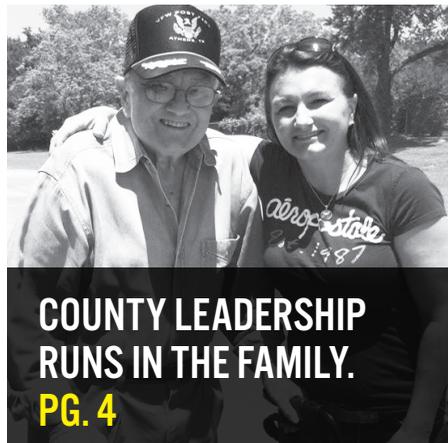




HOT TOPICS: THE NEW COUNTY WORKFORCE.
PGS. H1-H8



COUNTY LEADERSHIP RUNS IN THE FAMILY.
PG. 4



NACo JOINS MENTAL HEALTH CAMPAIGN.
PG. 4

Treasury advises on use of \$61.5 billion Fiscal Recovery Fund

by Eryn Hurley

Counties now have their first guidance for the use of the \$61.5 billion of the American Rescue Plan's Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Fund following the May 10 release of an interim final rule from the Department of Treasury.

The Treasury Department will accept comments on the interim rule until July 9. Later this year, Treasury will release separate guidance for the \$1.5 billion in additional federal aid for public lands counties. The Treasury's portal is currently open for counties to register and request their funds, which will be provided directly to all counties, regardless of population sizes

NACo has released an in-depth analysis of the rule, covering eligibility criteria for the use of funds, compliance and financial reporting and key dates for county actions. The full analysis is available at <https://www.naco.org/resources/featured/state-and-local-coronavirus-fiscal-recovery-funds>.

The fund covers costs incurred between March 3, 2021 and Dec. 24, 2024, and counties have broad flexibility to help those disproportionately impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, but they must demon-

strate that these uses supported the public health response or that recipients of the Recovery Funds experienced economic harm from the pandemic.

Counties may also use Fiscal Recovery Funds for the provision of "government services" to the extent of the reduction in revenue experienced due to the COVID-19 public health emergency.

Beyond responding to public health needs and negative economic impacts, counties can also use Fiscal Recovery Funds to provide premium pay to eligible workers performing essential work during the COVID-19 public health emergency. Premium pay may be provided retrospectively for work performed at any time since the start of the public health emergency on Jan. 27, 2020.

In addition to providing premium pay, the interim final rule permits rehiring of public sector staff, including county employees, up to pre-pandemic staffing level (Jan. 27, 2020), which is measured based on employment as of Jan. 27, 2021. Counties can use Recovery Funds toward payroll, covered benefits and other costs associated with rehiring public sector staff.

See **TREASURY** page 2



As COVID restrictions lift across the country, scenes like this county fair are becoming more familiar. The Powhatan County, Va. Fair was held May 14-16 with free admission. Modifications included sanitation stations throughout the grounds and sanitization of rides between riders. Photo by Cody Frayser

How one county commissioner is tackling rural vaccine hesitancy

by **Charlie Ban**
senior writer

After discussing Klamath County's housing plans on the radio, Commissioner Derrick DeGroot asked for a few seconds of Oregon Public Broadcasting's time.

"I received the Johnson & Johnson shot two weeks ago and I feel great," he said. "I'm a conservative from rural Oregon

and I would encourage everyone to get their vaccination as well."

His unsolicited pitch is just part of DeGroot's strategy for combating vaccine hesitancy, which studies by the Kaiser Family Foundation show is highest in rural areas (17 percent report they definitely don't want a vaccine) and among Republicans (20 percent). While DeGroot does not want to man-

date the vaccine, what he stresses the most is an open mind.

"The best conversation has been about how to make the decision," he said. "Most of it is a lack of understanding."

In his conversations with residents, both in and out of his official duties, DeGroot sees common refrains.

"It's new."

See **VACCINE** page 2

'This is a decision you make with your physician'

From VACCINE page 1

"It hasn't been tested."
"It was developed so fast."
Those concerns, he said, point to both modern reality and a culprit.
"We do things a lot faster today than we ever have, and it's only been sped up more," he said. "We're the society of jumbo jets and microwaves. We want to get where we're going faster, we want everything produced faster. We're getting so many things delivered quicker, including information. Some of that is good but some of that is bad."

What is bad, he said, is making a decision based entirely on input from social media or discussions at, say, a local barbecue.

"This is a decision you make with your physician, that's the conversation I have with most people," DeGroot said. "Who do you trust with your health?"



Commissioner Derrick DeGroot at a water rally in 2020.

That's probably a physician." That decision might end without a vaccine, but DeGroot said that's OK.
"Your doctor might tell you it's not right for you, and they

might be right, but at least you asked. I don't have a problem with that."

While the county has not set benchmarks, Gov. Kate Brown (D) recently announced that the state will relax restrictions on counties for which 65 percent of residents have had at least one shot. As of May 18, 29.9 percent of Klamath County's population was fully vaccinated, with more than 20,420 individuals reaching that point. DeGroot wants a to build a public ticker to display the raw numbers of residents vaccinated so the community can count down.

"Setting goals for people is always helpful," he said. "That will inspire people to be part of the solution."

"I understand this is a politically charged topic and a lot of times those can be difficult to broach with our constituents, however the time now is for a bit of political courage and making sure we are out there having these conversations. We're not trying to shove it down anyone's throat, we're not trying to force anyone to get vaccinated, but helping them have a conversation in the right way." **CN**

NACo offers full analysis on relief fund

From TREASURY page 1

The Interim Rule also allows for counties to use Fiscal Recovery Funds to address certain infrastructure needs including necessary investments in drinking water, waste and stormwater and high-quality broadband services.

For water and sewer investments, the Interim Rule aligns eligible projects with that of the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Clean Water State Revolving Funds and Drinking Water State Revolving Fund.

For broadband investments, the Treasury specifies that eligible projects must be designed to provide services that meet at least 100 megabits per second to support underserved households and businesses.

Finally, the Interim Rule clearly states that general infrastructure projects such as road construction or bridge repair unrelated to COVID-19 are not an eligible expense unless funds are pulled from revenue replacement funding.

Eligible expenses under the CARES Act Coronavirus Relief Fund (CRF) are eligible under the Recovery Fund, with two major exceptions. First, there are new restrictions on public health and safety employee payrolls. Additionally, issuing tax-anticipation notes are not an eligible expense.

Despite the broad flexibility of the Fiscal Recovery Fund, the Interim Rule outlines several

activities that counties cannot undertake with the funds.

These include applying as matching funds toward other federal grants, such as Medicaid, paying interest or principal on outstanding debt or for consent decrees/legal settlements and contributing to rainy day funds.

Funding also cannot be used toward paying down unfunded pension liabilities. However, counties can use funds for routine payroll contributions to pensions of employees whose wages and salaries are an eligible use.

Throughout the duration of the program, counties will be required to submit an Interim Report, Quarterly Project and Expenditure Reports, and Annual Recovery Plan Performance Reports regarding their utilization of Local Fiscal Recovery Funds.

However, only counties with populations above 250,000 in population are required to submit an Annual Recovery Plan Performance Report.

Read the full analysis, with elaboration on eligible expenses, key definitions and dates and differences between the Fiscal Recovery Fund and the Coronavirus Relief Fund at <https://www.naco.org/resources/featured/state-and-local-coronavirus-fiscal-recovery-funds>. **CN**

Eryn Hurley is an associate legislative director in NACo's government affairs department.



SNAP/STATS

MEMORIAL DAY
HONORING AMERICA'S FALLEN HEROES:

Civil War.....	620,000
World War II.....	405,399
World War I.....	116,516
Vietnam War.....	58,209
Korean War	36,516

Source: Statista

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NACo

Counties bring COVID-19 vaccine to doorsteps



Paramedics from the Naperville Fire Department vaccinate a homebound resident in DuPage County, Ill. Photo courtesy Naperville Fire Department

Transportation. Other states have launched similar programs using buses to reach communities with low vaccination rates.

The state health department offered Todd County the opportunity to utilize the bus because of its low vaccination rates, Community Health Manager Katherine Mackedanz said.

The county identified four communities based on ZIP code maps to determine the locations where it would stop.

“We’ve heard from a lot of people that even driving 20 miles is too far and they just don’t leave their local communities,” she said.

The 40-foot bus is ADA-accessible and will administer the Johnson & Johnson vaccine. Anyone 18 or older can walk up to receive a vaccine without making an appointment or showing insurance and ID cards.

“Our county hasn’t had many opportunities to get the Johnson & Johnson vaccine, so I think that ‘one and done’ will really encourage a lot of people who just want the convenience of it,” she said.

The bus spent one week in the county and held an evening clinic to target those working different shifts.

To attract even more county residents, a food truck was stationed outside the bus to provide free food to anyone who received a vaccine.

“I keep saying there’s really no more convenient option at this point,” Mackedanz said. **CN**

by **Rachel Looker**
staff writer

As more COVID-19 vaccines become available, counties are implementing programs to vaccinate the homebound population and find ways to provide convenient options for those who have yet to receive a dose.

In DuPage County, Ill. the health department partnered with local fire departments to administer the vaccine in residents’ homes.

Earlier this year, health department nurses began administering vaccines to a small number of people at their residences. The county launched a program partnering with local fire departments to expand the reach.

DuPage County Director of Community Health Resources Chris Hoff said there are many logistical challenges with administering vaccines in homes.

“It’s kind of a fine dance to get the right vaccine with the right person and with the right

temperature at the right time, so we knew we needed help to do that,” he said.

DuPage County has more than 20 different fire stations, according to Hoff.

He began connecting with medical directors who oversee paramedics to create a protocol for administering vaccines in homes. The county health department supplies the paramedics with the vaccine the day of the appointment.

“The vaccine should be widely available to anybody that needs it regardless of their status,” Hoff said. “If you happen to be homebound through something that prevents you from being able to get out, then we should have options to get you vaccinated.”

Two fire stations started the program, which is expanding to eight more in the upcoming weeks.

Hoff said a countywide registration sign-up list included an option for needing a vac-

cine at home. At one point, the list for at-home vaccinations was around 1,500 people.

