

## ARPA dollars fuel refugee workforce training in Ga.

by **Meredith Moran**  
staff writer

DeKalb County, Ga. is expanding a program through American Rescue Plan dollars to train its refugee population in skilled trades and improve energy efficiency in homes.

The Georgia county has the greatest number of resettled refugees in the state and its city of Clarkston is the most ethnically diverse square mile in America, garnering the nickname “The Ellis Island of the South” for the more than 60,000 refugees who have called it home over the past three decades.

Tekton Career Training, a DeKalb County business that mentors and trains refugees in trade skills, runs multiple specialized programs, including Empower Clarkston. The 10-week program focuses on what Luke Keller, Tekton founder and executive, refers to as “green construction” and efficiency training, which includes fixing homes with an energy leakage or pinpointing plumbing issues to cut down on exorbitant utility bills.

The concept for Tekton came out of a desire to both fill the county’s skilled labor shortage and create “social entrepre-

See **TRADES** page 4

# Economic momentum, bipartisan hope mark Biden’s return to Legislative Conference



SEE FULL COVERAGE OF  
**2023 NACo LEGISLATIVE  
CONFERENCE IN OUR  
MARCH 13 ISSUE!**

**President Joe Biden tells the Special General Session audience Feb. 14 that he ran for the U.S. Senate because life on the New Castle County, Del. Council was too hard. He spoke to county officials at the NACo Legislative Conference in Washington, D.C. Photo by Denny Henry**

by **Charlie Ban**  
senior writer

Not satisfied to coast on two years of legislative wins, President Joe Biden charted the path forward for what he called a blue-collar blueprint to rebuild America during his second consecutive address to NACo’s Legislative Conference.

First, he pledged to avoid defaulting on the nation’s debt, noting that even the likelihood of that outcome would wreak havoc on counties’ borrowing costs.

“I’m simply not going to let

the nation default on its debt for the first time in history,” he told the Special General Session audience Feb. 14, encouraging bipartisanism and stressing public service throughout but standing his ground on his legislative achievements (and his county experience, with two years on the New Castle County Council in Delaware).

“I believe we could be fiscally responsible without threatening to send our country into chaos.”

A start, he suggested, would involve comparing his budget proposal alongside House Speaker Kevin McCarthy’s (R-Calif.) to find common ground.

“He’s a decent guy, he’s got

a tough job,” Biden said. “He made it real clear to me what he wants to do. He says he’s not going to raise taxes at all, he just wants to cut programs.”

Biden rebutted potential cuts to programs, illustrating their projected effects on the deficit, which Biden took pride

See **BIDEN** page 2

## ‘Going to seed’ looks good for verdant county ecosystems

by **Charlie Ban**  
senior writer

With \$5,000 in seed money from the Jefferson County, Ohio commissioners, the Jefferson Soil and Water Conservation District is hoping its plans can blossom into something beautiful.

That funding will support

the district’s pilot program to enhance the supply of native plants, in hopes of holding steady and then gaining ground for local pollinator insects like bees and butterflies — seemingly insignificant parts of a much larger agricultural system. Seed allotments will be available based on landowners’ acreage, with ad-

ditional seeds for purchase.

“We have noticed that a lot of the habitat that’s needed in this area is missing because of human intervention development, so we’ve been trying to figure out a good way to come up with a program to reintroduce some of these native spe-

See **PLANTS** page 5



‘Fighting for the sake of fighting gets us nowhere — we’re here to get things done’

From BIDEN page 1

in reducing over his first two years in office.

Facing a divided government following the Republican take-over of the House, any legislation will need strong bipartisan appeal. Biden is hoping the Republicans interpret the 2022 midterm elections the same way.

“I believe people sent us a clear message in this off-year election: Fighting for the sake of fighting gets us nowhere,” he said. “We’re here to get things done.”

Even if the new Congress doesn’t pass any major legislation, he sees an opening for his economic plan, made possible by the passage of the American Rescue Plan Act, Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, CHIPS and Science Act and the Inflation

Reduction Act.

“I’m really optimistic for the year ahead as implement the laws we’ve already passed,” he said.

“If we didn’t pass another single thing, the things that are going to take place by implementing just the laws we passed last year will deliver real benefits to people that they’re going to feel in their everyday lives.”

Those investments would serve to stabilize the economy following the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, fortify and grow the country’s infrastructure, boost manufacturing, encourage investments in renewable energy sectors and attack basic costs of living.

He emphasized the direct funding that the American Rescue Plan Act enabled with its \$65.1 billion allocated to



NACo President Denise Winfrey of Will County, Ill., greets President Joe Biden. Photo by Lana Farfán

counties, which gave them the opportunity to spend where they see fit. Wishing he had the same kind of direct line to the federal government when he was in county government, Biden touted the stimulus’ fuel that kept counties from having to cut staff in response to lost revenue, while continuing to serve and even expand service to constituents in the wake of added demands from the COVID-19 pandemic.

“We urged you to use the rescue plan money to make your community safer, invest in affordable housing, get small businesses back on their feet, train your workforces, and you did,” he said.

He cited Ramsey County, Minn.’s program that trains nurses and licensed childcare professionals with addressing childcare needs that held back workers, Los Angeles County, Calif.’s job training for teenagers in vulnerable populations and Travis County, Texas’ and Pierce County, Wash.’s investment in housing to address homelessness.

Biden credited the American Rescue Plan Act with making possible the addition of 12 million jobs over the past two years, and catalyzing 10.5 million applications for new

small businesses in 2021 and 2022. But he was sore to point out where disinvestment in the United States’ core systems had shown up relative to other counties.

“If we’re going to have the strongest economy in the world, we have to have the strongest and best infrastructure in the world,” he said. “We’re also making the biggest investment ever in climate through the Inflation Reduction Act, creating millions of good paying jobs, investing in fence-line communities that have suffered the most as a consequence of being smothered by pollution.”

That was coupled with the CHIPS and Science Act, which Biden said would not only propel American manufacturing forward, but serve as the foundation for new hubs of innovation and economic growth in communities that have the tools and the talent but have lacked the confidence that comes from outside investment.

He singled out an Intel semiconductor plant being built in Licking County, Ohio that was made possible by the act’s grants and incentives. That plant, Biden said, will offer thousands of good-paying jobs

that won’t require a college degree.

“Where in the hell is it written to say we can’t lead the world of manufacturing,” he asked.

“For decades, we imported products and exported jobs because of cheaper jobs overseas. Now America is exporting products and creating jobs at home.”

Biden stressed the everyday effects that the Inflation Reduction Act would have, particularly the price controls on prescription medicines and Medicare’s ability to negotiate on drug prices.

“My unwavering focus is on continuing to lower costs for families,” he said.

“As my dad would say, ‘All I’m looking for, Joey, is just a little breathing room at the end of the month — just a little breathing room to have a little bit left over after I paid all my bills.’”

