



FIRST-TIME HEALTH DIRECTOR MEETS COVID HEAD-ON. PG. 3



VOLUNTEER DRIVERS CLOSE LAST-MILE TRANSIT GAPS IN N.Y. PG. 6



COUNTY LEADERSHIP PROGRAM EMPOWERS PEOPLE OF COLOR. PG. 8

County connects all to broadband

by **Mary Ann Barton**
editor

One silver lining about the pandemic: It has shined a brighter light on the necessity of broadband and pushed the issue to the forefront.

In NACo President Gary Moore's Boone County, Ky., the Boone County Fiscal Court approved a partnership last month with Cincinnati Bell Inc. that will result in the development of a one gigabit high-speed broadband fiber network available to every address in the county. This robust fiber network will be deployed within an accelerated 24-36 month time frame. The Boone County Fiscal Court's commitment of \$13.6 million will leverage a Cincinnati Bell investment of more than \$30 million to implement the project.

"Our school was doing virtual," said Moore, judge/executive in Boone County. "They bought Chromebooks for students but what do you do with a Chromebook if you don't have Wi-Fi? We were getting calls from parents. Providers needed to do e-health visits. Other people were working from home. So, the need for high-speed broadband cata-



Moore

pulted to the top of our list."

The broadband expansion will place Boone County at the technological forefront as one of the very first county governments in the nation to deliver access to one gigabit high-speed broadband

service to every address in its jurisdiction. A distinctive element of this project will include a last-mile, complete fiber build-out, capable of delivering speeds of one gigabyte. This access will be delivered via a state-of-the-art "Fiber to the Premise" network (FTTP).

"Delivering access for every address in the county to high-speed service is critical in creating a high quality of life environment and positioning our county as a community of choice for residents and businesses," said Moore. "The partnership with Cincinnati Bell will leverage significant private capital investment that would not have been made without the commitment of the Fiscal Court, solidifying our position at the forefront of economic development, innovation and focusing on the needs of our

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Vaccination efforts focus on incarcerated



An inmate at the Miami-Dade Pre-Trial Detention Center receives a dose of the Johnson & Johnson COVID-19 vaccine in Miami-Dade County, Fla. Photo courtesy of Miami-Dade County

by **Rachel Looker**
staff writer

As the COVID-19 vaccine distribution rollout continues and more than 212 million doses have been administered throughout the country, counties are making sure popula-

tions within detention centers and correctional facilities have the option to receive a dose.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is working with the Federal Bureau of Prisons to develop vaccination implementation plans.

While the CDC encourages jurisdictions to vaccinate staff and incarcerated persons at the same time because of the shared increased risk of disease, the CDC does not determine plans for allocating,

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Counties equip residents with digital COVID-19 vaccine cards

by **Rachel Looker**
staff writer

Counties are finding ways to provide residents with digital COVID-19 vaccine cards as the debate continues as to whether private entities will soon require proof of vaccination or COVID-19 vaccine passports.

White House Press Secre-

tary Jen Psaki said the federal government will not support a system that requires all Americans to carry a credential, adding that there will be no federal mandate requiring a vaccination credential.

In Hawaii, Lt. Gov. Josh Green announced plans for a state vaccine passport pilot program that would allow travelers to

bypass state quarantine rules, Hawaii News Now reported. The digital system may be implemented as soon as mid-May.

Erie County, N.Y., County Executive Mark Poloncarz recently announced that fans of the Buffalo Bills football team and Buffalo Sabres hockey team

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Applications provide county residents with digital access to COVID-19 vaccine cards

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would need to be vaccinated to attend 100 percent capacity games this fall.

Erie County owns the football stadium where the Bills play and the hockey arena where the Sabres play.

Poloncarz said the county has allowed a portion of fans to return to the facilities at no more than 20 percent capacity, as long as they had a negative PCR test within 72 hours of the game.

"The only way we're going to be able to return 100 percent of the fans to the stands is if everyone is vaccinated," he said.

Poloncarz said starting with the Bills' games this fall, all fans and staff who work at the stadium will be required to be vaccinated to enter the facility. He said the county is considering utilizing New York State's Excelsior Pass, an online application that links to the state health department to confirm vaccine records.

"The only way that we feel comfortable that we can return a full house to the football stadium or the hockey arena is by ensuring individuals in there are protected and the only way to really protect them is to vaccinate them," he said.

The county is still working out the details, such as how to handle out-of-state fans, but has received support from both teams, which are eager to have 100 percent capacity in the stands.

"If you want to return to normal, get vaccinated," Poloncarz said. "If you want to go to a Bills or Sabres game this fall, get vaccinated."

While Orange County, Calif., is not requiring vaccine verification to go onto county property, Supervisor Lisa Bartlett said the county health agency has announced a program that provides residents with digital vaccine records. Originally announced as a digital passport pilot program before changing its name to a digital



The VaccineCheck application in St. Mary's County, Md. provides electronic access to vaccine records.

vaccination records program, Bartlett said county residents can download a digital copy of their vaccine card and testing record through a county-implemented program called Othena. The third-party application is used to register individuals

for COVID-19 vaccinations and schedule appointments.

"As more people get vaccinated, they have the opportunity on an individualized basis to download their individual vaccination record," she said.

Through the app, the county developed an opt-in feature where a user can voluntarily download a digital copy of their vaccine card, according to Bartlett. The application protects medical history and privacy information and is only accessible by the patient.

"It's not available to any third parties, business entities or other government entities, so nobody else will have access to this information," she said.

The digital proof of vaccination is meant to help those who may have lost their physical vaccine card and prevent fraud. It has a QR code and can be downloaded on smartphones similar to digital boarding passes.

"It's voluntary and a lot of people just want to know that they've got it with them and they haven't lost it," Bartlett said. "If they need to access information, it's right there on

their smartphone so it's a matter of convenience."

The Health Department in St. Mary's County, Md. has also launched a way for residents to obtain digital proof of vaccination.

The department partnered with software company PinPoint to offer free digital COVID-19 vaccine cards for county residents using the VaccineCheck service. The web-based platform creates a digital version of a CDC vaccine card using the Maryland vaccine registry. Through the service, residents can also upload images of their physical card to the system for digital record-keeping.

St. Mary's County Health Officer Dr. Meena Brewster said with everyone having access to electronic health records, it made sense to allow electronic access to vaccine records.

"This is a convenient way for them to upload an image of their original paper card so that they can always access that original image as well as have an authenticate digital version," Brewster said.

PinPoint Managing Partner Chris Nickerson said the web-based application is powered by a HIPAA-compliant platform. Residents can access it online through a portal that checks ZIP codes. PinPoint also has the ability to verify records through other state registries, he said.

Brewster said the county partnered with PinPoint in the beginning of the pandemic to launch an occupational health screener for employees and to launch a behavioral health screener to check in on county residents' mental health.

"We knew there was a demand from our population for being able to access their own personal medical information and we wanted to make sure they could do so when it came to their COVID-19 vaccine record," Brewster said. **CN**

SNAP/STATS

Indianapolis International Airport

TOP 5 DOMESTIC AIRPORTS

AIRPORT	OWNED BY
1. Indianapolis International Airport	Indianapolis Airport Authority
2. Portland International Airport	Port of Portland
3. Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport.....	Metropolitan Airports Commission
4. Tampa International Airport	Hillsborough County Aviation Authority
5. T.F. Green Airport, Rhode Island	State of Rhode Island

Source: Travel + Leisure survey of readers, who based their choices on: Quick-to-navigate terminals, local food and drink options, free Wi-Fi, destination-specific shopping and short security lines.

