

Tourists: A double-edged sword during COVID-19 pandemic

by **Charlie Ban**
senior writer

Counties that rely on tourism to power their economies are loath to turn visitors away but given the potential for transmission of the COVID-19 coronavirus, they're doing just that.

In California, Inyo County's social media presence, Explore Inyo County, is blunt: "Please, go home. Under normal circumstances we welcome tourists with open arms, but there is a global public health emergency in progress, and we need to please request that you return to your primary address — your home."

In Flathead County, Mont., where tourists spend more than \$500 million per year, it's much the same. As of April 6, the county had 31 confirmed cases of COVID-19.

"Most of them are from people from New York and Washington state, trying to get away," Commissioner Randy Brodehl said. "It's an issue for us."

Every reason a visitor who doesn't own a second home there is moot. Nearby Glacier National Park is closed. The main streets of Whitefish, usually bustling now, are a ghost town. The hospital, which has

stopped elective surgeries, "is like a tomb."

"The modeling is iffy, but the likelihood we're looking at is cases peaking at the end of April, then a second surge later," Brodehl said. "We're also hoping there's a lot of pent-up spending when this is all over," and people start coming back to Montana.

Across the country, counties are clamping down on everything from summer camps to campgrounds to avoid the spread of the virus. In Dutchess County, N.Y., Executive Marc Molinaro said no permits would be issued for children's camps for the summer because of the pandemic. In Brevard County, Fla., the county banned tourists from renting rooms at local hotels, motels, recreational-vehicle parks, campgrounds or vacation rental facilities, including time-shares and Airbnb rentals. While not going as far, the Sussex County, Del. Council President implored out-of-towners, particularly from the dense Washington, D.C. area, to stay away.

"Now is not the time to visit and this is not the time for a mini-vacation," Michael H. Vincent said. "Sussex County and

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Customers line up six feet apart last week while waiting to get into a Trader Joe's in Sonoma County, Calif. After the CDC recommended people wear protective face masks out in public to help contain the coronavirus, many county leaders around the country are urging residents to make their own masks if they don't already have one. Photo by John Burgess/The Press Democrat

County sewing circle creates masks

by **Rachel Looker**
staff writer

Sometimes it takes a tragedy to bring people together.

"We literally are running the world's biggest sewing circle that you've ever seen in your life," Somerset County, Pa. Commissioner Pamela Tokar-Ickes half-joked.

Commissioners in Somerset County are heading a project to recruit county sewers to make face masks for those in need during the COVID-19 outbreak.

Tokar-Ickes said the county's EMA director and emergency response agencies told commissioners that they did not have enough face masks.

Somerset County Commissioner Gerald Walker explained the county never had a huge supply of masks for many places such as nursing homes, which usually don't require masks during daily operations. The county also had a limited, outdated supply of

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NACo outlines priorities to Congress to battle coronavirus

by **Mary Ann Barton**
editor

NACo outlined its top priorities last week in a letter to Congress as Capitol Hill leaders mull a fourth stimulus package to help the country dig out from the mire of the coronavirus pandemic.

Counties across the country

are facing economic shortfalls as COVID-19 breaks budgets related to battling the virus. Local governments have projected an unanticipated \$23 billion budget impact in the first two weeks of the coronavirus pandemic alone, according to a report out by Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA).

"As we work to protect our citizens, local businesses and economies, we are making significant financial investments to address immediate public health and safety needs," NACo said in its letter to congressional leadership. "At the same time, we are experienc-

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During pandemic, county offers 'relief in big and small ways' with storytime

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N95 masks, according to Commissioner Colleen Dawson, who added that each EMS service received no more than 90 masks.

"If you put one mask on the patient and one mask on each of the responders, that equals 30 trips," she said. "That's not many."

In the rural county in southwestern Pennsylvania, Dawson said the commissioners knew it would be challenging to obtain more masks.

"The federal and state governments, whenever they have additional masks, they go to the counties that have the higher numbers [of cases]," she said.

Commissioners Dawson and Tokar-Ickes found a sewer on Facebook and decided to connect with her and



Montgomery County Councilmember Will Jawando reads a book during a virtual story time to children tuning in through live sessions on Facebook and Instagram amid the COVID-19 outbreak.

Photo courtesy of Councilmember Will Jawando's Office

make this a county project. They ordered three palettes of 100 percent cotton material,

thread and elastic to distribute to residents interested in sewing.

"The county has been instrumental in launching this project and mobilizing the community as we move into this public health crisis," Tokar-Ickes said.

With the first order of material, the group hopes to produce 21,000 masks for the community. The masks will not be used in medical settings, instead distributed to nursing homes, emergency responders, county agencies and other non-profit organizations such as mobile food banks.

"It became apparent to us early on that we could not depend on the federal government or the state government to get us the materials we need here in rural southwestern Pennsylvania," Dawson said.

The county recruited 400 individuals incorporating church groups, sewing clubs and other organizations into the project. Dawson said they are splitting the materials into bags to distribute to those who

want to sew. The commissioners have struggled finding more elastic but are receiving donations from many individuals and community vendors.

"There was no doubt in my mind if we put the word out that we needed help that our community would respond," Tokar-Ickes said, adding that in these unprecedented times, county officials need to turn to their communities.

"County government has to work in close partnership with its community through this crisis and any other," she said.

Meanwhile in Montgomery County, Md., Councilmember Will Jawando is also interacting with his community to help local residents in a time of fear.

Jawando decided to hold daily virtual story times through live sessions on Facebook and Instagram until the coronavirus crisis is over.

He said his goal is to continue to provide children with early childhood development, education and literacy, while also providing 30 minutes of relief for parents.

In a county with 21 public libraries for 1.1 million people, Jawando said story time is a big component missing with libraries closed during the pandemic.

"I think our job as elected officials, a big part of that is just trying to be there for people when they need help," he said.

Jawando is working to make the virtual sessions interactive by asking his viewers questions through the social media platforms, including a shout-out section each day.

"They love to watch the screen and see their name coming," he said.


Through a partnership with a local arts organization, children who are tuning in are also completing art exercises in addition to listening to Jawando's storytelling.

"I've gotten so many pictures that have been sent in of kids watching story time but also participating in the art exercise so that's been very cool as well," he said.

Each session has an audience of between 2,000 and 5,000 from residents in Montgomery County as well as from viewers throughout the country.

"I've started to recognize some of the names," he said. "We've got a dedicated crowd but there's still people coming in new each day."

Jawando said he would encourage county officials to think about both large ways and discreet ways to help people in times of crisis.

"It's not solving all the problems but with all the anxiety that is going on right now and all the repercussions, many of which we don't even know yet because this is unprecedented, I think there's a lot of room for us to step in and try to just provide some relief both in big and small ways," he said. 

SNAP/STATS



APRIL IS NATIONAL GARDEN MONTH

TOP BOTANICAL GARDENS

LOCATION

Minnesota Landscape Arboretum.....	Carver County, Minn.
Missouri Botanical Garden.....	St. Louis County, Mo.
Bok Tower Gardens	Polk County, Fla.
Lewis Ginter Botanical Garden	Henrico County, Va.
Cheekwood Estate & Gardens.....	Davidson County, Tenn.

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ADVERTISING STAFF
Job Market/Classifieds representative
National Accounts representative
Mary Ann Barton
202.942.4223
FAX 866.752.1573

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With most of county seat Jackson's businesses dedicated to tourism and hospitality, Teton County, Wyo. has turned its attention to assistance for idled workers.

Expecting less revenue from tourism, counties are cutting budgets, eyeing savings

From TOURISM page 1

Delaware are in the midst of a national crisis, and our first responders, hospitals, health care workers and local and state officials need you to stay in your home communities."

Delaware State Police conducted six checkpoints in early April, stopping out-of-state vehicles to inform them of the state's quarantine order for visitors. Of 2,633 cars passing through, 477 were from out of state, *The Cape Gazette* reported.

On the other side of the D.C. area, Tucker County, W.Va. hasn't ordered its hotels to change their policies, because most did so proactively.

"We have people who want to come from the bigger cities, they want to hide away, but in their hiding away, they're going out and about, and that's something that our citizens and residents don't really care for," said County Administrator Shelia Devilder. "We have people who own second homes and we can't stop them from coming in, but we hope they'll

heed the governor's directions to self-quarantine for 14 days if they're coming from out of state."

Tucker County was in the middle of its budget process when the pandemic reached a point of concern, and every department made cuts to match a projected loss in revenue from tourism.

"All of our offices had to give up something, and for some of the extras we planned on, we just couldn't commit anything," Devilder said.

"We cut off money to our libraries, our airport. We were very conservative with our budgeting, but hopefully by the summer, things will ease up and we'll have a good surprise in our revenues."

Teton County, Wyo. is entering what is traditionally a slow month for visitors, between the end of the skiing season and when people come to visit Grand Teton and Yellowstone national parks.

"But that hasn't been reflected in the layoffs that have occurred (in the hospitality industry)," County Commis-

sion Chair Natalia Macker said. "We're looking to trim \$6.1 million from our county budget but the city (Jackson) is even more dependent on sales tax than we are."

