

The skyline of Austin, Texas will welcome nearly 3,000 county officials and others July 21-24 for NACo's 88th Annual Conference in Travis County. Photo courtesy of Visit Austin

Medical programs send budding doctors to rural county 'healthcare deserts'

by **Meredith Moran**
staff writer

Amid a growing urban-rural divide in health care, hospitals and medical schools are creating programming to attract young talent and help rural counties bridge the physician gap. While the number of primary care physicians

has increased significantly in the past decade, more young medical professionals are establishing roots in urban areas, classifying 82% of rural counties as medically underserved regions, according to a 2020 study published by the American Medical Association.

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NACo Annual Conference begins in Travis County, Texas

by **Charlie Ban**
senior writer

Everything is bigger in Texas, and it would be hard to find a bigger NACo event in 2023 outside of the Annual Conference in Travis County.

More than 3,000 registrants will be at the Austin Convention Center examining all facets of county government July 21-24.

Friday, July 21 will open with an orientation for the more than 500 first-time conference attendees before NACo's 10 policy

steering committee meetings begin. Members will debate policy resolutions and hear from experts in their fields and highlight successful strategies for addressing their key issues. All

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Expanded perspective shapes Winfrey's term as NACo president

by **Charlie Ban**
senior writer

NACo President Denise Winfrey's term on the NACo executive committee began on a computer screen in July 2020, when she was elected second vice president during

the virtual Annual Conference. She managed her transition as second vice president that year while also serving Will County, Ill. as county executive and then a member of the county Board.

Her year as NACo president followed a theme of Resiliency,

Inclusion, Solvency and Empowerment — RISE — and an emphasis on county programs that will give residents across the board an opportunity to improve their lives. NACo has channeled that energy into

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Winfrey hopes her example motivates more women to seek NACo leadership roles

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problem-solving work by the Commission on Mental Health and Wellbeing and the Housing Task Force, and efforts to secure the future of county government operations through the Artificial Intelligence Exploratory Committee.

As she closes out her term and prepares to become immediate past president after the Annual Business Meeting July 24 in Travis County, Texas, Winfrey recently reflected on her year — a year she hopes inspires more women to seek leadership roles — in a conversation with County News.

Q: What were your favorite of the many trips you’ve taken representing NACo across the country?

A: The year has been absolutely wonderful, and the thing I’ve enjoyed the most is the



NACo President Denise Winfrey at the podium Feb. 11 at the Legislative Conference. Photo by Denny Henry

wealth of friendship and just commonality among our membership in every state. Each association that I’ve visited has been more than welcoming. There’s nothing like visiting Hawaii, and the congressional delegation trip throughout Utah was incredibly enlighten-

ing, but I’ll always remember the reception in Alabama. I flew in late and arrived at the hotel at 10:30 and the lobby was full of county officials waiting to greet me. That’s a level of hospitality I never expected.

Q: You also got to welcome NACo Board members and Large Urban County Caucus members to Will County last December. What did you enjoy showing off?

A: I had a chance to show the Lion Electric plant and the BNSF rail yard, which are big parts of our multimodal transportation and logistics identity in Will County.

But what was most important was showing people what it’s like just to be here. We’re near Chicago, but we’re not the big city, and you can drive out to see generational farms that have been in families for hundreds of years.

We’ve got urban, suburban and rural, all three in the area. We have cities of 500 people, cities of 200,000 people and everything in between. We have the same issues as most other counties, whether it’s a shortage of workforce housing,

mental health issues, addiction.

Q: How has county government changed since you first sought NACo office?

A: Will County updated our technology to make county offices more user-friendly and streamlined for our residents. That could mean going online to do business with the county or using drop boxes for voting and tax payments.

We’ve also increased security at public entrances to county buildings and given employees key cards to enter secured doorways. We still have sanitizer everywhere.

Counties nationwide have had more resources than ever thanks to the American Rescue Plan Act and the additional flexibility we have in spending relief money.

Will County has used ARPA money to underwrite support for health professionals through our college consortium, which will help people get their nursing degrees but also help them put down roots and turn them into long-term community members.

Q: What issues have

you learned about thanks to your travels and connections with county officials nationwide?

A: When I was in Utah with Beaver County Commissioner Tammy Pearson, I asked her about what I thought was a dried drainage ditch, and she told me that was their river. That really showed me the extent of the drought in the West, and it was truly one of the values of being the president, because you don’t usually get to see it firsthand. You get to look up close at the issue they’re dealing with.

Q: To whom have you been able to communicate the county story as NACo’s ambassador?

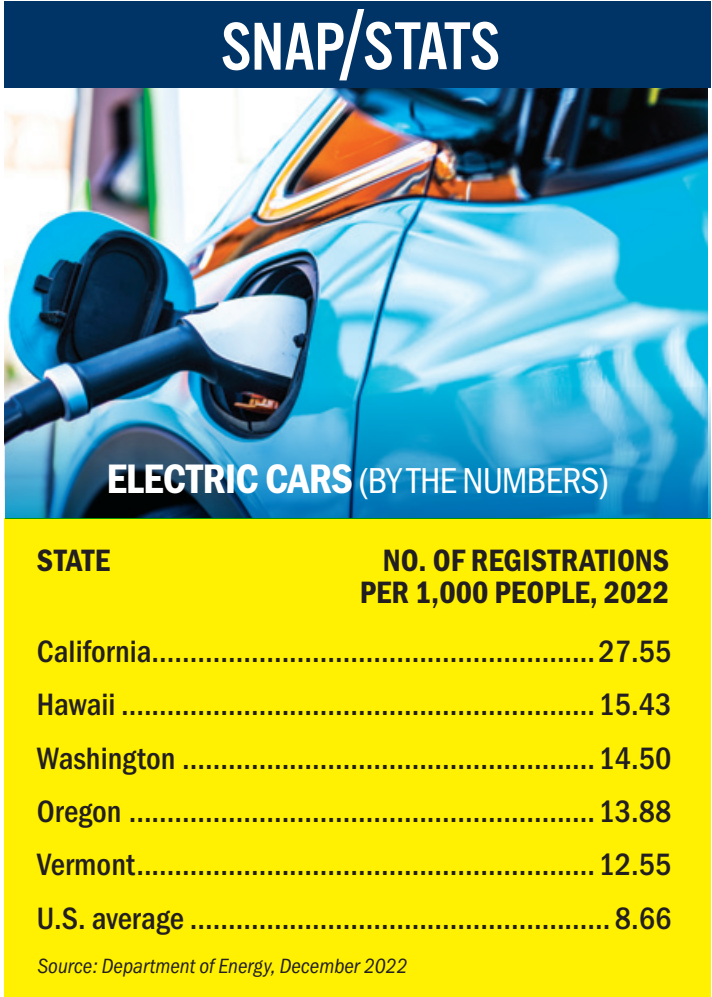
A: NACo’s relationship with the White House has given me a chance to speak directly with presidential advisors Julie Chavez Rodriguez and Lukas McGowan, to talk about county infrastructure responsibilities with Mitch Landrieu (who manages the rollout of the Bipartisan Infrastructure Bill), and to be able to thank former House Speaker Nancy Pelosi for making the American Rescue Plan funding available to all counties.

