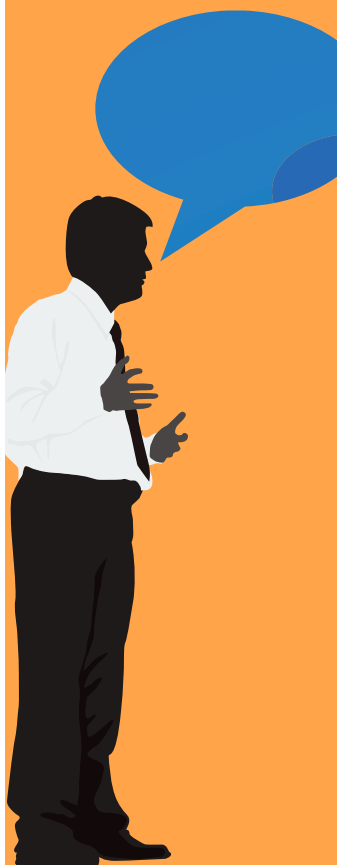


SPOTLIGHT ON: DIVERSITY, EQUITY & INCLUSION

Life experience
informs DEI
policy decisions.
Pg. 8



County
executive
outlines DEI
leadership.
Pg. 13



CN

CountyNews

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION *of* COUNTIES



COUNTY PARK AND REC
NOT JUST ABOUT 'BATS AND
BALLS' ANYMORE. **PG. 5**



L.A. COUNTY PROGRAM
HELPS EASE TRANSITION
FROM JAIL TO JOBS. **PG. 16**

VOL. 54, NO. 6

MARCH 28, 2022



Across the South last week, counties were hit by strong tornadoes. St. Bernard Parish, La. Director of Homeland Security John Rahaim (right) surveys damage March 23 from an EF-3, which had peak winds of over 160 MPH. Parish President Guy McInnis, interviewed by NBC, said residents were sent home early to prepare. The parish, which suffered one fatality, notified residents to be on alert via sirens, phone alerts and NOAA weather radio. Photo courtesy of NOLA Ready

County executive deploys to help Ukraine refugees

by **Charlie Ban**
senior writer

There was a time when Lt. Commander Steve Neuhaus would have viewed a posting to a NATO mission as the sign

that his U.S. Navy Reserve career was winding down.

Not now.

Called away three weeks ago to Italy from what looked like a simple 30-day mission in the Pacific Ocean, the Orange

County, N.Y. executive is now balancing nighttime meetings back home with an ongoing humanitarian effort to help Ukrainian refugees. More than

See UKRAINE page 3

Celebrate the role counties play during National County Government Month

by **Dakota Hendricks**
staff writer

Since 1991, NACo has encouraged counties to raise public awareness of the robust role counties play in our communi-

ties during National County Government Month, held each April.

NACo encourages counties to use this month to raise awareness, participate in community outreach, plan events and promote the programs and services counties provide. This year's theme is "Counties THRIVE," echoing the message of NACo President and DeKalb County, Ga. Commissioner Larry Johnson, of excellence and



continued service despite unprecedented challenges.

NACo encourages all counties to adopt a proclamation declaring the month of April to be National County Government Month.

To celebrate NCGM, counties have participated in a multitude of events like opening their doors to the public, conducting educational

See NCGM page 2

GAS TAX SUSPENSIONS POSE THREAT TO INFRASTRUCTURE FUNDING

by **Charlie Ban**
senior writer

As the war between Russia and Ukraine combines with the post-pandemic recovery to increases gas prices to near-record highs in some parts of the country, states are considering temporary suspensions of their fuel taxes to offer relief to consumers.

That tactic, however, done wrong, could have long-term repercussions for infrastructure funding, much of which is funded by gas taxes.

Maryland and Georgia thus far have approved temporary suspensions, but, with a caveat in Georgia, have also received assurances from their governors that the revenue will be backfilled.

"It's not a long-term solution, for sure," said Todd Kinney, Clinton County Iowa engineer and president of the National Association of County Engineers. "If they did a gas tax holiday in Iowa, you would see a direct decrease in your funding based on whatever taxes weren't collected. So it would be very hard for the Iowa legislators to backfill that money. It's not like the federal Highway Trust Fund, where they could just throw money into it."

Maryland's (36 cents per gallon) state gas tax suspension will last 30 days and Georgia's (29.1 cents per gallon) will last roughly 2.5 months. Governors Larry Hogan (R-Md.) and Brian Kemp (R-Ga.)

See GAS TAX page 5

Share your success stories in April, National County Government Month

From NCGM page 1

tours to raise awareness about what counties do and how important they are to the daily lives of their residents.

Because of the pandemic, more residents have interacted with county government than ever before and NCGM is a fantastic time to capitalize on that interest and awareness.

One of the ways counties can raise awareness is by distributing county fact sheets to local media outlets, schools and through social media.

Take the opportunity to share with the community all the county does for their aging residents, veterans and first responders.

Show what the county offers for supporting children and families and what they have done to support employment and local business.

In previous years, counties have taken to social media to share short stories of community excellence.

In 2018, Pulaski County, Ark. cleaned up roadside litter, leading to the collection of more than 35,000 pounds and 850 bags of trash. They posted information about the cleanup on social media.


In the same year, Pierce County, Wash. released a short video about their county and the many services they provide. In 2021, Tulsa County, Okla. honored the skilled carpenters that crafted a massive table for their county clerk's research library.

Another way to engage your community is to get the word out in your county about the 2022 NACo Student Art Competition, which is a chance to teach students about what counties do.

Get all the details at naco.org/art.

Every county is unique and has a different story to tell. This


year, share your programs and success stories with the hashtag #NCGM or by joining the NACo Untold Stories campaign.

For more information, a sample resolution, examples of social media posts and more, visit www.naco.org/NCGM. 

SNAP/STATS

MARCH IS NATIONAL PEANUT MONTH

TOP 5 PEANUT PRODUCING STATES



STATE	PERCENT
GEORGIA.....	49 PERCENT
FLORIDA.....	11.5 PERCENT
ALABAMA	10.5 PERCENT
TEXAS.....	9.5 PERCENT
NORTH CAROLINA.....	8.5 PERCENT

Source: National Peanut Board

CountyNews

President
Larry Johnson

Publisher
Matthew Chase

Chief Public Affairs Officer
Brian Namey

Editor and Senior Writer
Mary Ann Barton

Digital Editor and Senior Writer
Charlie Ban

Junior Staff Writer
Dakota Hendricks

Design Director
Leon Lawrence III

ADVERTISING STAFF

Job Market/Classifieds representative

National Accounts representative

Mary Ann Barton
202.942.4223
FAX 866.752.1573

Published by:
National Association of Counties
Research Foundation, Inc.
660 N. Capitol Street, N.W. STE. 400,
Washington, D.C. 20001
202.393.6226 | FAX 866.752.1573
E-mail cnews@naco.org
Online address www.countynews.org


The appearance of paid advertisements in County News in no way implies support or endorsement by the National Association of Counties for any of the products, services or messages advertised. Periodicals postage paid at Washington D.C. and other offices.

Mail subscriptions are \$100 per year for non-members. \$60 per year for non-members purchasing multiple copies. Educational institution rate, \$50 per year. Member county supplemental subscriptions are \$20 each. Send payment with order and address changes to NACo, 660 N. Capitol Street, N.W. STE. 400, Washington, D.C. 20001.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to County News, 660 N. Capitol Street, N.W. STE. 400, Washington, D.C. 20001

(USPS 704-620) n (ISSN: 0744-9798)
© National Association of Counties
Research Foundation, Inc.

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION of COUNTIES



We are committed to getting County News on your desktop ASAP. Send your address corrections to cnews@naco.org.

Dear Fellow County Leader,

There is no better time than National County Government Month (NCGM) in April to educate our citizens on the importance of county government and how we touch their lives every day. And now more than ever, the public is seeing firsthand the essential functions counties perform.

Through our tireless efforts and the critical services we provide to our residents, we are fighting the COVID-19 pandemic and saving lives and livelihoods. All across the country, counties provide meals to the hungry; help small businesses that are struggling; provide vital care, testing and vaccinations; and protect the safety, health and vitality of our communities. While we still face many challenges, we have much to be proud of. Selfless county officials and front-line employees have demonstrated bold, inspirational leadership, driving recovery and helping our residents and communities **THRIVE**.

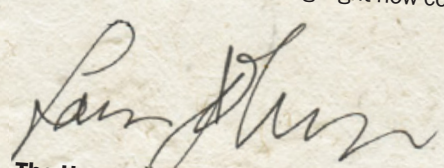
Under my presidential theme, **Counties THRIVE**, we are focusing on six areas that fortify what we do and allow us to best serve our residents:

- **Technology** – equipping counties to expand broadband access to ensure all residents can learn, do business and communicate effectively
- **Health** – improving our overall health and well-being
- **Readiness** – preparing the county workforce to gain the skills they need
- **Infrastructure** – strengthening resilience and the backbone of our communities
- **Vulnerable communities** – advancing equity, strengthening the safety net and ensuring that our residents have the help they need
- **Economic opportunities** – creating conditions for all of us to compete in the 21st century economy.


