

FLOOD DAMAGE CUTS
OFF COUNTIES FROM
YELLOWSTONE. **PG. 5**



NEW HIGH-SPEED RAIL
DELIVERING JOBS TO
COUNTIES. **PG. 6**



KIDS CAN CHECK OUT
EDUCATIONAL TOYS AT
COUNTY LIBRARY. **PG. 9**



HAPPY 4TH OF JULY!

Residents and visitors enjoy fireworks in Madison County, Ind. Across the country, counties were set to host firework displays, picnics, baseball games, family reunions, parades and other events to celebrate the holiday, the country's 246th Independence Day.

Photo courtesy of Madison County

LUCC leaders stress ARPA flexibility during Hill visit

by **Charlie Ban**
senior writer

Mark Poloncarz would rather people were talking about Buffalo, N.Y. because the Bills had won the last Super Bowl, or the Sabres hockey team breaking their playoff drought. Instead, the news over the last month and a half has focused on the murder of 10 Black resi-

dents at a grocery store.

Erie County's response, both immediate and over the long term, has been fueled by the American Rescue Plan Act and driven by a wide latitude in how local governments could spend the \$65.1 billion in direct funding as they eyed a way out of the COVID-19 pandemic and the

See ARPA page 3

Home visits buoy expecting, new parents in Madison County, N.Y.

by **Charlie Ban**
senior writer

Even children who grow up to be rigid rule followers have their rebellious phases, and often, that's when they're in the womb. But that's OK.

Madison County, N.Y.'s health department offers plenty of reassurance, particularly when public health nurse Molly Limbert shows up as the bearer of good news. Her regular home visits before and after birth help expectant and new mothers

feel at ease and armed with information in hopes of starting their newest residents off on a healthy course.

"The manual doesn't always fit, so that's what I'm here to

See BABIES page 2

\$2.4 billion available to fix bridges

by **Jessica Jennings**

The U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT) has opened a funding opportunity for \$2.36 billion for FY 2022 through the competitive Bridge Investment Program (BIP).

"With resources from President Biden's Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, we're thrilled to begin accepting applications for one of the most significant investments in our bridges in decades, fixing everything from

America's most economically significant bridges to smaller bridges that mean everything to a local community," U.S. Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg said. "When these bridges are repaired, the American people will benefit from greater safety, lower shipping costs for consumers and maintenance costs for drivers, faster movement of goods across our supply chains, fuel savings, and precious time being returned to their day."

The overall program will provide \$12.5 billion over the next five years to reduce the number of the nation's bridges in poor condition or in fair condition but at risk of falling into poor condition within the next three years. NACo worked tirelessly to ensure this additional funding, which can be accessed directly by counties, was included in the final package.

Counties are eligible to apply

See BRIDGES page 4

County’s public health nurse tells new parents what books can’t

From BABIES page 1

help with,” she said. “I’m there as little as possible, but as much as I’m needed.”

Limbert’s patients come referred by doctors, hospitals, community health agencies or expectant parents themselves. She shows up once a month during a pregnancy, then once a week after birth, up to two months for most newborns. Some circumstances warrant an extension of up to a year. Almost 11 percent of Madison County residents live below the federal poverty line.

“It’s for families who need a little extra support,” Limbert said. “We tailor what we offer to a family’s needs.”

That may be as a lactation consultant, teaching parents how to approach potential ill-

nesses, sleep training or what to anticipate in a baby’s development. Generally, Limbert hopes to be there to answer the questions that books don’t always cover and to serve as a live resource for families. Visits can take place in the home or any location where the family feels comfortable.

After the birth, her visits take on an added emphasis on maternal health, with screenings for postpartum depression, and Limbert is able to assess the situation to possibly refer families for additional services. She’s also a resource for new mothers who might not have someone to help them navigate the new world they’ve entered.

Right now, the most pressing need is baby formula, and Limbert has been compiling a list of stores mothers can call during



the shortage. Some mothers, like one Limbert had visited recently, needed specific formula.

“We’re hoping we’re over the peak of this,” she said. “Any time you can’t feed your child, no matter how old they are, it’s a major concern.”

While not the culmination of the county’s programming, the Community Health Services program holds a community baby shower for mothers who haven’t given birth yet and continues on the theme of going beyond the new baby books to offer dynamic support for new parents. It’s a collaboration among the county’s Healthy Families program, the local hospital and doctors’ offices, all of which sponsor gift bags for mothers and babies and gift

baskets that are raffled off.

The shower combines education with a healthy dose of humor, hands-on work using car seats and a luncheon.

“We want to make it light-hearted, because you learn best when you have fun,” Limbert said, noting that keeping new mothers relaxed helps lift their spirits. “This isn’t supposed to be a dry subject, it’s a new baby.”

“These [baby showers] are exhausting because I give it my all.”

Director of Community Health Services Rebecca LaPorte said that shows, because all of the feedback for the community baby showers rate them as “excellent” and “extremely helpful.”

Federal assistance on infant formula

In addition to the Operation Fly Formula, delivery of 13 million 8-ounce bottles of formula, the Department of Health and Human Services has offered new informational resources to help cope with the shortage.