The role as president also afforded me the chance to speak to the National Forum for Black Public Administrators and it felt good to be acknowledged given my 15 years in the county government and before that, township government.

Q: How have your experiences changed you at home as a Will County Board member?

A: Travel broadens people, and seeing how people from

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More than 80 percent of rural counties are ‘medically underserved,’ study shows

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The Family Medicine Rural Residency Program is a three-year program — the first year spent in Sacramento and the last two in rural Amador County — where residents work inpatient and emergency medicine rotations at Sutter Amador Hospital, which serves over 40,000 people and is the only hospital in the county. The program, which launched in 2021, currently has six residents, including Jacob Frey, who graduated from the David Geffen School of Medicine at UCLA and was raised in rural Calaveras County, which neighbors Amador County.

“The challenges that you see inside of a rural community — as far as lack of health care and the absence of a lot of infrastructure to handle a lot of the basic needs that these people have — going into medicine, I absolutely wanted to deliver health care to an area that is in need and I wanted to be able to serve specifically my community that I live in,” Frey said. “I didn’t want to be a doctor outside of the community and treating people in a different area; I wanted to be part of that community.

“I think it’s really important to understand the challenges that those rural communities face by being a part of it and experiencing it firsthand, and having grown up in it, just sort of knowing what those are and just coming back after being able to have a little bit of life experience and being able to contribute back to my community in a positive way.”

Family medicine residents who spent 50% or more of their training time in rural settings were at least five times more likely than residents with no rural training to practice in a rural setting, according to a 2022 study published in the *Journal of Graduate Medical Education*.

The University of Washington School of Medicine’s Rural Underserved Opportunities Program (RUOP) serves underserved rural counties and boroughs across Washington, Wyoming, Alaska, Montana and Idaho. It is aiming to start that pipeline even earlier, of-



Dr. Archana Ganta (left) and Dr. Arely Macias were the first physicians in Amador County’s Family Medicine Rural Residency Program.

fering a four-week rotation for students between their first and second years of medical school.

“People are imprinted upon early, so if I expose a medical student early on to emergency room care, they’re more likely to do emergency room medi-

wise, because there are more urban players in medicine, there are actually more urban players going rural.”

Recognizing this, Amador County is aiming to both create space for medical professionals from rural backgrounds and mark a different path for

got to find a place to live, get transportation once you get there,” Hartmann said. “... Looking at it from an equity issue standpoint, we’re also this year planning to establish an Underrepresented in Medicine/Rural scholarship to offset costs that they would

then when they’re discharged, they’ll see them in the continuity clinic and it gives a sense to the patients of ‘somebody’s really caring about me, they’re really following up on these things.’

“One of the things we’re trying to inculcate in the young learners is ‘Listen to the patient, take care of the patient,’ and people in the community really appreciate that.”

Frey said the most rewarding aspect of spending his residency in Amador County has been the sense of “connectedness” with the community, which Hartmann echoed.

“We all need to have this sense of community,” Hartmann said.

“We’re in this for the community to get better health care and get more providers and help our rural communities thrive because rural communities in the U.S. have really been kicked in the teeth a lot ... they’ve really had difficulty sort of maintaining businesses and maintaining health care, and we want a good thriving community in our rural area, and that includes having a good hospital, that includes having good primary care, good specialty care and we’re just trying to be a part of that.” **CN**

‘I think it’s really important to understand the challenges rural communities face.’

cine,” said Dr. John McCarthy, assistant dean of the university’s Office of Rural Programs. “If I expose them to a great mentor in obstetrics early on, they’re more likely to do obstetrics.”

Studies have found that medical professionals who were raised in rural areas are far more likely to practice in rural areas than their urban peers; however, students from rural backgrounds make up under 5% of the incoming medical student body.

“People from rural areas are more likely to go back to rural areas, but there’s a lot more people from urban areas that go into medical school,” McCarthy said. “So, percentage wise, more rural people will end up going rural, but total number

those from urban areas.

The Sutter Health Family Medicine Residency, which the rural program falls under, has started an Underrepresented in Medicine scholarship for fourth-year medical students, many of whom are from other parts of the country. An additional scholarship through the rural track is in the works, with the hope that people will return after they graduate, according to Dr. Robert Hartmann, an Amador County internal medicine specialist who is a core faculty member of the residency program.

“To use an example, you’ve got a med student in Philadelphia who wants to do a fourth-year, one-month rotation, but it’s on the West Coast, and that can be pretty pricey — you’ve

have in getting here and doing a month rotation with us in a rural area and learning more about us.”

Hartmann said the Family Medicine Rural Residency Program has brought “vibrancy” to the medical system in Amador County.

“A woman stopped me the other day and said, ‘My 16-year-old came in to see Dr. Ganta [a resident] and has seen her a couple of times and she is so happy, she finally has a young physician that she can relate to,’” Hartmann said.

“We get tons of positive feedback from the fact that the residents are seeing patients and are in the community,” he noted. “They’ll see [residents] in the hospital when they’re doing inpatient rotations, and

Advice to next prez? ‘Pace yourself’

From WINFREY page 2

different areas manage things in their counties, you get a different perspective on what can and can’t be done.

Seeing a successful program in Oregon that housed people in a hotel motivated me to bring their materials to local officials and we’re adapting their plans to hopefully make it happen someday.

Q: What was your most exciting moment as president?

A: New Castle County, Del. Executive Matt Meyer asked me what President Biden would call me when I introduced him at the Legislative Conference.

Would he call me “Madam President?” Sure enough, he did.

Then a few weeks later, I was at the White House for a Black History Month event, and I went out into the hallway to get some air, when the president left the event.

The cadet who was accompanying me noted that I shouldn’t

reach out, but President Biden stopped when he got to me, reached out his hand and said, “Madam President!”

Q: What advice did you find helpful and what would you recommend to a NACo president?

A: People told me to take care of myself, and that was very important — do every event you can, every speaking engagement — but take care of yourself. NACo’s mental health initiative, we need it not just for our constituents, but our county officials.

The job has gotten more stressful, and you have to be accommodating with the public, but we need to make sure we take care of ourselves so we can do our job for them.

