



Kentucky counties dig out after devastating floods

by **Mary Ann Barton**
editor

Counties in southeastern Kentucky continue to dig out after devastating flooding there that has killed at least 38 people. Rainfall measured in excess of 4 inches per hour and some counties saw between 14-16 inches of rain in four days.

Last week, President Biden and first lady Jill Biden toured the disaster zones, including Breathitt County, on the heels of Senate passage of legislation that aims to cut greenhouse gas emissions, which some say contributes to severe weather.

Floyd County Judge-Executive Robbie Williams said he appreciated the president's visit, noting that it helps to keep the focus on the region. "He keeps it on the front page of the paper a few more days," he told the *Lexington Herald Leader*.

"It's just heart-wrenching, and again, this is where I was raised and grown up and I'm not just a judge to the county," Breathitt County Judge-Executive Jeffrey Noble told local station WKYT-TV.

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Senate freshman Hickenlooper shares three perspectives



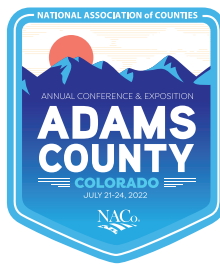
Sen. John Hickenlooper (D-Colo.) explains Colorado's Bottom-Up Economic Development Initiative in a Q&A with NACo President Denise Winfrey July 24 during the General Session at the 2022 NACo Annual Conference in Adams County, Colo. Photo by Denny Henry

by **Charlie Ban**
senior writer

John Hickenlooper's tenure in federal government has, in 18 months, seen horrifying lows and bipartisan highs, even though he's no longer in the Mile High County. His first day saw him surrender his communications devices on the Senate floor, where he was blissfully ignorant of the chaos outside his office during the insurrection at

the U.S. Capitol.

By the end of the year, the Colorado Democrat was one of 20 senators to hammer out the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, focusing



on broadband. The former Denver city and county mayor, Colorado governor and business owner has acquiesced to giving up executive power to join a leg-

islature.

"I'm not sure what it says about me as a human being, but I love it," he said to the General Session audience July 24. "I feel like there are enough

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Inflation Reduction Act: Takeaways for counties

by **NACo Government Affairs staff**

The U.S. House was expected to consider the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) as *County News* went to press. The Senate passed the legislation Aug. 7. The legislation was introduced July 27 by

Sens. Chuck Schumer (D-N.Y.) and Joe Manchin (D-W.Va.). The budget reconciliation bill includes several key provisions related to climate and energy, healthcare, tax reform and deficit reduction. According to the authors of the legislation, the IRA would reduce deficits by

over \$300 billion over 10 years through the relief of inflationary pressures. The proposal includes \$433 billion in new spending for energy and climate and health-care programs, while raising just under \$740 billion. The legisla-

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Thirteen counties in Kentucky declared disaster areas after fatal flooding

From FLOODS page 1

“I mean, I’m neighbors and friends, I personally know them, and it’s just tough to see them lose everything and life being lost, it’s just terrible.”

Biden declared 13 counties federal disaster areas: Breathitt, Clay, Floyd, Johnson, Knott, Leslie, Letcher, Magoffin, Martin, Owsley, Perry, Pike and Whitley.

In Owsley County, Judge-Executive Cale Turner noted that “it’ll take some time, we’re not going to recover tomorrow, but we can recover from it and we will.”

County road crews were

helping with cleanup; hot meals and shelter were being offered to displaced residents.

The Kentucky Association of Counties offered tips to affected counties on everything from preserving county documents to replacing residents’ driver’s licenses washed away in the floods. Driver’s license replacement fees were suspended in the affected counties.

FEMA set up temporary centers to provide residents with disaster assistance and cooling stations were set up throughout the affected counties. **CN**

Devastating flooding hit Kentucky. Photo courtesy of FEMA



Colorado senator brings local, state government experience to Capitol Hill

From HICKENLOOPER page 1

good people there who want to find solutions, both on the Republican side and Democratic side, that if there are enough of us who want to clear the table of all the baloney and focus on

common-sense solutions, we can make real progress.

“It is about careful observations, working in groups and finding the best solutions possible,” he noted.

Hickenlooper defended federal spending to stabilize the

U.S. economy after the pandemic, comparing varying economic approaches worldwide that have all resulted in inflation and urged people to keep the context of the last few years in perspective.

“We’re seeing inflation everywhere, whether governments spent money and tried to prime the pump to make sure our economy got better or not. We’re seeing the same levels, and sometimes increased inflation, in countries like Great Britain, Australia or Japan, where they took different federal approaches. When you shut down the global economy, all those supply chains get disrupted and you can’t just click your fingers and come back.”

He sees a role for government in doing “fine tuning” and addressing issues that remain for people’s opportunities and economic mobility: Education, climate change and civil rights.

Still new to a legislative body, he found the infrastructure negotiations “exhilarating,” he said in a conversation with NACo President Denise

Winfrey. He said the best problem-solving that went into the infrastructure bill was from a perspective of humility and a focus on the people who would be served by its success.

“That process, it took my breath away to see how vigorous a disagreement could be and then when you hear the discussions,” he said. “Nobody ever changed their mind by someone telling them why they were wrong and why that person was in conflict with them, why they were right. It became a question of how well we could listen to each other and accept that we’re coming politically from different directions.”

Hickenlooper said the outcome was a program delivering wildly popular results for infrastructure, both traditional and technological.

“I’m sure there’s not a person here who hasn’t said more than once over the last six months, ‘This is what government’s meant to do.’ He also reflected on his experience in local and state office, recounting a multi-county planning process for a light rail system

and the passage of a sales tax for educational programming for 4-year-olds.

Hickenlooper touted his plan as governor to unify all 64 Colorado counties economically. He asked each county to develop an economic plan, which were then synthesized into 14 regional plans and one state plan. He saw trends as the plans came in:

“Things like, ‘We want less red tape and bureaucracy.’ ‘We want fair access to capital for small businesses.’ ‘We want to make sure there are better workforce training and education systems.’”

“The whole state bought into this,” he said. “It was getting everyone together and empowering them to take a leadership position. It was the whole state that worked together on that.”

From the governor’s mansion to the U.S. Senate, he has seen a hallmark of success.

“Unity is everything,” he said. “I think it’s the biggest challenge the country faces overall. Democracy can’t work unless you’re willing to get to that unity.” **CN**

SNAP/STATS

BACK TO SCHOOL STATS

BY THE NUMBERS

CHILDREN ENROLLED IN PRESCHOOL:	45 PERCENT
AMOUNT TEACHERS SPEND ON SCHOOL SUPPLIES:	\$750
KINDERGARTEN-12TH GRADE ENROLLMENT:	48 MILLION
AVERAGE SALARY FOR COLLEGE GRADS:	\$73,000
AVERAGE SALARY FOR HIGH SCHOOL GRADS:	\$39,000

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, AdoptAClassroom.org



GENERAL
SESSION

SPEAKERS



Rahul Gupta, director of the Office of National Drug Control Policy, addresses the Opening General Session July 22 at NACo's 2022 Annual Conference in Adams County, Colo.
Photo by Denny Henry

Gupta: Harm reduction, data, treatment drive national strategy

by **Charlie Ban**
senior writer

While the country has focused on the COVID-19 pandemic, substance use and opioid addiction continue.

Now Rahul Gupta, director of the Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP), is leading the federal effort to combat both the human toll and the illicit drug markets that have plagued the United States for decades.

"The president's strategy puts together and delivers on his unity agenda, a call to action to beat overdoses," he said in an address Friday, July 22 to a General Session audience at NACo's Annual Conference in Adams County, Colo. "It's really important because it recognizes that this is not a red state issue, this is not a blue state issue — this is America's issue."

Gupta, who previously served as director of both the Kanawha-Charleston and Putman County health departments in West Virginia and as

the West Virginia health commissioner, is the first county official and the first physician to lead the ONDCP.

NACo has launched an Opioid Solutions Center to help counties navigate the aftermath of the \$26 billion multi-district litigation settlement with opioid manufacturers and distributors that will soon be distributed to states and counties.

The national drug control strategy focuses on four main tenets to reduce demand for dangerous narcotics and choke the supply. Chief among them is the first response for addressing overdoses — making sure the overdose-reversing drug naloxone is in the hands of anyone who may need it, without fear or judgment. Any life saved from immediate threat of overdose is a life that could eventually be treated for addiction.

"It enables us to work with people who use drugs to build trust in engagement and ultimately, keep them alive," he said.

"Securing naloxone is the

best thing that counties could do right now to save lives," he said later in a discussion with NACo Past 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.

"It not only saves dollars, it saves lives," he said. "But it also helps figure out what are the highest risk populations and how to get the help when people need it where they need it."

Gupta said counties are in the best position to figure out where to most effectively distribute federal funding to their highest-risk populations.

But even after someone survives an overdose, those who want to work toward recovery face long odds, he said, not just because of the nature of addiction but because of the dearth of treatment opportunities, with less than 10 percent of the population with substance use disorders able to enter rehabilitation treatment. The national drug policy aims to double

treatment admissions for populations at most risk of overdose death, en route to offering universal access to treatment for opioid use disorder by 2025.

"If somebody is needing the help, how can we make them wait for a month, or two months or three months?" Gupta asked.

The lack of actionable data on opioid addiction is a missed opportunity, Gupta said, because of the predictive nature of addiction trends.

"We know that one of the best ways to predict a fatal overdose is having a previous non-fatal overdose," he said. "The sooner we get this data, the sooner we can use it to drive all these decisions and save lives."

Following an industry-wide restriction on the prescription of opioid-based painkillers, the preeminent threat comes from illicitly manufactured drugs that often contain fatal doses of fentanyl. Those markets are fueled by international traffickers but, Gupta said, they are businesspeople.

"These folks are driven by

profits, not ideology, but profits," he said. "We will focus on disrupting transnational criminal organizations and their illicit financial networks and supply chains. We'll be focusing on where it hurts them most — their wallets."

Gupta reflected on how his local and state experience have helped him prepare for his federal role. That experience, and the way he sees a way out of the addiction epidemic, is cooperation.

"We can't move forward without working together," he said. "This is such a complex and large problem, with an American dying every five minutes around the clock, but no one agency, no one department, no one community can take care of itself."

"We've got to bring in faith-based communities, the business community, law enforcement partners, first responders, the medical community, the public health community, folks in transportation, housing... all those people." **CN**



GENERAL SESSION SPEAKERS



Author Heather McGhee addresses the Opening General Session audience July 22 at the NACo Annual Conference in Adams County, Colo. Photo by Denny Henry

McGhee: America prospers when it finds 'solidarity dividends'

by **Stephenie Overman**
freelance writer

Heather McGhee has been on the road across America searching for “stories of solidarity dividends,” stories of people using their collective power to gain the things that are precious to them.

What she has found, McGhee told NACo Annual Conference attendees July 22, has made her hopeful that “at the local level, there are people who are willing to fight for one another.”

“They are making things happen, they are winning,” she said. And what they are winning — for themselves and others — are things like “clean water, voting rights and the righting of historical wrongs.”

These victories are what she calls the “solidarity dividends” that can be won only when people come together.

“I can’t accomplish it on my own,” she said.

“That takes government collective action. That takes all of us. I find that there are ways that communities come to-

gether to gain things precious to them. It isn’t easy, but it is possible” when everyone rolls up their sleeves.

McGhee is author of “The Sum of Us: What Racism Costs Everyone and How We Can Prosper Together.”

“The Sum of Us” is being adapted into a Spotify podcast by Higher Ground, the production company of Barack and Michelle Obama.

A self-described “policy wonk,” McGhee has spent her career in public policy crafting legislation, testifying before Congress and helping shape presidential campaign platforms.

In 2002, McGhee joined Demos, a non-profit think tank that promotes an inclusive and multiracial democracy. She became Demos president in 2014.

But she left Demos in June 2018 because she felt the country wasn’t working. It was mired in what she termed “the inequality era,” with half of American workers being paid too little to meet their basic needs.

“It was not that we didn’t have solutions but that we wouldn’t come together” to achieve important things like paid family leave, well-funded public schools and a solid infrastructure, she said.

On her journey, McGhee said she found that the country’s collective economic progress has been held back by “the lie of the zero sum game—the belief that one group can win something only by causing another group to lose it.”

White Americans have tended to believe the zero sum lie, she said, and need to understand that such division has a steep cost for everyone.

The zero sum game is “a way of seeing the world as a fixed pie of wellbeing.”

If one group gets a bigger slice, another group gets a smaller one,” she said. “It’s a model that says we’re not all on the same team.”

But, “we need to recognize that it is not a zero sum game,” McGhee said. “We want all our players on the field scoring points for our team.” **CN**

Not Impossible Labs founder issues challenge: ‘Help one, help many’

by **Stephenie Overman**
freelance writer

The founder and CEO of Not Impossible Labs sent county leaders home across America with a simple, direct challenge: “Help one. Help many.”

Mick Ebeling, who founded the award-winning social innovation lab and production company in 2011, spoke July 24 at the final General Session of NACo’s Annual Conference in Adams County, Colorado.

“We get scrappy through stories,” Ebeling said. To avoid being overwhelmed by trying to solve the devastation of disease, hunger and war, “at the beginning, we try to reduce it down to solving for one person and telling the story about one person.”

Ebeling told his audience a series of stories that started with one person’s seemingly overwhelming problem and ended with a clever technical solution that can benefit many others.

Each story starts “When you say, ‘That’s not right, that’s absurd,’” according to Ebeling. “Then you commit. And then you work it out.”

Not Impossible Labs “works it out” by bringing together a team of hackers, doers, makers and thinkers to create de-

vices designed to better the world by bringing accessibility for all.

The lab’s mission is to provide “Technology for the Sake of Humanity.”

For his work Ebeling has been named by Fortune magazine as one of the Top 50 World’s Greatest Leaders and is the only person honored twice by TIME Magazine for a Top Invention of the year.