“This helps us to ensure that everybody in the community has the option [to receive a vaccine], even if you’re homebound and can’t get out to one of the vaccination sites that’s been set up,” he said.

Todd County, Minn. is collaborating with the Minnesota Department of Health to bring

mobile vaccine buses to communities with low vaccination rates.

The state health department retrofitted a Metro Transit bus as part of the state’s COVID-19 Community Mobile Vaccination Bus Project. The project is in collaboration with Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota, Metro Transit, the Metropolitan Council and the Minnesota Department of



Todd County utilized an ADA-accessible bus to help get people vaccinated, offering free meals too.

When public service runs in the family



Henderson County, Texas Commissioner Wendy Kinabrew Spivey

by Rachel Looker
staff writer

County government was not unfamiliar to John King, a current Haywood County, Tenn. commissioner.

As a child, he was surrounded by it.

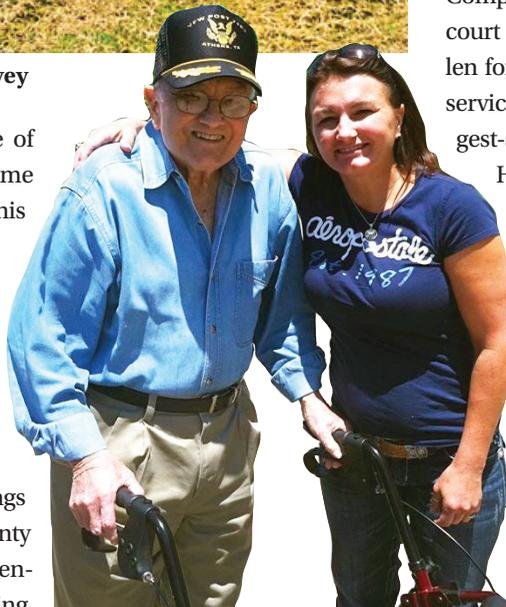
His father, Allen King, served on the Haywood County Board of Commissioners for 62 years. His grandfather served as a commissioner for 35 years.

“After my dad died, some of the county commissioners came and asked me if I’d run for his position,” Allen said.

He became a commissioner in his early 20s, serving as chair of the budget committee for over 30 years.

Both Kings followed in the footsteps of their fathers.

“We’ve had many meetings around the table about county government, what was happening, what wasn’t happening,



why somebody liked this, why they didn’t,” John said. “We’ve all been very familiar with everything going on every time we sat at the table.”

As a third-generation commissioner in the family, John was well versed in all things county government after listening to his father talk about his work for over 50 years.

“We’ve grown up hearing about it — I did and he [Allen] did as well,” John said.

Allen said his father had talked to him before he passed away about public service. He then passed these lessons on to his own son when John started his term in 2020.

Now retired, Allen still attends every commissioners meeting.

He lives across the street from John, who picks him up and takes him to the meetings. They drive to the Allen King Justice Complex, where the current court meets, named after Allen for his many years of public service and for being the longest-serving commissioner in Haywood County’s history.

“He hasn’t missed a meeting yet,” John said. “Even though he’s been off the last two years, he goes to every meeting and when we come home, we talk about what happened.”

Henderson County, Texas Commissioner Wendy Spivey also has family roots in county

government.

Spivey’s grandfather served as a commissioner from 1969 to 1976.

“I never was into politics,” she said. “I’m not a politician.”

But when she took a position as an administrative assistant at the county seven years ago, a decision in part influenced by

her grandfather, she fell in love with the job.

“I’ve always been really close to my grandfather. I’ve lived beside him my whole entire life from the time I was born until the time he passed away in 2011,” she said. “He’s always been a big influence on me.”

Her boss who was retiring encouraged her to run for the seat and she began her term as commissioner in January 2021. She is the first elected female commissioner in the county.

Her grandfather discussed his role as commissioner frequently, even building a barn in the back of his house to work on county business.

Spivey chose to use her maiden name on the ballot for those who may recognize the connection to her grandfather. In her office, she hung up a sign her grandfather used when he ran for commissioner.

“Everybody says you’re going to do good just like your grandfather because he did really well as a commissioner and he was well liked,” she said. “I’m happy to step in his footprints.” **CN**



John King

NACo joins ‘Mask COVID... Not Your Emotions’ campaign

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a dramatic impact on individuals’ health with more than 32 million cases reported and more than 580,000 deaths.

The pandemic has taken a toll not only on our physical health but on our nation’s mental health as well. Due to the impact of social isolation and stress related to the pandemic, people are experiencing higher rates of anxiety and depression, as well as suicide and overdose. The current mental health crisis cannot be ignored.

In recognition of this crisis, NACo has partnered with Psych Hub on its “Mask COVID... Not Your Emotions” campaign. Co-founded by former U.S. Rep. Patrick J. Kennedy and Marjorie Morrison, Psych Hub was created to address the desperate need for quality and engaging online education on mental health topics. The campaign combines COVID vaccination with easy-to-access tools to assess and address behavioral health conditions.

The campaign includes a digi-



tal toolkit with promotional materials for organizers to use, with everything from posters and flyers to graphics for social media.

The campaign raises awareness for the Mental Wellbeing Resource Hub, where anyone can go to access mental health tools and materials.

The campaign is simple: As people arrive for their COVID

vaccination, they may see promotional posters or receive a flyer with a QR code.

Scanning the code takes individuals to the resource hub where they can search for materials by keyword, topic or audience. To date, more than 50 national partner organizations from corporate, non-profit, behavioral health, education and government have joined Psych Hub to make more than 700 resources available on the hub.

County officials who wish to take advantage of this campaign

should complete the quick form here: tinyurl.com/zpab729s.

Enter the code NACO21 to receive a free digital toolkit. Customization of materials is also available for a small service fee. For further information, please contact ResourceHub@psychhub.com or NWalsh@naco.org. **CN**

You can learn more details about Psych Hub and this campaign at [Mental Wellbeing Resource Hub: https://psychhub.com/initiatives/resource-hub/](https://psychhub.com/initiatives/resource-hub/).

Job training program targets high-tech positions

by **Charlie Ban**
senior writer

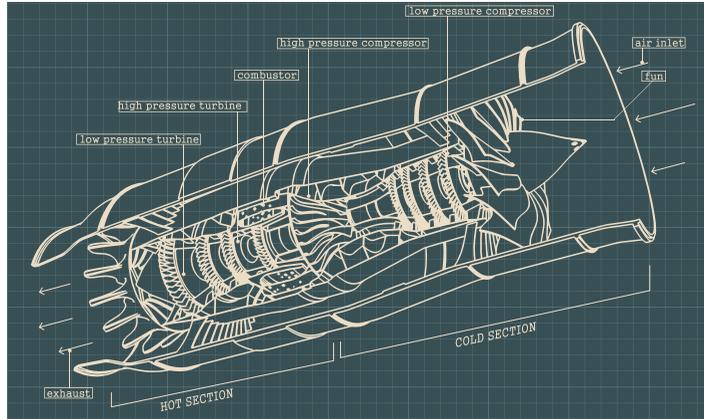
Though the COVID-19 pandemic ravaged the job market, Colorado counties are still reaching for the stars with a job-training program built to pair job seekers with employers in the aerospace industry and other high-tech employers.

Arapahoe/Douglas Works! is a joint workforce development organization between Arapahoe and Douglas counties; it will provide training for jobs like software developer, geospatial technicians, data analyst, quality technician and soldering technician.

“This is prime time with the pandemic to look to help individuals who were impacted,” said Sasha Easton, workforce

administrator with Arapahoe/Douglas Works! “We’re looking for people who are unemployed or underemployed, on public assistance. The cool thing about it is that there are so many counties involved that it’s a real regional approach.”

Arapahoe/Douglas Works! is participating with eight other central counties in the Denver area in the H1B One Workforce Grant Program, administered by the U.S. Department of Labor with a \$7.38 million grant. Its share figures to be \$910,000 to train 132 participants, aiming for 60 percent to receive a credential, certificate or degree. On top of that, the organization will subsidize training for 20 incumbent workers and enhance their skills to move into mid- and upper-level positions at their employers, pri-



marily in technology, transportation or aerospace fields.

“We like to focus on incumbent workers because they’re in a lower-paying job, get them new skills, keep them with that company but also fill the pipeline behind them as well,” said Kelly Folks, the organization’s workforce director.

The partnership will demonstrate to employers like Boeing

and TTM Technologies, both of which have signed letters of support, that the counties are committed to providing a qualified and able workforce.

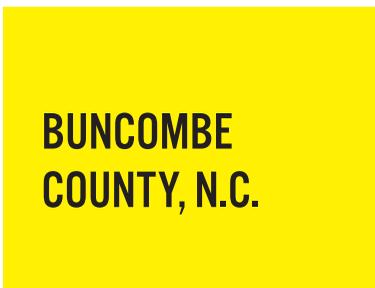
“There are positions where we might have training pipeline struggles or have a great need that we’re not meeting,” Business Services Manager Stephanie Mufic said. “That’s why those jobs are the focus of

the grant. Those are also mid-to high-level positions and our goal is to take people who are impacted by the pandemic right now that may not have had those skills. They can get those skills and get into those jobs.”

The program also applies to workers seeking an H-1B visa.

“We focus on aerospace, where they don’t have H-1B jobs however they have those careers that are very similar, but they can’t use H-1B visa workers because they have federal contracts,” Mufic said. “They still have a need.”

“We will take the support from the businesses,” she noted, “talk about training opportunities and areas we can use existing training opportunities ... and if it’s not there, work to create it.” **CN**



The Buncombe County, N.C. seal was created in 1927 to celebrate the construction of the county courthouse. City and county officials held a student drawing contest with Buncombe County Schools to determine the design of the seal. The contest was open to all students in the county.

A team of city and county officials, a historian and an education coordinator selected the winning design by student Roy Fox. He won \$25 for the winning entry.



Buncombe County is located in the Blue Ridge Mountains depicted by the mountains and pine trees in the seal.

The original county motto on the seal read “Men to Match Our Mountains,” which was altered in the 1980s to read “People to Match Our Mountains.”

