a way to help families who have been referred to the hotline, but whose situation didn't warrant opening an investigation.

"There was a concern that that wasn't really meeting the best needs of families who certainly don't need the intensity of services provided by DCFS, but clearly could benefit from something," she said.

The department launched the Community Prevention Linkage project in 2009 to increase preventative community connections for at-risk families.

Instead of closing the case if an investigation wasn't necessary, Miller said DCFS would



Families participate (pre-COVID-19) in community engagement activities in Los Angeles County, Calif. as part of the county's efforts in Moving Families from the Hotline to a Helpline. Photo courtesy of Los Angeles County, Calif.

reach out to families to offer community supports such as wellness activities, peer support, parent education, child development programs, employment skills, financial stability and emergency aid as well as non-traditional supports such as yoga, poetry slams, drumming and community gardens.

However, the department found the rate of connecting families to these supports was low with only one in 10 families connected to community services offered by DCFS.

Miller attributed this to a negative reputation of child protective services and the multiple handoffs between DCFS and prevention and aftercare providers.

"There was a lot of resistance in this approach as you could imagine from families in particular who don't welcome a call from DCFS," Miller said.

To examine the low acceptance rates for these supports,

services which was terribly exciting because we want to make sure families are getting the services that they need," Miller said.

The move led to more than 700 families connected to prevention services in one year, tripling the number from 2017.

Additionally, the approach streamlined enrollment wait times for community prevention supports, decreasing waiting periods by nearly 50 percent.

The redesign of the project involved collaboration among the Office of Child Protection, housed in the executive office of the county board of supervisors, DCFS, DMH, the University of Southern California's School of Social Work, 10 prevention and aftercare networks and the registrar-recorder/county clerk who offered the guidance on the Lean Six Sigma methods.

"It created a wonderful partnership and I think a deeper understanding from both the community partner side and the county agency side of what each other's strengths are and what each partner brings to the table," Miller said.

The redesign involved the department shifting roles, establishing multidisciplinary teams, simplifying the work process, retraining all hotline staff and standardizing data collection and tracking.

"I think one of the most important lessons learned was trusting, partnering and working with your community providers," Miller said. "Stepping outside of your own way of thinking and try to listen and hear from others about other ways of doing things that really are at the best interest and heart of families." **CN**

Los Angeles County's Moving Families from the Hotline to a Helpline is the recipient of a Best in Category 2020 NACo Achievement Award in the Children and Youth category.



County commissioners in Randolph County, N.C. held a seal design contest in 1973 to select the county seal and chose resident Audrey Beck's design as the winner out of 84 submitted entries. Beck won a design contest for the Asheboro City seal one year prior.

The circular seal depicts historical features that represent the county.

The foreground of the seal is an old plank road which leads to a covered bridge, one of only two remaining historic covered bridges in North Carolina.

Next to the road, arrowheads depict the county's Indian history.

Behind the road, buildings represent the growth of industry, homes, schools and churches in Randolph County.



The sunrise symbolizes a bright future for the county.

The mountain in the background represents the Purgatory Mountain, home to the North Carolina Zoo, which is the largest natural habitat zoo in the world.

If you would like your county's seal featured in "Behind the Seal," contact Rachel Looker at rlooker@naco.org.

PROFILES IN SERVICE

TRACY GRAHAM

NACo Board Member
Associate Commissioner
Audrain County, Mo.



GRAHAM

Number of years active in NACo: Four

Years in public service: Four years as an elected official and more than 20 years in public service and serving on public boards.

Occupation: County commissioner, previously 28-year career in information technology (infrastructure and security) and small business owner.

Education: Electronic Technology AAS, certifications from Apple, Novell, Microsoft and Citrix, Professional Development Academy, Enterprise Cybersecurity Leadership

Three people (living or dead) I'd invite to dinner: Mother, father and grandparents.

A dream I have is to: Visit Alaska and see the Aurora Borealis.

My favorite way to relax is: Sit on the deck or boat dock looking over the lake.

I'm most proud of: Our two sons Gib and Jacy.

Every morning I read: Inspirational passages from books my son typically gives me as a Christmas gift, currently *Wisdom from Above*.

My favorite meal is: Midwest ribeye steak and vegetables.

My pet peeve is: People driving slow in the passing lane.

The last book I read was: *Hit It!* by Kristi Overton Johnson

My favorite movie is: *Look Up*, a short film by Gary Turk

My favorite music is: Blues/classic rock

My favorite U.S. president: Ronald Reagan

My county is a NACo member because: Audrain County sees the value in services, resources and opportunities for networking that is a good return on investment for the citizens and employees of the county.

