

CN

CountyNews

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NATIONAL MONUMENT BORDERS: NEVADA COUNTY SEEKS INPUT
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COUNTY LIBRARIANS ON FRONT LINES OF OPIOID CRISIS
PG. 6

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION of COUNTIES

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JULY 24, 2017

Annual Conference brings new leaders and policies

A vibrant, forward-looking, resident-centric county greeted NACo members attending the 2017 Annual Conference and Exposition in Franklin County, Ohio, which ended today July 24 with the election of a new leadership team and a stronger commitment to the conference's theme: Counties Unite America.

The conference drew 1,500 county officials and guests to Columbus, home of the Ohio state capital and the Columbus Clippers, a minor-league affiliate of the Cleveland Indians, owned by Franklin County.

At the general sessions attendees heard from USDA Secretary Sonny Perdue on the Trump Administration's plans for rural America, and Piper Kerman, whose autobiographical book, *Orange Is the New Black*, inspired the popular



Downtown Columbus, Ohio on a beautiful summer day. Columbus is the capital of Ohio and largest city of Franklin County. Main Street Bridge spans the Scioto River in Downtown Columbus. Getty Images

Netflix series of the same name.

Another popular media-associated personality, Lou Dobbs, spoke at the closing general session. Dobbs anchors the *Lou Dobbs Tonight* show on the Fox Business Network. A self-described independent populist, he is known for his opposition to NAFTA and support

for immigration enforcement.

Moving far, far away from earth, NASA Marshall Space Flight Center Director Todd May and NASA John H. Glenn Research Deputy Director Maria E. Perez-Davis, PhD, engaged in a conversation about the future of space travel, and back on earth, but still closer

to space, Ed Viesturs, the only American mountaineer to have climbed the world's 14 highest peaks without supplemental oxygen, talked about his strategies to manage risk in extreme environments.

Several special, high-level discussions were undertaken at the conference that reflected

the broad scope of county interests. The CIO Forum and Tech Town Hall updated professional staff and county leaders on the threats and promise of emerging information technologies such as artificial intelligence and Big Data. The opioid crisis

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Desloge proudest of 'speaking up loudly'

Each year, County News offers outgoing NACo presidents an opportunity to review and describe their year in office. Outgoing NACo President Bryan Desloge, Leon County, Fla. commissioner, takes his turn.

How would you describe your year as NACo president?

I would describe my year as NACo president the way I once heard a celebrated Olympic bobsledder describe the unique talent and skills he brought to his job when he said, "I just held on and tried not to die." The job

of NACo president is not unlike many of the unique roles and experiences that we as elected officials are fortunate enough to have in our brief time in public office.

For me, the experience has been exhilarating, refreshing and exhausting all at once. Of course, it has been the relationships I have made in this role that make all the hard work and travel worth every minute. I owe a tremendous debt of gratitude to my fellow board members, Matt Chase and the amazing NACo staff, a dedicated aide



Desloge

and the Leon County government family back home whose support made this opportunity possible for me.

What was the most challenging part of your role as president?

As county commissioners, none of us are strangers to challenges, and the tough and sometimes unpopular decisions that come with the job. Similarly, in the role of president, the greatest difficulty of the job is not in finding the right answers, but in having the courage to act on the knowledge you have.

As president, you put yourself way out there on the issues that

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Bryan Desloge, NACo president, reflects on past year

From DESLOGE page 1

matter the most to all counties. Sometimes those issues are controversial and the challenge for the president is not to “go wobbly,” but to have the courage to speak truth to power. It’s

easier said than done and rising to this challenge does not take a special brand of courage inherent in a select few, but rather it takes the moral and intellectual support of the people around you to do it effectively. In my opinion, that support structure

is one of the things that makes NACo so effective.

What did you find most interesting or exciting?

Prior to becoming president, I thought I had a great appreciation for the vast diversity of issues and the immense range of challenges among counties. I even thought I had a healthy respect for the talent and dedication of elected officials and public professionals ... I had no idea. What I found most interesting during my time as president was seeing how counties adapt, evolve and adjust to tremendously complex challenges of all stripes and innovate to find new ways to better serve their communities in spite of the challenges.

Counties continue to be the greatest laboratory of ideas and solutions to address the real problems real people face every day. And what excites me most is knowing the enormous potential we have as an organization to share and scale ideas to improve the lives of so many people.

What are you proudest of?

As an adept politician, I could probably come up with ways to connect myself with some of NACo’s biggest accomplishments over the past year, but I don’t know if that would be quite accurate. I guess what I am truly most proud of is holding myself accountable for the things I told myself I would do if given the opportunity to serve as president. As such, I am proud to have tried to lighten the load of others and to then follow through.

I showed up. I said yes more than no. I tried to provide a calm and pragmatic voice when it was needed and tried to remind myself to speak up loudly for

those whose voice might not otherwise be heard. And finally, I felt a tremendous obligation to build on the good work of the others who came before me and to be inclusive and find opportunities for others to contribute their talents to NACo. These are the things I am most proud of.

What advice would you give your successor?

Lose 15 lbs. before you take office as you will gain them back quickly with all the food available. Get your TSA Pre-check number from the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) — avoid those long screening lines at airports. Make sure you have someone who can handle as many of your county duties as possible as you will often be handling them by phone, email and text.

Take some down time between trips — you’re in for a long haul with a great deal of time away from the office and home. Just know that you have an extraordinary support team in the NACo staff, who will help get you through it. You may also want to make sure your fellow commissioners know of the amount of time required as there may be times you will either have to call into Commission meetings or miss them altogether. With all of the above said, it was an incredible experience.

What’s next for Bryan Desloge?

A long nap.

Final thoughts?

It’s not enough to fight the good fight. We have to continue to demonstrate that we still do that which is worth fighting for. **CN**

Forums look at critical issues

From ANNUAL page 1

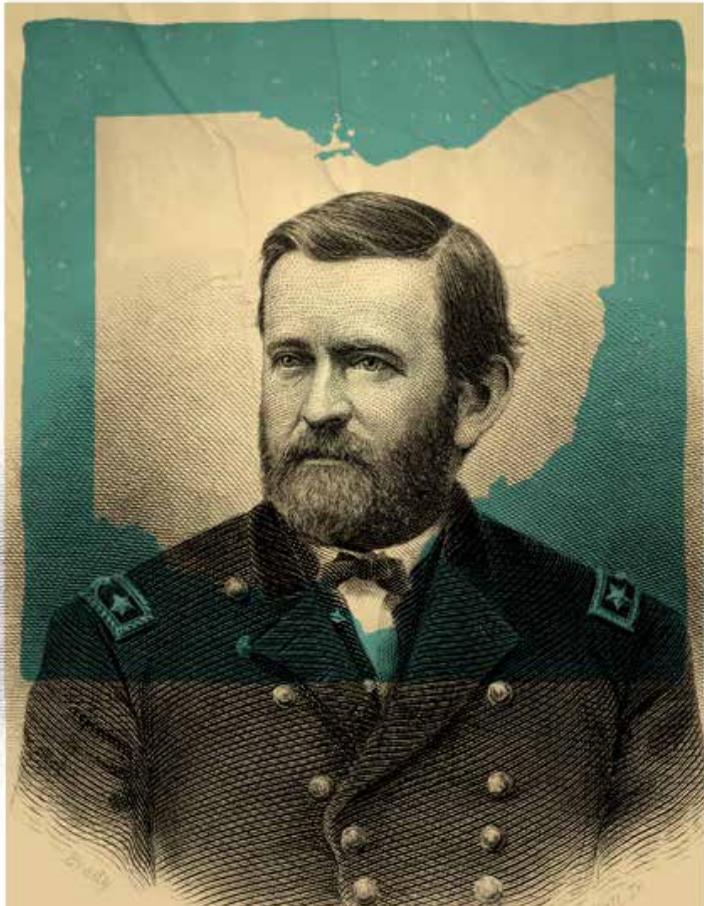
took center stage at a town hall and special exhibit showcasing examples of solutions used to fight the epidemic.