That means pacing yourself. I like to entertain whenever I am visiting people, but I make sure that someone I trust keeps track of time, so I can keep talking but someone else can hold me to it when it’s time to get some rest. **CN**

88th Annual Conference is chock-full of events

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registrants may attend steering committee meetings, but only committee members can vote.

The Telecommunications and Technology Committee will offer advice to take advantage of a historic level of broadband funding, the Transportation Committee will advise counties on integrating electric vehicles, the Agriculture and Rural Affairs committee will look at the decline of local news in rural counties and the Human Services and Education Committee will examine the county role in food systems.

Bright and early Saturday, July 22, attendees will take a ride on some e-bikes for a tour of Austin’s network of protected bike lanes. The BikeTexas-sponsored event will meet at 6 a.m. at the Trinity Street convention center entrance and leave at 6:30. Registration via the conference website is encouraged.

In the morning, the Rural Action Caucus will hear private and public perspectives on broadband deployment and approaches to combating gen-

erational poverty. The Large Urban County Caucus will discuss the economic value of county contributions to stadium and arena construction and how to leverage supportive housing for service coordination.

The afternoon’s Western Interstate Region Board of Directors Meeting will discuss the new National Center for Public Lands Counties and hear about the nearby Lyndon B. Johnson National Historical Park. NACo’s Housing Task Force will unveil its recommendations for how counties can address the housing affordability crisis through local policy and public-private partnerships.

The General Session audience will hear from Sen. John Cornyn (R-Texas) and Dr. Drew Pinsky, followed by a forum for NACo’s second vice president candidates — Roane County, Tenn. Commissioner Ron Berry and Wise County, Texas Judge J.D. Clark. You can read the candidates’ platforms on pages 4 and 5.

Sunday, July 23 will open with several educational workshops

and “County Talks” seminars in the exhibit hall. The NACo Board of Directors will meet before a celebratory luncheon recognizes Best in Category winners from the 2023 NACo Achievement Awards. Award-winning journalist, best-selling author and television host Joan Lunden will speak during the luncheon. Allan Golston, president of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation’s U.S. program, will address General Session attendees.

Mobile workshops will take attendees to the Community First! Village housing stability program or a visit to the local 911 Emergency Communications center as well as Travis County’s emergency helicopter service. Simultaneously, summits will examine strategies to promote economic mobility, mental health and disaster resiliency.

NACo members will complete the new executive committee July 24 at the Annual Business Meeting, voting for two declared second vice president candidates. Afterward, the South and

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Which residents benefit from prescription discounts?

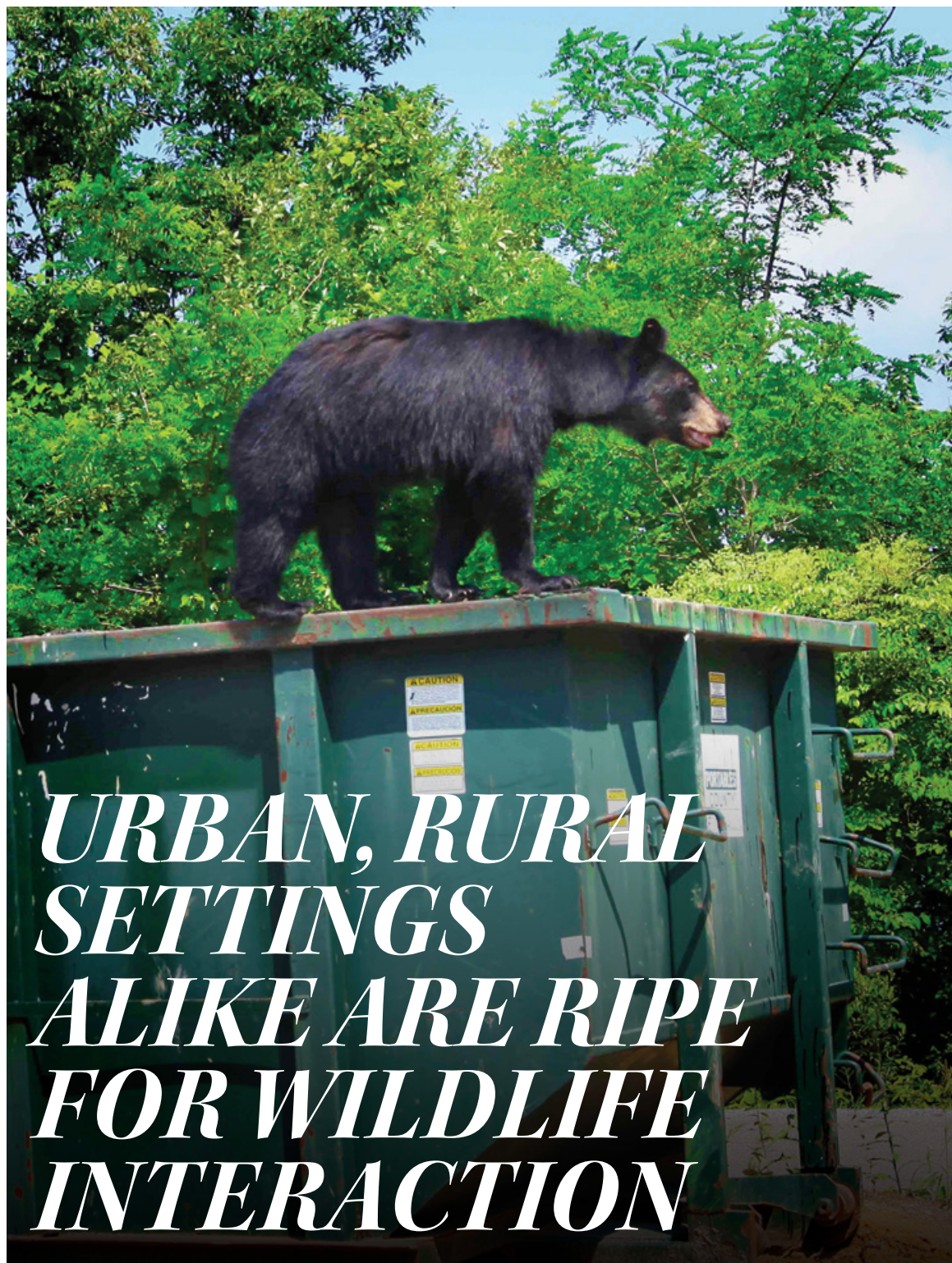
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URBAN, RURAL SETTINGS ALIKE ARE RIPE FOR WILDLIFE INTERACTION

by **Charlie Ban**
senior writer

Sooner or later, the bears come for what's theirs.

What's theirs is anything they can eat.

Fall is usually bear season, when they gather enough food ahead of hibernation, but this spring and summer have seen a number of out-of-season bear sightings in residential neighborhoods around the country that are catching residents and county governments by surprise. And farther away from their developed communities, humans' travel routes are snarled with animals.'

