

Denise Winfrey of Illinois takes reins as new president of NACo

by Mary Ann Barton
editor

Surrounded by her family, Will County, Ill. Board Member Denise Winfrey was sworn in Sunday, July 24 as NACo's new president at NACo's 87th Annual Conference in Adams County, Colo.

With her daughter Lisa and granddaughter Logan at her side, Winfrey was sworn in by fellow Will County Board Member Herbert Brooks, Jr.

"I'm pleased to announce today that RISE! will be the focus of my NACo presidency," Winfrey told county officials gathered in the Gaylord Rockies ballroom. (RISE stands for Resiliency, Inclusion, Solvency and Empowering.)

"In the year ahead, we will share examples of county innovation in expanding Resiliency efforts, promoting Inclusion, establishing Solvency through economic mobility opportunities and counties Empowering our residents by integrating human services with workforce programs to strengthen career pathways for vulnerable residents, like parenting women," she said.

"We want to highlight counties on the RISE, particularly those attempting to address women's equity in each of these areas."

"The year ahead will include national public awareness campaigns, peer learning exchanges, and conversations on the county role in each of these areas," she said.

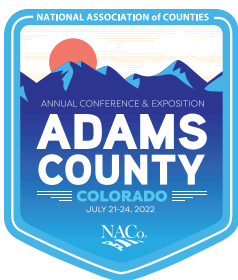
Winfrey told the crowd that her parents helped get her where she is today.

"So, who am I and how did I get here?" she asked.

"I can honestly tell you...It's my parents' fault. Some of you have heard me speak of their community involvement. They were big on 'get out the vote' efforts. As a child, my brothers and I were in the back seat of the car putting together candidate literature. My mother drove while my father knocked on doors. They were working to get the first Black person on the Will County board. My mother also worked for years as an election judge. My father poll watched and drove people to and from the polls."

Winfrey thanked Boone

See **ELECTION** page 2



NACo's new executive team! (L-r): NACo First Vice President Mary Jo McGuire, Ramsey County, Minn.; President Denise Winfrey, Will County, Ill.; Second Vice President James Gore of Sonoma County, Calif. and Immediate Past President Larry Johnson of DeKalb County, Ga. Photo by Denny Henry
FULL COVERAGE OF THE ANNUAL CONFERENCE COMING AUGUST 15.

Operation Green Light to shine light, connect veterans to benefits

by Mary Ann Barton
editor

A new program dubbed Operation Green Light for Veterans hopes to shine a light on the plight of veterans in counties across the country who are having a hard time connecting

with benefits after serving their country.

The new program endorsed by the NACo Board at its meeting July 23 in Adams County, Colo., is being promoted by Carbon County, Pa. Commissioner Chris Lukasevich.

"We're seeking formal rec-

ognition of Operation Green Light to connect veterans with benefits they have earned," said Lukasevich, who is retired from the U.S. Army and serves as the chair of NACo's Veterans and Military Services Committee.

See **GREEN LIGHT** page 2

Focused leadership, personal connection drive NACo president

by Charlie Ban
senior writer

Denise Winfrey clears the way.

But not so she can get through a crowd. When someone comes into her office to talk, everything between her and her visitor parts when she cleans off her desk.

"I'm not answering the

phone, I don't want any papers on the desk," she said. "Whoever is sitting in front of me gets 100 percent of my attention."

It takes a lot of planning to allow her that kind of focus. A clock in her bathroom lets her know exactly how much time she



Winfrey

has to get ready in the morning before dropping her granddaughter off at school and then to her Will County, Ill. office. When she arrives, she writes herself a note about what she wants to accomplish

See **WINFREY** page 3

Winfrey to focus on resiliency efforts and more



NACo President Denise Winfrey, a commissioner from Will County, Ill., addresses NACo members at the 2022 Annual Conference Sunday, July 24 in Adams County, Colo. Photo by Denny Henry

From ELECTION page 1

County, Ky. Judge/Executive Gary Moore for his work on broadband as immediate past president and DeKalb County, Ga. Larry Johnson on his THRIVE initiative as president. She gifted Johnson with a scrapbook, a framed copy of Johnson and President Biden in *County News*, as well as an organizer

case for the bow ties he’s known to wear. Winfrey began her ascent to the presidency when she was elected second vice president of NACo in 2020. She began her career as a member of the Joliet, Ill. Township Board. She has served on the Will County, Ill Board since 2009. Rounding out the 2022-2023 NACo officers’ team are First

Vice President Mary Jo McGuire, a Ramsey County, Minn. commissioner, who won election as second VP last year; newly elected Second Vice President James Gore, a Sonoma County, Calif. supervisor who won his race at Sunday’s election and Johnson as immediate past president. Gore, an immediate past president of the California State Association of Counties who recently was reelected to a third term as supervisor, won the vote by 71 percent in a three-way race with Loudoun County Board Chair-at-Large Phyllis Randall and Mercer County, W.Va. Greg Puckett.