- A landing page at www.hhs.gov/formula/index.html provides information and answers in multiple languages to common questions for families on where to find formula and tips for finding safe substitutes.
- A baby formula shortage social media toolkit at www.hhs.gov/formula/social-media-toolkit/index.html provides resources available for families who need formula with sample social media posts. **CN**

County leaders and agencies can spread the word to residents affected by the shortage by sharing social media messages and graphics from the toolkit, which is available in multiple languages.

SNAP/STATS

happy 4th of July

HERE’S HOW AMERICANS CELEBRATE

ITEM	BY THE NUMBERS
NO. OF HOT DOGS EATEN:	150 MILLION
BEER AND WINE PURCHASED:	\$1.4 BILLION
FIREWORKS PURCHASED:	\$1.5 BILLION
TRAVELING MORE THAN 50 MILES:	48 MILLION
NO. WATCHING FIREWORKS:	33 PERCENT

Source: WalletHub



The Madison County, N.Y. Health Department celebrates new mothers with an informational community baby shower and educational sessions with health practitioners. Photo by Chrystal Johnson

Poloncarz: ARPA gives counties the resources to ask ‘What else do you need?’

From ARPA page 1

turmoil that it sparked, particularly lost tax revenue.

“The city of Buffalo was facing a very large budget deficit and they were looking at layoffs associated with all of their workforce, including police,” the Erie County executive said at a June 23 Capitol Hill briefing by members of NACo’s Large Urban County Caucus.

“Erie County was facing difficult times until the American Rescue plan was provided and gave us the assistance to be able to stop that revenue loss that we were seeing,” Poloncarz said.

On the afternoon of May 14? “It was the Buffalo PD who responded immediately and were able to take him [shooting suspect] safely without any further harm,” Poloncarz said.

The next morning, Erie County had mental health care providers in the neighborhood and a plan to combat food insecurity in place for the residents of two ZIP codes, who had just lost their only local source of fresh food.

“The nice thing about the American Rescue Plan is yes, we invest in water projects, we invest in sewer projects, we have a big broadband project that’s going on, we put millions of dollars in COVID response, but it also gives us the power to say ‘What else do you need?’ That’s why it’s so important that we can then do that,” Poloncarz said, noting that the county canvassed the neighborhood to determine local needs.

“We would not have been able to do that without the ARP, because each of our communities would have been facing serious shortfalls as we prepared our budgets for 2022. We look back now and think about the services that we were able to provide and know that without the American Rescue Plan, maybe Buffalo may not be able to respond as quickly so that this individual didn’t kill more people because they likely would have laid off police officers.”

Those services Erie County provided to the residents of the affected neighborhoods came from the county’s office



Erie County, N.Y. Executive Mark Poloncarz speaks during a June 23 Capitol Hill briefing in Washington, D.C. Photo by Chris Wathen

of health equity, formed well before the shooting, which was able to start deploying resources soon after the scene was secure.

“Sometimes investments you make as a result of the American Rescue Plan blossom in ways you never thought they were going to or even ways you never assume,” Poloncarz said.

The Treasury Department final rule on the American Rescue Plan allowed counties to use up to \$10 million to replace lost tax revenue in the wake of the pandemic’s wide-ranging economic disruption, without needing to use the Treasury’s revenue loss formula. It also broadened eligible uses of the money to allow for water infrastructure projects and broadband investments and minimized the administrative burden in offering services and support to populations that were presumed disproportionately impacted by the pandemic.

One population was the unhoused, when congregate shelters became a tinderbox of COVID-19 transmission. Counties were quick to pair the people who needed a place to stay with places that saw a sud-

den lack of travelers — motels. With self-contained environmental systems and laundry facilities, motels made a good substitute for shelters, even an improvement, giving families more privacy than they had before.

Once the COVID threat started to recede and the ARPA spending rules were fleshed out, Hennepin County, Minn. saw its opening.

“We didn’t have any idea how long COVID was going to last,” said Commissioner Angela Conley. “We did know that we could use this infrastructure later.”

The county has integrated many of its human services departments with its shelter system.

“Homelessness disproportionately impacts our Native American relatives and so we really invested in those culturally-specific shelter spaces with wrap-around services, because there is a housing continuum and we are going to need to make sure that homelessness is rare, brief and non-recurring,” she said.

“What we’ve learned is that if supports are embedded on-site with emergency housing, sup-

ports like treatment, employment search, career readiness, medical care, case management; that by the time someone is ready to obtain permanent housing, that permanent housing is successful, thus making homelessness non-recurring,” she noted.

Hennepin County has spent nearly \$12 million of its \$114 million on homelessness, and the county has committed \$91 million to build housing aimed at residents earning 30 percent of the area median income. The county “leads the nation for worst places for Black and indigenous and other communities of color to access housing and is one of the worst places to buy a home for people of color in the country,” Conley said. “We’re actively closing that gap.”

“We didn’t just have a problem during the pandemic, we had a problem with housing and stability and affordability pre-pandemic,” she said. “That was only exacerbated by the pandemic, so we’re utilizing these dollars to do things we could only dream about without them. It was truly unprecedented.”

For Baltimore County, Md.