One of several summits examined early childhood policies and practices that promote healthy development. Another reviewed the progress of NACo’s Stepping Up project that assists counties in diverting persons with mental illness from their jails and into treatment. A third took a full day on the topic of resilient counties, paying special attention to financing disaster management, resource recycling and infrastructure needs.

An increasingly popular function at NACo conferences is the mobile tour, where conference attendees go off-site to get an up-close look at interesting projects, programs or economic engines for the region. This year, most mobile tours were sold-out weeks before the conference began. Here’s a sample: Nationwide Children’s Hospital Campus, Cybersecurity and Tier IV Data Center, Farber Factory Tour, Scioto Mile and National Veterans Museum Presentation Tour and the Rick-enbacker Inland Port.

Another popular conference feature, the annual NextGen service project, now in its fifth year, saw volunteers fill 365 backpacks with toiletries, games and puzzles for teens and children admitted to the Nationwide Children’s Hospital in Columbus.

A full report on the conference will be published in the Aug. 7 issue of *County News*. Meanwhile, visit NACo.org for more immediate coverage. **CN**



SNAP/FACTS

BIRTHPLACE OF PRESIDENTS OHIO’S PRESIDENTIAL COUNTIES

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Hamilton County.....	William Howard Taft
Delaware County.....	Rutherford B. Hays
Hamilton County.....	Benjamin Harrison
Cuyahoga County.....	James A. Garfield
Trumbull County.....	William McKinley
Clermont County.....	Ulysses S. Grant

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Solar eclipse to draw millions to mostly rural counties

By Charlie Ban
senior staff writer

When a total solar eclipse darkens the sky Aug. 21 — the first to cross the country since June 8, 1918 — Grant County, Ore. is going to be an ideal place to watch.

It's directly in the zone of totality, the path where the moon will completely block out the sun for two-and-a-half minutes as it moves west to east, to South Carolina. Outside of the zone, observers will still see a partial eclipse. But that route will likely bring untold millions to a narrow band of the country that will see a one-in-a-lifetime display, to places with emergency departments not suited for such large crowds.

Counties across the eclipse's path, most of them rural, will become as dense as cities for a few days, and requiring commensurate services from law enforcement and public health departments, on top of emergency management. The eclipse will cross over larger urban counties in the Midwest and Southeast, including part of Jackson County, Mo. (Kansas City), Davidson County, Tenn. (Nashville), Richland County, S.C. (Columbia) and Charleston County, S.C.,

though possible cloudy conditions in the East may interfere with viewing.

In Grant County, clouds are sparse, there's not much light pollution and public land — 66 percent of the 4,500 square-mile county — is plentiful. County Judge Scott Myers expects a half-million people will visit his county of 7,000 residents and one stop light, and he's concerned because the eclipse comes during the height of fire season, when the high desert region east of the Cascade Mountains has been starved of rainfall and snow melt for months. The same goes for other parts of Oregon and Wyoming, before the eclipse moves east into damper climates. The eclipse will be at maximum at 10:23 a.m. in Grant County.

"We're pretty nervous about

the influx of people," he said. "It's dead-center on our fire season. A lot of people expected to come in are smokers, particularly the Germans and the Japanese."

The county airport will be closed all day but staffed with 100 firefighters, eight helicopters and six planes.

Adding to the fire threat, the visitors will be filling in parts of the county that are usually vacant, adding to the complexity of the emergency response effort if a fire or other disaster breaks out.

"It only takes one or two accidents on a small county like this to tie up all of your emergency response," said Grant County emergency management director Ted Williams. "We could be dealing with traffic issues right up to the moment this happens."

"Communication is going to be our biggest vulnerability," he said. "With the canyons, we have very little cell phone coverage, and what we do have will be overloaded when you have that many people. You'll have to be using a satellite phone or a land line."

Landowners along the zone of totality are selling campsites and RV parking for around \$400 a night.

"We just know when someone puts an ad on our chamber of commerce that they can put up 15 RVs, for \$400 a night... they book them all in about 20 minutes," Myers said. "So, we can get some sort of idea how many people will be on private property, but given how much BLM (Bureau of Land Management) land we have here, that's when it's hard to predict."

Residents who won't be

cashing in on letting visitors stay on their property have expressed some concerns to Myers, many of which reflect his own.

"Retired people are worried about if they'll be able to get to the store, get their meds, fuel... if people will try to trespass on their property," he said. "I'm worried about whether there will be enough fuel to get people out of town. A few RVs can drain a gas station's tanks, so they'll need to ration, if they can't bring in temporary tanks. I'm worried stores won't plan ahead enough."

It's not just for Aug. 21. Given the limited capacity of the roads leading into most of Eastern Oregon, tourism boards are recommending coming days in advance to

See **ECLIPSE** page 4

GET TO
KNOW...

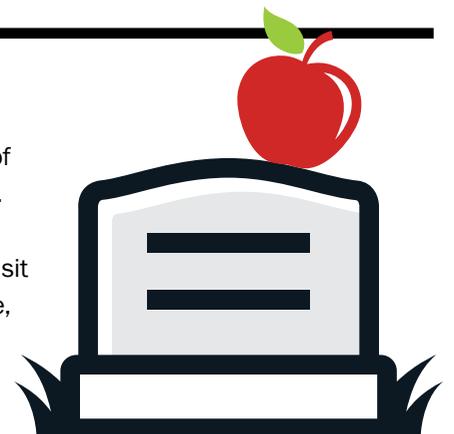


Allen County, Ind.

Welcome, Allen County, Ind.

Allen County is the third-most populous county in Indiana, within a one-day drive of one-third of the U.S. population and one-fifth of Canadians.

Johnny Appleseed is said to have died in Allen County sometime in 1845. You can visit his tombstone in the county seat of Fort Wayne, but some say he is not actually buried there. Ask the experts about it yourself at the annual **Johnny Appleseed Festival** in September!



Appropriators push ahead on spending bills

By Zachary George
legislative assistant

With the August recess fast approaching, the House Appropriations Committee continues its work on the 12 annual appropriations bills for FY18. To date, the committee has passed seven bills and anticipates approving the final five bills in the next two weeks. Combined, these 12 bills will direct government funding for the next fiscal year.

However, the appropriations committee has moved ahead of the normal budget process. Traditionally, appropriators base spending bills on a budget resolution passed by both chambers, which sets funding amounts for all federal agencies and programs. To date, neither the House or Senate have passed a FY18 budget resolution.