NACo AND NATIONWIDE RENEW PARTNERSHIP FOR 10 MORE YEARS

The National Association of Counties (NACo) and Nationwide are pleased to announce a renewal of their strong partnership for the next 10 years. Since its inception over 35 years ago, NACo and Nationwide's deferred compensation program has grown to become the largest supplemental retirement income program available to county employees.



NACo and Nationwide have strengthened retirement readiness for over 1.6 million county employees from more than 3,000 county entities. Today, with the endorsement of 41 state associations of counties, more than 422,000 county employees have accumulated over \$25 billion in retirement assets.

"Nationwide believes in creating a brighter future for our communities and we're proud to continue our partnership with NACo, helping county employees and plan sponsors prepare for retirement," said Scott Ramey, senior vice president, Nationwide Retirement Solutions Distribution. "We offer a variety of tools and solutions to educate participants, as well as breaking down challenges and

offering clear solutions to help them prepare for retirement." NACo CEO/Executive Director Matthew Chase said, "Our partnership with Nationwide is a meaningful investment in dedicated public servants. Our deferred compensation program increases individuals' financial stability and helps us attract the next generation of county employees. By renewing our longstanding partnership with Nationwide, we are expanding support for frontline county employees who are making significant contributions to communities across the country today and into the future."

NACo and Nationwide share the goal of providing world-class services and value to county employees and their families, positioning them for a healthy, secure and prosperous retirement.

Nationwide is a proven partner in delivering one-on-one support for plan sponsors to help their employees prepare for and enjoy retirement. Nationwide also brings a wealth of industry expertise and plan sponsor reporting capabilities. For county plan sponsors, providing a retirement plan with

Nationwide is a meaningful benefit that serves to attract and retain quality talent.

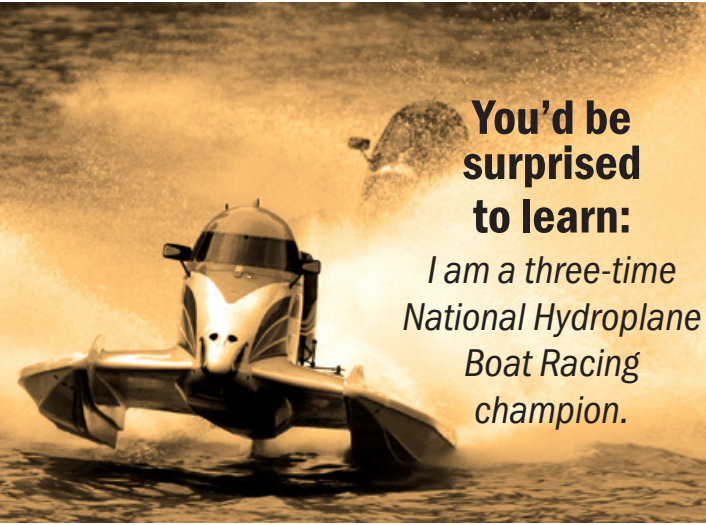
County employees have an opportunity to develop a retirement strategy throughout their career, so they are prepared for a secure retirement. Nationwide continues to provide a host of supporting staff, tools and resources to support them on their retirement journey, including:

- In-person or phone meetings with experienced and licensed financial representatives
- Webinars and workshops from the Nationwide Retirement Institute, and
- Financial and retirement planning calculators, like My Interactive Retirement Planner

Counties will see new products and services introduced over the coming months that will help employees achieve a secure retirement and enhance their quality of life.

Learn more about the partnership and the products and services offered to counties at www.nrsforu.com.

For more information, contact Carlos Greene, NACo senior program director at cgreene@naco.org or 770.881.0100



You'd be surprised to learn:
I am a three-time National Hydroplane Boat Racing champion.

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ON THE MOVE

NACo MEMBERS

- Coconino County, Ariz. Supervisor **Liz Archuleta** has been named director of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Office of Intergovernmental Affairs. Archuleta served on the county board for 24 years. Archuleta will serve as a liaison to state, county, local, tribal officials and other stakeholders for the USDA.
- Mercer County, W.Va. Commissioner **Greg Puckett** was appointed chairman of NACo's Rural Action Caucus. Puckett was appointed to the position after Roane County, Tenn. Commissioner Ron Berry, who previously served in the role, was elected as NACo's South Region representative.