For more details on the **2021 Aspire Awards**, please log onto www.naco.org/aspire.

If you have any questions, please contact **Carlos Greene** at **770.881.0100** or cgreene@naco.org

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

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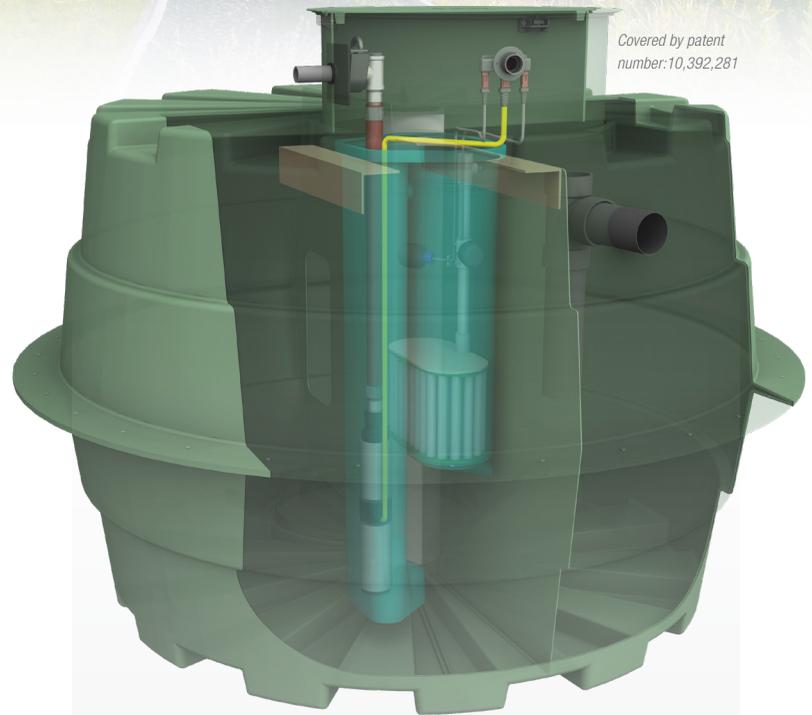


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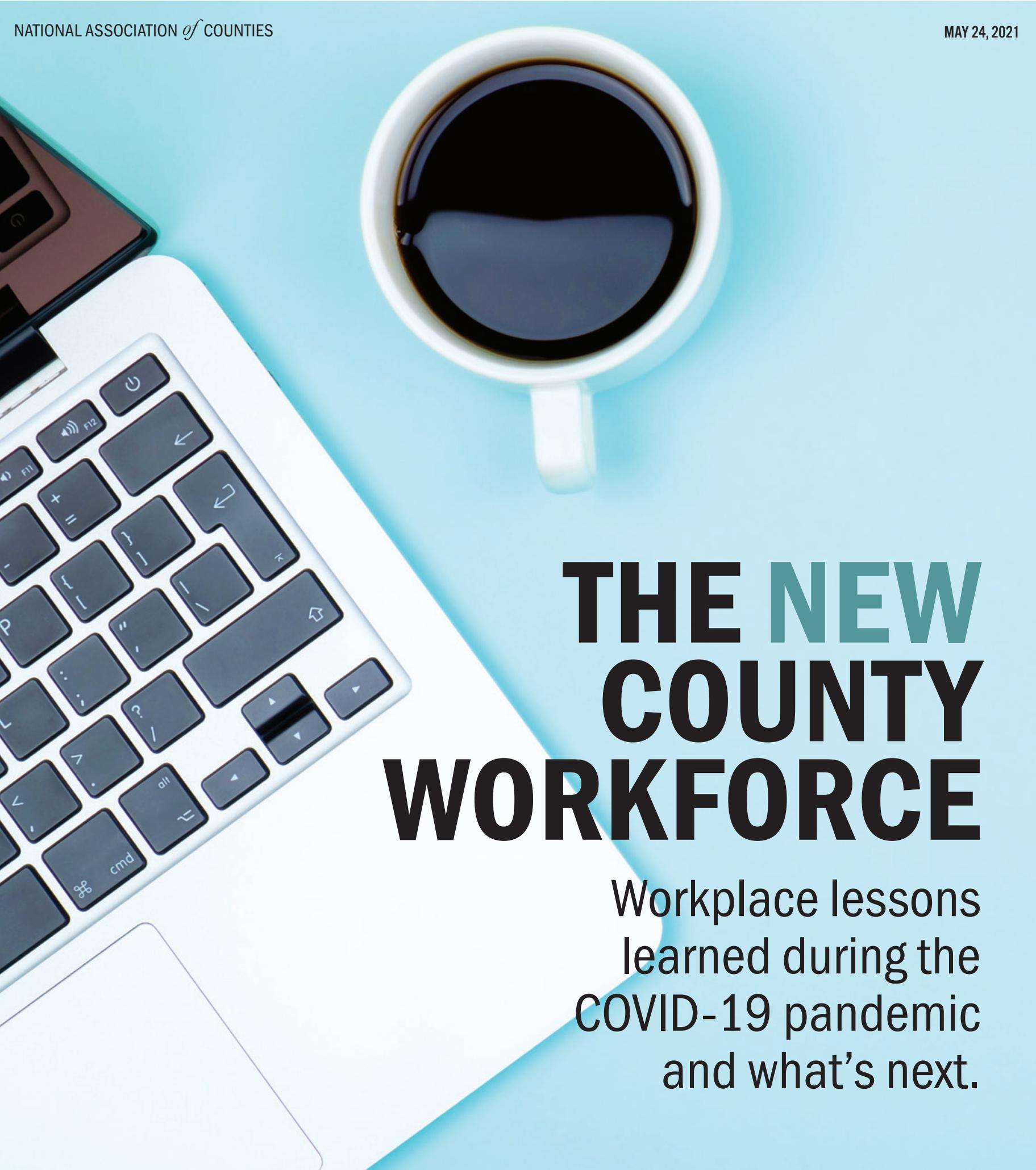
PROTECTING THE WORLD'S WATER

CountyNews

HOT topics

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION *of* COUNTIES

MAY 24, 2021



THE NEW COUNTY WORKFORCE

Workplace lessons
learned during the
COVID-19 pandemic
and what's next.

COUNTY STAFFING TAKES FOCUS IN A CLOUDED CRYSTAL BALL

by **Charlie Ban**
senior writer

Madison County, N.Y. was recruiting a new financial analyst in January 2020. The job was hers, but she asked some tough questions.

“She wanted to know if we offered work-from-home options,” said County Administrator Mark Scimone. “I said ‘No, we’re a government, we don’t do work from home. That’s not something we do and that’s not something I envision us doing.’”

She took the job anyway and started in March. Within a week, she and many of the county’s roughly 600 employees were working from home to prevent the spread of the coronavirus.

That dramatic shift illustrates how fast the conventional wisdom regarding county personnel trends can change. County employees make up 1 percent of the total U.S. workforce, and though many of those jobs will remain fundamentally consistent, some characteristics and staffing levels may change significantly in the next few years.

First off, counties are in a more stable place now than they were a year ago.

“The recovery is in hand now, so we’re able to transition back to looking to the future again,” said Dave Pieklik, economic development director for Citrus County, Fla., which counts roughly 1,000 county employees in its workforce.

Pieklik hopes that means he’ll eventually be able to expand his one-person operation, but he also sees counties recruiting more “utility players” who are comfortable filling multiple roles.

“I’m primarily in charge of business recruitment, but if I need to, I can fill in as a public information officer,” he said. “That kind of flexibility is something counties value more and more.”

Flexibility is how Hennepin County, Minn. hopes to compete with the private sector for workers.

“The way we compete isn’t through massive salaries and the benefits don’t resonate with the next generation,” said Chief Human Resources Officer Michael Rossman. “The only area we can compete against the private sector is to offer flexibility in remote work. We know one thing for certain, the traditional work environment... wasting the time to get there, spending the money to get there... the culture we create of needing a tie and a suit to show that you are promotable, all of



those ways of the past have kept people out of the workplace.

“If we change some of our cultural norms, if we allow more flexibility to meet people where they are, we’re working on true employment disparity work.”

Rossman and County Administrator David Hough emphasize maintaining a workforce that reflects the community it serves, which in Hennepin County is 30 percent Black, Indigenous and people of color.

“We want to look like the people we serve,” Hough said. “The county workforce is going to be more diverse than we’ve seen over the last 10 years. We have very intentional strategies about recruitment and retention.”

Along with its focus on flexibility, Hennepin County is recruiting early, offering job training for positions without degree requirements and offering a robust tuition reimbursement program, aiming to grow with its employees and foster long-term relationships. Though Rossman said the county doesn’t plan to compete with private sector on high-level salaries, most county jobs pay at least \$20 per hour.

Several officials indicated that more employees working remotely would

mean their counties could reduce office space and save on maintenance, heating and rent expenses.

San Miguel County, Colo. recently saw turnover for the first time in four decades in its sheriff’s and assessor’s offices, and in 2016, five county employees with 150 years of experience among them retired.

“From a recruiting standpoint, we have been fortunate being a place where people want to live, with natural beauty, recreation and cultural amenities,” said County Administrator Mike Bordogna. “We have great schools and pay comparatively well for the region, however, we also have some extreme challenges, like housing costs.”

Bordogna bets on cultural fit making the difference for candidates.

“The amount of quality applicants is astounding now,” he said. “We are getting to pick not only those that are highly qualified, but those that share our values and vision for the future.”

Remote work is proving financially viable for Madison County, which had previously missed out on \$100,000 because of missed appointments prior to the widespread insurance reimbursement of telehealth.

All of this remote work needs support,

too. Albany County, Wyo. Commission Chairman Pete Gosar anticipates adding to his county’s 186 staff members to support increased technological needs. “As more county business moves online and virtual meetings become a standard, I believe Albany County will need more people to place and monitor county information on the web,” he said. “Additionally, there will be a growing need for cybersecurity expertise.”

Counties will continue to deal with the aftermath of the pandemic.

“We’re looking at the mental health aspect of COVID, people who never had issues are needing therapy, so that’s an area that we’re looking at, what we will need to address in our community long-term,” Scimone said.