During NCGM, we have an opportunity to focus on our work to help our communities THRIVE. Now is the time to spotlight your county's role in achieving successes at the local level and to educate the public about how counties provide real support, identifying challenges on the ground and pursuing real solutions.

We hope that you will nominate some of your best county initiatives for our Achievement Awards program. This helps us promote your accomplishments and share your proven practices with all NACo members. With my focus on broadband, we would especially welcome any innovative solutions to meeting your county's broadband challenges. The deadline to apply is March 31. Learn more and apply today at www.NACo.org/AchievementAwards.

We encourage you to continue to showcase how your county is keeping residents healthy and safe and invite you to use NACo's National County Government Month resources to celebrate your accomplishments and highlight how counties help to improve people's lives every day.



The Hon. Larry Johnson
NACo President
Commissioner, DeKalb County, Ga.



NATIONAL COUNTY GOVERNMENT MONTH
APRIL 2022

County executive uses pandemic lessons learned to help Ukrainian refugees abroad



Orange County, N.Y. Executive Steven Neuhaus, right, while serving in Iraq with the U.S. Navy in 2019. Photo courtesy of Orange County, N.Y.

From UKRAINE page 1

2.5 million Ukrainians have been displaced since the Russian invasion began in February and Neuhaus's reserve unit is meeting their needs.

President Biden has made it clear that there will be no armed combat involved in the mission.

"They don't want to be Polish residents or German residents or American citizens, they want to be back in their home," Neuhaus said of the Ukrainian refugees.

"If they can't go home, we have to figure out what to do with them here. It's going to be a huge logistics challenge for NATO, and we're here to support that effort."

Primarily, Neuhaus will work to help feed, house and vaccinate refugees.

He anticipates that his deployment could be over in as little as two months, but that's dependent on the progress of the conflict in Ukraine.

"A lot of it involves doing what Orange County has done

during the COVID-19 pandemic: Distribute supplies to different organizations and respond with contingencies," he said. "It will mean using skills I've been honing for the last two years."

While he's in Italy, Neuhaus is checking in every afternoon

— or for him, six hours ahead, every night — with the county, including with Deputy County Executive Henry Porr.

While his "face time" with most county staff may be diminished, his input into county matters won't be.

"I have a worldwide hotspot

and a phone with unlimited international service," Neuhaus said. "The biggest challenge is the time difference."

While he will work 8-12 hours most days with the reserves, he has ample time to devote to the county, in part because aside from some stra-

tegically timed phone calls to his wife and kids, his lack of family obligations has opened up a hole in his calendar.

His reservist career began after 9/11, when he joined the Army National Guard, then later the Navy Reserve. He deployed in Morocco in 2011 during the Arab Spring; South Korea in 2017 when the North Korean regime tested missiles early in the Trump administration and Iraq in 2019 to fight ISIS. All deployments except Morocco took place while he's been county executive, and he delivered his 2019 State of the County address remotely from Baghdad.

His commanding officer in the Reserve is an IT administrator in a California county where the county administrator is a Navy officer.

"County government is very rich and alive in the reserves," Neuhaus said.

From his experience working with Iraqi refugees from ISIS, he's familiar with the de facto governments the refugee communities and sees parallels to county government.

He also has taken some of his military experience back home to Orange County.

He adapted his commanders' routine in Iraq where they released daily one-page briefs detailing the progress and direction of substantial missions over the surrounding 48 hours, having his county staff do the same during the height of the pandemic.

"It was never more than one page, but it was a snapshot of what was going on in the county and measured things like cases, hospitalizations, deaths," he said.

"It gave me a barometer of where things are and where they're going, and I released it to the public to give people a place to go for the reality of what we were dealing with."

Right now, however, he is figuring out how to best manage the dramatic swings in time zones, coming all the way from Hawaii two weeks prior.

"I'm just trying to get some sleep, I'm working on about two hours a night, right now," he said. **CN**

HOW COUNTIES ARE HELPING UKRAINE

■ Although private organizations and nonprofits are leading efforts to collect materials for donation in support of Ukrainian refugees and the military, several county governments are stepping up in their roles as conveners to galvanize public support:

■ Nassau County, N.Y. Executive Bruce Blakeman coordinated a gun donation program that collected 60 rifles to be sent to the Ukrainian Ministry of Defense.

■ The Pueblo County, Colo. Sheriff's Office has donated 83 ballistic vests to the Ukrainian military.

■ Onondaga County Executive Ryan McMahon and Syracuse Mayor Ben Walsh sent a letter to President Biden offering Syracuse and Onondaga County as a community "ready, willing and able" to play host to Ukrainian refugees.

■ The Will County, Ill. Board collected boxes full of backpacks; sleeping bags and blankets; first aid and personal hygiene items; diapers and wipes to refugees.

■ Union County, N.J. made donation boxes available in the lobbies of 24 law enforcement agencies.

■ The Somerset County, N.J. Board of Commissioners temporarily renamed a downtown Somerville plaza after "Freedom Square" in the Ukrainian capital of Kyiv.

■ West Virginia sheriff offices collected donations coordinated by the state's law enforcement coalition.

■ Jefferson County, N.Y. firefighters collected firefighting gear.

■ Dutchess County, N.Y. rallied groups and organizations to coordinate their collections with the county's.



2022 NACo
**WESTERN
INTERSTATE REGION**

IN CONJUNCTION WITH NACo's
RURAL ACTION CAUCUS SYMPOSIUM

MAY 18-20 / ANCHORAGE, ALASKA

CONFERENCE



Register Today! www.NACo.org/WIR22

REGISTRATION NOW OPEN!

www.NACo.org/Annual

ANNUAL CONFERENCE & EXPOSITION

ADAMS COUNTY
COLORADO

JULY 21-24, 2022

Note new pattern: Thursday – Sunday



County rec programs not just about 'bats and balls' anymore

by **Dakota Hendricks**
staff writer

As communities grow and change, the programs serving those communities must adapt to keep pace with new and innovative ideas.

"In the world of recreation, we now understand the field is changing and what we provide for youth programming, for our youth participants to do, is not just about the bats and balls anymore, it's about being innovative and creating other avenues of recreation," said Robert Walker, director of recreation at the Frank Johnson Recreation Center in Macon-Bibb County, Ga.

Since 2016, Walker began noticing a shift in the field of recreation. Together with longtime employee supervisor, Clarence Thomas, the two discussed how best to provide programs for kids who may be looking for less traditional recreation.

"The idea behind it was to diversify our offerings and to reflect the needs of the community," said Thomas. They began planning new programs in 2017. By 2019, the demographics served by the recreation center had fully embraced the



Students of the Macon Bibb Teen Communications Program put their interviewing skills to the test. Photo courtesy of Macon-Bibb County

ideas of less traditional recreation. As they discussed potential programs, it became apparent that within the department they had some expertise in journalism. Thomas had over 20 years of experience in various forms of journalism as a videographer, editor and freelancer.

The two began crafting a program for middle school and high school students to learn digital video broadcasting, something that many of the kids may already be exposed to through programs like Snapchat and Facebook. The program would involve teaching

broadcasting both at the center and on-site through field trips and hands-on experiences with broadcasting equipment. The goal was to have students leave the program with tangible skills they could take into the industry or have an advantage if they decided to take college-level courses. "We want somebody, somewhere to one day be able to say to them [students], 'Man we almost can't afford you,'" said Thomas.

The recreation center brought on another longtime employee, Jacory Bazell, to run the day-to-day operations of the program. The recreation

center purchased broadcasting equipment including lights, tripods, Panasonic 4K cameras and more at a cost of \$10,000 and began advertising the program through local events and schools.

Only two students attended the first meeting in October 2021, but that did not discourage Bazell. With time and recruitment efforts, there are now 21 students enrolled in the program. Each participant is taught on all the equipment and each role involved in video broadcast production including producer, camera man and "sideline reporter." The

group goes out to local events like a school basketball game and live streams the event to the Frank Johnson Recreation Center Facebook page.

For now, the program only involves broadcasting; however, Thomas hopes to be able to expand it into other avenues of journalism if there is interest. He is particularly excited to have the students become involved in the local film festival in the future. When asked about advice for other recreation centers and counties on starting unique programs like this, Thomas advised "be consistent, be creative." **CN**

Gas taxes are 'for one purpose only'

From **GAS TAX** page 1

have pledged to backfill lost revenue from state general funds, but Association County Commissioners of Georgia Executive Director Dave Wills said the fate of local maintenance improvement grants to counties and cities was still up in the air.

Those grants are drawn from 10 percent to 20 percent of the preceding fiscal year's gas taxes, and Georgia's gas tax suspension ends at the end of the fiscal year on June 30.

"By the time [this fiscal year] concludes on June 30th of this year and will be the basis for the appropriations that were made in the 2023 budget, we won't actually know what results to expect for funding we'll receive until the next legislative session," he said.

Gov. Glenn Youngkin (R-Va.) has called for a three-month suspension of the state's gas tax, which is 26.7 cents. Gov. Gretchen Whitmer (D-Mich.) plans to veto the Legislature's passage of a 27-cent-per-gallon tax suspension. The semantics surrounding gas taxes bely their nature as user fees that fund infrastructure, and Kinney said that muddies the issue for many consumers.

