



**PROFILES IN SERVICE:
MEET CATHY SENDER-
LING-MCDONALD. PG. 5**



**BRIGHT IDEAS: TEXAS
COUNTY BATTLES CAR
TITLE FRAUD. PG. 10**



**CONGRATS TO BEST IN
CATEGORY ACHIEVEMENT
AWARD WINNERS! PG. 11**

PRESIDENT SIGNS COVID-19 RELIEF ORDER

by Daria Daniel
and Brett Mattson

Following dissolution of negotiations in Congress for a fifth coronavirus relief package, President Trump released a series of administrative actions Aug. 8, an executive order and three memorandums, to address the expiration of federal unemployment benefits and provide other assistance for residents negatively impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The executive order is intended to prevent rental evictions and mortgage foreclosures, while the memoranda focus on providing new payroll tax cuts, partially extending federal unemployment benefits with monetary contributions from states, as well as extending student loan payment relief.

Nevertheless, the actions taken by the administration do not address NACo's main priority for COVID relief which is additional flexible fiscal aid for state and local governments of all sizes.

Assistance to renters and homeowners

The executive order on providing assistance to renters and homeowners directs fed-

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Storms ripped across Midwest counties last week including Linn County, Iowa, where a resident uses a chainsaw to clear the street following a derecho, a powerful line of severe thunderstorms. The derecho brought wind gusts of up to 110 mph that led to power outages for more than one million people. Traveling over 770 miles from South Dakota to Ohio, the storms became more severe in eastern Iowa and northwestern Illinois bringing winds that destroyed crops, grain bins and homes. Iowa Gov. Kim Reynolds (R) declared a disaster proclamation for 23 counties following the storms. Photo courtesy of The Cedar Rapids Gazette

Election officials: 'Flatten the curve,' avoid backups amidst pandemic

by Charlie Ban
senior writer

Robyn Stallworth Poquette compares election preparations to planning 100 weddings on the same day.

"It's as if nobody has RSVPed and you have to make dietary adjustments for all your guests... it's really difficult," the Yuma County, Ariz. recorder said, fresh off a primary election that essentially served as a rehearsal for the general election. In addition to being a presidential

swing state, Arizona will see a U.S. Senate race pitting the first woman combat pilot against an astronaut. Poquette expects turnout to be massive, dwarfing her primary that featured no local races.

Add the COVID-19 pandemic

to that and suddenly every family has a relative whose musical reputation outstretches their talent, but not their mother's confidence about performing at the reception. Mixed with competing rhetoric questioning ballot security and integrity,

and now the brides and grooms want their cats to serve as ring bearers.

When presented with those added layers to the chaos, Poquette said that sounded right.

See ELECTION page 3

New census deadline nearing

by Charlie Ban
senior writer

Every day, Judge Executive Cale Turner checked the U.S. Census Bureau website, hoping to see Owsley County, Ky's self-response rate take off.

For one of the poorest counties in the country, an accurate count of its population is crucial to securing federal support. In hopes of topping 2010's 52 percent rate, Turner recruited part-

ners he didn't have then, and they brought in hundreds of responses. Turner checked again: 31.6 percent.

"We're under a lot of pressure to get a good count," Turner said. "We met religiously for three months, determined to have a good turnout this time. Right now, we're the last in the state."

Census field workers are fanning out to counties across the country to fill in the gaps, but those working in Owsley Coun-

ty will spend some of that time doubling back over the responses that weren't recorded, leaving less time to wear their shoes out tracking down the hard-to-count population.

And that was before the Aug. 3 announcement that data collection would end Sept. 30, a month earlier than previously established. In response, nearly 900 organizations, including NACo,

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President's executive actions designed to provide relief during pandemic

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eral agencies, including the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development and Treasury, to review existing authorities and resources and identify any and all available federal funding to provide temporary financial assistance to renters and homeowners who are struggling to make monthly rental and mortgage payments due to COVID-19.

Such actions may include providing assistance and other resources to public housing authorities, affordable housing owners, landlords and recipients of federal grant funds in order to minimize evictions and foreclosures.

However, the EO does not specifically direct any federal agencies to take actions to mitigate evictions, nor does it reinstate the federal moratorium on evictions included in the \$2 trillion Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES) which expired July 24.

Needs assistance programs

The memorandum on authorizing other needs assistance programs for major disaster declarations would partially extend the federal pandemic unemployment insurance (UI) benefits implemented under the CARES Act which expired at the end of July.