And demographic trends will also drive growth.

Counties with significant aging populations are eyeing staffing shifts to meet their needs. Citrus County, Fla. is increasing its veterans affairs staffing, and New Hanover County, N.C. has already increased staffing in traditional human services roles, but also with technological support to help seniors navigate the digital environment, Board of Commissioners Chair Julia Olson-Boseman said.

The pandemic has also spurred federal help to bolster public health staffing. The American Rescue Plan includes \$3.4 billion to fund new hiring for local and state governmental public health departments and a \$3 billion grant program for under-resourced health departments to strengthen their workforce in the long term.

“It’s something very much needed to strengthen our nation’s public health security as a whole,” said Lori Tremmel Freeman, CEO of the National Association of County and City Health Officials. “The local public health system nationwide has been starved over the past few decades. The results of this disinvestment are seen in the COVID-19 response, as local health departments are stretched thin and staff are pulled away from other essential areas like food safety, HIV prevention, and opioid overdose prevention, in order to respond to the pandemic.”



PLANNING FOR FUTURE OF WORK PRESENTS CHALLENGES AMID PANDEMIC

by **Kevin Shrawder**

Counties occupy a unique space in the developing future of the American workforce. Not only are counties large local employers — of more than 3.6 million individuals across the nation — counties also serve as local policymakers, partners, program and resource providers and conveners, playing a critical role in developing and implementing a strategic vision for local industry and its workforce.

The Future of Work, a term that encapsulates the rapid changes transforming the traditional workplace and the shared uncertainty around what the workforce landscape may look like in the coming years, has shifted significantly due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This past year has spurred new conversations on affordable broadband, remote work and other dramatic industry shifts across the economy.

To provide perspective on the impact of COVID-19 on these shifts and county economic recovery, NACo partnered with Mathematica to study workforce development plans for the Future of Work at the local level. Several county priorities emerged

from a series of town hall conversations with county leaders and survey findings from counties across the nation.

In response to the immediate need of the global pandemic, some workforce plans were delayed or revised. Thirty-four (34) percent of county respondents pivoted to focus on the pandemic, while 52 percent adopted a focus on both the pandemic and non-pandemic-related workforce development; only 14 percent reported no substantial workforce planning changes.

As the pandemic wanes, the county response is evolving to proactive planning for long-term needs from reactive problem-solving. Eighty-six (86) percent of counties anticipate significant small business failure coupled with persistent increases in remote work or telework. More than 60 percent of county leaders expect significant increases in long-term unemployment, reduced educational attainment attributed to COVID-19-related disruptions and persistent declines in local tourism and hospitality sectors.

Local needs in Future of Work planning are not monolithic. Variations in local economies, such as industry composition or

geographic location, define county needs and response measures. Some industries (e.g., health care and social assistance) may require shorter time frames for recovery than other industries (e.g., hospitality and service).

Counties are interested in further partnership with local workforce development boards, community colleges, industry and employer associations, nonprofit organizations, K-12 school systems and other counties to address the unique local needs associated with Future of Work planning.

Counties seek opportunities to embrace practical workforce planning for all residents by bridging the digital divide with older adults, reconnecting younger workers' skills and preferences with local employment opportunities, ensuring equitable access for women who are reentering the workplace and addressing the disproportionate job losses in communities of color.

One distinct priority in county Future of Work planning is broadband infrastructure. Eighty-six (86) percent of county leaders expect lasting changes to how workers and businesses operate, such as remote and hybrid working. Fewer than 10 percent

of county leaders reported full coverage of high-speed broadband across the entire county and less than one-third (29 percent) reported that all or most residents had the necessary tools and technology to access broadband from their homes. With the rise in telework, telemedicine and other remote engagements, access to affordable broadband is linked intrinsically to the conversation around workforce planning.

County governments lead the way in preparing local communities for the Future of Work. With proper support and resources, counties can foster relationships between local stakeholders to effectively address needs and concerns, shaping the Future of Work in the community.

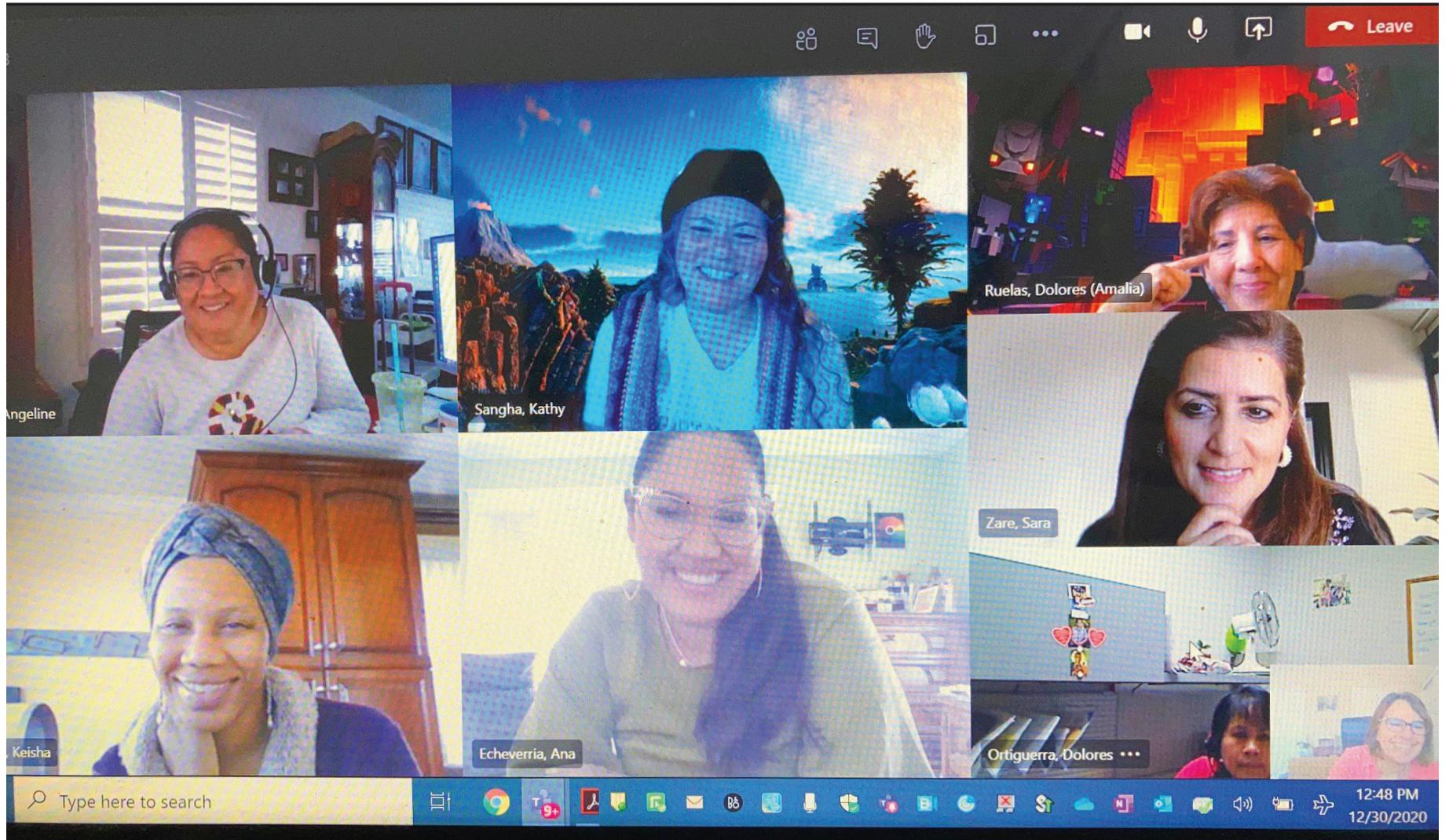
The full report Planning for the Future of Work Amid a Global Pandemic and three in-depth county case studies on workforce solutions, generously supported by Walmart, will be released in early June. 

Kevin Shrawder is an associate economist in NACo's Counties Futures Lab working primarily on data efforts including data analysis, data visualization and county-focused economic research.

COUNTY CONCERNS RESULTING FROM THE IMPACTS OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC ON LOCAL ECONOMIES



Source: NACo County Member Survey, 2020 - 2021



Members of the training team who helped administer the Managing Remote Employees training in San Diego County, Calif.

More remote work means need for more virtual trainings

by **Rachel Looker**
staff writer

In San Diego County, Calif., over 70 percent of the Health and Human Services Agency made the switch to working remotely when the pandemic started.

The change brought on new challenges for supervisors who had to adjust to the “new normal” without ever managing employees in a virtual setting.

San Diego County created its own Managing Remote Employees training to equip supervisors and managers with the tools needed to properly manage employees in a virtual environment.

The three-hour, interactive training identifies factors that make remote work challenging, teaches managers how to manage employees’ productivity, identifies ways to support remote employees and build an inclusive remote structure.

Staff Development Coordinator Karen Harris, who helped develop the training program, said the agency’s Knowledge Center realized in the summer of 2020 remote work would continue longer than many had thought, creating a need for supervisors to learn how to manage effectively on a long-term basis.

“I think the focus at the beginning was just to make sure everybody had the right

technology to do their work,” she said. “But after that got established, we realized there’s more to supervising people.”

Harris co-teaches the training, which took 80 hours to develop. The training teaches managers how to address challenges employees may face at home such as with childcare, feelings of isolation or even losing family members to COVID.

“What we wanted to consider is that this is not your typical remote work situation. This is a pandemic remote work situation.”

Over 300 supervisors and managers participated in the training with 97 percent of attendees reporting they acquired strategies to improve employee productivity and performance.

In the remote environment, supervisors struggled with micromanagement, undermanagement and feelings of distrust with managing employees remotely, Harris said. Strategies in the training focused on building trust and focusing on outcomes to measure productivity. For many organizations, Harris said training took a backseat during the pandemic.

“I think training is often seen as one of

those things that you can delay if needed or it’s not always a high priority, but I think that people were really kind of starved for information,” she said.

Community Health Program Specialist Lori Jones, who has elected to work from home permanently and manages a team of interns, completed the training.