Those budget cuts will come from unspent allocations, hiring freezes and a contingency fund. Over the next fiscal year, capital projects will likely take a back seat, Macker said, but workforce support will remain a focus. "It will definitely be a different conversation than in years past, when things were going well."

The county's local response, she said, was focused on community mobilization for child nutrition and financial assistance for workers.

"We've had a lot of conversations in the community about whether the hotels should be open or closed, the county is generally taking the approach of our hotels being a resource," Macker noted.

On March 12, the county board revoked permits for two large events, one a few days later and another at the end of the month.

"It was really interesting to get to that second event and think 'Wow, things are a lot different now than when we made that decision, so many things happened and that seemed so far in the future at the time.'"

The number of planes landing at the Jackson Hole Airport has plummeted, down to two a day from a typical 13, and with

just a handful of passengers, who mostly bringing medical supplies and mail.

Vacation counties are left holding their breath, looking forward to a time when travel won't put other people at risk.

"We're hoping that if we do what we're supposed to," Devilder said, "this will be over sooner rather than later." **CN**

Counties need flexible relief fund

From PRIORITIES page 1

ing massive and unprecedented declines in revenue as a result of the economic downturn and are working to quickly reprogram resources and staff to respond to the crisis."

"The decline in revenue is occurring when the need for county services and functions is skyrocketing for things like child protective services, emergency 911 assistance, law enforcement and emergency management, nutrition assistance programs, assistance for older Americans and affordable housing, all

of which are becoming more complicated and costly to maintain."

A small sampling of those priorities includes a flexible relief fund for counties of all sizes, clear federal guidance on the release of personal protective gear and medical equipment, expanding support for local Medicaid programs, suspending changes to Medicaid financing, increasing resources for county veteran service offices and increasing SNAP benefits. Read the entire letter here: <http://www.naco.org/LettertoCongress/04062020>. **CN**

Virtual meetings, real action for county boards

by **Charlie Ban**
senior writer

As counties manage, mitigate and treat the COVID-19 pandemic, their boards are seeing a bright spot: The glowing computer screen on which they are conducting their meetings.

With in-person meetings largely impossible because of physical distancing requirements (and ill-advised beside the point), boards are taking meetings online, and finding a lot to like despite the transition. Most states' emergency declarations or stay-at-home orders allow for public meetings to be made available, along with public participation options, elsewhere.

"I hope that we would still be able to use this in the future," said Shelly Pinkelman, chair of the Crawford County, Mich. Board of Commissioners. "I think the meetings are more streamlined, there's more efficiency in not breaking in, when motions are being made, which people are supporting them."

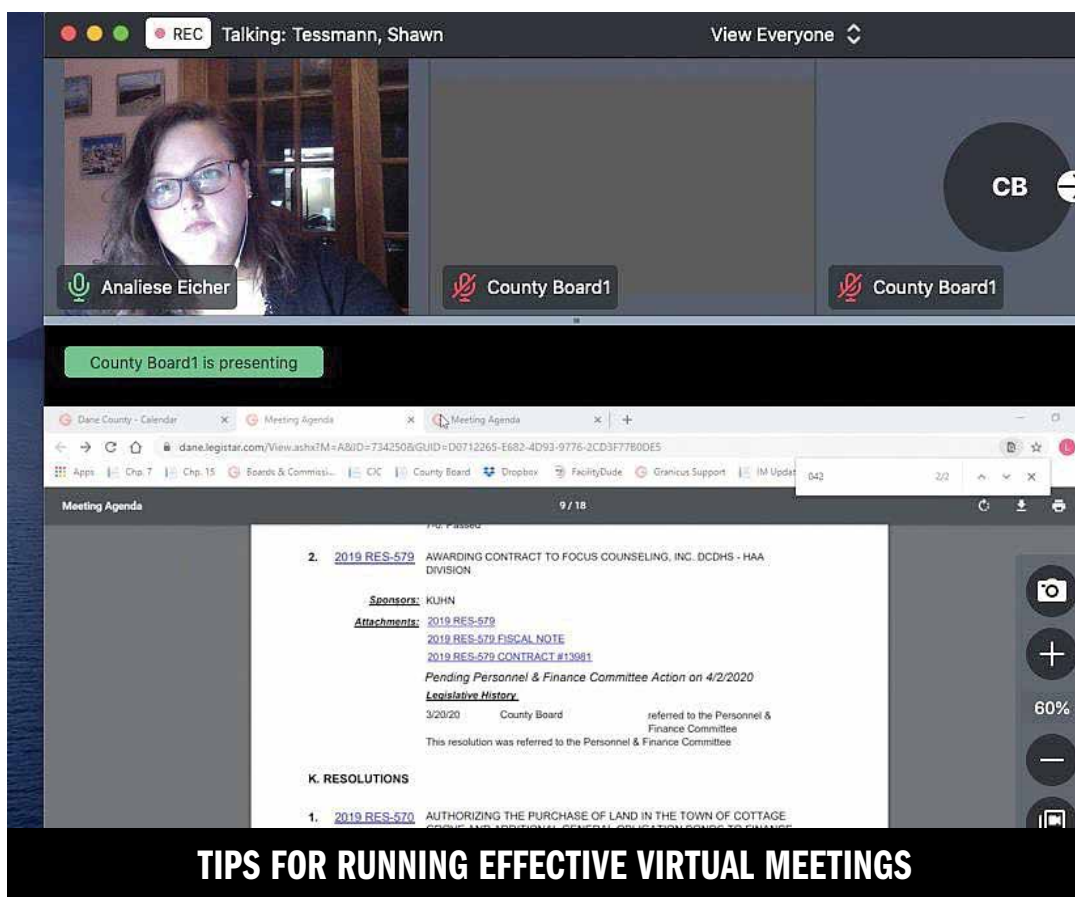
"I feel like there have been a lot more constructive comments, too."

That's a feature Orange County, Va. Board of Supervisors Chair Jim Crozier sees virtual meetings improving. The Board will accept comments and questions for two weeks prior to the next public hearing, and a staff member will ask the question during the meeting.

"When you're at a public meeting, it takes a little while to digest an individual's questions and figure out what exactly they're looking for, so it helps us prepare our answers a little more," Crozier said. "We're here to serve the citizens, and we don't usually get the interaction that we hope to get, so this may improve that, by making it easier for them to participate."

As for basic execution of the meeting, Crozier was impressed.

"It's a little different because you're not all sitting next to each other, but it's an extremely efficient way to run a meeting," he said. "You don't get the normal chatter you do, things



TIPS FOR RUNNING EFFECTIVE VIRTUAL MEETINGS

The North Carolina Association of County Commissioners offers some advice for holding virtual meetings:

- Test the software program before your meetings and become familiar with differences between programs: GoToMeeting, GoToWebinar, Zoom, WebEx.
- Take 30 minutes before the meeting starts to practice video, audio, muting and

unmuting, screen sharing, presenter sharing, chatting and questions.

- Use video, if possible, to keep people's attention.
- Have an agenda and script that include when presenters will need control and when to unmute attendees for questions and comments.
- Start meetings 30 minutes early to test audio, web cam and screen sharing, and solve

attendee problems.

Starting your meeting

1. Ask users to mute from their end, if possible.
2. Explain the agenda and chat/question options to attendees.
3. Ask speakers to announce themselves before speaking. (You can ask this of members of the public who decide to speak at public comment portion, just as you would in a regular meeting.)

run smoothly."

Don Batchelder saw the same results in Ouray County, Colo., where he is chair of the Board of Commissioners, when they held their first virtual meeting.

"We had more public participation than we do generally," he said. "People are more conscientious about being clear and concise as opposed to rambling on."

Branch County, N.C. Administrator Bud Norman advised counties not to attempt to achieve total proficiency before holding a virtual meeting, but rather to try it and work out the bugs as you move along. "Know that you'll get better each time you use it," he said. "Accept that mistakes may happen with first time use but you can't correct those mistakes if you don't formally use it."

The Dane County, Wis. Board of Supervisors wouldn't be able to meet in one place without the public anyway — it has 37 members. All logged in for their first meeting, most via the iPads they were issued earlier.

"It worked well because we did a lot of groundwork beforehand, we established procedures, rules of etiquette and ways to make sure people are recognized," said Board Chair Analiese Eicher. "We work a lot like a state legislature, with most of our work being done in committees, but even they are too large to have in one room together."

At 31, Eicher is the youngest board chair in Wisconsin, and being a "digital native" has given her the background to help her lead the transition.

"Folks were nervous at first,

but a lot of that apprehension was lifted after we did a training session," she said. "There was a learning curve from some of the older members, but they embraced it. The meeting itself didn't feel too different from normal, but I'm used to being in virtual meetings all the time."

Many counties are using Zoom to conduct the meetings, then broadcasting the video and audio on YouTube, Facebook or both. Tehama County, Calif. uses an audio-only stream.

Connectivity can be an issue where broadband internet service isn't available.

"Even though we're 60 miles from the nation's capital, we have very poor internet service," said Orange County, Va.'s Crozier.

It was rougher for Ouray

County in Colorado — Batchelder reported that the commission lost power for about six minutes during its most recent meeting.

"Depending on where in the county people are calling from, internet service is spotty, so you can be knocked off, but that usually lasts about 10 seconds," he said. "Everyone has the phone-in number. It's still a much better alternative than holding large meetings with lots of people."