However, the extra federal UI benefit which is on top of states' regular UI benefit would be reduced from \$600 to \$400 per week. Of the \$400 total, the administration proposed that \$300 would be funded through FEMA's existing Disaster Relief Funds (DRF).

The administration would direct the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to set aside funding from the DRF to cover the reduced UI benefits.

The White House proposed to earmark up to \$44 billion of \$70 billion in existing DRF dollars, which would last for about five weeks at current UI levels.



SPEEDREAD

Congress' Failure to Reach Agreement on Aid to State and Local Governments Leaves Them in an Untenable Position: naco.org/reliefbill.

States would be responsible for the 25 percent FEMA DRF state match, or \$100 per UI recipient each week. Governors must submit a federal request to FEMA to receive the extra federal UI payments; it is not automatic.

At least \$25 billion of the DRF would be set aside to support ongoing disaster response and recovery efforts and potential 2020 major disaster costs.

In addition, the White House would allow states to use their Treasury Coronavirus Relief Fund (CRF) dollars for the \$100 state match. However, the National Governors Association notes that states have already obligated more than 75 percent of CRF dollars, so it is unlikely that states have enough money for the state match. States and localities continue to face significant budget challenges due to reduced revenues so it is unclear how many states can afford or would accept this

payment arrangement to continue the federal UI benefits. West Virginia is the only state to agree to the plan so far.

Deferring payroll taxes

The presidential memorandum deferring payroll tax obligations directs the Secretary of Treasury to use his authority to defer payroll taxes for employees to reduce funding taken out of workers' paychecks and create incentives for work and employment.

Specifically, to defer the withholding of federal payroll taxes on an employee's earned wages of less than \$4,000 bi-weekly (pre-tax) Sept. 1-Dec. 31.

The deferment only applies to the employee share that is normally collected and submitted by employers (and the employee side for self-employed). Earlier COVID-19 supplemental law already allowed for postponement of the employer share of payroll taxes. Payroll taxes consist of:

- Social Security taxes at 12.4 percent (6.2 percent paid by employee and 6.2 percent paid by employer); and
- Medicare taxes at 2.9 percent (1.45 percent paid by employee and 1.45 percent paid by employer)

The employee payroll taxes

will be deferred without any penalties or interest and will go into effect on Sept. 1. In the interim, the U.S. Treasury and Internal Revenue Services are now tasked with developing additional guidance to explain how to implement this executive action.

Continued student loan repayment relief

The presidential memorandum on continuing student loan repayment relief directs the Secretary of Education to provide waivers and modifications to extend student loan repayment relief on loans held by the U.S. Department of Education until Dec. 31.

The administration initially suspended federal student loan payments and set the interest rate at zero percent for at least 60 days beginning on March 20, 2020. Then Congress included the federal student loan payment relief in the CARES Act which is set to expire on Sept. 30. This memorandum does not address student loan debt held by private lenders. **CN**

Daria Daniel is an associate legislative director and Brett Mattson is a legislative associate in NACo's Government Affairs Department.

SNAP/STATS



LABOR DAY IS SEPT. 7

Percent of workers 65-72 working/looking for work:29 percent
Percent of teens working summer jobs: 34.6 percent
Pay gap between high school/college grads:.....\$24,700
Women's earnings among workers 25 to 34:89 percent
Ages 16-29 neither employed or in education/training:..... 14.8 percent

Source: Statista

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Election projected to see a massive increase in voting by mail to avoid crowds



Multnomah County, Ore. staffers sort ballots for the City of Portland's Special Runoff Election Aug. 11. Oregon is one of five states that conduct all-mail elections. Photo by Motoya Nakamura

From ELECTION page 1

"Election management is out of sight, out of mind for most people," Poquette said. "People are generally unaware of the expensive preparation that everything takes."

On the heels of counties enacting policies to "flatten the curve" and keep COVID-19 patients from overwhelming hospitals, county election workers are following the same playbook to help them through a general election that is projected to see a massive increase in voting by mail to avoid crowds, and the coronavirus, at polling places.

For Yuma's much larger Arizona county cousin, Maricopa County, Ariz., the fourth largest in the country, a failure to do that could be catastrophic, so Government Relations Director Tonia Tunnell stresses making voting early as easy as possible.

"If your state allows no-excuse absentee voting or COVID can be an acceptable excuse, mail ballot request forms to all active voters," she said. "Just do it."

That counts for 28 states and the District of Columbia, plus Nevada, which will mail absen-

tee ballots, not absentee ballot applications, to all registered voters. Five states conduct all-mail elections.

