

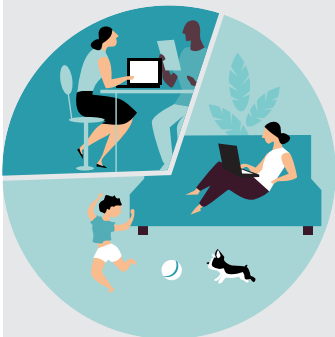
SPOTLIGHT:  
**THE CHANGING  
WORKPLACE**



**Apprentice  
program offers  
opportunities.  
Pg. 7**



**Remote work  
pays off for  
Texas county.  
Pg. 9**

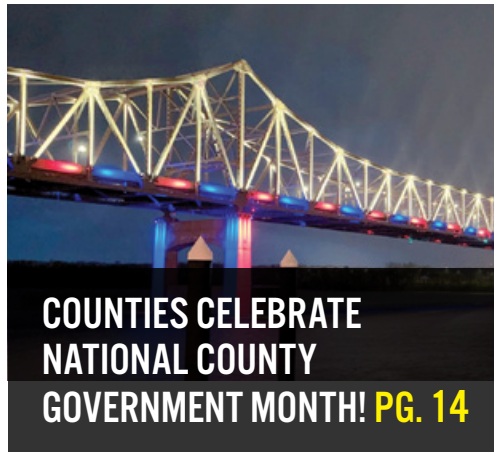


**Counties boost  
mental health  
support for  
employees.  
Pg. 12**



# CN

**CountyNews**



**COUNTIES CELEBRATE  
NATIONAL COUNTY  
GOVERNMENT MONTH! PG. 14**



**WISCONSIN COUNTY HELPS  
CREATE MORE INCLUSIVE  
JUSTICE SYSTEM. PG. 16**

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION *of* COUNTIES

VOL. 55, NO. 8

MAY 8, 2023

by **Charlie Ban**  
senior writer

All winter and spring, it's been looming on mountaintops throughout the West.

Like a frozen volcano, above-average snowpack has been accumulating and threatening to overwhelm streams and rivers when the temperatures rise, and county officials have braced for what will eventually rush downhill. It's deferred precipitation.

Throughout the West, the U.S. Department of Agriculture's National Water and Climate Center maps show remaining snowpack in early May well above 150 percent of median snowfall for the date, backing up anecdotes that many of these communities haven't seen snowfall like this for decades.

The Wasatch Mountains along Salt Lake County, Utah's border flow westward into seven canyons, many of which contain entire communities of hundreds of residents, giving

See **SNOWMELT** page 2

## Winter snows bring spring flows for Western counties



Salt Lake County, Utah Mayor Jenny Wilson shovels sand into sandbags to prepare for flooding. Photo courtesy of Salt Lake County

## Michigan counties provide services to human trafficking survivors

by **Meredith Moran**  
staff writer

Michigan county governments and non-profits are working together to prevent human trafficking and provide support

services to survivors.

The state ranks seventh for the presence of human trafficking, and in 2021 alone, 10,359 instances of human trafficking involving 16,554 victims were reported to the U.S. National Human Trafficking Hotline.

"It's imperative for all of us to know that we can work toward change and have that hope that things can change," said Ashley Chandler, director of finance for the non-profit Prism Project. "That's key for any person on this planet, especially with something as dark and overwhelming

as human trafficking."

Twenty-six percent of all people who are trafficked are children and the average age of a trafficked victim is 13. To meet the needs of such a vulnerable population, in February the Prism Project opened the first long-term safe house in the county for youth sex trafficking survivors. The safe house can hold up to six survivors, ages 13-17, for six to 18 months at a time.

"When you have more than a handful of kids with complex

See **TRAFFICKING** page 3

## Data analysis leads to better treatment for high users of social services

by **Charlie Ban**  
senior writer

Haggling went nowhere. Excuses didn't work. Pleading was useless.

When a man, recently released from incarceration, tried to get to his substance abuse counseling appointment, a missing bus ticket was becoming an insurmountable problem.

"I'm sorry, I can't help you."

He doesn't have any money for a new bus ticket.

"I'm sorry, I can't help you."

He just got out of jail.

"I'm sorry, I can't help you."

If he doesn't complete his counseling, he's probably going back.

"I'm sorry, I can't help you."

The desperate man was a county official, visiting Johnson and Douglas counties in Kansas for the second Familiar Faces Leadership Network peer exchange April 11-13.

His foil was a volunteer from Johnson County's substance abuse treatment program, relishing the opportunity to turn the tables and show those in power what it's like to have none while they acted out a Federal Bureau of Prisons reentry simulation.

His experience mirrored those of the residents they were trying to help, who are often caught in the seemingly never-ending cycle of "arrest and release." Mental illness or substance use disorder only makes navigating those sys-

See **CRISIS** page 4

# County boosts budget, adding more emergency crews to prepare for flooding

From SNOWMELT page 1

County Mayor Jenny Wilson roughly 600 square miles of stream front to be concerned about since the scope of the snowfall became apparent.

In mid-April, a string of days that topped 70 degrees prompted her to declare a state of emergency April 13, allowing the county to supplement its flood control and public works staffing.

“We don’t know when the temperature hits, we don’t know if we’re going to have gradual temperature increases — that’s our best friend,” Wilson said.

“It was in the 50s last week and it will be in the 80s this week, so it will be all-hands-on-deck.”

Salt Lake County public works and flood control staff work to clear culverts and clear debris from streams, which could create blockages along

streams or add hazards to flooding.

The county has asked residents to bring in firewood and other supplies that would ordinarily stay outdoors to prevent them from being washed away and added to the debris.

Most of the sandbagging has been a volunteer effort, drawing hundreds of residents to protect their homes and neighborhoods.

“We have an incredible amount of community engagement, residents are filling sandbags, they’re helping their neighbors, our cities are all preparing locations,” Wilson said.

A \$3.7 million budget adjustment has added 11 contracts for emergency management crews.

A total of 54 county staff have been rotating on 12-hour shifts for weeks, with an additional 20 during peak times.

See SNOWMELT page 3



An SUV is covered in snow in Salt Lake County, Utah. The county has added to its budget to hire more emergency workers to help prevent flooding from snowmelt. Photo courtesy of Salt Lake County

## SNAP/STATS

**U.S.-planned utility-scale electric generating capacity additions (2023)**

INFORMATION	NUMBERS
Solar: .....	54 percent or 29.1 gigawatts (GW)
Battery storage: .....	17 percent or 9.4 GW
Natural gas: .....	14 percent or 7.5 GW
Wind:.....	16 percent or 6.0 GW
Nuclear:.....	4 percent or 2.2 GW

Source: U.S. Energy Information Administration

## REQUEST YOUR FREE NACo STUDENT ART COMPETITION CALENDAR

Send an email with your name, title, county and address to: [cnews@naco.org](mailto:cnews@naco.org).

### CountyNews

**President**  
Denise Winfrey

**Publisher**  
Matthew Chase

**Chief Public Affairs Officer**  
Brian Namey

**Public Affairs Coordinator**  
Alyxa Hawkins

**Editor and Senior Writer**  
Mary Ann Barton

**Digital Editor and Senior Writer**  
Charlie Ban

**Junior Staff Writer**  
Meredith Moran

**Design Director**  
Leon Lawrence III

**ADVERTISING STAFF**

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

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

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

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

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

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

We are committed to getting County News on your desktop ASAP. Send your address corrections to [cnews@naco.org](mailto:cnews@naco.org).

## Counties brace for snow melt

From SNOWMELT page 2

“We’ve had public works personnel going in to give flood control a break, trying to keep the workload manageable,” Wilson said.

“Once the temperature falls again, it slows the melt and gives us a lull to regroup and get ready for the next melt.”

The eastern communities in Salt Lake County are among the most densely populated areas threatened by heavy snowmelt flooding, but many other counties are facing similar challenges.

Montezuma County, Colo. has already had its fair share of snowmelt, particularly in the city of Dolores, which suffered from flooding for a week.

“We have significant amounts of water spreading off the north side of the canyon,” said Vicki Shaffer, the county’s public information officer.

“There’s a lot of National Forest service land up above that and they received a lot of snow. When it melted, it quickly overwhelmed the system of ditches and culverts.”

When the flooding infrastructure fails, the water keeps moving where it can, washing out roads and in one small Montezuma County community’s case, deteriorating the supports for a bridge that connects residents to the rest of the county.

Like in Salt Lake County, the volunteer response has been crucial to protecting homes.

“We had hundreds of people come out to fill sandbags and then place them where they were needed, so they helped the public works people out there quite a bit,” Shaffer said. “We were very impressed with the turnout.”

It’s been a long winter in Mono County, Calif., in the Sierra Mountains, where everything is at high altitude, getting a lot of snow.

Supervisor Bob Gardner said the county’s focus has been on keeping culverts clear and hoping warmer rain doesn’t compound the pace of melting.

“We’re trying to anticipate where the water will get backed up and make sure there’s somewhere for it to go that isn’t

people’s crawl spaces,” he said.

Highway 395 was closed for several weeks due to severe avalanches, and another community was cut off entirely.

“All along we’ve been saying, ‘Look, we need that precipitation,’” Gardner said. “So we don’t want to look this gift horse in the mouth, but we’re not used to having you know three, four, five feet in one storm,” he said.

“You can’t plan or staff for an extreme situation like this, because they’re so rare.”

Lawrence County, S.D. is on the northeastern end of the higher-than-average snow zone, and Emergency Management Director Paul Thomson said the steep slopes work to his community’s advantage when it comes to snowmelt.

“It’s steep enough here that the water just rushes by on its way downhill,” he said.

“We don’t get inundated like they would on the eastern side of the state, where there’s about a foot’s difference with Nebraska.”

As the calendar moves deeper into May, counties are getting closer to the end, and it’s up to the weather whether it will come swiftly.

“We’ve been working with the National Weather Service in Grand Junction and they’ve been incredibly helpful and just so we know kind of what to expect,” Shaffer said.

“This morning’s report detailed that we’re at 196 percent of the snow water equivalent still left up in the mountains for this date, so we’ve got a lot more coming.”

Thomson said the best thing to hope for is consistency.

“I always tell people I don’t get nervous if we get a lot of snow,” he said.

“I don’t get nervous if we get a lot of rain. I get nervous if we get both.”

In Salt Lake County, what is likely the last act of snowmelt season will come from Big Cottonwood Canyon and Little Cottonwood Canyon to the south.

Wilson said the snowmelt flooding will likely last through the end of June.

“We hope to be in the clear by July 4.” **CN**

## Counties, non-profits work to prevent trafficking

From TRAFFICKING page 1

trauma, it’s a lot for one child to go through, let alone having that balance of accommodating everybody, so it was very intentional that it was a home-like environment,” she said. “We didn’t want to cram 30 kids in a big facility — really giving them that safe, more low-key environment to heal on their time and work through their complex trauma.”