One of the stories Ebeling tells is of a 14-year-old boy in the Nuba Mountains of Sudan named Daniel Omar. When bombs were dropped on his village, Daniel was injured so badly he had both his arms amputated.

“Here was a boy who had lost both arms, who was never going to throw a ball,” Ebeling said. After hearing Daniel’s story, Not Impossible Labs launched Project Daniel and set to work creating a 3D printing prosthetic arm that only costs about \$100. (A prosthetic arm can cost from \$5,000 to \$100,000.)

Thanks to Project Daniel, the teenager “fed himself for the first time in two years,” Ebeling told his audience. “Why do we pull this off? Beautiful, limitless naivete.

See **EBELING** page 6



Inventor and author **Mick Ebeling** talks to county officials July 24 at the final General Session of the Annual Conference. Photo by Denny Henry



MEETINGS

Erie County, N.Y. executive recounts mass shooting, remembers victims



Erie County, N.Y. Executive Mark Poloncarz describes the tragic mass shooting in Buffalo to members of NACo's Large Urban County Caucus on July 22.

Photo by Denny Henry

camera that's attached to his helmet."

In an online manifesto, the Buffalo shooting suspect admitted that he drove to the store because the ZIP code where it's located has the highest population of African Americans closest to where he lived, Poloncarz noted.

"He chose Buffalo because it was the shortest drive. He also admits that he wanted to kill as many African Americans and people of color as possible to help stop 'the great replacement of whites.' This is why words matter."

Within 90 seconds, 10 individuals were killed, three injured and dozens escaped "but are scarred for life by what they saw, and an entire community is traumatized," Poloncarz said.

The county executive described the lives of each of the people who were killed that day, some who he knew personally.

He spoke about each one of them as their images appeared on a large overhead screen:

See LUCC page 6

by Mary Ann Barton
editor

It started out as a beautiful Saturday on May 14 in Buffalo, N.Y., the county seat for Erie County.

"It was 81 degrees, I actually played golf that morning. I got a text message and a call immediately from my personnel director, who was driving by the Tops market," County Executive Mark Poloncarz recalled,

speaking July 22 to members of NACo's Large Urban County Caucus.

"At approximately 2:30 p.m., a white supremacist who lives more than 200 miles away from the city of Buffalo, pulls up

his car to the front of the store and begins shooting with a legally purchased AR-15-style assault weapon using hollow point bullets," Poloncarz said. "He was wearing body armor. He livestreams the event on a

As RAC celebrates 25 years, eyes are on next year's farm bill

by Charlie Ban
senior writer

NACo's Rural Action Caucus is now old enough to rent a car. The broad coalition representing the interests of nearly 70 percent of America's counties celebrated its 25th anniversary with a focus instead on the future: The 2023 farm bill.

Colleen Landkamer, a former NACo president and "mother of RAC" returned to mark the occasion. She has followed two stints as a Blue Earth County, Minn. commissioner with appointments as Minnesota's state director for USDA's Rural Development, including her current appointment by President

Biden.

After two years on the 15-person Rural Renaissance Task Force, former NACo President Betty Lou Ward, of Wake County, N.C., made RAC a full-fledged caucus in 1998, chaired by Landkamer and Harney County, Ore. Judge Dale White.

"We had a great Agricultural Affairs Committee, and their job was to talk about agriculture. Our job is to talk about how to invest in our rural places, how do we make sure that the resources are there and that we can thrive and grow and grow America and how do we partner with urban, rural and suburban?" Landkamer said. "We know none of us can do it by

ourselves, and that includes urban, that includes rural and that includes suburban."

After reflecting on the past 25 years, the caucus turned its attention to Sept. 30, 2023, when the 2018 farm bill expires.

National Cooperative Business Association CEO Doug O'Brien said the word on Capitol Hill is that there would be no new money in the \$400 billion, five-year farm bill.

"You look at the dynamics and things happening right now that probably sounds right," he said.

O'Brien said roughly two-thirds go to nutrition programs,

See RAC page 6



Colleen Landkamer, director of Minnesota's USDA Rural Development office, celebrates the Rural Action Caucus' 25th anniversary July 22. Landkamer served as NACo president from 2006-2007.

Photo by Hugh Clarke

Urban county leaders discuss gun violence

From LUCC page 5

- Roberta Drury, 32, went to Tops to pick up provisions for her brother
- Pearl Young, 77, a Sunday school teacher who ran a food pantry
- Margus Morrison, 52, a bus aide and loving father of six children
- Katherine Massey, 72; a neighborhood leader and activist
- Andre Mckniel, 53, who went to the market to buy a birthday cake for his son, 3
- Aaron Salter Jr., 55, an ex-Buffalo police officer who died exchanging gun fire with the shooter
- Celestine Chaney, 65, a breast cancer survivor and mother
- Geraldine Talley, 62, who went into the store with her fiancé
- Heyward Patterson, 67, a respected church deacon who provided people with free rides to the store
- Ruth Whitfield, 86, a moth-

er of the former fire commissioner with four children and married for 68 years

“These are the faces of gun violence, we will never forget them,” Poloncarz said.

As of July 22, the United States has seen 357 mass shootings take place; the total number of people who have died from gun shootings so far this year stands at 24,653, according to the Gun Violence Archive.

Luke McGowan, senior advisor in the White House Office of Intergovernmental Affairs, talked to county officials about the passage of the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act.

The most significant gun reform passed in decades, it was signed into law June 25 by President Biden.

“What’s in the bill?” McGowan asked.

“It provides funding for crisis intervention, over \$750 million in new funding for parents, teachers, counselors and schools to make sure they can raise the flag when they know

there’s a threat.”

The bill includes enhanced background checks for anyone who is under 21 who is buying a gun; bans anyone convicted of assault from owning a gun and clarifies who needs to register as a gun dealer, he said.

The bill also is the first federal law that makes gun trafficking and straw purchasing of guns a federal crime, he noted.

McGowan said that President Biden “says it is not enough, it’s just the beginning. Now that we’ve been able to do something, we can do more.”

Poloncarz thanked the federal Office for Victims of Crime (OVC TTAC), for helping his community after the shootings and lauded the passage of the gun reform legislation.

“More needs to be done, but it’s a good start,” he said. “To Luke McGowan and the administration, thank you very much.”

“We can’t bring back [the shooting victims], but we can try to help prevent mass shootings in the future.” **CN**

A look back at RAC’s start

From RAC page 5

with some going to risk management programs for farmers. There was a new source of support however, from the Rural Partners Network, an alliance of federal agencies and civic partners.

“The network is interested in some new money to help rural places have the capacity to really deal with their future, and that’s something that more and more people in Washington, D.C. are recognizing, that a lot of rural places, while they have wonderful assets and fantastic leaders, they don’t have the scale, they don’t have the staffing, you know, to make sure that that they’re ready and have a plan for the future. Part of the reason why people are understanding that more now is because as you know, I mean, there was lots of dollars that flowed out in this last couple of years, including in broadband, including water, including in a lot of things, and there’s a lot of rural communities. Typically, those rural

communities that have been relatively impoverished, under-represented, underserved, a lot of those places, they’re not necessarily ready for that money in a way that they can really make the most of it.” **CN**

‘Who is your one?’

From EBELING page 5

We didn’t get the memo that it shouldn’t be possible.” After helping one person, the team set up a training facility in Sudan to print prosthetic limbs to help many.

Quoting educational reformer Horace Mann — “Refuse to die until you have won some victory for humanity,” Ebeling asked: “What’s your victory going to be?”

“Who is your one? Imagine that if this next week, every single person in this room helped one person. It’s simple. One turns to two” and the numbers continue to multiply. Who is your Daniel?” **CN**

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WORKSHOPS

County parks see big pandemic visitor boom, stresses

by **Charlie Ban**
senior writer

The picnic made a big comeback in 2020. As the threat of COVID-19 transmission indoors became clear, Americans flocked to outdoor spaces, driving up park visitation across the country.

Those trends forced 2,900-county level parks departments to shuffle staff and resources and manage relationships and expectations among park users. And in many cases, undergo growing pains.

“Our parks department was relatively young compared to others in the area,” said Byron Fanning, director of parks and open space for Adams County, Colo. “We’ve had to grow up and the pandemic is what did that to us.

“People didn’t have opportunities to recreate indoors, so they rushed to our properties,” he said. “They beat our properties up.”

Analysis of cell phone data, overlaid with geofences indicating park boundaries, showed a 16 percent growth in park visitation in urban and suburban parks in 2020, compared to 2019, according to Jonathan Vlaming, superintendent of the Three Rivers Park District in Minnesota and representative of the National Association of County Parks and Recreation Officials. Ex-urban parks saw a 30 percent increase. While the increase slowed as the pandemic came under control, growth continued. Those figures represent both county parks and park districts that include multiple counties, including Vlaming’s.

“If you’re doing an 8 percent increase each year in your park visitation, that’s better than Best Buy, that’s better than almost any retail business out there for same-store sales growth,” Vlaming said.

Those growth figures have forced parks departments to accelerate planned upgrades



Mary Ann Bonnell, visitor services and natural resources manager for Jefferson County, Colo. Open Space, decries the 1990s approach to limiting park use by limiting parking lot size, in remarks at the 2022 NACo Annual Conference July 22. Photo by Hugh Clarke

and reforms, particularly transitions to cashless operations, virtual programming and integrated partnerships.

“It’s jammed five years into two years,” Vlaming said.

The increase in visitation and use has caused some conflict, including between long-time park users and newcomers, drivers who overcrowded trailheads and pressured park resources.

“[Park users] expect us to balance resource protection and access — that’s a big job when you’re talking about 7 million annual visitors to 27 parks,” said Mary Ann Bonnell, visitor services and natural resources manager for Jefferson County, Colo. Open Space. She judged, based on an increase in toilet paper demand in park bathrooms, a 43 percent visitor increase in 2020.

“There’s the issue of ecological carrying capacity,” she said. “People say ‘We heard you are letting people love these parks to death.’

“You have to identity re-

sources you want to protect and go for harmony, rather than balance where there are areas where you allow certain impact and areas where it is closed. Nobody can go in there because there are special resources we’re trying to protect.”

Jefferson County had to simplify signage to communicate more clearly to visitors, eschewing detailed historical interpretation in favor of the essential rules and guidelines and emphasized social norms.

“The standard gold yield sign is not adequate anymore,” Bonnell said. “It’s one of those things that people think they can explain, but when you corner them and say, ‘What does that really mean?’ they have no idea.”

Signage to encourage people to stay on established trails was crucial to maintaining a working relationship with wildlife, which had adapted to coexist with human activity in the parks.

But the capacity of the parks’

infrastructure buckled under higher visitor numbers.

“We saw the cracks in the foundation before COVID,” Bonnell said. “When Covid hit, those cracks became just crumbling. The congestion at our trailheads and the dysfunction at our trailheads became ominous. They were sick of not being able to find a place to park, and neighbors were getting annoyed with people parked outside of the trailhead lots.”

Adams County doubled the size of its parking lots at its large open space parks. The parks department expanded staffing to cover weekends, and Fanning accelerated what he planned as a gradual culture shift when he started in the role in 2019.

“We taught our users that they needed to clean up after themselves and we did that by putting in the same effort, properly staffing the parks and increasing maintenance,” he said.

When outlining new trails,

Adams County made it clear which were for walkers, which were for mountain bikes and which were for equestrian use, in some cases mandating one-way traffic to minimize conflict.

The county’s Murals for Hope program not only commissioned work by local artists, but the placement of the artwork motivated park users to explore new areas.

“As we got deep into the pandemic, we realized there were a lot of people using our system, but the community was in a dark place,” Fanning said. “Deep into 2020, we started to wonder if this was ever going to end, and what this was going to do to us as a whole. How are we going to come out of this? We felt we needed to do something to give our community hope.

“These 13 murals gave people something to move forward to, gave them new destinations, on the farther outreaches of the trails, encouraged people

See **PARKS** page 8



WORKSHOPS

Resiliency is key for growing rural prosperity



Routt County, Colo. Commissioner Beth Melton explains that getting business leaders together for beers in someone's garage has generated locally sourced ideas for strengthening the county's economy July 23. Photo by Hugh Clarke

by **Charlie Ban**
senior writer

Four concepts can help a rural county capitalize on its assets to help build a strong economy, and they're all available in a free book published by the Federal Reserve Board of Governors.

Andrew Dumont, a senior community development analyst at the Board, summarized "Investing in Rural Prosperity," explaining how tailored, resilient, inclusive and collaborative efforts — dubbed TRIC — were crucial to making the most of what counties have to offer.

"We believe that while every community may have assets to build on, we recognize that just having assets is not sufficient to create economic prosperity," he said.

Communities must be met with tailored approaches, based on their specific assets.

"They need to be met where they are, not presented with one-size-fits-all solutions," Dumont said. "[Development strategies] are most effective when they are crafted for the specific community in which they're being carried out."

To become resilient, development efforts in rural counties must be built to withstand both shocks and gradual changes, avoiding being overly reliant on

one community member, one organization or one industry.

Intentionally ensuring that their racially and ethnically diverse populations in particular can fully participate in the economy is increasingly important.

"People of color represent the largest source of population growth for many rural communities across the country and as a result, represent an increasingly large share of the population in rural communities," Dumont said. "If rural places want to thrive over the long term, we need to welcome and embrace people from diverse backgrounds and experiences and figure out how to maximize their potential."

Collaboration is a fundamental contributor to success, but not just among governments.

"Communities with chief success over time pursue cross-sector approaches bringing together leaders from the nonprofit community, for-profit business sector, financial, government and philanthropic sectors to develop and advance their strategies," Dumont said.

Commissioner Tammy Tincer demonstrated how Greenbrier County, W.Va. worked to address the state's health challenges, primarily access to healthy food, while supporting the county's farmers.

The county organized a sin-

gle farmers market that brought two smaller markets together, playing host to the joint venture on the courthouse property.

"We have people who come in to our region to come to our market, but the great thing is we got to exemplify and promote our local farmers and local foods," she said.