Even when the board holds meetings in person again, Crozier sees opportunities for time savings.

"We can make staff reports more efficient, do it from their office rather than sitting around waiting to be called on in our meeting room," he said. "That's just wasting their time. And if we have a light agenda, we might be able to take care of it virtually and not have to drive 40 minutes each way."

Orange County's new public safety building will house its board room, and plans are to make it as technologically advanced as possible to serve needs like this.

With the entire Dane County Board (ostensibly) up for reelection April 7, the county had offered virtual meeting tutorials to all candidates on the ballot.

"How do we orient and swear in new board members when we can't be doing this in person?" Eicher said. "It's an interesting challenge. I'm up to it and my fellow board members are up to it."

Dane County published a guide to conducting online meetings, available here: <https://bit.ly/2JILLNc>.

Eicher said the board has had to limit itself to essential business, putting off recognitions and celebrations until it can meet again in person.

While she is looking forward to that, Eicher expects this to be her county's standard operating procedure for the foreseeable future, but that alone was a step up from days of telephone calls leading up to the board's first meeting.

"It was good to see people's faces after a few weeks," she said. **CN**

COUNTIES GET CREATIVE TO COMBAT COVID-19 SUPPLY SHORTAGES



The Iowa National Guard makes a delivery of personal protective equipment and other supplies in Montgomery County, Iowa during the COVID-19 outbreak. Photo courtesy the Montgomery County Emergency Management Agency

by Rachel Looker
staff writer

Face masks, gloves, testing kits, gowns, cleaning supplies and hand sanitizers — the list goes on for supplies needed during the coronavirus pandemic.

In Montgomery County, Iowa, Emergency Management Director Brian Hamman said first responders, health care providers and long-term care facilities have been impacted by a shortage of personal protective equipment (PPE).

“With a sudden surge of COVID patients nationwide, everyone is stepping up their preparedness and response activities,” he said. “This has created a shortage of all this PPE and it’s virtually impossible to get.”

The county had a small amount of equipment available immediately but has reached out for additional public and private donations, Hamman said.

“Now, we’re really focusing on those state assets,” he said.

The county has received multiple shipments of face masks, N95 masks, isolation gowns and gloves from the Iowa National Guard. As of April 8, the county had more than 12,000 gloves, nearly 7,000 face masks/face shields, 300 isolation gowns and 240 individual cleaning wipes.

Hamman said the gowns and cleaning wipes are limited and they are unable to find any.

Nursing homes and other facilities that are now following stricter guidelines on patient care than before the outbreak are using more PPE than was ever planned, Hamman said.

“The numbers that they’re using, if they continue to rise, with what we request of the state assets or even through donation or even procuring those items ourselves if we can even find them, I don’t know that we are going to have enough if it comes to that point,” he said.

In other rural counties, such as Washakie County, Wyo., shortages also included testing kits.

At one point, the county had



Library staff deliver face masks created using the library’s 3D printer to Connally Memorial Hospital in Wilson County, Texas.

less than 20 for a population of 8,000, according to Washakie County Commissioner Terry Wolf.

The county has since received more testing kits, but now faces shortages in lab capacities to run the tests, he said.

“When you have limited testing kits... we’ve probably had people out there who are positive we just don’t know about,” Wolf said.

Counties find innovative solutions to shortages

In Hamilton County, Tenn., the county partnered with a private high school to offer faster turnaround times on completed tests, Commissioner Tim Boyd said.

Lab instructors at Baylor, a private high school, created a testing procedure to obtain COVID-19 screening results within four hours. Prior to the

partnership, Boyd said it took between 48 hours and seven days to receive results.

“Baylor took the initiative and said we’re not going to wait on the state or the government to help us with this lack of testing availability,” he said.

Hamilton County Commissioners unanimously voted to appropriate \$1.5 million to run the lab for a 90-day period at 300 tests per day to cover the costs of personnel, supplies and the tests, according to Boyd. The lab on the campus is run by the Hamilton County Health Department.

“We’re always talking about how fast counties can react because we’re the boots on the ground,” he said. “Here’s a perfect example of Hamilton County taking the initiative to work on this health crisis and not wait on the state and federal help.”

The lab is licensed by the state and aims to help local hospitals and health care providers identify those infected with the coronavirus.

“The county officials and your local private enterprises need to be thinking out of the box so that they can help each other through this unprecedented health crisis and take the time and listen to those coming forward,” Boyd said.

In addition to partnering with schools, Anoka County, Minn. Commissioner Matt Look partnered with a local business.

Look was approached by an e-cigarette company that wanted to produce hand sanitizer. He worked privately with the company to find an ethanol plant that was willing to donate 660 gallons of ethanol. The ethanol was mixed with glycerol and distilled water from the e-cigarette company using a World Health Organization (WHO) recipe for hand sanitizer.

“From a manufacturing standpoint, I think people are willing to help people and anytime you have that type of environment, you have creativity and that’s precisely what you need because you’re facing uncertainties,” he said.

During two distribution days at the county fairgrounds, over 700 cars arrived with drivers putting empty containers out

Rural county lifestyle makes social distancing easier

by **Charlie Ban**
senior writer

Lorinda Wichman knows her neighbors and friends — in the Nye County, Nev. district where she is the commissioner — have what it takes to remain vigilant through the COVID-19 pandemic.

“We’ve all been practicing social distancing for most of our lives out here,” she said.

Her district is the largest in the continental United States, nearly 18,000 square miles with roughly 8,000 residents. Positive cases have all been in Nye’s southeast corner, nearly three hours away, near a critical care hospital.

What does concern her are the twin threats that outsiders pose.

“We have had trouble with folks coming from more populated areas to wipe out our stores and then leaving,” she said. “I think they’d gone where they’ve been accustomed, didn’t find what they wanted and decided to go off on a road trip.”

And in doing so, possibly bringing the coronavirus with



Residents of Tonopah, the Nye County, Nev. county seat, have a two-hour drive to a hospital, but they also have a lot of practice with physical distancing.

them on their trip into northern Nye County’s small towns.

While the scale changes, the story is similar among other rural counties, many of which are buffered from quick contagion by low population density, but also lack the hospital capacity to treat potential patients locally. After the Nye Regional Medical Center closed in 2015, the County Commission created a hospital district, which funds a clinic that opened in its place.

“We are very concerned because of the vast distances to get

help,” Wichman said. “Because of that, we have a heightened awareness of social distancing and wearing masks, wearing gloves, making sure surfaces are sterilized — that’s a daily thing,” Wichman said.

After suffering damage to her windpipe from a fire, Wichman is now considered high risk for severe illness, and her husband has done the shopping for the family, with showers every time he comes home.

“We bring groceries to our elderly neighbor, and it scares the

daylights out of me, not knowing what we might have been exposed to and what we might expose him to,” she said.

Even counties with a hospital are looking over their shoulders. Harney County, Ore. has a hospital in Burns, but County Judge Pete Runnels said preparing to take on COVID-19 patients is taking its toll on the Harney District Hospital.

“Like all small rural hospitals, they are in a world of hurt because their main revenue sources are out because they can’t do

any surgeries or the minor stuff they survive on,” he said.

Harney County has yet to record a positive case, neighboring Malheur and Grant counties have, but Runnels thinks it’s just a matter of time.

“It’s a good time to be isolated and far away from people, because that buys us a little time to be ready,” he said. “I feel like we’re as prepared as we can be, I’m not sure if anyone can be fully prepared, but we’re trying. We’re doing takeout and businesses are mostly closed,” he said.

He’s seen some panic buying in local stores, and personal protective equipment is hard to come by, but that’s hardly a surprise. It’s about a 120-mile trip to Bend, so he knows where Harney County is on the supply line.

With more time at home on her hands, Wichman has been spending it in her “girl cave,” which her husband built to house her sewing shop.

“I’ve been taking all my scraps and fabric and making masks,” she said. **CN**



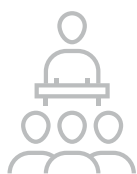
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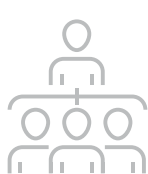
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Department of Labor answers questions about coronavirus

Q: I am a public sector employee. May I take paid sick leave under the Emergency Paid Sick Leave Act?

A: Generally, yes. You are entitled to paid sick leave if you work for a public agency or other unit of government, with the exceptions below. Therefore, you are probably entitled to paid sick leave if, for example, you work for the government of the United States, a state, the District of Columbia, a territory or possession of the United States, a city, a municipality, a township, a county, a parish or a similar government entity subject to the exceptions below.

OMB has the authority to exclude some categories of U.S. Government Executive Branch employees from taking certain kinds of paid sick leave. If you are a federal employee, the department encourages you to seek guidance from your respective employers as to your eligibility to take paid sick leave.

Further, health care providers and emergency responders may be excluded by their employer from being able to take paid sick leave under the act. These coverage limits also apply to public-sector health care providers and emergency responders.

Q: I am a public sector employee. May I take paid family and medical leave under the Emergency Family and Medical Leave Expansion Act?