The safe house is situated on more than 1,000 acres and provides youth survivors with medical care, therapy, education, life skills and what the organization refers to as “spiritual care,” which Chandler defines as “supporting religious customs, coordinating time for contemplation, journaling and being outside in nature.”

Prism Project counsels with the county sheriff’s office and its founder, Sylvia Blythe, is on Genesee County’s Human Trafficking Task Force.

All of the youth who live at the safe house are enrolled in online schooling through the state, in addition to having access to the organization’s para-educator to guide them through their studies. Prism Project’s social worker and direct-care coaches work with caseworkers, therapists and doctors to determine the right plan for each person.

“Our team assesses all the information along with those other key people to determine, ‘What are the goals?’” Chandler said.

“They’re going to put together a care plan that includes their medical, therapy and educational goals, and then out of that will determine how long the program would be a fit for them, and then within that, helping them work toward those different checkmarks and goals.”

Prism Project will have contact with the Safehouse youth for up to a year after they “graduate” to make sure they have all the resources they need and the hope is to eventually offer transitional housing as well, according to Chandler.

“Maybe that 16-year-old that comes in, does 18 months, graduates the program and turns 18 — where does she go? Depend-

ing on what that looks like for her, we want to be able to support that,” Chandler said.

Macomb County non-profit

Turning Point takes a more wide-scale approach — catering to survivors of both sex and labor trafficking. Worldwide, there’s an estimated 24.9 million victims of sex and labor trafficking.

The organization, which specializes in domestic and sexual violence, created its Human Trafficking Program last



Davenport



year through a \$400,000 grant it received through the Victims of Crime Act.

Through its “housing first” model, Turning Point doesn’t require survivors to fit certain criteria to be eligible for its support services. All human trafficking survivors are welcome, regardless of gender, sexual orientation or if they have struggles with substance use or have children that need housing as well, according to Turning Point CEO Sharman Davenport.

“Our services are trauma-informed, and empowerment based — we are helping our survivors to start to understand what their own needs are to move forward,” Davenport said. “We do case management, counseling, we have life skill classes on employment — all of those things that anybody who’s been trafficked would need.”

“Because they’re all survivors, they’ve all undergone some type of trauma and it’s important that they understand how to take control of their lives again, because their lives have been, whether through forced coercion, or some type of love that they thought they were getting, their lives have really been con-

trolled by somebody else.”

Davenport said while the transitional housing is offered for up to two years, Turning Point doesn’t work on a set timeline and provides support by need.

“We had a client who left our transitional housing program, she was able to get a job while she was with us and she was able to pay her first month’s rent security deposit of her new place and move in and everything was going well,” Davenport said.

“About six months into it, her car broke down, so she called her case manager and asked what

we can do because she got her car fixed, but that then meant she didn’t have all the money for her rent. So, we have a fund that we are able to access and give survivors money that they might need.”

Turning Point is a member of Macomb County’s Anti-Trafficking Task Force, which comprises local non-profits and educational partners as well as county governmental department’s including the sheriff’s office, juvenile justice center and health department.

The goal of the task force is to provide preventative education on human trafficking and training throughout the county.

“The county is really trying to understand all of the resources it has that can be provided for human trafficking, so the goal is to have most of us at the table,” Davenport said.

Since the task force’s launch, a human trafficking course has been created at Macomb Community College, making it so students who are working toward jobs in law enforcement, EMS and the fire department receive specialized training to recognize trafficking.

“They may be encountering individuals that are being trafficked,” said Vicki Wolber, Macomb County executive, “but they’re coming in maybe for food assistance, or they’re in the school system, so that’s part of our program as well as giving training to those individuals — to look for signs and ask ‘How can we better serve them?’” **CN**

# Counties have ‘raw materials’ for programs, the trick is putting them together

From CRISIS page 1

tems tougher.

“Some of y’all don’t realize you’re not in control anymore,” the volunteer said, loosening her grip on the role. “You don’t like not being in control.”

The exercise demonstrated how hard it is for residents leaving the justice system to stabilize their lives on the outside, and the seeming inevitability of running afoul of some rules, even if they aren’t reoffending. Then, perhaps, they could see their way out, where each of their counties could throw down a rope ladder, or with any luck, build a stairway out.

## Systemic approaches

Chances are, many counties have the raw materials to assemble systems to better coordinate service delivery to residents in need, but the trick is putting them all together — the Familiar Faces Initiative’s ideal. Johnson County’s system, My Resource Connection, started coming together in 2008, after years of just missing connections.

“We did a lot of really great things, but we did them in a vacuum,” said Chris Schneweis, a senior business analyst in the county’s department of corrections. “We did it in siloed departments that didn’t communicate when they were working with a similar individual. If I’m a probation officer, I focused on you and I worried about what the court says you need to do and that’s all I cared about. You don’t have food on the table? You can’t pay your rent? Not my problem, OK? We’d kick you down the road to somebody else.”

Schneweis and his colleagues across departments delivered those services in an uncoordinated manner, wasting money and at best helped clients tread water, but rarely helped them move forward with their lives.

My Resource Connection — MyRC — consolidates service delivery information, joining case managers who had been blindly working piecemeal with the same client and allowing access on a need-to-know basis, with heavy vetting by departments and extensive train-



**Dan Hanneken, executive director of In2Action in Boone County, Mo., gets a high five for having his business in order during an exercise that was part of the Familiar Faces Peer Exchange in Johnson County, Kan.** Photo by Charlie Ban

ing before anyone can access private data. Rarely can anyone see an entire client’s file in detail.

“You get access to MyRC based on the department you work in, which determines what level of access you see,” Schneweis said. “Just because you have access and you’re a user of My RC, that does not mean you get to see every piece of data from the application.”

The resulting system offers a no-wrong-doors approach in which every service provider has the agency to connect users with the greater resource offerings.

“Where we have made great strides is in the ability to notify others and say, ‘Look, you have this client and they just used the ambulance service last night,’” Schneweis said. “Here’s the first impression,’ and that allows that case manager to then reach out to paramedics, have their client sign a release to get the additional information, maybe reach out like in this case, they couldn’t reach out to the hospital, because the client refused transport, so the best they can do is get with our ambulance service to find out ‘OK, what information is taken? What was the overall situation surrounding this individual?’

“If this client needs resourc-

es, by putting the check mark in the box, I now hit that service tab. I now jump over to the services section. I may be a probation officer, but you need rent assistance, so I could start typing in here ‘rent assistance...’ The application’s going to auto-populate what it thinks I’m looking for.”

Douglas County also uses

if they were behavioral health or non-behavioral health-related,” said Johnson County Epidemiology Director Elizabeth Holzschuh.

Megan Sparks, a Johnson County epidemiologist, said that while MyRC’s interface is refined, it shouldn’t intimidate counties.

“Many of you will likely have

‘We did a lot of really great things, but we did them in a vacuum.’

- Chris Schneweis  
Johnson County, Kan.

MyRC, and Bob Tryanski, director of behavioral health projects, has seen how the system puts human service delivery numbers in perspective.

“In Douglas County, we have 122,000 people, but 122 people a year create 800 visits for the emergency department, so there’s a lot of opportunity if we could figure out who those 122 people are,” he said.

Douglas County’s MyRC algorithm assigns different weights to various interventions, including ambulance rides, emergency room visits and criminal justice interactions.

“The emergency room and ambulance rides are then weighted differently based on

some level of data infrastructure,” she said. “It may not look like MyRC, but you likely already have something there, even if you don’t realize it yet, so don’t write it off completely.”

Holzschuh agreed, noting how easy it is to be “data rich” but “information poor.”

“Every one of your departments has a wealth of data, but what are we doing with it?” she said. “How are we turning that into actual information that can then be moved into action? That can improve the lives of your community members, allow them to live their healthiest life, which also subsequently means reducing the burden generally on county or community services?”

## Better coordination

Better data offers the opportunity for more coherent strategies in service delivery.

Amanda Schwegler, a Johnson County mobile crisis response team leader, describes her department’s philosophy as “assertive outreach.”

“Our outreach efforts rise to meet the risk that we’re seeing in the folks that we’re interacting with,” she said, referring to vulnerable populations with very complex needs. “If they don’t have natural supports — friends, family and the community to help them do that — we become that support for them.”

Rob MacDougall, Johnson County’s director of emergency services, recognized that operational efficiencies were necessary for lasting change. When Johnson County added a basic health screening process, he knew the crisis line operators didn’t have the capacity to take on that added responsibility, so he created a referral system to the county’s daytime crisis line and outreach team.

Determining the antecedents to a county’s mental health crisis can help direct preventive efforts.

“If you invest money now in the idea of going upstream,

See CRISIS page 5

# Data analysis can help anticipate programs, present opportunities for treatment

From *CRISIS* page 4

of identifying those factors and policies that can actually impact the population, then maybe we can stem the tide of who ends up in crisis in the first place,” Holzschuh said.

Surrounding all of this information-sharing is the specter of the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act — HIPAA — which represents both a safeguard for patient information privacy and a misunderstood boogeyman.

“Some of what we had to overcome wasn’t just legal hurdles, wasn’t just HIPAA, it was also overcoming cultural experience,” Schneweis said.

“If you’re [working in] a state where it’s against state law to share that an individual’s on probation, HIPAA is the least of your worries then, because in most jurisdictions, court records are public.”

Holzschuh suggested involving HIPAA compliance officers

early in the process of building data interfaces to avoid facing problems later.

Carnegie Mellon University professor Rayid Ghani, whose Data Science for the Public Good project has been working with Douglas and Johnson counties for five years, said he was motivated by the project’s potential to stave off future problems. By comparison, he said, other public health programs like tracking lead in drinking water, means charting damage that has already been done in a population. With MyRC, he said, data analysis can be done to help anticipate who needs active outreach from the county, which will assist the county in reaching the people who wouldn’t otherwise request services. He evoked an application of the data science’s program in Cook County, Ill. with HIV-positive patients.

“We’d get a list of people who haven’t picked up their

prescription in over a year and then they would try to scramble to get them connected again,” he said. “They’d try to call them, go to their house. “They’re asking us, while we have them connected, give us this early warning that this person might not come back, so we can then start working on building a relationship with them,” because they’re more likely to disconnect and not come back.

MacDougall warns that even a sophisticated data system is not a cure-all.

“As useful as the tool is, I think you need to keep in mind that it is not going to capture everybody,” he said. “When we started getting arrest alerts for open clients, about 25 percent of those individuals that are in the open client system we’ve already assessed and diagnosed as severe mental illness that were not flagged by a brief mental health screen, so the awesome thing is we had both

to give us that information.”

## Allocation and attention

Scarce resources, even in a county that prioritizes human services in its budget, mean it’s unlikely everyone will get everything they need, so an important debate revolves around how they are best allocated.

Efficiency, Ghani said, can either mean dedicating your resources to people who are the cheapest to help, serving the largest number of people or making the most dramatic difference for the people suffering from the greatest inequities, which will narrow the scope of service.