A FIRST-TIME RURAL PUBLIC HEALTH LEADER MEETS PANDEMIC HEAD-ON

by **Charlie Ban**
senior writer

A lot about the San Miguel County job interested Grace Franklin. After five years working for the state of Colorado, it was an entry into county government and her first managerial role. It was a chance to essentially build a public health department. And the setting in the mountain town of Telluride offered the promise of a fulfilling work-life balance.

She's still working on that last one.

A few weeks after she started as public health director, the COVID-19 pandemic preempted all of her plans and put her in front of a life-changing threat.

"My first week here, our public health nurse with a background in emergency preparedness said, 'I need to tell you about the coronavirus, it's something we're going to need to watch,' and I just naively thought 'not yet,'" Franklin said. "Starting in March, I had to put away all of my plans and focus on this, full-time."

With seasonal visitors adding roughly 5,000 people to the county's 8,000 full-time residents, Franklin and the Board of Commissioners had to act fast to limit the spread of the virus that was already two weeks ahead while they learned more by the day. Together they set operating restrictions on businesses and tried to enact policies to limit community spread of the virus.

Along the way, she had a different kind of onboarding experience. By mid-March, a few local children developed serious respiratory infections, serious enough that one was taken by helicopter to a Denver hospital.

"The tone and the heaviness of that responsibility really set in then," she said, more than a year after the child recovered from a non-COVID illness and returned home. "I've always felt responsible for different things, but now I went from being this much more slow-go policy shift to 'we need to immediately address these concerns to truly save lives. If we sit idle, there's



San Miguel County, Colo. Public Health Director Grace Franklin adjusts a freezer. Photo by Lindsey Mills

going to be a lot of suffering.' That was a really heavy weight."

She was also forging a relationship with a Board of Commissioners that was just starting to embrace its dual role as the county Board of Health.

"We didn't even have public health on the organizational chart," said Commissioner Hilary Cooper. "A lot of counties seemed to not quite grasp the role they played — some commissioners saw themselves as fully involved, some figured decisions would be made by the public health director. We figured out it's somewhere in between."

But it was important early on, Cooper said, for the commissioners to take an active role early in the pandemic to support Franklin as she adjusted to her position.

"If we'd been hands-off, we'd be throwing her to the wolves," she said, noting that wolves had not yet been reintroduced to San Miguel County. "At the beginning, Grace was very much unknown, but we had credibility to make some tough calls and put our names on them."

"As she developed a reputation of respect and was coherent

and articulate and a good communicator, she was able to step into that leadership role."

Franklin's career started in her native Los Angeles, where she worked on nutrition programs for women, infants and children. She wanted to explore a systemic approach to health outcomes, moved to Denver for grad school, then worked in the state's family planning office. In San Miguel County, she saw an environment she liked.

"The county was uniquely positioned with its leadership," she said. "You could tell the commissioners understood what public health was, the importance of it. They were willing to put their support and their financial support behind it. That was key."

Cooper liked a lot of what Franklin proposed for the county's public health department, which had been largely run on a service delivery model. Franklin wanted the public health department to address the social determinants of health, a concept with which Cooper became familiar at a NACo Legislative Conference a few years earlier.

"It's asking how you take all the great work that's already

being done, how do you take the community voices to better understand their needs and their strengths? To really evaluate what is working and call out what is not," Franklin said.

County Manager Mike Bordogna saw her working well with the Board early on.

"Her ability to create a positive, informed relationship with the board really led them to know they could trust her to be the one to issue the public health orders," he said. "It could have easily gone the other way if she hadn't been so communicative and so informed, if she hadn't explained 'This is how I get my information, how I make my decisions.'"

She participated in hours-long meetings nearly every day at the start of the pandemic, before loosening her schedule to every other day. Seven-day work weeks were common, Bordogna said, but Franklin found a silver lining in that frequency.

"The moment you'd say something, it seems like things would change, so I always had an opportunity to update people," she said. "It was a great platform to keep everyone on the same understanding of a

constantly evolving target."

All the while, she tried to stave off burnout in the face of an undefined time frame.

"There was no work-life balance," she said. "I was already steeled for the concept of isolation, but this took it to a whole new level. It took me years to build my group of friends in Denver, so I knew it was going to take more than six months to find my people here."

She took some muted solace that she was not entirely worse off for having left Denver, where residents were even more restricted than in San Miguel County. She wasn't missing out on any big social events.

"At least they weren't having fun without me," she said sardonically. "I was intentional about connecting with people on the phone or on Zoom. My colleagues forced me to have fun, at the very least we'd have walking meetings."

"It's really easy to let exercise be the first thing to go, I focused on what brings me the most joy, like hiking."

It's hard to look for direct cause and effect relationships

'It's important to remember...many of them have not been found guilty...'

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distributing or administering vaccines at state and local detention centers, according to its website.

In Miami-Dade County, Fla., Commissioner Kionne McGhee led the effort with Commissioner Keon Hardemon to vaccinate some of the eligible detained population at the Miami-Dade Pre-Trial Detention Center.

Through a partnership with Community Health of South Florida, a federally qualified community health agency in the county, detained individuals received the one-shot Johnson & Johnson vaccine before it was paused.

McGhee said the goal and mission of the vaccination ef-

fort for detained residents was to give assistance for those in need and protect the rights of those held within the detention facility. He said prior to these efforts, there were no processes in place to address vaccinating this population.

In Florida's vaccine plan, corrections staff and inmates are not specifically mentioned in the phased vaccination strategy.

"It's important to remember that individuals, especially those who are in jail, they are detained residents... many of them have not been found guilty yet," McGhee said. "To presume that they're guilty and use that as a reason to not give them the same access to the vaccination, I think it's un-American and I think

it goes against the spirit of the American cloth."

David Mahoney, sheriff of Dane County, Wis. and the current National Sheriff's Association president, emphasized how jails across the country house individuals who are most in need of healthcare and are often suffering from alcohol, drug addiction and mental illness.

"We're talking about individuals who are already in need of healthcare, may not have received care of a medical professional in years and then because of their level of addiction to drugs and alcohol, could be more compromised," Mahoney said.

In the Dane County Jail, there are normally around

1,000 inmates, according to Mahoney. Since the pandemic, he said sheriffs have worked with partners in the criminal justice system to keep populations down, knowing that jails face obstacles providing adequate social distancing.

"It's virtually impossible to social distance individuals within the jail and that's not only the inmate population, but our employee population as well," he said.

Now, the county jail has a daily population closer to 400 or 500, which Mahoney said has allowed for jail staff to spread the population out within the facility.

Even with these efforts, over 100 individuals have tested positive for COVID-19 as well as 52 staff members.

In phase 1B of the vaccine rollout in Wisconsin, correctional staff became eligible for the vaccine. Mahoney said at this phase, the county did not have authorization or a priority for inmate populations.

In phase 3, he said the county received vaccination approval from the state for incarcerated populations and began administering vaccines. As of April 14, Mahoney said 87 incarcerated individuals received the Johnson & Johnson vaccine before it was paused.