SNAP/STATS

HIGHEST UNEMPLOYMENT RATES

INDUSTRY	BY THE NUMBERS
LEISURE AND HOSPITALITY.....	5.2 PERCENT
AGRICULTURE	4.4 PERCENT
RETAIL	4.1 PERCENT
TRANSPORTATION.....	3.8 PERCENT
CONSTRUCTION.....	3.7 PERCENT

Source: Statista

‘It’s extremely difficult to transition from military to civilian life’

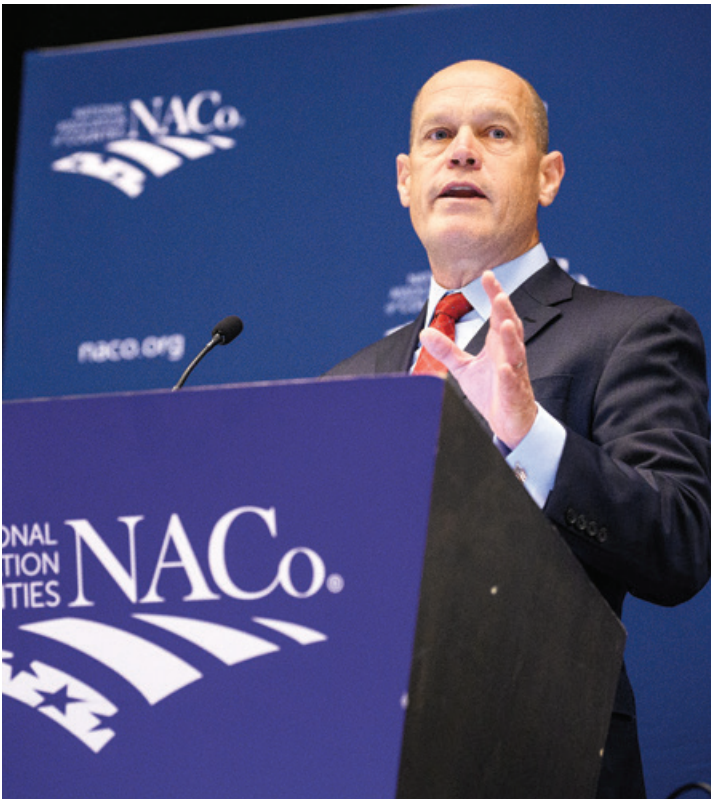
From GREEN LIGHT page 1

tee. He noted that the veteran population in his county in Pennsylvania is among the top five highest in the state and has the highest suicide rate. Other statistics about veterans show:

- As of 2019, 11.7 million veterans are over the age of 65, which is about 61 percent of all veterans.
- Veterans make up roughly 11 percent of adults experiencing homelessness.
- Some 70 percent of veterans experiencing homelessness also experience substance abuse and 50 percent live with mental illnesses like post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

“We have a problem in this country, it’s extremely difficult to transition from military to civilian life,” Lukasevich told NACo board members. One problem, he noted, is that counties don’t know when

veterans have moved to their community, which makes it difficult to connect them to benefits. With Operation Green Light launching nationwide, counties will literally shine green lights from their county buildings from Nov. 7-13 (Veterans Day is Nov. 11) to “send a clear message to inspire veterans to reach out to their county veteran service officers,” Lukasevich said. He noted that he was inspired to make Operation Green Light a national cause after it first got underway in New York. NACo is offering a toolkit (<https://www.naco.org/resources/operation-green-light-veterans-county-toolkit>) that includes a blueprint for declaring a resolution; press releases; letter to the editor for your local newspaper; writing a letter to Congress and posting information on social media. **CN**



Carbon County, Pa. Commissioner Chris Lukasevich discusses the need to connect veterans with services. Photo by Denny Henry

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‘You can never stop pushing, but you don’t have to shout in people’s faces..’

From WINFREY page 1

as a Board member and now, as NACo’s president.

It might be connecting with the family of a constituent who had recently died. It could be attending local meetings, where she thrives in one-on-one interactions. And now, it will be traveling the country, introducing new people to Will County.

The energetic start of her NACo presidency is a stark contrast to her youth, when she would leave Joliet, Ill. for a summer with her grandparents downstate in Carbondale, where she was born.

“It was nice to come home and power down because it was very slow,” she said. “We’d do a lot of things down there we couldn’t in Joliet, and it gave me a different experience.”

Winfrey studied business management at Lewis College

and earned a master’s in organizational management at American University before attending the Gestalt Institute of Cleveland. That led to a career as an organizational development consultant for a power company and as an independent management consultant.

“I love looking at a person individually, how they can be more effective as an individual and how their interactions with their leadership team can improve,” she said.

While she enjoyed her corporate career, once she had raised her only daughter, Lisa, Winfrey entered public service, something she had planned for years. As a child, she and her brothers accompanied her parents when they campaigned for the first county Board member of color.

“I can remember being little in the back seat of the car, my two brothers and I were putting together pamphlets,

“I learned that if you wanted something to happen, you have to be involved.”

my mother’s driving and my dad is knocking the doors,” she said. “I learned that if you wanted something to happen, you have to be involved, you have to be around, you have to advocate. You can never stop pushing, but you don’t have to shout in people’s faces. You do have to be engaged, though.”

Winfrey had been a member of the Rotarians, where a colleague suggested she serve on the Joliet Township Board. She relished being a connector, helping residents access services that would improve their lives and giving them a voice in government. The opportunity to understand someone’s

problems gave her the chance to put them in a place to succeed. Then, in 2009, she filled the term of her late representative on the Will County Board. She got involved with NACo soon after.

“I enjoyed seeing how other counties had their own challenges, but in the end, each county is a microcosm of the whole country,” she said.

She served on NACo’s Community, Economic and Workforce Development Steering Committee, Large Urban County Caucus and the Membership Standing Committee. Before she was appointed to the Board of Directors, she attended meetings so frequently that many assumed she already had a seat.

Winfrey was the speaker of the Will County Board when she ran for NACo’s second vice presidency, but the death of Will County Executive Larry Walsh elevated her to the in-

terim county executive role, which she held while campaigning for both a seat back on the Will County Board and the NACo executive committee.

She considered running for the executive position, but she was all-in on NACo. While a woman of color had not previously been Will County executive, the opportunity to represent the county nationally was too much to turn down.

During her inaugural address at the 2022 NACo Annual Conference, she acknowledged Genesee County, Michigan’s Charlotte Williams distinction as the first African American woman to hold the NACo presidency, in 1977-78.