“One of the things that we struggle with in these types of development systems, we kind of need to decide what we want this system to achieve,” he said. “Those are all uncomfortable conversations.”

Regardless of how a county

allocates its resources to help people suffering from mental illness and justice system involvement, quality control is crucial. Though counties often find themselves as the convener, strategist and funder in justice initiatives, Douglas County’s Tryanski said another perspective that is valuable is making sure that systems work as designed.

“There’s another expert you need at the table, and that’s the lived-experience expert,” he said. “You need experts who have been failed by the system, because they know what it feels like and they know why it fails, but it’s hard for them sometimes to find the courage to speak up, because when you speak up, you get uninvited to meetings sometimes.”

As peer exchange participants found out, if you don’t hear from them while the work is in progress, you’ll probably hear from them after systems are in place. **CN**



**Your high school senior could win \$2,500 for college!**

## Nationwide/NACo 2023 College Scholarship

To enter and for full details, go to [nrsforu.com/scholarship](https://nrsforu.com/scholarship)  
Submission period: April 1 – May 31, 2023

Nationwide Retirement Solutions (Nationwide) partners with the National Association of Counties (NACo) to provide counties and their employees with a competitive deferred compensation program. As part of this partnership, Nationwide pays a fee to NACo in exchange for NACo’s exclusive endorsement, marketing support and program oversight of Nationwide products made available under the program. For more information, including fees paid, Nationwide encourages you to visit [NRSforu.com](https://NRSforu.com).

Nationwide and the Nationwide N and Eagle are service marks of Nationwide Mutual Insurance Company. © 2023 Nationwide NRM-3181AO-NX.17 (03/23)



# Resources available for Mental Health Awareness Month

by **Christopher Chung**

County governments across the nation have committed to enhancing their community's behavioral health needs. While counties are at a different point in establishing a continuum of care — some are just beginning while others have robust systems in place — it can be helpful to pause and take note of the available resources and examples in the behavioral health space, especially during Mental Health Awareness Month.

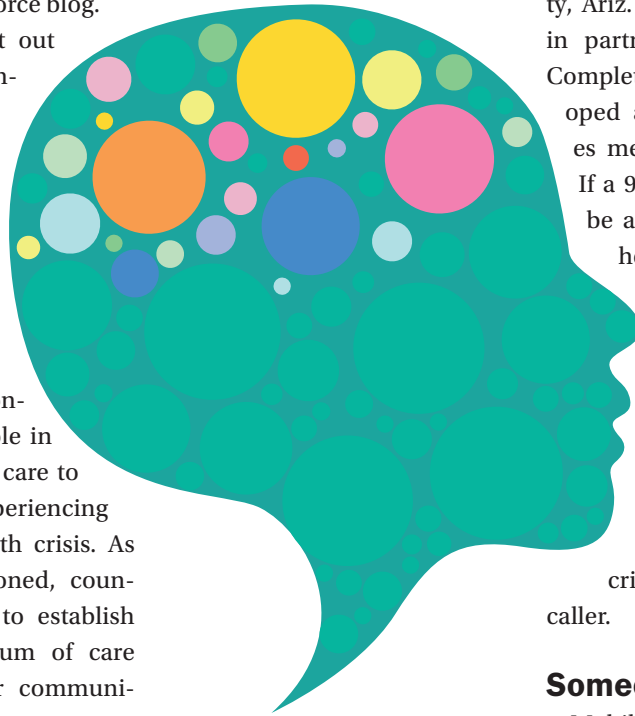
NACo publishes resources year-round to support county efforts surrounding behavioral and mental health. Some of the notable recently published resources include a toolkit explaining the behavioral health continuum of care; a behavioral health funding chart; a 988 suicide and crisis line toolkit and county strategies for recruiting and retaining a behav-

ioral health workforce blog.

NACo has built out a toolkit for counties based on three components — Someone to Call, Someone to Respond and Somewhere Safe to Go. Each aspect of the continuum plays a role in providing holistic care to an individual experiencing a behavioral health crisis. As previously mentioned, counties are working to establish the best continuum of care possible for their communities.

## Someone to Call

Individuals can reach out to crisis lines in times of need. This point of contact provides the most immediate access to care. Fairfax County, Va. uses a local regional crisis call cen-



ter to receive all 988 calls, texts and chats. The county also has a dial-988 educational campaign coordinated through county agencies, leaders, social media, local outlets and community meetings.

Similarly, the Pima Coun-

ty, Ariz. Sheriff's Department, in partnership with Arizona Complete Health, has developed a program that triages mental health 911 calls. If a 911 call is identified to be a mental or behavioral health crisis, the call is then transferred to a trained crisis specialist via the Arizona Crisis Line. If the specialist is unable to help de-escalate the call over the phone, they will dispatch a crisis mobile team to the caller.

## Someone to Respond

Mobile teams provide in-person responses to a behavioral health crisis. Counties have developed various models of crisis response teams that best fit their area. As a part of the Douglas County, Colo. Mental Health Initiative, the county has established com-

munity response teams, consisting of a fire/EMS unit, a law enforcement and a clinician responder and are deployed to mental health crises. Each team member fills a unique role to ensure safety, conduct medical clearances and assess mental health needs.

DeKalb County, Ga. has also established a mobile crisis service. The county's police department uses a Mobile Crisis Unit — composed of a registered nurse and a police officer — to intervene and evaluate individuals experiencing a crisis in the community.

## Somewhere Safe to Go

A triage center provides behavioral health resources and assistance. Opened in the summer of 2021, "The Link" is a community triage center in Minnehaha County, S.D. The

See **RESOURCES** page 20

## HOW TO PARTICIPATE IN THE MENTAL HEALTH FIRST AID PROGRAM

by **Brandon Natsuhara**

Mental health is a critical issue affecting individuals and communities across the United States. Recognizing the importance of mental health awareness and support, the NACo partnered with the National Council for Mental Wellbeing to develop the Mental Health First Aid program.

The Mental Health First Aid program provides training to individuals on how to identify, understand and respond to signs of mental illness and substance abuse disorders. The program aims to increase awareness of mental health issues and reduce the stigma associated with mental illness.

County governments have been instrumental in implementing the Mental Health First Aid program in their communities. By partnering with NACo and the National Council for Mental Wellbeing, county governments have been able to provide training to their employees, including law

enforcement, social workers, and other community members.

The program has been widely successful, with over 2 million individuals trained across the United States. The program has received support from county governments and community organizations, who recognize the importance of mental health education and awareness.

By providing Mental Health First Aid training to their employees and community members, these counties have taken an active role in addressing mental health challenges and reducing the stigma associated with mental illness. Their efforts have been a great example for other counties across the country to follow.

Early adopters, such as Douglas County, Neb.; Cass County, N.D.; and King County, Wash. have been instrumental in promoting mental health awareness and support in their communities through the exclusive NACo Workplace Mental Health training. These counties have set an example for others to follow by taking an active role

in addressing mental health challenges and reducing the stigma associated with mental illness.

Through its partnership with NACo and the National Council for Mental Wellbeing, county governments have been able to take an active role in promoting mental health awareness and support in their communities.

By providing Mental Health First Aid training to their employees and community members, county governments are working to ensure that individuals have the resources and knowledge they need to address mental health challenges.

Overall, the Mental Health First Aid program is a critical initiative in promoting mental health awareness and support across the United States. By reducing the stigma associated with mental illness and providing individuals with the support they need to lead healthy and productive lives, NACo and the National Council for Mental Wellbeing partnership are making a significant impact.

For more information, visit [mentalhealthfirstaid.org/naco/](https://mentalhealthfirstaid.org/naco/) or email Brandon Natsuhara at: [bnatsuhara@naco.org](mailto:bnatsuhara@naco.org).





Members of the 2023 Project HIRE cohort visit the Wayne K. Curry Administration Building, where they met Prince George's County Executive Angela Alsobrooks.  
Photo by Jermoni Dowd

# COUNTY PROGRAM OFFERS OPPORTUNITIES FOR DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED RESIDENTS

by **Charlie Ban**  
senior writer

The twins were the pillars of the Prince George's County, Md. Department of Aging.

For three decades, they worked in various clerical positions. Their developmental disabilities may have guided their lives' journeys leading up to the county's employ, but once there, they made careers of their own, up until they retired from the county after 30 years.

That was something Karen Sylvester remembered from early in her time with the county.

"If you come in and you can work for 30 years, you can take care of yourself and you can have a pathway to retirement so that you can take care of yourself in later years... that's all anybody wants — independence to be able to take care of themselves and live in the community," said Sylvester,

now manager of the county's Aging and Disabilities Services Division.

The program, which sought opportunities in county government for residents with disabilities, atrophied after a few years, but 2018 saw its return, fortified as Project HIRE — offering apprenticeships in several different county agencies, stints that are designed to last roughly a year.

"It's something we definitely wanted to get back to," Sylvester said. "It's something that made a difference in those boys' lives, and it could do the same for other people with the right guidance."

Valerie Berkley joined the

county to manage Project HIRE as program coordinator, going to work recruiting county departments to participate.

"I knew for this to work, it can't just be me being a one-woman show, it has to be collected within the community, and that's what you see today," Berkeley said. "If it wasn't for supportive employment partners, we wouldn't have the right spots for these candidates that we have every year."

The apprenticeship aspect is fundamental — while the job functions may seem similar to an administrative support position, the program emphasizes growth, development and finding a role that not only cap-

italizes on a candidate's skills but offers opportunity to adapt and take on new responsibilities. The job may be temporary, but it isn't a temp job.

"We're not just trying to place you at the grocery store, we're not just trying to place you at a retail store, we want to make sure that whatever your skills are, let's try to find a good match for you," Berkeley said. "We're together for a period of 9-12 months, but this could turn into your 'forever.'"

The screening process is unlike most job interviews. Initial stages take on a "meet and greet" feel, aimed at lowering barriers of formality for candidates who may be new to this. On top of that, the participants, ages 18-25, may be coming directly from a school environment, with limited work experience.

"For many of them, just meeting strangers can be a nerve-wracking experience, and they'll be meeting a number of people in their apprenticeship, so we try to start it off by keeping them comfortable. It's just a conversation to figure out what skills they have and what interests they have that will help us find a match,"

Berkeley said. "We do get some folks who are either non-verbal or just aren't comfortable enough to share exactly what their different skill sets are, so we work around that as best we can. We try to find out if our opportunities are right for them."

Their interests serve as an anchor and starting point as participants learn their way around cooperating agencies — currently the Department of Social Services, the sheriff's office and the health department.

"If you have something like paper shredding, and it could be fine because a lot of participants, trust me, like that on the top of the list...that's fine, but let's make sure that we expose them to different things, let's look at the overall culture," Berkeley said. "What that means is having the right supervisor to coach them along, mentor them."