House budget negotiations ongoing

In the House, budget committee leadership continues working on their FY18 budget resolution with negotiations ongoing between moderate and conservative members. House Republicans hope to use the FY18 budget to lay the groundwork for tax reform and some cuts to mandatory spending levels. However, prior to signing off on the budget resolution, the House Freedom Caucus — a group of 30 to 40 most conservative members of the House — hopes to ensure the tax reform outline will not include the border adjustability tax (BAT) and does include steep cuts to entitlement programs.

House Budget Chair Diane Black (R-Tenn.) and majority leadership remain in discussions with Freedom Caucus members over these issues, as they will be unable to pass a budget without their block of votes.

Reports indicate the House budget resolution, which has yet to be released, will

also include reduced levels of non-defense discretionary spending while increasing the amount of defense discretionary spending. Notably, this increase in defense spending would be above the funding caps set by the Budget Control Act of 2011 (P.L. 112-25), requiring a new bipartisan budget agreement to fund these programs at this level. Such an agreement could be difficult to reach since Democrats would be unlikely to accept significant reductions in nondefense spending in exchange for higher defense caps.

Still, House appropriators are pushing forward with their bills, even though if a new spending agreement is reached, it could require them to rewrite certain bills to meet the new spending levels.

Senate progress

Across the Capitol, the Senate Appropriations Committee is moving at a slower pace, and will likely mark up many of their spending bills after the August recess. The committee has approved the Military Construction-VA bill, and it may address additional bills in the next couple of weeks. Similar to the House, any bills passed by the Senate committee may need to be rewritten if a new budget agreement is reached.

County impact

Federal appropriations govern a number of programs that are key county priorities. In the House, the Housing and Urban Development bill maintains level funding for the Community Development Block Grant and the HOME Investment Partnership grants, while the Labor, Health and Human Services and Education bill continues support for the Social Services Block Grant and the Community Services Block Grant.

Other county priorities could be affected in future bills the committees will mark up. **CN**

Fire season coincides with solar eclipse

From ECLIPSE page 3

avoid traffic jams.

“There will be gawkers who think they can leave Portland and get to Eastern Oregon that day,” Myers said. “They’re going to be stuck somewhere between Mt. Hood and Madras.”

Williams said the planning exercise will be productive, particularly if Grant County, among others in the central and eastern parts of the state, someday take in refugees from the west in the event of a Cascadia Subduction Zone earthquake and tsunami that would affect coastal Oregon and Washington.

“We’ll be tasked with taking a lot of people, and this will show us what we’re capable of,” he said.

Bill Brinton has a harder time estimating how many people will show up in Buchanan County, Mo. where he is the emergency management director and chairman of the regional eclipse planning committee, which includes 150 people from seven counties. The eclipse will peak at 1:07 p.m.

“There are 20 million people within a four-hour drive of St. Joseph,” the county seat, he said. “Another 200 million live 8–10 hours away.”

More than 2 million live in the Kansas City metropolitan region, half of which will get a shade of the eclipse, but nothing like Buchanan County, home to 95,000 people.

Brinton expects a lot of the viewers to stop in strip mall parking lots along a road that runs directly under the path of the eclipse.

“A few cars here, a few cars there,” he said. “When it comes, people are just going to stop in the middle of the street and watch from their car hoods.”

Toward the end of the eclipse’ path over North America, it will pass over Richland County, S.C., home to the state’s capital, at 2:43 p.m.

“We look at this as similar to Pope John Paul II’s visit in 1987 in terms of planning,”

said Michael Byrd, Richland County’s director of emergency management. “We know we’ll need lots of traffic control, extra public safety resources available. We’ll be monitoring everything that is going on. I feel like we’ll be able to handle things with the resources we have, it will just be an all-hands-on-deck situation.”

On top of emergency management planning, some counties have taken steps to regulate what they can in advance.

Jackson County, Ill. passed an ordinance regulating temporary campgrounds, requiring landowners to register with the county health department, requiring landowners to maintain those campgrounds to state and local standards, including the county food service sanitation ordinance for any food vendors.

The county also updated its portable toilet and handwashing station ordinances.

Washington County, Idaho, with a population of 10,000, has already declared a disaster, well ahead of when anyone arrives, and 100,000 are expected.

The lessons the county learned after massive snowfall collapsed 225 buildings earlier in the year taught Commission Chairman Kirk Chandler it was a good idea to get in front of that.

“We were the first to declare a disaster with the snow and we were the first to get paid,” he said. “Roads are going to be impassible, the state department of transportation is saying traffic isn’t going to be moving most of the day.”

Like Grant County, Washington County will be very dry, and the fire risk concerns Chandler. “People are going to be pulling over into dry grass and will probably keep their engines going,” he said. “That’s a tinderbox waiting to happen.”

The eclipse will “make land-fall” in Lincoln and Tillamook counties, Ore. at 10:16 a.m. PDT. It will leave the United States at 4:09 p.m. EDT from Georgetown and Charleston counties, in South Carolina. Along the way, the zone of totality will cross through parts of 290 counties in 14 states. **CN**



OTERO COUNTY, Colo.

Introduced in: June 1983

Designed by: Bob Ashida

Otero County, on the high plains of southeastern Colorado, has relied on being part of transportation routes as it has grown. It is along many routes of the 19th century’s Santé Fe Trail Mountain Route trail system, which connected the United States to Mexico.

Agricultural fields surround La Junta, and are the source of Rocky Ford watermelon seeds, cantaloupes, corn, peppers and tomatoes, among other garden vegetables.



An Amtrak route runs daily through the county seat of La Junta and is represented centrally on the county’s logo.

Otero County rarely sees much cloud cover, so the sun looms as large over the seal and it does throughout the county.

Would you like to see your county’s seal featured? Contact Charlie Ban at cban@naco.org.

Nevada county hopes for voice in national monument borders

By **Charlie Ban**
senior staff writer

Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke's ongoing review of national monument designations is giving Western counties an opportunity to provide input on their boundaries — which they say they lacked before. It's also an opportunity to address the use of the Antiquities Act of 1906, which gives the president the power to unilaterally restrict land uses to hiking and hunting or fishing.

Zinke will deliver his recommendations to President Trump on Aug. 24, but has, in the interim, announced he would advise no changes to two monuments in Washington and Idaho. Public comment on the review closed earlier in July, garnering more than 1.4 million comments.

While much of the attention around the Antiquities Act has focused on President Obama's late-term designations of Bears Ears in Utah, Lincoln County, Nev. is hoping to make the case to Zinke for cutting back the Basin and Range National Monument, most of which falls within its borders. Basin and Range was designated in 2015 and was described by the *Las Vegas Review-Journal* as "one of the emptiest spaces in a state famous for its emptiness." County officials insist that within the emptiness lies potential for economic development, now dashed by the designation.

The monument prevents development of a rail line to the proposed, but currently dormant, development of a nuclear waste storage facility at Yucca Mountain, in Nye County, which local communities support but the state opposes.