NACo STAFF

- **Alex Minkoff** recently joined NACo as a research analyst. He previously held internships at NACo, the Network of Schools of Public Policy, Affairs and Administration and the Vera Institute of Justice. He worked as the lead tech and integration specialist with Lamoille South Supervisory School District in Vermont and earned a master's degree in public administration and policy and a bachelor's degree in anthropology.
- NACo held a virtual NCCAE Presidents and Executives Meeting Feb. 11 to introduce state association presidents to NACo and the White House Intergovernmental Affairs Office. President **Gary Moore, Matt Chase, Bill Jasien, Brian Namey, Mark Ritacco, Jack Peterson** and **Ashleigh Holand** spoke to the group on behalf of NACo.
- Chase addressed members of the Association of Indiana Counties Board of Directors Feb. 12.



Archuleta



Puckett



Minkoff

NEWS FROM ACROSS THE NATION



CALIFORNIA

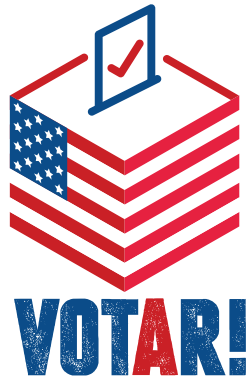
• **SANTA CLARA COUNTY** supervisors launched a new tiny home site to provide temporary **emergency housing** to unhoused families. A county partner will run the site and provide case management to connect families to services, *Bay City News* reported. The tiny homes have four bunks that can fold down to create a bed or table, shelving, HVAC units and electric outlets. The tiny homes are part of the county's goal to end homelessness. Photo courtesy of the County of Santa Clara Office of Communications and Public Affairs

CALIFORNIA

• Supervisors in **ORANGE COUNTY** announced a new program to assist households that are unable to **pay rent and utility bills** because of the pandemic. The county will use \$65.6 million from the U.S. Department of Treasury to implement the Emergency Rental Assistance program to help renters. The rental assistance is available for those who can demonstrate a risk of experiencing homelessness and have a combined income below 80 percent of area median income.

DELAWARE

NEW CASTLE COUNTY has opened a new **genomics testing lab** in partnership with Delaware State University. The county invested \$5.5 million in November 2020 to create the lab which began COVID-19 testing the university's athletic teams and will soon process tests for all students. The county plans to purchase testing capacity from the new facility in mid-February. The lab hopes to process 3,000 tests per day by March with same-day results and will lower the costs of processing from \$150 to \$10 per test.



FLORIDA

Over 30 counties in Florida have agreed to provide more **Spanish-language voting resources** for the next 10 years. The decision comes after a lawsuit claiming supervisors of elections violated the U.S. Voting Rights Act by running English-only elections, *Bay News 9* reported. The case was settled with 31 of 32 counties agreeing to provide additional support services such as Spanish-language ballots, Spanish-language polling place materials and a Spanish-language supervisor of elections website for the next 10 years.

GEORGIA

• **CLAYTON COUNTY** is working with Comcast to **equip community buildings with Wi-Fi**. The "Comcast Lift Zones" bring Wi-Fi to buildings to help

students without access to Internet complete virtual learning. Clayton County schools have not offered in-person learning because of increased COVID-19 cases, according to the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*. The Lift Zones also provide internet access to connect adults to online resources.

• **DEKALB COUNTY** launched the DeKalb Tenant Landlord Assistance Coalition to help families who are **behind on their rent payments**. The program aims to also help landlords who have suffered losses since the beginning of the pandemic. With the help of the coalition, renters and landlords who need assistance will be connected to courts, legal aid, DeKalb County and Goodwill, 11Alive reported. The program will cover rent and utilities and is funded with a \$21 million federal grant.

MAINE

A **mental health clinician** will now ride along with sheriff's deputies in **PENOBSCOT COUNTY** to check in with individuals after they are released from the county jail. The county received a \$750,000 U.S. Department of Justice grant to fund the position to help individuals suffering from mental illness. The grant also funds two peer support specialists to work with



Photo courtesy of Prince George's County

MARYLAND

• The Department of Parks and Recreation in **PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY** is on a mission to **restore a monument** that recognizes 49 residents who died in World War I. The 40-foot-tall monument, known as the Peace Cross, was constructed in 1919. The county department is also paying homage to four African Americans who were among the lives lost in World War I in recognition of Black History Month. The department is seeking contributions to restore the memorial.

inmates with mental health conditions and provide training to deputies and corrections officer about signs of mental illness and substance use disorders, *Bangor Daily News* reported.



INDIANA

The health department in **HAMILTON COUNTY** has partnered with students from area school districts to create teen task forces to stop the spread of COVID-19 and **keep students in school**. The task force launched the "Show Some C.L.A.S.S." campaign at the beginning of the school year to encourage students to check their temperatures, lead by example, avoid large gatherings, schedule a COVID-19 test and stay home when sick. The campaign acronym was updated this winter to: Commit to self-care, learn about the vaccine, avoid in-home gatherings, social distance and mask up and stay home.