Of the first cohort of 10 apprentices from 2018, two are still employed by Prince George's County. Given the interruption from the COVID-19 pandemic, which forced many jobs to go remote, that long-

See *APPRENTICES* page 10

SPOTLIGHT:  
**THE CHANGING  
WORKPLACE**



SPOTLIGHT:  
**THE CHANGING  
WORKPLACE**



# MORE THAN 500,000 JOBS OPEN IN STATE, LOCAL GOVERNMENT



Stat	Number	Date	Source
Job openings	9,931,000	February 2023	Bureau of Labor Statistics
Number of new hires	6,163,000	February 2023	Bureau of Labor Statistics
Unemployment rate	3.5 percent	March 2023	Bureau of Labor Statistics
Total number of non-farm jobs added	236,000	Between Feb. 23 and April 23	Bureau of Labor Statistics
Total number of local government non-education jobs added	14,000	Between Feb. 23 and April 23	Bureau of Labor Statistics
Long-term unemployed (jobless for more than 27 weeks)	1,167,000	March 2023	Bureau of Labor Statistics
Labor force participation rate	62.6 percent	March 2023	Bureau of Labor Statistics
Persons employed parttime for economic reasons	4,205,000	March 2023	Bureau of Labor Statistics
State and local government non-education job openings	535,000	February 2023	Bureau of Labor Statistics
Share of FTE's working fully remote	12%	February 2023	Stanford University & the National Bureau of Economic Research
Share of FTE's working fully in-person	60%	February 2023	Stanford University & the National Bureau of Economic Research
Share of FTE's working in a hybrid environment	28%	February 2023	Stanford University & the National Bureau of Economic Research
Unemployment insurance initial claims	207,120	Week ending April 1	U.S. Department of Labor
Unemployment insurance continuing claims	1,795,471	Week ending April 1	U.S. Department of Labor



# REMOTE WORK PAYS OFF FOR TRAVIS COUNTY

by **Charlie Ban**  
senior writer

The COVID-19 pandemic hit the right point on Travis County, Texas' crisis-opportunity curve.

After county employees took their work home, many of them never came back, especially after the Commissioners Court set a target to keep 75 percent of eligible workers remote.

In the process, the county cut costs, cut emissions and boosted worker satisfaction and job applications.

"It's been so effective across the board and addressing so many issues that we've struggled for years to try and solve," said Commissioner Brigid Shea who championed the policy along with former Commissioner Gerald Daugherty.

There are practical considerations: Medical examiners can't necessarily work from home.

Neither can corrections workers. But nearly half of the county's 5,000 employees potentially can work remotely, and for the sake of mounting cooling and water bills, Shea wants to see it happen.

She's not the only one, according to recent research. A 2022 Pew Research Center study found that 60 percent of U.S. workers who say their jobs can mainly be done from home are working from home all or most of the time.

McKinsey's American Opportunity Survey, conducted with market-research firm Ipsos of 25,000 Americans in spring 2022, found that when people have the chance to work flexibly, 87 percent of them take it.

Shea's focus was on reducing the greenhouse gas emissions the county employees created while sitting in congested traffic during

their commutes. And without having to powering and cooling their offices, the county saw a \$1.3 million decrease in costs between 2020-2021.

Daugherty came at the issue by eyeing productivity and job satisfaction increases, which Shea said have shown up, thanks in large part to time recouped from eliminated commutes, savings from not having to buy gasoline — particularly during the 2022 fuel price spike — and wear and tear on cars.

The National Bureau of Economic Research found Americans gained 55 minutes a day from decreased commuting because of remote work.

"Our auditors and employee feedback, both from hearings and the union show people are loving working from home," she said. "Those are the two holy grails that large employers are always grappling with."

There's some institutional

**"Everybody wants to work from home but yet we still have to find those ways to make it personal...."**

resistance, but Shea answers back with the proof that county departments made remote work successful when they absolutely had to early in the pandemic, so the concept has been proven.

"I've been a little surprised that more entities haven't continued it," she said.

**SPOTLIGHT:  
THE CHANGING  
WORKPLACE**



The county has contracted with Deloitte Consulting to build a more complete infrastructure around specific policies, including onboarding and remote-specific management, but individual departments also have wide latitude to determine what works best for them.

"We work very closely with our executive managers and we're not going to tell them who the eligible employees are — that's something that their managers down through the ranks are have to decide — but if they feel the need to have their staff come in one or two days a week or more that's also up to them, but in the end we're still taking people off the roads during rush hour," Shea said.

"We've been very flexible about it."

Lower in-person staffing will eventually allow the county to consolidate office space and lease their build-

ings to other government agencies — the county cannot compete with the private real estate market, however.

Shea's enduring concern, however, is finding a way for the policy to offer some benefit to the employees who aren't eligible, and that's where she is hoping for results from the contractor's policy proposals.

"We haven't come up with a quick answer about how to deal with the equity issues across departments," she said.

"A lot of people who have to be at the office to do their job in many cases are lower paid, they work on roads and bridges, our community food center, our health and human service workers," Shea noted.

"A higher percentage of them are people of color, and this is not going to work if the lesser paid employees of color don't get any of the benefit of remote work. We're very mindful of not wanting this to be a White privilege."

The remote work policy has been a boon for recruitment, according to Zephyr Stone, the county's talent planning and engagement manager.

Compared to fewer than 23,000 applications in 2019, the county received more than 30,000 in 2020, before settling down to just below 30,000 in the past two years.

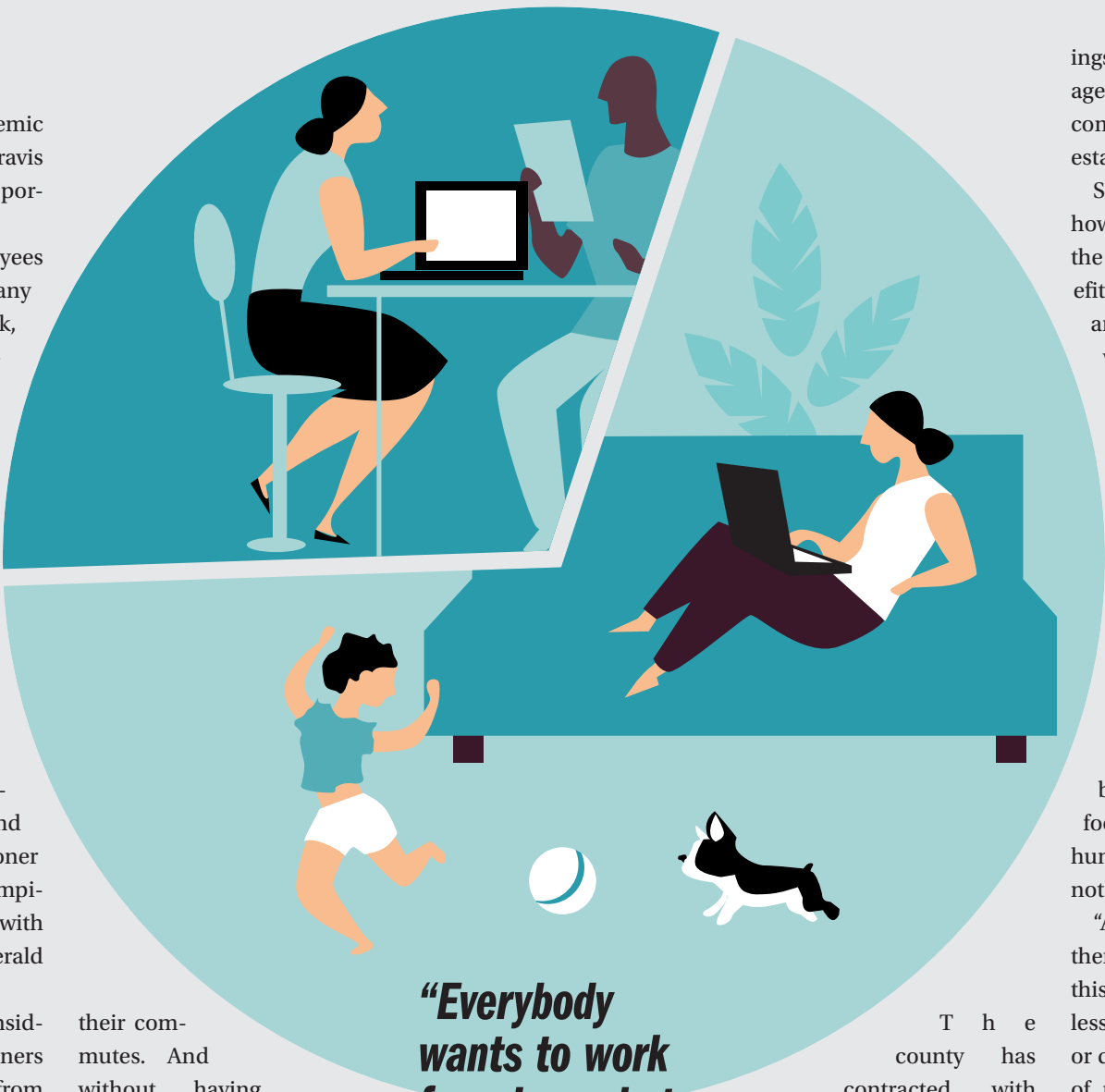
Despite the emphasis on remote work, however, Stone said that in-person job fairs remain a crucial part of the recruiting process.

"Everybody wants to work from home but yet we still have to find those ways to make it personal," Stone noted.

"We are trying to attend job fairs just to put a face to the county," she said.

"It's a different world, but

See **REMOTE** page 10



# New focus is on quality of life

From REMOTE page 9

people aren't different."

That different world however, has changed how county personnel recruitment works, and those gains were not made simply by announcing a new policy. The overall adoption of remote work in the private sector means the county has to escalate its recruitment to compete with other employers.

"In the past you had to point out a call for applicants and we'd sit and wait and they came to us," Stone said.

"Employers are really having to show their value to applicants. Employers really have to be more proactive and get out there."

That has meant advertising on job boards including Indeed and Zip Recruiter, developing relationships with universities

and participating in other organization's job fairs.

The county hopes to debut a rebranding effort for the recruiting department, Stone said.

The biggest challenge is that the market has shifted.

"People have more options now, they have higher expectations, so do all of us working at Travis County," Stone said.

"We can move to a more rural area, we can move closer to family.

"The pandemic made a lot of people reflect on what's important and what they wanted in their lives," Stone noted.

"People are more focused on quality of life and I'm not going to lie and say I don't like working remotely, but in general we've re-envisioned our lives outside of work while continuing the work we enjoy." **CN**

SPOTLIGHT:  
**THE CHANGING  
WORKPLACE**



SPOTLIGHT:  
**THE CHANGING  
WORKPLACE**



# Mentoring serves a key role in Prince George's program

From APPRENTICES page 7

term outcome isn't terrible.

But beyond professional development, Berkeley sees immeasurable value in the personal growth apprentices can experience.