Routt County, Colo. is dealing with a disparity between its per capita income and average annual wages. The county's economic development efforts have targeted industry sectors that they wanted to grow and fortify, while capitalizing on and preserving what it offers.

"We often say that our great-

est economic asset is being a great place to live," said Commissioner Beth Melton. "We don't have any shortage of people moving in, so what we really have to do is focus on protecting that and that's by making sure that people have housing, that they have access to childcare, that we're not 'loving our public lands to death,' that we're protecting the environment and to preserve those pieces of our community that make it such a valuable place."

Routt County's economic agenda aims to grow its own businesses before recruiting from the outside.

"We really focus first on business growth and expansion, keeping the businesses we already have and asking them, 'What would it take for you to hire one or two more employees?'"

When the Bakken shale boom more than doubled McKenzie County, N.D.'s population in less than a decade, the demographics changed just as dramatically, seeing the largest Hispanic population growth in the country between 2010-2020, and that opened the door for cross-cultural appreciation. Bringing in folk dancers to the county's farmers market made the new residents feel at home, and drew long-timers, too, Economic Development Coordinator Dan Stenberg said.

"Now we're sponsoring, at

our arts foundation, a folkloric dance class and they're going to be performing at our Heritage Day," he said. "It's usually a traditionally very agricultural thing, but it's going to be a good blending here in September of just adding some more cultures. All these things that we wouldn't really expect to be happening in rural North Dakota are happening and one of the things that we found with arts is really kind of a connector for people, both food and art."

Efforts to bring in academic approaches to encouraging multiculturalism met with resistance, but the McKenzie County residents continued to socially mix more informally.

"What we found works best is to just have people meet, talk about where they came from, how their lifestyle is different and that's probably the best way that we found to get all the people integrated," Stenberg said.

Without a nearby university campus, McKenzie County is eyeing a "skill center" that can offer classes, certification programs and other educational options.

"We can get people 'up-skilled,' not necessarily in a four-year program, but more just 'you need to learn welding, you need to learn a commercial driver's license,'" Stenberg said. "It's very needed in our community, to improve our workforce." **CN**

Labor concerns hit county park systems, too

From **PARKS** page 7

to explore more."

And a wood carving of Sasquatch at Riverdale Regional Park became a minor social media celebrity.

The murals have also discouraged graffiti, which alleviated the need for maintenance in areas where they were added.

"We want to find a way to use parks and recreation as a way to make our community more healthy," Fanning said. "People really appreciated that."

Shifts in the labor market have affected county parks, though. Vlaming said 42 percent of park systems have reported increased staff resignations, mostly motivated by salary needs. Most of those reductions are for full-time staff members, and seasonal workers have been harder to recruit. Bonnell said Jefferson County did away with the seasonal work entirely.

"We have to pay \$15, and if we really want someone, we have to pay \$18 which can bust our budgets, so as a result

you have planning staff out in the field doing planting work," Vlaming said. "Our agency has been shuffling staff all over the place."

He did say, however, that 60 percent of parks departments anticipate increased budgets in the future, if not commensurate with increased visitation and costs. Roughly 43 percent of county-run parks departments have made use of American Rescue Plan Act funding, though park districts are eligible only through their member counties to do so. **CN**



WORKSHOPS

DHS warns counties of international adversaries

by Mary Ann Barton
editor

It seems like something out of a spy novel: An employee in a county office getting recruited to collect information for a foreign adversary.

There was a time when most foreign adversaries mainly targeted the federal government, but these days, countries such as China, Russia and Iran are increasingly targeting state and local governments, according to Tina Gabbrielli, director of Counterintelligence, Office of Intelligence and Analysis, Department of Homeland Security.

Gabbrielli sounded the alarm in remarks July 21 to members of NACo's Justice and Public Safety Steering Committee as the NACo Annual Conference in Adams County, Colo. got underway.

Foreign adversaries are "persistent, cunning and target our institutions," looking to influence policy and destroy U.S. social cohesion and economic prosperity, she said.

She warned county officials to be extra careful when it comes to doing business with unfamiliar companies, especially ones that might bid extra

low for a project.

"Know who it is," she said. "Do they have ties to a foreign adversary? If the price seems too good to be true, there's probably a reason for that."

Today, China is using "non-traditional" ways of spying, including recruiting students and businesspeople who may be "witting or unwitting," Gabbrielli noted. When they reach out to recruit someone, their ties to China may "be hidden or not readily apparent."

She said that yes, even county employees could be targeted. Employees who are especially vulnerable are those who are having financial difficulties or who are disgruntled. Signs of a "recruit" could be someone with unexplained affluence or is planning foreign travel, she said.

China is even penetrating U.S. law enforcement, she said, and referred to a case that involved a New York City police officer accused of spying on Tibetan immigrants for China.

China, and Russia in particular, are both notorious for using online campaigns to influence elections as it did in 2016 and U.S. officials expect it to happen again this year, Gabbrielli said. The countries' spies

"attempt to weaken our social cohesion and underlying institutions. They will amplify any message they can to sow doubt and discord."

Other ways that foreign adversaries may stick their fingers in U.S. affairs include invest-

ment in real estate, finance, transportation, technology and entertainment — all ways to "collect information to our detriment," Gabbrielli said.

Counties should also beware of those who may ask to lobby or advance a position on their

behalf. Some adversaries use "do good" groups to "rope you in," she said.

If you suspect any international adversaries are sniffing around your county, Gabbrielli said to contact your nearest FBI office. **CN**



Tina Gabbrielli, director of Counterintelligence, Office of Intelligence and Analysis at the Department of Homeland Security July 21 addresses members of NACo's Justice and Public Safety Steering Committee. Photo by Denny Henry

Upgrading tech infrastructure: It's more than just broadband

by Mary Ann Barton
editor

Technology and telecommunications modernization on the county level is about more than just connecting residents to broadband. By updating your telecommunications infrastructure, your county can also increase the efficiency of county functions, enhance county public safety and bolster economic activity in the business community.

That was one of the messages heard July 21 by members of the NACo Telecommunications and Technology Policy Steering Committee at the NACo Annual Conference in Adams Coun-



Mark Pfaffinger, CIO, Larimer County, Colo., makes a point July 21 during a panel discussion at the Telecommunications and Technology Policy Steering Committee meeting. Photo by Denny Henry

ty, Colo.

Lee Davenport, director of Community Development at

DC-based non-profit US Ignite, led a panel in a discussion about county efforts to mod-

ernize and upgrade technological infrastructure.

"The pandemic really shined a light on the [broadband] problem, and we've seen a lack of investment by providers, a lack of expansion into our urban fringe," said Mark Pfaffinger, CIO, Larimer County, Colo. "Not much has changed, so the community really reached out and said, 'We need to fix this,'" he noted.

Many of the current internet service providers in the county participate in the Federal Communications Commission's Affordable Connectivity Program or provide a separate subsidy for qualifying households.

Some cities in the county,

including Fort Collins, developed their own fiber networks. "They're providing a footprint to expand to urban fringe areas," he said. "The next step is to expand those networks into rural areas."

Franklin County, Ohio Commissioner Kevin Boyce noted that his growing county has more than 80,000 residents without internet. One way the county is tackling the problem is by participating in a digital equity coalition that focuses on reducing the digital divide, he said.

Although broadband was top of mind, technological solu-

See TECH page 10



WORKSHOPS

Arena construction is a full-contact sport for counties

by **Charlie Ban**
senior writer

Professional sports team owners want to go deep when building stadiums and arenas, getting open while counties foot the bill. As stewards of the public coffers, counties have to bump and jam them off the line of scrimmage, telling them in no uncertain terms, “not so fast.”

“Billionaires make a lot of money using other people’s money, and if you give in to them, they will make you spend everything,” said Erie County, N.Y. Executive Mark Poloncarz, who literally wrote the book, “Behind the Xs and Os,” about negotiating with an NFL franchise.

Built right, arenas for sports and other events can be around for a long time. The Lubbock Municipal Coliseum in Texas was around for more than 60 years. Erie County is finally nearing a chance to unload the Buffalo Bills’ stadium, now called Highmark Stadium, which the county has owned since 1973, when it was built for \$23 million.

“I would love to be able to build a football stadium for \$23 million,” Poloncarz said.

Shortly into his tenure, Poloncarz negotiated the agreement that saw the Bills contribute to the stadium’s upkeep for the first time in 40 years. Now, with the venerable building due to be torn down in a few years, Poloncarz sees the opportunity for the county to get out of the football stadium business once the re-



Lubbock County, Texas Judge Curtis Parrish stresses the importance of limiting county responsibilities for cost overruns in arena construction July 24. Photo by Leon Lawrence III

placement is complete.

“...Because of all the liability issues that exist in regard to owning a major professional sports team,” he said, “people are not always in the best state of mind when they go to football games. I don’t get what the 22-year-olds think about jumping on a table that’s on fire that’s related to professional football, but they do that, and then they walk into your stadium and they stumble and they smash their head on the concrete when they fall down and of course it’s the owner who gets sued.”

Poloncarz noted that negotiations usually play out against the threat of relocation.

“If you are negotiating a lease with a major professional sports

team, you need to hire outside counsel who understands that league, because they have all kinds of financing mechanisms.”

Erie County will contribute \$250 million to the \$1.4 billion cost of building a new stadium, and that’s it, he said. The Bills will be responsible for cost overruns. Lubbock County has also nailed down its \$35 million contribution to the expo center that is already moving north of \$120 million total.

“Make sure that whoever you’re partnering with, whoever that is, knows that your fixed amount is this and no more, that these cost overages that will inevitably be coming to your project must be incurred by something other than the taxpayers of

your county,” Parrish said. “That is our job as county officials — to protect our citizens if we were to incur the overages that that are being anticipated.”

Though Erie County won’t own the new stadium, it will own the parking lot, which makes the county a party to the community benefits agreement, that will amount to millions of dollars that a third party will manage, which can be used to benefit the surrounding community.

While Poloncarz preferred the new stadium be built in downtown Buffalo, having control of the old stadium site and parking lot will help the county retain that leverage.

Assurances about the fate of surrounding neighborhoods is

what kept Knox County, Tenn. Commissioner Dasha Lundy from opposing the Knoxville Multi-Use Stadium in her district.

“I was a ‘no’ two weeks before our vote,” she said. “I lost sleep for months. How can I vote yes, when in the background, this is where urban renewal happened? this is where a Black business district was removed in the 1960s, where people lost their homes and churches?”

On top of that, she was worried about how new development would upend property values near the stadium.

“I definitely believe in economic development, but my question is, I always ask, ‘How do you develop without displacing?’” she said. “So, what can we do to make sure this multi-use stadium serves everybody and not just a certain population?”

The Tennessee Smokies owner, who also serves as president of the University of Tennessee, assured Lundy by giving a share of the sports authority vote to members of minority groups who live near the stadium, an internship program for local youths and a commitment to local hiring during construction of the stadium, which will cost more than \$150 million.

“It’s an amazing opportunity for my community,” she said. “I kept thinking about all those subcontractors, those minority-owned businesses who just want a chance to maybe make five or six figures in their life.” **CN**

Follow-up is necessary when deploying experimental technological solutions

From **TECH** page 9

tions for streamlining county government operations was also discussed.

Panelist Scott Fry, who handles state and local digital solutions for Adobe, said counties need to rethink old “disruptive” ways of doing things like printing out paper, signing a document, scanning it and emailing it.

“When you have processes

entrenched for decades, it’s very cumbersome,” he said. “I think of all the things government can do [to upgrade their technology], to add some type of e-signature solution. Really making a commitment is very important. It has to have an owner — make a plan to push it out across the county, across departments.”

“That is definitely an area where we need to make that improvement,” said panelist

Laurel Caldwell, ITS director for Latah County, Idaho.

Jeff Whitworth, co-president and chief technology officer, Technology and Data Institute, noted that when solutions to technological problems are offered, someone needs to make sure they actually work. As an example, he said that students needing broadband who were offered hot spots were not able to figure out how to use them mainly because there was not a

lot of knowledge in the household on how to get on a network.

Speaking from the audience, Caddo Parish, La. Commissioner Roy Burrell noted that it’s challenging when funds are controlled by the state, while parishes are the ones trying to connect their residents. It’s daunting to decide whether to try to create public broadband or approach private companies, which sometime approach

connecting communities in a “piecemeal” fashion, he noted.

A big piece of the puzzle, for counties that are trying to expand their broadband, needs to be “future proofing” your network,” Pfaffinger said.

“Our viewpoint is, the best way to protect it is: Own the fiber, own the plan, and bid it out,” he said. “Find providers willing to operate it for you. There are plenty of operators out there.” **CN**



WORKSHOPS

NACo CIO Forum: Going forward stronger, better

by Rita Reynolds
chief information officer

More than 140 county IT leaders, elected officials and others gathered at NACo's 87th Annual Conference last month at the NACo CIO Forum, in a day filled with education, knowledge sharing and networking.

NACo then-President Larry Johnson kicked off the day with words of encouragement and affirmation to county IT leaders on their commitment to providing superb technology support and in keeping America's counties safe from the ever-evolving landscape of cyber attacks.

The day then followed with a variety of panels, "fireside chats" and presentations on digital transformation, cyber strategies and the application of geospatial technologies during catastrophic events and disasters.

Below are a few highlights of those presentations:

- Removing Barriers and Creating Builders of the Future: Melissa Kraft, Dallas County CIO and Jayson Dunn of AWS shared their experiences in moving multiple solutions, functions and processes to the cloud. Moderated by Sybil Gurney, assistant CIO for Alameda County, participants learned how counties are taking a strategic approach to identify the benefits of moving to the cloud while developing policy that supports that evolution.

- Center for Digital Government Awards and NACo Achievement Awards: Phil Bertolini and Brian Cohen gave highlights on this year's county award winners in the Digital Counties Survey. First-place award winners included King County, Wash., Prince George's County Md., County of Placer, Calif., Arlington County, Va., and County of Nevada, Calif. The "Best in Category for Technology" award went to Miami-Dade County Fla. (CIO Margaret Bisbane's team) for their response to the Surfside Collapse using drones and GIS.