"Bears had a particularly hard natural food year last year, and so we had a lot of bear sightings and bear conflicts in Missoula, more so than in the recent past," said Shannon Therriault, environmental

health director for the Missoula City-County Health Department in Montana.

If Missoula, home to the University of Montana Grizzlies, is too obvious, counties in the Mid-Atlantic are seeing some black bears moseying nearby. Morris County, N.J. had to close one of its parks and trail systems for several days in June when an aggressive black bear was roaming near park users and their dogs. There were also bear sightings in suburban counties including Fairfax and Arlington counties in Virginia, Montgomery and Prince George's counties in Maryland, Bucks County and Cumberland counties in Pennsylvania.

Missoula County's bear buffer zone, which covers the city of Missoula, requires garbage to be kept in a bear-resistant container or kept inside until 7

a.m. on pickup day. The health department has proposed an expansion, and that proposal is open to public comment. Outside of the buffer zone, garbage collection is an optional service for all non-rental properties.

"It would capture that wildland-urban interface area so there's not like there's free access to garbage and then they get further from town and there's less access to garbage," Therriault said.

Both the Board of Commissioners and the city council would have to approve that change. A study between 2018-2021 found that 49% of human-bear interactions in Missoula County results from garbage.

The city and county passed a resolution in pursuing a "bear smart" community designation, pursuing a bear management

plan pioneered in Canada.

"Our elected officials are really interested in finding the solution so we know we have support and we have that resolution that helps support us," Therriault said.

Bears aren't the only wildlife interface humans are experiencing, and with 48 bear-related fatalities in North America from 2000-2017, there are far less risky interactions. Development and growing transportation networks in rural areas run the risk of interrupting migration patterns though wildlife corridors, increasing the chance of human-wildlife interface and posing a danger to migrating animals. The Federal Highway Administration reports approximately 200 human deaths and 26,000 injuries from wildlife vehicle collisions in the United States annually.

University of Wyoming conservation fellow Travis Brammer presented his research to NACo's Western Interstate Region Conference in Washington

County, Utah in May 2023.

"These corridors and this connectivity are under a pretty significant threat," he told county officials. "As people continue moving West, they tend to build homes in those connectivity areas, they also build additional roads, there's all that other infrastructure that comes from more people moving to an area."

"There are a lot more people driving on the already built roads, so those connectivity areas and those migration corridors are under pretty significant threat," he noted.

Improved connectivity policies could cut the 1 million to 2 million annual collisions by 90%, he noted, citing a 2023 study by the Pew Charitable Trusts. The crashes result in lost hunting opportunities, vehicle repairs, towing and carcass removal.

Brammer said that counties' land use authority is a hidden strength, not just by including fencing along roads.

"Counties do have a lot more control over these connectivity policies that that they're not getting credit for," he said. "Having a narrow focus at the county level can be really beneficial," as opposed to a broader, more superficial planning approach.

**Study finds
49% of
human-bear
interactions are
due to garbage.**

"States can kind of get away with having a land use and a transportation plan and an energy plan," he said. "The counties we spoke to said they are really honed in on one aspect of connectivity. They tended to get a little bit more support and see longer-term success."

He noted that the county level can get much quicker and more efficient feedback from their constituency and make sure that the plans and these policies really meet their goals and their needs.

That focus also translates to the county role in requesting funding.

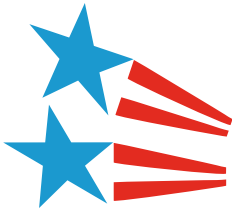
"When a country has something on the books, it makes it much easier to request funding from the feds or the states and if they have something on the books they can use that in that coordination process," Brammer said.

A funding opportunity for this specific kind of project is open for the next month.

The Wildlife Crossings Pilot Program of the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law has authorized \$350 million in competitive grants for which counties are eligible for construction projects, including wildlife crossing overpasses or underpasses or non-construction including a hot spot analysis of wildlife vehicle crashes.

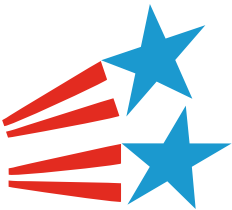
Those grant applications through the Federal Highway Administration are due by Aug. 1.

For more information, contact wildlifecrossings@dot.gov. **CN**



2023 NACo Second Vice President Candidates

CANDIDATE PLATFORM



BERRY

Ron Berry
Commissioner
Roane County, Tenn.

As a candidate for 2nd Vice President of NACo, I firmly believe the success of our organization is our ability to commit, connect and unite. These qualities will enable us to become a stronger and more cohesive NACo that effectively serves the needs of its members and advances the interest of county governments across the nation. In the following discourse, I will explore the importance of commitment, connectivity, and unity and outline how these values can shape our journey towards progress and success.

Commitment to Members

- 1. As 2nd Vice President, I will prioritize the needs and concerns of our diverse membership.

- 2. I will advocate for fair and inclusive policies that address the challenges faced by counties.
- 3. By actively engaging with members and seeking their input, we can develop meaningful solutions.

Commitment to Excellence

- 1. I will work tirelessly to uphold the highest standards of professionalism and integrity.
- 2. Encouraging innovation and sharing best practices will elevate the capabilities of our organization.
- 3. Through a commitment to continuous improvement, we can remain at the forefront of county governance.

Commitment to Collaboration

- 1. By fostering partnerships with other national and regional organizations, we can strengthen our impact.
- 2. I will promote collaboration among NACo members to facilitate knowledge sharing and resource pooling.

- 3. Engaging with stakeholders at all levels will enable us to advocate effectively for counties interests.

Connecting with Members

- 1. Establishing open lines of communication will allow for a better understanding of member's needs.
- 2. I will utilize technology and digital platforms to create opportunities for meaningful engagement.
- 3. Regular town halls, webinars, and conferences will facilitate networking and knowledge exchange.

Connecting Counties

- 1. NACo can serve as a vital bridge, connecting counties across the nation.
- 2. I will promote regional and intercounty collaboration to tackle shared challenges.
- 3. By facilitating the exchange of ideas, NACo can help counties learn from one another's successes.

- 4. Building strategic alliances with federal agencies, private sector entities, and nonprofits will strengthen NACo's mission.
- 5. Collaborating with these partners will help us secure necessary resources and funding for county initiatives.
- 6. By working together, we can leverage our collective expertise to drive positive change at all levels.

Uniting County Governments

- 1. I will foster a culture of unity and cooperation among county governments.
- 2. Through NACo, we can create platforms for county officials to come together and address common challenges.
- 3. United, we can advocate for policies that empower counties and strengthen our collective voice.

Uniting Urban and Rural Communities

- 1. Recognizing the unique needs of urban and rural counties, I will promote dialogue and understanding.