"I feel that once they are done with school, sometimes they get really stagnant, because adult services don't always have stimulating programming, so it's often up to families to help them grow," she said. "This gives them a chance to develop their own routine, meet new people, face new challenges and come out of it with confidence. They can say 'I'm valued, my work is valued, my opinions are valued... I get to have relationships that have nothing to do with mom, dad or my siblings.'"

Counties looking to form their own apprenticeship programs have to secure funding



**Project HIRE apprentices learn job interview skills.**

and partners. Finding departments with the flexibility and leadership willing to mentor young people with developmental disabilities is a careful balance, given the time commitment, but the county has found that program participants are more likely to favor the stability that comes with county employment, ultimately reducing turnover. Support from human resources, given the extensive onboarding that is necessary, is also crucial.

And the benefits aren't limited to participants. Sylvester

hopes that helping apprentices learn and grow helps colleagues, not just the mentors, see their office as more of a community, recognizing that everyone has a role in fostering an inclusive and successful work environment.

"It's an education for them as well and they are trained and they are educated that everybody has value and so I think that's been a large part of this," Sylvester said. "It's not just a job, but it's educating people that everybody has something to offer."

And Berkeley hopes that adds up to confidence and independence.

"I don't have a perfect recipe for it, but it's just beautiful to see that these young people mature and realize that not only am I able to work, but I can advocate for myself. They realized 'I do want more,'" she said. **CN**

**REGISTER TODAY** AND VIEW THE FULL SCHEDULE AT [NACo.ORG/EVENTS](https://nacoo.org/events)

2023 NACo

# WESTERN INTERSTATE REGION CONFERENCE

**MAY 17-19**  
**WASHINGTON COUNTY, UTAH**

SPONSORED CONTENT

# The Changing Workplace

by **Garrett Macdonald**  
MBA, CTP, FPAC

In the recent past, the workplace functioned on the unspoken understanding that employees who devoted themselves to their work and remained committed to a company would receive job stability, healthcare benefits, a pension and even retirement gifts. Back then, the normal practice was to stay with the same company for one's entire career. In local government, this was especially true.

In this article we will explore trends in public-sector employment; what employees say matters most when considering a job; the most frustrating aspects of their workplaces; and how to retain employees.

First, let's look at the current data on employee tenure.

As of January 2023, the median tenure of wage and salary workers aged 25 or above is about five years.\* However, this varies greatly by age. The median tenure for workers ages 25 to 34 is only 2.8 years, while for

employees ages 55 to 64, it's 9.9 years.\*\*

There is a notable contrast in the length of employment between private and public-sector workers. As of January 2022, the median tenure for private-sector employees was 3.7 years vs. seven years for local government workers.\*\*

Since January 2022, many experienced public-sector workers have left or retired.\* Greenwald Research sur-

veyed 1,100 state- and local-government employees and found that 33 percent of those surveyed planned to retire. That's more than three out of every 10 employees!

According to public-sector workers, the top reasons for leaving their jobs are:

- Stress and burnout
- Anxiety exacerbated by the pandemic
- Low risk-reward
- The inability to work from home
- Wages and benefits less competitive than with the private sector
- Lack of upward mobility
- More unpredictable and

challenging politics

Considering the many societal changes that have occurred over the past decade, you'd expect public-sector employment to have changed as well. Has the pace of change in public-sector jobs kept up with that in other job sectors? What is most important to new job seekers, and what can local governments do to attract new talent?

As the public sector seeks to recruit younger workers — to ensure a smooth transition and maintain the continuity of public service — these are some important questions local leaders should consider:

- How competitive are our wages and benefits in the marketplace?
- What educational opportunities do we offer to help new hires

advance within our organization?

- What mentorship and coaching opportunities do we offer?
- Do we have an environment where new employees can share ideas and foster change?
- Do we allow and/or encourage cross-collaboration between departments? Or are we too siloed? Too hierarchical?
- Do we adequately reward employees for their long-term loyalty?
- What are the barriers to hiring new talent? How can we reduce them?
- What other steps can we take to enhance job retention? Improve our retirement package?

How entities address these questions will help them attract younger workers, the future of the public-sector workforce. Now is the perfect time to rethink how public-sector entities can help future employees get what they need and want out of their careers. Done right and they'll have a diverse, satisfied workforce ready to make a difference!



\*According to Employee Benefit Research Institute (EBRI) data.

\*\*According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Garrett Macdonald is a senior vice president at three+one®, threeplu-sone.us.



## ON THE MOVE

### NACo STAFF

- Executive Director **Matt Chase** and Strategic Relations Director **Jack Peterson** attended the Michigan Association of Counties Legislative Conference in Ingham County.
- Chase, Legislative Di-



**Peterson**

rector **Blaire Bryant** and Legislative Associate **Owen Hart**, Associate Membership Director **John Losh** and Associate Corporate Relations Director **Cara Hackett** attended the Association County Commissioners of Georgia Annual Conference in Chatham County.



**Bryant**



**Hackett**

- Chief Government Affairs Officer **Mark Rittacco** and Membership Director **Kim Hall** attended the West Texas County Judges and Commissioners Association Annual Conference in Lubbock County.
- Government Affairs Director **Eryn Hurley** attended the Texas Conference



**Ward**

of Urban Counties in Travis County.

- Senior Program Manager **Nina Ward** spoke at the National Council for Mental Wellbeing's Annual Conference in Los Angeles, Calif.
- Chief Research Officer **Teryn Zmuda** participated in a discussion at the National Association of Home Builders mortgage roundtable in Washington, D.C.

Hire Quality Staff @ Jobs Online



# Counties are boosting, normalizing mental health support services for their employees

by Meredith Moran  
staff writer

Counties are investing in mental health support services for their workers, hoping to increase employee well-being and curb high burnout and low retention rates in local government.

Coming out of the COVID-19 pandemic, counties are devoting additional resources toward first responders' mental health to help them deal with struggles like post-traumatic stress disorder. Santa Clara County, Calif. is taking an extra step, expanding services for all employees through a contract with Concern Health.

"For all of our folks here at the county, the burden of managing the pandemic 24/7, 365 days a year for three years took an extraordinary toll," said Santa Clara County Supervisor Joe Simitian, who created the initial proposal in 2022 for expanding services. "And I didn't want to get into a situation where people felt they had to compete to prove that they had suffered in some significant way.

"... If we're trying to deliver for the public every day, we can't give them 100 percent if our employees aren't 100 percent."

Santa Clara County employees have access to 24/7 counseling — in-person, video, phone, text and live chat — through Concern Health. Other services offered are critical incident response, a self-help resource library and work-life programming, including free financial, legal, parenting and eldercare consultations with vetted referrals.

"The fact that we're available in multiple ways I think is important, because different populations want different things," said Priya Dharan, Concern Health's director of business development. "What's unique to us is that we have a clinical first

access center, so when people call, they're actually talking to a clinician. It's not just a call center with trained employees, we have licensed clinicians answering the calls so they can triage, do an assessment and then get people the right level of care."

According to a 2022 report by Mission Square Research Institute, employee assistance programs and mental health support are the top retention strategies used by local and state governments.

Simitian pointed to Santa Clara County's high cost of living and housing as an additional factor that makes retention difficult on top of the general struggle to maintain workers at the county level. Dharan echoed that sentiment, saying that Concern Health's data has shown that financial counseling is one of the top services that Santa Clara County workers have utilized since the program launched in December.

"Attracting and retaining top quality staff is an immense challenge in a county like ours, and the burden the pandemic placed on county government has just aggravated that challenge," Simitian said. "I would argue that this is an obligation we have to our employees on a sort of standalone basis. It's the right thing to do. That said, it's also a smart strategy if we're concerned about retaining the staff that we have."

Simitian emphasized the importance of counties doing due diligence in encouraging the actual use of support services. Santa Clara County's Employee Engagement and

SPOTLIGHT:  
THE CHANGING  
WORKPLACE



Well-Being Champions Committee, which is under its Employee Wellness Division, is made up of 91 employee advocates across 80 percent of the county departments. The committee shares feedback on what's working and what's not with the county's support services.

"We go through Concern's provided services — they have so much going on, so we've taken the opportunity at our monthly meetings to go much more in-depth and say, 'Oh you want to do in the moment support? This is how you access it, this is who you would talk to, how you would call ...'" said Teresa Chagoya, the Employee Wellness Division's manager. "Folks are providing feedback that their co-workers are much more pleased with the services that are being offered ... I think it's the fact that you have something they can access when they need it, it's easy to get to, it's being provided by their employer."

A 2021 American Psychological Association survey found that 59 percent of respondents experienced negative impacts due to work-re-

lated stress within the past month and 87 percent reported that increased action from their employers would help their mental health.

"Our employees, like most county employees around the country I would suppose, have the opportunity to get pretty good health insurance as part of their package, but does that package really get them access to the mental healthcare that they need and deserve?" Simitian said. "Frankly, the answer is not always ... We've made incremental progress over the last two or three decades on the issue of mental health parity and there's some help in terms of federal law and state legislation, but we haven't made enough progress, and it's still largely illusory.

"It may be on the books, but trying to actually get folks the help they need — nobody's going to give you a debate that if you have a broken arm, your health insurance covers it. [If] you try to get that same insurance policy to step up when you need mental health services, it's more likely to be a challenge."

Concern Health works with the county and its other partners to ensure employees are aware of the breadth of services it offers and to cultivate a workplace environment that breaks down the stigma of mental health, Dharan said.

"When you have a cold or a cough, you talk about it, but mental health issues or emotional issues, you'd never bring it up at work, so it's about normalizing the conversation," Dharan said. "Some [employee assistance programs] try to keep the utilization low — we, on the other hand,

promote and really work with the organizations to up the utilization and encourage leaders to be speaking up, speaking out and sharing experiences."

Concern Health's public safety program for first responders has the highest utilization rate of its programming, Dharan said. The program has a specialty panel of trauma-informed counselors who were first responders themselves before becoming licensed counselors.

"They understand the culture very intimately, and they are able to build trust, because with counseling, the client needs to really relate to the counselor," Dharan said. "[Concern Health] is owned by a hospital, so we're very sensitive to the needs of responders in that group — nurses and others who are severely burned out.

"They had said to us that there's a cultural resistance to counseling because they don't want to be labeled, so we introduced what's called 'coaching,' so the coaches will essentially look at what's overwhelming you, prioritize the things you need to get done and help you get to be where your stress levels are lower, you're able to sleep better."

While burnout is particularly prevalent among first responders, the increasing pressure can be felt across the board. A Pathways' Mind at Work report found that nine out of 10 employees are concerned about their burnout levels, while a Robert Half Talent Solutions survey found that 44 percent of respondents are more burned out on the job today than they were just a year ago. Governments need to invest in employee well-being to strengthen the county as a whole, Simitian said.

"You can't expect people who are struggling themselves to help others out there in the community at peak proficiency and efficiency." **CN**



# The secret to Nevada County, California's award-winning HR programs? Start by throwing out the rule book

by Steve Rose, MHR, MA

The Nevada County human resources department has been recognized recently by the U.S. Department of Labor, the California State Association of Counties, International City/County Management Association and Human Resources Director Magazine.