Biden was buoyed by the morning’s announcement that inflation hit 6.4 percent over the past 12 months, down from the 9.1 peak last summer.

“Today’s data reinforces that we’ve made historic progress and we’re on the right track,” he said. “Now we need to finish the job.” **CN**

SNAP/STATS

HOUSING AFFORDABILITY

Home price appreciation in last three years:

| COUNTY                           | PERCENT      |
|----------------------------------|--------------|
| 1. Collier County, Fla.....      | 69.5 percent |
| 2. Ada County, Idaho.....        | 59.3 percent |
| 3. Williamson County, Texas..... | 58 percent   |
| 4. Travis County, Texas .....    | 50.1 percent |
| 5. Washoe County, Nev.....       | 46.9 percent |

Source: MoneyGeek



# Yellen urges counties to focus ARPA funding on workforce development, affordable housing

by **Meredith Moran**  
staff writer

Actions taken by counties to invest funding from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) is transforming American lives in the areas of affordable housing, public health, infrastructure and workforce development, U.S. Secretary of the Treasury Janet Yellen told county officials Feb. 14 at the NACo Legislative Conference.

"Many jobs in public service are difficult, but there are very few jobs where you're more tested on your ability to deliver day in and day out than leading a local government — that's certainly been true over the past three years," Yellen said. "...Without the voices of our counties, the American Rescue Plan would have undoubtedly looked quite different — as a result, our recovery would have looked quite different, too."

ARPA ushered in one of the strongest examples of economic recovery in modern history, Yellen said, citing the creation of 10 million new businesses since it was enacted, as well as record lows in the unemployment rate for Black and Hispanic Americans and people with disabilities.

"The Rescue Plan initiated bold and timely action — delivered at a moment when we faced grave uncertainty about the direction of our economy," Yellen said. "We knew it was important to provide direct and flexible aid to state and local governments. Critically, we had to avoid the mistakes of the Great Recession, when state and local austerity was a drag on GDP growth for the first 14 quarters of the recovery."

"So, we did what had never

been done at this scale — deliver relief to over 3,000 counties in the United States," she said. "We also provided our recipients with sustained and flexible funding. It was clear that this crisis would evolve with new variants, and that it would affect each jurisdiction differently. A one-size-fits-all approach would not have sufficed."

Yellen attributed The American Rescue Plan Act to "setting the stage" for the Bipartisan

Infrastructure Law, the CHIPS and Science Act and Inflation Reduction Act.

"Without the American Rescue Plan, our federal government would likely still be focused squarely on putting out the fire instead of rebuilding our house," Yellen said. "And counties might still be struggling with restoring their operations to normal levels, rather than thinking about new investments that will shape the future of their economies. The

strong recovery of the past two years has not only meant that Americans are better off today, it's allowed us to focus on what our economy will look like in 2030, not just 2023."

Yellen urged county officials to focus particularly on funding workforce development and affordable housing, highlighting Franklin County, Ohio's pre-apprenticeship program on skilled construction trades and New Hanover County, North Carolina's 278-unit apartment complex affordable housing project as success stories. The Biden Administration's goal is to close the housing supply gap by 2027, she said.

"Over the past few years, many of us have been in the trenches together," Yellen said. "We've faced down a devastating public health crisis, we've rescued the American economy and we are now investing in our future. None of this has been easy, particularly for you — the county leaders of America. But the progress we've made is proof of what we can do when our counties and our federal government come together — not only to fight fires, but to build a better world after the crisis." **CN**



**Treasury Sec. Janet Yellen addresses county officials Feb. 14 at the NACo Legislative Conference at the Washington Hilton.** Photo by Denny Henry

## Emergencies: 'When we're not connected, we're not safe'

by **Mary Ann Barton**  
editor

In a room packed with about 100 conference attendees, Guilford County, N.C. Commissioner Alan Perdue gave a powerful presentation Feb. 11 on the importance of clear communication among emergency responders.

Specifically, Perdue discussed the importance of making sure that buildings do not block radio signals. He spoke to members of the Telecommunications & Technology Policy Steering Committee, which was led by Stearns County, Minn. Commissioner Tarryl Clark, at NACo's Legislative Conference.

As part of the Safer Building Coalition, Perdue said

their goal is to eliminate "dead spots" in buildings that block radio signals during emergencies.

He told the room about taking his child to college and during a meeting about safety on campus, after being told that the college had an emergency alert system to send emails and texts to students, he asked the school whether they had coverage in every building.

"You could hear a pin drop," he told the audience. "A plan isn't worth anything if there is no coverage. First responders must be able to communicate with each other."

Perdue urged county officials to look into the safety of commercial buildings in their communities. For example,

he noted that LEED-certified buildings and Low-E glass windows in buildings can block cell signals.

A former fire chief with an extensive background in emergency management, Perdue noted that many TV shows

about firefighters sometimes stretch the truth a bit. But he noted, before playing a clip from the TV program "Chicago Fire," that what the audience was about to see was very close to reality. County officials in the room watched the clip, as

emergency responders and civilians, trapped in an elevator shaft in a building that was on fire, were unable to communicate with personnel on the ground. Eventually they were able to communicate enough to get rescued, but not without some harrowing moments.

Afterward, Perdue noted the importance of coming up with a plan to find out if buildings, especially school buildings, are safe. He noted that his county is collaborating with Guilford County Schools to enhance communication capabilities for emergency responders, especially inside school facilities.

"Oftentimes, due to a misunderstanding of the critical



**Guilford County, N.C. Commissioner Alan Perdue discusses the role that buildings play when it comes to radio communications during emergencies.** Photo by Denny Henry



# Trade program benefits homeowners in need of repairs, unemployed refugees

From TRADES page 1

neurship,” Keller said, which he defined as “essentially the idea of, ‘How do we leverage business to help effect positive change in our communities?’”

“For every five skilled laborers that were leaving the workforce, only one was actually entering, so as far as skilled labor and opportunities in vocational trades, supply was going significantly down and demand was really growing, so wages are going up exponentially,” Keller said. “So, we started getting into more of the philosophical reasons of ‘Why?’ Maybe there’s a lack of education that those are really great opportunities, maybe the fact that we push pursuing college — we don’t really push the trades on people in the U.S. very well, other than the people who are maybe ‘troublemakers’ ironically, when reality is, those are really great-paying jobs that you can get with essentially zero debt to your name.”

After reaching out to resettlement agencies and non-profit organizations that serve refugees, Keller said that he recognized the trade gap could be filled through training and employing the county’s large population of refugees in skills like carpentry, plumbing and even coding.

“What I realized is that there were very few groups that were focused on upward mobility [for refugees],” Keller said. “They were basically just trying to ensure that people survived — they would help them get resettled, get into an apartment, get clothes and furniture ... but beyond that, they were kind of left on their own.”