MARYLAND

• The Economic Development Corporation in **ANNE ARUNDEL COUNTY** launched a new program to provide mentorship and grants to **small businesses owned by women, minorities and veterans**. The Inclusive Ventures program provides a \$5,000 grant and a six-week on-line class for minority-owned business owners who have been hard hit during the pandemic, *The Baltimore Sun* reported. The first cohort is open for 10 businesses.

• Officials in **BALTIMORE COUNTY** announced a new program for residents 65 years and older to **receive home repairs**. The "BCAUSE program" aims to keep older adults in their homes to age safely in place by offering eligible homeowners up to \$4,500 in home repairs or safety modifications, CBS Baltimore reported.

MICHIGAN

The Sheriff's Office in **WASHTENAW COUNTY** is **forgiving over \$500,000 of accrued debt** by individuals incarcerated in the county jail. Those incarcerated in the jail from 2003 to 2020 and have debt owed for additional supplies and services bought at the commissary will have the accrued debt forgiven, *the Detroit News* reported. The move aims to help decrease recidivism rates and ease individuals' transition back into society.

NEVADA

• **CLARK COUNTY** commissioners may **ban "varmint hunts"**. These competitive predator hunts involve teams paying to hunt coyotes and other animals. In 2012, a story by 13 Action News found there was at least one varmint hunt every weekend across Nevada from September through March. Commissioner Justin Jones framed it not as a prohibition on hunting, but as a recommendation to tell the Nevada Department of Wildlife that the county opposes the competition hunts.

• The **WASHOE COUNTY** Recorder's Office has launched a **record notification service** that notifies property owners the very

See NEWS FROM page 11



TEXAS

MASON COUNTY's 111-year-old courthouse was destroyed in a Feb. 4 fire, and police have charged a man with two felony charges of arson and one charge of burglary of a building. KXAN News reported that county records and documents had been removed from the building, which was under renovation.

zoned agricultural can also keep cattle at a rate of one cow per acre after the first acre, the *Prince William Times* reported. The changes added about 1,800 parcels to the domestic fowl overlay district and about 3,800 more agriculture-zoned parcels can keep cattle.

Homeowners within the district are allowed a certain number of "bird units" based on the acreage. One "bird unit" allows a homeowner to have up to 10 chickens, which is equivalent to 20 pigeons, six ducks, four turkeys or one ostrich.

WASHINGTON

SNOHOMISH COUNTY is asking the state for funding to turn county-owned buildings into a **processing and distribution center** for local farmers to use. Those facilities can mean the difference for small farmers who otherwise wouldn't have easy access to washing stations and cold storage, or even a commercial kitchen space, a teaching kitchen and a potential year-round farmer's market, all of which would be part of the \$2.5 million plan, King 5 news reported.

WEST VIRGINIA

Six counties are **now classified as rural** by the Federal Office of Rural Health Policy, which will allow the counties to be eligible for more grants and funding. **BOONE, CLAY, HAMPSHIRE, LINCOLN, PRESTON and WIRT counties** were not considered rural because of their proximity to more urban areas, but evaluation of the population and the amount of work in those areas qualifies the new classification, *The News and Sentinel* reported.

News from Across the Nation is compiled by Charlie Ban and Rachel Looker. Does your county have news we should know about? Contact cban@naco.org and rlooker@naco.org.

From NEWS FROM page 10

day a document is recorded on their property or parcel number, including mechanics' liens, tax liens or refinancing documents. "We know that property owners are often the last to know when a document is filed on their property, and we are always looking for ways to provide better service and more transparency to our residents," County Recorder Kalie Work said.



NEW MEXICO

BERNALILLO COUNTY is offering a series of **genealogy**

courses to help the public track their ancestry. The county is also offering other genetics-related courses, like the science of DNA and its use in criminal investigations.

NEW YORK

• The **SCHENECTADY COUNTY** Police Department and the Center for Community Justice teamed up with Catapult Games to develop virtual reality (VR) software centered on **de-escalation tactics** for police officers, News 10 reported.

The user views a scenario through VR goggles and makes choices with a controller to de-escalate hypothetical situations. The programming is based on real scenarios, using body camera footage from instances like the death of George Floyd in Minneapolis and local incidents.



NEW YORK

• The **OSWEGO COUNTY** Office for the Aging is helping to ease feelings of loneliness among older residents in isolation by giving them **animatronic pets**. The office has acquired 45 robotic cats and dogs for residents 60 and older, with priority given to those who haven't had much human contact.