A: It depends. In general, you are entitled to expanded family and medical leave if you are an employee of a non-federal public agency. Therefore, you are probably entitled to paid sick leave if, for example, you work for the government of a state, the District of Columbia, a territory or possession of the United States, a city, a municipality, a township, a county, a parish, or a similar entity.

But if you are a federal employee, you likely are not entitled to expanded family and medical leave. The act only amended Title I of the FMLA; most federal employees are

covered instead by Title II of the FMLA. As a result, only some Federal employees are covered, and the vast majority are not. In addition, OMB has the authority to exclude some categories of U.S. Government Executive Branch employees with respect to expanded and family medical leave. If you are a federal employee, the department encourages you to seek guidance from your respective employers as to your eligibility to take expanded family and medical leave.

Further, health care providers and emergency responders may be excluded by their employer from being able to take expanded family and medical leave under the act. These coverage limits also apply to public-sector health care providers and emergency responders.

Q: What do I do if my public sector employer, who I believe to be covered, refuses to provide me paid sick leave or expanded family and medical leave?

A: If you believe that your public sector employer is covered and is improperly refusing you paid sick leave under the Emergency Paid Sick Leave Act or expanded family and medical leave under the Emergency Family and Medical Leave Expansion Act, the department encourages you to raise your concerns with your employer in an attempt to resolve them. Regardless whether you discuss your concerns with your employer, if you believe your employer is improperly refusing you paid sick leave or expanded family and medical leave, you may call WHD at 1-866-4US-WAGE (1-866-487-9243) or visit www.dol.gov/agencies/whd. Your call will be directed to the nearest WHD office for assistance to have your questions answered or to file a complaint. In some cases, you may also be able to file a lawsuit against your employer directly without contacting WHD. Some state and local employees may not be able to pursue direct lawsuits because their

employers are immune from such lawsuits. For additional information, see the WHD website at: <https://www.wage-hour.dol.gov> and/or call WHD's toll free information and help line available 8 a.m.-5 p.m. in your time zone, 866.4US.WAGE (1.866.487.9243).

Q: Who is an emergency responder?

A: For the purposes of employees who may be excluded from paid sick leave or expanded family and medical leave by their employer under the FFCRA, an emergency responder is an employee who is necessary for the provision of transport, care, health care, comfort and nutrition of such patients, or whose services are otherwise needed to limit the spread of COVID-19.

This includes but is not limited to military or national guard, law enforcement officers, correctional institution personnel, fire fighters, emergency medical services personnel, physicians, nurses, public health personnel, emergency medical technicians, paramedics, emergency management personnel, 911 operators, public works personnel, and persons with skills or training in operating specialized equipment or other skills needed to provide aid in a declared emergency as well as individuals who work for such facilities employing these individuals and whose work is necessary to maintain the operation of the facility. This also includes any individual that the highest official of a state or territory, including the District of Columbia, determines is an emergency responder necessary for that state's or territory's or the District of Columbia's response to COVID-19. To minimize the spread of the virus associated with COVID-19, the department encourages employers to be judicious when using this definition to exempt emergency responders from the provisions of the FFCRA. For more, see: <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/whd/pandemic/ffcra-questions>.

PROFILES IN SERVICE

WARREN MACKEY

Board Member
Commissioner,
Hamilton County, Tenn.

Number of years involved in NACo: 15

Years in public service: 15

Occupation: Professor of history at Chattanooga State Community College

Education: BS from Tennessee State University; Wayne State University; MS Tennessee State University; Doctor of Arts Middle Tennessee State University and post-doctoral work at University of Texas, Austin

The hardest thing I've ever done is: Cause a friend to be terminated.

Three people (living or dead) I'd invite to dinner: President Obama, Martin Luther King and Marcus Garvey with Malcolm X as a backup

The most adventurous thing I've ever done was: Raise \$100,000 (\$129,000 in six years) to establish a scholarship fund to provide scholarships for students in a public school.

My favorite way to relax is to: Attend a Chicago Steppin' dance class.

I'm most proud of: What my children and grandchildren have been able to accomplish.



MACKEY

Every morning I read: Articles from online sources.

My motto is: "And miles to go before I sleep, and miles to go before I sleep."

The last book I read was: *The Future of Capitalism* by Lester Thurow

My favorite movie is: *Doctor Zhivago*

My favorite music is: Urban smooth (K'Jon, Kem, the Isley Brothers, Johnny Gill, Carmichael, Bobby Hutton, Toni Braxton, etc.)

My favorite U.S. president is: President Washington, President Lincoln, President Franklin Roosevelt and President Obama (a four-way tie)

My county is a NACo member because: I have helped our county understand the importance of our collective voice as a national organization.

A dream I have is to: Do an archaeological dig in Jerusalem



Feeding children during COVID-19: Federal resources

by Rachel Merker

As county leaders confront the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on their communities, providing meals to low-income children remains a critically important challenge. Widespread school closures have disrupted access to consistent, healthy meals for children who participate in the National School Lunch and Breakfast Programs.

At the same time, demand is rising for nutrition assistance through programs like the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, formerly known as food stamps), which provides low-income households with monthly benefits to purchase groceries, and the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC), which offers nutrition benefits, education and service referrals to low-income pregnant and post-partum women, infants and young children deemed nutritionally at risk.

The federal government is working to provide state and local governments with additional resources and flexibilities to feed low-income children during the COVID-19 outbreak — particularly because tradi-



Staff at a Loudoun County, Va. school pack hundreds of meals.

tional emergency feeding strategies, such as large group meal sites, risk spreading the virus.

The Families First Coronavirus Response Act, enacted March 18, provided \$500 million in additional funding for the WIC program and \$450 million for the Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP) to provide additional commodities to food banks. Importantly, this legislation also permits states to apply for Pandemic-SNAP to either initiate or increase SNAP benefits for households with children who receive free or reduced-price school meals. States can also apply to increase SNAP benefits to the maximum allowable amount for households during the public health emergency and to waive various adminis-

trative requirements within the WIC program.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) is also using flexibilities within child nutrition programs to allow them to transition to models typically only used during the summer or school breaks to feed low-income children. To account for the risk of exposure to COVID-19, FNS is allowing children or parents to pick meals up from the feeding sites or receive it via delivery.

The new flexibilities in the child nutrition program also present challenges for school food authorities and state and local human services administrators who may lack adequate resources, infrastructure or manpower to operate these al-

ternative feeding models. The Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act enacted March 27, offers \$9 billion in additional funding for child nutrition programs to help meet those needs. The CARES Act also creates a \$15 billion SNAP contingency reserve fund for the Secretary of Agriculture to distribute as deemed necessary for costs associated with excess program participation. USDA is also working with

public and private partners to target meal delivery to children in rural areas.

County leaders looking to leverage federal resources to feed children during the coronavirus pandemic can visit www.fns.usda.gov/coronavirus. **CN**

Rachel Merker is associate legislative director, Human Services and Education, in NACo's Government Affairs department.

GET TO KNOW...

Massac County, Ill.

Welcome, Massac County, Ill.

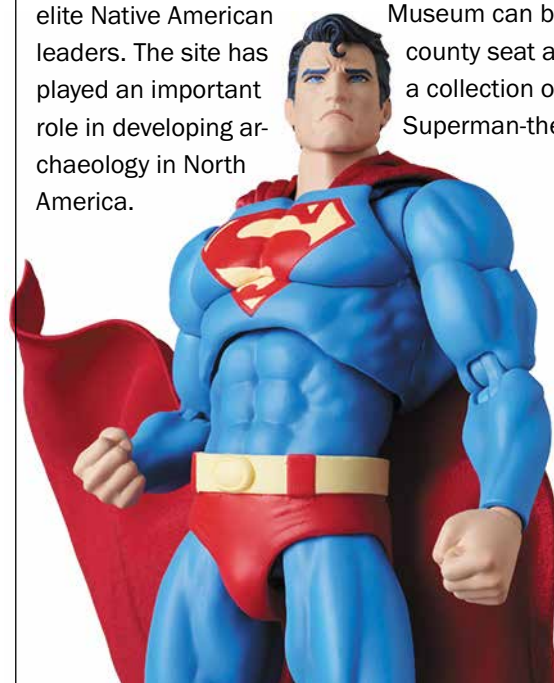
Massac County, founded in 1843, is located on the southern border of Illinois along the Ohio River. Originally forming from neighboring Johnson and Pope counties, Massac County was named after a French fort from the 18th century, Fort Massac. The fort was named after a French admiral and minister, Claude Louis d'Espinhal, marquis de Massiac. The Fort Massac State Park was the first state park created in Illinois.

Native Americans originally populated the area, and artifacts can be found at the Kincaid Mounds Archaeological Site where flat-topped mounds represent the houses and temples of elite Native American leaders. The site has played an important role in developing archaeology in North America.



The county seat is Metropolis and is considered the official home of Superman. The city features a 15-foot-tall Superman statue and hosts an annual Superman celebration. The Super

Museum can be found in the county seat and showcases a collection of over 20,000 Superman-themed items.



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Some counties close coastal areas to stop COVID-19 spread

by **Rachel Looker**
staff writer

The numbers in Tillamook County, Ore. tell a story: 70 miles of coastline, 25 hospital beds, 3 ICU beds and a population of 26,000 that quintuples during its busiest tourist season, which this year, started around the same time the coronavirus began to spread throughout the country.