Empower Clarkston was previously funded through a Southeast Sustainability Directors Network grant, and in September, DeKalb County awarded the program \$250,000 in ARPA dollars, with the remaining \$125,000 coming from the city of Clarkston, to continue its work for at minimum the next two years.

“The goal was to address two big aspects of what was in the American Rescue Plan Act, and that’s addressing either unemployment or job training — upskilling — for residents to be



**Empower Clarkston participants pose for a photo after making energy improvement upgrades to a DeKalb County home.**

Photo courtesy of Malek Armash

more self-sufficient, and then also the environmental side of things, to help people save money on their power bills,” said DeKalb County Commissioner Ted Terry.

Before working on homes or learning how to use tools, Empower Clarkston participants undergo 20 hours of classroom training consisting of an intro-

ty lives below the poverty line, which is higher than the national average. While anyone who is a homeowner in DeKalb County is eligible to receive an inspection and upgrades through Empower Clarkston regardless of their financial situation, program manager Malek Alarmash shared a story that he said serves as a reminder to how im-

and who pay so much on their bills.”

According to Keller, the program saves homeowners on average about \$600 a year — “which is game-changing money for a lot of families,” he noted.

Alarmash, a Syrian refugee, said that having that shared experience with the trainees, of adjusting to American culture, is beneficial to his role as program manager.

“I can relate to cultural differences, and I can see, when a refugee first comes to the United States, it’s ‘What are the barriers?’ Because I went through this experience myself, I became a citizen and I was hired in a position that can lead this community,” Alarmash said.

“What I enjoy most about the program is the training aspect of it — being able to see people who don’t know how to carry a drill or don’t know what the basic safety measurements in the U.S. [are] and transitioning them into people who are ready for the workforce in the United States.

“Besides all this training, we touch on American work ethic structures, like to not be late to a job site, how to make sure your boss knows when you have appointments — all of those specific cultural differences were really challenging for me and

for others when they first come to the United States because it’s really hard to determine what’s right and what’s wrong when you first come to a different country and experience a new culture.”

Van Mulambi, a refugee from Congo, graduated from the program Feb. 24 and is currently in the process of finding employment.

“I enjoyed the work [in the program] and I like the job, because it’s easy for me. It’s helped people to fix their houses and it’s good for me — I know now how to exactly handle all of that...to put insulation in, to cover the ducts,” he said.

Support doesn’t end after the 10 weeks are over, according to Alarmash.

Upon completion of the program, Tekton gifts its “graduates” a tool bag and helps connect them to long-term employment and services like resume building and preparation for job interviews.

“We have connection within the community — we work with companies that recruit people and also with individuals who are looking for employees,” Alarmash said. “For example, the HVAC company that we work with, they hired three individuals who graduated from the [program] — we want to make a sustainable system.” **CN**

**‘There were very few groups focused on upward mobility for refugees.’**

*- Luke Keller*

duction on heating, ventilation and air conditioning systems, safety basics, how to insulate different spaces and what materials need to be used for specific scenarios, according to program manager Malek Alarmash, who both recruits and trains people in the program.

The home upgrades are free to homeowners and trainees in the program make \$15 an hour in what Keller refers to as “earn and learn.”

The expansion has allowed Tekton to train more people through the program and service more homes, according to Keller. Last year, Empower Clarkston decreased the energy bills of homes it worked on by 35 percent.

More than 14 percent of the population in DeKalb Coun-

portant the program is, particularly for low-income residents.

“I was walking through a hallway and the client was complaining about how cold the home is, and I asked her, ‘Do you know why?’ And she was like, ‘I have no idea — I’m a single mom, I work full-time and when I get home I have to cook for my kids,’ so she didn’t have the time or the financial support to dig into the issue,” Alarmash said.

“...We took care of the insulation and fixed her back door and added some weather stripping to the windows, and before we left, she started crying and she asked if she could hug me, and I thought of that as very powerful in how the program could potentially help homeowners who don’t have financial support



# Counties can fund, distribute native plant seeds

From PLANTS page 1

cies that have been eliminated from our landscapes,” said Aaron Dodds, projects manager for the district.

It’s one county’s effort to change the picture on a larger jigsaw puzzle — a worldwide decline in pollinators. Experts point to habitat fragmentation, pesticide use, climate change and the spread of emergent pathogens, parasites and predators.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture estimates that more than 90 species of U.S. specialty crops require pollination, making bees, butterflies, moths, bats and birds and more are a critical part of the pollinator-plant ecosystem. That estimate attributed an additional \$15 billion in crop value each year to wild and managed bees.

In 2014, President Obama established a Pollinator Task Force, led by the Department of Agriculture and the Environmental Protection Agency, to develop a national strategy to protect and promote health of pollinators.

The Pollinator Research Action Plan, released in May 2015, guides the federal agenda, including research, to restore and increase pollinator habitat and populations.

“You look at the news, with the monarchs and the bumblebees and there’s definitely a stormy outlook for their future unless there’s some intervention,” Dodds said.

Other efforts have taken root across the country as the local efforts grow.. Starting in March, the Brown County, Wis. Central Library will house a seed library, the county’s contribution to a seven-organization collaboration. Visitors will have their choice of hundreds of different seeds, most of which are edible plants, but all of which are suited to north-east Wisconsin’s conditions.

“Our first year, we’re focusing mostly on just getting seeds into people’s hands so that they’re empowered to grow their own veggies and get that fresh produce, but we will also be offering a lot of a number of educational programs related to seed raising,” said Sandy Kallunki, the central library’s manager.

“The Master Gardeners have expertise and will be developing a seed stewards program, where people are able to get the guidelines, in terms of how to harvest those seeds appropriately document them so that we can have some of those seeds coming back into our seed library for other people to use in the future.”

Local nonprofits and the University of Wisconsin Extension Office will make experts available to help local residents with their planting or offer low-priced planting beds and soil.

Since 2019, the York County, Va. public works department has worked with the county’s beautification committee and students from York Riv-

er Academy have maintained sustainable gardens that include native plant species to provide a habitat for native species of pollinators. The three-way partnership allowed each member to contribute ideas and approaches, including a native plant garden at the county’s waste management administrative facility. The students developed the plan for the garden, including a pollinator-supporting plant list and rendering of the proposed garden.

Dodds sees Jefferson County’s current economic crisis as an opportunity to stabilize its ecology.

“We have a power plant that’s about to close up here in a couple months...there’s just a lot of blight, and so by being able to bring some of these wildflowers and trees that are beneficial to the pollinators, that will also help improve the quality of life and beautify the area.”

The soil and water district has mapped out a pollinator trail, which strategically locates targeted areas contiguously to bolster chances of success.

If successful, the effort will be a throwback to a 20-year-old campaign: “Be Jefferson County Proud.”