OKLAHOMA

Planning a wedding involves a lot of moving parts, and **TULSA COUNTY** decided to do some moving of its own to help betrothed couples. The Board of Commissioners approved a **satellite office for the County Clerk**, which will be located in the city of Broken Arrow's Rose District, home to a cluster of wedding vendors. That will cut a trip to downtown Tulsa for many seeking a marriage license.

"We had been trying to talk about doing this in the future, offering services outside of the courthouse to make it more convenient for our constituents," Tulsa County Court Clerk Don Newberry told the *Tulsa World*. "Basically, it all just came together, and we were able to do this with very little cost to our office, which is a great thing."

TENNESSEE

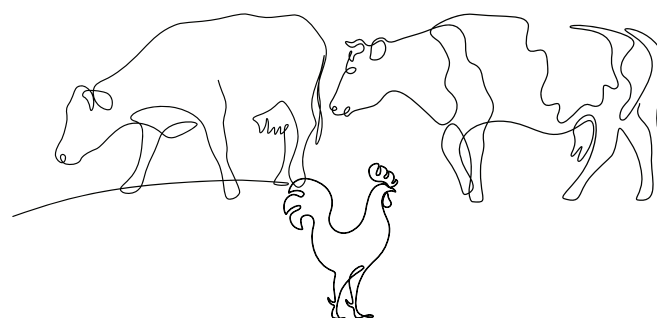
RUTHERFORD COUNTY Mayor Bill Ketron wants to make **littering offenses** more stringent. Ten times more stringent. The current fine for a first-time illegal dumping offense is \$50, and he'd like to make it \$500. He'd also like a \$1,000 fine for repeat offenders. He will take his proposal to the County Commission, WGNS News reported.

VIRGINIA

• The **FAIRFAX COUNTY** Police Department conducted **mock traffic stops for drivers with disabilities** to help drivers and officers learn how to safely interact with one another during traffic stops. The goal was to ensure that drivers with disabilities are well-versed in what happens during traffic stops.

"The partnership among the community, police and stakeholders allowed for a well-received learning experience for drivers and the police," said Sgt. Hudson Bull. "Traffic stops are an important way for officers to improve our roadway safety, and this event provided a safe environment to engage with the community."

• More **PRINCE WILLIAM COUNTY** residents can keep **cattle and domestic fowl** on their properties under new rules the Board of Supervisors approved. Parcels of 2 or more acres located in the domestic fowl overlay district that are



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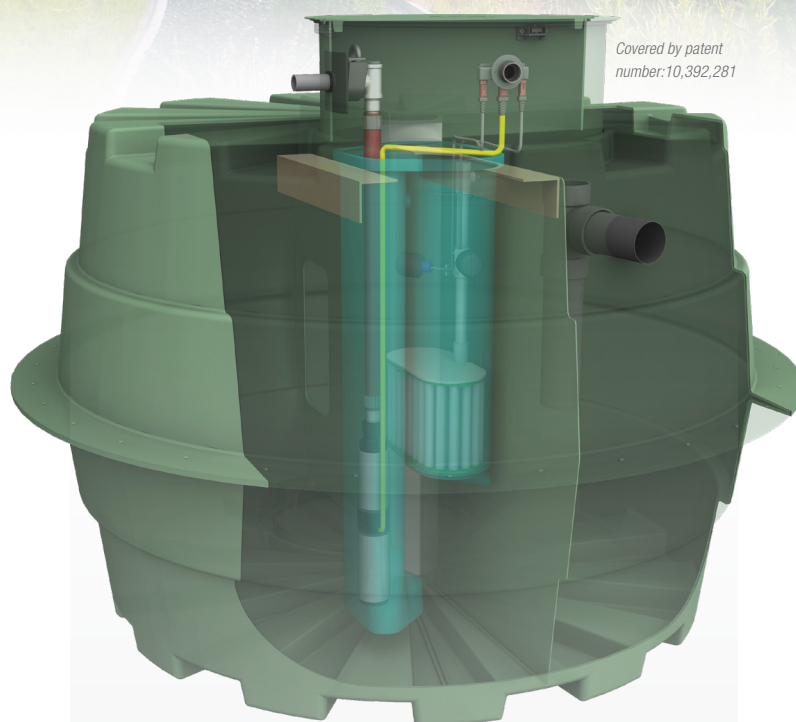
- Brundtland Report, United Nations, 1987

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*WERF Fact Sheets C1, C2, & C3, “Performance & Cost of Decentralized Unit Processes,” 2010.



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