The place to be

That means 15 states, so far, will require excuses to acquire an absentee ballot or else voters will have to show up in person, and management of polling places will get a lot of scrutiny in light of coronavirus physical distancing requirements.

Though Arizona allows no-excuse absentee ballots, Maricopa County moved to meet those demands with voting centers, which frees voters from being tied to their precinct. In the primary, instead of 1,142 voting locations, the county staffed 99 much larger voting centers, which opened 27 days before the election ended.

"We were moving toward a voting center model, but COVID pushed us all the way there," she said, "The biggest factor that made it happen was shopping centers."

Contracting with shopping centers gave the county much larger spaces to work with and brought customers near the stores.

"The vast majority of those

voting centers had at least 12 check-in stations," Tunnell said. "You can't do that in a school library. We had all the room we needed to spread out."

Even though Nevada is mailing out ballots to all registered voters, Eureka County will maintain ballot collection locations at the north and south end of the small rural county.

"We had a lot of pushback in the primary, we have a lot of voters who would rather do it in person," said Mike Nunn, deputy clerk recorder. "They're skeptical, they want to do things the way they've always done them, so we're giving them that option."

Playing host to polling places will require a significant amount of personal protective equipment and cleaning supplies, all expenses Tunnell said could be covered by coronavirus relief aid.

"Every poll worker is going to have a mask, shield and gloves," she said. "We'll have masks for everyone in case they forgot one, we'll have single-use pens for the ballots. We'll need disinfecting wipes, tape to mark spacing on the ground...these are all new expenses because of COVID, and COVID money

should pay for it. They add up.

"These are expenses that we wouldn't have had in previous years — going from a school library that was free to a commercial location that gives us the space to do social distancing, it's going to cost the election department money, so we need Congress to pitch in and help us with that," she said.

Poll positions

Tunnell said some poll workers manned their voting centers for 27 straight days in the primary, with many more working 14 days. Recruiting that workforce is crucial, and she suggested that current conditions could require having a reserve corps that could be half of the normal complement.

"People are going to back out, they might get scared, they might get talked out of it, or they could get sick," she said. "You'll have to replace backups, too, so you can't get complacent."

Joyce McKinley has a great recruiter in Centre County, Pa., where she is director of elections.

"We have a teacher at Bellefonte High School who does half the training for poll workers from the school," she said. "We

send them in groups of two to different precincts."

Some alumni come home from college to work the polls, and McKinley said that teacher came up with 75 different poll workers from his classes in 2016.

"I don't know what we'll do when he retires," she said.

Centre County includes Penn State University, where McKinley has combined all of the precincts for ease of voting in the student union.

Tunnell said civic duty pay measures could sweeten the deal for poll workers, who can collect the pay on top of their salary.

Poll workers end up being the public face of election officials.

"They try to really garner the trust of our community in a county like ours where we want to make voters feel safe and secure going to the poll and receiving their early ballot in a way they feel confident that their vote counts," Poquette said.

"Staff are having communications with frustrated voters, voters who are hearing different rhetoric from neighbors on se-

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'Vote by mail has been a good process for Utah ... you can trust it'

From **ELECTION** page 3

curity. That's not easy."

Mailing it in

Clerk Polly Olson saw mail-in ballots boost turnout in Deuel County, Nebraska's primary, and she is sure that trend will continue when the races add more gravity.

"In a primary election without a lot of local issues, we don't usually have a lot of turnout but we saw an increase because the secretary of state helped us in sending out mail-in ballots," Olson said.

McKinley is expecting as many as 44,000 absentee ballot requests in the general election, twice what the primary drew. Centre County is considering contracting with a mailing service to distribute the ballots.

Knowing who is getting the ballots is the first step toward ensuring a vote's validity.

"A successful and secure mail vote program has to start with having really good voter registration lists," Tunnell said. "You have to be very vigilant about

the national Voting Rights Act and how you keep your voter list clean. Even before we mail ballots out, we compare our list to the national change of address (registry).

"We know every ballot is going to a real person who is living."

In Yuma County, that work will start the second week of September, when Poquette's temporary workers start auditing their address lists before the ballots go out Oct. 7.