Laurel Caldwell, Latah County, Idaho CIO, speaks at the CIO Forum at the NACo Annual Conference in Adams County, Colo. July 20.

Photo by Hugh Clarke

- A Crash Course in Marketing—Communicating About Cybersecurity Across Your County: Participants heard from Berks County, Pa. and Dutchess County, N.Y. about their approach to sharing the story of cybersecurity priorities to county leaders. While Dutchess County CIO Glenn Marchi gets the word out via a NYSAC and county-developed guide for cyber, dubbed "Cybersecurity Primer for Local Government Leaders," Justin Loose of Berks County takes the approach of developing easy to understand, key performance indicators that have a significant impact on the strengths of cyber defenses. Support for both these counties comes from valuable partners BIOKey and the Sylint Group.

- The 50 Shades of Community Engagement - Use Cases from Clayton County, Ga.: The presentation included a quick game of government trivia using Kahoot. More importantly, Detrick Stanford, COO for

Clayton County, Ga., shared how the automated collection of social media comments and posts using ZenCity's dashboard tool has aided the county in understanding the impact of resident sentiment. Knowing how county residents perceive and view current world, national and local events can enhance the way in which counties respond to and meet the needs of their residents.

- GIS - Emerging from the Storm: The panel included a video interview with the team from Flagler County, Fla. Led by Darlene Pardiny, GIS director, their team has successfully implemented the full stack of ESRI tools in day-to-day and emergency situations. Patrick Bresnahan, Geographic Information Officer (GIO) for Richland County S.C., shared his experiences with disasters and emergency situations, especially flooding and hurricanes and how GIS assisted in the assessment of damage from those types of storms. Richard


Leadbeater of ESRI rounded out the panel providing additional county experiences that have benefited from the implementation of GIS. The new Technology of GIS Guide is the second in a series of five that showcases the benefits along with the top 10 questions that non-technical county leaders can use in talking with geographic/geospatial support and staff.

- Evolution of Cybersecurity Strategy Based on Organizational Maturity: Mark Pfaffinger, CIO of Larimer County, Colo., shared how his county has responded to changes in cybersecurity this year and their approach to include remote workers and cloud providers. Through the implementation of tools such as Okta and support from third-party partners such as NuHarbor, (represented by Jack Danahy), Larimer County has pivoted to address emerging priorities like zero trust. Mike Sage, CIO for the County Commissioners

Association of Pennsylvania, moderated with humor and insight the correlation of cyber and county IT maturity.

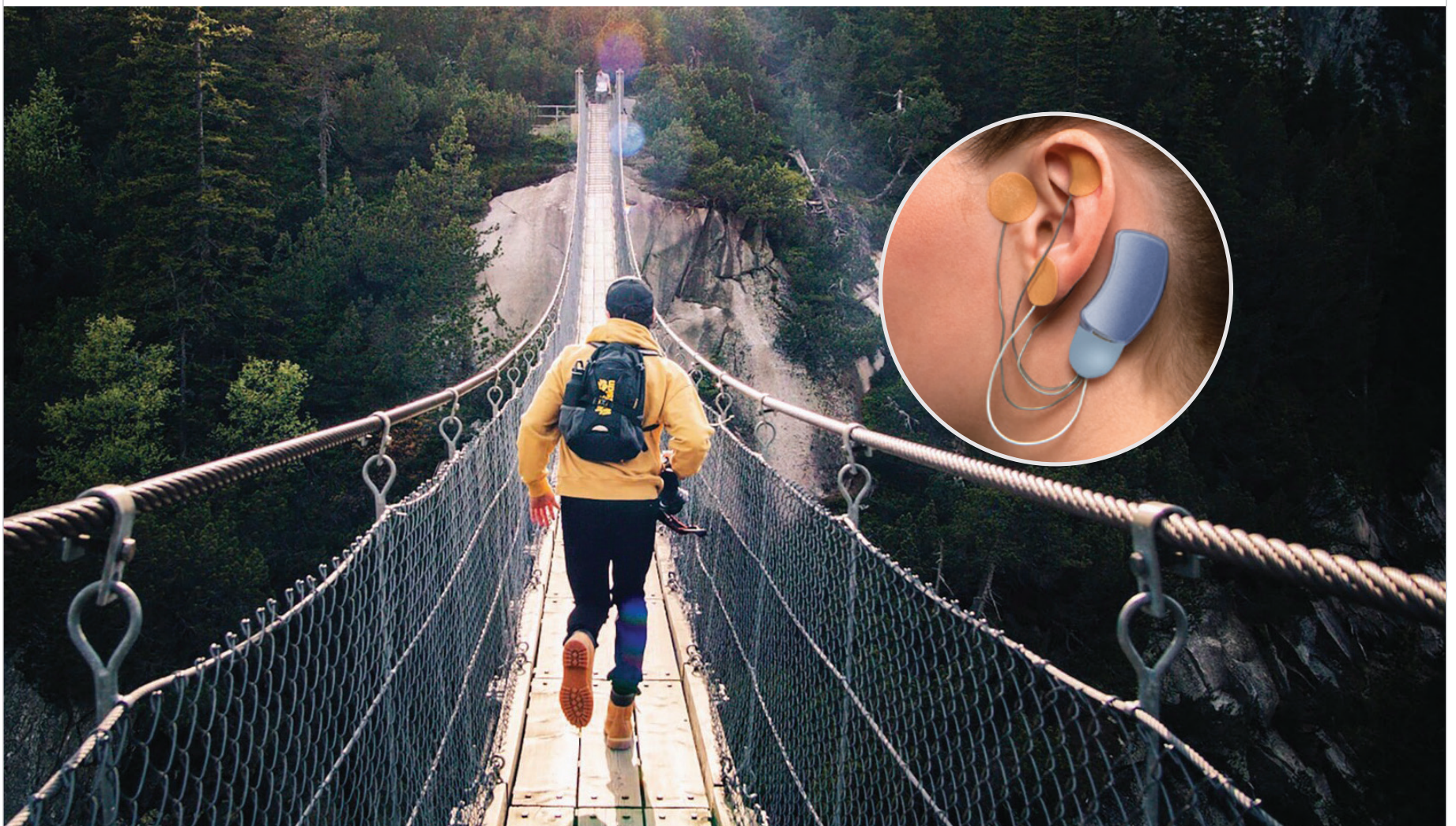
- Digital Transformation in Howard County, Md. Brandee Ganz, CIO for Howard County, shared how ServiceNow has greatly improved and reduced the mean time to resolution for delivering online services and responding to resident inquiries. John Regula of Bucks County Pa. moderated the panel using a "Jeopardy" approach.

Commissioner Joe Briggs, Cascade County, Mont., closed out the day with remarks that likened the technology journey being more of a marathon than a 5k race. He encouraged county IT leaders — and leaders in general — to stay the course.

The full video for the CIO Forum can be found on naco.org at: CIO Forum: Emergence: Going Forward Stronger and Better. 

Rita Reynolds is the chief information officer at NACo.

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TOUR

Adams County highlights its innovative human services



Adams County, Colo. Commissioner Charles 'Chaz' Tedesco speaks with members of NACo's Human Services and Education Policy Steering Committee, who got a chance to see the county's human services programs in action July 21. Photo by Leon Lawrence III

by Stephenie Overman

Adams County Commissioner Chaz Tedesco is proud to show off the county's spacious human services center, which includes emergency housing for children in foster care and a café that trains culinary workers.

Members of NACo's Human Services and Education Policy Steering Committee who met July 21 at the Adams County Human Services Center had the opportunity to tour the facilities and hear about the county's innovative programs.

"I wanted a safe place where kids can do their homework," Tedesco said.

"Where someone could breastfeed in peace," he said, adding that the place was designed to provide an inviting atmosphere "not only for clients, but employees."

The building opened in the fall of 2017 for "just under 90 million dollars," according to Tedesco, who represents District 2. "We did studies. I drove our staff nuts. I take pride in this building. I hope this ignites a fire" of concern for people, especially children, who need public services.

"My background is, I'm a fos-

ter kid," Tedesco said. "I was given up at birth... Foster kids have to deal with trauma." Human services workers want to be able to see themselves as "shining knights" for these vulnerable children but "unfortunately, often that isn't the case. We need to improve this system, to make it less traumatic."

Emergency housing at the county center provides a bedroom, kitchen and living area where children who need placement can stay temporarily.

The center houses A Precious Child boutique, which provides clothing, car seats, toys and emergency intake bags.

In 2021, the county began partnering with local nonprofit Work Options to open Mountain View Café at the center, a place where Adams County residents can take part in a free six-week culinary training program.

Meg Pickens, contract administrator for Adams County, said the residents train with professional chefs, earn certifications and make up to \$400 a month.

The first year, 58 culinary students were enrolled, Pickens said. So far, "88 percent earned certificates, 73 percent com-

pleted the course and began job searches. Forty-three percent gained employment and 18 percent are still in their job search."

In addition to touring the center, visiting county officials saw a county Homes for Hope site. The Homes for Hope program uses two renovated houses to provide therapeutic foster care for children up to age 18.

Two to six children can be placed in each home, according to Katie McDougal, Adams County director of Human Services. Keeping siblings together is a priority for the program.

The county partners with Specialized Alternatives for Families and Youth to support the foster families who are living in the homes. "Clinicians visit families to provide mental help. We're studying this, we want to make sure we're doing this right," she said.

The two houses had been used by the county as rental properties before the renovations, Tedesco said, a use that didn't fit in with county needs. Now, he hopes the Homes for Hope project "may be a model for others" and that the county will continue to repurpose spaces for more innovative uses. **CN**



LUNCHEON

Achieving health equity takes effort

by Stephenie Overman

Building fair long-term health programs requires "infusing equity into the DNA" of county services across the board, Kenneth Wilson, county administrator, Franklin County, Ohio told fellow county officials.

"When we talk about equity, we can't not talk about poverty," Wilson said. "Equity is not an add-on. You have to put your money where your mouth is."

Susan Polan, associate executive director of the American Public Health Association, said that to address the root causes of inequity "you have to talk about how to work with the justice system, transportation, the education system... make sure everyone is focusing on similar goals."

"You have to break down the fences, you have to make sure that the people who need the services receive those services."

Equality and equity are not the same, Wilson told his audience. "You can't give each kid the same size shoe and expect them to win the race. You have to give them the right size shoe."

While equity is not yet linked to every dollar, the infusion of federal Covid relief has helped.

"We have funded an associate director of health equity [position]. This is their job, full time.... Commissioners have declared racism a public health crisis," Wilson said, and a \$50-million Franklin County Mental Health and Addiction Crisis Center is in the works.

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration has prioritized equality as an issue, according to Charles H. Smith.

"We hold grantees accountable," said Smith, regional administrator for SAMHSA's Denver-based region. SAMHSA provides grants to reduce the impact of substance abuse and mental illness.

Smith agreed that to reach underserved communities, it's important to look at the various social determinants of health. "When thinking about health, it's an all-facets approach" that considers how unsafe housing, lack of transportation or race/gender discrimination might restrict access to good care.

Smith urged county leaders to get to know the SAMHSA resources available to them, including the technical assistance the agency offers.

Look for "the good data sets... know where there are hotspots," Smith said. "Be mindful that the best source of data are community members." Also, make sure the data gets back to the people it's been collected from.

Focusing on good data is going to bring the most benefit for the effort, according to Polan.

Use tools that are already available, she said. "Be sure you are collecting information as localized as possible. And offer data in the context of a story" that helps people understand the issues involved. **CN**



Kenneth Wilson, Franklin County, Ohio administrator. Photo by Leon Lawrence III

Illinois exec McCreery retires after nearly 40 years

by **Charlie Ban**
senior writer

Mike McCreery put his coat on before taking a gift over to his neighbor's house on Christmas morning in 1982. As he zipped up, his son Ryan wrapped his arms around McCreery's leg and started crying.

"Daddy, when will you be home?"

For a two-and-a-half-year-old, every time his father left their Springfield, Ill. home, it could be days until the elder McCreery came back. He had business all over the country, representing a coal mining concern.

"I remember one day I had breakfast in Indianapolis, lunch in Washington D.C. and dinner in Los Angeles," he said.

After coming to terms with how much he was away from home, McCreery started working at State Farm in Springfield and a few months later he was the executive director and sole employee of the United Counties Council of Illinois - UCCI. He traded a wide-ranging can-

vas of congressional districts for a wider portfolio of county issues on whose behalf he would lobby the Legislature.

"Particularly what was enjoyable and fun about UCCI was the diversity," he said. "We've got western suburbs, we've got small southern Illinois counties, we've got you know individuals who are the political forces."

His working relationships spanned demographic lines in different parts of the state, where he forged particularly strong ties to Polish, Latino and African American groups.

"I worked with an organization called Black Contractors United — a group of inner-city Chicago minority contractors," he said. "Well, I'm a downstate White guy and I think we got along great."

Being present was crucial to McCreery in his work.

"A rule that was difficult for my family was that if they're [the Legislature] in session, I'm in the building," he said. "I'm hanging out just outside the House chamber, and Gov.



Former United Counties Council of Illinois Executive Director Mike McCreery, right, alongside Jesse White, the longest serving Secretary of State in Illinois history. Photo courtesy of Mike McCreery

James Thompson walks by and he could ask me right there my position on a bill. Being there was important to me, letting them know if they needed to know anything about the counties' positions or information that could help legislation move, that I was there to consult with.

"We maintained pretty strange hours," he recalled. "There have been times we've been in session until midnight or later; once or twice I would stop at a local restaurant and have breakfast on my way

home, when everyone else was on the way to work."

On top of his lobbying, McCreery helped develop the organization's insurance pool and added roughly 15 counties to the membership rolls and expanded legal services for counties.