Transforming local government can happen organically with a visionary leader, a great team and clear vision of the future.

When I was hired to be the Nevada County HR director in 2018, I would have never imagined those three critical elements synergistically merging to make such an impact on our county.

Our CEO had a vision for the future, which included growing and developing staff, fostering innovation and becoming a high-performing organization.

That was all the inspiration the HR team needed. Armed with three certified Lean Six Sigma Green Belts,\* we took inventory of our processes and quickly realized we needed to be more nimble and more focused on the needs of the organization and community.

We threw out the rule book — nothing was off the table to become the strategic business partner we knew we needed to become. We analyzed our current practices, surveyed our internal and external customers and successful corporate and local government HR offices. We developed both a list of items we wanted to change and set three goals for our office:

- Grow and develop staff, putting the “human” back in HR.
- Use technology and CPI (Continuous Process Improvement) techniques to ensure we were doing everything we could do.
- Be the best public sector HR office in the state.

With our focus on becoming a strategic business partner as our “true north,” and our three goals,



we rolled up our sleeves and began the work to transform how HR is approached. We knew we were contributing to the future of HR, but never realized how much.

So, what were we able to accomplish? For starters, we reduced our time to hire from 136 days down to 28. The success wasn't only due to the enhanced process and concurrent processes, but in the relationships we created with our departments. We approached recruitment as a partnership, with shared success in mind. Empowering the recruiters to make all the decisions at their level was essential to the success of the initiative.

Another challenge was to create an internship program to offer anyone who needed additional on-the-job training an opportunity to become fully employable and learn about the vast opportunities of working in local government.

We developed our guiding program principals after exhaustive research on successful internship programs. Those principals included:

- Creating an intuitive and responsive candidate and employer experience
- Leveraging technology and CPI in all aspects of the program to ensure both an efficient and consistent experience
- Developing talent pipelines and enhance the lives of our community

Like many local governments,

we had difficulty in staffing the development of the program, so we found interns with the skills and aptitude to help co-develop the program.

To ensure the program met our objectives, we put the requirements of the intern at the center of the program, we had our own built-in focus group and we took advantage of their insights.

In just two short years, and more than 135 interns later, we developed a state and nationally recognized program garnering more than \$1.2 million in grants for their salaries and hired so many great candidates who we

would otherwise never have had the opportunity to meet.

Developing staff means to give them a voice and ensure they are a vital part of the decision-making process.

This is hardest thing for most leaders, but if done successfully, can really impact the trajectory of your organization. In our case, the HR staff was all in, and wanted their own platform for improving our operations.

They call themselves the Pit Crew, after NASCAR, a well-choreographed team doing amazing things with incredible speed, accuracy and agility. The team meets regularly to find process-

es we can do better or eliminate all together and briefs their progress monthly at the all-staff meeting. Since 2020, the team has completed 15 projects, saved the county staff thousands of hours and more than \$250,000 in real costs.

Having a clear vision, supportive leadership and a great team are the ingredients required to make the impacts required to be a high-performing organization. Here in Nevada County, we have equal parts of each.

We provided each other with the inspiration, network and confidence to achieve our goals and boldly go where others had not. We know as a team that we are just beginning our journey and having a great time doing it together. We wouldn't have it any other way.

\* A Council for Six Sigma Certification Certified Lean Six Sigma Green Belt is an individual who possesses a thorough understanding of enhanced problem-solving skills, with an emphasis on the DMAIC (Define, Measure, Analyze, Improve and Control) model. **CN**

Steve Rose is the director of Human Resources for Nevada County, Calif.

## SPOTLIGHT: THE CHANGING WORKPLACE



# I Love My County Because...

# ART CONTEST

Submit your artwork at [NACo.org/ART](https://NACo.org/ART)

Check out the website for more information









Now accepting entries!



# National County Government Month In Photos

Counties from across the country celebrated National County Government Month in April. Here's a sampling of how some marked the event.



**ILLINOIS** | Peoria County, Ill. Peoria County, Ill. celebrates National County Government Month by lighting up the Murray-Baker Bridge in blue and gold.



**NORTH CAROLINA** | Durham County, N.C. Durham County, N.C. commissioners host a women's leaders roundtable, meeting with future public servants at the Next Generation of Women Leaders Breakfast. They heard from the first all-female board of county commissioners in North Carolina.



**OHIO** | Jackson County, Ohio The Jackson County Commissioners are joined by a handful of local officeholders during a meeting held April 12 to recognize April as National County Government Month. Telegram photo by Phillip Buffington



**ALABAMA** | Mobile County, Ala. Commissioner Connie Hudson, president of the Mobile County, Ala. Commission, presents a video about county government to mark National County Government Month.



**TEXAS** | El Paso County, Texas El Paso County, Texas employees celebrate National County Government Month with free snow cones, provided by a local vendor, @KonaPaso.

**GET TO KNOW...**

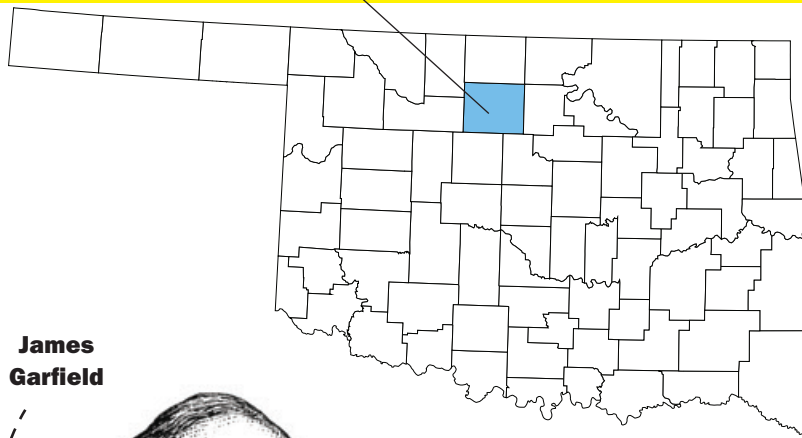
**Garfield County, Okla.**

**Welcome to Garfield County**

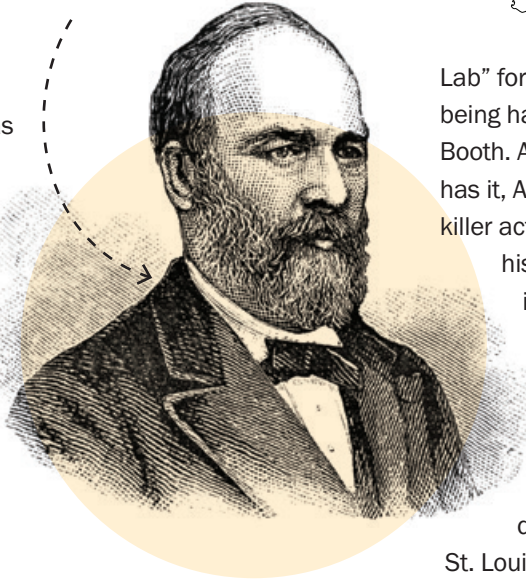
**Garfield County, named in honor of President James Garfield two years after his assassination, was founded in 1883.** The

county is well-known for its wheat production and its county seat, Enid, has the largest grain capacity in the United States and the third largest in the world. Enid was named for a character from Alfred, Lord Tennyson's narrative poems "Idylls of the King," but county lore hints that the city may have gained its name from settlers who held up a "DINE" sign backwards following the Land Run of 1893, the largest land rush in history.

The county seat was featured in the film "Ghost



**James Garfield**



Lab" for allegedly being haunted by John Wilkes Booth. As a conspiracy legend has it, Abraham Lincoln's killer actually escaped from his reported death in Virginia to Enid, where he committed suicide. The body of the man who may or may not have been Wilkes Booth was displayed during the St. Louis World's Fair in 1904 and later was shown by carni-

val sideshow promoters before it was stolen in a trainwreck.

The city was named in "The Grapes of Wrath" and "Jurassic Park III" and the Oklahoma state legislature designated it as the "purple martin capital of Oklahoma" for the Neotropical migrant birds that nest in the state in the summer before flocking to Central and South America in the winter.

The annual Tri-State Music Festival, which draws bands from across Oklahoma, Kansas and Texas to the county, features jazz concerts, a parade and carnival. Garfield County museums include the Western-themed Simpson's Old Time Museum, which is owned by local filmmakers

and holds a collection of more than 1,800 dolls; the Midgely Museum, which showcases a 7,000-pound petrified stump and fluorescent rocks that must be viewed under black light; the Railroad Museum of Oklahoma and the Cherokee Strip Regional Heritage Center, which features history on the Land Run of 1893 and houses the first portable drilling rig.

The county has a population of nearly 61,000 and is just over 1,000 square miles, according to the 2020 census.

Notable Garfield County residents include the late Pulitzer Prize-winning author Marquis James and Grammy Award-winning opera singer Leona Mitchell.

*"Get to Know" features new NACo member counties.*

**2023 NACo ANNUAL CONFERENCE & EXPOSITION**

**TRAVIS COUNTY**

**AUSTIN, TEXAS JULY 21 thru 24**



**SCAN FOR MORE INFO AND TO REGISTER**



## BRIGHT IDEAS | DANE COUNTY, WIS.

# County Creates More Inclusive Justice System with Help from Community

### PROBLEM:

Dane County, Wis. needed to address a racial gap in its criminal justice system.

### SOLUTION:

Involve the local community to help re-envision the system through a more diverse and inclusive lens.