A spate of unsolicited, pre-filled absentee ballots from the Center for Voter Information is making counties' jobs harder to conduct business by mail. Fairfax County, Va. residents received mailers with a return address to the city of Fairfax. Though the city and county are cooperating to make sure the applications reach the right office, Fairfax County General Registrar Gary Scott said the mailing is also confusing voters who have previously submitted absentee ballot applications themselves. These voters are worried that their applications



Robyn Stallworth Poquette, Yuma County, Ariz. recorder, speaks at a Capitol Hill briefing on election administration during the 2020 NACo Legislative Conference. Photo by Denny Henry

were not received, leading them to think they need to apply again.

The same problem has surfaced with Roanoke, Richmond and Franklin counties and their namesake cities, though the latter two are farther apart than Fairfax and Roanoke counties are from their respective cities.

In response to a similar problem in North Carolina, the

Legislature there passed a law prohibiting pre-filled absentee ballot request forms.

Get them to sign on the line which is dotted

To vote absentee in Scotland County, Mo., you'll need a notary. Clerk Batina Dodge said it isn't hard to find one, but it's an extra layer of security.

"The virus hasn't been a big concern here, so I don't think we'll see a big demand for absentee ballots," she said.

Her small office has talked about contingencies if things change and they get inundated with ballot requests, but even then, they'll have an idea how many to plan to process.

"I don't know what the situation will be the closer we get to November," she said.

The proliferation of mail ballot access has been met by skepticism, including by President Trump, himself a mail voter in Florida. Weber County, Utah Clerk Auditor Ricky Hatch said Utah's all-mail election, now in its third year, and Weber County's seven-year program has received bipartisan support in the county and an endorsement from Republican gubernatorial candidate Spencer Cox.

"Vote by mail has been a good process for Utah, there are a lot of controls and you can trust it," Hatch said.

When he hears questions

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NATIONAL ASSOCIATION of COUNTIES

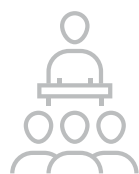
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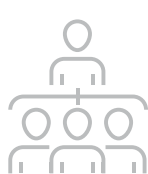
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From ELECTION page 4

about Weber County's mail ballot security, Hatch points to the county's successes and security procedures.

"It's usually people who haven't been paying attention to that in the past or pipe up on social media repeating what they've heard nationally," Hatch said. Signature verification is the crucial step in verifying ballots, which election judges, trained in handwriting analysis, do with each ballot that comes in, comparing the signature to up to five on record from different government documents. If a ballot fails, then it is routed to a full team of election staffers. If it doesn't pass muster, they contact the voter.

"It's getting better because the quality of signatures we have on file has increased," Hatch said, "The failure rate is much lower than it used to be."

We want it that way

State governments are still taking action that could affect how counties administer their elections, and it's crucial to make counties' voices heard in the process. Hatch is worried that the Utah Legislature's special session could impose new rules, like when it outlawed in-person voting options during the primary.

"We asked them then to let us choose," Hatch said. "They said you could choose between mail or a voter not leaving their car to drop off their ballot and the county assumes all the liability."

"We may get something similar."

Hatch doesn't mince words. "Let us run our elections the way we know," he said. "We know our public and our poll workers. We've handled difficult situations like this before and we've done great, but we'd like to mail out our ballots a little earlier than before to give people and the post office extra time to process everything."

Tunnell said unilateral action without input from the people who put on elections is one of the fastest ways to lose the confidence of the voting public.

"States, please talk to us before you make statewide decisions," she said. "Counties know what their culture is."

Too many changes, like sudden changes to state-wide mail ballots in Nevada, could throw people for a loop. Eureka County's staff struggled to keep up with the changes so they could be a trusted authority to the public.

"They need reassurance that their vote will count, and it won't be subject to fraud any more than in a regular election," Nunn said.

It's a situation where even though a national election is a composite of 3,069 smaller units, scaling doesn't necessarily mean better results.

"Being as small as we are is beneficial to the community," Nunn said. "Everybody knows everybody. We're here in case people have questions. We stay on top of requests from the public." **CN**

PROFILES IN SERVICE

CATHY SENDERLING-MCDONALD

NACo Board
County Welfare Directors
Association of California
Sacramento, Calif.

Number of years involved in NACo:

I began at CWDA in 2000 and started playing an active role in NACo and the National Association of County Human Services Administrators at that time. I've been formally on the HSE Steering Committee for about 10 years.

Years in public service:

Occupation: Deputy director at the statewide association representing California's 58 county human services agencies. I am registered to lobby the California Legislature and I work on both budget and legislation. I'm also the primary liaison to our federal representative.

Education: I have a Bachelors in Journalism from the University of Missouri — Columbia and a Master of Science in Public Policy and Management from the Heinz College at Carnegie Mellon University in Pittsburgh.