And yes, it included a picture of a bee. **CN**

*York County, Va.’s Partners for Pollinators program won a 2020 NACo Achievement Award in the Parks and Recreation category.*

## PROFILES IN SERVICE

### LEE CONSTANTINE

**NACo Board Member**  
Commissioner,  
Seminole County, Fla.  
President,  
Florida Association of Counties



CONSTANTINE

**Number of years active in NACo:** Eight years

**Years in public service:** 42 years

**Occupation:** Real estate consultant

**Education:** University of Central Florida’s Nicholson School of Communication, Alumni Hall of Fame

**The hardest thing I’ve ever done:** Life or death decision in the Terri Schiavo case while in the Florida Senate (2005).

**A dream I have is to:** Travel without a schedule or itinerary.

**You’d be surprised to learn that I:** Played professional beach volleyball.

**The most adventurous thing I’ve ever done is:** Jump out of an airplane, sky-diving.

**My favorite way to relax is:** Anything that has to do with water and the beach.

**I’m most proud of:** The groundbreaking legislation I passed, such as the Florida Unified Building Code, Florida Forever Program and the Wekiva Parkway and Protection Act.

Also, established and directed a charity event, Charity Challenge, Inc, that raised over \$7 million for local Central Florida charities through 35 years.

**Every morning I read:** The Orlando Sentinel and Sunburn.

**My favorite meal is:** Lasagna

**My pet peeve is:** Entitled lazy people

**My motto is:** Make a positive difference in people’s lives.

**The last book I read was:** “Forces of Nature: A History of Florida Land Conservation,” by Clay Henderson.

**My favorite TV Series is:** “Game of Thrones” and “Yellowstone.”

**My favorite music is:** Everything from classical to modern country.

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

**My county is a NACo member because:** The national relationship building. Also, the advocacy and reference information it provides.



### THREE PEOPLE (LIVING OR DEAD) I'D INVITE TO DINNER:

Abraham Lincoln,  
**Willie Mays**,  
Theodore Roosevelt





# How can counties fund a local behavioral health continuum of care?

by **Chelsea Thomson**  
and **Jonah Cunningham**

County and local officials play a critical role in funding, implementing and coordinating a local continuum of care to support people during a behavioral health crisis. Counties often leverage funds from various sources to support the services — Someone to Contact, Someone to Respond, Somewhere Safe to Go — that help community members who need support. By directing resources to community-based treatment and services, counties can better serve residents with behavioral health conditions, reduce reliance on the criminal legal system and direct valuable resources toward improving stability and health.

To inform local decision-making and identify possible funding streams, NACo and the National Association of County Behavioral Health and Developmental Disability Directors (NACBHDD) developed a chart of funding opportunities across federal, state and county governments and non-government sectors. Counties can coordinate these resources to build a sustain-

A crisis response framework created by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) recommends communities build infrastructure that provides **someone to contact (crisis lines), someone to respond (mobile crisis teams) and somewhere safe to go (crisis triage centers).**



able behavioral health crisis continuum of care. The funding chart is accessible here: <https://www.naco.org/resources/community-funding-opportunities-support-community-members-experiencing-behavioral-health>.

The chart also reflects some of the counties across the country that are funding local behavioral health crisis services through a combination of resources to ensure long-term success and community well-being.

## Someone to Contact

The first part of a crisis continuum includes 24-hour staffed crisis call centers that are equipped to take all calls/texts/chats, triage the immediate concern to assess needs and coordinate connections to care. Two examples include Chester County, Pa., which received funding from the state

mental health block grant to support the 988 transition and Douglas County, Colo., where commissioners allocated ARPA resources to support 988.

## Someone to Respond

Mobile crisis teams provide stabilization and treatment as well as deflect individuals away from the criminal legal system and emergency departments. These teams can include a combination of behavioral health clinicians, paramedics, peer support specialists, social workers or trained law enforcement. Escambia County, Fla. received a U.S. Department of Justice grant to form two co-responder teams and Kitsap County, Wash. dedicates a portion of a local sales tax to provide law enforcement an option to request a navigator to assist with behavioral health calls.

## Somewhere Safe to Go

Crisis receiving and stabilization centers often provide residents with access to out- and in-patient services, peer support networks, withdrawal management, medication adjustment, counseling, therapy and/or longer-term residential care. Many centers offer a dedicated first responder drop-off

area and accept referrals and walk-ins. Missoula County, Mont. is using state appropriations to plan and renovate a space for the crisis receiving center and Pennington County, S.D. received funding from a philanthropic organization to help support operations at the crisis unit's new facility. **CN**

*Thomson is senior program manager for Behavioral Health and Justice in NACo's Counties Futures Lab. Cunningham is president/CEO, NACBHDD.*

## BEHIND THE SEAL

## OKLAHOMA COUNTY, OKLA.

Oklahoma County's official county seal was approved for use June 13, 1889 by the Oklahoma County Board of County Commissioners following a contest in which at least 27 different proposals were received and reviewed, in time for Oklahoma County's 99th birthday three days later. The winning seal design, submitted by Oklahoma County Clerk Ralph Hess, features the year 1890 to commemorate the county's June 16, 1890 birthday.

The upper right quarter consists of a scroll marked "DEED" and a quill pen with three stacked books labeled Tax Rolls, Minutes, and Plats. This quadrant represents the county's role in maintaining land and property records, as well as assessment and taxation. These represent the County Clerk and Assessor offices.



Wheat stalks appear at the bottom of the shield and are a traditional symbol for Oklahoma. They also appear on the county building on Park Avenue.

The center emblem features a shield divided into four sections based on the four main categories of service the county provides.

The shield itself represents the protective role each of the four sections provide.

The upper-left quarter of the emblem features the traditional scales of justice and the seal of the state of Oklahoma. This represents the office of the District Attorney and the courts and includes things like jury duty. The state seal represents the county's status as a subdivision of state government.

The lower left quarter consists of a crossed pick and shovel to represent civil engineering for roads and bridges and a surveyor's theodolite to represent mapping responsibilities. There is also a black circle with a yellow triangle which symbolizes the role of the county in emergency management. (The symbol was once the symbol for civil defense.)

The lower right quarter features the county sheriff's badge, representing the sheriff's office, the county jail and other public safety roles.

*If you would like your county's seal featured in "Behind the Seal," contact Meredith Moran at [mmoran@naco.org](mailto:mmoran@naco.org).*

A Week to Energize the Movement for  
Civic Education Across the Nation

**CIVIC**  
LEARNING WEEK

**March 6–10, 2023**

**CivicLearningWeek.org**

SPONSORED CONTENT

# IT'S TIME TO MODERNIZE YOUR COUNTY GOVERNMENT'S BUDGETING PROCESS

by Matt Benati

Have you found yourself saying, "There has to be a better way!" as you manually consolidate and reconcile endless spreadsheets during your county's annual budgeting process? You're not alone!

If you're fed up with time-consuming and error-prone processes, it's time to modernize how you collect, create, and communicate your county's budgeting process.

## The Challenge with Legacy Systems

Most county governments traditionally managed their budgets with email, Excel, and Word but these tools are not without limitations. Even with the most comprehensive and well-documented process and the most well-versed Excel super-user, some challenges are unavoidable.