- 2. Bridging the urban-rural divide will enable us to find innovative solutions that benefit all counties.
- 3. By fostering unity, NACo can ensure that every county has a voice in shaping our national agenda.

Uniting Across Political Party Lines

- 1. As 2nd Vice President, I will work across party lines to build consensus and advance county interests.
- 2. I will prioritize bipartisan-ship and seek common ground to address critical issues facing counties.

I am honored to be a candidate for 2nd Vice President of NACo. I have prepared for this opportunity by serving as South Region Director for 3 years, member of Ex Committee for 3 years and a member of NACo Board of Directors. I am the only veteran candidate, having served in the United States Marine Corps. I humbly ask for your vote and support in the July election.



2023 NACo Second Vice President Candidates

CANDIDATE PLATFORM



CLARK

J.D. Clark

Judge

Wise County, Texas

Fellow County Leaders,

My reason for running for NACo 2nd Vice President is simple: to connect and amplify our county voices as we tell our county stories and strengthen America's counties.

It has never been more challenging to serve in county government, but it has also never been more important. As county officials, we know that our locally driven, results-based work is the most effective way to achieve real solutions in our communities, but we must work to share that message with our federal partners, private sector partners and constituents.

As your candidate for NACo 2nd VP, I am ready to do that work with you every day.

I am a husband, a father of three daughters, a former junior high and high school

teacher, the former mayor of my hometown and now a three-term county judge.

I recently spent time at NACo's D.C. headquarters completing the County Leadership Institute with county colleagues from across the nation. That experience re-emphasized what I have long believed about NACo: we have an incredibly deep, diverse bench of county officials, and if we connect and amplify those voices, we have a powerful vehicle to achieve our county priorities.

That spirit of collaboration and communication has been a hallmark of my service as an elected official and of my work with NACo. I am proud and honored that our past NACo presidents have entrusted me with leadership and policy roles, and as a result, I have co-chaired the Broadband Task Force; twice chaired the Rural Action Caucus; twice chaired the Telecommunications and Technology Policy Steering Committee; chaired the Veterans and Military Services Committee; vice-chaired the Pensions, Finance, and Intergovernmental Affairs Committee; and served on the NACo Board of Directors on behalf of the Texas Association of Counties.

If given the opportunity to serve our great organization as 2nd VP, I am committed to continuing that work and focusing on the following:

-Fostering productive, effective partnerships and relationships with federal partners from across the partisan spectrum. We do this by identifying, connecting and amplifying our diverse and talented county voices. While polarization at the federal level continues to grow, we know that we can't let that stop us from getting real, important work done at home on the local level.

Our membership is a source of great strength and effectiveness, and that is why we must harness those county voices from all areas of the nation and from all types of communities to carry our county stories to our partners at the federal level and build productive relationships.

-Recruiting and retaining highly skilled personnel in a highly competitive job market. We must remember that we are not just an organization but also an employer. The success of NACo relies not only on great member counties but also on the talents and skills of our professional staff. We must work to be a premier employer in the public policy arena so that NACo remains a home for top-tier policy minds to serve America's counties.

-Promoting the efficiency and effectiveness of county-level solutions. The government closest to the people is the government that functions

best, and we must be the voices advocating for county-level solutions to tackle issues and strengthen our communities.

To tell these stories and show the effectiveness of county-level solutions, we must share our best practices and achievements to highlight the positive impact county government has made for our taxpayers and residents. We need our federal partners to see the value in equipping us with the resources required to tackle issues at the local level.

Whether it is PILT, broadband, mental health, ARPA flexibility, stormwater management, disaster recovery, transportation, public safety or the thousands of other issues county officials work on across America each day, we must amplify our voices to tell our county stories and shine the spotlight on what we are facing at home.

We can use our voices and experiences to be thought leaders and drive the national conversation. NACo has done this so successfully with the Opioid Task Force and the Broadband Task Force, and I know we will do it again with the new Mental Health and Wellbeing Commission and the AI Exploratory Committee. I also know that new and different issues will develop that will require us as counties to rise to the challenge and seek innovative solutions together.

Connecting our county voices

will make us heard, and we will achieve incredible results for our communities.

I am here to stand shoulder to shoulder with you to do the work. I am ready to be a convener and a connector to amplify our voices and tell our county stories.

My county — with a population of approximately 70,000 — is traditionally rural with rapid suburban growth. I have a county neighbor with population of over 2 million and a county neighbor with a population of less than 10,000. That reality has given me the experience, the ability, the energy, and the willingness to work on a diverse set of issues with counties of all sizes.

I am excited and encouraged by the support we have received already from diverse county officials from across the nation. Let's work together as counties — rural, suburban, and urban — to connect our voices, tell our stories and achieve our county priorities.

I love NACo, I love county government and I would love to work with all of you to strengthen our American counties.

I ask for your vote, and I will work hard for this organization and for county government every step of the way.

Please reach out to me anytime at 940-389-0969 or jd.clark@co.wise.tx.us.

WORD SEARCH

TRAVIS COUNTY, TEXAS

Created by: Mary Ann Barton

B O S D K E O Q H X B S P C O Y D M V U
D A D I C Z A P L I N O O K V T H X N B
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AUSTIN: The county seat and capital of Texas is named for Stephen F. Austin, a Virginian who led a group of 300 people to settle in the region in 1825.

BARBECUE: The county is known for its award-winning barbecue joints; brisket, in particular, is a recommended choice at many of the BBQ eateries and food trucks.

BATS: The county is home to the largest urban bat colony, believed to number 1.5 million, in North America.

They live there from spring to late fall and come out after the sun sets to feed on insects.

COMMISSIONERS: The county's Commissioners Court consists of four commissioners and a county judge.

COURTHOUSE: The Heman Marion Sweatt Travis County Courthouse was built between 1930 and 1931; it was expanded in 1958 and 1962. The first courthouse was built in 1855.

DANCING: There are plenty of places

to do some country dancing with live music in the county, including the Broken Spoke, in business since 1964.

INDUSTRY: Some of the tech companies located in the county include Dell, IBM, Apple and Samsung.

LBJ: The Lyndon Baines Johnson Presidential Library and Museum, which includes a replica of the presidential Oval Office, is located in the county at the University of Texas.

LONGHORNS: The University of Texas, founded in 1883, is the home of the Texas Longhorns.

MATTS: Matt's El Rancho has been serving up Tex-Mex enchiladas and margaritas in the county since 1952.

MUSIC: "Austin City Limits" is the longest-running music TV program.

NEWSPAPER: The local newspaper is the *Austin American-Statesman*; its first issue was printed in 1871.

POPULATION: The population of the county is about 1.3 million, according to the 2020 U.S. Census; the county has seen a 26 percent increase in its population since 2010.