“It means a lot not only for me, but for our county,” she said. “We’re not as large as Cook County or Lake County, and it means a lot for a smaller county like mine to have some national representation.” **CN**



Will County, Ill. Board Member Denise Winfrey takes the oath of office to become president of NACo on Sunday, July 24 at the NACo Annual Business Meeting and Election in Adams County, Colo. Winfrey was joined by daughter Lisa, granddaughter Logan and fellow Will County, Ill. Board Member Herbert Brooks, Jr. Photo by Denny Henry

PROFILES IN SERVICE

JASON STROUF

NACo Board Member
Commissioner,
Custer County, Mont.
MAC president



Strouf

Number of years active in NACo: Two

Years in public service: 7.5

Education: Master's, The Ohio State University

Occupation: Commissioner

The hardest thing I've ever done: Run for elected office.

Person (living or dead) I'd invite to dinner: President Lincoln

You'd be surprised to learn that I: Was a certified athletic trainer.

I'm most proud of: My wife and three children.

Every morning I read: *The Billings Gazette*

My favorite meal is: Steak and potatoes.

My pet peeves are: Opinions without the knowledge.

My motto is: Work hard, be honest.

The last book I read: "It Worked for Me," by Colin Powell

My favorite movie is: "Hoo-siers"

My favorite music is: Country

My county is a NACo member because: We believe in the benefits of NACo and it provides a bigger voice for small counties.



My favorite music is: Country

DICK CECIL, LONGTIME DELAWARE EXEC, DIES AT 91



Dick Cecil receives a proclamation from the Sussex County Council for his years of service to Delaware counties. (L-r) JuneRose Futcher, Sussex County Councilman Mark Schaeffer, Dick Cecil and son Robert Cecil. Photo courtesy of the Cecil family

by Charlie Ban
senior writer

Dick Cecil, the longtime Delaware Association of Counties executive director and New Castle County councilman, died July 18 at age 91.

As a 20-year veteran of the New Castle County Council, Cecil won a tight 1996 election (2,069-2,019) to NACo second vice president, over Howard County, Md. Councilman Vernon Gray. Cecil's close reelection loss in that year's Republican primary forced him to vacate his NACo executive council seat, but he took on the association job a year later.

"His leadership would have

been great for Delaware, showing that a small state could do it if you have the right person with the right personality," said George Cole, Cecil's successor at the association. "Dick was well liked."

Cecil encouraged Kent County Commissioner Allan Angel to run for NACo office twice, and Angel described him as rigorous and dedicated. "As long as you could hold your own with him in a discussion, he was happy to talk to you," Angel said. "He was incredibly encouraging of people who put their time and effort into county government. He always did the right thing, and never 'played politics.'"

Cole, who had served as a Sussex County councilman, was thrilled when Cecil moved to his county, and when Cecil started attending commission meetings. "He was a father figure in Delaware politics, and he was relentless in convincing you to do what was good for you," Cole said. "I was content to stay in Bethany Beach all summer, but he pretty much dragged me out to go to conferences, meet people and learn things that would make me a better leader." After Cecil retired, then President-elect Biden said he was grateful for Cecil's united approach among Democrats and Republicans.

CN

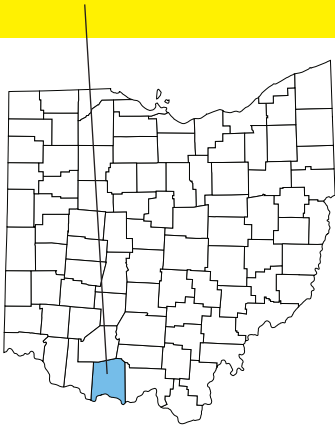
GET TO KNOW...

Adams County, Ohio

Welcome Adams County, Ohio!

Named after President John Adams, the second president of the United States, Adams County was founded July 10, 1797. Its population stands at 27,477 according to the 2020 Census.

The county seat is West Union and the size of the



county is 586 square miles. That includes many parks and preserves and the archaeo-

logical wonder, called the Serpent Mound. The mound is the eroded remnant of a huge ancient meteorite impact crater.

The largest employers are manufacturers, retail, health care and social assistance.

The county celebrated its 131st county fair in July and the county's 225th birthday at the fair.