"The reason we chose Johnson & Johnson is it's a one-shot regimen," he said. "We realized that with Moderna or Pfizer with a two-shot cycle, we may have a lot of difficulty with in-

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NATIONAL COUNTY GOVERNMENT MONTH
APRIL 2021

Treasury releases new ARP payment guidance

by Eryn Hurley
and Mikaela Tajo

Counties have a roadmap to quickly and efficiently receive payments from the American Rescue Plan's Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Funds thanks to guidance released April 15 by the U.S. Treasury.

The guidance on pre-award requirements outlines steps counties must take, though specific submission instructions have not yet been released. NACo recommends your executive or authorized officer prepare to certify the submission by doing the following as soon as possible:

- Ensure they have a valid DUNS number. A DUNS number is a unique nine-character number used to identify an organization and is issued by Dun & Bradstreet. The federal government uses DUNS numbers to track federal allocations. A DUNS number is required prior

to registering with the System for Award Management (SAM) database, outlined below. Registering for a DUNS number is free and if your county does not have a valid DUNS number, call 1-866-705-5711 to register at <https://fedgov.dnb.com/web-form/>.

- Ensure they have an active SAM registration. All federal financial assistance recipients must register on *SAM.gov* and renew their free registration annually. Registration can take up to three weeks and a delay in registering could impact timely payment of funds.

- Gather payment information, including:

1. Entity Identification Number, name and contact information
2. Name and title of an authorized representative of the county financial institution (e.g., routing and account number, financial institution name and contact information). **CN**

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Public health overhaul took a back seat to pandemic response

From DIRECTOR page 3

between public health policy and health outcomes because doing so relies on many elements, making the task similar to verbally directing someone how to play pinball. Instead of setting her goals based on contagion rates, Franklin focused on the strength of her professional relationships.

“What does communication look like between these different groups? Are people willing to partner with us? Will people be willing to call us out when we’re wrong? Is my staff avoiding burnout?” All were questions she asked.

Cooper helped direct retired public health veterans in the county to serve as a sounding board for Franklin, who developed a strong relationship with county Medical Officer Sharon Grundy and Franklin’s counterparts in other regional county public health departments.

“Any time I’ve struggled, they’ve been there to help me through things,” she said.

And, of course, she worked on her relationship with the Board of Commissioners.

“I don’t know them that well, they didn’t know me enough to trust me,” she said. “There were definitely times when we disagreed, but we did it in a healthy, constructive manner. They were also asking me how they can support me in a public fashion versus how they do so in the background.”

Cooper said the commissioners never felt like they were in a position where they had to blindly trust Franklin, and her credibility built up over time as she demonstrated competence.

“We knew what she was trying to do, we were on board with that from the beginning, and it was a relief when she was able to hire staff to share the load,” she said. “There’s something about being thrown into an emergency, right? You either step up into the emergency or you step out and let other people lead.”

Bordogna saw Franklin hold her ground a few times when public pressure was relayed through the board as the pandemic wore on and businesses chafed at restrictions.

“It’s tough to tell your ultimate bosses ‘No, I will not allow this



San Miguel County, Colo. Public Health Director Grace Franklin

and here’s why,’ and for them to go along with it when they hear about it from residents and business owners,” he said. “A lot of people in the community don’t know what public health does and where she would get the authority to tell them what to do.”

Bordogna credited Franklin with close coordination with different industries, listening to their concerns and finding workable solutions to allow them to resume operations safely.

The county’s unemployment rate topped out at 22.9 percent in April 2020 but was down to 6.1 percent in February 2021.

“Every group felt like they had access to her, nobody rebelled,” he said. “Without their support, our community response to the pandemic wouldn’t have been possible. The hospitality industry didn’t when we restricted lodging, but she explained the epidemiology and why it made sense to limit capacity.”

She tried to institutionalize best practices for different industries but did so with two-way communication.

“I wanted to get a better idea about how the pandemic looks in their industry, how can we protect customers and workers,” she said. “With construction, we had a workforce coming from all over — Utah, Denver, other counties — and restaurants were an interesting take on harm reduction and people’s risk tolerance.”

Franklin hired COVID-specific health educators to work directly with business owners and tailored data to their industry-specific needs.

‘We were a little lax on the enforcement side in favor of more education, unless it was egregious,’ she said. “The educators helped institute best practices and got buy-in from businesses.”

That work paid off, Bordogna said, when lodging tax revenues for 2020 exceeded the prior year’s revenues in spite of the shutdown early in the year.

“We became a destination for safety-conscious visitors,” he said. “It was proof that having high standards doesn’t mean you hurt your businesses.”

San Miguel County’s vaccine distribution has gone well, without a national pharmacy chain to contribute. As of April 19, the county leads Colorado in proportion of its adult vaccinated, at 33.9 percent and 2,770 total vaccinated. Franklin focused on vaccine equity and allowed all non-English speakers to get vaccinated without appointments.

“It’s one fewer barrier they have to get past when there’s already some hesitancy,” she said.

She held video community forums, with question-and-answer sessions, which were also broadcast on the radio for non-internet users aimed at the town of Norwood, whose residents demonstrated skepticism toward the pandemic and vaccines.

Although the far western town of Egnar is closer to the Dolores County seat of Dove Creek than it was to Telluride, she planned a vaccine event at its fire station.

“We wanted to make sure they

felt like they were part of San Miguel County, that we weren’t foisting them on some other county just because it was more convenient,” she said. She sent postcards to every post office box in town and posters on local storefronts.

“It’s very humbling because it’s such a diverse county and to really hear the full spectrum of needs, the full spectrum of ideology as it pertains to a health crisis and how we’re responsive,” she said.

“The bottom-line value here is the health of families and friends. People genuinely care for people, they can disagree and still bring you a quiche when they know you’re hungry. It’s the remarkable beauty of rural America.”

If San Miguel County is able to weather the forces of additional visitors and the return of events and festivals as vaccination efforts continue, Franklin may soon be able to affect the changes in the public health department that she wanted and sold Bordogna and the Board on her 15 months ago.

“She was confident enough to stand up to a lot of questioning about ‘Who are you? Why are you telling us what to do when?’ She was very brave, courageous and calm, incredibly calm,” Cooper said.

“I haven’t seen her get frustrated. I’ve seen her get tired.

“Our biggest goal for Grace is for her to be able to take some time off soon.” **CN**

Connecting to broadband

From BROADBAND page 1

citizens.”

Under terms of the partnership:

- Cincinnati Bell will expand its fiber network and offer one gigabit Internet service to every address in the county, expanding to more than 40,000 currently unserved and underserved business and consumer addresses. These consumer addresses will include both single-family residents as well as multi-dwelling units.

- The service will be delivered under a “Fiber First” strategy that is committed to utilizing a “Fiber to the Premise” network design, ostensibly installing fiber optic cable along every mile of road right-of way within Boone County. The fiber backbone will be designed to ensure capacity that will serve all future development and technology upgrades.

- Cincinnati Bell will offer a Boone County Affinity Internet Package to every Boone County resident.

- UniCity, Cincinnati Bell’s Smart City organization, will fund \$500,000 worth of improvements to Boone County’s public Wi-Fi infrastructure. UniCity works with communities to leverage technology applications that support business district vibrancy, neighborhood-based enhancements and public safety.

- Qualified K-12 students in Boone County will have access to discounted pricing programs for home-based internet as well as other subsidized broadband programs based on availability.