Washington County Commission Chairman David Meyer, who has served as UCCI president for eight years, said McCreery had the right personality for the job.

"[Legislators and members] can work you over and things

don't always go right, so there are times he could really get it from both sides, but he managed everybody's expectations and relationships in a way that kept things going," Meyer said.

With a large and diverse membership, McCreery had to keep his constituency focused even when the legislative process got bumpy.

"You can't always go directly from point A to point B," he said. "Sometimes you have to explain that we have to go east before we can go north. There are too many obstacles."

Meyer said he quelled any discontent there.

"He got along great with everyone," he said.

That got to the heart of why McCreery stayed in the job for almost 40 years.

"It comes down to working with people and that's what I've always enjoyed about it," he said.

The career change was good for him, and it received approval from Ryan, who succeeded his father as executive director. **CN**

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PICTURES



ALL PHOTOS
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UNLESS NOTED

(L-r): NACo President Denise Winfrey swears in Sonoma County, Calif. Supervisor James Gore as second vice president; Ramsey County, Minn. Commissioner Mary Jo McGuire as first vice president and DeKalb County, Ga. Commissioner Larry Johnson as immediate past president.



Lukas McGowan, senior
advisor at the White
House, speaks to NACo
Board members July 23.



Emily Burr of the Adams County, Colo. Cultural Council, sings the national anthem July 22 to kick off the General Session of the NACo Annual conference in Adams County, Colo.



(L-r): Minnesotans Terry Lovgren (Pine County) Barbara Weckman (Scott County) and Tarryl Clark (Stearns County) pause for a selfie.



Commissioner Kay Cashion of Guilford County, N.C. models an expired fire-fighting jacket during the Justice and Public Safety Policy Steering Committee business meeting July 21.



(L-r): Stephanie Wallace of Adams County, Colo.; Gemma Ferguson, Eddy County, N.M. assessor, take part in a volunteer project.



Ben Hill County, Ga. Commissioner Hope Harmon (left) and an unidentified member pause for a photo.



Forsyth County, N.C. Attorney Gordon Watkins and Forsyth County, N.C. Commissioner Fleming El-Amin chat July 22 at a General Session.



NACo members got up bright and early for a bike ride that has become a tradition at the conferences. They toured Adams County's Riverdale Regional Park. Photo by Hugh Clarke



Miami-Dade County, Fla. Commissioner Sally Heyman receives a standing ovation for her years of service, at the NACo Board meeting, after telling fellow board members about her plans to retire.



Councilmember Craig Rice, Montgomery County, Md., fires up the audience at the Annual Business Meeting and Election.



NACo First Vice President Mary Jo McGuire is interviewed by Jerry Mayer from Hometown Productions Inc. in Louisiana during the General Session.



DeKalb County, Ga. Commissioner Larry Johnson reviews his year as NACo president at the 2022 Annual Conference.



Palm Beach County, Fla. Commissioner Melissa McKinlay (left) chuckles at the NACo Board Meeting.



Los Angeles County, Calif. Supervisor Holly Mitchell (left) takes a selfie with author Heather McGhee.



Sonoma County, Calif. Supervisor James Gore and wife Elizabeth celebrate his election as second vice president.



Members of the Women of NACo gather for a photo at the WON Leadership Reception.



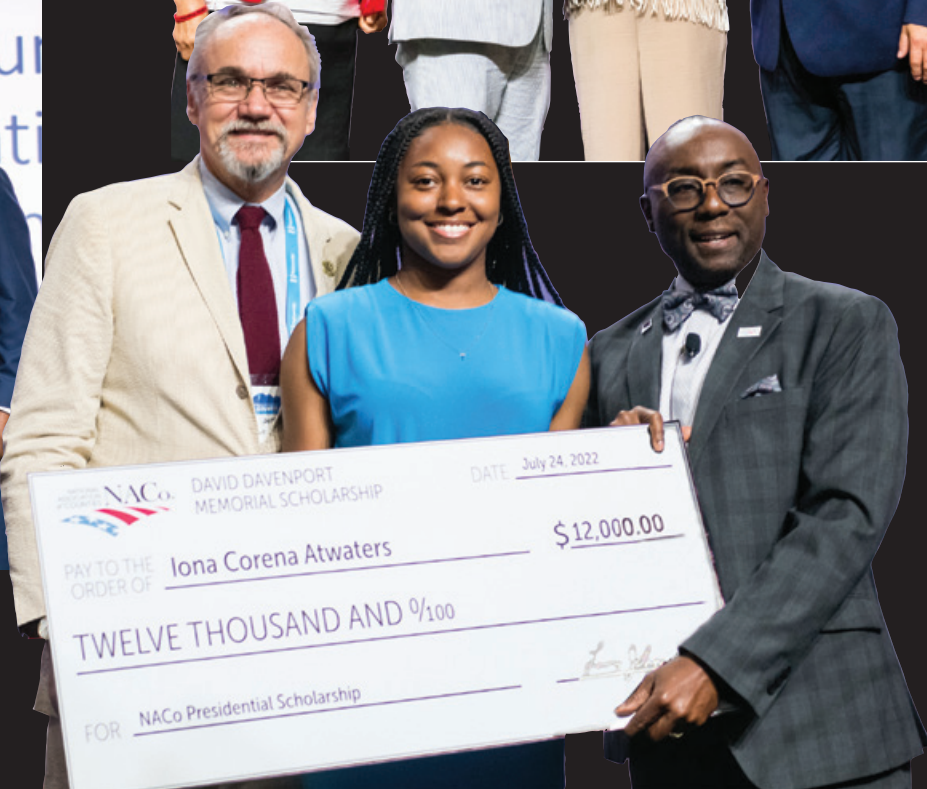
AWARDS

Ramsey County, Minn. Commissioner Toni Carter receives the Public Leadership in the Arts award.



Palm Beach County, Fla. accepts their "Best in Category" Achievement Award in Financial Management and Services.

Iona Corena Atwaters receives the NACo Presidential Scholarship from DeKalb County, Ga. Commissioners Jeff Rader and Larry Johnson.





RESOLUTIONS



Washington County, Ark. Judge Joseph Wood addresses the NACo Board at its meeting July 23 in Adams County, Colo.

NACo's policy steering committees and the Board of Directors passed 29 new policy resolutions at the 87th NACo Annual Conference, held July 21-24 in Adams County, Colo., culminating in passage by all NACo members at the July 24 Annual Business Meeting, that are brand-new to the American County Platform. Resolutions covered a wide range of federal policy issues that affect county government operations. They range from measures to combat the rising price of housing to federal land funding, health disparities, visa backlogs and more. Here are the newest policy positions adopted by NACo members:

COMMUNITY, ECONOMIC AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Institutional landlords and homeownership

ISSUE: Examining the adverse impact that institutional landlords purchasing single-family homes have on homeownership.

ADOPTED POLICY: NACo urges Congress to direct the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD's) Office of Policy Development and Research to conduct a study examining the impact purchases of single-family residential properties made by institutional and business investors have on housing availability and affordability across the U.S. Specifically, this study should include a focus on identifying and proposing solutions related to the disproportionate impact on workforce housing, communities of color and the difficulty elderly, lower- and middle-income Americans face securing housing for

themselves and their families when competing against institutional and business investors.

Housing and source-of-income discrimination

ISSUE: Addressing the discriminatory practices of certain landlords who refuse to accept housing vouchers or rental subsidies from households utilizing vouchers to pay for their rent.

ADOPTED POLICY: NACo urges Congress and the Administration to ensure equal housing opportunity for all households regardless of their income by:

Passing and enacting federal voucher and rental subsidy non-discrimination legislation to prevent source-of-income discrimination by certain landlords against voucher holders or persons receiving any rental subsidy; and

Directing the U.S. Depart-

ment of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to collect and analyze data on the effect source-of-income discriminatory practices have on HUD's Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) program participants' housing options.

NACo also encourages HUD to develop new or revise existing guidance to strengthen enforcement of rental subsidies and voucher non-discrimination regulations by reaffirming these types of federal assistance as a lawful source of income to protect vulnerable households.

Support the Community Reinvestment Act

ISSUE: Congress will be considering changes to the Community Reinvestment Act (CRA) in the upcoming term of office. The act originally adopted in 1977 is now 45 years old. Throughout its 45-year history,

there have been several modifications to the application of the CRA through administrative rules. The NACo member communities would benefit from careful consideration of the potential changes to the CRA.

ADOPTED POLICY: NACo urges Congress to consider carefully proposed changes to the CRA and to adopt those changes which ensure continued and expanded access to capital investment for low-income, distressed and minority communities.

ENVIRONMENT, ENERGY AND LAND USE

Support the Reinvesting in Shoreline Economies and

See *RESOLUTIONS* page 20

Support Rails-with-Trails; safety of railroad workers, public

From **RESOLUTIONS** page 19

Ecosystems Act (S.2130)

ISSUE: Federal Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) impact assistance laws should be updated through legislation to provide more parity in federal offshore oil and gas revenue sharing to the four GOMESA states and provide revenue sharing from offshore wind development to supporting coastal states.

ADOPTED POLICY: NACo strenuously supports the passage of the Reinvesting in Shoreline Economies and Ecosystems (RISEE) Act (S.2130) as this legislation addresses new federal offshore energy development to meet current and future energy needs and to provide long-term funding streams to enhance coastal resilience.

Encourage carbon capture and underground storage

ISSUE: The Federal Government's encouragement of Carbon Capture and Underground Storage is important to America's ability to meet carbon emissions reduction goals and address climate change.

ADOPTED POLICY: NACo urges the U.S. Department of Interior to:

- Issue guidance and policies to authorize access to and use of pore space for geologic storage of CO₂; and

- Promptly complete necessary reviews under the National Environmental Policy Act for approvals of CCUS projects in the Gulf of Mexico, including leases and rights-of-way; and
- Coordinate a whole-of-government approach to confirm that all agency actions in the federal family are covered by NEPA review to the extent required by law; and

- Create a CO₂ infrastructure working group made up of relevant federal and state regulatory agencies and interested stakeholders to study the best way to harmonize the federal, state, and local and regulatory permitting process.

Complete a new five-year plan and resume federal onshore and offshore leasing

ISSUE: The federal government's position on resuming offshore leasing is important to America's counties regarding the funding of conservation, recreation, restoration and protection of vital national resources.

ADOPTED POLICY: NACo urges the federal government to complete a new five-year plan and to resume onshore and offshore leasing, to maximize the funding streams of the royalty revenue for the purposes of conservation, recreation, restoration and protection of vital national resources. And, in the absence of expedited

lease sales by the Administration, NACo urges Congress to immediately pass legislation instructing the Administration to hold multiple commercially viable lease sales each year.

Support the Reinvesting in Shoreline Economies and Ecosystems Act (S.2130)

ISSUE: Federal Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) impact assistance laws should be updated through legislation to provide more parity in federal offshore oil and gas revenue sharing to the four GOMESA states and provide revenue sharing from offshore wind development to supporting coastal states.

ADOPTED POLICY: NACo strenuously supports the passage of the Reinvesting in Shoreline Economies and Ecosystems (RISEE) Act (S.2130) as this legislation addresses new federal offshore energy development to meet current and future energy needs and to provide long-term funding streams to enhance coastal resilience.

Support rails-with-trails

ISSUE: Use of active railroad right-of-way offers opportunities to develop continuous trails that are safe, direct and beneficial to the community, however, it is exceedingly difficult to obtain approval from

railroad companies to allow for trail development within their right-of-way on active railroads.

ADOPTED POLICY: NACo urges the Federal Government to support and advocate for Rails-with-Trails. Furthermore, it encourages the Federal Railroad Administration and Federal Highway Administration, in partnership with the railroads and with trail providers, to develop national standards for Rails-with-Trails that would ensure the safety of railroad workers and the public, which could be used to mitigate any potential increase in liability for shared use, and which would address potential impacts to future rail operations.

FINANCE, PENSIONS AND INTERGOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS

Fund community development financial institutions and the Native American Rural Homeownership Improvement Act of 2021

ISSUE: Many rural and tribal communities are capable of increased community development and levels of homeownership but lack the financial institutions and access to capital to achieve their potential. Assistance from the federal government through Community Development Financial Institutions (CDFI) provide capital access for these communities to flourish.

ADOPTED POLICY: NACo urges Congress to increase federal funding for Community Development Financial Institutions (CDFI) and to pass the "Native American Rural Homeownership Improvement Act of 2021."

Appropriately penalize threats against election officials and workers and their families

ISSUE: The purpose of this resolution is to urge Congress to enact legislation that will impose appropriate penalties for harassing or intimidating, threatening or causing harm to, attempting to pressure, or

disseminating personal information of election officials, election workers or their family members. Such incidents have led both to increased resignations of election officials and workers and to costly protective measures.

ADOPTED POLICY: NACo calls upon Congress to enact legislation that will impose appropriate penalties for offenses including but not limited to the following: harassing or intimidating election officials in the performance of their duty, threatening or causing harm to election officials or their families, attempting to pressure election officials or their family members to violate state law or the Constitution, and disseminating by any means the personal information of election officials or their family members.

Strengthen local governments' competitiveness in the municipal bond market

ISSUE: The purpose of this resolution is to support efforts by the federal government that strengthen counties and local governments' competitiveness in the municipal bond market amidst domestic and global financial challenges and market volatilities.

ADOPTED POLICY: NACo supports any legislative or regulatory initiatives and proposals that support the competitiveness of counties and other local governments in the municipal bond market as well as the issuance of government debt to finance large-scale capital projects.

HEALTH

Declare mental/behavioral health, substance abuse and the lack of services a national public health crisis

ISSUE: Public Health Awareness raises awareness of the relationship between the health of individuals and the health of their communities.

ADOPTED POLICY: NACo urg-

See **RESOLUTIONS** page 21



Carbon County, Wyo. Commissioner John Espy takes the microphone at the NACo board meeting.