"When all of this started happening, sort of mid-March or so, Tillamook County had zero confirmed COVID-19 cases," Tillamook County Commissioner David Yamamoto said. "We wanted to keep it that way."

Sandwiched between the two COVID-19 hotspots of California and Washington, the rural coastal county in northern Oregon is a popular tourist destination with hotels, motels, campgrounds and vacation rentals.

With stay-at-home restrictions throughout Oregon, California and Washington, Yamamoto said he did not expect a large number of spring breakers to visit the county. But on March 20, an influx of tourists arrived — and it only got worse.

"Our beaches were absolutely jam packed," he said. "It was like a Fourth of July weekend."

Following an emergency board of commissioners meeting, county officials voted to pass a resolution to close RV parks, vacation rentals, hotels, motels and bed and breakfasts. The county worked with the state and U.S. Forest Service to close county, state and federal campgrounds.

"We did all of this to protect our residents here," Yamamoto said.

The state owns the beaches in the county, but the county owns the beach parking lots and beach access routes, he said, which were all closed after he and his fellow commissioners passed the resolution.

"We knew we had to do something," he said. "Was it kind of a drastic measure? Yes. Was it the right thing to do? Absolutely."

The commissioners sent sheriff's deputies to campgrounds and RV parks to inform visitors, many with out-of-state license plates, about the closures.

"We put a note on their car or we walk out on the beach to find them and say, 'Hey, you're in a no parking zone,'" he said.

At this point of enforcement, the county still had no confirmed cases.

"It was very interesting by that evening of March 22," Ya-

"Tillamook County had zero confirmed COVID-19 cases. We wanted to keep it that way."

- Commissioner
David Yamamoto

mamoto said. "The vast majority of people had already left. They understood that they really shouldn't be here in a population that has no COVID-19."

Tillamook County is a large retirement area. A significant portion of the population are older individuals who are at a higher risk for contracting the virus. According to Yamamoto, the county lacks health infrastructure, especially in rural areas of the county.

"We don't have the hospital beds to handle a true pandemic, so we wanted to flatten the curve," he said.

Overall, visitors and county residents were compliant with the closures. Yamamoto said there have not been any enforcement issues.

"The message here has to be that we appreciate your business, but right now we're closed and putting our residents in Tillamook County

first," he said.

Other counties along the nation's shores have also closed coastal areas to prevent the spread of the coronavirus.

In Pinellas County, Fla., another popular spring break location, the board of commissioners voted to close all public beaches to ensure visitors were taking the pandemic seriously, County Administrator Barry Burton said.

Burton said the closures have been enforced through the sheriff, local police agencies and the county's park rangers.

He added that the coastal county faced challenges when officials found many visitors from outside the state congregating throughout the county. The county voted to shut down pools, which helped eliminate large crowds, he said.

"I think we struck the right balance in trying to have people disperse and act a little bit responsibly, but it did take a little bit of time for people to go back home," he said.

Burton said they are focusing on community education, specifically educating large groups on beaches that are disregarding social distancing practices.

"We're trying to educate people and where we have problems, we'll enforce it," he said.

He said overall, the commu-

nity has been cooperative.

"It's not a question of making people miserable, it's a question of implementing the best practices to where we can keep this from spreading throughout the community and affecting other people and causing additional problems in our communities," Burton said.

On the east coast in South Carolina, the state's governor issued an order closing all public access points to beaches as well as boat ramps, landings and other access points for lakes, rivers and other waterways.

County officials in Horry County, S.C., home of Myrtle Beach, put up closure signs and barriers at beach access points, adjacent beach parking lots, boat landings and boat ramps, according to Kelly Moore, public information officer for Horry County.

Moore said for county-owned parking areas, drivers who are violating the executive order are being issued tickets or getting their vehicles towed.

"We've seen great cooperation by county residents," she said. "We know folks have concerns about their health and safety and they're willing to participate to try to slow the spread of the virus." **CN**



Visitors overcrowd the beaches and parking lots in Tillamook County, Ore., on March 21 and March 22 amid the COVID-19 outbreak.



Beaches emptied out after county commissioners passed a resolution closing RV parks, vacation rentals, hotels, motels, bed and breakfasts, beach parking lots and public beach access points in Tillamook County, Ore.

Nearly 311 million under ‘safer at home’ orders

by Jonathan Harris

As of April 8, nearly 311 million residents in at least 42 states, 148 counties, 14 cities, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico were under orders to stay at home unless leaving for an essential purpose or activity, according to data from *The New York Times*. With more than 400,000 COVID-19 cases nationwide and more than 13,000 deaths as of April 8, state and local leaders see mandated social distancing as a key to slowing the spread.

“Safer at home” policies — also known as “stay at home” or “shelter in place” orders — direct residents to stay at home unless they are engaging in “essential” activities. The county or state designates these essential activities, which typically include food shopping, doctor’s visits, buying medical supplies, buying supplies to work from home, working in an “essential” business, taking care of family and friends or exercising at least six feet away from others.

The purpose of these policies is to reduce the spread of COVID-19, preserve critical and limited healthcare capacities in counties and prevent the healthcare system from being overwhelmed by patients. Safer at home policies aim to prevent new clusters of the disease from forming by closing businesses and areas where people tend to congregate and where the virus could easily spread.

Safer at home policies primarily prohibit gatherings outside of the home (especially in groups of 10 or more) and traveling within a county or across county lines (by car, motorcycle, bicycle, foot or any other means), unless for an essential activity. Residents who ignore the policy may face a misdemeanor punishable by fine, imprisonment or both.

Safer at home orders nearly always close down nonessential businesses and any other nonessential places where people could potentially gather, including restaurants (for dine-in), bars, gyms and rec-



Los Angeles County Supervisor Kathryn Barger holds a press conference to announce a “Safer at Home” order.


reation facilities. Some counties and states, though, have ordered the closure of nonessential businesses without instructing residents to stay at home. The primary difference between the two orders is that safer at home policies explicitly restrict the movement and activities of individual residents, while business closure policies only restrict the activities of businesses.

There are different ways that counties and states are deciding which types of businesses are essential versus nonessen-

tial. Most counties and states are following the U.S. Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency’s (CISA) guidance to decide which types of businesses count as essential or nonessential, though many with modifications. CISA’s list is not exhaustive, nor is the guidance mandatory; rather, CISA provides broad guidelines to help local governments identify key operations that ought to continue in this time of crisis.

State and local leaders know our communities best and

should be empowered to decide what types of industries local economies need to continue functioning, should the need for a nonessential business shutdown arise. County officials are working around the clock to ensure the safety and wellbeing of all residents during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Though reluctant to impose measures that may impact their local economies, counties recognize that safer at home policies and closures of nonessential businesses can help to curb the spread of COVID-19. Ultimately, local leaders, in consultation with their state partners and in line with federal guidance, should decide which measures are needed to protect their communities. NACo’s analysis of safer-at-home orders is informational and is not intended to serve as policy recommendation. For more information, visit NACo.org/Coronavirus. 

Jonathan Harris is associate research director in NACo’s County Innovations Lab.

COUNTIES MATTER



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#NCGM



BRIGHT IDEAS | CHARLOTTE COUNTY, Fla.

County Immerses Residents in Local Wildlife

PROBLEM:

Many residents lack the knowledge of how to properly interact with some types of wildlife commonly found in Charlotte County neighborhoods.

SOLUTION:

Educate participants about wildlife and the natural habitats they may encounter.

by Rachel Looker
staff writer

Alligators and scrub-jays and tortoises, oh my!

With diverse wildlife in Charlotte County, Fla., the Charlotte County Community Services Department's Parks and Natural Resources Division established an outreach program to educate county residents about the animals, habitats and natural environment they may come in contact with throughout the county.

The Nature in Your Neighborhood program launched in November 2018 and is an annual, six-part series that covers a variety of topics relating to local wildlife.

With low residential density in areas throughout Charlotte County, many county residents interact with wildlife every day. Parks and Natural Resources staff respond to questions daily at county parks and over the phone about environmental and wildlife issues.

Through the program, participants learn about the sensitive habitats of bald eagles, alligators, scrub-jays, gopher tortoises, sea turtles and shorebirds.

Senior Environmental Lands Manager Jason Thompson said the program started as an educational outreach opportunity.

"We came up with an opportunity to reach out to our citizens and bring about awareness for some of our more prominent environmental issues like protected species, gopher tortoises and scrub-jays, but also the environmental issues that people may deal with



Senior Environmental Lands Manager Jason Thompson shows a gopher tortoise to participants of the Nature in Your Neighborhood program in Charlotte County, Fla. Photo by Ashley Turner

day to day," he said.

According to Thompson, it is not uncommon to find animals like snakes or alligators throughout the county. Specifically, he described how gopher tortoises, one of five North American tortoise species, may be problematic in the county because they impact development. He added that many county residents often see gopher tortoises in their backyards.

"We felt like it was important to bring some greater awareness to some of these wildlife issues — things that are very much in line with what is in our neighborhood," Thompson said.