Executive Johnny Olszewski, the American Rescue Plan has been “truly transformative,” and a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity.

“This work allows us to aspire to where we’ve always wanted to be as a local government and as folks who are trying to serve our residents,” he said.

Olszewski sees the looming shortage of healthcare workers in his region, and has started partnering his county’s community college with local health care providers to craft training programs that will help combat that shortage.

“We’re taking care of things like childcare on site,” he said. “We’re paying for transportation to make sure people can get on-site. If need be, we’ll pay people to go to school. We know that the return on investment there will be significant because not only are we working on a partnership where they will have a guaranteed job on the back end of that partnership with one of our hospital systems, but we’re also finding ways to both take people off the public assistance roll and also see them spend more on

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Applications open for bridge funding from Dept. of Transportation

From BRIDGES page 1

for BIP funding directly through USDOT, as well as to bundle bridge projects into one application. In all, \$20 million is reserved for the planning application category outlined below. In total, the Notice of Funding Opportunity is soliciting applications for three different funding categories:

- Planning: For projects requiring technical assistance to become eligible for BIP capital construction funds; applications due July 25, 2022

- Large bridge projects: For projects with eligible costs over \$100 million; applications due August 9, 2022

- Bridge projects: For projects with eligible costs less than \$100 million; applications due September 8, 2022

Funds will be awarded on a competitive basis to projects that replace, rehabilitate, preserve and protect bridges on the National Bridge Inventory by improving the safe and efficient movement of people and goods over bridges or by im-

proving the condition of bridges in poor and at-risk conditions.

Key highlights for counties include:

- 80 percent federal cost share for projects, with the exception of off-system bridge projects which are eligible for 90 percent


- Multi-year funding agreements are available for large bridge projects

- 50 percent of funds are set-aside for large bridge projects (\$903 million in FY 2022)

- No more than 5 percent of funding can be awarded to projects solely replacing or rehabilitating culverts

- All BIP funds must be obligated by FY 2025; certain funds must also be expended by FY 2030

Counties own four out of every 10 bridges on the National Bridge Inventory list and are the majority owners of off-system bridges, which make up nearly half of the nation's entire bridge inventory. Collectively across the country, counties own more roads and bridges than any other level of government and play a major role in ensuring the

connectedness of the national transportation network. 

To learn more about the BIP and other BIL federal funding

opportunities for county infrastructure, view NACo's implementation and funding matrix page: [https://www.naco.org/resources/implementing-infra-](https://www.naco.org/resources/implementing-infra-structure-investments-county-level)

structure-investments-county-level. Jessica Jennings is legislative director, Transportation, in NACo's Government Affairs Department.

Season 2 coming soon!

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SEND US YOUR MASTERPIECE.

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

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

For more information, visit: naco.org/art

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Flood damage cuts off Montana counties from Yellowstone



Damage to U.S. 89 in southern Park County, Mont. cut the town of Gardiner off from Yellowstone Park. Photo by Doug Kraus/National Park Service

by **Charlie Ban**
senior writer

It was a lean two years in Gardiner, Mont. As the COVID-19 pandemic depressed two summers' worth of visitors to Yellowstone National Park, businesses in the 900-person Park County town bided their time and looked ahead to the fated "normal summer" when they could serve tourists again.

In the decade before the pandemic, most summer months saw 60,000 cars travel through the North Gate.

This June, before most of the throngs could come through town, 5 inches of rain melted another 4 inches of Montana snow into the Yellowstone River, which washed out the road in the canyon south of town, cutting off access to the park's northern loop.

As the National Park Service assessed damage to the park, all five entrances were closed June 13, right as the summer travel season was starting to hit

full capacity at the end of the school year.

"A lot of businesses have already done things like buy an entire summer's worth of food, so it's all in refrigeration and freezers," said Park County Commissioner Steve Caldwell. "They already have reservations lined up. It looked like it was going to be a pretty good summer, and people were hoping for a big season."

A week later, the south loop reopened, and while road and bridge repairs will be necessary for the north loop to reopen, the prognosis has improved to include possible reopening this year, before the seasonal closure in November.

"They are going to open roads much quicker than they had anticipated," Caldwell said. "We've been getting good news from the superintendent."

But that good news likely won't apply to U.S. 89, which connects Gardiner to the park. Instability in the canyon is making prospects for rebuild-

ATTEMPTED STOLEN VALOR

To the west, U.S. 191 takes visitors south from Bozeman to the West gate through Gallatin County, Mont. Gallatin County residents reported receiving text messages marketing some generic-looking "Gallatin County 9-1-1" T-shirts.

County communications coordinator Whitney Bermes received the message and thought it was targeted spam because she worked for the county.

A few minutes later, she got a call from a television news reporter asking about it and she realized how widespread the messages were. The county's emergency services department responded on Facebook that the marketing effort was a scam and

not affiliated with the county: "We pride ourselves in serving our county residents and visitors with life-saving services. We do not sell t-shirts."

Bermes said it wasn't clear if the county had any legal recourse to address the fraud.

"We figured it was someone being opportunistic with what was going on in our general part of the state," she said.