A typical county government budgeting process can be broken down into three primary phases:

- Collect: Request operating, capital, and personnel budgeting requests from department heads.
- Create: Consolidate each of these requests into a single location to create the budget.
- Communicate: Share the final budget with residents and internal stakeholders.

Each of these phases has its own unique challenges. To get a better idea of how some of these challenges impact the overall process, let's take a look at a few examples specific to capital budgeting:

**Collecting capital requests:** Capital requests often have supporting documentation,

such as photos, emails, estimates, or letters from residents. There's no convenient way to "attach" everything to the capital request, so approvers must review documentation in multiple places and formats. This can lessen the impact of the supporting documentation when everything isn't viewed together. It's also downright frustrating and time-consuming for each reviewer in the process!

**Creating the capital budget:** With the capital budget, it's necessary to create multi-year, multi-scenario plans to identify the optimal use of funds for proposed projects. Setting up multiple plans in a spreadsheet can be tedious, but the bigger challenge is the lack of visibility spreadsheets offer — especial-

ly for non-financial council members that have to weigh in on the budget. Most finance teams find themselves creating custom charts to help stakeholders compare the plans and show their impact on other parts of the budget.

**Communicating the capital budget:** Residents want to know what capital projects their tax dollars are funding, but communicating the approved projects, fund sources, and timelines in a format that's easy to understand can be challenging. This is especially true with a static PDF or web page since project information constantly changes as work progresses. The solution, a dedicated capital project website, is expensive and time-consuming to build and maintain.



- Providing a built-in checklist to help you earn the GFOA Award
- And much more!

### ClearGov's Budget Cycle Management suite includes:

- Capital Budgeting – Automate the collection, organization and optimization of capital utilization.
- Personnel Budgeting – Budget salaries, compensation and benefits, conduct scenario planning and what-if analysis.
- Operational Budgeting – Build a forecast and annual budget more efficiently and collaboratively.
- Digital Budget Book – Produce an interactive, GFOA award-winning budget book in a fraction of the time.
- Transparency – Tell a government's financial story to drive community support and engagement.

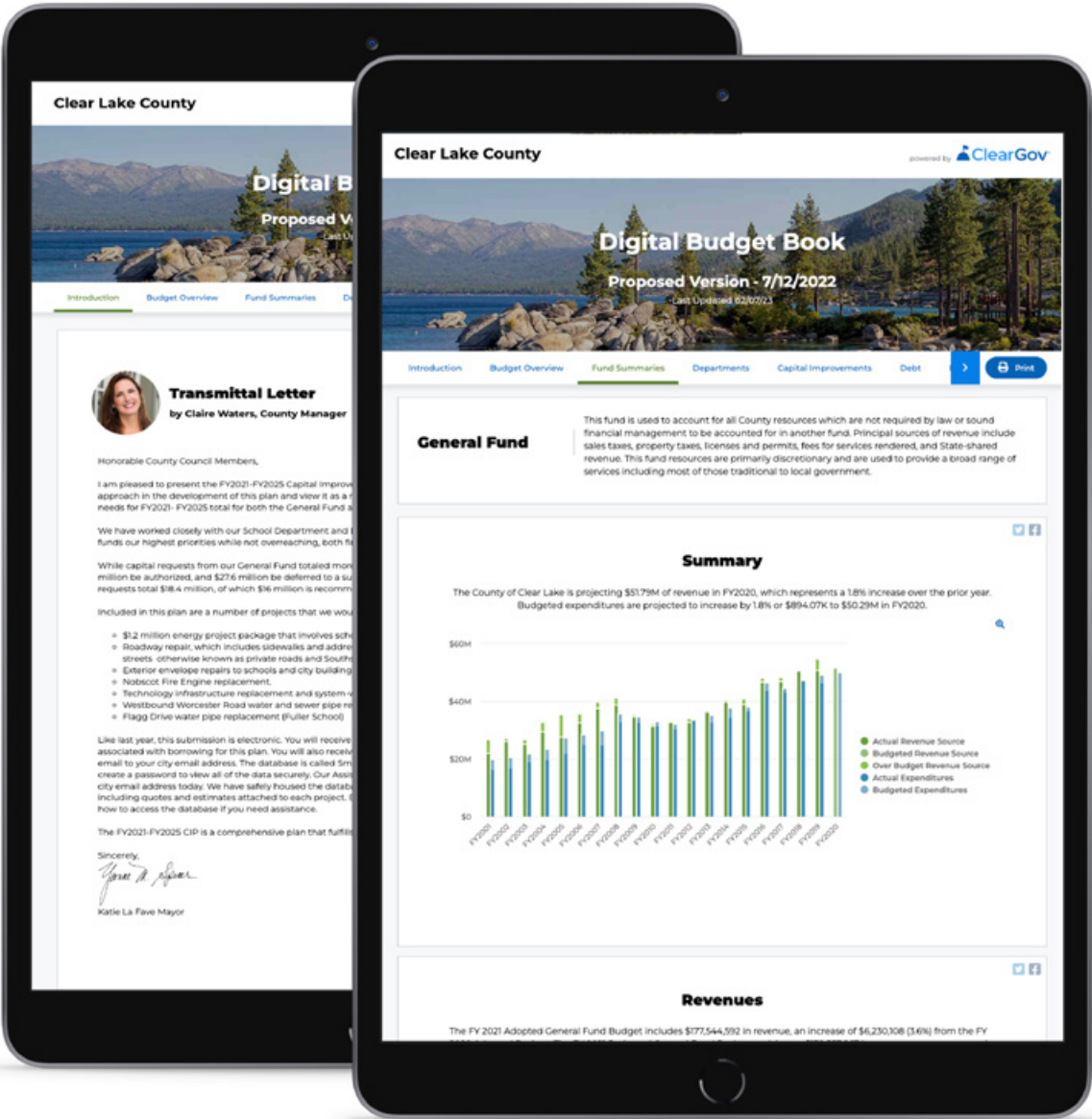
See how our complete suite of Budget Cycle Management software solutions streamline and automate the entire budgeting process, from start to finish. Contact us today to schedule a personalized demo: <https://cleargov.com/lp/naco>.

*Matt Benati, VP of Marketing for ClearGov, uses his super powers to improve communities across the nation by helping public agencies modernize their budgeting and permitting processes.*

## Modernize Your Budgeting Process with Cloud-Based Software

ClearGov's complete suite of Budget Cycle Management software solutions streamlines and automates your budgeting process from start to finish. It allows your county to overcome the traditional challenges associated with a manual budgeting process by:

- Saving time
- Reducing errors
- Improving transparency
- Fostering civic engagement
- Facilitating real-time collaboration
- Managing all data in a centralized location
- Automatically generating graphs and charts





# Find out if emergency communications work in buildings, schools in your county

From RADIOS page 3

nature of in-building communications, building owners and developers push back on the adoption of codes and standards requirements due to added costs,” he noted.