Moore noted that thanks to how people are working during the pandemic, “we have found the acceptance of doing things virtually and many times now, people prefer an online visit.”

“When given the option, people sometimes choose virtual,” he said.

“And we know that doing things virtually is much more acceptable, people are comfortable with it, it’s going to stay with us.” **CN**

..... ON THE MOVE➔

NACo STAFF

- Associate Legislative Director **Blaire Bryant** has been nominated to serve as chair of the Partnership for Medicaid’s Ad Hoc Task Force on Health Equity.
- Executive Director **Matt Chase** and Associate Legislative Director **Eryn Hurley** addressed county commissioners and staff April 13 at the North Carolina Association of County Commissioners.
- Chase and Legislative Director **Mark Ritacco** addressed the board of directors April 14 at the New York State Association of Counties congressional delegation briefing.

Bryant

Hurley

Volunteer drivers serve as last-mile transit solution

by **Charlie Ban**
senior writer

In upstate New York, the “last mile” between a person’s home or destination and their nearest transit option can be much longer than a mile.

St. Lawrence County, for example, is larger than the state of Delaware, and many residents lack a car to get to work or school.

With that kind of land area, its 20 bus routes can’t be everything to everyone, but for eight years, the county has worked with a nonprofit to provide rides to and from the bus routes, in a simpler form of ride-sharing, in a program called First Mile Last Mile.

“One of the biggest problems in rural areas is how you reach transit,” said Sam Purington, executive director of the Volunteer Transportation Center. “They have buses, but we have a lot more cars and a lot of retired people who are able to drive and drive well and want to help out.”

Purington’s organization pairs

volunteer drivers with people who need a lift, and in return, drivers receive a mileage reimbursement and are insured for the trips and a chance to contribute to their communities. It’s an approach that is attracting nearby Oswego County, in addition to existing operations elsewhere in New York, New Hampshire and California.

Riders must be at least three-quarters of a mile from a bus stop and make reservations two days in advance, either by phone or via computer. The ride is free, with funding for the program coming from federal transit allocations to host counties.

“Uber or Lyft would never work out here, but this gives people a more personal touch anyway,” Purington said. “A lot of our volunteers are looking for a way to help out. Our clients just need a transportation solution to get them into the system.”

Purington sees the First Mile Last Mile program as more than transportation, though.

“We create a sense of commu-



nity for those volunteers so they feel like they’re part of something larger than themselves,” he said. “There are two things people need to understand. One is the intrinsic value you will get from doing this — you will have this great experience of volunteering without the cost. And it won’t mess with your taxes because it’s reimbursement, not a payment.”

Purington’s organization manages schedules to find efficient matches between drivers and riders.

Matilda Larson, a planner for St. Lawrence County, said 80

percent of First Mile Last Mile riders in her county used it to reach work or school.

“We have a somewhat unique challenge here because we have five population centers where most counties have one,” she said. “That makes it harder for our bus routes to serve everyone, so having First Mile Last Mile services has been crucial.

“What’s the point in having transit services if nobody can use them?”

Because the relationship between users and the system is a little more involved than depositing a fare and sitting on

the bus, Larson is also able to collect more information from First Mile Last Mile users to help understand the transit system’s user base.

Drivers must pass background tests and drug screenings and must drive a car that is less than 15 years old and in good condition.

“Even if someone has car trouble, fixing it is less expensive than fixing a bus,” Purington said.

Word of mouth has proven to be the program’s best promotion, given the convincing involved in selling someone on picking up strangers in their own car and driving them around. Purington’s volunteer base has topped 450, and that critical mass makes the difference in matching the supply of drivers and demand.

“A coordinated volunteer group can do a lot more than four or five individuals doing this on their own,” he said. “This is a lot more personal than a lot of transit options.” **CN**

Report: Post-Secondary Education System Partnerships

by **Rashida Brown**

The National Association of Counties Research Foundation (NACoRF) has released a report, “Counties Supporting Post-Secondary Education Systems and Workforce Opportunities” exploring county decision-making authority in post-secondary education systems. It highlights best-practice approaches for county governments seeking to promote economic mobility and career readiness opportunities for residents.

Rapid changes in the economy present a greater need for workers to have the acquired skills and qualifications necessary to meet the demands of today’s workforce. Research shows that about two-thirds of high-quality jobs require education beyond high school, yet only 46 percent of working age adults possess that minimum standard, according to a Georgetown study on job growth.

To address this issue, county leaders are exploring and sup-

porting post-secondary education programs and training that prepare workers and job seekers for local jobs. NACo’s report unveils key findings and county-based strategies for funding higher education institutions and pursuing regional and intergovernmental partnerships that coordinate multiple services and programs strengthening career pathways for residents.

According to NACoRF’s research, counties either have direct authority or work in coordination with a variety of sectors and systems that are intimately connected to post-secondary education institutions. As a part of the landscape analysis study, NACoRF conducted a survey of county leaders, showing that about 58 percent of county leaders noted their top investments in higher education include direct funding to colleges and universities and 52 percent fund continuing education and workforce development programs. NACoRF’s research also shows that education is the third largest source of expendi-

tures for counties. In FY2017, county expenditures for education included \$103 billion for construction and maintenance of public school buildings and support for post-secondary education, according to previous NACo analysis.

Recognizing the benefits of having more affordable options for higher education and skills-based training programs for residents, Erie County, Pa. provided seed money and spearheaded the process of establishing a local community college for the county.

County leaders can leverage the power of local leadership and use their role and authority to increase residents’ access to post-secondary education programs. Fifty-four percent of county leaders said they make funding decisions and 50 percent participate in or lead collaborative efforts involving post-secondary education institutions, according to NACo’s survey. Examples include providing funding for post-secondary education facilities, operations and programs and

leading and participating in cross-sector collaboration efforts that address systemic barriers hindering residents’ ability to obtain and sustain employment.

County human services and workforce development leaders play a critical role in helping to reduce employment and education barriers for low-income residents. They expand and improve systems serving residents experiencing homelessness, aging out of foster care and being released from the criminal justice system. For example, Allegheny County, Pa.’s human services department hires, trains and funds navigators for the Community College of Allegheny County to connect college students to county resources, such as housing or behavioral health services and economic support programs. In Solano County, Calif., recipients of the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families cash assistance program are connected to post-secondary education institutions and enroll them in Career & Technical

Education programs. Overall, county leaders are partnering with post-secondary education institutions, local businesses and workforce development boards to identify and develop programming designed to maximize the skill sets needed for local industry jobs.

They are creating partnerships with private industry employers and using innovative approaches that support both human capital and major industry needs. Through this landscape analysis study and report, county leaders offer strategies that have been effective in their efforts to expand employment opportunities for residents and support a growing local economy. The “Counties Supporting Post-Secondary Education Systems and Workforce Opportunities” report and case studies can be found at www.NACo.org/PostsecondaryEd. **CN**

Rashida Brown is the associate program director, Children, Youth and Families, in NACo’s research department.

PROFILES IN SERVICE

ALEXANDER MIRABELLA

NACo Board Member
County Commissioner Chairman
Union County, N.J.

Number of years active in NACo: Twenty-three-plus. Early in my county career I saw the value in NACo and participating on committees.