Have you seen similar advertisements for counterfeit or unauthorized merchandise bearing the name of county parks, services or departments? Contact Charlie Ban at cban@naco.org.

ing shaky, Caldwell said, and the park is considering abandoning that route in favor of improving a gravel stagecoach road with climbs that currently measure 12 percent. Substantial paving and grading work will be required to make it passable. That temporary solution will have to suffice while the Park Service figures out a permanent option.

Throughout the 2010s, summer months regularly saw more than 60,000 cars pass through the North Gate every month from June to September.

"Gardiner is still going to have a serious hiccup, but at least it will be a hiccup and not a prolonged bout of isolation," Caldwell said.

Park County Health Officer

Laurel Desnick estimated 30 percent of the county's economy was focused on hospitality services.

"Everything will be normal other than we're not an entrance to Yellowstone Park," she said, noting that the investments and infrastructure to support that tourism could be

See FLOOD page 6

High-speed rail delivers jobs to counties

by **Stephenie Overman**
freelance writer

California’s high-speed rail line isn’t anywhere near completion, but it’s already bringing benefits to some of the state’s Central Valley counties.

For key economic indicators — per capita income, unemployment and poverty rates — “valley counties have persistently performed poorly compared to state averages,” according to the Center for Continuing Study of the California Economy.

The publicly funded California High-Speed Rail Authority can help bridge that gap, according to rail authority CEO Brian Kelly.

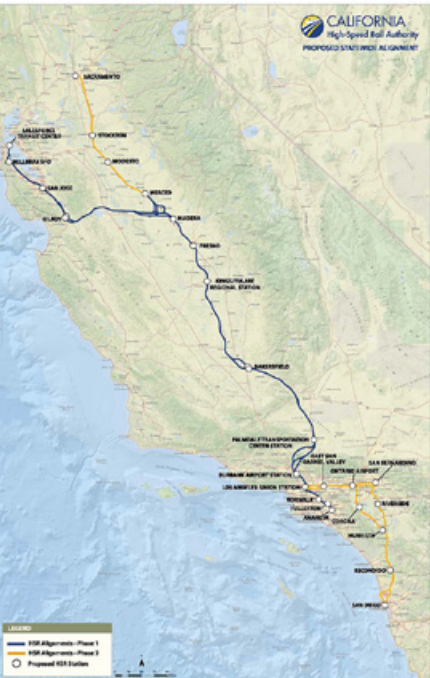
Kelly told a recent American Public Transportation Association conference that the first segment of the rail project — in Madera, Fresno, Kings, Tulare and Kern counties — means “huge economic development in one of the most disadvantaged areas” of the United

States.

The project officially broke ground in Fresno in January 2015 and construction is currently taking place within 119 miles in the Central Valley. The Merced to Fresno project section is part of the first phase of the system, a 65-mile electrified, two-track initial operating segment connecting the communities of Merced, Madera and Fresno.

So far, “close to 8,000 construction jobs have been created,” with the help of the State Building and Construction Trades Council, the Fresno Regional Workforce Development Board and other groups, according to Augie Blancas, a public information officer for the authority.

Blancas noted that the high-speed rail authority and its design-builders are implementing the Target Workers Program, which requiring 30 percent of all project work hours be performed by individuals from disadvantaged



communities (such as the Central Valley) where household income ranges from \$32,000 to \$40,000.

Training workers is a key part of the project, according to Blancas.

The authority has partnered with the City of Selma, in Fresno County, to create a workforce development cen-

ter training for Central Valley residents. The center is aimed at serving veterans, at-risk young adults, minority and low-income populations.

“There’s customized classroom instruction and hands-on training,” that helps students prepare for careers in more than 10 construction-industry trades, Blancas said. “There are more than a dozen certifications that will help them move forward in fields of their choice. The certifications make them more employable. They learn about trades, then have something like an apprenticeship. Then they look forward to being part of a local union.”

So far, he added, the program “has had more than 70 graduates.”

When the high-speed rail system goes into operation it

will add a host of other job possibilities, including operation planners, station managers and workers, train operators and dispatchers, system security, maintenance engineers.

The high-speed rail authority also touts its fully electric technology as a way to improve air quality in highly polluted areas such as the Central Valley.

When finished — estimated dates for completion range from 2023 to beyond 2030 — the high-speed rail system will run from San Francisco to the Los Angeles basin in less than three hours at speeds of more than 200 miles per hour. The system will eventually extend to Sacramento and to San Diego, totaling 800 miles.

The goal is an integrated statewide network of high-speed rail, intercity and regional services and integrated express buses. **CN**

Stephenie Overman is a frequent contributor to County News.

‘We’re in the beginning stages of what could be a decades-long process’

From **FLOOD** page 5

redirected in Park County.

“There are many other activities that have probably been passed over because everyone was so focused on the park. It’s just a big shift.”

Park County is also home to the Northeast Gate, which passes through more tourist towns — Cooke City and Silver Gate on U.S. 212, known as Beartooth Highway.

Floods washed out four county bridges near Cooke City, though Caldwell noted three were scheduled for replacement in the fall.

Caldwell said businesses have sought assistance from the Montana Department of Commerce and FEMA to possibly be compensated for individual damages, though the agency was not set up for that kind of assistance.