The hardest thing I've ever done: Pregnancy! It took some help from doctors to get pregnant due to fertility issues. After we successfully achieved that, I was nauseated the entire time, developed high blood pressure and my legs swelled to the point we were wrapping them in cabbage leaves every day to try to get the swelling down. It was all worth it to end up with our wonderful son (now 6) of course, but wow.

Three people (living or dead) I'd invite to dinner: My husband, my son and my father. Nearly every day, I wish that my dad had lived long enough to meet my son.

A dream I have is to:

Have an amazing craft and sewing room where I can do projects.

You'd be surprised to learn:

I have visited 47 states and have only three to go: Vermont, South Carolina and North



SENDERLING-MCDONALD

Dakota. (I think just being in an airport does not count. I've done something "real" enough to count as a visit in each of the states I've included.)

The most adventurous thing I've ever done is:

Learn how to ride a motorcycle and pass the test to get this designation on my driver's license.

My favorite way to relax is:

Put the classical station on the XM while I'm driving.

I'm most proud of: Being willing to move to new cities, where I don't know anyone, when

My favorite movie is:

It varies, but probably right now my favorite is *The Lego Batman Movie*, which I've listened to from the front seat while my son watches it on the DVD system in my car about two dozen times. There are so many great lines. It's truly hilarious. We quote it all the time.



it mattered — for my first job out of college in southern Indiana, for graduate school in Pittsburgh and for my first post-grad job in Sacramento. It was hard and scary at times, but it's worked out for me and I'm glad my parents supported me in this journey.

Every morning I read: Twitter, *The New York Times* and a California-focused compendium of headlines called "Rough and Tumble."

My favorite meal is: Zachary's Pizza in Berkeley. When we first began dating, my husband and I described our "favorite pizza place" to each other. We described it completely differently, but it turns out we were talking about the same place!

My pet peeve is: People who are unnecessarily mean to others.

My motto is: "In life, as in football, the principle to follow is: Hit the line hard." — Theodore Roosevelt

The last book I read was:

Station Eleven by Emily St. John Mandel. It's about a pandemic (timely).

My favorite music is: I was raised on classic rock (Beatles, Rolling Stones, Clapton, Queen) by my parents but I also love new wave, punk and alternative (U2, Depeche Mode, New Order, The Cure). My husband has also gotten me into the harder rock—I've seen Metallica twice, including once with the San Francisco Symphony and Iron Maiden twice as well.

My favorite U.S. president is:

I shook Jimmy Carter's hand when I was in first grade and he visited my hometown of Granite City, Ill. during his unsuccessful re-election bid against Ronald Reagan, so I've always had a soft spot for him.

My association is a NACo member because:

My association is a long-time member of the National Association of County Human Services Administrators and I'm proud to live in a 100 percent state!

ELECTION SECURITY RESOURCES

On top of the traditional and adaptive processes to run a secure election, computer system security is a constant threat.

"You have to ensure your voter registration systems are completely secure, and the only way you can do that is patch, make sure you secure all of your passwords and follow all the protocols," Tunnell said.

"If you don't know how to do it, don't say you can't, find out how."

- The U.S. Department of Homeland Security offers resources for election officials: <https://www.cisa.gov/election-security-library>
- As does the Center for Internet Security: <https://www.cisecurity.org/elections-resources/>
- If your county doesn't have an information technology department, contact NACo CIO Rita Reynolds at rreynolds@naco.org.

'We're under a lot of pressure to get a good count'

From CENSUS page 1

have signed onto a letter to U.S. Senate leadership from the Census Project, pleading for the next COVID relief bill to extend statutory deadlines for four months.

"Currently, there are low response areas in every part of the country, in every state, in every city," the letter said.

"If remaining counting operations are not done well, communities most in need of resources to improve quality of life and standards of living will get the short end of the stick for the next decade."

"Too much is at stake — the undercount of vulnerable populations such as young children, people in low-income communities (rural and urban), immigrants, American Indians and others; congressional representation and the annual allocation of \$1.5 trillion in 2 federal funding to states and localities."

Already stretched thin in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, many counties say changing course on the support they have pledged to the census effort might not be feasible, and their only hope is to stay the course and hope that helps.

"Our original plan was to push out stuff with the schools, but those were blown right out of the water when schools closed down earlier this year," said Cooke County, Texas Judge Jason Brinkley, whose county sat at a 58.7 percent response rate as of Aug 13.