“Having a clear understanding of the critical nature that in-building communication capabilities can have on emergency responders, like EMS,

Fire and Law Enforcement, while performing their duties, is vital. Education about these solutions known as Emergency Responder Communication Enhancement Systems is a key factor for all stakeholders including policy makers.

“If policy makers are not briefed on this important issue, it makes it difficult for them to effectively work with building owners and develop-

## ‘...developers push back on adoption of codes...’

ers within their jurisdictions to ensure policies are in place for emergency responders to communicate inside buildings,” he said.

“Educational buildings are

certainly one area where we expect our emergency responders to be able to effectively communicate when they enter a building to mitigate an incident. Everyone’s safety depends on it.”

Guilford County identified this issue in some of its aging public-school facilities, limiting the ability for first responder radios to easily connect to one another and re-

quiring work-around systems.

As a result, the county is undergoing a significant modernization of its school infrastructure designs through recent voter approved school construction bonds passed in 2020 and 2022. [CN](#)

*For those who want to learn more, visit the Safer Buildings Coalition at: [saferbuildings.org](#).*

WORD SEARCH

SUMMIT COUNTY, OHIO

Created by: Alyxa Hawkins

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

- AKRON:** The county seat of Summit County is Akron, Ohio.

**CANAL:** The Ohio and Erie Canal runs through the county. Constructed in the 1820s, this canal connected Akron to the Cuyahoga River. It was used to carry freight traffic until 1861 and the Ohio and Erie Canal Historic District is now a National Historic Landmark.

**COURTHOUSE:** The county courthouse, located in the county seat of Akron, was built in 1905 and designed in the Second Renaissance Style.

**CUYAHOGA:** A large portion of Cuyahoga Valley National Park is in the northern part of Summit County.

**FARM:** The Anna-Dean Farm, located in Barberton, Ohio within Summit County is a historic farm listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The farm features a 52-room mansion built in the Beaux Arts style constructed in 1909.

**GOODYEAR:** The multinational tire manufacturing company Goodyear Tire & Rubber Company is based in Summit County in the county seat of Akron.
- MATZEN:** Cleveland sculptor Herman Matzen created the two statues outside the county courthouse: “Justice” and “Law.”

**OHIO:** Summit County is in northeastern Ohio.

**POLICE:** The first modern police car, a wagon powered by electricity, originated in Summit County.

**POPULATION:** With a population of 540,428, Summit County is the fourth most populous county in Ohio.

**SCHOOL:** In 1847 the Akron School Law passed establishing the K-12 education system used to this day in the United States.

**SUMMIT:** Within Summit County is the highest elevation point on the Ohio and Erie Canal – which is where the county got its name.

**THOMAS:** Within the county seat of Akron sits E.J. Thomas Hall, a performance hall which regularly features acts from the Akron Symphony Orchestra.

**UNIVERSITY:** The University of Akron is in Summit County.

**WISE:** Actor Ray Wise was born in Summit County.

GET TO KNOW...

Clay County, Tenn.

Welcome, Clay County, Tenn.

Clay County, named for U.S. Secretary of State Henry Clay, was formed in 1870 from sections of Jackson County and Overton County, Tenn. Historic Clay County Courthouse Curator Thomas Watson said that the county was formed after the Civil War, so that “every person in Tennessee should be no more than a one-day horse ride from the county seat.” Clay County has been a part of three states throughout history: Kentucky, North Carolina and Tennessee. During its time as part of Kentucky, the county was visited by frontiersman Daniel Boone in his first trip to the state, where he would later notoriously blaze the Wilderness Trail.



The first law office of Cordell Hull, who was Secretary of State under Franklin D. Roosevelt and was referred to as the “Father of the United Nations,” is located in the county. The office is now part of the Clay County Museum located in Celina, the county seat, that holds stories and artifacts from Clay County residents over the years, including the world’s largest smallmouth bass, weighing in at 11 pounds, 15 ounces. The fish, which is now stuffed after undergoing taxidermy, was caught in 1955 in Dale Hollow Lake, one of the most popular house boating destinations in the country.

Clay County has a population of about 7,581 and is roughly 259 square miles, according to the 2020 census.

**It’s home to Rolley Hole, a game involving flint rock marbles that is unique to the area. Ten minutes outside of Clay County is Standing Stone State Rustic Park, where marble players from as far as England and France have come to compete in the Rolley Hole world championship.**



Marble players from all over the world compete in the National Rolley Hole Marbles Championship.



**BRIGHT IDEAS** | MIAMI-DADE COUNTY, FLA.

# Florida County Collaborates with Local Artists to Shine Light on Environment

**PROBLEM:**

Finding ways to make the public more aware of the environment.

**SOLUTION:**

Engage the arts community to help get the word out about the environment.

by **Meredith Moran**  
staff writer

Miami-Dade County, Fla. is collaborating with local artists to bring environmental awareness to the community through its Arts Resilient 305 program.

“Climate change, sea level rise, these kinds of issues are affecting literally the fate of the planet,” said Michael Spring, director of Miami-Dade County’s Department of Cultural Affairs.

“And I think one has to be alert to ways in which you can help formulate solutions and ways to address things that threaten the very survival of places, and the arts community is filled with creative-thinking people who are great at collaborating with everyone from technology to the sciences, to all kinds of endeavors in a community to address solutions,” he said.

“The arts are no longer looked at as just being a nice thing to have because they provide a great quality of life — even though they do that — but they’re increasingly being looked at as part of the solution for addressing key community issues,” he noted.

Miami-Dade County’s Department of Cultural Affairs has a citizen advisory board whose members are selected by elected officials. According to Spring, the chair of the board traditionally has a background in business or civic leadership, but for the first time ever, it was an artist — Xavier Cortado — whose work largely focuses on climate change. Cortado challenged the department to mobilize the arts community



Artist Brigid Baker’s “Numinous Land” performance at the 2022 Aspen Ideas: Climate Conference. Photo courtesy of Marialaura Leslie

around the environment and develop what ultimately turned into the Arts Resilient 305 initiative.

“To some degree, our entire county began to look at its budget through the lens of resiliency and green practices, so there was this sense of this being a priority,” Spring said. “I don’t think that our mayor and our elected officials immediately thought that the Cultural Affairs Department would have a role in this, but we did — we immediately thought that this could be an area for our involvement, so we looked around to see what other people were doing, figuring why invent something if somebody else was already doing it well?”

“And oddly enough, we couldn’t find anything — I mean, there were some initiatives in Europe that were going on, in Great Britain, in regard to the arts community being active in the issues of the environment and resiliency, but we really couldn’t find anything very comprehensive about

this, so that’s when we put our heads together and we began to work on this with the cultural community,” he said.