Years in public service: I am in my 30th year as an elected official. I have completed two terms (six years) as a councilman in Roselle Park, N.J. and I am entering my 24th year as a county commissioner.

Occupation: Retired corporate operations and IT manager, current municipal manager in Scotch Plains, N.J.

Education: BA in Economics from Hobart College in Geneva, N.Y.

The hardest thing I've ever done: I have had to lay off people several times in my public career which is extremely



Mirabella

hard knowing that I was impacting people and their families. Although sometimes necessary, very hard.

Three people (living or dead) I'd invite to dinner: Jerry Garcia, Tom Seaver and John F. Kennedy. Wow, that would be an interesting conversation.

A dream I have is to: Partially retire (3-4 months a year) in Rome, Italy.

You'd be surprised to learn: I have been to over 70 Grateful Dead concerts.

The most adventurous thing I've ever done: I have been on the show "House Hunters International" when my wife and I purchased an apartment in Italy. It was very interesting being on a TV show to see what it is really like.

My favorite way to relax is: Relaxing for me usually involves staying home, listening to music or watching TV.

I'm most proud of: The strength of my marriage to my wife, Phyllis, married almost 29 years and love her more each year.

Every morning I read: Several online news sources including CNN, MSN, NJ Insider and NJ.com.

My favorite meal is: Too many. I love any parmigiana-shrimp, veal, chicken over angel hair pasta. Also love cheeseburgers, fries and pizza — all the healthy options.

My pet peeve is: Rude people and people who don't listen or compromise.



You'd be surprised to learn:

I have been to over 70 Grateful Dead concerts.

My motto is: "You must be the change we wish to see in the world." — Mahatma Ghandi

The last book I read was: *Back from the Dead* by Bill Walton

My favorite movie is: I have a few — *Pulp Fiction*, *Godfather I* and *Godfather II*, *Goodfellas*, *Galaxy Quest* and *Grease*. If I click on any of these, I watch until the end.

My favorite music is: Classic rock. Led Zeppelin, Grateful Dead, REM, Bob Dylan, Eric Clapton.

My favorite U.S. president: President Barack Obama. I appreciate his leadership style and always felt his heart was in the right place while leading our nation.

My county is a NACo member because: I see the benefit of using our collective county voice from across our nation to advocate for issues that are important to our constituents.

COUNTIES MATTER



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#NCGM



County leadership trainings empower people of color

by **Rachel Looker**
staff writer

When it comes to inclusivity, it only makes sense to bring in the people you serve.

In Boulder County, Colo., Belinda Hearn, program coordinator for People Engaged in Raising Leaders (PERL), is leading two programs that are looking to improve diversity throughout the county and engage more people of color in leadership positions on county boards and organizations.

The PERL training program is designed to increase involvement among people of color throughout the county by providing the skills and tools needed to understand boards, commissions and other leadership structures.

Hearn said the county's Community Action Programs began in 1965 as part of President Lyndon B. Johnson's "War on Poverty" to address high national poverty rates.

The PERL training program is housed in the county's com-

munity services department.

"It seeks to actually get people in boards and leadership positions in different organizations that would not normally recruit them into those spaces," Hearn said.

The PERL program provides free training and encourages individuals to become involved in various types of leadership positions whether in the county government, non-profit advisory boards or even serving on the parent teacher association.

"It is really about just empowering people of color, people who identify as other, people who live in poverty, people who want to gain skills to get the necessary tools and learn the structure," Hearn said.

The training focuses on the logistics of serving on a board including board roles and responsibilities, oversight and management, sunshine laws, communications, interviewing, Robert's Rules of Order, finance and governance and board culture.

"Even if they're not wanting to go jump on a board, they know how to have a conversation and speak up at one of these meetings, speak up at one of these town halls, speak up at your child's school and know what the structures and the makeup of the boards and commissions are," she said.

Erica Lee completed the training in the fall of 2020 and said the program opened her eyes to the many resources available in the city and county.

"It felt good to see something that was freely available for me to plug into and so perfectly aligned with the niche of a person of color going onto a board in Boulder County," she said.

Lee serves on the board of the Longmont Community Justice Partnership, a non-profit in Boulder County that focuses on restorative justice trainings and services.

She said the process of completing the PERL training and working with Hearn instilled a new confidence in her own

capabilities to serve in a leadership role.

"I'm just the youngest board member and only person of color. I'm one of the very few females, so the confidence in some of the discussions and just some of the affirmations that came from the program was helpful," she said.

While the PERL program focuses on empowering individuals to serve in leadership positions, Hearn also leads the Creating Connections program where she educates executive directors and board members on how to diversify their boards.

Through the program, Hearn visits boards and organizations and teaches members about diversity, equity and inclusion. She actively seeks to engage organizations to teach members how the county can be a tool to help them become more inclusive.

"We have historically white boards that are usually mostly male, and they don't have the people that they serve on their

boards," Hearn said. "You can't be in a community telling a community what they need or what they want when the community themselves are the subject matter experts and should be serving on these boards."

Board members develop strategies for board diversification, learn about tools for recruitment and how to support fellow board members with diverse backgrounds through the workshops.

Hearn said the goal of the program is to develop strategies to keep boards diversified and keep people of color engaged in various leadership positions throughout Boulder County.

The PERL program and the Creating Connections program work in tandem with one another.

Hearn often hears from boards for the Creating Connections program after an individual completed the PERL and now serves as a board

See **TRAININGS** page 9



NATIONAL ASSOCIATION *of* COUNTIES **NACo**

DETAILS
COMING SOON!

SAVE
THE
DATE

2021 **NACo** **ANNUAL
CONFERENCE**

**JULY
9-12** IN-PERSON
AND
VIRTUAL
**PRINCE
GEORGE'S
COUNTY, MD.**

Trainings help boost diversity

From TRAININGS page 8


member.

“You need people who train those growers to be in the room, you need people from the community in the room, you need people organizing for the community in the room—you can’t do one without the other,” she said.

Hearn emphasized the importance of collaboration. She works with Social Venture Partners, a philanthropic network, and Mission Launch, a non-profit, to host trainings and workshops.

“We’ve been able to come together and be for profit, non-profit and county government and get us all in the same space to push this work forward,” she said.

Hearn said through both programs, she hopes to see improvements for the entire community.

“There’s no way for us to get that strong and healthy community unless we invest in our assets, which are the people we serve, and unless we bring them in so we can hear their voices and really give them the power to make an impact,” she said. 

GET TO KNOW...

Wayne County, Ill.

Welcome, Wayne County, Ill.

Wayne County is located in the southeast portion of Illinois known as “Little Egypt,” a nickname that dates to 1799. The 715-square-mile county was created in 1819 and now has a population around 16,700. Its county seat is Fairfield.

The county is named after General “Mad Anthony” Wayne, who served as an officer in the Revolutionary War and the Northwest Indian War. His nickname refers to his fiery personality and military exploits during the American Revolution.

In 1886, a fire destroyed a two-story, brick “fire-proof” building constructed with the intention to keep county records safe. The fire, a suspected arson case, destroyed criminal, civil, tax and land records that documented the early years of the county.

The railroad served as a main economic force for

Wayne County after local leaders lobbied for the southern extension of the Baltimore and Ohio railroad to pass through the county. The route was established 10 blocks west of the county seat.

The county is home to Frey Farms, the largest grower of pumpkins in the United States.

“Get to Know” features new NACo member counties.