"It's basically a user fee, so it's one of the more equitable fees or taxes you'll pay," he said. "In a lot of places, it's constitutionally protected and has to be spent on roadways," he noted. "It's not like a property tax or income tax or something where you really don't know where that money is going. Fuel excise taxes are there for one purpose and one purpose only." **CN**

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION of COUNTIES **NACo**

DEADLINE EXTENDED
April 15 at 11:59 p.m. EDT

2022 NACo **ACHIEVEMENT AWARDS**

MONTGOMERY COUNTY **COVID CORPS**

Submit your application at www.naco.org/achievementaward

QUESTIONS? Contact awards@naco.org

WORD SEARCH

PALM BEACH COUNTY, Fla.
Created by: Mary Ann Barton

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

AIRPORT: The county-owned airport consistently wins awards for its amenities including a spa, a putting green, lactation suites and three pet-relief areas.

BEACH: The county has 47 miles of beach.

BREAKERS: A historic hotel built in 1896, originally called The Palm Beach Inn.

EMPLOYER: The county’s largest employer is Palm Beach County School District, with 22,000 employees.

GOLF: The county owns and operates five golf courses.

HISTORY: The county was founded in 1909, carved out of Dade County. Meetings were held in a four-room schoolhouse.

INDUSTRIES: The three largest industries in the county are tourism, construction and agriculture.

LARGE: The county is the second-largest county in Florida covering over 2,000 square miles. (The largest is Collier County.)

LIGHTHOUSE: The Jupiter Inlet Lighthouse is the oldest structure in the county, built in 1860.

PALM: The county is named for the large number of palm trees which were planted by local residents, after a ship wrecked nearby in 1878 with a shipment of coconuts from Trinidad.

RAILROAD: The Jupiter and Lake Worth Celestial Railroad and Henry Flagler’s Florida East Coast Railroad (FEC) began service in the late 1800s, opening the county to tourism and interstate trade.

RESTAURANT: Florida’s oldest waterfront restaurant, Old Key Lime House, is located in the county. It opened in 1889.

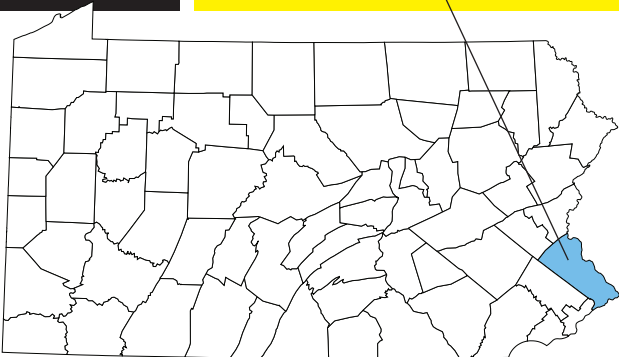
SEAT: The county seat is West Palm Beach, which is the county’s largest city.

SUGAR: The county leads the nation in production of sugar, producing more than 17 million tons of sugar cane last year.

TOURISM: Tourism in the county is up 83 percent compared to last year, according to the county tourist development council.

GET TO KNOW...

Bucks County, Pa.



Welcome to Bucks County, Pa.

Located north of the city of Philadelphia, Bucks County is bounded by the Delaware River and is rich with history.

One of the three counties first created by the founder of Pennsylvania William Penn in 1682, Bucks County is named after the English town of Buckinghamshire. Tourism has become a booming industry in the county with 8.15 million visitors each year exploring the rolling hills and rich forests. The once largely agricultural county has several historical sites from the American Revolution, 12 covered bridges, several historic museums, vineyards, parks and more.

Beginning in the 20th century, Bucks County earned a reputation for artistry,

attracting famous painters, authors, poets and playwrights.

Tony Award-winning lyricist Oscar Hammerstein II grew up in New York City and later moved to a farm in Doylestown, the Bucks County seat. Hammerstein, with composer Richard Rodgers, created many of the lyrics for their musicals, including “Oklahoma!” “The Sound of Music” and “Carousel,” at the farm.

“Get to Know” features new NACo member counties.



Oscar Hammerstein II





Make an Impact on Consumer’s Everyday Safety

See how many standards protect human health, safety, and the environment at ansi.link/consumer



Cumberland County, Pa. partners with mental health provider for first responders



Cumberland County commissioners, EMS members and On the Job and Off representatives gather in January 2022 at the First Responder Assistance Program press conference for the launch of their partnership. Photo courtesy of Cumberland County, Pa.

by **Dakota Hendricks**
staff writer

Four years ago, Cumberland County, Pa. recognized a need to support 911 dispatchers in the county. Facing growing levels of “compassion fatigue,” the county decided to create a peer support network that could ease the burden of a difficult job. Although peer support and Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) teams they already had in place were effective, there was a gap in what their services could provide. It was clear the county needed access to trained clinicians with experience in caring for first responders.

Mike Snyder, a county 911 dispatcher and leader of the CISM team, ran into a problem almost immediately in trying to bridge the gap in service. Snyder found mental health clinicians could not respond quickly, with wait times as long as five to six months for an appointment. In the first responder community especially, it can be difficult to convince someone to seek help,

and to be met with such a drastic wait time, meant that some were less likely to, Snyder said. The county continued to look for a solution.

They found it by teaming up with former firefighter Ali Rothrock, who now heads up a program that helps first responders with the stresses of the job. The roots of the program years ago, on her first call working with a volunteer fire department at age 16. She knew that something was missing in how communities care for first responders, after responding to a fatal car crash involving children. She quickly realized there was “absolutely nobody” to help first responders recover from such a scene.

“I moved forward from that call realizing that our training really stops at a certain point,” she said. “We’re never taught how to deal with the constant sleep disruptions, the horrible things that we see, the burn-out, how that affects our ability to, you know, be a spouse or a parent.”

Through her volunteer work as a firefighter, Rothrock iden-

tified a need for care and dedicated herself to raising awareness. She wrote a book called “Where Hope Lives,” began speaking at events, became a Certified Trauma Responder and toured the country teaching mental health awareness and support for first responders.

‘First responders experience the worst of the worst...’

ers.

In 2018, she founded On the Job and Off, bringing her in-person training online. Rothrock moved to Cumberland County, Pa. and began working on the CISM team under Snyder and quickly made the same realization, waiting six months for an appointment with a specialist who has no experience with first responders is “almost not even worth it,” she noted.

With the help of a trusted clinician and also a former firefighter, Lisa Zoll, Rothrock launched the “Gearing Up”

training, began vetting clinicians and sending first responders for care to someone with experience in the field. “Gearing Up” is a one-day training course for clinicians to receive the experience needed to understand the duties and difficulties of a first responder.

In partnership with Cumberland County, On the Job and Off launched the First Responder Assistance Program (FRAP) designed to provide care quickly, when it is most needed. The program provides a hotline for first responders to receive care in a timely manner. The program has the full support of the county commissioners who understand the need for such services.

“Cumberland County is leading the state by implementing this access of care to our first responders,” said Cumberland County Commissioner Gary Eichelberger.

“First responders experience the worst of the worst — they absorb the sights, sounds and smells of the horrific details,” said Commissioner Vince DiFilippo. “These men and

women are dedicated to helping people, and Cumberland County is proving that we are dedicated to supporting their lives, so they can continue to respond to our county’s needs.”

Snyder said the scope of the program is not only for those traditionally considered first responders. The county has identified others who could be in critical need of mental health support like coroners, human services and children and youth caseworkers. “We need to make sure as employers and as supervisors, that we’re taking care of those folks.”

One of the ways the county is working to fight back against the stigma of mental health treatment is through making mental health treatment more routine. Snyder said even if the team returns from a call that is not a “critical incident” they will conduct the briefing anyway. This helps encourage participation when things are difficult as the process becomes more normal. Another

See **HOTLINE** page 20

TACKLING DEI FROM THE INSIDE OUT IN HENNEPIN COUNTY, MINN.

by Mary Ann Barton
editor

Hennepin County, Minn. Commissioner Angela Conley is a living breathing example of the principles of diversity, equity and inclusion or more commonly called by its acronym “DEI.”

“It’s the whole reason why I ran for this office,” she said.

More than 20 years ago, she was a young single mother at the county welfare office (as she noted it was called back then), applying for food support, cash assistance and child-care assistance.

“I was one foot away from homelessness — if it wasn’t for my sister’s basement,” she said.

“The county is where you go to receive the type of support we need to become self-sufficient, to thrive,” she said. But when she stepped foot inside the county office, she said she “felt like a case number.” It was that experience that inspired her to later work for the county.

Once she got on her feet, she applied for a job with the county, to be a human services representative, helping process TANF cases. “I wanted to be this warm, friendly face for people who were like me, at the end of their rope, I wanted to be that face who walked them through mounds of paperwork and made them feel human.”

Fast forward 20 years to 2018, when she ran for a seat on the county board. Knocking on doors asking people to vote for

her as a county commissioner, she heard the same stories she had lived through.

“I was able to relate and say ‘Yeah, I’ve been through that, and this is the way I want to change the system to work better for us,’ she said. “It’s overwhelmingly our most marginalized residents who have these experiences and it shouldn’t be that way.”