Pass legislation to protect county election officials

From **RESOLUTIONS** page 20

es the Federal Government to work with local, community and government agencies to (1) assess internal plans, policies and procedures to ensure solutions to address the lack of awareness and the need for increased mental and behavioral health services in their local municipalities (2) create strategies to increase awareness of mental and behavioral health services (3) increase access to inpatient and outpatient mental and behavioral health services (4) work with marginalized populations to provide education on mental and behavioral health, issues and solutions (5) assess and advocate for relevant policies that improve mental and behavioral health outcomes in communities of color and (6) support local, State, and Federal programs that advance mental and behavioral health initiatives.

Promote health equity and eliminate disparities

ISSUE: Counties need federal support for their efforts to promote health equity and eliminate disparities.

ADOPTED POLICY: NACo calls on Congress to enact legislation that would support county efforts to promote health equity and eliminate health disparities. Legislation should include provisions which would:

- Promote and fund the systematic collection and reporting of data related to disparities associated with the demographic factors of race, ethnicity, sex, primary written and spoken language, disability status, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, and socioeconomic status.
- Improve access to, and the quality of care that is culturally and linguistically appropriate.
- Improve the diversity and quality of the nation's whole health care workforce.
- Address systemic barriers to quality care for disparities-impacted populations through expanding coverage, improving access, innovating in delivery, bringing down barriers to coverage, and improving com-

munity health.

- Improve health outcomes for women, children, and families in historically and currently excluded and underinvested communities.
- Strengthen protective factors and resources that bolster mental health and eliminate structural barriers that contribute to mental health and substance use disorder inequities.
- Address high impact minority diseases.
- Evaluate and provide funding for, adoption of health information technology in racial and ethnic minority communities and extend Medicaid electronic health record incentive payments to more providers who serve minority populations.

Support reproductive rights

ISSUE: As providers of both clinical care and public health, counties are directly interested in access to a full spectrum of maternal health care.

ADOPTED POLICY: NACo urges Congress and the Administration to ensure women's reproductive rights and access to care for our residents' health, reducing disparities in maternal morbidity and mortality.

HUMAN SERVICES AND EDUCATION

Reduce the immigrant and non-immigrant visa backlog and processing times

ISSUE: U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services is currently facing a backlog of over 3.8 million applications as of May 2021, preventing qualified applicants from receiving employment authorization to bolster local workforces. Further, the lack of a digitized system and access to electronic application materials increases delays and processing times.

ADOPTED POLICY: NACo urges Congress and the administration to provide necessary funding for USCIS to reduce the visa backlog and process new applications. NACo supports federal legislation and regulatory



Miami-Dade County, Fla. Commissioner Sally Heyman addresses fellow board members July 23.

efforts to improve processing times, such as digitizing application materials for electronic processing and increasing staffing capacity.

JUSTICE AND PUBLIC SAFETY

Support qualified immunity

ISSUE: Legislative efforts to abrogate qualified immunity diminishes core employee protections, while failing to fulfill the goal of improving government accountability.

ADOPTED POLICY: NACo recognizes that qualified immunity is a critical civil protection for public servants at every level of government, including county employees such as: department of human services workers, public infrastructure maintenance workers, peace officers, election workers, public health workers, and others. The Association also recognizes that qualified immunity does not—and should not—protect county employees who violate clearly established statutory bounds or constitutional rights, nor does it protect such employees from criminal prosecution. Furthermore, well-intentioned state efforts to inject greater accountability by removing qualified immunity have unintentionally made it more difficult to attract and retain good employees, have increased the cost to local governments, and have made

communities across America less safe. Therefore, NACo urges that neither Congress, nor the President of the United States, through executive order, take any action to diminish, undermine, or otherwise dilute qualified immunity protections for county employees. Counties operate on limited and restricted budgets, so any effort to weaken this protection will have a severe financial impact and prevent the recruitment and retention of qualified employees.

Increase flexibility for building code requirements in FEMA's BRIC program scoring criteria

ISSUE: The Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities (BRIC) Program includes an applicant's building codes as part of the scoring criteria, but numerous states have not adopted the most recent code requirements, leaving many counties unable to create competitive applications.

ADOPTED POLICY: NACo urges FEMA to examine the building code requirements in the BRIC application process and provide alternative scoring opportunities for counties who are unable to meet these requirements due to state level restrictions.

PUBLIC LANDS

Federal land management agencies: Pay for state and local emergency response services in remote federal public lands to increase motorized access on those lands to facilitate rescue efforts and to coordinate better with state and local first responders

ISSUE: The cost and human impact of state, county, and volunteer emergency response operations performed on remote federal public lands, that go unreimbursed by the federal government; and the federal government's refusal to allow the motorized vehicle access and coordination needed to carry out such operations.

ADOPTED POLICY: NACo supports:

- Ongoing funding for federal land management agencies to reimburse for state and local emergency response services performed on remote federal public lands;
- Legislation to allow state, county and volunteer emergency first responders all the motorized vehicle access needed on federal lands to effectively perform their operations;
- Laws and regulations compelling federal land management agencies to adopt a stan-

See **RESOLUTIONS** page 22

Fully fund Recovering America's Wildlife Act of 2021

From **RESOLUTIONS** page 21

dard operating procedure for working with state and local first responders to document and maintain public land specific risk assessments and risk management plans for public safety; and

- Laws and ongoing funding to provide emergency landing zones for life flight jet helicopters.

Oppose the designation of greater sage-grouse sagebrush focal areas

ISSUE: The Secretary of the United States Department of the Interior (DOI) has reinitiated consideration of whether to withdraw approximately 10 million acres of federal lands classified as Sagebrush Focal Areas (SFAs) from location and entry under United States mining laws to conserve the Greater sage-grouse and its habitat.

ADOPTED POLICY: NACo opposes the withdrawal of SFAs

from location and entry under the General Mining Law of 1872.

Streamline federal property acquisition process for local government housing projects

ISSUE: U.S. counties need a streamlined process for obtaining available Federal public lands for additional workforce housing projects.

ADOPTED POLICY: NACo urges the Department of the Interior and the Department of Agriculture to create a new streamlined process to enable counties or other local governments to acquire small parcels of Federal public lands properties for workforce housing projects. The existing process to acquire available Federal public lands is simply too complicated and takes too long.

USFS rulemaking and NEPA for formalizing county coordination and

cooperating agency status, focus on local conditions and public involvement in firefighting and associated interdisciplinary resource management

ISSUE: Wildland Fires continue to take lives, livelihoods and destroy millions of acres of lands and resources with the United States Forest Service (USFS) operating under a Wildland Fire Management direction and strategy that circumvents the Administrative Procedures Act, The National Forest Management Act (NFMA), and the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) as well as the required inclusion of cooperating agencies, including counties and states, coordination with state and local governments, and the requisite transparency, public engagement and input.

ADOPTED POLICY: NACo urges the United States Forest Service to promulgate an official

Wildland Fire Fighting and Interdisciplinary Resource Management rulemaking process coordinated with state and local governments, developed with counties as cooperating agencies and with public involvement in every step. This federal rulemaking requires a NEPA analysis and public disclosure of the interdisciplinary environmental effects upon the American people, their states and county governments of the implementation of the preferred Wildland Fire Fighting and Interdisciplinary Resource Management Alternative. The preferred management alternative will be determined in the rulemaking through transparent and accessible public involvement, coordinated with state and local governments, and county governments will participate in the USFS led NEPA analysis as cooperating agencies. This process is a well-known rulemaking process that is imperative for the USFS to lead and engage counties via county cooperating agency sta-

tus and is not a one size fits all just as Forest Plans.

Distribute local assistance and tribal consistency fund county funds to public lands counties and supporting the NACo distribution formula

ISSUE: The U.S. Department of the Treasury has not distributed funds to "eligible revenue share counties" under the Local Assistance and Tribal Consistency Fund established by the American Rescue Plan Act, nor shared a distribution formula with counties.

ADOPTED POLICY: NACo supports the distribution of Local Assistance and Tribal Consistency Fund county funds only to those counties with federal public lands within their jurisdiction and calls on the U.S. Department of the Treasury to follow the fair, equitable distri-

See **RESOLUTIONS** page 23



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Provide direct funding for electric vehicle charging stations

From RESOLUTIONS page 22

bution formula shared by the NACo Public Lands Steering Committee in August 2021.

Support the Recovering America's Wildlife Act of 2021

ISSUE: While State Wildlife Plans are congressionally mandated, there is limited dedicated federal funding to implement these important conservation tools.

ADOPTED POLICY: NACo supports passage and full funding of Recovering America's Wildlife Act of 2021 (H.2773) or similar bill, with an annual funding target of \$1.3 billion for state and wildlife agencies in partnership with state-based conservation entities such as county park agencies, special park districts, forest preserves and other regional park authorities.

TELECOMMUNICATIONS AND TECHNOLOGY

Alter the challenge Rules to the Universal Service Fee High-Cost Areas – Connect America Fund

ISSUE: The Federal Telecommunications Act has remained largely unchanged since its passage in 1996 despite the rapid changes in technology and market conditions. One of the elements of the original act which has not aged well is the ability of the legacy carriers (Price-cap carriers, Baby Bells) to block the use of the High Cost / Connect America Funding by other carriers within their designated service area. While the intention of the legislation was to encourage these carriers to build out broadband in their areas, all the Price-cap carriers have not done so. The result is that residents within the footprint of these carriers have largely been bypassed by wired internet.

In Montana our Price-cap carrier has required lawsuits to force them to accept the USF high-cost funding and provide

services. This has occurred while the rural co-ops have had to run untapped fiber from the Price-cap's central switch across these unserved areas to reach beyond the Price-cap's territory.

The result is a donut surrounding our larger cities where no wired service is available for several miles until you reach an area serviced by one of the rural co-ops.

ADOPTED POLICY: NACo believes that the time has come for Congress to remove the ability of the Price-cap carriers to block the allocation of Connect America funds within the unserved and underserved portions of their designated territory. The Price-cap carriers must either demonstrate an ongoing expansion of high-speed service into the unserved or underserved portions of their territories or allow other carriers access to the Connect America funds to provide those services.

Congress and the FCC: Implement the Findings of the "Ending 9-1-1 Diversion Now Strike Force" Final Report

ISSUE: Funding for 911 comes from a variety of sources, including monthly fees that are set by each state and paid on consumers' telephone bills. Yet this rate may vary by phone type within a state. As consumers shift their telecommunications preferences from wired to wireless phones, some states have seen a dramatic decrease in dedicated 911 funding as existing statutes have not been updated to account for these shifts. Subsequently, it is not uncommon for the revenue from 911 fees to fall short of the cost of running a 911 call center, also known as a public safety answering point (PSAP).

Additionally, many states collect 911 fees and remit the revenues to local governments. However, in 2015 over \$220 million in 911 fees were diverted by states throughout the country for purposes other than maintaining and upgrading PSAPs. As counties receive less in dedicated 911 revenue



due to both states withholding funds and shifts in telecommunications preferences, they must turn to county general fund revenue for support.

In response to this concern, Congress issued a directive to the FCC that resulted in the creation of the "Ending 9-1-1 Fee Diversion Now Strike Force." This group has completed its work and on September 23, 2021, issued its findings.

ADOPTED POLICY: NACo encourages Congress and the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to utilize the findings of the "Ending 9-1-1 Fee Diversion Now Strike Force" detailed in their September 23, 2021 Report and Recommendations.

Mandate unspent RDOF dollars be reappropriated to shovel-ready projects via existing broadband infrastructure grant programs

ISSUE: Counties and broadband providers that are ready to serve communities currently unconnected are unable to do so due to concerns of overbuilding in areas designated as "served" under the FCC's Rural Digital Opportunity Fund (RDOF), despite many RDOF awardees being in default and thus highly unlikely to fulfill their obligation to complete their proposed broadband service project.

ADOPTED POLICY: NACo urges the FCC to redirect broadband connectivity funds made available under the Rural Digital Opportunity Fund (RDOF) from bidders who have defaulted or do not intend to build, to

shovel-ready projects via existing broadband infrastructure grant programs in order to prevent further delay on broadband infrastructure projects and connect unserved and underserved communities.

TRANSPORTATION

Provide direct funding to counties to support the deployment of electric vehicle charging stations and to study alternatives to the federal gas tax

ISSUE: Counties and local jurisdictions desire federal funding to support the deployment of electric vehicle charging stations and to explore alternatives to the federal gas tax to ensure adequate funding of critical highways and public transportation.

ADOPTED POLICY: NACo urges the U.S. Congress and U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT) to provide direct funding for the deployment and maintenance of electric vehicle (EV) charging stations and infrastructure, including incentives for private investment and public-private partnerships, to state and local governments to support a gradual shift to majority EV transportation; and further urges USDOT to work in partnership with the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) to ensure the our nation's power grid network can accommodate new EV charging stations. Counties urge the U.S. Congress to work with USDOT and DOE to standardize EV charging plugs. Finally, NACo urges the

U.S. Congress and USDOT to meaningfully explore alternatives to the federal gas tax in anticipation of dwindling gas tax revenue as EVs gradually replace traditional gas-powered vehicles.


County road funding for forest health

ISSUE: Forest health demands thinning of forests which require the use of county roads that most often lack federal designation and design standards to receive federal funding needed to get products to the mills and maintain forest health.

ADOPTED POLICY: NACo urges Congress and US DOT to supply funding for specific county road maintenance and upgrades necessary to protect health, safety, and welfare. These roads connect US Forest and BLM lands to processing facilities (mills) which reduce the risks of wildfire and promote forest health.

Fully fund the Active Transportation Infrastructure Investment Program

ISSUE: Regional trail network use is changing from a recreation focus to an active transportation focus, while park agencies continue to bear the lion's share of funding for the development and operations of these networks.

ADOPTED POLICY: NACo supports full funding of the Active Transportation Infrastructure Investment Program (ATIIP) and encourages Congress to develop and fund additional programs specifically focused on development of trail networks at the County and regional level. 