The program is offered for individuals of all ages and abilities. Each session begins with a 30- to 45-minute lecture, which Thompson described as more of a group discussion among participants. During the discussion, Thompson and his team talk about the science behind many animals found throughout the county, such as why scrub-jays are on the en-

'We felt like it was important to bring some greater awareness to some of these wildlife issues — things that are very much in line with what is in our neighborhood.'

dangered species list.

Following the group discussion, participants meet at one of the parks in the county to learn about the animals and their habitats in the field.

"We bring a lot of knowledge and a perspective of the science portion without going too deep into it but also when we bring folks out into the field, they get to see with their own eyes the nature in your neighborhood," Thompson said.

In the field, participants learn about the different types of sensitive habitats, why they are important, what local, state and federal agencies do to protect them and where they can find these areas on Charlotte County's conservation lands.

"We bring them out in the field with professionals and

show them what to look for and give them almost a crash course in what it takes to do the work that we do," he said.

The program includes different modules that focus on different animals. The alligator module covers the life cycle of the alligator, conservation of the species and educates participants on what to do if they encounter an alligator in Charlotte County.

Modules discussing scrub-jays, sea turtle and shorebirds discuss conservation efforts, where the animals can be found and each animal's life cycle. In the gopher tortoise model, individuals learn about the most popular animal in the county.

More than 100 participants have attended the program with


half of the participants attending more than one module.

"Some of them [the participants] we've come to know very well and they come annually just to come out and take an opportunity to go out in the field with us," he said.

The program is funded through in-house programming with the department.

To encourage county residents to attend, Thompson said the department advertises the program on the county website and through local media.

He added that they are constantly reviewing feedback about the program and are considering expanding it to cover different animals.

"We're always looking to freshen it up and change things up to see what works and see what people are interested in," he said. 

Charlotte County's Nature in Your Neighborhood program is the recipient of a 2019 NACo Achievement Award in the Parks and Recreation category.

Telework – Is it the New Normal?

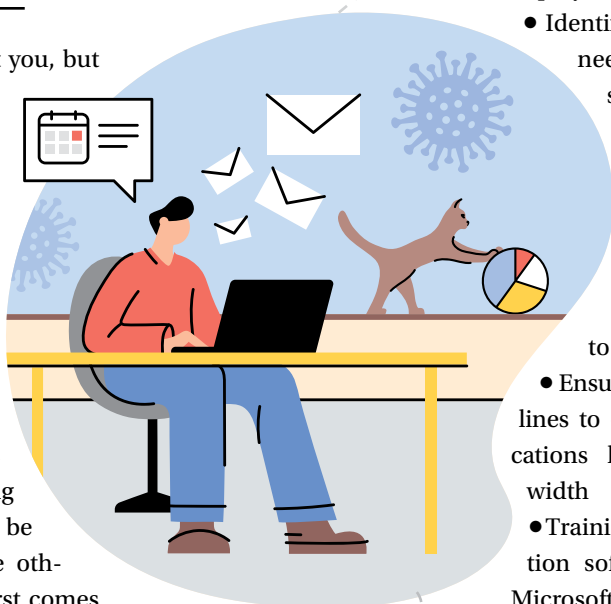
by Rita Reynolds

I don't know about you, but I've been inundated with articles on teleworking tips and best practices! Don't get me wrong, this advice and guidance is absolutely needed, as we enter another month of "shelter in place."

As I was writing this article, I was asking myself how will this be different than all the other articles? Well, it first comes from years of experience in teleworking. Second, it takes into consideration the unique position that county government has grappled with for years: Security and knowing that the employee is working.

Counties were thrust overnight into provisioning employees with the ability to telework. Technology staff quickly rose to the occasion by meeting those needs while at the same time keeping in mind the importance of security in this day and age. These are just a few of the steps that county information technology or IT departments have taken:

- Deploying laptops and de-



laying laptop refreshes

- Increasing capacity of and ensuring secure connections like Virtual Private Network (VPN) is on end user equipment
- Confirming a process for physically "sanitizing" any laptop needs returned to the IT department for repairs and re-

deployment

- Identifying staff that may need a mobile Wi-Fi hot spot (i.e. rural areas in county)
- Updating documentation and providing rapid-fire trainings for those employees new to telework
- Ensuring the Internet pipelines to county-housed applications have enough bandwidth
- Training on communication software tools such as Microsoft Teams, Cisco WebEx, Zoom and GoToMeeting
- Reviewing or creating telework policies; this isn't necessarily the time to develop a detailed telework policy and procedures, but rather covering the basics that include care and security of the equipment.

While implementing the above as expeditiously as possible, IT staff must also remain diligent concerning telework, and the additional security challenges telework brings. What are those challenges? Telework requires that the county employee have a password-protected internet connection and that the county-owned equipment is kept in a safe and secure location where no one else (children, etc.) can use that equipment. It is important as well that county employees practice se-

curity hygiene best practices. These include using

the internet for only work-related purposes, resisting the urge to click on unfamiliar links in emails, turning off and disconnecting your work laptop from wi-fi and turning off the remote wi-fi connection when the computer is not in use.

Finally, IT staff are providing training on both how to use equipment and tools for telework, as well as ramping up email phishing tests with employees. Unfortunately, bad actors are capitalizing on the COVID-19 situation and are exploiting end users with emails that appear to contain valid COVID-19 information. County email phishing tests can remind employees that they should only rely on well-known sites such as the CDC or Johns Hopkins for their COVID-19 information. And even in those cases, verifying that the actual web address points to the real site.

We don't know how long this situation will last. But until it is over, county IT will work to meet these increased telework demands, as well as remain vigilant on the security front. From network monitoring to deploying secure equipment, county IT staff are a vital com-



ponent of the county critical infrastructure! **CN**

Rita Reynolds is the chief technology officer at NACO.

BEHIND
THE
SEAL

CAPE GIRARDEAU COUNTY, Mo.

The center of the county seal for Cape Girardeau County, Mo., features a stone courthouse that has been in use for 111 years.



The county, named for a rock promontory along the Mississippi River, was officially organized in 1812. The county court met in various locations for six years. Prior to the courthouse featured in the seal, the county constructed three other courthouses including a wood frame structure built in 1818 and two brick and stone courthouses built in 1840 and 1872.

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

TELEWORK TIPS

Teleworking also requires county IT to ramp up various software tools to help employees stay connected with their team and their supervisor. Tools such as Microsoft Teams have seen a 400 percent increase in use over the past month. This requires an employee to communicate differently. NACO has collected telework tips from a variety of sources. Below is a short list:

1. Designate a specific location in your home for your workstation, preferably a room where you can close the door. Don't work from the couch or the

bed...it's ergonomically taxing and can make it hard to focus.

2. Be sure to shower and change into new clothes each day. Remember, telework may require video conferences.
3. As you start your day, make and review a list of all the things you need to accomplish and prioritize each item.
4. Assign a specific time block to each action item, starting with the most urgent ones.
5. Schedule a couple of short breaks each day and go for at least one walk.
6. Pick up the phone. Emails are

good when you need a simple, fast response, but don't use them for more complex issues or decisions. Discussion is necessary to help you stay connected with your colleagues and allows you to work through complex problems. You aren't bothering anyone by doing a video call!

7. Keep a written running list of things you want to flag for your colleagues, so you don't forget to mention them during your next team call.

8. Use the Outlook calendar or other tools such as MS Teams or Cisco WebEx to schedule group calls and invite participants.

It's helpful to paste a summary of the purpose of the call on the invite and attach any relevant documents you plan to discuss. That way, each participant is on the same page without having to dig through their inbox to find a related string of emails.

9. If you ever feel disconnected or out of the loop, initiate a check-in!

10. Before the end of each day, assess your accomplishments and productivity and make any updates for your running list of action items. Adjust priorities as necessary.

the HR DOCTOR

with Philpot
& Winkeler

The Time Is Right to Get Innovative, Try New Ideas

The COVID-19 pandemic is changing the way we deliver public service.

There are more online services and more telecommuting. But, despite the numerous ways to connect remotely — Zoom, Microsoft Teams, Skype, the old-fashioned phone — some positions cannot be performed through telecommuting.

Not even all staff who have primarily clerical, administrative or paper-driven roles are able to telecommute. Assessors' offices, treasurers' offices, recorders' offices and elections staff all have statutory deadlines and duties. Neither criminal activity nor civil disputes take a break during pandemics, which mean county attorneys' offices, public defenders' offices, courts and clerks of the court have ongoing business.

Each county department continues to provide essential services to customers at service counters — with a break to disinfect the counter in between customers — when other administrative duties may have been able to shift to telecommuting. To staff who must keep coming into the office or directors trying to revise how their offices function while balancing public health with public service, the possibilities don't always feel endless.

Here are some creative ideas to consider as we continue to navigate the best practices as set forth by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), to encourage social distancing and enable your county to have fewer employees in the office, while still serving the public. Not all the ideas may be feasible in your work setting and, given how the last few weeks have gone, the world, and the CDC guidelines, will likely change considerably between the time this is written and the time it gets to you; but perhaps reviewing the list below may be the beginning of a brainstorming that leads



to additional innovative ideas and possibilities. The time is right to try new things. There is no such thing as “normal” right now.