SPOTLIGHT ON DIVERSITY EQUITY & INCLUSION

“I had to tell people about the importance of county government and why we need to pay attention, especially as people of color — that this is the level of government we really need to pay attention to.”

Not only had she lived through the kinds of experiences that many marginalized people have, but she worked internally to make those experiences different for other people. “I dedicated my career to it,” she said. She worked for 10 years for the county and 10 years for the state in human services positions “trying to make these changes from within, realizing that real power to make systemic changes happens on the county board. I knew I needed to be there.”

Conley was elected in 2018

as the first Black county commissioner in the county’s history. Election night “was overwhelming,” she said. “I couldn’t stop crying. My daughter was there, she was 6 at the time. It solidified for me that young women of color don’t have to sit and wait your turn.”

About 40 percent of Hennepin County’s population identifies as a person of color, she noted. Her election “just made sense to be reflective of that,” she said.

Transition from ‘worker role’ to policymaker

“As the saying goes, ‘you’re drinking from a fire hose,’ so there certainly was a learning curve,” Conley said of her first days on the job as a county commissioner. “I know the inside and outside of county government like the back of my hand. But being in a worker role as opposed to a policy-making role, that’s the learning curve.”

She had to learn the ins and outs of negotiating policy, negotiating with her colleagues and gaining support. “That took awhile, to get a feel for my colleagues and where they stood on the issues,” she said.

Tackling homelessness

Homelessness was a top priority for Conley. “The year before I ran, and during the year I ran for this office, we had the largest homeless encampment that we had ever seen, and it



was right in the district that I represent now,” she said. She was disappointed, she said, in how Hennepin County had failed to invest in shelter systems that “were inclusive, that were dignified and when you have that type of breakdown or lack of investment, this is what happens. People living outside in places unfit for human habitation.” She worked with Hennepin County and county staff to change that.

Before she was sworn into office, she rode a local train system overnight with a colleague from the St. Paul City Council and talked to people who were

making the trains their home, asking them, “What’s wrong with our shelter system? Why don’t you want to stay there? The people who are living this are the experts, let’s learn from them,” she said.

“Over the last two years I’ve worked hard to open a shelter for women and we were able to do that. The number one group experiencing homelessness are Black and indigenous women. They needed safe places.”

The shelter passed the city zoning process this year. “We’re going to get people who identify as women into that shelter,” she said. “We were able to



Hennepin County, Minn. Commissioner Angela Conley speaks to students at a ceremony to celebrate improvements to a local park. Photo courtesy of Hennepin County

bring this to fruition. It was a full package of philanthropic, city, county and state funds. It was a matter of reaching out to the right people. It was beautiful how it came together."

Creating a race equity advisory council

Conley created a race equity advisory council to report to the county board of commissioners. They present an annual report to let the county know where the greatest disparities exist in the county and advise the board on how they might dedicate funds on various ini-

tiatives. Last year, they advised the board to invest more in health equity. That prompted Conley to author a board resolution to add \$10 million to support maternal and infant health of the Black and indigenous population.

She and a colleague (Irene Fernando) also co-wrote a resolution in 2020 to declare racism a public health crisis.

Food inequity

Food access and food inequity "have always been an issue, especially in the district I represent," Conley said. Part of the district includes the cam-

pus of the University of Minnesota. While campaigning, students told her their top two needs were affordable housing and food access. "Students are hungry and they're tired of making macaroni in their microwaves," she said.

"I said, 'You know what? We have a county office on campus here that renews drivers' licenses and IDs, but why isn't there a space in that office to apply for food benefits?'"

"We're in the process right now of opening up space for students to apply for cash and food assistance," she said. "The campus has never had that.

We're working on the logistics now. I believe in moving policy based on what people living it tell me. And when they're telling me that they're hungry and have no access to food on campus then that means we need to open access to food on campus."

Uncomfortable conversations

"When I first came to the board, and I was talking about the race equity advisory council, it was not a unanimous vote, racism as a public health crisis was a 4-3 vote," Conley noted.

"These are new conversations to the board," she said. "Our board is much different now, it's much easier to have conversations about race and race equity than it was when I first started."

"This wasn't comfortable to talk about. And that's the issue. Race, racism and disparity reduction and how they relate to each other and DEI efforts and how they relate to racism or anti-racism, that's not comfortable for people, which is great!"

"We've got to be uncomfortable," she said. "If we're comfortable, we're not making substantial change." **CN**

IN NEW JERSEY, 'FREEHOLDER' NAME IS IN THE PAST

by **Dakota Hendricks**
staff writer

It took a coalition from a vocal group of county officials, the New Jersey Governor's Office and several state senators to end a stubborn remnant of a bygone era, "freeholder" two years ago.

The freeholder title dates to before the American Revolution, and loosely translates to mean the only people eligible to hold public office at the time — white male owners of debt-free land.

In modern-day New Jersey, the term freeholder referred to a position akin to a county commissioner. Attempts to remove the term in the state had failed until a national shift occurred after the murder of George Floyd spurred the nation to focus on diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI).

A longtime politician, community leader and county freeholder from Union County N.J. decided to take action



Union County, N.J. Commissioner Angela Garretson, in a photo before the name change from "freeholder" to "commissioner."

two years ago. Commissioner Angela Garretson has been an elected official since 2004, first running for a position on the school board, then to mayor of Hillside, N.J. and then county freeholder. After the death of Floyd, Garretson formed a coalition of black county officials called the NJNineteen with the goal of replacing the term with a far more common and less

offensive "county commissioner." Garretson said the group was able to mobilize their allies in the Governor's Office, in the state Senate and in the community. Through hard work and raising awareness, the group was able to flip the script on more traditional attempts to remove the term

to a strategy "embracing the tenets and the values of DEI." Garretson said the year they succeeded she was running again for office. "I ran as a freeholder, but I became one of the

first commissioners in the state of New Jersey." — ANGELA GARRETSON

N.J. State Sen. Joseph Pen-

"I ran as a freeholder, but I became one of the first commissioners in the state of New Jersey." — ANGELA GARRETSON

first commissioners in the state of New Jersey."

Another member of NJNineteen, Burlington County Commissioner Felicia Hopson, said the response from her community has been "overwhelmingly positive."

"I found it was easier to connect with residents and constituents, explaining what I did with having the term commissioner as opposed to freeholder," she said. "There are still a lot more dif-

ficult conversations that need to be had, but this step from freeholder to commissioner is definitely a step in the right direction."

nacchio sponsored a bill to end the term in 2018 which was unsuccessful and cosponsored the bill in 2020 that succeeded. Pennacchio was once a county freeholder and pushed to have the term changed to county commissioner in the name of clarity and transparency. "I was a freeholder and I knew I spent more time telling people what a freeholder was than what I did," he noted. "If you want people to be engaged with their government, they have to know who they're talking to in the first place." **CN**

SPOTLIGHT ON
**DIVERSITY
EQUITY &
INCLUSION**

SEND US YOUR MASTERPIECE.

**2022 "I Love My County Because..."
Art Competition
now accepting entries.**

Our annual NACo Student Art Competition in conjunction with National County Government Month (April) is now open. Students in grades 1-12 are encouraged to enter the competition with the theme "I Love My County Because..."

For more information, visit: naco.org/art

Sponsored by:



EQUITY-BASED BUDGETING EXAMINES FISCAL IMPACTS

by **Charlie Ban**
senior writer

They don't always use the name, but the effect is the same.

Wayne County, Mich. doesn't have an explicit equity budgeting policy, but Chief Financial Officer Hughey Newsome won't put up a fight if you call it what it is.

"It's de facto equity budgeting because Detroit is a majority-minority city," he said, pointing out that in addition to the county's demographics, which include a large Middle Eastern population in Dearborn there are also residents downstream of industrials sites who pollute their water supply.

"It's one thing to me in equity budgeting — it's as much output and performance budgeting as it is equity, right? Because you want to make sure that you're spending dollars where it's effective, but you also want to spend dollars where it's fair," he said.

"We've had to consider the disproportionate impact of the housing crisis and the need for services to certain populations all the way into the impacts of COVID, again and again, be-

cause the City of Detroit and Wayne County were probably some of the worst hit in terms of infections with comorbidities."

In the perspective of the crises Wayne County residents face, equitable budgeting means prioritizing the placement of resources toward plugging the leaks in a boat, rather than buying every-

one the same flotation devices — allocating resources where they are needed the most. After all, a vessel won't do much good if it's underwater. Counties are starting to adopt the fundamentals of equitable budgeting, trailing cities, but with the potential to affect even farther-reaching changes to address long-standing underinvestment. It represents an opportunity to improve outcomes for residents.

Newsome said Wayne County has been employing aspects of equitable budgeting since 2015. Milwaukee County, Wis. started fully embracing the strategy in 2019, and now requires departments to use a racial equity budget tool that gauges how budget reductions may or may not burden

Black and Brown individuals and communities. The tool asks department directors if service users of color have been engaged in budgeting decision-making, how racial and economic data figured into how resource distribution was prioritized and the overall racial equity implications of proposed budget changes.

The starting point, and the most important through line, Newsome said, is having clearly defined metrics.

"Reliable, usable data is the key to effectively tracking the impacts of budgeting across demographics," he said. "The key thing is going to be getting the metrics and making sure that staff is doing this kind of thinking, not getting lost in the theoretical. To define the metrics of what we need to be focused on, you have the challenge of trying to standardize what we measure."