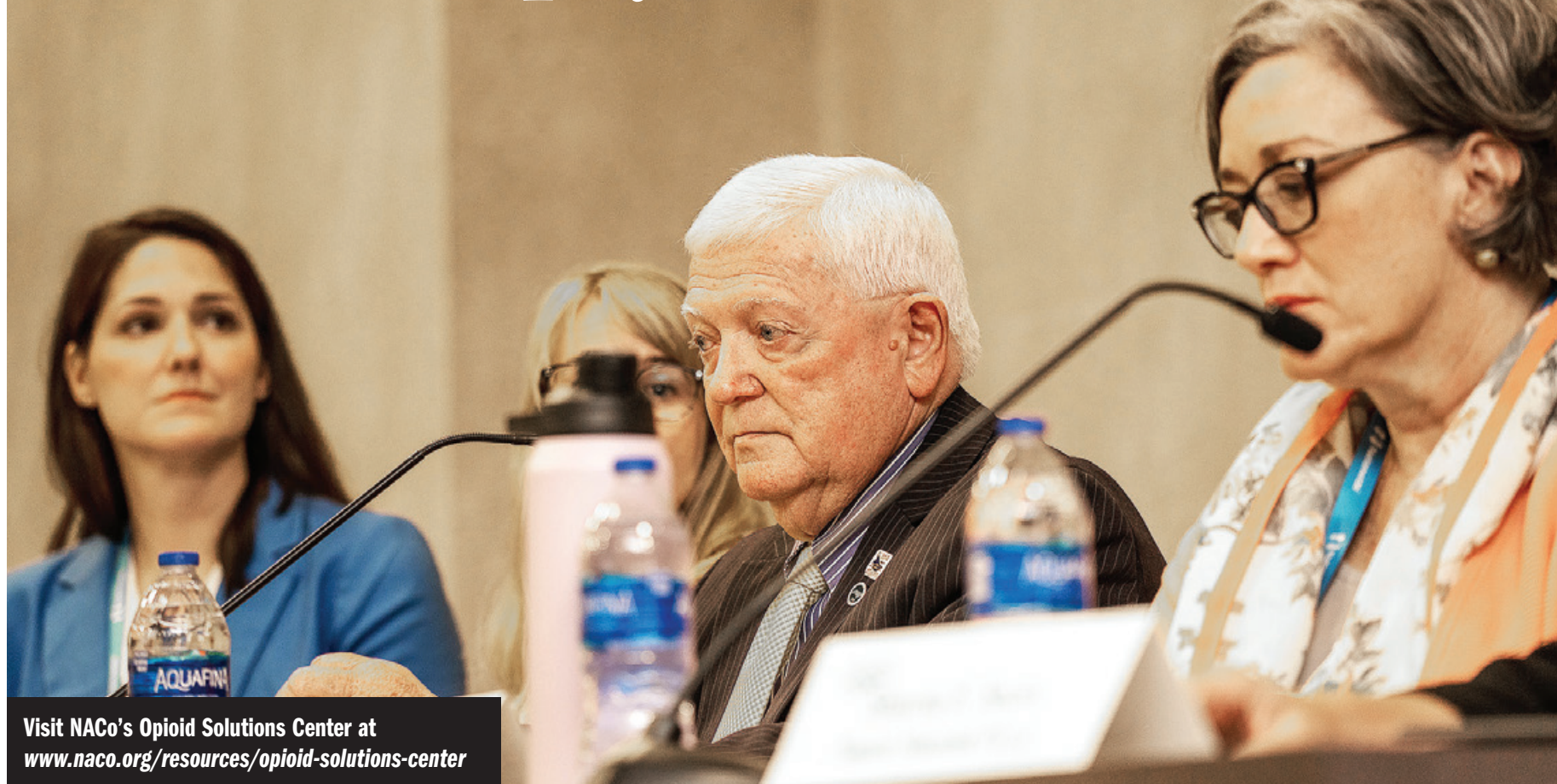


Racing legend Jack Roush returns to the county each year for Jack Roush Day in Manchester. He is the co-founder and owner of

Roush Fenway Racing, a NA-SCAR team headquartered in North Carolina.

"Get to Know" features new NACo member counties.

Counties plan funding as opioid settlement payout nears



Visit NACo's Opioid Solutions Center at www.naco.org/resources/opioid-solutions-center

Burke County, N.C. Commissioner Johnnie Carswell reflects on the toll of the opioid epidemic. Jefferson County, Colo. Commissioner Lesley Dahlkemper (right) and Ashleigh Holland, director of NACo's Counties Futures Lab look on. Photo by Hugh Clarke

by **Charlie Ban**
senior writer

With counties poised to receive much-needed funding from the national opioid settlement, planning on investment of those funds is reaching full speed.

Still calculating the cost of the services they deployed to meet the needs of the painkiller-turned-heroin epidemic, the general sense was the counties are taking a careful look at how the funding can best be allocated. The epidemic, largely fueled by legal prescriptions of painkillers, marketed in a way that suggested they would not be habit forming, stressed county budgets from law enforcement, to rehabilitation, to the foster system and coroner's office.

The \$26 billion from the manufacturers, distributors and pharmacies involved in the painkiller process will be split among state and local governments.

"The 911 center overwhelmed with calls and actions, our law enforcement, ambulance, all the other life support type pro-

grams we run... the county is touched in so many ways," said NACo Immediate President Gary Moore, the Boone County, Ky. judge/executive who served as co-chair of NACo's joint opioid task force with the National League of Cities.

"The money is starting to flow, but we also know that ARPA dollars are allowed expenses in some cases for some of the purposes that we're dealing with, so this is the perfect time for nature to come together and announce what we're going to be doing over the coming months."

In addition to counties formulating their own plan for their share of the settlement, NACo has launched its Opioid Solutions Center, which will help guide counties evaluating their needs and deliberating about spending and as a resource for counties as they battle addiction in their communities. In addition to providing case studies, the center includes a 15-page document on approved uses of the funds.

Partnering with the Substance Abuse and Mental

'I share their powerful stories with you because I know people can recover.'

Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), the center includes a free helpline for technical assistance for counties.

NACo will also convene a national leadership network of 20-25 counties who are committed to addressing substance abuse disorder in their communities.

"This group is going to get a master class in substance use disorder and will support many convenings, for travel to each other's communities to really see those solutions in practice," said Ashleigh Holland, director of NACo's Counties Futures Lab.

Attorney Shayna Sacks diagrammed the results of the multi-district litigation. She represents 200 governmental entities around the country,

with 115 counties among them.

"The idea is that before Christmas, everybody is going to have one payment from Johnson & Johnson and two from the distributors, so it's going to be a nice big influx," she said. "Approved uses... were designed to be extremely broad to ensure that everybody will be able to use the money towards abatement."

She explained how counties' willingness to sign onto state settlements benefited both levels of government, giving them larger allocations for expediting their settlement process.

Jefferson County, Colo. Commissioner Lesley Dahlkemper described how her state's recognition of existing regions will help regional partner counties better assess their local needs and plan to address them. She recounted the stories of four local residents in recovery, describing their accomplishments.

"I share their powerful stories with you because we know that people can recover, and this is why the decisions we make as county commissioners locally

regarding the settlement money matters so much," she said. "It truly is about saving lives."