The department works with thousands of artists and more than 500 art organizations, so it convened a series of roundtables to share best practices for the creation of art in sustain-

work that provided more factual information about things you could do to be helpful in this area, but we also periodically send out Arts Resilient 305 e-blasts to artists and arts organizations that provides them with information about opportunities, because everybody’s always looking for

tional Endowment for the Arts and now receives funding through the county and city.

“Often with new programs, I get the attention of the county budget folks by pulling in some outside funding,” Spring said. “It ends up being like the Good Housekeeping seal of approval, like, ‘OK, somebody’s taking

‘The arts are increasingly looked at as part of the solution for addressing key community issues.’

ability, related to conservation of energy and water, as well as discover the level of environment-focused work already being done in the community to connect them to grant funding. A survey they conducted found that, out of the roughly 220 respondents, around half were already doing work related to the environment and were interested in getting more involved with it, Spring said.

“One of the obvious things we decided at the beginning was just to develop a graphics kit that arts groups and artists could use and plug into their

funding for things or people to collaborate with, and so our resiliency office is really great about this, because now their antennas are up about opportunities for nonprofits to work with governments or to work with other businesses, and whenever they find things they send them to us, and then we send them out to artists and arts organizations, so they can take advantage of the resources that are necessary to power this forward,” Spring said.

The Arts Resilient 305 program initially functioned through a grant from the Na-

you seriously because a lot of these ideas are not very conventional and you have to sell them a bit get spending money on them, so the National Endowment for the Arts grant really helped with that, as it’s helped with other programs that we pioneered here in the past.”

Spring encouraged county governments to not underestimate utilizing the arts as a driver for progress in a number of areas, from environmental awareness to economic mobility.

See ARTS page 12



# NEWS FROM ACROSS THE NATION

## ARIZONA

**MARICOPA COUNTY**, Arizona's most populous county, could break into four separate counties. Two proposals by House Republicans, if passed, would limit Maricopa County's boundaries to the majority of Phoenix, which would result in the state having to fund new boards of supervisors, sheriff's offices, county court systems and more for the three new counties. If implemented, three of the four counties would lean Republican, one Democratic. A similar proposal by Sen. Jake Hoffman following the 2020 presidential election was rejected.

## CALIFORNIA

• **CONTRA COSTA COUNTY**'s health department is forming a **gun violence prevention coalition**, targeting students and young adults ages 18-24. The coalition plans to sponsor Silence the Violence days of action and help young adults develop skills in the

trades to bolster employment prospects. A \$1.5 million DOJ grant will fund the program.

• **VENTURA COUNTY**'s **wildfire alerts** will now be offered in four languages for non-English speaking farmers, a population that has missed public health warnings in the past because of language barriers. The aim is to protect workers from wildfire smoke. The county will now send alerts in English, Spanish and the Indigenous languages Zapoteco and Mixteco, but must register for the non-English options.

## GEORGIA

• **MACON-BIBB COUNTY** raised the **Muscogee (Creek) Nation flag** over Macon City Hall. The Muscogee (Creek) were removed to Oklahoma during Indian Removal in the 1830s. Commissioners passed a resolution acknowledging the federally recognized tribe's homeland in the coun-



## GEORGIA

• The **FULTON COUNTY** Board of Commissioners approved \$250,000 to fund a task force surrounding **reparations for Black residents**. The task force was first assembled in 2021 to determine how feasible it would be to distribute reparations to Black Fulton County residents.

"Qualitative and quantitative data will allow the task force to critically examine the ways slavery, Jim Crow and Urban Renewal denied African Americans opportunities to acquire personal, political and economic autonomy. Recommendations will be offered based on the empirical evidence," said Task Force Advisory Board Chair Dr. Karcheik Sims-Alvarado. "The feasibility study will demonstrate how Fulton County can support the recommendations made by the task force."

ty's boundaries, which was the former capital of Muscogean culture. The nearby Ocmulgee National Monument is set to become Ocmulgee Mounds National Historical Park, which will be co-managed by the Muscogee (Creek) Nation and the Department of Interior.

The tribe is currently the fourth largest tribe in the United States with approximately 97,000 citizens.

## INDIANA

**HAMILTON COUNTY** has launched a 10-week **hospitality training program in its county jail** to provide incarcerated individuals with job skills and help fill the county's hospitality worker shortage. The training is funded through American Rescue Plan Act dollars. All participants earn nationally recognized credentials from the American Hotel and Lodging Education Institute. Two cohorts of men have gone through the program — all of whom have passed their certifications — and a women's cohort began earlier this month.

## MICHIGAN

• **INGHAM COUNTY** Register of Deeds Derrick Quinney held a "**restrictive covenants**

**removal fair**" to assist property owners in removing housing provisions put into place to keep neighborhoods legally segregated. Quinney, the only African American register of deeds in the state, was a key voice in shaping a new state law to make it easier for property owners to remove racial covenants from their records, *City Pulse* reported.

• **KENT COUNTY** expects to save about \$1 million a year under a new operating agreement for its **waste-to-energy facility trash incinerator**. While private companies

operate the incinerator, the county's public works staff will continue to oversee inbound trash and the areas where incoming loads are weighed and dumped.

See NEWS FROM page 11



## CALIFORNIA

• The **FRESNO COUNTY** Department of Public Health launched a **rural mobile health program**, funded through American Rescue Plan Act dollars, that will provide medical services at no cost to agricultural workers and residents in the county's rural areas. The hope is to relieve the overwhelmed hospital system and help patients combat health problems they otherwise wouldn't know they have.



## NEVADA

• **Matrimony on the move?** The **CLARK COUNTY** Clerk's office opened a **temporary marriage license office** at Harry Reid International Airport between Feb. 2-14, issuing marriage licenses and vow renewal certificates.



From NEWS FROM page 10

## NEW YORK

• **ALBANY COUNTY**'s new **Nature and Historic Preserve System** will establish regulations for the use and continued sustainability of nature and historical preserves owned or managed by the county.

The new system provides for the inclusion of the Ann Lee Pond EcoRegion Preserve, the Lawson's Lake Preserve, and additional properties intended for a variety of uses, from recreational activities to historic and nature preservation.

• A 25 percent decrease in local **child-care** slots has prompted **FRANKLIN COUNTY** to launch the "Pipeline Program" to recruit and train new providers. The program guides people through the child-care licensing process and offers \$4,000 in start-up funding per provider. That guidance includes consultation on the type of renovations that are necessary to operate a child care business.

## NORTH CAROLINA

The **WAKE COUNTY** Sheriff's Office is restarting its **welfare check** program for residents ages 65 and older. An automated system will call registered seniors at 9 a.m., asking for an affirmation if they are OK. If the recipient does not answer by pressing "1," another call will be made to the senior citizen five minutes later. If there's still no answer, the senior's emergency contact will be called. A sheriff's deputy will then be dispatched to the residence, if that doesn't work, WUNC-FM News reported.