"The rail corridor alone would generate close to \$12 million a year in personal



Basin and Range National Monument. Photo courtesy of Bureau of Land Management Nevada

use tax," said Commissioner Varlin Higbee. "Another thing is that jobs that would come with it. Wherever they take the train off of the line, they want to put in a cask (for the waste) maintenance facility and a place where they actually build the casks. So, you're looking at 200, 300 support jobs that come with the train and those kinds of jobs build a community."

Though some mining and grazing operations can be grandfathered into monument designations, Lincoln County Public Lands Manager Connie Simkins said that hasn't been the case.

"Since the designation, we've found that the grazing operations have been hindered, the off-road events that have historically been held have been hindered, grazing allotments have been stopped and use of gravel pits for county road development has been stopped," she said.

"A little bit over 12 percent of our county is taken out of multiple use, and this county is a resource-based county

— mining and ranging. The county is 97 percent federally-managed land, 232,000 acres out of 6.8 million that are private property that are available for our commissioners to set taxes on to run the county government and services."

The monument's 705,000 acres made up 6 percent of the county's 6.8 million total acreage. Roughly the same acreage was already protected by the wilderness designation that preceded the national monument. Zinke is visiting Lincoln County in late July.

"Not once were representatives from Lincoln County contacted for our opinion or conversations related to the matter," said Commissioner Kevin Phillips, outlining NACo's and the Nevada Association of Counties' position on the Antiquities Act, which President Obama invoked in Basin and Range's creation after legislation to do so failed. Phillips is president of the state association.

"Lincoln County is on record for years opposing another wilderness designation

within the county.

"We'd like to eliminate it if possible, or shrink the footprint. The true antiquities are already inside a wilderness area and protected to the nth degree and it puts on another layer of BLM management."

Lincoln County's proposed boundaries for a smaller Basin and Range include three sites, one of which falls south of the current boundaries.

That, Phillips said, would fall closer to the wording in the Antiquities Act, which says monuments should be "confined to the smallest area compatible with proper care and management of the objects to be protected."

The antiquities within the monument include Native American rock art, several mountain ranges and some modern art, under a conservation easement by the Los Angeles County Museum of Art. Four wilderness areas, totaling 123,000 acres, currently protect those sites, and the county praises the BLM's funding and staffing.

In a letter to Zinke, NACo

Executive Director Matt Chase supported the department's monument review, and emphasized NACo's position that special use designations should require the support of county officials, to avoid "major controversies that sow distrust between citizens and the federal government."

"Oftentimes, counties and local governments find themselves shut out of the process in land management decisions. Monument designations made without local government input and approval generate significant controversy, and can cause economic hardship for communities if historic land uses such as grazing, mining, energy development, timber production, and recreational activities are restricted."

Designations in Wyoming and Alaska require congressional approval, which Nevada's state association hopes to achieve. An issue paper published by the association in June 2017 lays out the problems, on principle, with the monument designation process and preliminary legislative action, including stakeholder meetings held 100 miles from affected residents and lack of representation by Lincoln and Nye county officials. The paper does praise the 2000 and 2004 wilderness designation processes in Lincoln County as test cases that demonstrate adequate local engagement and federal funding for management.

During his monument review, Zinke has suspended meetings of the Resource Advisory Councils, 38 volunteer-led sounding boards in Western states that include local officials, which has shut out many county officials who serve on those committees.

But, for an hour or so, a few county officials will have his ear. **CN**

Beyond books: Librarians on front line of opioid crisis

By **Mary Ann Barton**
senior staff writer

Last August, librarian Kitty Yancheff, public service division manager at Humboldt County's main library in Eureka, Calif. revived a man who had overdosed one afternoon while sitting at a computer table at the library. She noticed he was slumped over, sweating heavily, his lips turning blue. While another staff member called 911, Yancheff injected naloxone into the man's thigh. She gave him a second dose in his arm.

The library staff had recently been trained by the Humboldt County Department of Health and Human Services on how to use naloxone or Narcan, which revives someone who has overdosed on opioids. The library was stocked with the antidote.

Located on California's northern coast, the county has seen its drug-related death rates more than double since 1999, according to the California Department of Public Health. Nine people have died this year so far from drug overdoses in Humboldt County, according to the county Coroner's Office.

Librarians on the front lines

Most of the first responders in the opioid epidemic are sheriff's deputies or emergency medical technicians with fire departments. However, with surging opioid use claiming the lives of thousands across the country, unlikely county employees — librarians like Kitty Yancheff — are stepping up to help deal with the overdose crisis.

Public libraries have become a magnet of sorts for people with drug problems, often for the same reasons anyone visits libraries — because they're free, open to the public and generally welcome people to stick around and stay awhile.

Opioid overdoses are now the leading cause of death for



Humboldt County, Calif. librarian Kitty Yancheff was recognized by the Board of Supervisors for her efforts last year, when she revived a man who had overdosed on drugs at the library. Photo courtesy of Humboldt County

Americans under age 50. Drugs killed 52,404 in 2015 and likely topped 59,000 in 2016, the largest annual jump ever recorded in the United States.

'We want to be ready'

Like library systems in Carroll County, Md. and Waukesha, Wis., Salt Lake County, Utah, librarians are also being trained to administer antidotes to opioid overdoses.

"Basically, we're a public place, we have a lot of different people come in," said Liz Sollis, a spokeswoman for the county's library system. "A lot of people are struggling with opioids — they may have moved from dependency to addiction and they can experience an unintentional overdose. Our priority is the people we serve."

"We haven't had it [drug overdoses at the library] happen, but we want to be ready," Sollis said, noting that Utah "ranks high" among states with an opioid problem. The Centers for Disease Control ranks Utah seventh in the nation for drug overdoses.

About 50 management employees at the Salt Lake County library system were trained

in May on how to administer Narcan (which comes in both sprays or injections). Hundreds of other library employees who work in the county's libraries were also trained, by watching an instructional video, and learned how to recognize the signs of someone on opioids. Sollis noted that administering the antidote is not a job requirement.

"Training county library staff to respond to an opioid overdose and to help them save lives is the right thing to do," said Salt Lake County Library Director Jim Cooper. "We are a neighbor in most communities, and neighbors look out for each other."

Security cameras, police patrols, social workers

Although no one has overdosed on drugs at Salt Lake County's libraries, drug overdoses — sometimes fatal ones — are happening at many public libraries across the country. A 25-year-old homeless man died in February of a drug overdose in the restroom at the Central Library in Denver.

Having rules about restroom

use and security in place can be a deterrent, according to Steve Albrecht, author of *Library Security: Better Communication, Safer Facilities*. He recommends adding security cameras just outside of a library restroom, along with a sign noting that the location is under surveillance. Some libraries lock their restroom doors and require identification to use it.

At a Philadelphia branch library, where people had overdosed on drugs, volunteers now sit outside and notify security if someone is in the restroom longer than five minutes.

As a result of the fatal overdose in February, the library in Denver stocked 12 Narcan kits and more than 60 staff members have been trained on how to administer the drug; since February, the staff has had to use Narcan nine times.

Denver librarians placed 262 calls to 911 last year for overdoses as well as for trespassing and disturbances. The number of calls to 911 were up 30 percent from 2015, the library reported.