Burke County, N.C. Commissioner Johnnie Carswell shared the story of his son, who died after decades of substance use disorder and the reverberating effects that had on his family, including his granddaughter, who he adopted.

Nearly 10 years of reliving how repeated efforts to help his son failed has helped Carswell target what he sees as an obvious fix, after watching month-long rehab stints serve as Band-Aids.

Burke County is renovating its shuttered jail to become a regional rehabilitation center, thanks to \$3.25 million from the state and service agreements with 11 nearby counties.

"We can remodel that whole confinement center to use it as a rehabilitation center, and we are not going to use the traditional 30-60-90-day programs that most people experience," he said. "The recovery program that we want to put in place will be for however long it takes someone to recover." **CN**

SPONSORED CONTENT

Nationwide Is Helping NACo Plan Sponsors Provide Participants with Guaranteed Retirement Income

The SECURE Act (Setting Every Community up for Retirement Enhancement Act) opened a new era of opportunity for retirement plan participants by expanding the ability for plan sponsors to help participants not only plan for retirement, but also live in retirement. One way the Act will help is by making in-plan guarantees within defined contribution plans such as 457(b)s and 401(a)s more accessible and portable than before.

This comes at an opportune time as American savers weather a perfect retirement storm. Given the recent market volatility, consumers are much more interested than ever before in solutions that can provide a level of certainty and protection. Retirees are living longer and facing greater pressure to fund their own retirement, as costs for healthcare and long-term care continue to rise. Employers are looking for accessible, portable and affordable solutions to help their employees protect their savings and ensure income in retirement.

Upon announcing a suite of in-plan guarantees in late 2020, Nationwide Retirement Solutions has seen strong momentum in plans adopting guaranteed solutions for retirement plan participants.

Uniquely Positioned to Meet this Need

As an established industry leader serving government and corporate retirement plans, as well as a top provider of annuities, Nationwide is uniquely equipped to address this challenge. It has the in-house expertise to develop new solutions and deep partnerships across the industry to bring them to market.

"We're confident that a suite of solutions will give plan sponsors the flexibility to select the option that's best for their par-



Nationwide®
is on your side



ticipants," said Eric Stevenson, President of Nationwide Retirement Solutions. "Our approach is unique, by going beyond retirees' well-established need for guaranteed income, to also address their growing need to protect principal."

Guaranteed Lifetime Income

Nationwide continues to work with industry partners to introduce solutions offering guaranteed lifetime income. Structured as collective investment trusts (CITs), these investment options offer participants the opportunity to grow their retirement savings with the promise of generating guaranteed income in

retirement – money they can't outlive. These solutions offer a simple experience along with useful planning tools, helping participants to worry less about running out of money in retirement. Nationwide is excited to be able to offer solutions built to help participants plan for the future and reach their retirement goals.

Reach out to your local Nationwide rep or Dave Belnick belnid1@nationwide.com for more information.

The sixth annual Advisory Authority Survey was conducted online within the United States by The Harris Poll on behalf of Nationwide from May 27 – June 25, 2020 among 1,768 fi-

nancial advisors and 817 investors, ages 18+.

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Sperling, county leaders tout equitable recovery

by **Charlie Ban**
senior writer

The COVID-19 pandemic's economic effects hit counties twice — once with the immediate demand for a vast number of services, but more insidiously, undercutting the economic activity that funded most of those services.

The Biden administration, staffed by economists who still had regrets from the Great Recession, answered back with the American Rescue Plan, with a quick distribution of half of the \$65.1 billion allocated directly to counties in 2021, with the other half coming in 2022. That strategy prompted counties to look at their long-term needs and beyond merely surviving the disruptions, by targeting vulnerable populations and economic sectors in their communities and committing to fortifying them.

"After the Great Recession... we saved the auto companies and we saved the big suppliers, but not all those small suppliers who went out of business," said Gene Sperling, senior advisor to President Biden. "It was heartbreaking, [and] through no fault of their own. No city or state had any money to help deal with their communities with major foreclosures, there were no funds left to deal with them. The funds helped you get out of recession, but they didn't have the power they needed to make sure it was a recovery."

Now, with long-term recovery in mind, each county is taking aim at its own lingering issues. For Cook County, Ill. it was recognizing the drag that medical debt was having not only on residents' finances, but their willingness to seek additional medical care.

"Medical debt is the number one reason that people in this country declare bankruptcy, so we decided to forgive as much debt as we could," said Cook County President Toni Preckwinkle.

"This fall, with just \$12 million of our federal funds, our partner [RIP Medical Debt] will negotiate the purchase of hundreds of millions of dollars in



Gene Sperling, senior advisor to President Biden, discusses the American Rescue Plan during a July 21 press conference at the 2022 NACo Annual Conference in Adams County, Colo. Photo by Denny Henry

medical debt for Cook County residents and forgive them," which will additionally help improve their credit scores.

"This is a problem too many people across the county, especially people of color and young people with disabilities are encountering," she said.

NACo Immediate Past President Gary Moore, a judge/executive in Boone County, Ky., recounted how his work with NACo's Broadband Task Force prompted him to seek out solutions to connect high-speed internet to every home in his county.

That project, funded by ARPA and a partnership with Cincinnati Bell and aiming for 40,000 homes, is on track to be complete by March 2023. That's due in large part to the speed with which the federal government distributed ARPA funding.

"The investments that we're making in our community — they move quick — and they move quick because of the direct allocation of funding to each county," Moore said. "Direct allocation was something we believe strongly in. We know that funds that travel from the federal government to state governments and then down to cities and counties, but we didn't want this to be the norm. We needed to act

and we needed to act quickly."

Sperling said direct allocation to counties of all sizes, an improvement over 2020's CARES Act funding that required a county to meet a 500,000-population threshold, was to empower counties.