“I learned a lot about ideas for team building and recognition,” she said.

Senior Office Assistant with the Resource Family Approval Program Dalensha Lynch, who supervises nine people, said the training taught her the importance of using different communication channels to stay in touch with supervisees in more approachable ways.

“The training helped me zoom in on a few things that I never really thought would help increase the unit’s morale,” she said, describing how her team played games like “two truths and a lie” and completed scavenger hunts to become more comfortable in a virtual environment.

Harris said San Diego County noticed a reduction in its carbon footprint that resulted from teleworking and is looking at ways for employees to continue working remotely or in a hybrid model.

She added that fewer employees are taking sick time and productivity levels have remained the same during the transition with the help of tools managers learned during the training.

“I think people do want training and they do need training and it’s just not to forget about how to support the workforce,” she said. **H4**

HOTtopics

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The future of county customer service

by **Rachel Looker**
staff writer

On March 16, 2020, Montgomery County, Md. 311 Call Center Manager Katherine Johnson told her employees to pack up their computers and equipment to start working from home.

MC311 Customer Service Center is Montgomery County's source for non-emergency government information and services.

As news of the COVID-19 virus began to spread, Johnson pulled her employees aside to talk with them about the possibility of teleworking for what would likely not be a matter of days or weeks, but months.

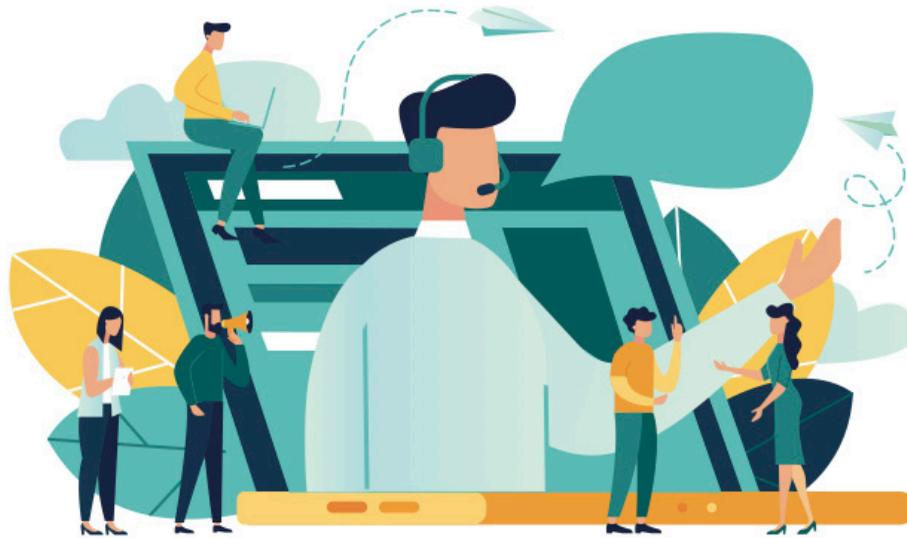
"I knew it was a matter of 'when,' not a matter of 'if,'" she said.

The team at the 311 customer service operation in Montgomery County has been teleworking under the county executive's directive since last year.

The move to teleworking included the transition of 38 customer service representatives and 12 management staff with the support of three information technology specialists.

"We made the switch seamlessly in one day," MC311 Director Brian Roberts said.

Both Roberts and Johnson credit the successful transition to efforts made in 2014, when MC311 launched a smaller



scale telework program to respond to situations such as inclement weather. The main shift involved switching software that is run on desktops to laptops.

"I believe we were one of the few departments that was really ready for this," Johnson said.

Additionally, Johnson ensured teams rotated throughout different weeks working from home to address any technical or management issues with working remotely.

When the pandemic hit, she ensured the team was fully equipped with all technological requirements, hotspots and office supplies needed.

"We are essential personnel," she said. "We definitely want to make sure that we

are always available to our Montgomery County residents, and anyone who's calling 311 for information."

To aid customer service representatives, Johnson contacted a wellness program to hold sessions to help the teams cope with stress and anxiety.

"To have the residents in such distress— people lost their jobs, people didn't have food, for them to have to hear that all day was very emotionally draining on them," she said.

With many programs providing assistance to residents throughout the pandemic, Johnson said there were many high call volume days. The MC311 handled 19,000 calls in the two weeks leading up to the switch to remote work. The

following two weeks after the transition saw 21,000 calls.

Despite the influx of callers, customer service representatives maintained an 84 percent customer satisfaction level throughout the pandemic with callers unaware they were fielding calls from their homes.

Roberts said one benefit to working remotely is the elimination of commuting time, which improved attendance.

"Schedule adherence is very important to our business because you want to make sure that as many people as possible are available to take calls during the day so that we minimize the amount of time a customer has to wait to get to an agent," he said.

As of now, the MC311 team plans to continue teleworking.

"It's hard pressed for me to see why we need to put 50 people in an open office area together, our managers and our agents combined, when the risk is that high and we've been operating so successfully remotely so I think this is the way we're going to proceed for the foreseeable future," he said.

Both Johnson and Roberts said the COVID-19 pandemic will have a significant impact on how counties conduct customer service operations.

"I think the remote operation for 311 is going to be around for a while," Roberts added. ■

Projected Percent Change, by Selected Occupational Groups, 2019-29

Percent employment growth, projected 2019-2029



Source: Department of Labor

THE NACo HIGH PERFORMANCE LEADERSHIP SPOTLIGHT

by **Tim Rahschulte**

Our goal, Stronger Counties for a Stronger America, is made possible by strong leaders. This is a segment on those strong leaders, individuals who are enabling their teams to deliver products and services to citizens who in turn enable their communities to thrive.

Such leadership is more important than ever. The climate of county business today requires navigating constant change, balancing competing priorities, doing more with less, and focusing diverse resources on solving problems never encountered before. Today's leaders are resolving pressing issues for those they serve, while enabling future county workforce leaders to carry their work even further.

The leaders featured in the Spotlight here have all earned their Master Certificate of Leadership from the NACo High Performance Leadership Academy, the



12-week program designed and delivered in collaboration with Gen. Colin Powell.

To date, NACo and county leadership partner The Professional Development Academy have provided \$5 million in scholarships and have helped two-thirds of the counties in the United States to make existing leaders better and emerging leaders ready.

If you are looking for support in your succession-planning work or an online leadership program that is scalable and affordable for your entire management team, visit www.naco.org/skills to learn more and enroll. As for those strong leaders, you can learn more about them here in the NACo High Performance Leadership Spotlight.

MARIBEL GOMEZ CORDERO

NACo Board Member
Orange County, Fla.
Commissioner

Number of years in role: Two

Don't miss this in my county: Split Oak Trail

Most influential person in my career: Mary Jo Hoard, LMHC

Biggest challenge: COVID-19 (rents, small business closings).

Motivation for signing up for HPLA: To be a better leader every day.

Favorite part of HPLA: Breakout group meetings.

Favorite leadership role: Building trust among the team, positive communication and leading by example.

My oath or motto: To bring motivation, inspiration, creativity and unity to a posi-



Cordero

tive workplace that will increase efficiency in service to the community.

In my spare time: I read and spend time with my family.

I'm most looking forward to: Continuing to practice my leadership rules and learning more.



The NACo High Performance Leadership Academy is a 12-week, online course that connects your staff with practical leadership training.

THE ACADEMY FOCUSES ON FIVE ESSENTIAL SKILLS:



LEAD



ORGANIZE



COLLABORATE



DELIVER



COMMUNICATE

With a curriculum developed by **General Colin Powell** and public and private sector leaders, NACo High Performance Leadership Academy gives students the opportunity to learn from world-class faculty. All content is guided by an expert facilitator.



The NACo High Performance Leadership Academy empowers frontline county government professionals with fundamental, practical leadership skills to deliver results for counties and residents.

Find out more at NACo.org/Skills

DECIDING WHICH WORK PRACTICES STAY WHEN PANDEMIC IS GONE

by **Stephenie Overman**

Stefan I. Mychajliw is enthusiastic about employees working remotely once the pandemic has eased. But then the Erie County, N.Y. comptroller was enthusiastic about remote work before the pandemic began.

As county officials around the country make decisions about how and whether to bring employees back to work, many may find their employees enthusiastic about remote work as well. A Society for Human Resource Management survey found that 52 percent of 1,000 U.S. workers would choose to permanently work from home full-time if given the option.

For Mychajliw, the region's often bitter winters, combined with employees' ability to work productively from home, cemented his decision to keep remote work working.

"We're in the heart of downtown Buffalo," he said. "People can see a storm physically rolling in and know that their commute home will be two hours." During one blizzard, "I had to drive around and pick up employees" to make sure they got into the office to finish critical work and avoid penalties.

That experience led him to investigate remote work for his staff. Implementation

began in 2019, so that when the coronavirus struck, "we were prepared. We didn't miss a beat."

During the pandemic, the office has operated with a skeleton crew of four or five employees on site, out of a staff of 30-plus people. Employees are in the office one or two days a week, according to Mychajliw. "I care less about process. I care more about results. I prefer remotely. It's more productive. We can and should remain remote."



Overman

"I wholeheartedly understand that with certain functions in county government people have to be there, but if they don't have to be, let them take care of their families and get their

jobs done. Treat them like adults," he said.

Changes brought about by the pandemic also can benefit the public, according to Mychajliw, such as making forms available online, so people don't need to travel to the county building.

The office works with a banking partner to ensure that high-tech security measures are in place. "We've been working on this so long, we've got it down to a science," he said.

High-tech solutions allowed the Delaware County, Ohio Department of Building Safety to conduct building inspections virtually during the pandemic, according to Duane B. Matlack, the department's

director and chief building officer.

Before the pandemic, many government building departments around the country – including Delaware County – were hesitant to do virtual inspections, but it became a necessity, Matlack said. The department does about 20,000 inspections annually and now "probably about 10 percent are virtual. Before, it was zero to a half percent."

In the future, "it's going to be permanent," he said. "It appears to be just as effective." The department is finalizing a virtual inspection program that will be in place indefinitely. Plus, "we have created a new position that has an inspector splitting time between plan review and conducting virtual inspections – we've made our first hire."