"Our plan is still to use the schools in the next couple of weeks to distribute as much information as we can, but we're basically just at the whims of the shorter timeline."

Cooke County's second avenue for getting information out to residents was churches, which are mainly empty during the pandemic.

Up in Illinois, Cook County was also thrown for a loop by the new deadline, but in a larger county with more resources dedicated to the census efforts, there's a little more adjustment that can be made.

"We're going to shift our priorities to be more grassroots," said Jourdan Sorrell, director of public policy and research for Commissioner Stanley Moore.

"This news has just reempha-



sized that success is going to come from a collaborative approach."

Cook County is using data from the Census Bureau to strategically approach undercounted census tracts, which helps partners focus their efforts.

"We know exactly which neighborhoods we need to improve on," Sorrell said. "That's making these adjustments a lot easier."

Sorrell said that though the county was focused throughout on the census, the civil unrest in June following George Floyd's death forced parts of the county to redirect efforts to repair community relations and property damage, which cost the census efforts some time.

"We knew from the beginning this would be a journey," Sorrell said.

"When the pandemic hit, it took away a lot of the face-to-face events we had planned, and a lot of those went virtual. We can still get things done on an operational level, building coalitions with other organizations, but it forced us to rethink a lot of what we were planning."

In Henderson County, N.C., Planner Jacob Compher planned to speak to the local Rotary Club in a remote meeting.

"The new deadline gives us a whole new sense of urgency," he said. "We're making new efforts to reach out to trusted voices who can communicate the importance of the census to people who have been hard to reach."

"In a rural area like this, distrust for government can be a key obstacle, nobody wants to give away personal information, so these messages aren't always the best coming from the government, even local govern-

ment."

Henderson County has a significant migrant worker population, and reaching them through social service nonprofits has helped the effort make inroads with that community, Compher said.

He was already worried about how the pandemic would throw the county's plans into disarray, and even though the data collection deadline was extended, Compher feels it won't be enough to get an accurate count.

"It was already going to be challenging for the enumerators, going out to some of those rural places, now I know it's desperate that they get out the door," he said.

There's no room for complacency when federal funding and representation is on the line, though.

Even for Dakota County, Minn., which has broken the 80 percent self-response rate, beating its 2010 rate, that 20 percent remaining seems daunting to Management Analyst Jane Vanderpoel.

She credited the extended deadline with giving the county's residents time to meet their 80 percent goal.

"We still have 33,000 households to hear from, that's why we signed onto the letter," she said. "We need more time to do this right in these conditions." **CN**



EAU CLAIRE COUNTY, WIS.

The Eau Claire County, Wis. seal was designed by Kenneth Campbell, a University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire art professor. The seal was officially adopted in 1983.

The eagle crest above the coat of arms represents Old Abe, the bald eagle mascot for a company of Eau Claire soldiers during the Civil War.

On either side of the shield, the date of "1856" represents the year the county was created.

The five fleurs-de-lis at the top of the shield represent the three cities and two villages in the county.

The seal incorporates cog wheels that represent the county's industry.

A lighted lamp symbolizes the county's educational resources.

Two white pine trees signify the county's major natural resource.

Two cornstalks represent the county's largest agricultural commodity.

18 white fleurs-de-lis represent the county's townships.

Two cornstalks represent the county's largest agricultural commodity.

The French words "Voici L'eau Claire" on the banner below the shield are taken from the book *The Illustrated History of Eau Claire* which describes how explorers found clean, drinkable water at the mouth of the Eau Claire River. It translates to "Here is clear water."

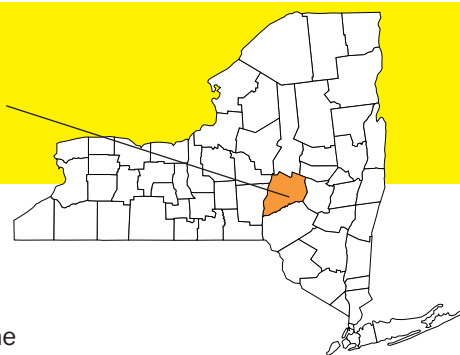


The seal contains space at the bottom to add the names of county offices or departments.

If you would like your county's seal featured in "Behind the Seal," contact Rachel Looker at rlooker@naco.org.

GET TO KNOW...

Otsego County, N.Y.