"It's like the government did not trust that most of the counties [via the CARES Act], even major counties with 200,00... 300,000 people, could use these funds and giving it directly has led to so much innovation, to so many people not having to go on hands and knees and beg for the funds."

And the timeline for counties to spend ARPA money, 2026, was another lesson from CARES.

"I've had a couple of [mayors] telling me...they threw away their CARES [funding]," Sperling said. "They had to spend it in months, they didn't think about it. When [ARPA] came, they got their community together and they said 'What are our biggest challenges related to the pandemic? How do we solve them?'"

Since Congress passed ARPA in March 2021, the Delta and Omicron variant waves have caused shockwaves throughout the American economy, as have Russia's war against Ukraine and global inflation.

Those disruptions have validated Sperling's desire to give counties more flexibility than they had with CARES.

"If it's another thing that we learned it is to give yourself a cushion, provide some insurance when you're trying to get out of a deep hole, because things go wrong you don't foresee," he said.

Adams County, Colo. allocated ARPA funding through a scoring rubric for grant applications, placing emphasis on minority-owned businesses and nonprofit organizations who served the county's most vulnerable residents during the pandemic and before.

"We knew getting that money back into our communities through a grant process would help save small businesses, continue critical testing and vaccination clinics and ensure that our families could stay in their homes," said Commissioner Eva Henry.

"The grant program has already proved successful with businesses once on the brink. Now, thriving nonprofit partners are expanding their services and programming to meet the ongoing need and as helpful as these funds were, we know there are other areas of immediate need."

When the pandemic began,

Blaine County, Idaho saw itself become an early hot spot for infections. County Administrator Mandy Pomeroy and the Board of Commissioners saw the local fissures from the pandemic and tried to address them.

The county has upgraded its communications systems, its IT system and updated facilities to be more sustainable. But even those improvements were made with residents in mind. Among the grants the county awarded was to a local crisis hotline, so they could make resources available bilingually to serve the county's Spanish-speaking residents.

San Diego County, Calif. Supervisor Nora Vargas was elected in the middle of the pandemic, taking office in early 2021. She sees the equitable approach her county has taken as the local government ideal.

"Our county's success in protecting our communities is exactly how government is supposed to work for all of us, not just some of us," she said. "[ARPA] was a catalyst to ensure that we were building healthier and stronger communities. We will continue to allocate these resources in an equitable fashion for our community so that they can thrive, not just survive." **CN**

WORD SEARCH

TRAVIS COUNTY, Texas

Created by: Mary Ann Barton

N E W S P A P E R C U C Y H O M Q S C S

C A C V W Z U O S M I J A X W U R V O O

P C K R Y C U Q P M Q N P P G O X S U C

C O Q N E I P P I H V G A V I R G W R C

M A P B Y H H U V G N Q X P M T E K T E

C C R U B A U K E K O G O N S H A G H R

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AUSTIN: The county seat of Travis County is named for Stephen F. Austin of Austinville, Va., who founder of the principal settlements of English-speaking people in Texas in the 1820s.

BARBECUE: Texas is known for its barbecue. If you're visiting Travis County, try InterStellar BBQ. It was ranked No. 2 in the state in 2021 by Texas Monthly magazine.

BATS: The county is known for the 1.5 million bats that fly from under the Congress Avenue bridge at dusk. Each night they eat 10,000 to 20,000 pounds of insects.

CAPITAL: Austin is the state capital of Texas; the capitol building dates to 1888.

COURTHOUSE: The 125,000-square foot Heman Marion Sweatt Travis County Courthouse opened in 1931.

GEOGRAPHY: The county measures 1,023 square miles; 3.2 percent of that is water. The county is located in central Texas, between San Antonio and Dallas.

HIPPIE: Hippie Hollow, a Travis County park, is the only legally recognized clothing-optional public park in Texas.

HISPANIC: About 33 percent of the population in the county is Hispanic or Latino, according to the U.S. Census.

JOHNSON: The Lyndon Baines Johnson (LBJ) Library and Museum or LBJ Presidential Library is located in the county.

MATTHEW: Actor and activist Matthew McConaughey, a Texas native, and his family make their home in Travis County.

NEWSPAPER: The local newspaper in Travis County is the Austin American-Statesman. The paper was founded in 1871.

POPULATION: As of the 2020 Census, the county's population was at 1,290,188.


SOCCER: The county is home to the Austin FC, an American professional soccer club which competes in Major League Soccer.

TRAVIS: The county is named after William Barret Travis, a lieutenant colonel and commander of the Texas Army at the Battle of the Alamo, where he died.

UNIVERSITIES: The county is home to several universities including the University of Texas, home of the Longhorns.


BEHIND THE SEAL

COLUMBIA COUNTY, Ore.



The Columbia County courthouse stands in contrast to the Columbia River, the county's name-sake, along with Mt. Saint Helens, as it appeared when the county was founded in 1854.

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BRIGHT IDEAS | PITT COUNTY, N.C.

County Social Worker Program Helps Inmates with Mental Health, Opioid Use Disorders

PROBLEM: Inmates often don't have the resources to integrate into the community after leaving jail and revert to their old ways.

SOLUTION: Hire a social worker to work at the jail who can give them the tools they need to succeed.

by **Mary Ann Barton**
editor

From 2014-to 2017, the incarceration rate within Pitt County, N.C. (331.3 per 100,000 population) was higher than the incarceration rate in the state of North Carolina (276.7) and region (232.6).

When Paula Dance was elected sheriff of Pitt County in 2018, one of her goals was to reduce recidivism, provide education and provide treatment for individuals.

Dance is Pitt County's first African American sheriff and the state's first female African American sheriff.