Desnick said that several concessionaires had received inquiries about moving to work near the South Gate in Teton County, Wyo., and reported wages of \$25 an hour. But there

was a catch.

“When people asked about a place to live in Jackson...that ended up being the problem,” she said.

“There’s a labor shortage, just like everywhere else, but there’s also a housing shortage.”

Plainly put, a lot of people settled and built businesses to serve the flow of tourists and that flow has been endangered.

“They are small towns, so for the majority of people, they’ll move on, and come to Yellowstone some other time,” Desnick said.

“For the families who live in Gardiner and Cooke City, it’s devastating.”

Up the road, the Beartooth Highway moves into Carbon County to the east, and the town of Red Lodge.

Like Gardiner and Cooke City, it’s lost its claim to fame as a gateway town, but in addition to losing what is roughly a 90-day peak tourism period, Commissioner Bill Bullock said damage to the county’s irrigation system is also imperiling



Yellowstone Superintendent Cam Sholly and Facilities Chief Duane Bubac look at damage in Gardner River Canyon in Park County, Mont. Photo by Doug Kraus/National Park Service

its short agricultural season.

“The timing of this couldn’t be worse,” he said.

“The irrigation system, countywide, is annihilated. The monumental size and scope of this can’t be overstated.”

Many farmers can’t reach their headgates to turn their water on, and Bullock said every major drainage has been affected.

“We’re in the beginning stages of what could be a decades-long process. It’s not going to be overnight, it’s not going to be next week, it’s

not going to be by the end of the summer,” he said. “This is something we’re married to a very, very long time.”

“We had a fire last year, we had a flood this year, all of these things add up and start to give Carbon County a negative connotation.”

The bright spot, he said, has been the efficient restoration of basic services and the attention the county has received, including a visit from FEMA Administrator Deanne Criswell.

On the transportation end, the county’s strong partner-

ships with the state and federal government and local contractors has helped expedite work to the point where most residents can return to their homes, and the county itself, which only had one road to the outside world, now has three.

“The work to get our transportation system back up on the county end has been monumental, it’s rapidly approaching the point where it’s functional,” he said.

“It’s not going to be perfect, it’s probably not going to be paved, but that’s the goal.” **CN**

LUCC visits Capitol Hill

From ARPA page 3

sales tax when they buy their first house and pay property taxes and local income taxes.”

LUCC Chairman John O’Grady, a Franklin County, Ohio commissioner, stressed the value of the partnership that led to Congress and the Treasury Department crafting ARPA and its execution. Earlier in the day, the quartet of LUCC officials met with White House Intergovernmental Affairs Director Julie Chavez Rodriguez and White House Senior Advisor Gene Sperling.

“You know, it’s the partnership between the counties and the federal government, the states and the cities that drives our government system and enables the most effective responses,” he said. “We just want to make sure that there’s a constant line of communication ... because you know, we’re getting the work done, people are being impacted, the residents of our counties are being impacted every day and this is going to be a really positive experience.

“A lot of counties couldn’t have made it through if it wasn’t for these dollars.”

Sen. Ben Cardin (D-Md.) shared his perspective on ARPA’s negotiations in the winter of 2021.

“It was controversial at the time, but we recognized that if you didn’t get the help from the federal government, you would not be able to maintain your essential services,” he said. “You couldn’t impose new taxes, you had to be able to provide the services that people expected, whether they’re public health services, whether they were first-responder-type services, whether it’s sanitation.”

“We also recognized that for the sake of our economy, we went through one of the worst periods with the global pandemic closing our economy,” he noted. “If we were going to keep our economy moving, we had to make sure the engines of our economy could operate... counties are critically important to that strategy.” **CN**

GET TO KNOW... Kalamazoo County, Mich.

Welcome Kalamazoo County, Mich.!

Located in southwest Michigan, Kalamazoo County is home to more than 261,000 residents and was organized in 1830. Its county seat is Kalamazoo and was originally named Bronson. The county name is from a Native American word Kikalamazoo, meaning “reflecting river.” The 130-mile Kalamazoo River flows through the county and ends at Lake Michigan.

The county is home to major international pharmaceutical and life science corporations including Pfizer, Stryker, Upjohn and RealBio Technology.

The county was once considered the Celery Capital of the World in the early part of the last century when celery “fresh as dew from Kalamazoo” was shipped throughout the United States. By the mid-20th century, pests and disease, not to mention California growers, deflated the industry although the state still ranks second in the nation as the top U.S. celery producer.

Kalamazoo County has several interesting ties to music. The song “I’ve Got a Gal in Kalamazoo,” was the #1 hit in 1942 by the Glenn Miller Orchestra and was nominated for an Academy Award. Inventor Orville Gibson started creating musical instruments in Kalamazoo County in 1894



and founded the Gibson Guitar Corp. in 1902.

“Get to Know” features new NACo member counties.