SPRINGS: Located in Zilker Park, Barton Springs is a set of four natural water springs; the largest, Main Barton Spring, supplies water to a pool that's open to the public.

TRAVIS: The county was founded in 1840 and named for William Barret Travis, the commander of the Republic of Texas forces at the Battle of the Alamo.

ON THE MOVE

NACo STAFF

- Ronin Davis** has joined NACo as a senior program manager for Behavioral Health and Justice. He was previously a senior director at Seedco, worked for the Council of State Governments Justice Center and earned a master's degree in social work from Columbia University.
- Joe Jackson** has joined NACo as a legislative assistant. He previously interned for NACo's Government Affairs department and earned a bachelor's degree in Global Politics and Spanish from Washington and Lee University.
- Demetra Rice** has joined NACo as a payroll and accounts payable specialist. She was previously an



Davis



Jackson



Rice



Kuiper

office manager for Prime Residential and a payroll and benefits coordinator for the University of Maryland.


- Legislative Director **Brett Mattson** attended the National Sheriffs' Association Annual Conference in Kent County, Mich.
- Chief Research Officer **Teryn Zmuda** and Counties Futures Lab Director **Ashleigh Holand** educated Pew Charitable Trusts staff about county government.
- Associate Program Director **Jennifer Kuiper** and Program Manager **Grace Blanchard** participated in Economic Recovery Corps Partner Coalition Meeting with the U.S. Economic Development Administration at the Local Initiatives Support Corporation.

ARE YOU READY TO ENROLL YOUR TEAM IN THE NACo LEADERSHIP ACADEMY?

A participant from San Miguel County had this to say about the program: "The most valuable aspect of the course was having to apply what I was learning to my current job/role. We had the opportunity to have five members of our management team take the course together which made us all focus on our leadership skills at the same time. In doing so we grew together as a team and was able to receive and give constructive advice to each other. By using all our leadership oaths we created a vision for our detention facility that will guide us through the next few years."

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION of COUNTIES


NACo



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PROFILES IN SERVICE

STAN PONSTEIN

NACo Board Member
Commissioner, MAC President
Kent County, Mich.

Number of years active in NACo: 10 years

Years in public service: 44 years

Occupation: Costco Wholesale, Member Service

Education: Aquinas College, B.A in Political Science

The hardest thing I've ever done: I ran for the Grandville Board of Education at the age of 19, and won.

A dream I have is to: Visit all 50 states; one left, Hawaii

You'd be surprised to learn that I: I have a Culinary Arts degree



PONSTEIN

The most adventurous thing I've ever done is: Run and finish the Old Kent River Bank 25K.

My favorite way to relax is: Sit in the backyard with my wife with a glass of wine and watch and listen to the birds at our feeders.

Every morning I read: Morning headlines from The Times-Picayune

My favorite meal is: Crab cakes as a starter, mushroom risotto with wild Gulf shrimp for the entrée and Bananas Foster for dessert.

My pet peeve is: Those who ask a question that is longer than the answer.

My motto is: The state of Michigan motto, "Si quaeris peninsulam amoenam circumspice." (If you seek a pleasant peninsula, look about you.)

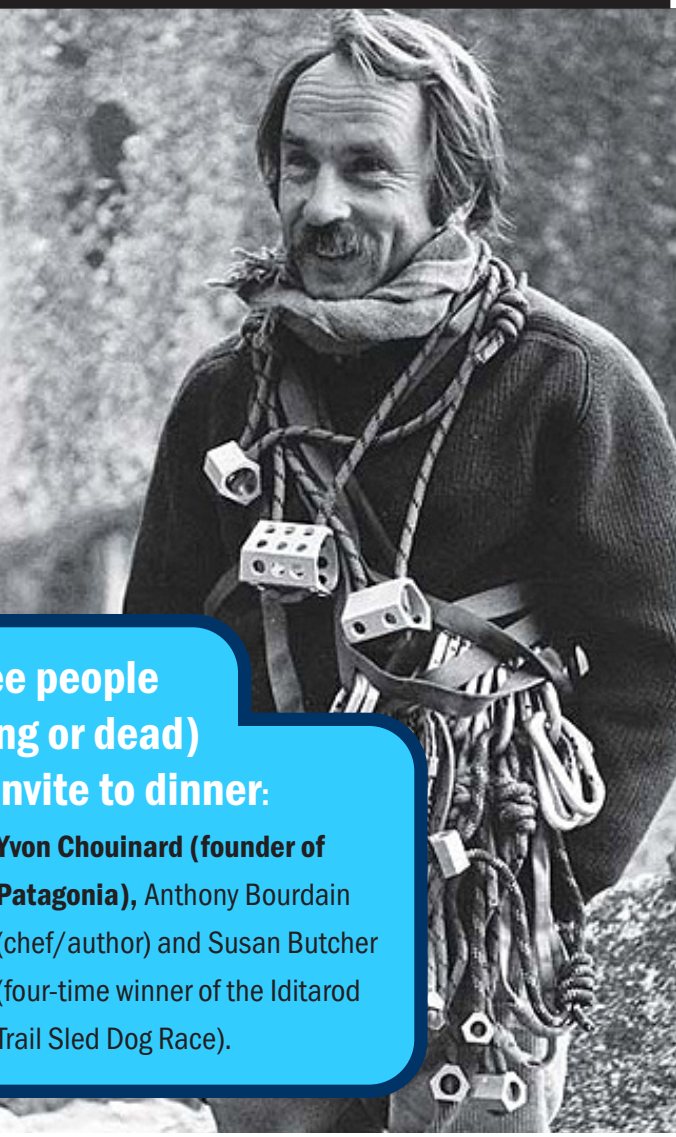
The last book I read was: "A View from the Wolf's Eye," by Carolyn C. Peterson

My favorite movie is: "The Sound of Music"

My favorite music is: New Orleans jazz

My favorite U.S. president is: Theodore Roosevelt

My county is a NACo member because: NACo staff, access to information, collaboration, advocacy, partnerships and see what we can achieve when we work together.



Three people (living or dead) I'd invite to dinner:

Yvon Chouinard (founder of Patagonia), Anthony Bourdain (chef/author) and Susan Butcher (four-time winner of the Iditarod Trail Sled Dog Race).

GET TO KNOW...

McDonald County, Mo.