What Wayne County needs is to fully integrate its accounting software with geographic information systems to overlay investments made by location versus complaints or incidents reported nearby.

"Essentially, let's aggregate the spending information from

a financial standpoint, the customer service like a Cityworks aspect, but also get that GIS information in there to give us a comprehensive view of, 'This is how much money we spend, this is where we spend it, this is how effective we were,'" he said.

Changing resource allocations can prompt public outcry, and the Government Finance Officers Association offers five principles when implementing equity-based budgeting principles:

- **Avoid creating zero-sum competitions:** When resources are shifted, the constituency losing out may not see the communal growth enabled by reinvestment elsewhere.
- **Avoid either/or thinking and encourage both/and thinking:** Shifts in investment can prevent problems from happening in the first place.
- **Create procedural justice:** If people feel the process used to reach budget decisions was fair, they are much more likely to be willing to live with the outcomes.
- **Decompose outcomes:** Governments should differentiate among outcomes, intermediate outcomes and ultimate outcomes, allowing govern-

ment to focus on where it may need to form partnerships and where its role is indirect.

• **Engage citizens in the conversation:** The decisions on distribution and redistribution of public resources and who decides should be informed with citizens from across the community.

Impetus for equity budgeting comes from elected officials, and Newsome said their background plays a key role.

"These leaders have been exposed and came up understanding the needs of means of certain populations," he said. "You have it organically or learn it from a textbook.

"At the end of the day, they understand the end game, which is 'We have to service those people that have been under-represented before.' What equity budgeting is going to get you, in theory, is the most bang for your buck to serve, to serve a certain population that needs it."

Newsome anticipates the federal government's guidelines for spending American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding will encourage more county adoption of equitable budgeting strategies.

"The discipline has been put on us by the federal government, where we're having to develop metrics to report on from a quantitative perspective," he said. "My expectation is those disciplines are going to steal from our ARPA reporting over into our normal reporting." **CN**

SPOTLIGHT ON
DIVERSITY
EQUITY &
INCLUSION

DEI RESOURCE LIST

Share your county's diversity, equity and inclusion efforts at NACo's DEI resource page, which includes county declarations and resources, committees and initiatives and key terms and definitions. <https://www.naco.org/county-resources-diversity-equity-and-inclusion>.

Other DEI resources for local governments include:

- **Municipal Research and Services Center** <https://mrsc.org/Home/Explore-Topics/Governance/Citizen-Participation-and-Engagement/DEI-Resources-for-Local-Government.aspx>
- **Government Technology** <https://www.govtech.com/biz/diversity-inclusion-state-local-government-icymi>
- **Gov Loop** <https://www.govloop.com/fostering-diversity-in-local-government/>
- **Villanova University** <https://www.villanovau.com/resources/public-administration/diversity-equity-and-inclusion-in-public-administration/>
- **Mayor's Caucus** <https://mayorscaucus.org/initiatives/diversity/dei-resources-for-municipal-governments/>

Hire Quality Staff @ Jobs
Online jobs.naco.org

FIRST LATINA KANSAS COMMISSIONER SEES DEI OPPORTUNITIES

by **Charlie Ban**
senior writer

Though she ran for the Board of Commissioners to help ensure a better life for her daughter, Sarah Lopez sees her role in Sedgwick County, Kan. as a chance to open opportunities to a larger community.

"I have a different outlook than some of my colleagues around the state and so diversity, equity and inclusion is incredibly important to me," she said. "I have kids that are part of the LGBT community and they were discriminated against in school, and so that's kind of really what made me want to help resolve some of these things, update some non-discrimination policies with schools."

When Lopez ran for the board of county commissioners, she angled her campaign with the message of ensuring that her southern district got its fair share of services and resources. But as her campaign went on, she saw a powerful symbolic opportunity as the first Latina county commissioner in Kansas history. While people of Hispanic descent make up roughly 20 percent of Sedgwick County's population and she is one of five commissioners, she does not represent the district where the majority of Hispanics live.

Lopez sees great potential for an influx of talent if the county can make itself a more attractive employer with a greater emphasis on internal equity.

"I want to make sure that

we're doing a better job of being more inclusive as everybody is having all kinds of workforce shortage issues around the country," she said. "We're no different and I really think that this is a way that we can start getting into more communities that might not

ever think about working in local government."

Aside from the symbolic and leadership position she holds, Lopez also looks forward to a systematic look at how Sedgwick County policies could change its hiring practices and nondiscrimina-

tion policies.

"It's been a long time coming and I don't think anybody has intentionally put any policies in place, but if you haven't lived experiences, then it's hard to really understand them," she said.

Lopez would also like to see herself recruiting more people who look like her to run for county office.

"I think anytime being the first of anything, there's a lot of pressures that come from both sides of that," she said. "The Hispanic community locally is really looking at me to kind of set an example.

"Going to our Kansas Association of Counties meeting, the other commissioners look pretty much the same, so walking into that room, I don't always feel as if I fit in there, but I defi-

nately think it's important to show up and to be seen and for people to realize that, you know, our community is the Hispanic community in Kansas is growing and we need to have more representation."

The road to the county commission was the more challenging part for Lopez, who faced some race-based opposition during her campaign.

"I don't know if it was intimidating necessarily, but there were some mailers and things that were sent around that were veiled race-baiting and really trying to point to the color of my skin or my last name or whatever

the case may be," she said. "And so that was pretty disappointing, but I wasn't necessarily intimidated by it. In my professional career, I've pretty much been the only woman or person of color in most of the rooms anyways, so it wasn't something that I wasn't used to already."

Lopez has joined NACo's DEI Advisory Group, a group of county DEI professional staffers and elected officials interested in discussing diversity, equity and inclusion.

"I'm really excited to be a part of it, selfishly," she said. "I feel like I'm going to learn a whole lot from the people that are part of that group and just want to see what I can bring back to Sedgwick County, because I don't have a lot of DEI familiarity besides my lived experience. So being able to learn from people who have really studied this is going to be helpful.

"It's something that all organizations at this point should be making an effort toward," she noted. "I'm excited to bring my experience as a young Hispanic woman in a predominantly White area in the middle of our country. I do think that I'll have a different perspective than maybe others from the coasts because they are quite a few years ahead of where we are today with this work." **CN**

Are you interested in joining NACo's DEI Advisory Group? Contact Ophelia Bitanga-Israel at obitanga@naco.org.

SPOTLIGHT ON
**DIVERSITY
EQUITY &
INCLUSION**



Sedgwick County, Kan. Commissioner Sarah Lopez visits Sen. Jerry Moran (R-Kan.). Photo courtesy of Sarah Lopez

County leadership on DEI starts at the top

by Dave Somers

I've been given great responsibility as Snohomish County Executive to expand the conversation and advance diversity, equity and inclusion in all of our communities.

The entire county is nearing 850,000 people, about 70 percent are White, and it's a very easy place just to put issues or race aside and say there's no problem because a lot of us don't experience it on a day-to-day basis. There had been a Diversity Commission under a prior county executive, and it had disbanded itself out of frustration at the lack of progress.

Talking to our employees, particularly our employees of color, about what they are experiencing and checking back in with the former task force revealed deep problems. We have Proud Boys, and we have White nationalists; they showed up on our streets in 2020 in response to a false rumor that Antifa and Black Lives Matter activists were planning to overtake one of our towns. The deep divisions became extremely clear to me and everyone else who was paying attention.

I established a new Equity and Inclusion TaskForce, and I asked employees—a very diverse group with a passion for these issues—please tell me how to best advance this conversation and this work here in Snohomish County because many of you have lived it and experienced it. They came back and said: "This needs to come from the leadership, this needs to come from the top, needs to come from the county executive. You need to be clear about language that's coming out. You need to empower people. We have a lot of work here to do within county government."

I had a list of things that we needed to accomplish after George Floyd's murder in 2020. Working with our local NAACP chapter, I issued a proclamation because I wanted to be very clear about what I hoped we could accomplish, things like body cams, citizen oversight bodies, and bail reform. I started an Office of So-



Somers

cial Justice in my office and reassigned five staff members to it. We meet weekly, and I'm part of that group, so is my deputy. Everything that group does comes with the weight of my office behind it. The task force is now assigned to our human resources department and is going through all the impediments we have to employment, workplace barriers, and all the things that our employees really experience that are challenges to advancing diversity and inclusion in the workplace.

It's also essential that people we are asking to do work for us are compensated. Many of the community leaders have other jobs or responsibilities. During the Census, we knew we had to reach out to underrepresented communities and asked for community leaders to help us get this work done. We ended up paying them using gift cards because that's the only way we could get the ap-


proval of our attorneys. With the COVID-19 pandemic, we wanted to make sure we were getting information about clinics and vaccines out to everybody in our community; therefore, we compensated people who helped with outreach. As a result, we saved lives.

Once a month, my department directors and our leadership team have dedicated cabinet meetings to talk about diversity, equity and inclusion issues. And last year we worked through the book "Me and White Supremacy." The book allowed us to discuss some very difficult issues and better understand where we needed to make progress. These conversations can be uncomfortable, and some of my department directors were really challenged. We read through the book and had roundtable discussions on it to make sure we all could face this together. As a result, DEI has been at the forefront of everything we do.