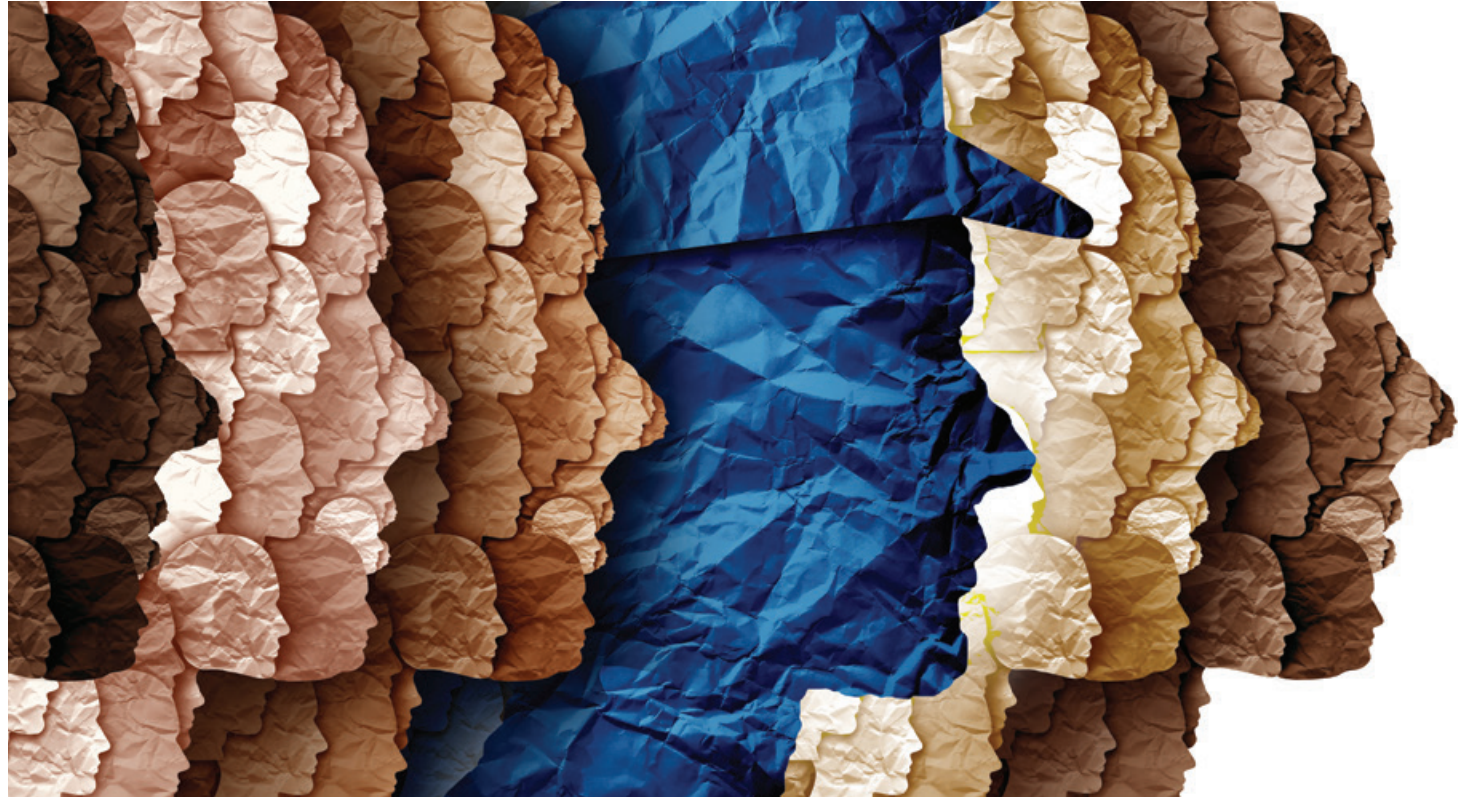
by **Meredith Moran**  
staff writer

Dane County, Wis. is working with Black, Indigenous and people of color (BIPOC) community groups to build a community justice court that will address the racial gap in its criminal justice system — which has one of the starkest disparities in the country.

Determining that it was important to not only involve those most impacted by the racial disparities in the justice system in the conversation but also compensate them for their work, the Dane County Board and Criminal Justice Council (CJC) contracted with seven BIPOC non-profits to create a needs assessment to re-envision the criminal justice system through a more diverse and inclusive lens.

“What we’re hearing is what we’ve been doing for 100-plus years is not working for communities of color,” said Colleen Clark-Bernhardt, Criminal Justice Council coordinator. “It’s incumbent on Dane County — and I would posit the rest of the country — to do something else because that’s what justice and fairness should look like. But also, economically, it makes sense because the folks who we’re incarcerating today will be in our communities tomorrow and we want them to be helping support our schools, our roads and live a sustaining life.”

The assessment, which cost the county \$100,000, engaged BIPOC Dane County residents



who have lived experience with the criminal justice system as well as those who are invested in bridging the inequity gap.

Wisconsin imprisons one in 36 Black adults — the highest rate in the United States, according to a 2021 Sentencing Project report. Once in the justice system, data shows that Dane County social workers recommend formal judicial proceedings against Black youth at a 25 percent higher rate than their white peers, *The Capital Times* reported in 2020.

“There’s a lot of distrust in the justice system and how things have been working and so they’re very skeptical about how this will be different from what we already have going on in Dane County, so they were saying, ‘How do we make it different? How do we actually create a separation between the courts and the center, so people can feel a little bit more comfortable?’” said Alex Booker, a graduate of Black community leadership group Urban Triage, in the CJC’s community organization pre-engagement discussion.

The primary message that came out of the assessment

was the need for hiring people of color in the community court and embedding racial equity in every aspect of its creation, including what services are offered and how they’re delivered, Clark-Bernhardt said.

“One of the themes that rose

‘The folks who we’re incarcerating today will be in our communities tomorrow.’

- Colleen Clark-Bernhardt

across the board, in addition to the need for accessibility both linguistically and culturally for immigrant communities, was also the ability to share information about what the criminal system looks like,” said Evelyn Cruz, director of program planning and evaluation for Centro Hispano, in the CJC discussion. “What are the agencies that compose that? And what are the ways to better access the system?”

The county included the feedback that came out of the needs assessment in its application for a \$600,000 grant it won to create the community court, which is now in the planning process.

The community court’s advisory subcommittee, which began meeting in April and is tasked with developing a vision for the community justice initiative by September, is made up of stakeholders in the criminal justice system, BIPOC

non-profits, victim advocates and community members with lived experiences in the system.

The community justice court itself is the next step the county’s taken in bridging injustice in its criminal justice system, following the adoption of its Community Restorative Court in 2014, which places an emphasis on repairing harm over punishment.

“There was this gnawing understanding that while our Community Restorative Court, which is for 17-to-25-year-olds, has been really impactful, we needed something bigger,” Clark-Bernhardt said.

While no formal positions

have been created and there are no plans yet for a physical building, Dane County Executive Joe Parisi has included funding for a community court coordinator in the 2023 annual budget and Clark-Bernhardt said she could see a capital funding proposal happening for a physical space once the report and recommendations have been given to the CJC.

“The ideal vision is that it’s not just a community court, but that it has service providers, peer support and navigators all in one building,” Clark-Bernhardt said. “... Having an opportunity to do something different and potentially really address the root cause of crime and get somebody assistance, both on the victim side and the offender side, to attempt to break that cycle, is what we’re trying to do. So, we just want to provide for a healthier person, healthier family, healthier community and then ultimately a much healthier county.” [CN](#)

*Dane County’s program was a 2022 Achievement Award winner in the Criminal Justice and Public Safety category.*



# PROFILES IN SERVICE

## CINDY JONES MILLS

**NACo Board Member**  
Forsyth County Board of Commissioners  
Forsyth County, Ga.



MILLS

**I'm most proud of:** My children and my grandchildren. I love being their CiCi!

**Every morning I read:** A devotion and emails from constituents.

**My favorite meal is:** Salmon and a sweet potato.

**My pet peeve is:** Uninformed people

**My motto is:** "This too shall pass."

**The last book I read was:** "Rod: The Autobiography" by Rod Stewart

**My favorite movie is:** Depending on my mood - "The Shawshank Redemption" if I'm being serious, "Ferris Bueller's Day Off" if I want to laugh.

**My favorite music is:** Old time rock 'n roll.

**My favorite U.S. president is:** George W. Bush

**My county is a NACo member because:** They see the value NACo brings to our county through its conferences, educational programs, webinars and most of all its advocacy for counties.

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

**Years in public service:** 11

**Occupation:** Business owner in the trucking industry

**Education:** Some college

**The hardest thing I've ever done:** Watching my parent's health decline

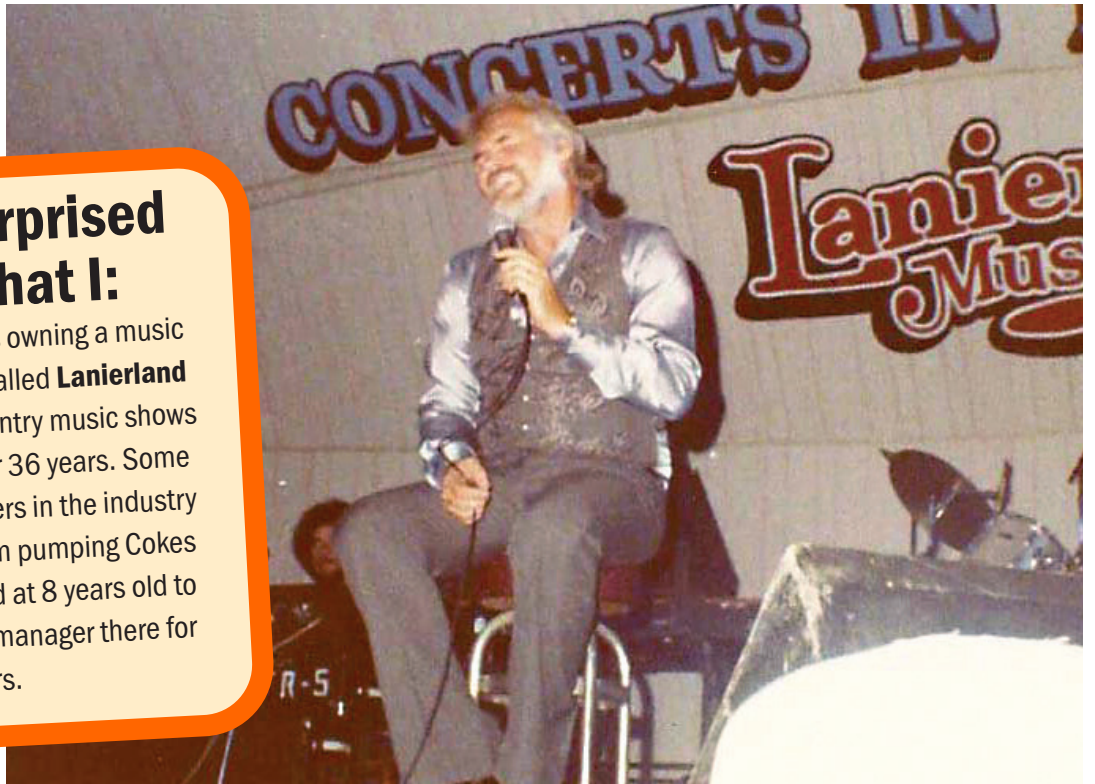
**Three people (living or dead) I'd invite to dinner:** My father, my grandfather and my grandmother (all deceased).

**A dream I have is to:** Meet singer Bob Seger

**The most adventurous thing I've ever done is:** Run for public office.

**My favorite way to relax is:** Listening to music, a good podcast or playing with my grandkids.

**You'd be surprised to learn that I:**  
Grew up with my parents owning a music park (36 years). It was called **Lanierland Music Park**. We had country music shows and a few pop shows for 36 years. Some of the biggest entertainers in the industry played there. I went from pumping Cokes in the concession stand at 8 years old to becoming the general manager there for 10 years.