Welcome to McDonald County, Mo.
McDonald County, Mo., founded in 1849, was named for Revolutionary War soldier Alexander McDonald.
The county, which borders Arkansas and Oklahoma, has been nicknamed "Snake County" for the large number of snakes that live in the county's streams and caves. The county has over 100 caves, many of which were marketed as "show caves" in the early 20th century to bring in visitors.
Every Christmas, people from across the world send letters to the county's town of Noel, to receive its custom post office stamp that says, "Seasons greetings from Noel, Missouri, Christmas City, USA." The tradition started in the Great Depression when the town's postmaster decided it would be a festive idea, and now people from as far as China send



as there was a rivalry between the city and the village of Rutledge to be chosen. Rutledge was initially named the county seat following an election, but Pineville didn't want to cede the title. There was reportedly blood shed over the dispute and Rutledge's log courthouse was destroyed, allegedly by Pineville residents. Pineville officially became the county seat in 1857 when the state legislature required all

letters and packages.
The county seat of Pineville was the filming location of the 1938 Western "Jesse James" about the infamous outlaw. McDonald County native Dabbs Greer launched his acting career as an extra in the film and then went on to become a series regular in TV shows like "Gunsmoke" and "Little House on the Prairie," and played the older version of Tom Hanks' character in the Oscar-winning film "The Green Mile."
Pineville's position as the county seat didn't come easily,



county seats to be closer to the center of the county. Pineville is located on Elk River, which attracts thousands of people who flock there each summer to canoe along with Big Sugar Creek and Indian Creek. Big Sugar Creek State Park, which was created in the 1990s to preserve part of the Elk River water system, sits on more than 2,000 acres and is home to rare plants like the Chinquapin tree.

Get to Know features new NACo member counties.

Annual Conference

From ANNUAL page 4

West regions will hold elections for their representatives before attendees get together for the closing reception at Austin City Limits at the Moody Theater.
A bevy of social and networking events will provide opportunities for county officials to form new friendships and compare approaches to issues that all counties face. To sweeten the deal, Visit Austin has negotiated discounts at nearby restaurants and entertainment venues for conference badge-wearing patrons on Friday, July 21. Also, by showing your conference badge, attendees will receive discounted admission to the LBJ Presidential Library from July 20-25.
The Passport to Prizes program will offer an incentive for enterprising attendees to visit many of the more than 182 vendors in the exhibit hall. The conference's annual community service project will involve stuffing backpacks with school supplies for students in the Austin Public Schools system. **CN**

You can read daily County News coverage of the conference at www.naco.org/news.

NEWS FROM ACROSS THE NATION

OHIO

• **CUYAHOGA COUNTY'S Fresh Water Institute** will partner with nonprofits and public and private entities and work with universities and philanthropic foundations to build a business strategy around the economic development potential of the area's lakes and rivers, Ideastream Public Media reported. The institute will focus on education advocacy, research and economic development.

ALABAMA

A **WILCOX COUNTY** program is **helping young adults get employed**. The Summer Youth Employment Program, run by the non-profit Wilcox Works, connects local businesses that are looking to fill open positions with county residents ages 15-21 who are seeking a job. The program also teaches participants basic skills, like how to apply for a job, interview and learning about the onboarding process. The non-profit partners with 23 local businesses and other organizations including the Wilcox County Commission and Wilcox County Extension.

dents, including creating a crisis intervention training program for first responders to de-escalate a situation in which someone is experiencing a mental health crisis, launching the county's first pilot program for mental health services in a primary pediatric care office for minors and adding 10 more crisis stabilization

unit beds to the Central Florida Behavioral and University Behavioral Center.



IOWA

CALHOUN, CASS and VAN BUREN COUNTIES are receiving funding through state grants to **cut down on emergency response times**. The Iowa United First Aid program, funded through the Governor's Empower Rural Iowa Initiative, is equipping trained volunteers with an app that delivers 911 dispatch alerts when an emergency occurs in their vicinity. The \$150,000 is going toward training volunteers and providing them with the necessary equipment to perform first aid, bleeding control, CPR and use of an automated external defibrillator, so that victims can be stabilized while an ambulance is on the way.

LOUISIANA

A **JEFFERSON PARISH** program is **connecting its formerly incarcerated population** to employment, housing, legal services and medical and mental health services. Loui-

siana Prisoner Re-entry Initiative (LaPRI) participants are chosen before they finish their sentences to ensure they're supported upon release. In an attempt to reduce recidivism, the parish is targeting people who have been deemed most at-risk of reoffending because of a lack of support services.

"We have people who have paid their debt to society and are back in society and we have a tremendous number of jobs open," said Jefferson Parish Council member Byron Lee, who devoted \$100,000 from his district's discretionary fund to the program. "... We're helping to support the workforce through this endeavor making sure formerly incarcerated people get a second chance but also business-

es benefit from their labor."

MICHIGAN

WAYNE, GENESSEE and MARQUETTE COUNTIES are **employing low-level, non-violent offenders** instead of having them serve jail time. Two hundred people who would otherwise be incarcerated will be eligible for Job Court in the county each year, which the Michigan Legislature has appropriated nearly \$5 million toward in the three counties.

NORTH CAROLINA

The **MECKLENBURG COUNTY** Detention Center will offer a **poetry program** that involves personal devel-

See NEWS FROM page 11

COLORADO

EAGLE COUNTY, which includes the city of Vail, is **paying homeowners to rent to local workers** instead of tourists. Residents who choose to participate in the Lease to Locals program will receive a stipend ranging from \$2,000 to \$12,000, depending on how long the lease is. The county's housing authority is hoping to include at least 40 homes by the end of this year that will house 78 local workers.

FLORIDA

ORANGE COUNTY is implementing expanded **mental health services** for its resi-

ILLINOIS

MADISON COUNTY Community Development is partnering with the electric services company Ameren Illinois to provide low-income families with **free window air conditioners** as the temperatures heat up. Eligible households must be at or below 200% of the Federal Poverty Guidelines and consist of residents who are elderly, disabled or have children 5 years old or younger.





VIRGINIA

- Throughout July, which is Park and Recreation Month, **PRINCE WILLIAM COUNTY** Parks, Recreation and Tourism will hold a **raffle** for park users. Using a free PWC Parks Explorer Park and Recreation Month Pass, visitors and community members are invited to visit parks and locations throughout the county and then “check in” using the Pass on their phone or mobile device, and after four check-ins, they’ll be entered in the raffle, *Potomac Local* reported.

From NEWS FROM page 10

opment. “Empowering Self” is a twice-weekly class that encourages men to express themselves regarding personal challenges that led them to incarceration, with hopes of addressing and resolving those conflicts.

OHIO

- Women suffering from substance use disorders who are involved in the justice system in **TRUMBULL COUNTY** will get some help thanks to the new **women’s therapeutic docket program** being offered.

The program will offer rehabilitation to women suffering from drug addiction. Also: Peer support and a safe space to discuss any traumas or issues they may be facing. It was inspired by a similar program in **MONTGOMERY COUNTY**.