I'm an older White guy, but it's very important not only that I listen to all of our communities but also that I listen to people who experience racism and inequity in our community. I want their experience

to inform me and my work. I'm not an expert on DEI issues, but I must make decisions on what to do, because of my role in the community. In order to make those decisions, I need folks talking to me who live this every single day, because I don't. I know that their input is essential to guide me, my office and its work. Our engagement with our communities and community leaders is absolutely vital both to the work we're doing internally and to the work we do out in the community. They help inform my decision making.

We are all in different places along this journey of making our communities and country fairer and more just for everyone. There are various levels of comfort even talking about these issues, but in Snohomish County we talk about them. Though, those of us who are more comfortable, we do most of the talking and those who are less comfortable do more listening. As we go through this process, it's becoming easier for everyone to talk and explain our wealth of perspectives and experiences or lack of experiences.

Prior to working in county government, I was a biologist, and there is something in biology called disturbance ecology. When you have a flood or a fire or a windstorm, there's disruption and there can be pain. But from that, new life springs forward. So having these issues out in the open, talking about them, trying to understand them, identifying where we are, is really the only way forward. It's a good thing. It can be painful, but it's a good thing. We just need to keep talking about it, understand it, and move forward. 

SPOTLIGHT ON
DIVERSITY
EQUITY &
INCLUSION

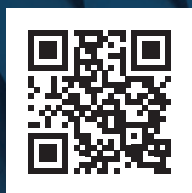


Dave Somers is the elected executive of Snohomish County, Wash. He spoke as part of a panel discussion "Say and Do: Five Strategies for Advancing Diversity, Equity and Inclusion in your Community" at NACo's 2021 Annual Conference in Prince George's County, Md.

alteryx

From Analytics Bottlenecks to **Breakthroughs**

Empower your teams
to upskill with
analytics automation
that democratizes
data and drives
breakthroughs.



ALTERYX.COM

SPONSORED CONTENT

Analytics Automation Accelerates the Delivery of Unemployment Benefits During COVID

What happens when a large transactional system that is scoped to manage around 2,000 applications a month suddenly faces an unprecedented influx of 2,000,000 applications? You quickly discover that your legacy system needs help.

Recently, I had an opportunity to sit down and talk with Dr. Matthew McCarville, former Chief Data Officer for the state of Florida, about how Florida responded when faced with an unprecedented influx of requests for unemployment assistance at the height of the Covid pandemic.

In the face of the pandemic, Florida's unemployment agency found themselves facing an overwhelming challenge – the inability to scale with the sheer volume of new applicants. In a matter of days, a task force of state technology and data leaders worked to supplement their existing system with critical automation to handle the extreme influx of applications. Using a combination of Google Forms for data intake, analytics automation through Alteryx, and RPA

through UiPath, the agency was able to restore access to a critical array of services for those seeking unemployment relief.

Two million applications and counting

The pandemic caused a sharp influx of unemployment applications in Florida (from 2,000 a month to 2,000,000), and their unemployment system was unable to scale in response to the requests for support. That led to a system that was inaccessible to those desperately seeking assistance, and the information that was collected could not be analyzed for eligibility, adjudication decisions could not be processed in a timely

manner, and manual processes could not ensure adequate protection from instances of fraud. This led to delays in the distribution of unemployment relief, creating additional economic pressure on individuals and families, as well as pressure on state leaders to swiftly correct these concerns.

Agility and stability through analytics automation

By implementing a Google Forms-based process, the team was able to fix the problem associated with the input of application information. Once the data was collected, the Alteryx Analytic Process Automation (APA) Platform was utilized to process and analyze this data and create an

integrated dataset with other sources to automate the process of identification (fuzzy matching), the determination of eligibility, and the management of funding distribution. Additional workflows were automated, including the use of Alteryx to feed RPA processes (UiPath), to handle the adjudication of claims.

The core system was still limited to 150,000 concurrent sessions, meaning that on average, 400,000 users needed to have their input (data collection) handled through Google-based processes. Through an integrated process that included both APA and RPA, analytics automation was applied through 72 decision tree algorithms to handle backdated claims and provide unemployment relief automatically and retroactively to the date of

filing instead of when the application was eventually processed.

Building for the future

With a combination of technologies and the application of analytics automation through Alteryx, Florida's unemployment agency was able to recover from the increase in applications, restore a critical element of the state's social safety net, and ensure that people received the unemployment support they were entitled to faster and more efficiently. Additionally, the state is better equipped to handle future challenges and is benefiting from a higher level of automation that is making operations more responsive and efficient.



BRIGHT IDEAS | LOS ANGELES COUNTY, Calif.

From Jail to Jobs: Los Angeles County 'P2E' Program Eases Transition

PROBLEM: Those with a criminal record often lack the skills to acquire good jobs.

SOLUTION: Create a program in partnership with job centers and the probation system to pair those struggling to find employment with job training and assistance.

by **Dakota Hendricks**
staff writer

Job searching can be difficult even for those with supportive families and work-related skills. For those without support or who are facing the stigma associated with a criminal record, it can feel all but impossible to navigate the difficult requirements associated with the job hunt. Los Angeles County identified a gap in service and created the Prison 2 Employment program (P2E) to better support their residents.

Under the guidance of Human Services Administrator Whitney Moore-White, P2E serves the formerly incarcerated in two ways: Individual direct services and transitional subsidized employment. Those involved with individual direct services are sent to the nearest America's Job Center of California (AJCC). Participants receive tailored services to fit their needs, including job training, transportation and resume assistance. White said even short trips can take several hours because of horrible traffic, making it difficult to get to a job interview on time.

The second component, transitional subsidized employment, provides a job for participants for up to three to four months when they can gain critical on-the-job training. After four months, the participant is offered employment.

"Some of them were able to do some things related to computers, some people did some COVID-19 work and we're



Alan S. enrolled in tech training through the P2E program, gaining job experience in administrative work, community outreach and site security. Photo courtesy of Los Angeles County

helping test people.... Others were working in food kitchens and helping to organize and run kitchens and things like that," said White. Through flexible funding, the county was able to pay for things like housing for participants to live close to an AJCC, to remove as many barriers as possible.

P2E is not solely about services, it is also about networking between agencies. The program helps bridge the communication gap between the county and local probation and parole services. Through weekly meetings, the P2E program helps forge bonds between services, giving county employees an idea about the services that are available so they can connect those in need to the right program, such as a job training center a counseling center or other service.

To better promote coordination and track the success of the program, the county created cross-agency software that allows information to be shared between departments and organizations, allows partners outside the county to submit information quickly and highlights the success of P2E in all the categories required by the state. The program tracks the number of participants who went through P2E and gained employment in fields such as construction, manufacturing, retail and business services. It also records salaries. Participants in the program have an average wage of \$17 an hour, \$2 more than the California minimum wage of \$15.

California made funding available for programming like Prison 2 Employment to all

counties, with stipulations on how many residents needed to be served and hours of training provided. In Los Angeles County, the state asked that at least 268 residents participate and the county nearly tripled that number to 767, despite the increased challenges imposed by the pandemic. The county also exceeded the required number of training hours for participants.

"We really exceeded every category for which we had goals and I'm happy that we were not only able to exceed and excel in that way, but that we served so many people because that was the thing at the end of the day that mattered the most," said White.

The pilot program has currently closed. Funding is expected to be included in an upcoming state budget that

would allow for counties to continue the program. White said the county will continue the program soon, regardless of funding availability from the state, now that they have uncovered the critical need for the service and seen its incredible success.

"Even if we don't have that [state] funding going forward, I know that we are looking for other funding to implement this program or program that's like it. Even if it's not this specific program, elements of [P2E] will always remain with the county because we understand the benefit. **CN**

Los Angeles County Prison 2 Employment is the recipient of a Best in Category 2021 NACo Achievement Award in the Criminal Justice and Public Safety category.

PROFILES IN SERVICE

KATHY ACKERMAN

NACo Board Member
Clerk/Auditor
Idaho County, Idaho



Ackerman

Number of years active in NACo: Three

Years in public service: Thirty-five if you count 24 years as an employee prior to my election.

Occupation: Idaho County Clerk

Education: High school graduate, some college (University of Idaho)

The hardest thing I've ever done: Waking up to find myself in the "sandwich generation," taking care of my family (husband, two teenagers and an infant) and my parents (sudden, unforeseen health issues).

Three people (living or dead) I'd invite to dinner: My maternal grandmother (I didn't ask enough questions or pay close enough attention while she was living). NACo President Larry Johnson — he's fun! Mother Teresa. Who wouldn't be inspired and humbled by her selfless service and love for people?

You'd be surprised to learn that I: Have managed to be successful without a college degree. (Don't limit your possibilities because you've been led to believe that a college degree is your ticket to making a difference in this world.)

The most adventurous thing I've ever done is: A static line solo sky dive.

My favorite way to relax is: Reading or writing

I'm most proud of: My three children (two adults and a teenager).

Every morning I read: My personal email and a couple of online news sites.

My favorite meal is: Anything with mashed potatoes!