Inflation Reduction Act extends ACA premium subsidies until 2025, excludes MIEP

From IRA page 1

tion aims to reduce carbon emissions by 40 percent by 2030. Key provisions for counties include:

ENVIRONMENT, ENERGY AND LAND USE PROVISIONS

The IRA makes significant investments in energy and climate. The legislation would extend the investment tax credit (ITC) and the production tax credit (PTC) for projects that begin construction prior to January 1, 2025. State and local governments, among other eligible entities, would be able to receive direct payments from the federal government instead of the ITC or PTC. It would also:

- Extend the carbon capture (45Q) tax credit to projects that begin construction prior to January 1, 2033. The legislation would also lower the carbon capture thresholds required to qualify for the credit.
- Decrease the maximum value reduction of 45Q tax credits when used in conjunction with tax-exempt bonds from 50 percent to 15 percent. This decrease could make the new carbon capture bonds established in the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law more attractive and feasible.
- Establish several grant pro-

grams at the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and other agencies to reduce emissions across a range of sectors. Counties would be directly eligible to apply for funding under many of these programs, including a \$3 billion competitive grant program to reduce air pollution at ports and a \$7 billion competitive grant program to provide financial assistance to low-income and disadvantaged communities to deploy or benefit from zero-emission technologies.

- Establish a \$3 billion Neighborhood Access and Equity Grant program at Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) to improve walkability and safety, mitigate negative environmental impacts and support planning and capacity-building activities in disadvantaged communities. Counties would be directly eligible to apply for funding under the program.
- Establish a commercial clean vehicle tax credit of up to 30 percent of the vehicle's sales price or the incremental cost of the vehicle. The credit would apply to vehicles that are manufactured primarily for use on public streets, roads and highways.
- Require the Department of Interior (DOI) to hold an onshore oil and gas lease sale within 4 months of issuing new

onshore wind and solar rights of way. It would also require DOI to hold an offshore oil and gas lease sale of at least 60 million acres in the year prior to issuing offshore wind leases

FINANCE AND TAX PROVISIONS

- IRA is projected to reduce deficits by over \$300 billion over 10 years through the relief of inflationary pressures. In total, the proposal includes \$433 billion in new spending in energy and climate, and healthcare programs, while raising just under \$740 billion. These offsets include two major tax provisions:
 - Strengthening the Internal Revenue Service's (IRS) tax enforcement and compliance abilities by providing \$80 billion for IRS taxpayer services, enforcement efforts, operations support and business systems modernization.
 - A 15 percent alternative minimum tax (AMT) for corporations with profits of more than \$1 billion. This provision would become effective beginning in the 2023 taxable year and includes an exemption for businesses owned by private equity.
- Of particular note to counties, however, unlike the Build Back Better Act, the IRA does not include relief from the \$10,000

cap on the state and local tax (SALT) deduction enacted in the 2017 Tax Cuts and Jobs Act. The House-passed bill would have raised the SALT cap to \$80,000 and would have extended the cap past its 2025 expiration date as a spending offset. NACo supports the full deductibility of all state and local taxes, particularly the property tax, in the federal tax code.

HEALTH PROVISIONS

- Caps out-of-pocket cost of prescription drugs for Medicare beneficiaries each year at \$2,000. Counties support a variety of strategies to assist in cost containment for prescription drugs. Seniors and individuals with disability who are able to receive prescription drugs at a reduced rate under Medicare are more likely to have better health outcomes and less likely to be admitted into county health facilities such as hospitals and the emergency room.
- Provides free vaccines for Medicare beneficiaries which include COVID-19 vaccines, shingles and other necessary vaccines. Counties, as key providers of local public health services and frontline service providers for the medically vulnerable, continue to administer essential vaccinations to residents,

regardless of their insurance status. Federal support for the cost of administering COVID-19 vaccines and other important vaccinations increases communal protection from infectious diseases while decreasing the cost burden of uncompensated medical care.

- Extends Affordable Care Act (ACA) premium subsidies to 2025, which assist low-income individuals with obtaining health insurance on the ACA marketplace, by capping how much an individual pays out of pocket for insurance based on their income level. Important for counties, these subsidies allow low-income individuals to obtain affordable health insurance based on their income, reducing the number of uninsured and medically indigent individuals seeking care in county health facilities. The subsidies are set to expire at the end of 2022 and would be extended for three years under this bill.
- Notably, unlike the Build Back Better Act, IRA does not include the enactment of the Medicaid Reentry Act which amends the Federal Medicaid Inmate Exclusion policy (MIEP) by authorizing incarcerated individuals to receive services covered by Medicaid 30 days prior to their release from jail or prison. **CN**



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PROFILES IN SERVICE

MARY TINKLER

NACo Board Member
Treasurer
Charleston County, S.C.
Officer
National Association of County Collectors, Treasurers and Finance Officers (NACCTFO)
National Association



Tinkler

Number of years active in NACo: This will be my first active year with NACo, but I have been active with NACCTFO for four years.

Years in public service: Eight

Education: Rhodes College, B.A.; Auburn University, M.B.A.

Occupation: Charleston County, S.C. treasurer

The hardest thing I've ever done: Say good-bye to my beloved dog, Moose.

A dream I have is to: Finally learn how to bake a caramel cake. I've tried! It's much harder to get the caramel the right consistency than one would think.

You'd be surprised to learn that I: Have four states left to visit —Minnesota, Wisconsin, North Dakota and South Dakota.

The most adventurous thing I've ever done is: Run for office. I served in the South Carolina House of Representatives before I became the Charleston County Treasurer

My favorite way to relax is: Make dinner with my husband, Tad.

I'm most proud of: Purchasing a home on my own.

Every morning I read: The Post and Courier — Charleston, S.C.'s local newspaper

My favorite meal is: Spent around the dinner table with my family and friends.

My pet peeves are: When people don't recycle.

My motto is: Carpe Diem

The last book I read: "Hamnet" by Maggie O'Farrell

My favorite movie is: "Dead Poet's Society," although I'm pretty happy watching anything with a holiday theme.

My favorite music is: '80s and '90s

My favorite U.S. president: Thomas Jefferson

My county is a NACo member because: We appreciate the value of learning best practices and innovative solutions from our peers.



Three people (living or dead) I'd invite to dinner: Kate Middleton, Michelle Obama, **Betty White**

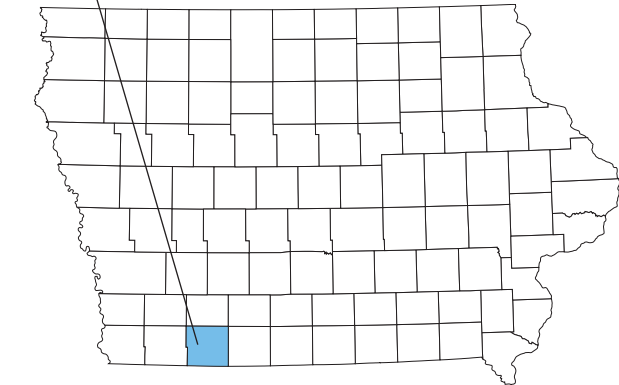
GET TO KNOW...

Taylor County, Iowa

Welcome Taylor County, Iowa!

First established in 1847, Taylor County, Iowa got its name from Major Gen. Zachary Taylor, the 12th president of the United States. The county seat is in Bedford, where the county courthouse stands. Built in 1892, it is included in the National Register of Historic Places. An earlier courthouse was built in 1864.

The county's population is just under 6,000, according to the



2020 Census and measures about 532 square miles.

Taylor County Conservation

manages 539 acres of parks and wildlife areas where visitors enjoy bird-watching, fishing, hunting, hiking and camping.

American singer and entertainer Roberta Linn, 91, who sang on "The Lawrence Welk Show," is from the county. She won an Emmy for her work on her own TV show, "Café Continental" on CBS.



"Get to Know" features new NACo member counties.

ON THE MOVE

NACo OFFICERS

- President **Denise Winfrey** attended the United Counties Council of Illinois Annual Conference, held July 25-26 in Jo Daviess County.
- Winfrey along with Executive Director **Matt Chase** and Associate Membership Director **John Losh** attended the South Carolina Association of Counties Annual Conference, held Aug. 1-4 in Charleston County.
- Winfrey and Membership Director **Kim Hall** attended the North Carolina Association of County Commissioners Annual Conference, held Aug. 11-13 in Cabarrus County.
- Winfrey and Losh attended the County Commissioners Association of Pennsylvania Annual Conference, held Aug. 7-10 in Lancaster County.
- First Vice President **Mary Jo McGuire** and Program Director **Spencer Bridgers** attended the Arkansas Association of Counties Annual Conference that began Aug. 10 in Garland County.

NACo STAFF

- **Will Chapman** has joined NACo as a corporate relations assistant. He previously worked as an account associate for the National Park Foundation and a deputy campaign director for 360 Campaign Consulting Firm. He earned a bachelor's degree in Political Science and Philosophy at Allegheny College in Meadville, Pa.
- **Leenah Hegazy** has joined NACo as a leadership network associate. She previously held a research internship at the Department of Homeland Security and earned a bachelor's degree from James Madison University.
- Hall and Public Affairs Coordinator **Alyxa Hawkins** attended the County Commissioners Association of West Virginia Annual Conference held July 31-Aug. 2 in Ohio County.
- Chief Information Officer **Rita Reynolds** presented at the ISAC Annual Meeting, held Aug. 7-10 in Baltimore City, Md.



Chapman



Hegazy

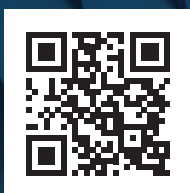


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Automating Data and Analytics to Improve Public Health in LA County

Back in 2018, an article in Health Management Magazine discussed the need to elevate the role of clinical laboratories in healthcare delivery, patient health, and the management of public health priorities. The article points out that, at the time, contemporary research indicated a subordinate role for laboratories, with pathology services generally treated as a low value commodity.

The argument of the authors was that with the ever-increasing reliance on data to improve service delivery, patient outcomes, and population health management, laboratories should play a transformational role in the progress of value-based healthcare. The article put forward a vision of “Lab 2.0,” where laboratory medicine plays an integral role in value-based healthcare by “combining longitudinal patient results with population data and the latest medical understanding to connect the clinical dots.”

Connecting the Dots with Data

Fast forward to 2021 where the global SARS-CoV-2 (COVID-19) pandemic put “Lab 2.0” into breakneck motion by placing a greater dependency on laboratories to provide data to help manage population health. Public health organizations — from the largest state to the small-

est communities — found themselves relying on a network of laboratories to process and provide results from COVID-19 testing.

The largest county in the United States, Los Angeles County is home to more than 10 million people and host to millions of visitors each year. When the true scope of the pandemic came to light, the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health (LAC DPH) knew the importance of laboratory testing as a mechanism to track the progress of the SARS-CoV-2 virus and took action to make the collection of results more efficient.

1.6 Million Cells of Data ... and Counting

As of October 5, 2021, over 31.5 million positive and negative SARS-CoV-2 test results have been reported to LAC DPH via the electronic lab reporting (ELR) system. In addition, more than 900,000 test results have been reported

in flat files from laboratories not yet reporting via ELR. At the height of the pandemic, an average of 5,400 and up to 35,000 flat file test results per day were being reported to LAC DPH.

In theory, a specific reporting structure should help address data quality issues, but in practice, with laboratories processing hundreds or thousands of results every day and the tedium of manual data management of flat file lab results, even with the best intentions, data quality issues are going to occur.

Consider this — with an average of 5,400 daily file test results reported to LAC DPH, even a 5% daily error rate would result in 270 “out of compliance” reported results every day. Assuming it would take 10 minutes for each “out of compliance” result to be followed up on and rectified, the LAC DPH would have had to expend 45 work hours — greater than 5 FTEs per day.

With flat file data coming in from more than 50 different laboratories, the LAC DPH understood that standardization of the information provided by these individual laboratories would be critical. The team provided each laboratory with specific data reporting requirements for flat files, including how 32 fields of data should be laid out and how the information in each cell should be formatted.

Improving the Course of Public Health with Analytic Automation

With a set format for each laboratory established, an Alteryx workflow was built to examine the structure of each report and determine if the columns were in the right order. More than that, the workflow could examine each individual cell to make sure the required information was present and in the right format. For laboratory reports that were verified, the results

were included in additional analyses to track the spread of the virus.

In this same process, reports that were out of compliance — either because of formatting issues and/or missing/incomplete data — were pulled and inconsistencies/errors identified.

Now, instead of the LAC DPH having to contact the specific laboratory with the reporting problems, an analytic workflow automated the notification process with an auto-generated email that was sent to the laboratory with detailed information. This automated notification sped up the process by which the laboratory could rectify the reporting issue and resubmit the information.

In addition to the time and resources saved, the LAC DPH sped up time to insight, which allowed the DPH to monitor percent positivity, pinpoint areas of concern, and better inform policy decisions.



WORD SEARCH

DECATUR COUNTY, Ga.
Created by: Mary Ann Barton

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

AIRPORT: Decatur County Industrial Air Park is a county-owned public-use airport.

BAINBRIDGE: The county seat is named for Commodore William Bainbridge, commander of the ship known as “Old Ironsides,” the USS Constitution in the War of 1812.

BASS: The fishing is good in the county, with the Flint River and Lake Seminole attracting fishing enthusiasts for bass tournaments

COLLEGE: The county is home to Bainbridge State College.

COURTHOUSE: Constructed in 1902, the Decatur County courthouse is a neoclassical building designed by Alexander Blair III, who designed the Grand Opera House in Macon, Ga. and seven other county courthouses.

DECATUR: The county is named for Commodore Stephen Decatur, a naval hero in the War of 1812. (The county

seat for DeKalb County, Ga. is also named Decatur.)

FARMING: The county is home to more than 300 farms. The main crops are vegetables, melons, potatoes and sweet potatoes.

GEORGIA: Decatur County is located in the southwest corner of Georgia.

GRIFFIN: Marvin Griffin, who served as governor of the state from 1955 to 1959, was born in the county.