## OREGON

**MULTNOMAH COUNTY** has debuted its **Treatment Readiness Program**, offering people involved in the criminal justice system who are suffering from mental illness a place to visit daily to meet with counselors, make appointments and find support during a transition.

The program focuses on first providing stability, then encouraging participants to engage in treatment and services, the *Portland Courant* reported,



## NEVADA

• Looking to bolster their water supply, **ELKO COUNTY** commissioners voted to contribute \$3,500 to the Ruby Mountain **Cloud Seeding** Project, which will work to bolster the area's snowpack with additional precipitation.

That remedy last year produced roughly 19,712 acre-feet of additional snow water equivalent in the Ruby Mountains, the *Elko Free Press* reported.

while learning the skills that will help them achieve success as they access those services. The pilot program, which can serve up to 40 participants at a time, is staffed by parole and probation officers, case managers, community health specialists among other county partners.

## PENNSYLVANIA

• **ALLEGHENY COUNTY** is recruiting landlords with a \$2,000 sign-on bonus for any apartment newly rented to an individual or family **exiting homelessness**, along with a \$1,000 retention bonus.

The Housing Navigator Program will connect participating landlords with renters, ensure rent and incentive payments are made and address any issues that might arise between a landlord and tenant.

• Aiming to reduce the

spread of sexually transmitted infections, the **DELAWARE COUNTY** Health Department will mail out **free condoms** to residents who can request them using an online form.

• Local fire companies can apply for need-based grants through **MONTGOMERY COUNTY's Fire Services Grant Recovery** program. Eligible applicants must "demonstrate pandemic-related economic impacts" and adhere to the following guidelines: Decreased revenue, loss of supplemental fundraising revenue, financial insecurity or hardship, increased costs or challenges covering payroll, rent, mortgage, or other operating costs, according to *The Reporter*.

## TENNESSEE

Defendants in **SHELBY COUNTY** will now receive a **bail hearing** within 72 hours

of arrest, and that bail will be based on their ability to pay, set by judicial commissioners through the county's new bail program.

## TEXAS

**HARRIS COUNTY** is expanding its **Jail-Based Competency Restoration Program**, which provides services to individuals found incompetent to stand trial. The Commissioners Court voted to add \$645,000 to the program to increase availability of therapy, substance abuse education, peer support services, case management, discharge planning and medication management.

## VIRGINIA

• The **FAIRFAX COUNTY** Department of Transportation is proposing changes to its youth fare policy that would **eliminate fares** for children ages 5 to 11 with a paying adult. Free fares

are already available for children under 5 with a paying adult.

• More than 100 **HENRICO COUNTY** employees would be eligible for **forgivable loans of up to \$20,000**, which would cover down payments and closing costs of a new house under a proposal in the 2023-2024 budget. Eligible employees must have worked in the county for at least 12 months and have a household income of less than 120 percent of the area median income, adjusted to family size. Approved applicants would have to live in the county for five years to pay off the balance.

## WASHINGTON

• **KING COUNTY** is contributing \$1 million in American Rescue Plan Act funding to aid the renovation of a nonprofit's warehouse to make it a shared space for storing, packing and distributing fresh produce and goods to people and families experiencing **food insecurity**. Farmers and hunger relief organizations currently meet in parking lots, lacking cold storage for perishable goods and a covered location where staff and volunteers can box and prepare food for distribution.

• The **PIERCE COUNTY** Sheriff's Department is planning to **add mental health professionals** to a co-responders program for those experiencing a mental health crisis, without the need for a law enforcement presence that could escalate a crisis.

## WISCONSIN

**MILWAUKEE COUNTY** is considering a plan that would eliminate **medical debt** for up to 67,000 lower-income residents. The county's American Recovery Plan Act Task Force endorsed a \$1.6 million plan to partner with the group RIP Medical Debt, a nonprofit through which **COOK COUNTY, Ill.** has been working to the same end since last summer.



## OHIO

**HAMILTON COUNTY** is making permanent its **Equity and Resources Mobile Tech Bus**, which had been out of commission for more than a year.

During the pilot in 2021, the bus reached more than 4,000 people living in 50 ZIP codes across the county, offering health services like COVID and flu vaccines and cancer and diabetes screenings, with plans to add dental services, and economic resources like rent and mortgage aid and small business assistance, WVXU-FM News reported.

*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.*



# New crop of Miami-Dade County artists set to show at Climate Conference

From ARTS page 9

"I often say to our elected officials here, because we have such great examples of it, that if you want to figure out a way to revitalize a neighborhood, put a theater in it," Spring said. "We have the annual Art Basel Art Fair here in Miami in December of every year, and I talk to them about, 'If you ever doubted the fact that the arts contribute to the economy, try to get a restaurant reservation or rent a car or find a hotel room during that arts week here in Miami.'"

"And it's not just for that one week, but it's sort of a poster child for the power of the arts to address key issues, everything from economic development to climate change, so I think that these are important examples of how creative thinking can help address really key issues facing communities."

In 2022, Miami-Dade County Mayor Daniella Levine Cava and City of Miami Beach Mayor Dan Gelber worked together to bring the Aspen Ideas:

Climate Conference to Miami and tasked the county's Department of Cultural Affairs to commission 14 local artists to create visual, performing and media works during the conference as part of the Arts Resilient 305 initiative, Spring said.

Art showcased during the summit ranged from a choreographed dance ritual that aimed to "explore environmental racism as the root cause of generational gentrification, carbon footprint and water ethics" to the Plastocene Swim Line, a photography series that highlights the exploitation of fast fashion and consequences of consumer culture. It was such a success, Spring said, that the Aspen Institute is returning next month for its next summit.

"So, once again the county and the city of Miami Beach are collaborating on commissioning work from another dozen or so different artists, because we just have a wealth of creative people here to do these interventions around the themes of climate change and resiliency,"



Artist Morel Doucet's "Daughters of the Copper Sun" ceramic bust at the Climate Conference. Photo courtesy of Marielaura Leslie

Spring said. "...I think that we have one of the most progressive mayors in America now in Daniella Levine Cava, and she has really focused our government on this issue and she's encouraged our department's work in this area.

"We have new positions in our government that focus on Biscayne Bay and on the effects

of heat on people in businesses and communities, so this is in the context of a mayor who's really leading the charge — she's at the forefront of pointing the government in the direction of addressing these things, so the governmental environment around what we're doing couldn't be more supportive and this has a lot to do with a

mayor who really gets it, who really understands that there's no time to delay on looking at solutions to these things." **CN**

*Miami-Dade County's Arts Resilient 305 program was a NACo Achievement Award winner last year in the Arts, Culture and Historic Preservation category.*

## GET A GREAT START TO 2023!

Request your free NACo student art competition calendar. Send an email with your name, title, county and address to: [cnews@naco.org](mailto:cnews@naco.org).

Winning artwork for the calendar was created by students from around the country.

The calendar is sponsored by Americans for the Arts and NACo.