My pet peeve is: When people complain on Facebook or to others about some issue, but don't make any effort to contact the people directly involved who could actually fix the issue or explain it.

My motto is: If you have something to give, you'd better be giving it.

The last book I read was: *Going There* by Katie Couric

My favorite movie is: "You've Got Mail"

My favorite music is: 70s hits

My favorite U.S. president is: Abraham Lincoln

My county is a NACo member because: We understand the value of county voices working together and appreciate the many services NACo provides to support our commitment to effective public service.



BEHIND THE SEAL

HUNTERDON COUNTY, N.J.

The Hunterdon County seal was remade in 2021 to remove the term "freeholder" after legislation changed the name statewide. The seal depicts a sheaf of wheat surrounded by the county name and the new title of "Board of County Commissioners."

The county was formed in 1714 out of parts of Burlington, Mercer, Morris and Warren Counties. The original county seal dates to at least 1841 and has undergone a few changes over the years. The oldest seal has been lost to time, replaced in 1893, then again in 1938 with a sheaf of wheat emblem resembling a daisy. In 1976, the seal was changed to a hay wagon then in 1997, back to a sheaf of wheat.



Wheat has been an important crop grown in the county since the early colonial days with the traditional crop still being grown today. With new farming techniques, farmers in the county have greatly increased their crop yield across far fewer farms.

If you would like your county's seal featured in "Behind the Seal," contact Dakota Hendricks at dhendricks@naco.org.

ON THE MOVE

NACo OFFICERS

● President **Larry Johnson**, commissioner, DeKalb County, Ga. and First Vice President **Denise Winfrey**, board member, Will County, Ill., attended the Police Jury Association of Louisiana's annual convention held March 9-11 in Calcasieu Parish (Lake Charles).

NACo STAFF

● **Ashley Hunt** has joined NACo as a program manager for health. She previously worked as network intern, program associate and senior program associate at Safe Kids Worldwide and earned master's and bachelor's degrees in Public Health.

● Executive Director **Matt Chase**, Membership Director **Kim Hall**, Director of Programs and Practices **Ashleigh Holand**, Legislative Director **Jessica Jennings** and Membership Associate **Maxx Silvan** attended the New York State Association of Counties' Legislative Conference held March 14-16 in Albany County.

● Hall, Chief Information Officer **Rita Reynolds** and Chief Economist **Teryn Zmuda** attended the County Commissioners of Pennsylvania Spring Conference, March 20-22 in Dauphin County.



Hunt

finally!

NACo swag is now available online!

naco.org/store

NEWS FROM ACROSS THE NATION



Photo courtesy of the Santa Rosa Sheriff's Office

FLORIDA

• **SANTA ROSA COUNTY** has partnered with a local organization to make interactions with the **disabled** safer for everyone. The Santa Rosa Sheriff's Office, in partnership with Emerald Coast Exceptional Families, has created a joint database to provide fire, EMS, police and the sheriff's department critical information about special needs of participants enrolled in the SAFE program. Residents can put a sticker on their car window or front door to tell officers there is an individual who may not respond normally, and the database allows access to information quickly so first responders can take appropriate action.

ALABAMA

LAMAR COUNTY District Attorney Andrew Hamlin has launched the Helping Families initiative to support **at-risk youth**. The program pairs at-risk youth with services to promote academic success, reports WBRC-TV. Hamlin was inspired to create the program after a series of shootings last summer involving youths, one of which was fatal.

ARIZONA

PIMA COUNTY has

launched a new program aimed at promoting meaningful connections between parents and their children in **foster care**. Thanks to a partnership with state and county departments and the local court, the program called Reading 2Gether will bring parents together with their babies and toddlers in foster care to read a book before bed.

At least twice each week, the biological parent and child will be in contact online or by phone, with identical books in

hand. The child will be helped by their caregiver in following along in the book while the parent reads aloud. It's all toward providing reunification or a final placement situation for children. The Pima County Juvenile Court Center says the program will help improve child literacy as well as improve family bonding opportunities, reports KOLD-TV.

FLORIDA

• Renters will have better access to **rental assistance** programs thanks to **PINELAS COUNTY**. The *Tampa Bay Times* reports the county has about \$18.3 million available for the program county-wide. Renters could receive 18 months of financial assistance to help with utilities and rent.

• For residents of **ST. LUCIE COUNTY**, scheduling a trip will be a lot easier with the launch of the Area Regional Transit (ART) On-Demand **public transportation service**. *Intelligent Transport* reports the program will allow residents to use an app, book online or call to schedule a free on-demand ride, giving flexibility to commuters as opposed to more traditional scheduled routes. The service will include wheelchair-accessible vehicles.

ILLINOIS

Residents of **COOK COUNTY** will soon have access to the largest of its kind **cash assistance program** with the launch of a new guaranteed income pilot. Launching next year, the \$42 million program will provide payments to those in need and is part of a multi-year, multifaceted plan to tackle racial inequity. The pilot will

NORTH CAROLINA

In two and a half months of 2022, the **BLADEN COUNTY** Sheriff's Office **inmate trash pickup** program collected more than 1,200 garbage bags full of litter. The program offers sentence reductions for misdemeanor confinement inmates who volunteer to clean up local roads that aren't managed by other agencies. A repurposed jail van with a port-a-potty and clean water carries the inmates to litter-prone roads. Photo courtesy of the Bladen County Sheriff's Office



help combat the rising number of suburban families living below the poverty line.

KANSAS

One year after **JOHNSON COUNTY** launched its Problem Solving Beds program, the county has helped 280 formerly incarcerated people find a safe place to sleep at night as they search for **affordable housing**. The voluntary program utilizes housing on the corrections facility campus in New Century (near Gardner), by the New Century Aircenter, according to the *Shawnee Mission Post*.



MARYLAND

• **Sports teams** popular with girls will see a boost in funding thanks to the support of

MONTGOMERY COUNTY

Councilmember Hans Riemer and Council President Gabe Albornoz put forth a special appropriation of \$100,000 to expand sports leagues. Currently there is only a youth basketball league available through the county recreation center. New expanded programming will offer thousands of kids the opportunity to play volleyball, soccer and softball with the goal of establishing "county-wide recreational leagues" in the next fiscal year.

NEVADA

For a week in February, **WASHOE COUNTY** deputies gave warnings for minor traffic infractions instead of tickets if the driver was registered as an **organ donor**. It was the third time since 2021 that the sheriff's office offered these second chances, and in addition to bringing awareness to organ donations, the program is intended to promote positive interactions with law enforcement.

NEW MEXICO

SANDOVAL COUNTY has allocated \$10,000 to reward people who clean up **illegal dumping sites**. Participants sign up identified problem areas, take the garbage to the county landfill and receive \$100. New dump sites can be referred to the code enforcement office, which will verify it and add it to the list.

MARYLAND

• **HOWARD COUNTY** is expanding their Live Where You Work program with the aid of \$500,000 worth of American Rescue Plan funding. The county says the additional funding will allow 20 workers to gain access to **affordable housing** through the continued partnership with Columbia Downtown Housing Corporation and their rental subsidies. The program is designed to subsidize healthcare workers, allowing them to live near their work.



(L-r) Director of Housing and Community Development Kelly Cimino, Howard County Executive Calvin Ball, Columbia Downtown Housing Corporation President Pat Sylvester



Mary
Burnett
Talbert

From NEWS FROM page 18

NEW YORK

• The **ERIE COUNTY** Commission on the Status of Women is planning the “**Trailblazing Women of WNY**” (Western New York) monument project, a series of statues and plaques dedicated to pioneering women in the region. The project will also feature an online educational component.

The first three women to be honored with a statue are Louise Blanchard Bethune, the first professional woman architect in the United States; civil rights leader, preservationist and educator Mary Burnett Talbert and Seneca leader and faith-keeper Geraldine Sittah Green. The statues will be placed outside the Buffalo and Erie County Public Library, WGRZ-TV News reported.

• Two rural counties have worked together to bring **dialysis services** closer to their residents. The **WYOMING COUNTY** Community Health System has opened a new dialysis center inside the **LIVINGSTON COUNTY** Center for Nursing and Rehabilitation Facility.



PENNSYLVANIA

• After commercial boat usage dropped over the past decade, the Army Corps of Engineers closed two locks on the Allegheny River. But that left recreational boaters high and dry. The **ARMSTRONG COUNTY** commissioners contributed \$15,000 to the Allegheny River Development Corp., which will pay the Corps to **open the locks to recreational boaters** on weekends and holidays in the summer, *The Valley News Dispatch* reported.

Weekend boaters drop anchor in the Kittanning pool on the Allegheny River.

Photo by Renee Dressal

“We believe it’s one of a kind,” said Livingston County Administrator Ian Coyle. “We’re not aware of any sort of county-to-county shared services partnership that exists where a health facility in one county and a health facility in another county are partnering together on a service that’s needed by the general community.”

TENNESSEE

A **KNOX COUNTY**’s **Nurse Navigation program** aims to reduce hospital overcrowding, free up emergency response personnel and reduce emergency medical costs by routing “less emergent 911 calls” to licensed nurses who can assess the caller’s health before deciding on continuation of care.

Care options can range from a virtual position or nurse consultation to transport to a clinic or hospital, WATE-TV News reported.