PROFILES IN SERVICE

TONY GUILLORY

NACo Board Member
Calcasieu Parish, La.
Police Juror

Number of years active in NACo: 10

Years in public service: 15

Occupation: State Farm agent

The hardest thing I’ve ever done: See my father pass. He and I talked every day and he’s the reason I am where I am today. He always wanted to help people. I’m proud of him and my mother because they always helped people and encouraged me to get into public service. My dad always told me: “Don’t be in office just to be in office. Make a change.”

People (living or dead) I’d invite to dinner: My father, Presidents Clinton and Obama and Gov. John Bel Edwards

A dream I have is to: I would love to see all the violence and killing stop.

The most adventurous thing I’ve ever done: Travel with my friend Jerry Red, as



Guillory

we go state-to-state for NACo events.

I’m most proud of: Working hard to help people.

My favorite meal: Surf ‘n turf from Villa Harlequin in Lake Charles.

My motto is: “I’m someone you know and someone you can talk to.”

My favorite movie: I don’t have a favorite, but I love action movies.

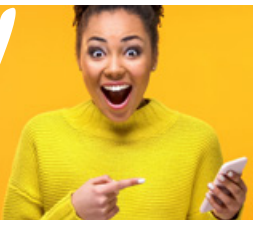
My favorite U.S. president is: Bill Clinton and Barack Obama

My parish is a NACo member because: NACo gives us all updates from Washington on major issues. NACo will fight on Capitol Hill for all states, and NACo was a major fighter on the Hill for Louisiana to get our share of money from hurricanes and many other issues.



My favorite way to relax is: Playing billiards.

finally!



NACo swag is now available online!

naco.org/store

WORD
SEARCH

SONOMA COUNTY, Calif.
Created by: Mary Ann Barton

L P K G A Z D R M T X P Y T J I I A R L
X I J D S F X R J A J U N G I L V Q R W
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AGRICULTURE: The county is ranked 12th in the nation for its agriculture production which includes grapes (wine production), eggs, fruits and vegetables.
COAST: The county's borders include more than 50 miles of coastline from the Pacific Ocean and San Pablo Bay.

COOPERATIVE: The county partners with neighboring Marin and Mendocino counties to keep its beaches clean.
GRAFFITI: The film "American Graffiti" was made in the county and the town of Petaluma celebrates it each year with a classic car parade.
HITCHCOCK: Film director Alfred Hitchcock made at least two movies in the county, including "The Birds" in Bodega Bay.

LOCATION: The county is located 30 miles north of San Francisco.
NATIVE: It is estimated that as many as 5,000 Native Americans once lived in the county including the Pomo, Coast Miwok and Wappo.
NEWSPAPER: The county counts several local newspapers including the Argus-Courier, founded in 1876 and the Press Democrat, founded in 1897.
PARKS: The county is home to more than 60 state and regional parks.
POPULATION: The county's population is more than 480,000.
REDWOODS: The western part of the county is home to towering redwood trees, with some extending beyond 370 feet tall.
SCHULZ: The county-owned airport, the Charles M. Schulz Sonoma County Airport, is named for the famed "Peanuts" cartoonist who was a local resident.
SEAT: The county seat is Santa Rosa.
SONOMA: The name has variously been described to mean "valley of the moon," "earth village," "redwood place" and just "nose."
WINERIES: The county features more than 425 wineries from small family-run operations to world-renowned, award-winning vineyards.

BEHIND
THE
SEAL

SANGAMON
COUNTY, ILL.



With a county seat bearing a name as American as apple pie — Springfield — Sangamon County capitalizes on its most famous native: Abraham Lincoln. Lincoln's profile graces the county seal atop an outline of the county's boundaries. That design means that anyone with a penny can be considered to be carrying a Sangamon County challenge coin..

If you would like your county's seal featured in "Behind the Seal," contact Charlie Ban at cban@naco.org.

ON THE MOVE


Johnson

NACo OFFICERS

- President **Larry Johnson**, Executive Director **Matt Chase** and Membership Director **Kim Hall** attended the Florida Association of Counties Annual Conference in Orange County.

NACo STAFF

- Counties Futures Lab Director **Ashleigh Holand**, Strategic Partnerships Director **Jack Peterson** and Associate Legislative Director **Paige Mellerio** attended the annual retreat for several Midwest states' associations of counties in Polk County, Iowa.
- **Chase** attended the New York State Association of Counties conference in Suffolk County.

UNTOLD
STORIES

Together, we can tell the full story of county efforts in responding to the coronavirus pandemic and driving recovery in our communities.

Join NACo's **Untold Stories** campaign to highlight the human impact of county services.

Visit [NACo.org/UntoldStories](https://www.naco.org/UntoldStories) to submit your story and access resources to engage your local audience, including a letter to the editor template, a media relations guide, social media templates and more.



BRIGHT IDEAS | YUMA COUNTY, Ariz.

Kids Can Check Out Educational Toys, Games at County Library

PROBLEM: Children who don't go to preschool aren't always exposed to a variety of early childhood learning activities.

SOLUTION: Offer educational books, toys and games to families to check out at the library.

by Mary Ann Barton
editor

In Yuma County, Ariz., the local library has always been a hub of activity for residents and their families, for story hours and checking out books for their kids.