BEHIND THE SEAL

SIERRA COUNTY, Calif.

Sierra County, Calif. adopted its current seal in the late 1970s. The seal highlights the east and west portions of the county to convey the message of “one county.” It includes the date of 1852 which was when the county was created. Elements throughout the seal depict Sierra County’s resource-rich environment.



The seal features the snow-capped Sierra Buttes and the Sierra Valley pastoral setting to symbolize the two jewels of the west and east.

Trees and the Kentucky Mine help represent the county’s strong sense of resource awareness.

Earth tones and natural colors used throughout the seal also depict the resource-rich environment of Sierra County.

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

WORD SEARCH

ESCAMBIA COUNTY, Fla.
Created by: Mary Ann Barton

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

BEACHES: The beaches in the county are often ranked among the top in the country by Dr. Beach, the Travel Channel and USA Today.

COURTHOUSE: The county courthouse was completed in 1888. It was originally the U.S. Customs and Post Office until 1938, when the county took over the building.

ESCAMBIA: Named for the Escambia River; some say it’s a Spanish word meaning “barter” or a Native American word meaning “clear water.”

GEOGRAPHY: The county is 875 square miles; 25 percent or 218 square miles is water.

GRITS: Next time you’re in town, stop by The Fish House for Grits a Ya Ya, which feature sauteed Gulf Shrimp.

HURRICANE: Hurricane Sally caused more than \$126 million in damage to private property in the county last year.

ORIGINAL: Escambia and St. Johns counties were Florida’s original

counties, created in 1821, covering the entire territory within modern state boundaries.

NAVY: The county seat has been referred to as the “cradle of naval aviation” and is home to the Blue Angels and the Naval Aviation Museum.

NEWSPAPER: The local newspaper is the *Pensacola News Journal*. Its history traces back to 1889.

PANHANDLE: The county is located in Florida’s panhandle.

PENSACOLA: The county seat is Pensacola.

POPULATION: The county’s population is about 325,000, according to the U.S. Census Bureau.

PROPERTY: Beachfront homes in the county sell for up to \$4 million.

SPANISH: The land was under Spanish control before it was acquired by the United States in 1818.

WESTERN: The county is the westernmost county in the state of Florida.

finally!

NACo swag is now available online!

naco.org/store

NEWS FROM ACROSS THE NATION



CALIFORNIA

• The California Public Utilities Commission approved \$48 million in funding to form a **regional energy network** across **SAN LUIS OBISPO, SANTA BARBARA** and **VENTURA counties**. Dubbed 3C-REN, the collaboration aims to deliver regional energy efficiency programs to reduce energy use, carbon emissions and meet the goals of local climate action plans. Programs offer resources and training focused on California's Energy and Green Building Standard Codes and assistance for residents to make free and low-cost home improvements to reduce carbon emissions.

CALIFORNIA

• Supervisors in **SAN BERNARDINO COUNTY** are considering a pilot program to allow **"home restaurants"** in certain parts of the county. The supervisors decided to look into the program and lobby the state to allow certain areas to have home-based restaurants. In 2019, **RIVERSIDE COUNTY** became the first county in California to allow residents to sell food out of home kitchens, according to *The San Bernardino Sun*.

• **YOLO COUNTY** launched a pilot project to share **monthly data on county court cases**. The project is in partnership with the district attorney's office, the Yolo County Multi-Cultural Council and Measures for Justice, a nonprofit. The data is updated each month and includes information on how many cases have been referred from local law enforcement agencies and how long cases take to be finalized, the *Daily Democrat* reported. The dashboard aims to build trust between county residents and the district attorney's office.



COLORADO

The Clerk and Recorder's Office in **ADAMS COUNTY** is holding its second **"I Voted" sticker design contest** for the upcoming 2021 and 2022 elections. A local elementary student created the winning design for the presidential election last year. The office received more than 50 submissions from local students. Clerk and Recorder Josh Zygielbaum told CBS Denver the contest engages youth in the electoral process and provides an opportunity for students to learn about elections.

FLORIDA

Officials in **ORANGE COUNTY** have launched the **"I Got My Shot"** public safety campaign to **debunk COVID-19 vaccine myths**. In partnership with the Florida Department

of Health in Orange County, Walt Disney World, Universal Orlando and others, the campaign highlights trusted voices to encourage residents to get vaccinated.

IOWA

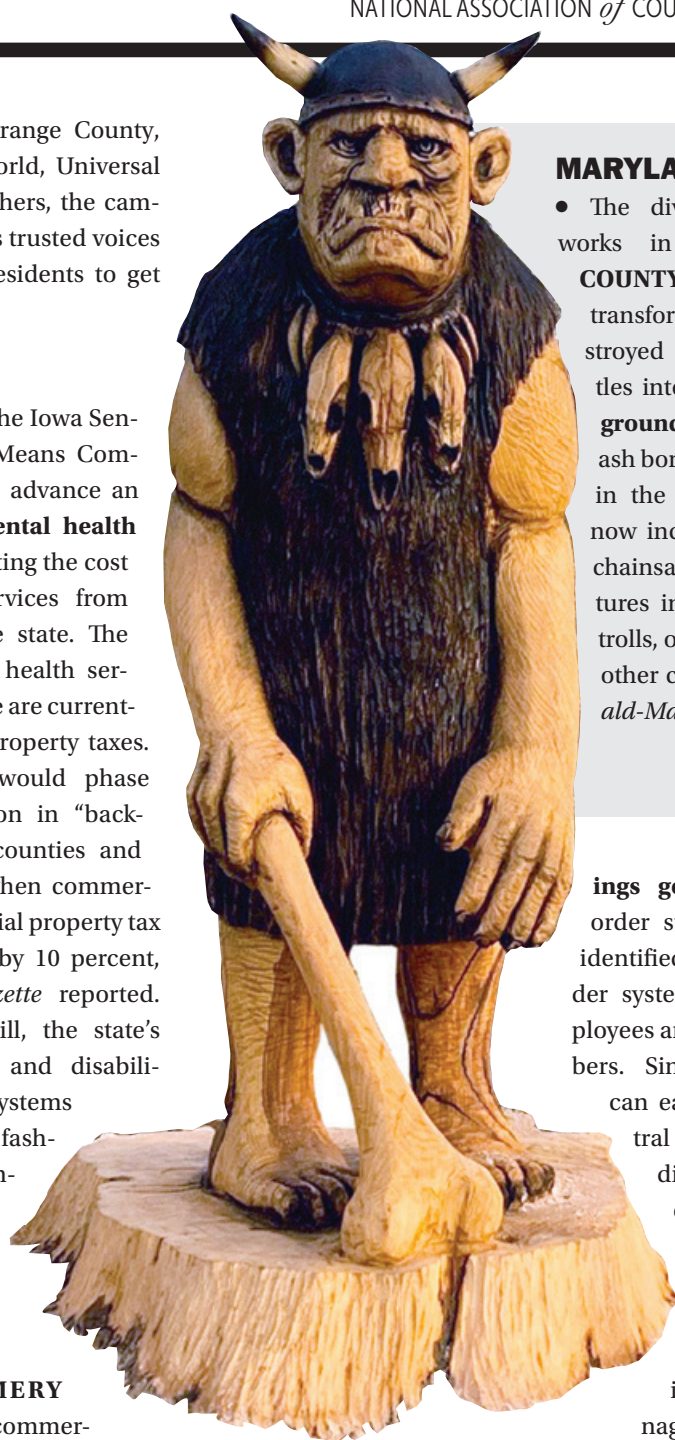
Members of the Iowa Senate Ways and Means Committee voted to advance an overhaul of **mental health funding** by shifting the cost of regional services from counties to the state. The cost of mental health services in the state are currently covered by property taxes. The measure would phase out \$152 million in "back-fill" to cities, counties and schools from when commercial and industrial property tax rates were cut by 10 percent, the *Globe Gazette* reported. Through the bill, the state's mental health and disabilities services systems would be "re-fashioned" and counties would maintain autonomy.