Programs launch in 2019

She launched several programs in July 2019 to meet her goals: Medication Assisted Treatment (MAT) within the Sheriff's Heroin Addiction Recovery Program (SHARP), and the Women's Empowerment and Recovery Program (WEAR) within the Pitt County Detention Center.

The focus of the SHARP program is mental health, substance use and co-occurring disorder. The program offers tools for long-term recovery and parenting classes.

The SHARP initiative allows licensed therapists, counselors and peer support specialists to work with selected individuals who acknowledge their need for assistance in ending their substance use cycle.

These individuals are also eligible for MAT.

WEAR is designed to edu-



Speaking in a panel discussion at the NACo Annual Conference, social worker Kiera Clemmons discusses how new programs are helping inmates in Pitt County, N.C. Photo by Denny Henry

To keep the program going, the county relies on grant funding, eventual county funding, continued services provided by stakeholders, sound partnerships and eliminating barriers and bridging the gaps.

cate and empower women, focusing on trauma using evidence-based techniques.

The WEAR program is designed to empower incarcerated women by promoting positive thoughts and behaviors, as well as addressing substance use issues.

WEAR offers treatment for substance use disorders, life skills training, education and positive thinking reinforcement.

WEAR also utilizes licensed therapists, counselors, and peer support specialists to assist participants in recovery and general life-skills necessary to improve their lives upon release from the criminal

justice system. WEAR participants may also be eligible for MAT.

Bridging gaps between citizens, community, law enforcement

The first of their kind in North Carolina, the programs address and eliminate barriers for individuals struggling with alcohol use and substance use disorders.

It also aids in bridging the gap between citizens, community resources and law enforcement.

The programs include help from a social worker, Kiera Clemmons, who works at the

Pitt County, N.C. detention center.

Clemmons' role is to communicate with an on-site psychiatrist, perform diagnoses and direct services as well as work as a liaison between the detention center and community support services.

The number of referrals since implementing the program, according to Clemmons, who talked about the program at NACo's Annual Conference in Adams County, Colo., were 427 for the SHARP program, 130 for the WEAR program and 337 for the MAT program.

Community partnerships crucial to success

The programs get help from outside partners, including Pitt Community College, CareNet Counseling, East Carolina University, Narcotics Anonymous, Alcoholics Anonymous and the Greenville Art Museum.

Since the implementation of the programs, many participants have obtained the necessary coping skills, community resources, and ongoing treatment necessary to sustain long-term recovery.

To keep the program going, the county relies on grant funding, eventual county funding, continued services provided by stakeholders, sound partnerships and eliminating barriers and bridging the gaps.

Dance is committed to offering effective solutions, a seamless community reentry and referrals within an aftercare partnership for those struggling with addiction.

A message on the detention center website notes:

"The process of recovery can begin at the moment of incarceration but should not have to stop the day an inmate walks out the door of the Detention Center, into the same temptations." **CN**

NEWS FROM ACROSS THE NATION



Willa Bruce (left) with her daughter-in-law and her sister in Manhattan Beach in the 1920s. Credit/California African American Museum, via Alison Rose Jefferson

CALIFORNIA

• **LOS ANGELES COUNTY** returned land taken by a Southern California city to the descendants of a Black couple from whom it was taken.

Charles and Willa Bruce used the land to build a resort that other Black families could visit without facing racist harassment, but Manhattan Beach officials voted in 1924 to condemn the land through eminent domain, claiming to need it for a public park, *The New York Times* reported.

The city of Manhattan Beach paid them \$14,500 and kept the land until 1948, when it was transferred to the state, which transferred it in 1955 to Los Angeles County. The county ultimately developed a public park on the nearly 7,000-square-foot parcel. The county will rent the property for \$413,000 a year while maintaining a lifeguard training facility there. The family has the option to sell the land later to the county for its estimated value of \$20 million.

CALIFORNIA

• **SAN DIEGO COUNTY** has formed an **Office of Immigrant and Refugee Affairs**. Located in the county's Health and Human Services Agency's Department of Homeless Solutions and Equitable Communities, the office will serve as a centralized hub connecting families and individuals to services.

• **SONOMA COUNTY** has launched a new **constituent relationship management system** for submitting and tracking service requests. Phase one of SoCo Connect will be piloted to address standard work requests by the Department of Transportation

and Public Works and Permit Sonoma, with plans to expand the interactive reporting tool to track information requests to improve county response and include services provided by other county departments. The upgraded system enables county residents, officials and staff to report, submit photos and monitor progress on information requests and standard work requests.

GEORGIA

An overwhelmed emergency room prompted **HENRY COUNTY** to partner with a nurse 911 service to **divert non-emergency visits**. The program aims to decrease ambulance response times and

hospital wait times by allowing registered nurses to assess the symptoms of the caller over the phone and provide alternative care based on their needs. These various services range from virtual doctor visits, referrals to alternative destinations outside of the emergency room, and appointment bookings to available healthcare providers in the community.

KENTUCKY

Aware that high-energy programming might not be appropriate for all participants, the **PERRY COUNTY** Public Library has started a new weekly program for children who have different **sensory needs**. The sensory story times will incorporate elements designed to help different types of learners appreciate and participate in the programming.

MARYLAND

MONTGOMERY COUNTY has created the Office of Food Systems Resilience to maintain **steady food access for children**. The agency, operating out of the county executive's office, will serve as a liaison to county government and help bolster nonprofits in the area. It will look to provide healthier options and look to solve the underlying causes of food insecurity. They will also advise the county executive and council on food-related policies.

MISSISSIPPI

CHICKASAW COUNTY is one of several in the state allowing **state prisoners to be placed in county jails and**



ILLINOIS

COOK COUNTY has a **new flag**. Glenbrook South High School student Andrew Duffy created the winning design, selected by the commissioners. The stars' seven points represent the county's regions, the city of Chicago and the forest preserves. They are in red to signal social change. The "Y" in green and blue represents Cook County's waterways, lands and riverbanks. The white background is a "blank canvas ... for the innovation to come," according to the county.