Participants will need to

complete five different phases of treatment before graduating from the program. Participants will have to undergo drug testing, proof of employment or enrollment in the docket employment program and weekly peer meetings.

PENNSYLVANIA

The **BUCKS COUNTY** commissioners approved \$16 million for the construction of a **mental health diversion center**. The building will be divided into a short-term observation unit, a restoration to competency unit and a residential treatment facility with a 28-person capacity, Patch reported. The short-term unit will have an eight-bed capacity with an expected stay of up to two weeks.

SOUTH CAROLINA

Rental properties in unincorporated **RICHLAND**

COUNTY will adjust to new registration and business license requirements. Residential landlords who own a single rental property may register that property through the county’s Business Service Center, and landlords who own and rent more than one residential unit must register those properties and obtain a business license. Previously, residential landlords were only required to obtain a business license if they owned three or more rental units.

VIRGINIA

- “Go fly a kite” is no longer fightin’ words in **FAIRFAX COUNTY**, where the park authority has **banned kite fighting**.

Kite fighting involves the use of super-sharp strings to attack and cut the lines of opposing kites, often as metal filament, piano wire, fishing line or a line coated with glass fragments. The result is a losing kite that creates an uncontrolled weapon, subject to the whims of the wind, which can damage wildlife or plants and damage maintenance equipment. Individuals who refuse or repeatedly violate this rule may potentially be banned from park use.

WASHINGTON

Starting in January 2025, businesses in unincorporated **KING COUNTY** must accept **cash** for certain transactions and cannot charge higher prices for those transactions under a new County Council ordinance. The ordinance allows retailers to reject bills more than \$20 or transactions of more than \$200.

Retailers will be able to apply for an exemption if the business faces unique hardships, including a theft history, proximity to a banking institution or businesses that operate out of a home and those with only one employee onsite at a time.

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



TRAVIS COUNTY, TEXAS

Travis County, founded in 1839, was named for William Barret Travis, the commander of the Republic of Texas forces at the Battle of the Alamo. Travis County’s seal was adopted in 1975 and designed by the county treasurer at the time, Johnny Crow.

The seal highlights notable county structures including the State Capitol building, the University of Texas tower and the Austin city skyline. Other imagery featured includes two Bergstrom AFB jets for the Bergstrom Air Force Base, a Hill Country deer jumping over a native cactus, a sailboat on Highland Lakes and the justice scales for the Travis County and District Court systems.



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

I Love My County Because...

ART CONTEST Submit your artwork at **NACo.org/ART**

Now accepting entries!

Check out the website for more information



OREGON

A new **MULTNOMAH COUNTY** program is rehabilitating waterlogged, rusted, abandoned and **rundown boats**. The county sheriff’s office River Patrol Unit, partnership with Metro Regional Government and the Oregon State Marine Board helps owners properly dispose of unseaworthy or poor condition vessels and thus far has disposed of 19 derelict and abandoned vessels across the region, five of which had to be removed from waterways.

The program is free to owners, and funding comes from Oregon House Bill 5202.

BRIGHT IDEAS | SARATOGA COUNTY, N.Y.

Saratoga County Program Trains Teens to Fill Emergency Medical Service Gaps

PROBLEM:

Saratoga County was facing a shortage of emergency services workers.

SOLUTION:

The county is partnering with local high schools and community colleges to turn interested teens into first responders.

by **Meredith Moran**
staff writer

Facing a looming shortage of emergency services workers, Saratoga County, N.Y. is providing teens with Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) training.

There's been a nearly 10% drop in certified EMTs in the past decade in New York, according to the State Department of Health Bureau of EMS. Just last year alone, 15% of available personnel in the state didn't renew their certification cards, which has been largely attributed to pandemic-related burnout and stress.

To help fill that gap, Saratoga County's Workforce Development is partnering with the town of Clifton Park, Clifton Park-Halfmoon EMS, Hudson Valley Community College (HVCC) and Shenendehowa High School to turn interested teens into first responders. The EMT Career Pathway for Youth program launched in June 2022 and expanded county-wide this year, according to Jennifer McCloskey, director of Saratoga County Workforce Development.

"We're very lucky to not be at an emergency level at this point for staffing, but it's definitely something that's been talked about in the EMS community, trying to get younger people involved earlier," McCloskey said. "Really what my goal was, because there's a lot of EMT training where you can go to your local firehouse and they'll have a weekend program and things like that, but

I wanted to identify a pathway for kids who are interested in going into the medical field.

"So, the way we developed it was that they would be enrolled at the community college and by the end of the program, in addition to being certified EMTs, they also have seven credits that they can use toward furthering their education at the college and potentially go on to be a paramedic, go on to nursing, the medical field, so it's really identifying that pathway and giving that first experience to the kids."

The program features 140 hours of instruction and practical lab time in addition to 10 patient ride-alongs with Clifton Park-Halfmoon EMS. It takes place over the summer, four days a week from 9 a.m. to 2:30 p.m., in order to best cater to teens' schedules, McCloskey said.

"The kids really give up their whole summer, because we

have that shortened timeframe with which to get the certifications done," McCloskey said. "We really wanted to make it easy for the students to attend, so that's why it's important that we do it in the summer, so that we're not trying to schedule around other activities during the school year. With it being a summer program, it's a really intensive curriculum."

Simon Gorby, a Saratoga County teen who graduated from the program last year, said he was grateful the program allowed him to get EMT-certified earlier and on a timeframe that fit his schedule.

"Trying to get the training to be an EMT is sort of a rough process, it's not a short course," Gorby said. "It's not something that you can just do in a week, it's definitely a time commitment to get into it and it seemed like a perfect opportunity for students that have the capability of learning new things, they're

still in their stage of developing learning these skills and they have the time throughout the summer to do it. It's much easier to get people to have time to do it when they're younger than when they're trying to have a job."

Gorby said he was initially motivated to get EMT certified because of his volunteer work with the fire department. But he said he thinks the training is helpful for anyone to have.

"I think that what was taught in the course is not only useful skills for jobs, like as an EMT, but just in general health safety and basic care," Gorby said. "If someone's in some type of emergency, I know what I'm looking for and what the medics or EMTs coming to the scene are looking for, so they will have that information before they make it."

High schoolers don't need to take any prerequisites to qualify for the program, but they

must be at least 16 when they start training and 17 by the time they take the final certification exam through the state. McCloskey said another integral element to the program is how community-based it is.

"It's building that community with our young people to get involved and to help people," McCloskey said. "And hopefully, they'll go through their training and become who they want to become as adults and stay here in Saratoga County, because they've built those community relationships, so that's really the more holistic program idea than just simply putting people through training." **CN**

The Saratoga County EMT Career Pathway for Youth program earned NACo's Best in Category Achievement Award in 2023 in the Personnel Management, Employment and Training category.