The Denver library is taking

measures to combat the problems, including adding more security cameras and regular patrols by police. As a result of an increased police presence, there have been 44 arrests at the library from January to May, a 33 percent increase from last year, the library reported.

"Our work with the Denver Police Department...is beginning to pay off," chief librarian Michelle Jeske said in a statement. "We are seeing positive changes that are making our facilities safer for all as we expand our efforts. We have more work to do and we're confident we're on the right track."

Like Salt Lake County, the library hired its first social worker two years ago and since then has hired another, as well as three "peer navigators" to help connect library patrons with social service providers. A peer navigator draws from his or her experience to help a person with mental illness.

The American Library Association is working to create a guide for librarians on how to recognize opioid use and how to address it. **CN**

BRIGHT IDEAS | YORK COUNTY, Va.

County Meets Needs of Residents Starting Home-Based Businesses

PROBLEM:

As more people create home-based businesses, they need help starting and growing their businesses.

SOLUTION:

York County, Va., started the Home-Based Business Assistance Program.

By **Mary Ann Barton**
senior staff writer

With more and more people starting businesses from home, York County, Va., has not only stepped up to help those residents get up and running, but is helping them grow their businesses.

Behind the trend: Retirees setting up shop as contractors and consultants after they've left the military or a corporate job, parents juggling work and family life, retailers moving from brick-and-mortar and millennials choosing when and where they work.

"It's such a growing trend — 66 percent of our business licenses are for home-based businesses," said Melissa Davidson, assistant director of the York County Economic Development Office, who oversees the county's Home-Based Business Assistance Program or "HBB" as some participants call it.

Located on the eastern shore of Virginia near the U.S. naval station at Norfolk, the county is home to thousands of military retirees including Toni Chavis. She and her husband, retired from the Air Force, started a home-based handyman and interior design business from their home in York County.

"A lot of people don't know where to start," Chavis said. The



Home-based business owners participate at York County, Va. Home-Based Business Resource Fair & Conference. Photo courtesy of York County

couple started a home-based business because they are parents and wanted a more flexible schedule. The county program has exposed her to "things you might not hear about," such as business laws and accounting issues, she said.

York County economic development staff and officials began noticing the home-based business trend about six years ago when they saw more and more residents applying for home-based business licenses.

The county decided to create its own program, after they had a hard time finding information to help residents. "We did a lot of research," Davidson said.

The program was launched by staff members in the county's Office of Economic Development with a one-time grant of \$25,000 from the state's Economic Development Authority, for the Home-Based Business Transition Grant Program, which helps home-based businesses transition to commer-

cial spaces. The county department, with an annual operating budget of \$474,000, devotes two of its three full-time staff members and one part-time staff member to the program. They spend about 20 to 30 percent of their time on it.

The Office of Economic Development often solicits private sponsorships to help defray costs of big events such as its annual resource fair and conference (the state's Economic Development Authority covers \$2,500 of the \$6,000 cost), held in the fall. The department's event budget is used to rent a venue (if not donated), pay for food that isn't donated and to market the event. "We try to get as many sponsorships and donations as possible," Davidson said.

Today, the program includes:

- **Transition Grants:** Matching grant funds, 50 percent up to a maximum of \$2,000 per business, can be awarded for supplies, equipment or inven-

tory; funding can also be used for down payments on the lease or purchase of commercial property or on marketing and promotion. The funding comes from Virginia's Economic Development Authority.

- **Home-Based Business Resource Fair & Conference:** An annual daylong event that focuses on the needs of the county's local home-based businesses and entrepreneurs. The day features a resource fair with more than 30 exhibitors, as well as sessions and specialty breakout tracts focused on topics relevant to all types of home-based businesses, including traditional, franchise and direct and network marketing. The conference hosted 106 participants its first year in the fall of 2015 and 147 its second year, in the fall of 2016. Another fair is set for this fall.

- **Home-Based Business Lunch & Learn Series:** Networking and educational opportunity. Monthly brown-bag

style sessions focus on topics relevant to doing business from home. Professionals are on hand to give tips and advice. In 2016, the lunches attracted 167 participants; this year, the lunch series so far has attracted 93 participants in the first six months.

- **E-commerce Grant Program:** Program encourages businesses to create or enhance their online presence. Fifty percent matching grants up to \$500 are awarded for design of new or upgraded websites.

- **NxLevel Scholarship Program:** The county offers matching scholarships up to \$300 for any citizen to take the Small Business Development Center's NxLevel Course, a 12-session national training program that helps entrepreneurs learn skills needed to create and strengthen successful business ventures.

The county also works closely

See **HOME-BASED** page 13

NACo receives federal funding to strengthen coastal counties' resilience

By **Sanah Baig**
program director

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) has selected NACo's

Community Resilience and Economic Development Program team to receive a grant from NOAA's Coastal Resilience Grant Program. The competition funds projects

that build resilience, including activities that protect life and property, safeguard people and infrastructure, strengthen the economy, or conserve and restore coastal and marine resources.

Over the next three years, NACo will provide technical assistance to coastal communities to help them better prepare, plan for, absorb the impacts of, recover from or adapt to extreme weather events and climate-related hazards.

NACo will join with the Association of State Floodplain Managers (ASFPM) and the Coastal States Organization (CSO) in this effort to assist coastal communities in developing strategies and policies that will result in more resilient coastal region economies and better stewardship of natural assets.

The program will have two phases: the development of a web-based, multimedia training program and a technical assistance (TA) program including several regional training workshops.

The web-based guide will teach coastal managers how to educate and work with local elected officials on coastal management issues to improve their community's resilience to changing coastal and economic conditions. The guide will synthesize existing tools in a way that is simple and easy to use. It will also connect local coastal managers and local elected officials with NOAA and other federal programs and to each other to create a coastal resilience network.

The in-person program activities will take place in coastal communities within the Gulf of Mexico NOAA Region (Alabama, Florida, Louisiana, Mississippi and Texas).

Applications inviting teams from these regions to apply will be available in 2018. **CN**

For more information, please contact Sanah Baig, program director, sbaig@naco.org.

MONEY MATTERS

State and Local Groups Begin Defense of SALT Deduction

By **Michael Belarmino**
senior policy advisor, GFOA

A Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA) report, *The Impact of Eliminating the State and Local Tax Deduction*, calculates the impact on individual taxpayers in each congressional district and illustrates a strong linkage between the deduction and homeownership. The report, released July 11 at a Capitol Hill briefing, concludes that if the state and local tax (SALT) deduction were repealed, individuals in every state and all income brackets would be adversely impacted.

As part of its tax reform efforts, Congress is debating whether to eliminate the SALT deduction, which allows taxpayers to deduct state and local property, income and sales taxes to reduce their federal tax liability. The SALT deduction, as well as other such deductions for mortgage interest or charitable giving, are routinely targeted whenever discussions to reform the federal tax code take place. Eliminating deductions in a tax reform package would allow the federal government to collect new revenue, which would offset the loss in revenue resulting from the lowering of federal income tax rates, which is a key GOP objective in tax reform.