The six stars represent "foundational moments" for Cook County, including the founding of the county itself, its hospitals, public health departments, forest preserves and the Arthur J. Audy Home in 1899.

work for local government agencies while they serve their sentences.

"It saves having to pay money for another employee and then the good part about it for the inmates participating in that program, a lot of them when they get out, they go on to employment with that organization that they worked for," Sheriff James Meyers told WCBI-TV. "Once we get to know the inmate and they do a good job here, then we willingly will give them a recommendation on a work recommendation. And a lot of times that's very successful."

NEW JERSEY

• **ATLANTIC COUNTY** is on

track to **eliminate paper** in its public bidding process. County Executive Dennis Levinson noted the process will ultimately cut costs for vendors. Previously, vendors had to hand-deliver bids or hire someone to do that for them. The new system will provide automated notifications to vendors of bid solicitations and check for errors if the information has been omitted prior to submission.

NEW YORK

The **ST. LAWRENCE COUNTY** Child Care Council has collaborated with the local college to hold a **Family Child Care Training Program**,

See **NEWS FROM** page 11



FLORIDA

World Athletics has awarded the 2026 **World Cross Country Championships** to **LEON COUNTY**, which will hold the race at its Apalachee Regional Park. The course has played host to a slew of national championships since the county's Parks and Open Space Department designed it as a cross country-first facility.

Runners start the 2021 USATF Club Cross Country Championships. Photo by Robert Brook

From NEWS FROM page 10

which aims to increase the number of child-care workers and business owners. Funded with \$200,000 of American Rescue Plan Act money, the program will offer medical training, day care orientation, a stipend for supplies and technical assistance and support in the licensing process. SUNY Canton's mall Business Development Center will offer an introduction to entrepreneurship, business planning, bookkeeping, marketing and building wealth. The goal of the program is to license between 10 to 15 child care providers in the first year, which would create 60 to 120 licensed child care slots.

NORTH CAROLINA

• With its population of stray cats tripling in the past decade, **DURHAM COUNTY** will begin capturing, spaying, neutering and vaccinating them before returning them as "community cats." The Board of Commissioners voted to change the county's animal control ordinance to pave the way for a **trap-neuter-release** program. Community cats will only be euthanized when deemed "medically necessary to prevent physical suffering," *The News and Observer* reported.

• **WAKE COUNTY's "Lease 2 Home" program** is offering incentives for landlords to rent to people facing barriers to housing. Incentives include \$500 for every lease signed through the program, with an additional \$250 if a voucher is used and \$1,000 for each renewal. The program aims to help people with low credit scores or criminal records.

OREGON

GILLIAM COUNTY is forming its own **health department**. Think Out Loud reported that the county left its regional health district with neighboring counties to cut travel time to providers, after conducting a feasibility study in 2021 and winning approval from the Oregon Health Authority.

PENNSYLVANIA

CUMBERLAND COUNTY



NEW JERSEY

• **HUNTERDON COUNTY** has expanded its volunteer program for **cleaning veteran headstones** in local cemeteries. The county became the first in the nation to take a formal program approach inspired by a U.S. Navy veteran's non-profit organization. The county commissioner board held the first Veteran Headstone Cleaning event in 2021. The county supplies cleaning materials, including gloves and spray bottles, food, refreshments and water.

will offer annual credits of up to \$250 on county **real estate tax bills** for active firefighters and EMS volunteers who are county residents, homeowners and members in good standing of a county-based company. The ordinance setting up the

program was passed by county commissioners last week and will apply as a refund to this year's tax bills, *The Patriot-News* reported. The county's program is open to any fire or EMS volunteer who has served for at least six months during a given tax year. The credits are also available to persons who were prevented from meeting the six-month requirement due to injury.

TENNESSEE

The **MAURY COUNTY** 911 system is developing a database aimed to help emergency responders best approach homes where a resident is on the **autism spectrum**. The county is asking citizens to fill out a form for an autism database, making it one of the first 911 centers in the country using a life-saving database focused on people with autism.

A local native and medical student developed the database to decrease negative encounters between first responders and someone who has autism, whose behaviors could be misinterpreted leading to negative consequences.

UTAH

SALT LAKE COUNTY's new **drought mitigation projects** will include converting three sports fields to artificial turf and planting drought-resilient plants on 142 parking strips at 40 different county facilities. Those two measures are esti-

mated to conserve 11 million gallons of water annually, *The Salt Lake Tribune* reported.

VIRGINIA

WISE COUNTY's Virginia-Kentucky District Fair has two names, representing the community on the border between the two states, but the only name people think of now is Linda Skeens.

Skeens's culinary prowess brought her, and the idea of a **county fair**, great internet celebrity after putting together a dominant performance. She won first, second and third place in the best cookies, candy and savory bread categories. She also won the blue ribbon for cakes, pies, brownies, sweet breads canned tomatoes, canned corn, pickled peppers, sauerkraut, relish, spaghetti sauce and both jelly and jam, along with quilt embroidery. She topped it off with the award for best overall baked good — her strawberry fudge.

Charlie Ban compiles News From Across the Nation. Do you have some news we should know about? Contact cban@naco.org.



NORTH CAROLINA

• **MECKLENBURG COUNTY's** education program, **Mr. Bee's Learning Lab**, won two Telly awards for children's programming. The Telly Awards honor excellence in local, regional and cable television commercials, including non-broadcast video, television programming and digital video.

Mecklenburg County Manager Dena Diorio celebrates Mr. Bee's Learning Lab's Telly Awards. Photo courtesy of Mecklenburg County

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