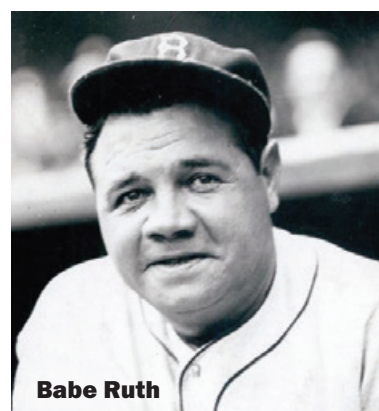
Welcome, Otsego County, N.Y.

Otsego County is located in central New York at the foothills of the northern Catskills. The county was officially established in 1791 and named for a Native American word meaning "place of the rock." The city of Oneonta includes the "Table Rock," a geological formation that is a popular hiking spot in the county. Oneonta is also home to the State University of New York College at Oneonta. Otsego County's current population is around 60,000 with

primary industries in the health, education services and tourism sectors.

The county seat is Cooperstown, named after its founder Judge William Cooper. **Cooper's son was James Fenimore Cooper, a famous writer who wrote *The Last of the Mohicans*.** Cooperstown sits on the southern shore of Otsego Lake, which serves as the source of the Susquehanna River and is the largest body of water in the county stretching eight miles long

and one mile wide. **Cooperstown is also home to the National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum.**



Babe Ruth

SPONSORED CONTENT

GRAB AN OAR AND PULL

Because we're all in the same boat now

by William Cherry
director of Public Partnerships
for three+one

Rowing a boat takes teamwork, especially during a storm. It requires people working together toward a common goal. If half of the rowers are determined to head north, while the other half are just as resolved to head south, nothing gets accomplished — no forward progress is made, and the boat will never reach the safe haven of land.

COVID-19 is very likely to be the storm of our lifetime. It's too early to say for sure, but there is some chance that history will describe it as our "Storm of the Century." Either way, it is a tempest that is rocking the very foundations of our economy and our society. We are all sitting together in a lifeboat now, heaving and swaying as the storm rages around us. And we all have a responsibility to grab an oar and do our part to help our neighbors and ourselves if we're going to make it safely to shore. We have much to be thankful for — our "ship" is sound and our backs are strong — and we have a common goal.

We must recognize that there are a huge number of heroes who are already pulling with all their might on their oars and trying their best to keep us alive. They are our nation's healthcare workers, medical professionals, public health officials and emergency responders. They are straining and struggling, putting their very lives on the line for us and our families, day in and day out. Their hands are blistered and their muscles are weary, and it is our duty and responsibility to man our own oars to try to take some of the burden off their shoulders.

Some oars are more powerful than others and the rowers who hold them can make enormous contributions to the success of our journey. Members of Congress must put aside their political differences and pull together

as one to help us make it safely through this storm. We need them to recognize that when one side of the boat rows in one direction and the other side rows in the opposite direction, the ship is dead in the water.

One thing that everyone should be able to agree on is that local governments are going to need substantial financial assistance during this pandemic if we are to have any chance at all of a really full recovery within a reasonable time period.

As a former disaster recovery coordinator for a county in upstate New York, I saw firsthand just how critical federal funding is to a community that is struggling to get back on its feet in the aftermath of a natural disaster. With significant federal help (in our case, almost \$100 million), it still took my community almost 10 years to recover from a devastating flood. WITHOUT any federal assistance?? We would still be running county offices from rented garages and using

second-hand folding tables as desks. We would also be driving our local government deeper and deeper into debt as we tried to deliver necessary services such as law enforcement, road and bridge repairs and public health. And trying to do all that with a taxpayer base that was already tapped out. Our boat would be leaking, foundering and in serious danger of actually sinking.

We at three+one are also doing our part to pull on the oars. We help local governments make the most of what they have, so they can collect that much less from the taxpayers. We provide data and financial forecasts on the funds that a county or municipality has on deposit. That information gives them the opportunity to maximize the value of that cash. For example, New York's Orange County has been using our liquidity analysis services since 2018. Last year they earned \$2 million MORE than

similar-sized counties! That represents \$2 million in public services and infrastructure improvements that did not have to be paid for by their taxpayers. Another great example is Lehigh County, Pa. They earned about \$489,000 annually in interest before partnering with three+one in 2017. Last year Lehigh County earned more than \$2 million in interest on their available cash — despite the fact that interest rates have actually gone down!

Each and every one of us can make our own contributions to help our communities and our nation make their way through this disaster. Though we must certainly address the public health crisis of COVID-19, we must also address the financial aftermaths that this pandemic will surely have on our society over the next several years. It is critically important that local governments receive direct federal funding now — before it's too late — if necessary pub-

lic services are to be delivered without interruption.