The more notable findings from the report, which analyzed data from 2014, include:

- Almost 40 percent of taxpayers earning between \$50,000 to \$75,000 per year and more than 70 percent of taxpayers earning between \$100,000 to \$200,000 per year itemize deductions and use the SALT deduction
- Over 50 percent of the total amount of the SALT deduction goes to taxpayers making less than \$200,000 a year; and
- The SALT deduction is not a red state v. blue state issue,

taxpayer use of the deduction is widespread among all states regardless of geographic area, political identification, wealth, or economic activity.

The SALT deduction was one of six deductions allowed under the original federal income tax code enacted in 1913. For well over a century it has served as a core pillar supporting the federal-state-local partnership that maintains the essential public services upon which Americans rely.

State and local governments

Over 50 percent of the total amount of the SALT deduction goes to taxpayers making less than \$200,000 a year

utilize the revenues from property, sales and income taxes to help finance infrastructure projects, law enforcement, emergency services, education and many other services. Eliminating this provision could limit state and local control of our tax systems, and constrain the policy options available to address local challenges and increased responsibilities due to the devolution of federal programs.

NACo, along with its Big 7 partners (National Governors Association, National Conference of State Legislatures, Council of State Governments, National League of Cities, International City/County Management Association and the U.S. Conference of Mayors) and the National Association of State Budget Officers, joined GFOA in releasing the report. **CN**

A copy of the report can be viewed at www.gfoa.org.

PROFILES IN SERVICE

JEFF RADER

Board Member
Commissioner
DeKalb County, Ga.



Number of years involved in NACo: 2

Years in Public Service: 10

Occupation: City planner

Education: B.A. in economics from University of Georgia, master's in city and regional planning from Georgia Institute of Technology

The hardest thing I've ever done: Politically was vote for a tax increase in the depths of the recent recession.

Three people (living or dead) I'd invite to dinner: Alex Honnold, Barack Obama, Pope Francis.

You'd be surprised to learn that I: Don't use Facebook.

The most adventurous thing I've ever done is: Spent the summer motorcycling across the U.S.A.

My favorite way to relax is to: Cook for my family.

I'm most proud of: My kids.

Every morning I read: The *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* and *The New York Times*.

My favorite meal is: Grilled pompano.

My pet peeve is: Arrogant ignorance.

My motto is: Be prepared.

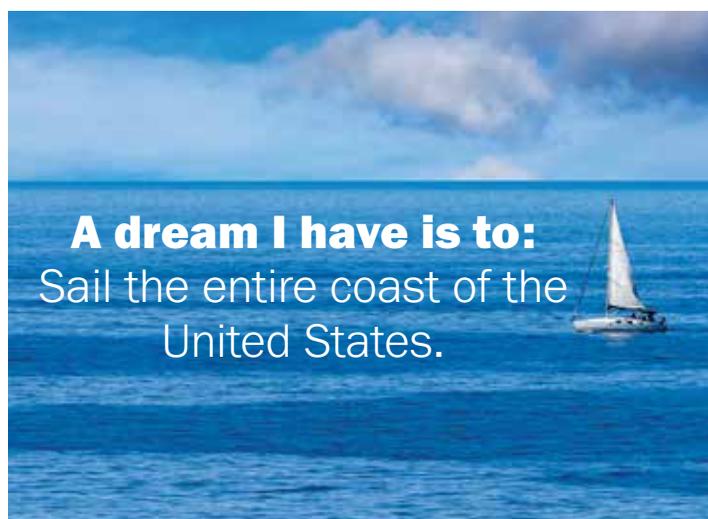
The last book I read was: *The Three Governors Controversy* about Georgia political history.

My favorite movie is: *It's a Wonderful Life*.

My favorite music is: Samba.

My favorite U.S. president is: Theodore Roosevelt.

My county is a NACo member because: It's a great way to exchange ideas and amplify our influence as local leaders.



ON THE MOVE

NACO STAFF

Alana Hurley

will serve as NACo's new leadership development manager. Alana will develop and coordinate educational programs for members; oversee logistics for the County Leadership Institute;



Hurley

support the Next Gen NACo Committee and manage the NACo Presidential Scholarship Program. Before joining NACo, she managed the continuing legal education programs for the American Association for Justice.

WORD SEARCH

OTERO COUNTY, COLO.

LEARN MORE ABOUT THIS FEATURED COUNTY IN 'BEHIND THE SEAL'

Created by Mary Ann Barton

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ARKANSAS RIVER: The river travels through the county.

BENT'S OLD FORT: Reconstructed trading post was last U.S. outpost before crossing the Arkansas River and entering Mexico.

COMANCHE: The Comanche National Grassland comprises 443,764 acres of range lands and 300 different species of animals.

DINOSAURS: More than 150 million years ago, Picketwire Canyonlands was teeming with Brontosaurus and Allosaurus. The canyons are home to the largest known set of dinosaur tracks in North America.

FORT CARSON: The U.S. Army installation.

FRANK FINNEY: The Frank Finney House is an 1899 Colonial Revival designed by Walter Dubree.

GRAND THEATRE: An art deco movie theater.

LA JUNTA: The county seat, Spanish for "the junction," is at the intersection of the Santa Fe Trail and a pioneer road to Pueblo.

MIGUEL OTERO: Namesake of Otero County and member of a prominent Hispanic family.

ROCKY FORD: One of the cities in Otero County.

SANTA FE TRAIL: The important trade route passed through Otero County.

SOUTHEAST: The county is located in the southeast portion of the state.

GEORGE W. SWINK: One of the first three county commissioners when the county was formed, who had a large impact on the area. Swink Bridge spans the Arkansas River in the county.

VOGEL CANYON: Area contains pre-historic rock art.

WATERMELON: A watermelon festival is held each year in September in Rocky Ford, a city in Otero County.

York County, Va. lends a hand to entrepreneurs

From HOME-BASED page 11

with the York County Chamber of Commerce, which offers short-term office and conference room rentals, as well as a home-based business ordinance review committee.

The county worked with the chamber to create a new membership tier just for home-based businesses, at a more affordable rate of \$125 a year.

"A lot of home-based businesses, you see them trying to meet at a Starbucks," Davidson said, but with a chamber membership they can hold meetings using conference rooms at the chamber.

As far as advice to other counties thinking of starting a similar program, Davidson said the

most important aspect is making that initial connection with home-based businesses and finding out what participants need.

The county made their first contact with program participants by reaching out the old-fashioned way.

"We sent out postcards inviting them to a launch breakfast," she said, adding that mailing addresses were matched with business license applications. After gathering RSVPs, they held the breakfast meeting at a county building. They held their first Lunch & Learn in November 2015.

One of the most well-attended Lunch & Learns was held in May, when the featured speaker gave organizing tips to partici-

pants on everything from creating a workspace to time management to work-life balance, Davidson said, noting how easily home-based businesses can sink into chaos when lines between business and home life are blurred.

Getting feedback from participants at all of the events is crucial, Davidson said. Surveys are emailed to participants afterward, asking attendees their opinions on everything from the speaker to the dessert, she said. "We get pretty good feedback, it keeps us on our toes." **CN**

If you want to learn more about York County's Home-Based Business Assistance Program, contact Melissa Davidson at: Melissa.davidson@yorkcounty.gov.