TEXAS

TRAVIS COUNTY has formed a **Sexual Assault Community Advisory Board** to build a criminal justice system

that works for survivors and reduce the number of sexual assaults. “Ultimately, our goal is to ensure that we fight for justice for all victims of sexual assault and it’s incredibly important to us that we do that in a way that respects the trauma that survivors of sexual assault have experienced and that we do all we can to prevent more trauma for survivors of sexual assault,” said District Attorney Jose Garza.

PENNSYLVANIA

• **Historic dedication plaques** dating from the original construction of two **WESTMORELAND COUNTY**-owned bridges won’t be a part of the final products after rehabilitation efforts, so the county sold them to the public in a blind auction, *The Tribune Review* reported. Latrobe’s Brewery Bridge and its 1970s reconstruction are up for grabs for the highest bidders. The 1931 and 1974 plaques were sold separately, as is.



WASHINGTON

The **SNOHOMISH COUNTY** Council voted to ease restrictions on rural detached **accessory dwelling units**, allowing rural parcels as small as 25,000 square feet to have these housing units.

News From Across the Nation is assembled by Charlie Ban and Dakota Hendricks. Does your county have news we should see? Contact us at cban@naco.org and dhendricks@naco.org.

County helps first responders

From **HOTLINE** page 7

way the county is encouraging participation is by appealing to the team dynamic. Snyder said there is a “culture of teamwork” within the EMS community and by encouraging people to support their team, they have been more receptive to mental health discussions.

“This program is available for all our dedicated first responder agencies in the county, including the Cumberland County Department of Public Safety, prison, probation, sheriff and coroner offices, and all of the fire department, law enforcement, and EMS agencies in the county,” said Commissioner Jean Foschi.

Rothrock said On the Job and Off is rapidly growing and is talking with other counties in the state to expand the service.

Her program provides Cumberland County with an assessment tool in the form of a survey to help the county gauge the mental health of their em-

ployees and understand when someone might need extra support. Rothrock said she hopes to continually expand the scope of programming, including creating courses for coroners and other lesser recognized first responders.

She has heard from many first responders about how the program has impacted their careers and lives, and shared a testimonial from an anonymous first responder: “I was connected with a counselor from On The Job and Off’s First Responder Assistance Program at a time when I really needed help. My grief included anger, irritability, breakdowns and sleeplessness. I wasn’t able to run fire calls or spend time at the firehouse. I know now, that reaching out for help does not make you weak. It takes a lot of courage to tell someone you don’t know how to handle what you’re going through. I want other first responders to know they can ask for help and that the help I got was exactly what I needed.” **CN**

New Child Tax Credit outreach toolkit available

by **Rachel Mackey and
Brayden Cohen**

NACo and the American Public Human Services Association (APHSA) have introduced a new toolkit to help health and human services (HHS) agency staff connect eligible families with the temporarily expanded Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) and the Child Tax Credit (CTC) during the 2021 tax filing season.

Counties support the EITC and CTC as important policy tools to combat poverty among our vulnerable residents. The American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 (ARPA) provided a historic, temporary expansion of the CTC (increasing the size of the payment, expanding eligibility and issuing some of the credit via advance monthly payments) and the EITC for childless adults. However, uptake of the advance CTC suggests that gaps in access have persisted with millions of children having missed out on the new income support. Similarly, newly eligible adults are at risk of not

claiming the expanded EITC if they do not normally file taxes.

An estimated 75 percent of families are at risk of missing out on tax credits that are currently participating in public benefit programs. As key partners with the federal government in designing and implementing social services and anti-poverty programs, county HHS agencies are uniquely positioned to perform education and outreach to connect vulnerable residents to free tax preparation sites that can help them claim the expanded CTC and EITC this spring.

The NACo/APHSA toolkit is designed to support state and local HHS agencies in alerting program participants of their potential eligibility for tax credits and share information on free tax filing services. The toolkit includes outreach and messaging materials through resource pages, blogs, policy briefs and state and local spotlights.

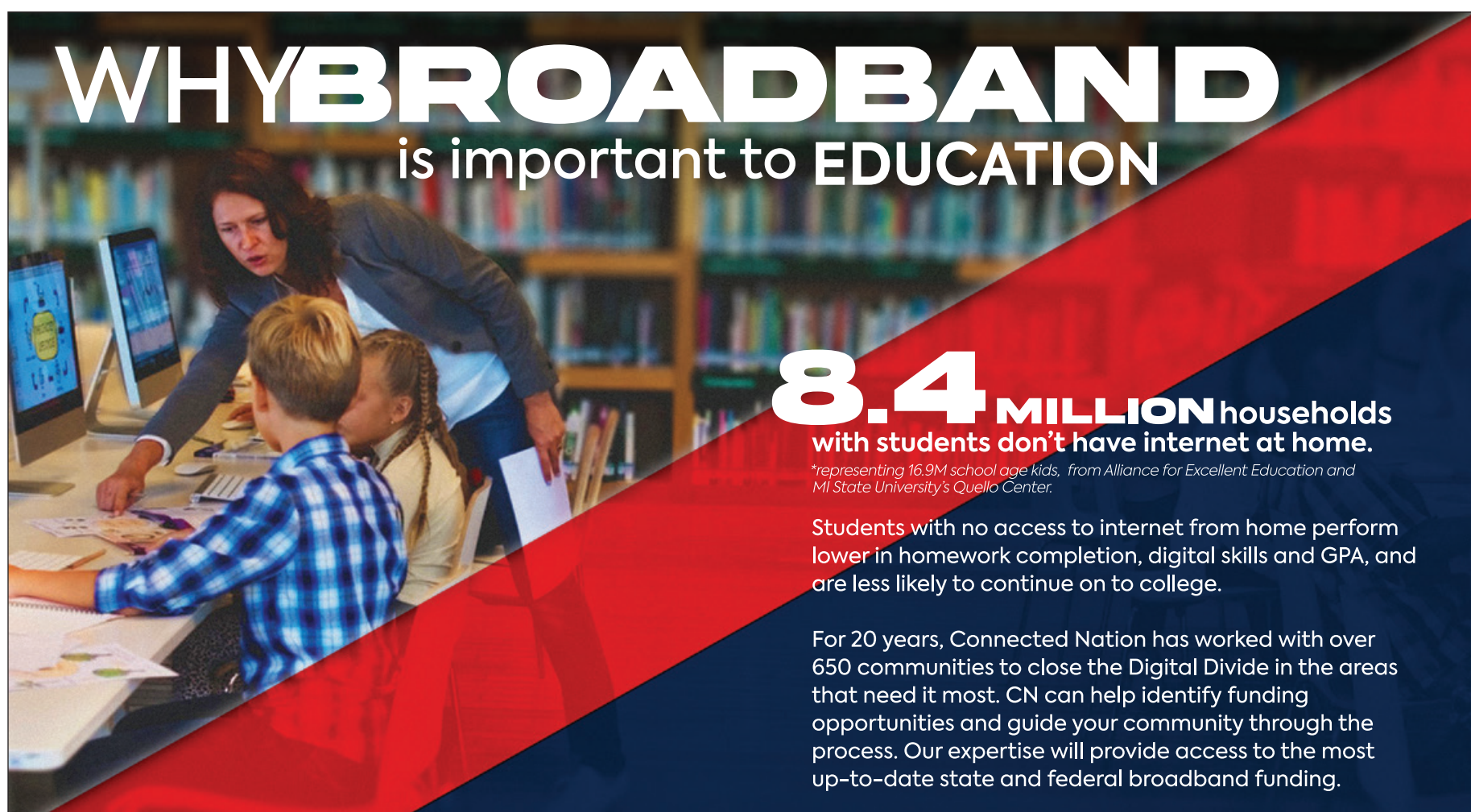
Throughout 2021, counties invested in numerous efforts

to boost tax credit enrollment, often in partnership with local non-profits and other key stakeholders. Some county highlights include:

- Los Angeles County, Calif.: The Department of Public and Social Services (DPSS) ran a text message campaign to spread CTC awareness.
- Erie County, N.Y.: The Department of Social Services collaborated with community partners to provide guidance.
- Delaware County, Pa.: The county, along with community organizations and foundations, is urging families to file their taxes to claim their CTC.

To access the NACo/APHSA Child Tax Credit toolkit, visit: <https://www.naco.org/resources/tax-credit-outreach-hub-county-health-and-human-services-agencies>. **CN**

Rachel Mackey is a legislative director, human services and education and Brayden Cohen is a legislative assistant in NACo’s Government Affairs department.



WHY BROADBAND

is important to EDUCATION

8.4 MILLION

households with students don’t have internet at home.

*representing 16.9M school age kids, from Alliance for Excellent Education and MI State University’s Quello Center.

Students with no access to internet from home perform lower in homework completion, digital skills and GPA, and are less likely to continue on to college.

For 20 years, Connected Nation has worked with over 650 communities to close the Digital Divide in the areas that need it most. CN can help identify funding opportunities and guide your community through the process. Our expertise will provide access to the most up-to-date state and federal broadband funding.

Learn more about how our team can help close the **Digital Divide** in your community

ConnectedNation.org

Chris Pedersen
877-846-7710
info@connectednation.org

**CONNECTED
NATION**