The library took childhood learning on step further when they introduced the Smart Start Kids Program, which offers county library-holders books, games and toys in a bag that can be checked out. The bagged items come in different educational categories and can be checked out for three weeks. Toys and items, including the bags they come in, are sanitized between uses.

Brenda Cervantes, grants and special projects administrator, for Yuma County Library District, has been in the job for more than a year. The program started when she worked in the county's Youth Services department.

"This was an idea that my director had along with the Youth Services manager at the time," she said.

The idea began after families, especially with children under age 5, asked for board books and toys. "You know what, a lot of these community members don't have access to preschool," Cervantes noted.

"There are lots of families where both parents are working, and a large percentage of our county is from the Latino community, where they traditionally depend on family members or close friends to take care of their children," she



A sampling of materials offered for check-out at the main library in Yuma County, Ariz. Families check out bags that include the toys, books and games, each with a different theme similar to preschool learning.

said. "They're always coming over here to take advantage of our programs."

"People would come in and say, 'Hey do you have toys we can borrow here?' Before COVID, we'd let parents borrow toys and they'd sit down right there in the library and that's how they would do it."

A state grant helped pay for educational toys for the program. The toys and books offer children more than 20 themes (such as Alphabet, Animals, Bilingual, Science and Numbers and Counting) to choose from. Each kit has different items depending on the theme. The Numbers and Counting kit includes a few books about numbers, a small toy where children put numbers together, a counting toy and bean bags. "That way, a parent and child have a variety of ways to play. Play is the best way for children to learn."

Anyone can check out a kit as long as they are a county resident and have a library card. They offer kits in English and Spanish. They fly off the shelves.

"They do get borrowed a lot," Cervantes said.

Yuma County currently offers the program at its main library with hopes of adding it to its other branches.

"We are going to extend this if we get funding again, so the rest of the branches get similar products," Cervantes said. "The program is in high demand."

The pilot program began with a \$3,000 grant that the county used to purchase toys. After researching similar programs at other libraries, they purchased the books and toys from educational toy companies.

In addition to seeing how quickly items are checked out, the library conducted a survey to gauge the program's pop-



ularity. "After talking to our community, we can see just how happy they are about it," Cervantes said.

The program became extra popular during the pandemic, after the library reopened in October 2020.

"There are some educational activities you can do online, but there is only so much a screen will do," Cervantes noted. "You need something hands-on."

The kits that are the most

popular are Science and Bilingual.

"Those were the two people are always asking for," Cervantes said. "The Science kit involves recipes with Jello. Lots of kiddos love to play with their food. The Bilingual one, that's the one we thought would help a lot of families trying to learn English; it's also for families who want to teach their kids Spanish."

"When I used to do the bilingual story time, parents would say 'Hey, what else do you have that we could use to help our kids learn Spanish?' The program came about because we were listening to our community, and asking them what they wanted, what they needed." **CN**

Yuma County, Arizona's Smart Start Kids program was the 2022 Achievement Award winner in the Library category.



CALIFORNIA

The California Wildfire Mitigation Program will fund initiatives to encourage homeowners to foster **fire-resistant homes** in three counties. **LAKE, SAN DIEGO** and **SHASTA counties** will aim to create defensible spaces around structures and increase the use of fire-resistant materials. In San Diego County, the Home Hardening Program will provide direct financial assistance, up to \$40,000 dollars per home, to complete defensible space and home-hardening retrofit measures. The program will help some 500 homeowners in the three-year pilot. Construction costs will be fully covered for households under 120 percent of the Area Median Income. As fire has no economic barriers, homeowners who earn above that threshold will still be able to participate in the program with a cost share of between 10-25 percent of the total project cost.



Rorex

COLORADO

Clela Rorex, the **BOULDER COUNTY** clerk who was the first public official to **issue a same-sex marriage license** in 1975, died June 19 at age 78. She saw nothing in state law preventing it and issued six licenses before the attorney general ordered her to stop, the *Associated Press* reported.

NEWS FROM ACROSS THE NATION



NEVADA

CLARK COUNTY opened the **Lone Mountain Dog Park**, paired with Peter Hazel's artwork "Wanna Play?" which was commissioned by the county and funded by park bonds and the county's arts plan.

FLORIDA

The **LEON COUNTY** Sheriff's office is launching a street team initiative aimed at addressing homelessness. Two new deputies will staff the Homeless Outreach Street Team, aiming to connect unhoused people with any needed resources.

GEORGIA

A **Court Watch** program is kicking off again in **FULTON COUNTY**, recruiting hundreds of citizens to follow cases as they move through the system. The program aims to cut down on repeat offenders as it holds the court system accountable. Volunteers will be trained and assigned a case to follow all the way through the system, gathering data on things like when bond is granted and for how much, and the sentences handed down.

IDAHO

• **ADA COUNTY** will allow any group, regardless of political affiliation or purpose, to **use its meeting room** for events, meetings or presentations. Users will have to pay a

flat cost, plus any additional extra money required to cover additional security, cleaning, IT help or sheriff's deputies necessary for the event.

• **BLAINE COUNTY** will fund



MINNESOTA

HENNEPIN COUNTY illuminated the **Lowry Bridge** in red, black, green, and gold in celebration of Juneteenth.