MARYLAND

• **MONTGOMERY COUNTY's** commercial **food scraps recycling program** recycled 200,000 pounds of food waste last year. The food recycled turned into beneficial "soil amendment," a material added to soil to improve its quality. Eleven partners have joined the program and received a 35-gallon food scraps recycling container, compostable bags and the food scraps recycling collection service that is held three times per week, WDVM-TV reported.

MICHIGAN

OTTAWA COUNTY officials established the **Groundwater Board** as part of the Groundwater Sustainability Initiative to improve the quality of the county's bedrock aquifers. The 15-member advisory board will provide recommendations to protect and conserve groundwater resources. The efforts are in response to reports of low water pressure and damaged crops from salty water, *The Lakeshore West Michigan* reported.



MARYLAND

• The division of public works in **WASHINGTON COUNTY** is working on transforming a park destroyed by invasive beetles into a **natural playground**. The Emerald ash borer destroyed trees in the park, which will now incorporate original chainsaw-carved sculptures including gnomes, trolls, ogres, dragons and other creatures, the *Herald-Mail Media* reports.

ings gender neutral. The order states that restrooms identified using a binary gender system can exclude employees and community members. Single-stall bathrooms can easily be gender neutral and ease the risk and distress some employees may face, he said.

There are 300 single-stall bathrooms in county government buildings where the signage will now read "restroom."

MISSOURI

ST. LOUIS COUNTY Executive Sam Page signed an order making all **single-stall bathrooms in government buildings**

MONTANA

Commissioners in **MISSELSOULA COUNTY** adopted **environmental zoning laws related to cryptocurrency**.



MINNESOTA

As part of National Autism Awareness month, the **STEARNS COUNTY** Sheriff's Office launched a new program to incorporate the usage of **sensory bags** to help deputies work with individuals who are on the autism and Alzheimer's spectrums. Each sensory bag includes Silly Putty, spinners and rubber balls to distract individuals from stressful situations. Over 70 bags will be placed throughout county buildings and given to deputies to keep in squad cars.

The zoning regulations focus on the county's clean energy goals and specifically relate to climate change by regulating the location of mining operations and what type of energy can be sourced, the *Missoulian* reported.

NEW JERSEY

- The **BERGEN COUNTY Food Security Task Force** is working with DoorDash to deliver 100,000 hot meals to non-profits across the county from local restaurants. Project Dash aims to bring business back to the local restaurants that have been hurting throughout the pandemic and to provide nutritious, hot meals to families who have been relying on food pantry items.

- **CAPE MAY COUNTY** is the first in New Jersey to receive the **StormReady designation** from the National Weather Service. That designation will eventually allow local municipalities to achieve flood insurance discounts. The county placed emergency alert radios in key locations in the county, such as libraries, to receive instant alerts about weather threats.

NEW YORK

NASSAU, SUFFOLK and WESTCHESTER counties are forming a **regional coalition to restore tax deductibility** for New York homeowners following the cap on the state and local tax deduction in the 2017 Tax Cuts and Jobs Act. The law capped the amount that homeowners could deduct on their state and local taxes to \$10,000 or \$5,000 for married taxpayers filing separately. Officials will launch a petition calling on the more than five million New Yorkers that they represent to reach out to their congressional members urging them to support a full repeal of the cap.

OKLAHOMA

The **TULSA COUNTY Sheriff's Office** is partnering with the Tulsa Police Department for a six-week program with the goal to **improve relationships between students and law enforcement**. Project



OREGON

When warm weather spurs thoughts of picnics, **MULTNOMAH COUNTY's** vector control specialist, Chris Roberts, springs into action when picnic food inevitably attracts rodents. As the county's **rat tracker**, he fields calls mainly from local homes, but also from restaurants, schools, grocery stores and hospitals, visiting roughly 500 locations a year.

Trust involves meeting with groups of Tulsa Tech students weekly for six weeks, teaching them about what the law enforcement officer does and some of the training that they go through.

TENNESSEE

SHELBY COUNTY employees experiencing **domestic violence** may now use sick leave to seek help. The Commission

passed a motion adding "safe leave" to the county's personnel policy and added "mental health" in its sick leave policy, WMC5 News reported.

TEXAS

Since becoming the first sheriff's office in the country to invest in **tele-psychiatry**, the **HARRIS COUNTY** sheriff's office has grown to nearly 150 deputies from its start with

three in 2017. They respond to calls for service, use a video-capable tablet and connect a person in distress to a mental health professional, who helps de-escalate the situation.

VIRGINIA

- **FAIRFAX COUNTY** saw a satisfied customer not only recover but come back to **join the paramedic force** that saved her life. Jessica Alm-

quist suffered a severe brain injury when a drunk driver hit her car when she was in high school. She spent 11 days in the ICU and did a lot of physical therapy, but years later she has become a technician and paramedic for the Fairfax County Fire and Rescue Department, the local CW affiliate reported.



WASHINGTON

- A building **KING COUNTY** initially bought for shipping solid waste is being repurposed for a new use — as a **film production facility**. Roughly \$1.5 million of new wiring and soundproof walls have turned a 117,000 square-foot building into two soundstages. The county's Film Advisory Board identified the facility as being necessary to compete with nearby Vancouver, British Columbia for film projects.

- **SPOKANE COUNTY** will resume holding jury trials — at the **county fairgrounds** to allow more space for physical distancing — but despite its new venue, officials want things to remain business as usual. Jury selection for the 2019 domestic violence case being heard was conducted at the courthouse, but everything from testimony to closing arguments is set to be held at the fairgrounds. Court officials are also eyeing the Spokane Convention Center as a possible location for court business in the coming weeks and months, the local NBC affiliate reported.



VIRGINIA

- **CHESTERFIELD COUNTY** water drinkers, which technically includes everyone, can thank fish for keeping their water quality high. The county's utilities department had 1,250 **sterile triploid grass carp** brought in by truck from Arkansas to control the growth of an invasive aquatic plant in the county's main reservoir, the *Chesterfield Observer* reported. The county is more than doubling its number of fish to control hydrilla, a rapidly growing plant from Africa, Australia and parts of Asia.

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

BRIGHT IDEAS | ADAMS COUNTY, Colo.

County Housing for Foster Youth Lessens Trauma

PROBLEM:

County human services departments face challenges finding in-county and emergency short-term placements for foster youth.

SOLUTION:

Utilize in-county resources to provide emergency foster care for children.

by Rachel Looker
staff writer

As a former foster child, Adams County, Colo. Commissioner Charles Tedesco knows what it's like to be in the foster system.

"You're taught your whole life, 'Hey, your parents are your parents, and nobody can ever take that away from you,' ... and the foster program kind of proves that wrong," he said. "It proves to a child that nothing is secure, and it creates a trauma in their life."