To adapt to the changes, the department provided staff training on how to use various platforms. When someone requests an inspection, that individual or the person's contractor can use a phone to virtually walk the inspector around the site.

Virtual inspections result in cost-savings because it takes less time and inspectors don't have to drive to building sites. "It's convenient for homeowners," Matlack said. "It's effective for the customer and for us. There are good things that have come out of this."

Randall D. Fuller, judge of the Domestic Relations Division of the Common Pleas Court of Delaware County, Ohio, acknowledged that when COVID hit, his team successfully "worked to figure out how to do everything remotely." Fuller hears cases involving divorce, custody, visitation and child support.

Courts traditionally are slow moving, he noted, but "we completely changed our operations. Before COVID, you needed a [handwritten] signature in blue ink; now there's e-filing. It's a benefit to all parties. A lot of those things we're going to continue."

But, as COVID wanes, Fuller plans to transition employees back to the work site. "We do unique stuff," he said. "People testify. Trials are preferable in person. You need to be able to see and control the surroundings. When people come to the courthouse, they realize the significance of it. There's the reality of being in the courtroom instead of sitting at home on the couch."

Making the transition back may be almost as tricky as the move to remote work in the first place. "When we decided to come back, we talked about it early and often, so they knew what was coming," Fuller said. "They've had plenty of time to get vaccinated" and to make arrangements for childcare, which has been in short supply in so many places, he noted. "We had to be fair to them to make sure they can prepare."

Betsy Swanson Hollinger plans to take what she learned co-managing a clinic back to her regular job as the learning and organizational development manager in the human resource department of Ventura County, Calif.

When the pandemic began, Hollinger, like many others, began working from home. Then, employees were called in to help as Disaster Service Workers.

"We had been teleworking for almost a year prior to deployment. None of us knew anything about working in a clinic." But employees quickly united to get the community vaccinated, she said. Clinic workers "needed to learn who each of us is, what makes us tick and how can we become a team with such an interdisciplinary group."

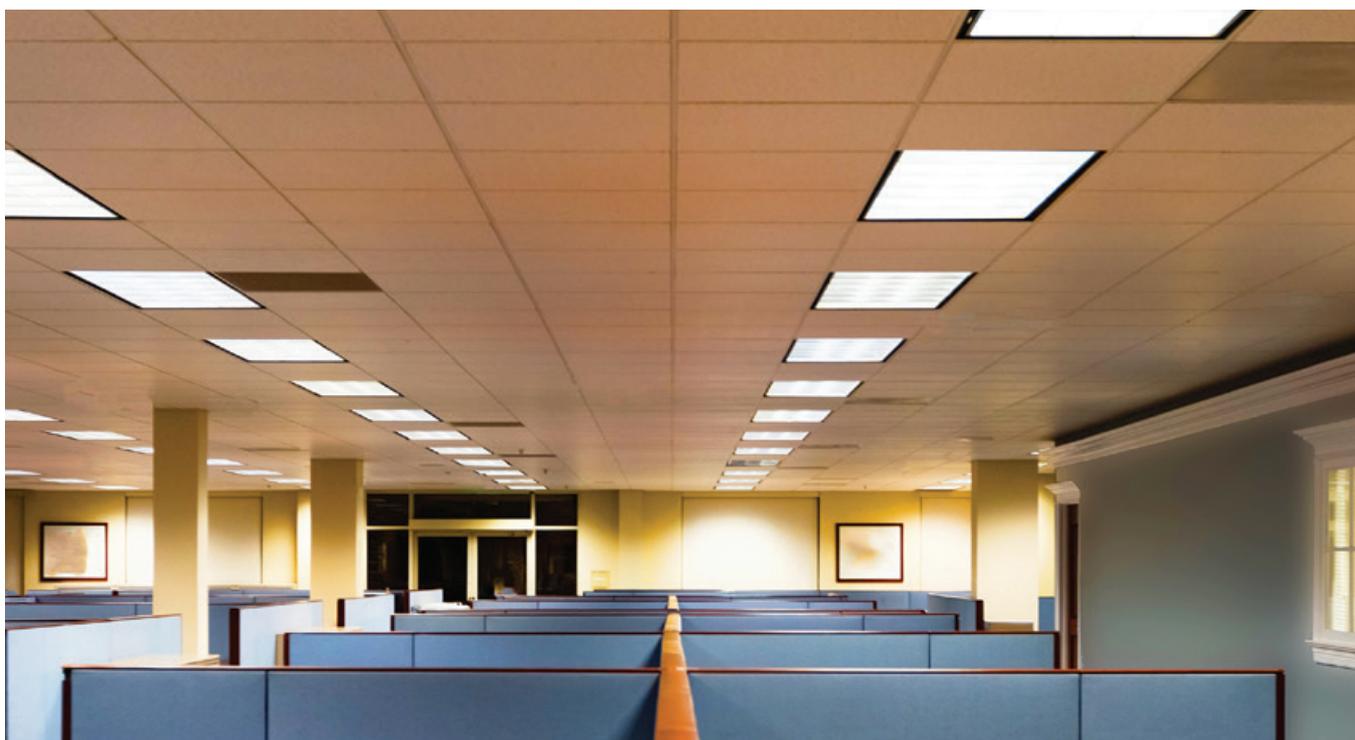
As county employees working as Disaster Service Workers are being released back to their home agencies "there's sadness and grief leaving this job. It was so mission driven. The human spirit needed this," Hollinger added.

The intense experience, she said, has given her a better knowledge of the skills needed for true leadership: Adaptability, flexibility, resilience, emotional intelligence.

"When you are stressed, you need to know your set point, to know how to manage your emotions so you don't infect others, to know how to de-escalate and treat people with compassion," she said. "Treating someone like a business process doesn't work. That's where sometimes we go wrong in leadership"

"I have a litany of stories and examples I'm going to teach leaders." 

Stephenie Overman is a freelance writer who covers employment and health. She has written for Fortune and Forbes, was a senior writer for HR Magazine and editor of Staffing Management Magazine and Executive Talent magazine.



**the HR
DOCTOR**
with Philpot
& Winkeler

Embracing Work-Life Silver Linings After the Pandemic

by **Erika Philpot**
and **Rose Winkeler**

On May 24, 1844, the first public telegraph message was sent from Washington D.C. to Baltimore by Samuel Morse. We can only wonder what he envisioned the possibilities of his invention to be. By October 1861, the first transcontinental telegraph line was completed, signaling the beginning of the end of the Pony Express and ushering in a new era of communication. It was a pivotal moment, and the world would never be the same. Now we find ourselves on the possibilities side of a pivotal and historic moment. The pandemic has forever changed the workplace.

How will we take the lessons learned over the past year and make them bigger, better and more effective? And where do we go from here?

Many employees were thrown into remote work during the pandemic, but a year later, what were the lessons learned? What do we know we can do? And what questions do we ask ourselves to do that even better in the future?

- We know we can adapt to sudden change effectively and use our shared experience as a positive team-building.

- We know we can learn new technology and implement it to positively impact citizens.
- We know we can trust employees to do their best work even if we don't see them every day.
- We know we can embrace family commitments and better work life balance because of the experience navigating work and school closures.
- We know we have employees who will work with incredible dedication in person, public service warriors who have had the opportunity to shine during difficult times.
- We better understand how citizens' needs change and that we can adapt to meet the needs they have today, rather than do the work the way we have always done it.

These lessons feel like reaching the car after a long hike, the satisfaction of a job well done, of something new accomplished, of sweat and dust well earned. The journey wasn't easy, and it is important to pause and celebrate all that we have been through, what we learned, and where silver linings were found.

The pandemic touched everyone: Employees with family members with underlying health conditions, employees working from home while parenting children too young for remote school-



Philpot



Winkeler

ing, employees with older children who were missing out on life milestones or struggling to find motivation outside the classroom, employees who live alone and missed the social connections they made at their workplaces, public health employees worrying about the exposure to their families, the list goes on. And of course, those who lost family members, unable to say goodbye in person and worked through grief without funerals or celebrations of life or the physical comfort of others.

What's coming next?

We have all been through a lot. Employers can help bring some peace of mind as employees likely have questions about what may be coming next.

How will remote work evolve going forward? Which jobs, tasks and job descriptions best lend themselves to remote work? If remote work continues, employers will need to indicate the amount of remote work on job descriptions and include the information on job postings. For existing employees, update job descriptions and use a telecommuting agreement memorialize expectations.

What does telecommuting in the "new normal" look like? What will their hours be? How frequently will they telecommute? Are they expected to come into the office for certain meetings or events? Is there a possibility that they could get called into the office in an emergency?

Will some employees work 100 percent remotely? And can they do so from great distance? How close must remote employees be in case they are needed in person? If you allow employees to work remotely from another state, they may be required to obtain worker's compensation insurance from their own jurisdiction. And HR will need to not only abide by the worker's hometown laws and regulations, but payroll will need to pay state tax.

In one sense, this pandemic has forced us to speed forward in the adoption of technology and the evolution of

service delivery. Unfortunately, it has also reverted us backwards in time as it has resulted in a mass exodus of women from the workplace. According to a CBS article in February of this year, nearly 3 million women left the labor force. Many more news stories reported on the phenomenon, discussing how the pandemic's impact on the availability of childcare, the increased physical and mental workload placed on women, even those with spouses, the disproportionate number of job cuts impacting women and other causes combined to reduce women's involvement in the labor force to that of more than 30 years ago in just one year.

While this is a problem with many causes outside any one employer's control, as you consider how and whether your employees will return to the workplace, this is the opportune time to look at your policies to see how welcoming your workplace is to women. Does your county ensure pay equity? Do you penalize gaps in applicants' resumes that may have been caused by leaving the workforce to raise children? Do you offer paid sick leave and paid parental leave? How flexible are employees' work hours? These are policies for which revision can benefit all employees, but the impact of that revision may be to welcome women back to the workforce by showing that they can be a valued employee and a dedicated caregiver. And these policies can invite men to embrace the family caregiving tasks so often left to women. If these kinds of policies are not just adopted, but also encouraged, then collectively employers can perhaps shift the imbalance in their employees' lives so that the next crisis, whatever it may be, does not have this same impact.