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NEWS FROM ACROSS THE NATION



CALIFORNIA

• It's that time of year when pools of water beckon man and beast. But sometimes it's a good idea to stay out of the water. **NAPA COUNTY** issued a countywide warning recently after two dogs died when they swam in — and likely drank — water in a pond that contained a growth of **toxic algae**. Another lake in the area was closed after another outbreak of a toxic algae bloom. Warning signs were posted and the county got the word out in a news release from its health department and on its Facebook page. While animals can die from the toxin, children and adults can experience serious injury to the liver, kidney and nervous system if affected water is swallowed.

Algae forms in a pond. Photo by Alexandra Fries/Integration and Application Network

CALIFORNIA

• **ORANGE COUNTY** recently announced the arrests of 23 people on charges of public benefits fraud. The defendants were charged with improperly collecting \$220,572 in benefits from SNAP — formerly known as Food Stamps — as well as child care benefits, Temporary Assistance and Medicaid benefits. The county's Department of Social Services Special Investigations Unit investigated the cases. District Attorney David Hoovler began investigating **welfare fraud** in 2014 and since then has charged 185 people who had received \$1.8 million in benefits. Recipients charged with fraud have paid back more than \$500,000 and others have voluntarily repaid more than \$200,000 without charges being filed.

• **SONOMA COUNTY** signed off on one of its biggest **land deals** recently, selling a county-owned former hospital complex on 82 acres for what ultimately may add up to \$11.5 million. The 81-year-old hospital, which didn't meet current seismic building standards, closed three years ago after racking up costly maintenance bills.

A developer proposes to build up to 800 rental units, housing for veterans, a grocery store, an amphitheater and other amenities. The county has defended the sale price, which is about \$2 million less than the property's appraised value, claiming the value to taxpayers is much greater when factoring in the cost of developing the planned affordable housing and the demolition and

maintenance costs the county will avoid through the sale, *The Press Democrat* reported. The county pegged the total maximum value of the deal to taxpayers at \$71.9 million.

FLORIDA

SARASOTA COUNTY is facing a \$300 million bill after the state Supreme Court said an obscure law requires the county to reimburse any hospital for **indigent care**. The court reversed two lower courts' decisions that had favored the county. Two private hospitals began billing the county in 2011, but the county refused to pay them.

"This is going to be a big blow to our county," County Commissioner Nancy Detert told the *Daily Progress* newspaper. "That's an unrealistic number," she said of the \$300 million. "That's never going to happen."

GEORGIA

The opioid crisis took a new twist recently in **FORSYTH COUNTY**, where two new strains of fentanyl recently popped up. Acryl-fentanyl and tetra-hydro-furan fentanyl, are more resistant to **Naloxone** or **Narcon**, the life-saving antidote, and can be absorbed through the skin, according to the Georgia Bureau of Investigation's Crime Lab.

An article in the *New England Journal of Medicine* suggested that "up to six times the usual 0.4mg intravenous dose [of naloxone] might be required for fentanyl analogues or other synthetic opioids because of its greater toxicity compared with other opioids and the unpredictable amount of substance in each tablet."

The Georgia State Board of Pharmacy voted to immediately pass an emergency rule which regulates the newly identified tetra-hydro-furan as a Schedule 1 substance, giving all Georgia police officers the same authority as drug agents to seize the substance.

ILLINOIS

• **COOK COUNTY** could lay off

more than 1,000 county workers after a tax on soda and other sweetened beverages slated to begin July 1, was blocked. A judge put a temporary hold on the penny-per-ounce tax that was supposed to raise \$67.5 million through Nov. 30, after the Illinois Retail Merchants Association and several grocery stores sued, saying the tax is unconstitutional. County officials say the tax, expected to raise \$200 million for fiscal year 2018, is needed to pay for services and will also improve the public's health. A hearing is planned for July 21.

• **JERSEY COUNTY** has filed a lawsuit against the makers of OxyContin, Dilaudid, Opana, Percocet and other **opioids**. The county is the second in the state to file such a lawsuit, joining **ST. CLAIR COUNTY**, which filed its lawsuit in April. St. Clair County's suit claims Purdue Pharma and other companies misrepresented opioids' risk addiction. "These drug companies have raked in billions of dollars by deceitful advertising and fraudulent conduct that has brought misery and heartbreak to our community," Jersey County State's Attorney Ben Goetten said.

New statistics from the state Department of Public Health show 2,278 drug-related overdose deaths statewide in 2016, a 44.3 percent increase in three years. Of those, more than 80 percent were opioid-related.

INDIANA

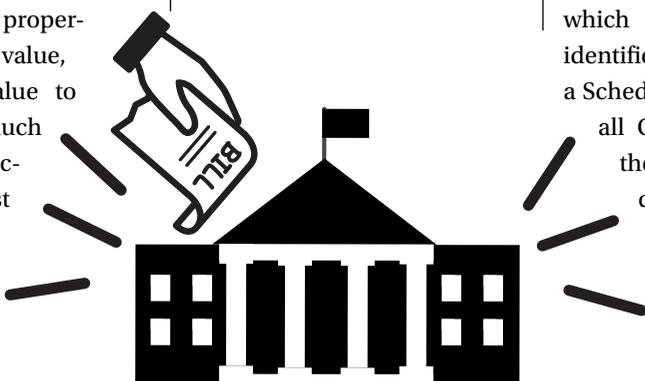
MONROE COUNTY Sheriff Brad Swain has ordered his deputies **not to use Narcan** on emergency calls, in order to save their dwindling supply for deputies. Deputies are to use the life-saving antidote to opioid overdoses if they have been exposed to fentanyl, a drug that is 50 to 100 times more potent than heroin.

"Given the incidents of officers in life-threatening situations, due to exposure to fentanyl, keep the remaining units available for use in such cases we may encounter in which a deputy or other public safety professional may be in distress," Swain said in an email sent to deputies July 10.

There are no plans to get more Narcan for the Sheriff's Office, the *News and Tribune* reported. "If there is a source that will provide this without stressing the public tax dollars, I am going to do that," Swain told the newspaper. "This is an unexpected and unanticipated expense so if I can get a supply, we will continue with the program, but like any other grant-related program, supply runs out and we move on."

MICHIGAN

The sheriff of **WAYNE COUNTY** reiterated that he will not detain anyone in his jail for Immigration and Customs Enforcement unless **ICE** gets them a warrant from an independent judge or magistrate. Sheriff Benny Napoleon said he's abiding by what courts have ruled. Agreeing to ICE detainer requests could expose the county to liability, immigrant advocates say. The jail has a daily population of between 1,700 to 2,200. "We're not a part of Customs and Immigration," Napoleon told the *Detroit Free Press*. "We're a police agency."



“Every day, I send ICE a notification of all the people who are newly brought into the Wayne County Jail,” Napoleon told the newspaper. “If they want any of these people, they have ample time to get a [judicial] warrant and have time to commit them to a jail or wherever they want.”



times for beer, wine or mixed drinks to 10 a.m. from noon.

OHIO

BUTLER COUNTY

Sheriff Richard Jones says his **deputies won't carry naloxone**, despite its effectiveness reversing the effects opioid and heroin overdoses. Jones' position reflects those by a city councilman in his county, and he explained that deputy safety is his main concern, the *Cincinnati Enquirer* reported, because when people who overdose are revived, they are often violent and are almost never happy to see the police.