- Close the doors of offices and direct as much service as possible through the phone or by advance appointment. Triage appointments on the phone allows staff to answer questions and may result in fewer people needing to come to the office in person. Identify areas in the lobby where staff can meet with customers by appointment and set up the station in a way so that everyone can comply with social distancing guidelines. Have chairs at the ends of a six-foot table with disinfecting supplies in the center of the table.
- Consolidate service counters to have fewer staff working directly with the public.
- Mark the places on the floor where you want customers in line to stand with a tape “X” or square.
- Utilize an outdoor drop box primarily for customers, but, if appropriate, also for telework-

ing employees and in-office employees to exchange documents.

- Hand items to citizens outside by appointment, having them call when they arrive, much like takeout food.
- Have employees work alternative schedules to lessen the number of staff in the office at one time. Staff can start work at 6 a.m. or 7 a.m., while other employees can come in late and work until 6 p.m. or 7 p.m.
- Have some staff work alternating or staggered days, including weekends, to have fewer staff in the office at once. They might be able to accomplish that electronic records project that keeps getting pushed to the back burner.
- Even if staff don't have take-home computers, have them work on special projects from home such as updating their desk manual, revising a policy manual, creating an onboarding checklist, writing procedures, mapping workflow or researching a policy. Ask the staff what projects they have always wanted to accomplish,

but never had time to focus on.

- Identify an online training academy or series that team members can complete from home or have them work on any virtual continuing education.
- Split the staff up into small teams, so there are fewer people handing work to one another. Perhaps one team can work two long days Monday and Tuesday, with a half day Wednesday and the other team can work half day Wednesday, and long days Thursday and Friday. The other hours could be accomplished with online projects or training.

A month ago, if someone would have told you that your county would be able to transition all or even a majority of your employees to telecommuting within just two weeks, you might have said they were crazy. A month ago, if someone would have asked if your county could implement, train and successfully utilize online meeting tools such as Microsoft Teams, Skype, Zoom or Go To Meeting for a majority

of your daily actions in two weeks, you might have scoffed at the notion.

Counties across the country are using their incredible teamwork and can-do spirit to make amazing things happen to keep public services intact and available during this difficult time. Keep thinking outside the box, keep trying new things, imagine the impossible. The time is now.

Let's create some excitement and opportunity during this time of change and uncertainty. Public service is always a proud calling, but in times like this, when the health and safety of our communities is lifted up by our hands, as well as the services that ground us in “normal” life, that is when we really shine. **CN**

From Coconino County, Ariz., HR gurus and contributors, Erika Philpot, human resources director and Rose Winkeler, deputy county attorney, address common and critical HR questions from their “boots on the ground” perspective.

NEWS FROM ACROSS THE NATION



CALIFORNIA

• For the first time since 1969, a first-of-its-kind **public park** is coming to **SAN MATEO COUNTY**. Supervisors unanimously voted to purchase a mile-long stretch of Tunitas Creek Beach for \$3.2 million from Peninsula Open Space Trust, a non-profit environmental group, *The Mercury News* reported. This land is the first major coastal beach added to the county's park system in over 50 years. County supervisors also voted to fund restrooms, hiking trails, picnic tables, interpretive signs and parking at the new property.

Photo courtesy San Mateo County Parks

CALIFORNIA

• County officials in **HUMBOLDT COUNTY** are using satellite imagery to **identify illegal marijuana growing sites**. The county partnered with Planet, a satellite imaging company, to identify unpermitted cannabis-cultivation operations and to reduce growers' impact on natural resources, *Governing* reported. When marijuana use was legalized in the state, it added restrictions for growers. The satellite imagery helps the county reduce environmental impacts, recover costs and assess fines and penalties. Since starting to use the images in 2018, the county issued 700 citations compared to less than 100 the year before.

• Vulnerable citizens in **SAN DIEGO COUNTY** have a new lifeline, and a way out if things get hairy. The county's Office of Emergency Services started up the **Neighborhood Evacuation Team** program,

in partnership with the Community Emergency Response Teams (CERT) throughout the region. The teams are made up of disaster-trained volunteers who can help in their neighborhoods. Residents are paired with CERT members who guide them to make a plan that suits their needs, including working out transportation needs with a caregiver, neighbor or family member. The free service can drastically reduce the time needed to evacuate.

COLORADO

• **SAN JUAN COUNTY** enforced a **locals-only policy** to prevent the spread of the coronavirus. The order is prohibiting all but essential services and allowing only Highway 550 drive-through traffic and San Juan County residents, *Out-There Colorado* reported. Additionally, vehicles parked on all county roads that are not registered in the county will be subject to fines and towing.

• **SUMMIT COUNTY** launched a mobile program for **in-home testing for the coronavirus**. County residents who have a doctor's note can be tested in their homes by first responders from a private ambulance company. Completed tests will be sent to Quest Diagnostics, a private lab, with results available in four to five days, according to *Denver7*. The county is funding the program with the federal government expected to reimburse 75 percent of the cost.



FLORIDA

• **BROWARD COUNTY** Animal Care is encouraging **virtual adoption** through an on-

line program to help pets find homes during the COVID-19 outbreak. The program has received hundreds of applications with over 80 pets finding homes, according to CBS Miami. Those looking to adopt can view pictures online and fill out an adoption or foster application before meeting the animal in person, where finalized paperwork is completed outside by the individual's car.

• More than 75 volunteers played the part of injured passengers in a **full-scale disaster exercise** for Key West International Airport and **MONROE COUNTY** Fire Rescue. The drill is designed to test the emergency responders at the airport and the local community's response in the event of an aircraft disaster. The airport remained open throughout the event with no interruptions to scheduled flights or the community. The Federal Aviation Administration re-

quires the airport to conduct the review at least once a year, but every third year, the airport must perform a full-scale exercise during the review. Among the participating agencies were Monroe County Emergency Management, the Monroe County Sheriff's Office and Monroe County Health Department.

GEORGIA

The Public Art Program of the Department of Arts and Culture in **FULTON COUNTY** is **helping artists** impacted by the coronavirus pandemic. The department launched the Digital Art Acquisition Initiative which encourages artists to submit up to three digital works to be considered for up to \$1,000, Patch Media reported. If purchasing the art, the county has the option to print one copy of the piece.

ILLINOIS

• **LA SALLE COUNTY** board



CALIFORNIA

• In the 16 months since its launch, the solar facility at **SACRAMENTO COUNTY**'s International Airport has grown to provide approximately 35 percent of the airport's energy. It is the **largest airport solar facility** in California. The electricity generated by the facility is enough to power 1,600 homes a year. Projected cost savings from the project are an average of \$850,000 annually throughout the 25-year term of the agreement. The facility generates nearly 15.5 million kilowatt-hours per year which equates to 11,535 metric tons of greenhouse gas emissions expressed in carbon dioxide equivalent. The clean energy generated annually has the carbon reduction equivalent of removing nearly 2,500 cars from the road. The solar farm occupies one 15-acre site and one 20-acre site.

meetings will likely get a little more efficient, following a vote to amend board rules to **allow for consent agendas**. The board will now be able to approve certain actions without a formal vote, primarily for routine matters like appointing members to public bodies, *The Times* reported.

• **WINNEBAGO COUNTY** now has a **mental health board**. The seven-member body will recommend how to spend revenue from a county-wide half-cent sales tax and seek grants to provide mental health services. The recently passed sales tax increase is likely to raise up to \$14 million a year for mental health and addiction services.

INDIANA

Election officials in **PORTER COUNTY** are looking to **high school students to serve as poll workers**. Many experienced poll workers are staying home amid the COVID-19 outbreak because of their age or health conditions, according to the *NWI Times*. The county is now allowing 16 and 17-year-old students to serve as poll workers and work at early voting sites.

IOWA

A program launched by **DICKINSON COUNTY** Conservation is helping **keep county roads clean**. The Adopt-a-Roadside program mimics statewide programs for highways and allows individuals to adopt a section of the road to clean up its trash. Volunteers must clean litter from at least one mile of the road twice per year for two years, *Explore Okoboji* reported. Participants will receive safety gear including gloves, visibility vests and first aid kits supplied by the county.

MARYLAND

• In celebration of **Read Across America Day** March 3, **MONTGOMERY COUNTY** Executive Marc Elrich and Councilmember Gabe Alborno visited the Wheaton Library and Community Recreation Center and read to young children to demonstrate the importance of encouraging lit-

MARYLAND

• County residents in **ANNE ARUNDEL COUNTY** can now use a text messaging program to help **find lost pets**. The Lost2Found program provides owners information on locating a lost animal including websites for local shelters and video tutorials. County residents who find a lost pet can also opt into the program and receive information on the proper methods of finding a pet's home. The program launched to reduce the number of animals coming to shelters during the coronavirus pandemic, the *Capital Gazette* reported.



eracy at a young age. Alborno provided a Spanish translation of the books.

MINNESOTA

The Sheriff's Office in **STEARNS COUNTY** has partnered with local auto shops to help county drivers **fix their car lights**. Drivers who are pulled over with broken headlights, tail-lights, brake lights and turn signals will receive fix-it vouchers instead of warnings or tickets through the Lights On program, *WJON* reported. The vouchers can be used at local auto shops for free light changes.