This pivotal moment is about so much more than operational issues. It is about trust, healing, rebuilding and so many other things we may not have even considered yet. We know the telegraph and the technology to follow it forever changed the world. Let's take a moment and acknowledge the historic moment we are presently in, celebrate our resilience, face our challenges and take on the opportunities to come. **■**

Erika Philpot is human resources director for Coconino County, Ariz., and Rose Winkeler is deputy county attorney, for Coconino County.

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..... **ON THE MOVE**

NACo OFFICERS

• President **Gary Moore** and Associate Membership Director **John Losh** participated in the Police Jury Association of Louisiana's Annual Convention May 12-14 in East Baton Rouge Parish, La.

NACo STAFF

• Chief Technology Officer **Rita Reynolds** presented at the Texas Association of Counties Technology Workshops on Evolving to Adapt and Secure - County Technology in a New Administration and a New Norm April 28 and May 6.

• Executive Director **Matt Chase** discussed the American Rescue Plan May 4 with members of the South Dakota Association of County Officials and on May 6 with the Washington State Association of Counties Board of Directors.

• Program Manager **Arabella Pluta-Ehlers** discussed Moving the Needle on Early Childhood Workforce Issues May 7 at the Child Care Services Association.

• Director of Programs and Practices **Ashleigh Holand** participated in San Diego County's Evidence-Based Policy Summit May 11.



Losh



Pluta-Ehlers

GET TO KNOW...

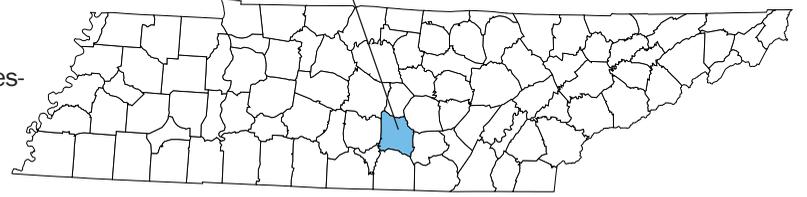
Coffee County, Tenn.

Welcome, Coffee County, Tenn.

Located in central Tennessee, Coffee County was founded in 1836 and named after General John Coffee, a hero in the War of 1812. The county seat is Manchester, named after the industrial city of Manchester in England. Coffee County has a population of around 56,000.

The county has several prehistoric sites, with the most significant being the Old Stone Fort State Archaeological Area where carbon dating dates back to A.D. 30, A.D. 230 and A.D. 430.

There are 12 Century Farms (in operation for more than 100 years) located throughout the county with the oldest dating back to 1818. Popular destinations include



the **Beechcraft Heritage Museum, a "living and working" aviation museum that showcases the history of the Beechcraft brand of airplanes.**

Coffee County has been home to the four-day Bonnaroo

Music and Arts Festival since 2002. The festival is held each year at the Great Stage Park, a 700-acre farm in the county seat of Manchester.

"Get to Know" features new NACo member counties.



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PROFILES IN SERVICE

DAN EGGLESTON

NACo Board Member
Fire Rescue Chief
Albemarle County, Va.



Eggleston

Number of years active in NACo: 10-plus

Years in public service: 41

Occupation: Fire rescue chief

Education: Bachelor's degree in Business and master's degree in Emergency Management

The hardest thing I've ever done: Like many of my colleagues — balance work and personal life.

Three people (living or dead) I'd invite to dinner: Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Jefferson and Eleanor Roosevelt

A dream I have is to: Travel in space.

You'd be surprised to learn: I wanted to be a police officer when I was a child.

The most adventurous thing I've ever done: Hiked in the Australian Outback.

My favorite way to relax is: Create or repair something in my shop.

I'm most proud of: Being part of a team that built a high-performance fire rescue department.

Every morning I read: The local newspaper, *The Daily Progress*.

My favorite meal is: Anything in my backpack after a long hike in the mountains.

My pet peeve is: Avoiding responsibility.

My motto is: Never give up.

The last book I read was: "The Kindness of Strangers: Penniless Across America" by Mike McIntyre

My favorite movie is: "The African Queen"

My favorite music is: '60s rock

My favorite U.S. president: Thomas Jefferson (who else?)

My county is a NACo member because: We are members of NACo because we see the value of sharing best practices, unity in promoting legislation that provides quality of life and the collective wisdom provided by a well-managed and engaged association.

WORD SEARCH

GILLIAM COUNTY, Ore.

Created by: Mary Ann Barton

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

CENTRAL: The county is located in north-central Oregon.

CONDON: The county seat is named for lawyer Harvey C. Condon.

COURTHOUSE: The county courthouse burned down in 1954 and was replaced in 1955.

DINER: If you get a chance to visit, stop by the Condon Diner and try a huckleberry milkshake.

DOC: Doc Severinsen, who led the orchestra on "The Tonight Show," was born in the county.

FOUNDED: The county was founded Feb. 25, 1885.

FOUNTAIN: If you visit Condon, be sure to visit the soda fountain inside the Country Flowers store on Main Street.

GILLIAM: The county was named for Colonel Cornelius Gilliam who died accidentally while commanding the Oregon volunteers during the Cayuse War of 1847.

HISTORIC: Condon's historic downtown is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

LONEROCK: Founded in the 1800s and once a booming pioneer town, Lonerock got its name from a huge rock that sits next to the Methodist Church.

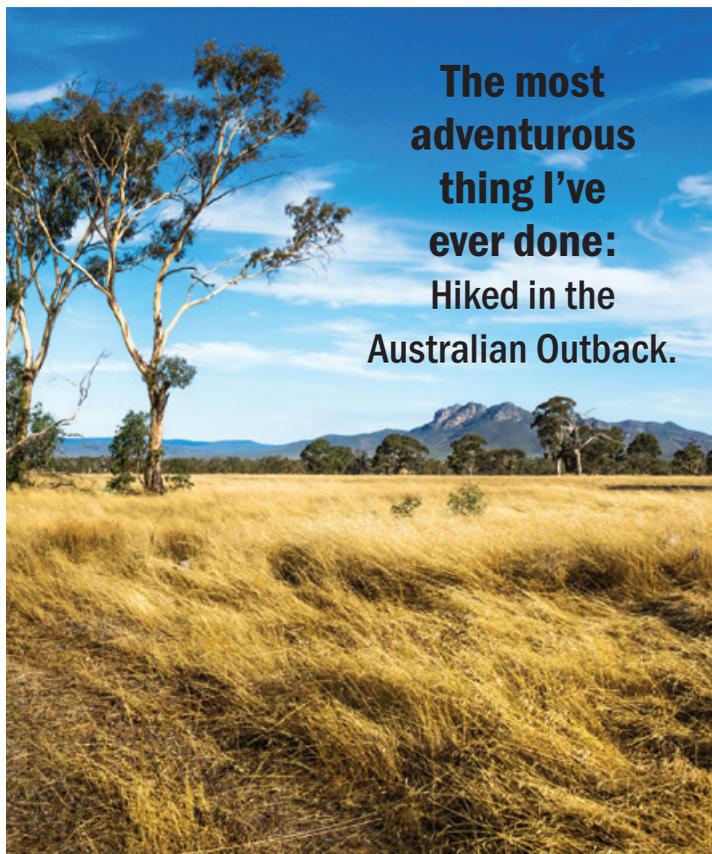
MUSEUM: The Gilliam County Historical Museum complex includes a train depot, caboose, church, barber shop, jail and schoolhouse.

NEWSPAPER: *The Times-Journal*, the local newspaper, was established in 1886.

NOTABLE: The county is the hometown to two governors and two Nobel laureates.

POPULATION: The population is just under 2,000.

STATION: Condon Air Force Station was a radar station near the city that operated from 1951 to 1970.



The most adventurous thing I've ever done: Hiked in the Australian Outback.

COVID-19 RECOVERY CLEARINGHOUSE

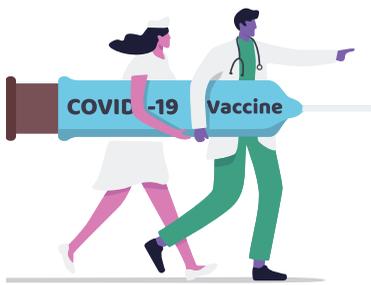
The State and Local Coronavirus Fiscal Recovery Funds legislation, part of the American Rescue Plan Act, provides **\$65.1 billion in direct, flexible aid** to every county in America.

NACo is here to help.

Ask your questions and share your story on how your county is investing these funds at **NACo.org/coronavirus.**



NEWS FROM ACROSS THE NATION



tal health, exercises to reduce stress, relaxing nature tours and short videos of “Moments of Zen.” Other resources include mental health tips from community partners and various county programs and initiatives aimed at helping residents manage stress.

CALIFORNIA

SAN DIEGO COUNTY launched an initiative to allow businesses and community organizations to **host mobile vaccinations** at their place of business. By filling out an online form, organizations interested in hosting a vaccination event at their worksite can request a mobile vaccination team. The goal of the initiative is to increase access to COVID-19 vaccines for employees who face challenges scheduling appointments at other vaccine locations.

FLORIDA

• The Environmental Protection and Growth Management Department in **BROWARD COUNTY** launched an **online resilience dashboard** that displays how investments throughout the county are reducing greenhouse gas emissions and increasing resiliency. The dashboard displays maps and tools used in resilience planning while tracking trends in greenhouse gas emissions and water consumption. It displays county investments in solar projects, electric vehicle charger installations and displays an emissions inventory.

• A new initiative in **HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY** is addressing the mental health challenges that many have experienced throughout the pandemic. Residents can participate in “**Mindful Mondays**” and visit the online Mental Health Resources Hub to access free tools to manage stress in their daily lives. The Mindful Mondays offer virtual health classes focused on men-

• **MIAMI-DADE COUNTY** launched the Miami-Dade Building Efficiency 305 Challenge or BE305 Challenge, to empower local building owners to **reduce energy and water consumption**. Mayor Daniella Levine Cava launched the challenge with the county’s Office of Resilience and other organizations with the goal of reducing energy and water consumption 20 percent by 2026. The challenge helps building owners free up business capital to reduce carbon footprints of buildings in the county.