HISTORY: The county was founded on Dec. 8, 1823, from a portion of Early County.

HOPKINS: The late film, stage and TV actress Miriam Hopkins was raised in the county; she was nominated for the Best Actress Oscar in 1936.

POPULATION: The 2020 census shows the population of the county at 26,595 but the latest estimates put it at 29,038.

RESTAURANT: Next time you’re in town, try the fried green tomatoes at The American, a family-owned restaurant in the county with lots of positive reviews.

SEMINOLE: Lake Seminole, created by a dam at the Florida line built by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, forms the southwestern boundary of the county.

SIZE: The county is 623 square miles.

BEHIND THE SEAL

MADISON COUNTY, Ala.

Madison County’s seal depicts a land of contrasts.

At the top, tall buildings represent the metropolitan scene in downtown Huntsville.

Clockwise, the barn and silo reflect the county’s agricultural history, which continues today, where cotton, corn and soybeans are grown.

Lastly, the rocket, stars and moon celebrate NASA’s Marshall Space Flight Center which is situated on the U.S. Army’s Redstone Arsenal in Huntsville.



Madison County Commissioner Tom Brandon assisted with interpretation of the seal. Would you like to see your county’s seal featured? Contact Charlie Ban at cban@naco.org.

UPCOMING EVENTS

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION of COUNTIES NACo.

For more information, visit www.naco.org/events



2022 FALL BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING & LUCC SYMPOSIUM
November 30-December 2
Will County, Illinois



2023 LEGISLATIVE CONFERENCE
February 11-14
Washington, D.C.



2023 WESTERN INTERSTATE REGION CONFERENCE
May 17-19
Washington County, Utah



2023 ANNUAL CONFERENCE & EXPOSITION
July 21-24
Travis County/Austin, Texas

BRIGHT IDEAS | BOULDER COUNTY, Colo.

Academy Helps Young Adults Take Next Steps to Further Education, Careers

PROBLEM:

When COVID hit, young adults in Boulder County, Colo. needed help completing their education and finding jobs.

SOLUTION:

Start the Young Leaders Academy to help them get to the next level.

by Mary Ann Barton
editor

When the pandemic hit, Boulder County, Colo. decided to use funding from the CARES Act to help provide the stepping stones necessary for young people in their community to get from education to career.

A two-department collaboration, between the Community Action Partners (CAP), under the Community Services Department and Workforce Boulder County, got the concept off the ground, according to Belinda Hearn, who coordinates the county's PERL program, which stands for People Engaged in Raising Leaders.

"We got a grant at the end of 2020 and started in 2021 and came up with this idea - in the 16 to 24 year age bracket, to get them connected to training and education," she said. "When COVID hit, no one was thinking about this age group."

They called it the Young Leaders Academy. The program was created to cultivate BIPOC (Black, Indigenous and people of color) future leaders and entrepreneurs from under-represented backgrounds. YLA creates a pipeline of diverse talent to a variety of sectors across Boulder County while having positive future economic implications, and academic, and health-related outcomes for its BIPOC youth participants.

"We got the funding in the fall of 2020, hired for the position and got started in winter of 2021," Hearn noted. "The program manager wrote a grant

and when the grant came in, we collaborated with Workforce Boulder County."

The program and funding were used to motivate young people to take steps toward completing their educations, each one of them making a four-month commitment to the program.

The program came with a stipend of \$7,000 to help support their educational development at either a four-year college, technical college or for certifications as well as help them meet their employment and leadership goals. The program included six weeks of interactive, engaging workshops.

"Each week we offered something different: Interviewing,

budgeting, resume writing, interpersonal skills and more," Hearn said. Participants also received a \$500 stipend for completing 80 percent of the workshops.

Each participant could take part in paid internships, occupational skills training (certifications, license or degree) or a high school equivalency diploma.

"And what was so cool about this, everything was done on Zoom," Hearn said.

And for those who may not have had the resources, such as a laptop or Internet service? "Those things were provided, we helped them get a laptop and Internet service; if they didn't have those things, we

could provide it."

Broken down into three cohorts, each cohort lasted six weeks. A typical week would be a meeting on Zoom for an hour to an hour-and-a-half. Students also spent time interacting with a case manager, checking in to see how things were going.

"We had a celebration during the second week in June, to celebrate all the candidates who graduated from YLA," Hearn said. It was the first time they had all met in person.

Hearn said they measure the program's success "by what they achieved - 90 percent went on to complete their education, a couple graduated from four-year colleges, some are gainfully employed. A cou-

ple of youth are working for Amazon Prime and FedEx," she said. More than 70 young adults have gone through the program.

The county is looking to continue the Young Leaders Academy.

"I was so impressed by the students, they were there because they wanted to be there," she said. "Some were in pretty difficult situations - working while taking the class. It was a different energy than adults. Their intentions and outcomes were wonderful." **CN**

Boulder County, Colo. won the NACo 2022 Best in Category Achievement Award in the Children and Youth category.



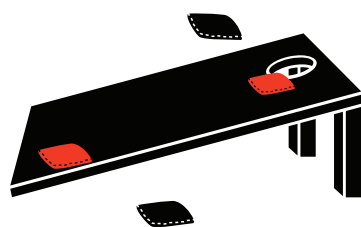
Participants in Boulder County, Colo.'s Young Leaders Academy celebrate at a graduation ceremony. Photo courtesy of Boulder County

CALIFORNIA

• **ALAMEDA COUNTY** has turned to its former **foster youths** to design a guaranteed income system for those about to age out of the system. Beginning in 2023, roughly 90 21-year-olds will receive \$1,000 per month over a two-year period, *The Oaklandside* reported.

• The **LOS ANGELES COUNTY** Office of Immigrant Affairs or OIA in the Department of Consumer and Business Affairs has launched the Capacity Strengthening Grants for Immigrant Focused Community Based Organizations Initiative to support community organizations serving **immigrant residents** who have been disproportionately impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The initiative's goals include evaluating, sharing, strengthening and implementing the best practices from the pandemic response and service for immigrant communities into the post-pandemic recovery period and beyond. Ten recipient organizations will receive a grant award of \$150,000 over a two-year period, along with technical assistance. Another 10 organizations will receive vital technical assistance and coaching from the Center for Nonprofit Management to strengthen their capacity.



INDIANA

LAGRANGE COUNTY and LaGrange Communities Youth



NEW JERSEY

CAMDEN COUNTY held a family fun and fitness day July 30, supported by Olympian New Jersey native Joetta Clark Diggs.

Photo courtesy of Camden County

Centers Inc. recently held a program to help young people become more comfortable with **police officers** by holding a "LaGrange County Connecting with Youth" program for children in Grades 6 and up. Officers from several local law enforcement agencies were on hand to meet and get to know the teens, including from the county sheriff's and park police departments. Officers wore civilian clothes instead of their uniforms and participated in activities including games of corn hole, disc golf, a dunk tank, golf, archery, nature hikes, a K-9 demonstration and more.

IOWA

JOHNSON COUNTY's Proj-

ect Lifesaver program can help **find vulnerable missing people** with Alzheimer's, autism, dementia and other cognitive conditions. A silent radio frequency is sent out through a wrist or ankle band and connects to a tracking device like GPS. It allows first responders to know how close or far away an individual wearing the transmitter is based on how loud or soft the tracking device is beeping.

MARYLAND

The **MONTGOMERY COUNTY** "FareShare" program offers tax-free reimbursements to local businesses for their employees' costs for **commuting to work by public**



transit. That could total \$280 a month for using public transit or carpooling by vanpooling. Employers must commit to covering the first \$25 per month of travel costs for participating employees, with the full subsidy going as high as \$3,360 per year, per employee with a maximum payout of \$40,000 to each business per year.

MINNESOTA

OLMSTED COUNTY's **Summer of Discovery** program recently introduced 15 youths to county activities and potential employment opportunities in its first year. The partnership

with the local Boys and Girls Club took students to various county departments to help familiarize them with those departments' functions.

Commissioner **Gregg Wright**, a retired high school teacher and college counselor, initially proposed it as a way to reach the next generation of potential county staff, *The Post Bulletin* reported.

"We know there is a shortage of workers in the community, and we will have to recruit and retain employees," he said. "One of the best ways to start with recruitment is to look at people who are younger, who are starting to look at careers

See **NEWS FROM** page 31

GEORGIA

GWINNETT COUNTY recently held the induction ceremony for the Gwinnett Youth Commission's new class. The yearlong program includes an eight-week summer program designed to **educate youth about local government**, engage youth in civic affairs and provide an opportunity for youth to affect change in their communities. Youth will get behind-the-scenes tours of Gwinnett County Government departments, interact with government leaders, and receive community leadership training designed to foster the next generation of leaders for Gwinnett County. Photo courtesy of Gwinnett County



From NEWS FROM page 30

that they might enter.”

NEBRASKA

LANCASTER COUNTY has introduced a text message-based program to help teens and young adults **quit vaping**. “This Is Quitting” is a free and anonymous program designed for teens and young adults that provides tailored advice, cognitive and behavioral coping strategies and social support to help them stop using e-cigarettes, and is coordinated by Tobacco Free Lancaster County, Lincoln Public Schools and the Lincoln-Lancaster County Health Department.

NEW JERSEY

• **MORRIS COUNTY’s** Office of Planning and Preservation is documenting its “**Veterans of the Z**,” those who served in the formal Korean War and those who have served since 1953 along the Korean Demilitarized Zone. This includes photographs and documents related to their service. The basic information required for listing is the veteran’s name, Morris County municipality of birth or residence and the military branch in which they served.

“The Korea veteran listing is anticipated to be a unique one, encompassing not only the Korean conflict from 1950 to 1953, but the considerable tensions in the ensuing decades,” said Jan Williams, cultural and historic resources specialist for the Planning and Preservation Office.

NEW YORK

• The **NIAGARA COUNTY Opioid Task Force’s** “Hope

Links” campaign recently asked county fairgoers to complete one paper link by writing on that link something that has posed a significant life challenge to them, and something that gave them hope that they could triumph over that challenge. These links will be collected and utilized to create a visual representation that “Hope Links” the community together in the face of adversity.

OHIO

• **HANCOCK COUNTY’s juvenile court program** is acquiring what had been an independent nonprofit court-appointed special advocate program. The change is expected to lead to enhanced volunteer training and a larger volunteer base. The organization’s board of directors will remain as a private, fundraising sector of the organization.

“The new model will provide the benefits of a court-based process combined with the benefits of a non-profit arm,” said nonprofit Board Chairman Jim Carpenter.

• In recognition of Child Support Awareness Month, the **MONTGOMERY COUNTY** Child Support Enforcement Agency is giving parents a chance to pay one month of **back child support** instead of the usual three required to get a driver’s license reinstated, the *Dayton Daily News* reported.

Parents can also get resources to help ensure they don’t get behind again, with help like employment resources, and co-parenting resources, including mediation.

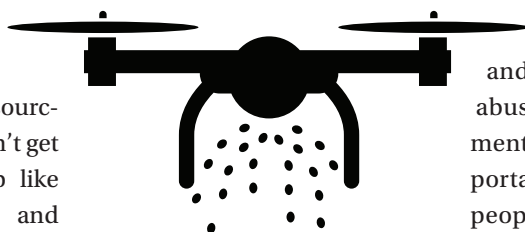


WASHINGTON

Members of the **KING COUNTY** Youth Conservation Corps test **water samples**. Ten high school students worked with Parks and Recreation staff over seven weeks to better understand the breadth and depth of environmental justice, ecological restoration, and parks and recreation management practices. Photo courtesy of King County

PENNSYLVANIA

• A new **CENTRE COUNTY** program will pay for **vehicle repair costs** related to COVID-19. The need for assistance must be means-tested, related to COVID-19, such as employment loss, loss of work hours or medical bills, and the cost of repairs cannot exceed Kelley Blue Book value. The payment for the repair will be made directly to the repair shop, and residents must keep the vehicle for the six months following the repair, the *Centre Daily Times* reported.



• **CUMBERLAND COUNTY** is testing a program that would

use **drones to help farmers spread cover seed**. If it’s successful, seeding fields earlier in the year would not only help grow more crops, but also protect the soil from wind and stormwater run-off, *The Sentinel* reported.

UTAH

SALT LAKE COUNTY debuted its **Jail Resource Re-entry Program**, which provides a short-term location to access resources including court information; conditional release supervision information; setting up Medicaid enrollment and referrals for substance abuse or mental health treatment, food, shelter, and transportation. The program helps people navigate the transition from jail back into the community, reduces disruptive

behavior in the community after release and decreases the likelihood that the person will re-offend and return to jail. Since a soft opening in April, the program has helped 650 people, with their chief needs relating to legal and supervision questions, Medicaid enrollment and housing.

VIRGINIA

FAIRFAX COUNTY is forecasting more than \$1 million in revenue from the first year of its **plastic bag tax**. The county brought in over \$500,000 in the first five months of the tax, even with retailers allowed to retain 2 cents out of every 5 cents collected on each disposable plastic bag they distribute in 2022. Retailers will retain 1 cent in 2023, and in 2024, all the revenue will go to the county, FFXnow reported.

The revenue can be used to support educational programs, clean up pollution and litter and provide reusable bags to people who receive federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program or Women, Infants and Children food benefits.

NEW YORK

• A 14-year-old’s design submission has broken the mold for an “**I Voted**” sticker **competition**. Hudson Rowan’s design led the monthlong voting, wire-to-wire, in **ULSTER COUNTY**.

“It’s got crazy bulging eyes, mangled looking hair, looking off into the distance ... some crazy, like, spider robot legs shooting outta the sides,” he told National Public Radio. “It kind of gives a chaotic vibe.”

Election Commissioner Ashley Dittus said most of the submissions she had seen since the contest started last year included red, white and blue; or maybe images of mountains to represent their county in the Catskills. But she’s never seen anything like this before.

“I will never forget when I saw it,” she said. “I instantly smiled and I had to show it to other people. I just couldn’t keep it to myself.”



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



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