Sun Valley Economic Development's "**Lease to Locals**" program aimed at combating the housing crisis. The program aims to convert existing housing stock — particularly unused homes and short-term rentals — to new longer-term rentals to the local workforce. It borrows from a **SUMMIT COUNTY, Colo.** program, *The Mountain Express* reported.

• Students pursuing training for the **skilled trades** at **WAYNE COUNTY** Community College will go tuition-free, thanks to the school's Rocket2Work initiative. Programs included in the Rocket2Work initiative involve careers in CDL licensed professional truck driving, skilled construction, advanced manufacturing and

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From NEWS FROM page 10

mechatronics and technology and technical careers, *The News-Herald* reported.

NEW YORK

MADISON COUNTY's health department and council on alcoholism and substance abuse are making **wall-mounted boxes containing Narcan** available to community agencies and local businesses. Partner agencies plan to distribute the boxes across the community through targeted outreach and facility requests, starting with county office buildings.

OREGON

• **CLACKAMAS COUNTY** is launching a new program connecting **low-income families** with a variety of mental and behavioral health resources. The "Healthy Connections Oregon" program, led by Clackamas County Children, Family & Community Connections, will help participants in the state-funded Temporary Assistance to Needy Families program access additional long-term support through counseling, addiction recovery,

mentoring and more.

• **MULTNOMAH COUNTY** is launching a nine-month internship program for **young people and adults with disabilities** for career success by helping them acquire competitive, applicable and marketable job skills. Each Project SEARCH intern is assigned an on-site instructor and skills trainer, with interns completing three rotations in different host business environments and job search assistance afterward.

PENNSYLVANIA

WESTMORELAND COUNTY has installed an **electric vehicle-charging station** at one of its parks as a pilot project.

The five-year deal with a private energy company will give the county 25 percent of the revenue generated at the site, once installation costs are recovered, *The Tribune Review* reported, with motorists likely paying between \$2 to \$4 for an hours-long charge.

UTAH

WEBER COUNTY is the first in the state to create an

VIRGINIA

• One of the **FAIRFAX COUNTY** Police Department's helicopters was on display at the National Air & Space Museum's **Annual Innovations in Flight Event**. More than 50 aircraft fly in from around the region for the event.



in-house public defender's office, with a director and full-time attorneys. Having full-time dedicated attorneys helps reduce conflicts of interest that arise from using contract indigent defenders, *The Herald Extra* reported

VIRGINIA

• **ARLINGTON COUNTY** was recognized as a Platinum Level award recipient by **Walk Friendly Communities**. It was the only county to be recognized,

though the Virginia independent cities of Alexandria, Charlottesville and Portsmouth were also honorees. The program cites the county's multi-modal Master Transportation Plan, its 2019 Vision Zero effort, its Complete Streets program and its extensive pedestrian and bike data collection activities.

WASHINGTON

• **KING COUNTY** is providing \$7 million to fund one-time

retention bonus payments to child-care workers. All child-care staff working at Washington State Department of Children, Youth, and Families licensed child care programs within King County are eligible to receive payments.

• The **PIERCE COUNTY** Council adopted a policy allowing for **safe parking sites** for a limited time while permanent rules are drafted, reviewed and submitted to the council for consideration. Safe parking sites are allowed on land owned and controlled by a religious organization, and up to four limited-duration sites are allowed on civic or commercial property if a religious group, non-profit or government agency operates the site. A site can host any number of vehicles in all urban zones, subject to county approval that public health and safety standards are met, MyNorthwest reported. Sites owned by religious organizations that serve up to seven vehicles are allowed in all zones in unincorporated Pierce County, while those hosting eight or more vehicles are allowed in urban zones, but all sites must conduct public meetings to discuss neighborhood impact, and to review state and local sex offender registrations.



MICHIGAN

• has partnered with the county's school system to provide grants to local public school districts to address students' **mental health needs**. The program allows school districts to create programs designed to help students' social and emotional challenges specific to the needs of their unique communities. More than \$10 million of the overall \$15 million initiative will be funded by the county's American Rescue Plan Act allocation, with \$5 million coming from local school districts.

"Addressing mental health needs of students is a public health issue as much as it is an education issue," said Board Chairman David T. Woodward. "This is the biggest county-school partnership in the state to improve the mental health of our students across Oakland County."

School districts may submit proposals for grant funding for initiatives that may include additional school mental health professional staff, training to increase the capacity to identify students in need of mental health intervention services, programming to address the social and emotional needs of students or increased capacity for school-based mental health screenings or assessments of students.

Oakland County leaders and school officials announced a new grant program for school districts aimed at addressing students' social and emotional needs on June 22 at the Oakland County Board of Commissioners offices. (L-r): Oakland County Board Vice Chairwoman Marcia Gershenson; Commissioner Penny Luebs; Clawson School Board Trustee Cyndi Peltonen; Board Chairman David T. Woodward, Royal Oak Schools Superintendent Mary Beth Fitzpatrick and Deputy County Executive Sean Carlson. Photo courtesy of Oakland County

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

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ADAMS COUNTY

COLORADO

JULY 21-24, 2022

Note new pattern: Thursday – Sunday