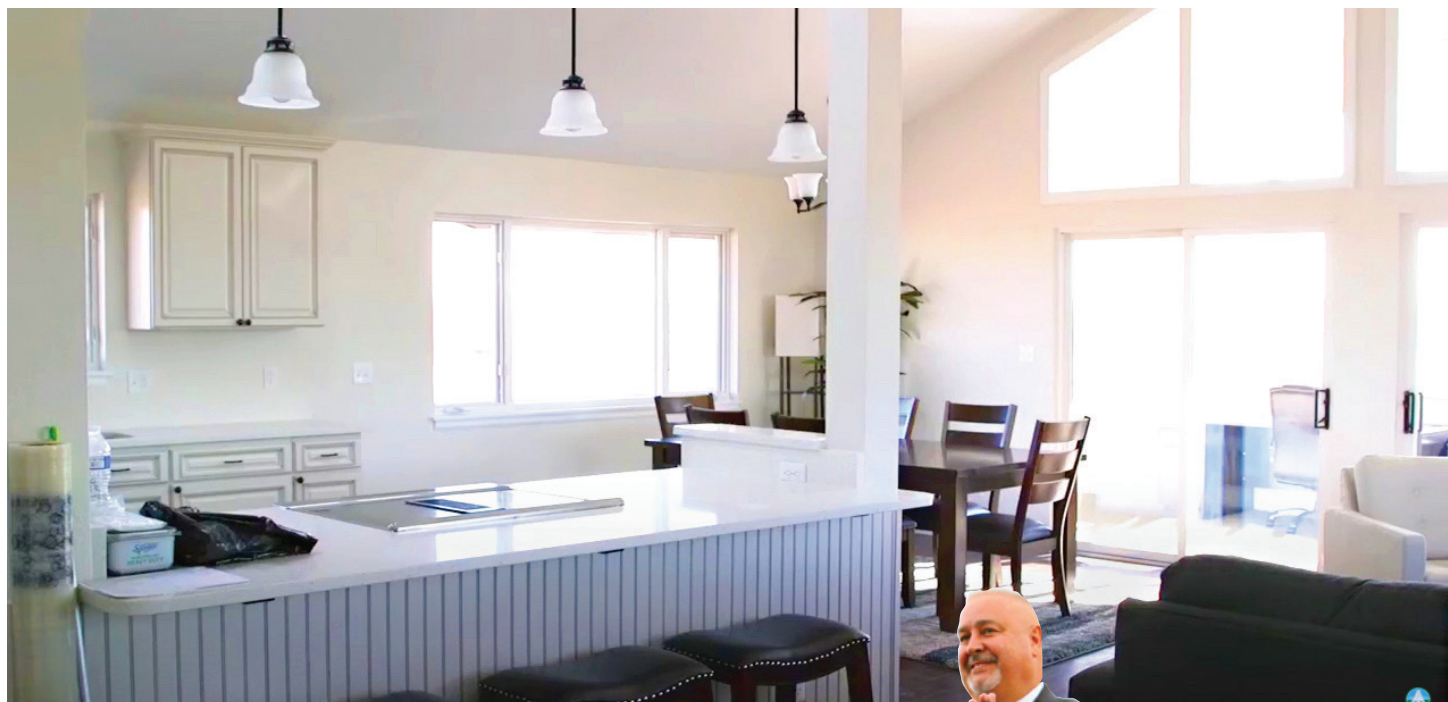
Tedesco spearheaded the Homes for Hope program to provide in-county, emergency foster care for children. The program lessens trauma for children by keeping them closer to local connections and supports while allowing siblings to be kept together throughout emergency placement.

"I wanted to provide something that was more of a transitional-type separation, rather than a traumatic-type separation," he said.

The program launched in 2019 when the county repurposed two county-owned houses acquired during an open space purchase, Tedesco said. Before being used for the program, the county rented the homes similar to rental units.

"We jumped at the chance to make it more beneficial and efficient for the county, as well as giving a benefit to our foster families," he said.

The homes are occupied by two families who are available 24/7 to receive children. Adams County renovated each house to meet all safety standards and codes, adding "receiving



Adams County, Colo. renovated two county-owned houses to be used as emergency foster care housing for children through the Homes for Hope program.

rooms" which serve as private spaces to allow children to decompress in a comfortable space.

Adams County Human Services Director Katie Griego said the two homes are fully furnished and can serve up to 12 children between both properties.

"What we're trying to do is really find that safe and comfortable place for a kid to land rather than having to have the traumatic experience of sometimes sitting, unfortunately, in an office or at a police department," she said.

The emergency placements through the Homes for Hope program are exclusively available for county foster children ages 0 to 18. Any child placed in the homes receives a medical, mental health and dental exam.

"It was really a process of 'how do we make it easier on the child, less traumatic, and also ease the burden on our staff?' by opening a program that notoriously has been done by faith-based groups or non-profits and not by counties themselves," Tedesco said.

With around 1,000 children entering out-of-home foster care placement in the county, social workers often struggle to find adequate emergency housing throughout the state and face challenges keeping siblings together.

"We've seen success certainly in the homes and being able to keep kids within their own home schools and not have to make any additional changes for them," Griego said.

Adams County works closely with a child placement agency that receives a reduced rental rate to help foster parents occupy the two homes. Other community organizations donated furniture, landscaping services and other supplies to the houses. The program saves the county around \$155,000 per year in foster care placement costs alone.

By placing foster youth in the county instead of throughout the state, human services staff avoid making long treks for a case and children have more opportunities for kinship visits.

Griego said the Homes for Hope program also provides a "safe place to land" and creates a home-like setting to reduce the number of times children are moved from one foster family to another.

"Just imagine having to leave all you've ever known — this approach gives kids that experience of minimal disruptions and those wraparound supports right away," she said.

Griego said the normal length of stay is around 90 days, but the time period is often extended when it takes longer for a child to reunify with his or her family



Adams County, Colo. Commissioner Charles Tedesco

or find more appropriate foster placement.

Adams County is working to expand services so the homes can be licensed at a therapeutic level of care to provide more

wraparound services for families.

"We're really excited about that opportunity and the positive impacts we think that will have for both the children, but also the foster parents who are needing to support the children with many, many barriers and challenges that they face," Griego said. **CN**

Adams County's Homes for Hope program is the recipient of a 2020 NACo Achievement Award in the Human Services category.

Prioritizing inmate vaccinations

From VACCINES page 4

mates who may have been released from jail between the first and second vaccine."

Mahoney said because of incarcerated individuals' lack of proper healthcare and the challenges of the housing situation within detention facilities, inmates should have been prioritized in the second phase of the vaccine rollout.

"The advantage to it is that it provides vaccine for deadly disease to a population that for the most part is lacking in healthcare who can take advantage of this vaccine and remain healthy," Mahoney said.

He added that the hundreds of exposures were likely caused by prison staff who were coming and going from the facilities and felt staff should have been prioritized in the 1A phase of the rollout.

Individuals at the Dane County Jail have the option to receive a vaccine and while vaccinations are on hold because of the pause on the Johnson & Johnson vaccine, more inmates want to receive a dose.

"I think it's important that we make an offering so that we're not further exposing them to in this case a disease that could actually cost them their life," he said. **CN**