MONTANA

Commissioners in **TETON COUNTY** voted to hold their June 2 primary election by **mail-in ballots**. The governor of Montana has given all counties the option to conduct the primary by mail, the *Choteau Acantha* reported. According to the county election administrator, 71 percent of registered voters have already signed up to receive absentee ballots in all elections. This is the first time the county will hold a primary election by mail.

MISSOURI

People with domestic violence convictions and orders of protection against them will soon be **banned from carrying concealed guns** in **ST. LOUIS COUNTY**. Councilwoman Kelli Dunaway said that passing this bill would make an ordinance that wouldn't have the same penalties as a federal crime, but federal prosecutors are often

"too busy with much bigger issues," she said, according to ABC News. "If we can hand this law over to the county government, it's more likely to be prosecuted."

NEW JERSEY

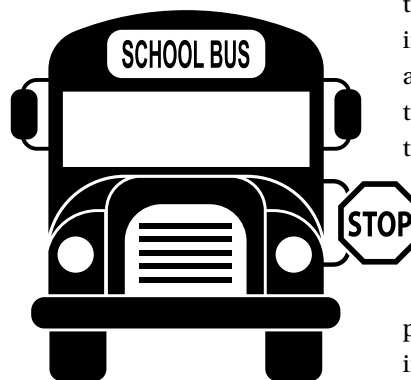
BERGEN COUNTY received a three-year federal grant from the Enhanced Training and Services to End Abuse in Later Life Program to increase training for police, prosecutors and judiciary in recognizing, investigating and prosecuting cases of **elder abuse**. The grant totals \$400,000.

A multidisciplinary partnership among the human services department's division of senior services, sheriff's office, prosecutor's office, county board of social services, adult protective services and center for hope and safety will conduct a swift county-wide needs assessment survey to accurately identify current gaps in service and the overall awareness in the community.

The data collected will be used to develop a plan for better implementing services for victims of elder abuse, neglect and financial exploitation.

NEW YORK

• With new authority granted



by the state, **ONEIDA COUNTY** approved a new program to catch **drivers passing school buses** using cameras on the buses' stop-arms. Interested school districts can enter into an agreement with the county to participate.

The traditional process of reporting, gathering viable evidence, finding the perpetrator and eventually issuing a traffic ticket is a lengthy, tedious process that Sheriff Robert Maciol admitted is difficult to complete successfully, resulting in several "unsolved" cases. The new law would circumvent the previous obstacles law-enforcement encounter when bringing bus-passing violators to justice. The cameras would operate in real time, using motion-activation to detect violations. The evidence gathered by the cameras would then be securely forwarded to the sheriff's office, where an as-

signed officer would oversee all incoming reports from the cameras to review, and confirmed violations would result in fines.

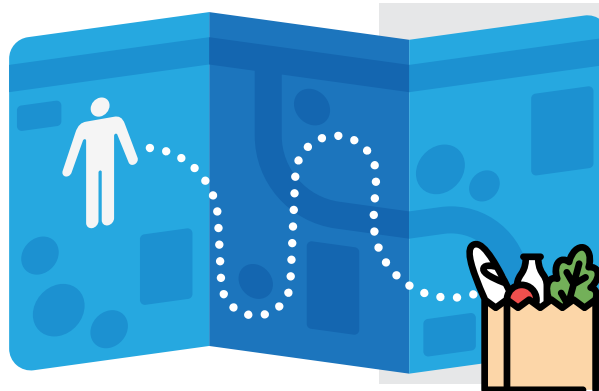
• **PUTNAM COUNTY** is helping parents make their children better drivers. The Parent as Driving Partners initiative is a partnership of the Putnam County Clerk, Putnam County Probation STOP-DWI, Putnam County Sheriff, Putnam County Traffic Safety Board and the Putnam County Youth Bureau. It emphasizes the role of parents in promoting safe driving habits in teens and offers a booklet that contains some basic guidelines to help parents in their role as driving partners and includes a **parent/teen driving agreement**, outlining the responsibilities of both parents and teens in promoting safe driving. The county's Department of Motor Vehicles will be distributing this booklet to parents of teens applying for their learning permit and asking that they sign the agreement. It will also be required of students seeking on-campus parking at the county's high schools.

• **WESTCHESTER COUNTY**'s facilities will no longer play host to shows involving the performance of **exotic animals**, following an executive order by Executive George Latimer. In 2017, the state passed a law banning the use of elephants for entertainment. News 12 reported that the County Center will allow an annual reptile show and pet adoption event because those animals are not performing. County legislators are working on a law that will make the ban permanent.

See NEWS FROM page 16

PENNSYLVANIA

ALLEGHENY COUNTY has developed an online **map of free food distribution sites**. The map includes food pantries, churches, schools and other locations and can orient users around a specific address. The map also includes some distribution sites outside of the county.



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Appointments are now open for NACo's leadership team in

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 - Standing Committee chairs, vice chairs and members
 - Ad Hoc committee, task

force and advisory board chairs, vice chairs and members

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To be considered for a NACo presidential appointment to any of the committees or as an at-large director for the NACo Board of Directors, you must complete an application form by June 14, 2020. Find that application form, beginning April 15, here: www.naco.org/presidential-appointments. Please direct any questions to committee@naco.org. 



From NEWS FROM page 15

TEXAS

DALLAS COUNTY dramatically cut the **cost of phone calls from jail**, which will make it easier for inmates to stay connected to the outside world.

The previous rate of \$3.60 for every 15-minute phone call will be reduced to 18 cents. That will save inmates and families an estimated \$4.6 million a year, according to an analysis by the Prison Policy Initiative, according to the *Dallas Morning News*.

The more than 5,000 inmates in Dallas County's jail for the first time will also be able to rent electronic tablets that include a legal library, religious texts and messaging software through a secured intranet.

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

Counties get creative to produce hand sanitizer, face masks

From SHORTAGES page 5

their windows to be filled with the free hand sanitizer. Additionally, the sheriff's departments, home healthcare workers and senior centers were requesting gallons of the hand sanitizer.

"It just represents the big need that is out there," Look explained. "It's just one more weapon, if you will, in the toolbox in this war against the virus."

A county library in Wilson County, Texas is using its own

supplies to create PPE during the crisis.

At the Sam Fore, Jr. Wilson County Public Library, librarians are using the facility's 3D printer to create face masks.

Wilson County Public Libraries Computer Lab Manager Lesa McCall said she discovered Make the Masks, a website with a 3D-printable mask plan available for communities to produce.

According to McCall, the 3D printing is able to extend the lifespan of N95 masks by a factor of four by utilizing and re-

placing different pieces of the masks.


"That was our goal to take what limited supplies they have and extend them as much as possible," she said.

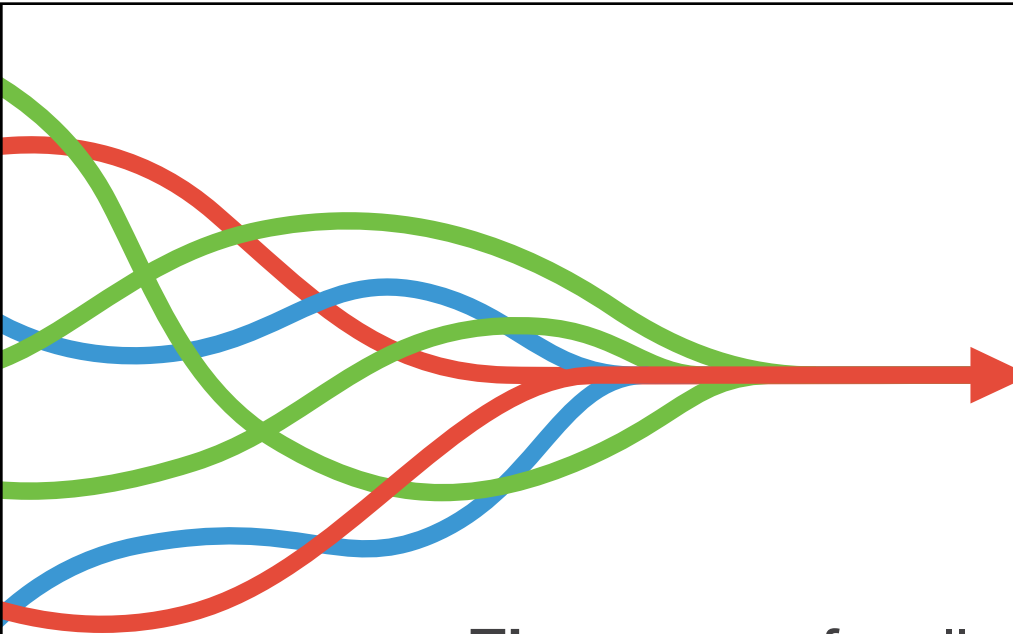
McCall said they have delivered three dozen masks to the hospital and two emergency services districts and are working on printing more.


She said the masks will be distributed to jails, funeral homes, the sheriff's department, police departments and medical providers.

"We were hoping that we


could get the word out and if everyone could do their little bit of printing, we would really just be able to extend these supplies exponentially," she said.


For counties looking to track PPE usage, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has created a personal protective equipment burn rate calculator, a spreadsheet model which can be helpful for facilities to optimize the use of PPE. The tool calculates the average consumption rate and can be used to estimate the remaining supply of equipment. 





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