ILLINOIS

DUPAGE COUNTY re-launched its **interactive Memorial Day** portal to allow residents to share stories and photos to honor fallen heroes. The interactive memorial launched last year to provide residents a way to highlight family members and friends. The website includes quotes, poems and videos with historical information about Memorial Day.



KANSAS

• The **KIOWA COUNTY** library launched **StoryWalk**, a permanent countywide reading adventure that displays pages of a children’s book along a set route in the county. Story pages are posted throughout different locations with each town displaying a different story. New books are displayed each month with discussion questions at the end for children to review after reading.



(L-r) Pasco County Economic Development Council President and CEO Bill Cronin, Experience Florida’s Sports Coast Director Adam Thomas, Rep. Gus Bilirakis and Pasco County Commissioner Mike Moore at the Team Up! For a Stronger Economy celebration.

FLORIDA

• The **PASCO COUNTY** Economic Development Council and the county’s destination management operation held a joint awards celebration dubbed **Team Up! For a Stronger Economy**. Pasco County Commissioner Mike Moore, who serves as chairman of the Pasco Tourist Development Council, presented the Chairman’s Choice Award to Rep. Gus Bilirakis for his support of the county’s tourism industry.

• Kansas counties will receive \$8.5 million to **improve rural roads** through the Kansas High-Risk Rural Roads Program, Gov. Laura Kelly announced. Sixteen counties received the \$8.5 million through the state and local partnership that aims to improve the safety on off-system rural roads. The Kansas Department of Transportation was able to distribute twice the amount of funds for the program after COVID relief funds and Highway Infrastructure Program funds became available earlier this year, WIBW-TV reported.

MARYLAND

• The Department of Public Works in **ANNE ARUNDEL COUNTY** launched the Our wAAtter Program to encourage

residents living near the Chesapeake Bay to learn more about the **county’s sewer system**. The program helps to reduce the costs of converting private septic tanks to the county sewer system. The switch would improve water quality for residents and allow the county to better control the pollutants affecting the bay.

MICHIGAN

The Board of Commissioners in **OAKLAND COUNTY** launched the **Native Plant Initiative** to provide residents the chance to grow plants native to the county. During an inaugural curbside plant distribution event last fall, the county distributed more than 90 plant bundles. The county’s Parks and Recreation Department



MAINE

Commissioners in **OXFORD COUNTY** received a heartfelt surprise during a recent meeting when county department heads and employees surprised commissioners to **thank them for their leadership** during the pandemic. County employees expressed gratitude for the emergency policies the commissioners enacted to ensure employees stayed safe while continuing to serve the public and for fostering a team atmosphere throughout COVID-19. Employees distributed plaques to the commissioners and presented a sign with thank-you messages.

is helping administer the program and hold events to distribute the kits.

NEW YORK

• A \$450,000 block grant from the Department of Housing and Urban Development will fund **NASSAU COUNTY**'s study of the COVID-19 pandemic's **disparate effects on minority communities**. The study will focus on what residents experienced when trying to access coronavirus testing and vaccination appointments, based on results from surveys of residents generally and nine communities with large minority populations.

• **WESTCHESTER COUNTY** Executive George Latimer and **SUFFOLK COUNTY** Executive Steve Bellone signed dual executive orders directing their counties to develop plans within 90 days to **convert their vehicle fleets to electric** by 2030.

OHIO

CUYAHOGA COUNTY has opened a **diversion center**, which is staffed with professionals to treat those suffering from addiction or mental health problems whose actions prompted a call to police. The facility can house 50 people.

PENNSYLVANIA



• After nearly 40 years, **CARBON COUNTY** has **sold 19.5 miles of the Reading Blue Mountain and Northern Railroad**. The county has reinvested all proceeds from the railroad back into the operation, and gleaned scant revenue from its parking lot. The railroad posed some liabilities, *The Times News* reported, and the Board felt it would be better served by someone in the railroad field.

• Dissatisfied with the state's response to the pandemic, seven Western Pennsylvania counties are meeting to explore



MARYLAND

• The Challenger Little League season kicked off in **WICOMICO COUNTY** at Field 7 1/2 designed to provide individuals with **physical or mental disabilities the chance to play baseball**. Earlier in the week, an inclusive playground and sensory trail opened at the complex as part of Project 7 1/2. Challenge Little League players paraded to the field before playing two games with their buddies who assist the players during the games.

forming a **regional health department**. The entity would include **BEAVER, BUTLER, LAWRENCE, GREENE, FAYETTE, WASHINGTON** and **WESTMORELAND** counties, *The Post-Gazette* reported.

SOUTH CAROLINA

Gov. Henry McMaster (R) issued an executive order May 11 that forbids counties and other local governments from relying on earlier public health orders or using a state of emergency to **require masks** in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

TEXAS

The **HARRIS COUNTY** Commissioners Court passed a resolution calling for **George Floyd to be posthumously pardoned** for a 2004 drug charge. Houston Public Media reported that more than 160 drug convictions tied to the arresting officer, who is facing two counts of felony murder, have since been dismissed by prosecutors. The Texas Board of Pardons and Paroles and Gov. Greg Abbott (R) will make the next determinations on the request.

WASHINGTON

Picking up a trend that started in 2020, **KING COUNTY** has announced plans to buy

enough hotels by the end of 2022 to **house 1,600 homeless people**. *The Seattle Times* reported that advocates have been asking elected leaders to pivot away from the traditional overnight shelter model.

WISCONSIN

DANE COUNTY cleared nearly \$150,000 in debt for

those who are currently or were formerly incarcerated in the county jail.

The Board cited the financial difficulties created by the pandemic when making the decision to **forgive outstanding fees and fines** associated with expenses such as a work-release program, medical copays, electronic monitoring and

when an inmate is charged for using phone minutes of another inmate, the *Wisconsin State Journal* reported.

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



VIRGINIA

When the **ARLINGTON COUNTY** police department pledged to protect and serve, the ambiguous object of that motto allowed officers to include wildlife. While traveling on I-66, a detective came upon a **family of geese** walking in the lane of travel. He activated his emergency lights and helped escort two adults and five babies down the ramp, where they exited the roadway.

BRIGHT IDEAS | LACKAWANNA COUNTY, Pa.

Farmers Markets Boost Nutrition for Seniors

PROBLEM:

Seniors facing many health challenges have less access to healthy food.

SOLUTION:

Create social events to increase senior participation at voucher distributions for the USDA's Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program.

by **Rachel Looker**
staff writer

In Lackawanna County, Pa., the concept of standing in line has been turned into a community-wide, social event for seniors looking to eat healthy and form connections within the community.

The Lackawanna County Food Policy Council, a task force formed to address food insecurity issues, launched the Healthy Aging Produce Initiative or Eat HAPI Initiative, to increase senior participation in the Department of Agriculture's Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program.

The USDA program provides low-income seniors with access to locally grown foods by providing vouchers that can be used to purchase produce at local farmers' markets. In Lackawanna County, seniors previously obtained vouchers at senior centers or at a small number of farmers' markets that had no additional programming.

The Eat HAPI Initiative created senior farmers markets that specifically increased access to healthy food for seniors, increased the redemption rate of farmers' market vouchers and created opportunities for socialization and recreation in the county.

"We needed to change how we did it and we wanted to see what we could do in terms of making this a much wider approach and it wasn't just a handout," said Jason Kavulich, director of the Area Agency on Aging.

Kavulich connected with

partners which led to a few larger voucher distributions in strategic locations throughout the county.

The senior farmers markets featured music, food demonstrations, health providers doing blood pressure checks and other health-related stands where seniors could stop while waiting in line for their voucher.

"We lost that 'bread-line look' and then we kept going with it," he said.

At each event, local farmers had stands selling produce to allow seniors to use their vouchers the same day. A local career technology center donated wooden produce stalls for the senior farmers markets for regional farmers to set up the stands.

Kavulich said the farmers made specific packages of different types of produce that matched the value of the vouchers.

"Instead of getting \$5 worth of tomatoes or instead of getting \$5 worth of cucumbers, you can get a variety for your \$5 and have it all mixed up," he said.

With seniors often facing mobility issues that make it hard to prepare meals, the events included chopping stations to make the produce easier to cook with and cooking demonstrations to teach seniors easy meals they could make at home.

Local musicians provided music and a yoga instructor offered free yoga as ways to engage with seniors at the markets.

"People really enjoyed it," Kavulich. "It wasn't just simply standing in line waiting for your voucher."

The Agency on Aging partnered with the Lackawanna County Arts and Culture Department to help plan the events.

Lackawanna County Deputy Director of Arts and Culture Maureen McGuigan said the departments created these social events to tie arts, culture and education into the distri-



Local musicians play music at the South Side Farmers' Market as part of Lackawanna County's Eat HAPI Initiative. Photo courtesy Jim Cullen

butions.

"I'm really interested in art becoming part of systems in a good way — that it's not something separate but can be incorporated," she said.

In addition to providing access to healthy foods, McGuigan said the events focused on connecting people to the community.

"It's helping people have knowledge to know how to eat better and to also prepare foods, but then expanding that vision into you're part of a community and you can enjoy music and you can connect with others," she said.

The events proved successful. Lackawanna County had the second highest farmer market voucher redemption rate in the state at 90.3 percent. According to Kavulich, the voucher program also puts about \$100,000 into the local economy and into regional farmers' hands.

"We said every year we're going to continue to evolve our program," he said. "We're going to continue to add to it, make it educational, make it about nu-



Volunteers chop fresh produce for seniors to take home as part of Lackawanna County's Eat HAPI Initiative. Photo courtesy The Greenhouse Project

trition, make it about how to access it and then also engage with local farmers."

While COVID-19 put the Eat HAPI initiative on pause, Kavulich said this year they are holding similar Fridays in the Park events where they will be distributing vouchers in conjunction with other programming.

"The initiative just blos-

somed out of community partnerships, a willingness to continue to serve our community better and not just settling for what we've done year after year," Kavulich said. 

Lackawanna County's Eat HAPI Initiative is the recipient of a 2020 NACo Achievement Award in the Human Services category.