NEBRASKA

The Nebraska Supreme Court ruled that **WASHINGTON COUNTY could not be sued** for the death of a quarry worker who drowned while working on a road when the Missouri River flooded in 2011.

The county is protected by sovereign immunity, after giving a contractor oral permission to do work on the road, at which point the contractor accepted full responsibility for the project, the *Pilot-Tribune and Enterprise* reported. The court ruled that the contractor had adequately warned its crews about the conditions that ultimately led to the worker's truck sinking into a soft shoulder and overturning into a ditch.

PENNSYLVANIA

- The **ERIE COUNTY COUNCIL** has voted to **sponsor a new community college**, making it the first new community college in Pennsylvania since 1993.

Empower Erie's plan is to privately raise millions of additional dollars to pay for capital improvements and equipment over its first 10 years, and county government could redirect almost \$4 million now earmarked

for annual long-term debt payments to cover the state-required local share of the college's funding, according to the *Times-News*.

A 2010 effort to organize a local community college failed for lack of a prime financial sponsor, even after a 2009 study recommended that Erie County create one.

The feasibility study concluded that the new school could offer curriculum that includes engineering, welding, computer security, accounting, journalism, fitness and nursing instruction, as well as other courses of study, with projected enrollment of 1,525 students in the school's first year, including full-time students.

- **POTTER COUNTY's** Veterans Service Committee has spearheaded a countywide campaign to **restore and clean the gravestones of military veterans** in dozens of cemeteries spread across the county. Committee members have also established a website that displays photographs, biographical information and military service summaries for

deceased veterans.

A \$1,000 appropriation from the county's veterans service fund has been used to purchase an environmentally-friendly cleaning solution, the same as that used in national cemeteries, plus brushes and buckets.



SOUTH CAROLINA

More than 160,000 curbside garbage cans in **RICHLAND COUNTY** are being outfitted with **radio microchips**, similar to those injected into pets, to keep track of them in cases of theft and severe weather.

A \$1 million system will not only help keep track of county property, but will integrate into systems used by garbage haulers, county waste inspectors'

trucks and route management software, which will make sure cans aren't skipped on collection day *The Free-Times* reported. Recycling bins delivered to homes between 2014 and 2016 came pre-installed with the tracking devices.

SOUTH DAKOTA

Starting July 1, **booking photos** are available to the public throughout the state, after previously only being released if the person was a fugitive or had escaped from jail. Though many counties are charging \$8 per photo, **CODDINGTON COUNTY** plans to process requests for free.

"I'm looking forward to just providing them to the public for free as long as there isn't an overabundance of requests," Sheriff Brad Howell told *The Public Opinion*.

News from Across the Nation is compiled by Charlie Ban and Mary Ann Barton, senior staff writers. If you have an item for News From, please email cban@naco.org or mbarton@naco.org.



NEW YORK

SUFFOLK COUNTY has installed **12 cameras**, capable of panning, tilting and zooming, throughout the county in hopes of preventing crime. The cameras will be moved based on crime statistics and community feedback; their \$130,000 cost was funded by asset forfeitures, CBS New York reported.

NORTH CAROLINA

You can buy your booze earlier now in North Carolina's counties. Gov. Roy Cooper (D) signed a bill allowing local governments to **move up sales**



VIRGINIA

Harry Potter fandom has not waned much in the 20 years since the book series debuted, and **JAMES CITY COUNTY's** parks and recreation department is incorporating one of the series' hallmarks, the **game of quidditch**, which combines aspects of dodgeball, rugby and tag. A goalkeeper uses a broom, which harkens to the game's wizardly origin. Photo courtesy of James City County Parks and Recreation

the HR DOCTOR

With Phil Rosenberg

Phil Rosenberg

The Freedom from Information Act

My beautiful wife of four dozen years, Charlotte, recently showed me a snippet from the *Reader's Digest* about a possible new law in Europe that would grant employees the right to disconnect from emails once they leave work. "The Freedom from Information Act" might be a great name. Whether or not such a law ever passes in Europe, it is highly unlikely that such a new federal mandate would pass or, for that matter, be signed by the president, especially if it restricted tweeting in any way. Nonetheless, a new Civil Right for Americans — the right to be free from information overload will become increasingly attractive and increasingly important in the world ahead.

Our lives in an age of smart phones, internet communication and soon-to-come widespread Virtual Reality and Artificial Intelligence (AI) could not have been imagined as creating a growing and perhaps very dangerous problem when the Founding Fathers were alive. Perhaps this is no different than the 18th century Second Amendment, born in the era of muskets, yet now allowing me to purchase and use high-powered semi-automatic assault rifles. Where are the Founding Fathers when we need them?

Information now assaults us whether we are awake or semi-conscious. I am even beginning to have conversations with Alexa about whatever information she may be gathering about me. We have discussed, for example, whether or not I have a right to see such information, perhaps not unlike being able to have access to my very own medical records. Even writing this article was interrupted by a robo phone call

urging me to renew my vehicle warranty before it is too late and terrible things happen.

The next generation of "smart" communications will see further growth in artificial intelligence. Computer algorithms are increasingly able to mimic patterns of human thinking and communicating. Our lives will be shaped, more likely dominated, by robotics and genetics. We will live in a world where our pets will either be robotic canines or kitties, or be genetically modified animals, which are nearly as smart as various human beings I have encountered. I can already open the door in the morning and ask my dog Isibindi to please go bring me the morning paper. After negotiating the number of treats he will be paid for his work, he races out the door with the lightning speed of a Rhodesian Ridgeback-hunting hound mix. My morning newspaper arrives with only a small amount of dog drool on it but in otherwise excellent condition.

There are canines who also sense people's moods and impending medical issues. We have not yet begun to witness the capabilities which lie ahead for our interaction with smart animals designed to be far smarter than they now are in being able to meet our needs.

Yet, AI is growing in sophistication and presence in our lives to such an extent that it will constitute a danger to our personal liberties and the way in which our society functions. The information overload will expand to a point where we will have no choice but to rely on our machine creations to manage it all for us. These machines will think faster than we can and not just in terms



of adding up numbers. The machine intelligence coming soon to our everyday lives will be able to make subjective judgments, ethical decisions, and determinations about what is or isn't in our best interests. Then they will act on those results.

As long as there is an "off" button that I control I remain optimistic and curious about how this future will play out. I am looking forward to it in fact. Very importantly, it also becomes a new imperative for me to ensure that my family members are not part of what will be a large information-deprived, or information-poor segment of the population. I must make sure that my family is educated about the science behind robotics and AI, the likely developments in the field and the huge importance of continuing to be human in a world of bytes and bits.

Given all this, the idea represented by the concept of "The Freedom From Information Act" would enable you and me individually, as well as the government decision-makers who represent us, to decide to turn on or turn off the products of AI before some mega-corporation comes up with a way to disable the on-off switch.

We are moving toward a time when freedom from information may become just as important as freedom of information. Perhaps the Luddites of the 19th century had it right when they tried to shun machines in favor of a simpler existence. May we ponder this concept and develop an action plan sooner rather than waiting around until the calendar again reads 1984. **CN**