## Which residents benefit from prescription discounts?

### Live Healthy helps residents:

- ▷ Without Insurance
- ▷ With High Deductible Plans
- ▷ When Live Healthy has a better price than insurance

Any resident (and their pets) of a county, parish or borough participating in the Live Healthy Discount Program are eligible to save.

**Enroll now at [NACo.org/Health](https://NACo.org/Health)**

\*The Live Healthy program is not insurance. Prescription savings may vary by drug and pharmacy; discounts are only available at participating pharmacies.

# NEWS FROM ACROSS THE NATION

## ARIZONA

**PIMA COUNTY'S** "Cycle Breaker" program is **connecting disengaged youth to education and employment opportunities** to help reduce recidivism. The program provides residents ages 16-25 who are not in school or employed with skills training, educational services and employment opportunities. The program also provides transportation, housing and food for low-income youth. Upon completion of the program, participants receive certification along with either their GED or high school diploma.

## CALIFORNIA

• **Overdose deaths in MARIN COUNTY** have more than doubled from 2018 to 2021. That challenge has led the county to **test its wastewater for substances** like fentanyl, methamphetamines and cocaine to determine how much it needs to boost its Narcan distribution. The county used the same method to monitor the spread of coronavirus and decided to apply the same system to help combat the opioid crisis. Twice a week, sanitation workers collect a 50-millileter sample of the 8 million gallons of wastewater that flow into the agency's facility and ship it to be tested.

## FLORIDA

• The **LEON COUNTY Sheriff's Office** has created an **ag-**



## FLORIDA

• **LAKE COUNTY** is bringing back its **Food for Fines program**, which relieves residents of library fees in exchange for food donations. Hygiene and baby products along with packaged pet food will also be accepted at libraries across the county. Those donations will then be sent to local food banks and charities.

**gricultural re-entry program**, where inmates receive beekeeping training, providing them with an activity while they're incarcerated that can also lead to employment opportunities upon release.



## MARYLAND

The **PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY** Council unanimously approved a **universal basic income pilot program**, in which around 200 low-income residents will receive between \$500 and \$800 monthly for 24 months, no strings attached. California's Stockton Economic Empowerment Demonstration program, which the county's program will be modeled after, saw a 12 percent increase from part-time to full-time employment in its participants and showed that they were able to pay off debts. Montgomery County, Md. approved a similar program in 2021.

## MICHIGAN

**OTTAWA COUNTY'S Commodity Supplemental Food Program** is partnering with delivery service DoorDash to increase food access for its low-income elderly population. The program, which is funded through the U.S. Department of Agriculture, was previously structured so that seniors had to pick up the groceries in person, so the partnership with DoorDash allows for more people to utilize the assistance.

## NEW JERSEY

**OCEAN COUNTY** will offer **free boat flare disposal** in a collaboration among several county departments — the first residential program of its kind in the state. Only Ocean County residents are allowed to participate; flares from marinas and businesses will not be accepted.

## NEW YORK

• **ERIE COUNTY** will launch a **paid ambulance service** to



Sarah Morton, left, environmental technician with the New Hanover County Department of Environmental Management, assists county resident Debby Riescher in loading fresh compost into her vehicle. Photo by Mark Courtney

## NORTH CAROLINA

• After five years, **NEW HANOVER COUNTY'S composting program** has yielded results — 273 tons of nutrient-rich material for county residents — for free. In the process, the county purchased a BeddingMaster in-vessel manure composter, an 8-foot-diameter, 40-foot-long machine designed to recycle manure into bedding for cows. The program has taken in about 250 tons of compostable waste annually for the past five years. The county operates a HazWagon, which parks throughout the county to accept waste that can be used at the composting facility, *Coastal Review* reports.

address emergency medical services worker shortages in rural areas of the county with longer response times.

• **WESTCHESTER COUNTY** has changed **email domains** to reinforce the county as a trusted source of information. All email addresses have changed to "@WestchesterCountyNY.gov," from "@WestchesterGov.com," the *White Plains Daily Voice* reported.

County Executive George

Latimer explained the reasoning behind the change, saying, "It is more important now than ever that our constituents have confidence in the authenticity of who we are at Westchester County Government, and this change all comes down to greater online security, and trust."

## NORTH CAROLINA

• The **MECKLENBURG COUNTY** Detention Center is offering a voluntary program

## PENNSYLVANIA

• Local **civic leaders will freshen up a BEDFORD COUNTY** Fairgrounds icon. This year's Leadership Bedford County participants have selected to restore the iconic Route 30 Coffee Pot as its class project. The group is run through the local chamber of commerce. The century-old structure was originally a restaurant and bar and welcomes visitors to the fairgrounds. Emphasis on the "grounds."

Photo by Jerin Miller



## CALIFORNIA

• In **SACRAMENTO COUNTY**, it'll take the same amount of time to **get a divorce** as it would to get a hamburger at a fast-food chain. Through the county's One Day Divorce Program, couples can attend a 10-minute hearing that replaces the drawn-out divorce process that can last months to years. The program is led by volunteer law students and attorneys and is designed for people who have a low to moderate income, allowing them to get on with their lives quicker and cut down on the traditionally high cost of getting divorced.



to help inmates and their families learn to better communicate and connect with each other. The **Strengthening Families program** is mostly virtual, but the families who complete the program get to celebrate in person after completing the program.

**PENNSYLVANIA**

- Current and past **LYCOMING COUNTY** employees will be able to access **health services** at the new Partnership Health Center. The center is located in a county-owned office building and offers best-practice primary care, same-day appointments and health plan care coordination at no cost and with no co-pays.

*The Sun Gazette* reported the move was intended to stave off rising health care costs, which the county self-pays. County officials hope the free care encourages employees to seek preventive care, which will head off health problems early.

**TEXAS**

- **HARRIS COUNTY** is establishing a **women’s re-entry program** at the new Women’s Center jail. The \$4.7 million initiative, funded by the American Rescue Plan Act, will employ case managers to match women with provid-



A spotted lanternfly coaster. Courtesy of the Starboard Brewing Co.

**WISCONSIN**

The **DOOR COUNTY** Invasive Species Team is partnering with a local brewery to serve a new beer, Planthopper Pale Ale, named after a **spotted lanternfly** that poses a threat to the plants necessary for the ingredients to make beer — among others. The beer will be served on coasters that feature illustrations of, and facts on, the lanternfly and ways to prevent the spread of invasive species to help customers identify the insect. The taproom also will have materials such as information sheets and rack cards about the lanternfly and the spread of invasives, the *Green Bay Press Gazette* reported.

ers of mental health services, trauma and substance abuse counseling and vocational and educational training, among other services.

**VIRGINIA**

- The **ARLINGTON COUNTY** Board has **eliminated sin-**

**gle-family zoning.** The vote allows the by-right construction of buildings from duplexes to “six-plexes,” depending on lot size, with the units capped at four on certain smaller lots. The structures will be no larger, in height or footprint, than what’s allowed for single-family homes, ArlingtonNOW reported. A temporary cap will limit 58 such structures per year, for five years, geographically dispersed by zoning district.

- **LOUDOUN COUNTY**’s economic development agency is offering a new program to **help entrepreneurs.** Launch Loudoun offers large-scale events, targeted programs, partner counseling and personalized 1-on-1 services with industry specialists to counsel pudding business leaders, with an emphasis on bolstering skills in finance, legal, workforce, marketing, and ownership and leadership.

*Charlie Ban and Meredith Moran compile News From Across the Nation. Does your county have news we should know about? Contact cban@naco.org and mmoran@naco.org.*



**See how 2000+ government agencies reduced emissions, improved driver safety, and lowered operational costs**

**GEOTAB** Learn more

**BEHIND THE SEAL** **SPOTSYLVANIA COUNTY, VA.**

**S**potsylvania County, Va., established in 1721, was named for Lieutenant Gov. Alexander Spotswood, who acted as the formal leader of the Commonwealth during the royal governorship of George Hamilton.

The county’s seal features Spotwood’s coat of arms, a symbol to identify his family, that dates back to medieval times.

The red shield represents eagerness to serve one’s country

the white shield embodies protection

the white boar is for hospitality

the trees are for strength.

Also highlighted is the county’s motto — “Patior ut Potiar” — Latin for “Through suffering, strength.”

Want to see your county seal featured in County News? Contact Meredith Moran at mmoran@naco.org.

# NACo offers resources to aid county mental health intervention efforts

From RESOURCES page 6

24/7 access center provides response and treatment for individuals experiencing mental health crises, withdrawal symptoms and intoxication.

Likewise, the Grand Lake Mental Health Center in Northeast Oklahoma is a not-for-profit Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinic serving the communities of 12 rural counties in the region.

The center provides crisis, outpatient, inpatient, mental health, wraparound and emergency detention services.

It is staffed by nurse practitioners, licensed mental health professionals and peer support specialists who have lived experience with mental illness and/or SUD (substance use and substance use disorders).

Counties are on the front lines of implementing services across the continuum of care. Aligned with this, NACo aims to reinforce and support county efforts in the practice of be-

havioral health.

For more information about Mental Health Awareness Month and ways for

counties to participate visit: [www.naco.org/resources/mental-health-awareness-month-county-participa-](http://www.naco.org/resources/mental-health-awareness-month-county-participa-)

[www.naco.org/topics/behavioral-health](http://www.naco.org/topics/behavioral-health)

NACo resources for behavioral health can be found at [www.naco.org/topics/behavioral-health](http://www.naco.org/topics/behavioral-health)

[www.naco.org/topics/behavioral-health](http://www.naco.org/topics/behavioral-health)

Chung is a justice intern in NACo's Counties Futures Lab.

## WORD SEARCH

### WASHINGTON COUNTY, UTAH

Created by: Mary Ann Barton

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

**ADJACENT:** Adjacent counties are Iron, Kane, Mohave and Lincoln counties.

**BORDERS:** The county borders Arizona and Nevada.

**FLOOD:** It rained for 44 days in January and February during the Great Flood of 1862.

**FOUNDED:** The county was founded March 3, 1852.

**GEOGRAPHY:** The county is made up of three areas: the Colorado Plateau, the Great Basin and the Mojave Desert.

**GEORGE:** The county was named for the country's first president, George Washington.

**HOUSING:** The median listing home price in the county as of March was \$595,000, according to realtor.com.

**INCOME:** The median household income for the county is \$65,000.

**PAIUTE:** A portion of the Paiute Indian Reservation is located in the county.

**POPULATION:** The county population is 192,927, according to the U.S. Census Bureau.

**SIGNAL:** The highest point in the county is Signal Peak at 10,369 feet.

**SIZE:** The county is 2,430 square miles.

**SOUTHWESTERN:** The county is located in the southwestern corner of Utah.

**WILDERNESS:** There are 18 official wilderness areas in the county.

**ZION:** Zion National Park is located in the eastern part of the county.

# Housing Affordability Crisis Threatens to Derail the Economy

## Building Material Supply Constraints and Persistent Labor Shortages Are Impeding Home and Apartment Construction



Learn more at [nahb.org](http://nahb.org)