After all, we are all in this same boat together. It will take the willingness of each and every one of us to grab ahold of an oar, plant our feet firmly on the deck and then do our best to pull in the same direction as the person in front of us and the person behind us. Our journey will be challenging, full of surprises and potentially dangerous. But in the end, if we can all just keep the distant shoreline in sight and pull together toward a common goal, we can and will make it through this storm. **CN**

The team at three+one is proud to partner with NACo as we jointly assist the nation's county governments during these times. To learn more about how NACo works with three+one to develop financially sound solutions, contact Kyle Cline at kcline@naco.org or by phone at (317) 502-7415.



NEWS FROM ACROSS THE NATION



CALIFORNIA

• Individuals who test positive for COVID-19 and can't afford to self-isolate will be **paid to stay at home** through a new program in **ALAMEDA COUNTY**. The program helps individuals who may have to choose between going to work or staying at home and losing a job, NBC Bay Area reported. The county will pay \$1,250 to those who test positive for the virus, do not qualify for unemployment benefits or paid sick leave and have a referral from clinics in high-risk areas. The county plans to help 7,500 people in communities hardest hit by the virus through the program.

• **CONTRA COSTA, NAPA, MARIN, SANTA CRUZ and SAN MATEO counties** have imposed **fines for not wearing face masks** in public areas. In San Mateo County, supervisors voted for mask-less individuals to face up to a \$500 fine. First-time violators of coronavirus-related public health requirements will receive a \$100 fine followed by a \$250 fine for a second offense and \$500 for

further violations, *The Mercury News* reported. Other public health requirements include social distancing at least six feet and not gathering in large groups.

HAWAII

• **MAUI COUNTY** has created a **virtual job fair website** to help county residents get back to work. Individuals seeking employment can view the website for job opportunities and job training. Maui County Mayor Michael Victorino said the virtual tool provides a safe option for employers to find employees while helping residents earn livable wages. The website is in partnership with the economic development office, the workforce development board and the University of Hawaii Maui College.

MARYLAND

• **ANNUE ARUNDEL COUNTY** launched Operation COVID Health Corps to **hire unemployed workers** in the county and increase efforts to reduce the spread of the coronavirus. The new initiative involves increased contact tracing, additional testing, faster results, handling high call demands and solving interagency issues, according to CBS Baltimore. The county's workforce development board will hire unemployed workers throughout the county to fill the added positions.



FLORIDA

Commissioners in **WALTON COUNTY** voted to spend CARES Act funding to **purchase COVID-19 rapid testing equipment**. The purchase will include three rapid-testing machines, staff to operate the equipment and testing strips, the *Northwest Florida Daily News* reported. The rapid tests will provide results within 15 minutes as opposed to multiple days. In addition to being used for community testing, one machine will also be used for testing in the county jail, county government offices and other situations where immediate results are needed. Photo courtesy of *The Northwest Florida Daily News*

• The council in **MONTGOMERY COUNTY** unanimously approved a **use of force bill for police**. The bill prohibits the use of chokeholds and limits "no-knock" warrants, WTOP News reported. Under the legislation, police are prevented from striking an individual who is restrained and from firing weapons at a moving vehicle. The bill allows police to use deadly force "when absolutely necessary, as a last resort or when no other alternatives are available."

• Maryland Gov. Larry Hogan (R) issued an emergency order that **prevents counties from ordering closures of schools** for the start of the school year. The order comes after Hogan overturned a decision in

MONTGOMERY COUNTY where officials decided to enforce closures of private schools as well as public schools. Hogan said schools should make the determination whether to open for classes, *The Baltimore Sun* reported.



MICHIGAN

Commissioners in **OAKLAND COUNTY** voted to establish the Oakland Together Absentee Ballot program to

provide pre-paid return postage for election absentee ballots this fall. The program is funded through the Oakland Together Local Government Partnership program, established with funds from the CARES Act. The ballot program removes a barrier to make it easier for county residents to vote by mail.

MINNESOTA

RAMSEY COUNTY is offering county residents who have lost income because of COVID-19 **funds for emergency rent, mortgage and utility assistance**. County residents may receive up to \$5,500 to help pay rent or mortgage payments, damage deposits or to keep utilities from being disconnected, the *Pioneer Press* reported.

MISSOURI

ST. LOUIS COUNTY is purchasing thousands of **mobile hotspots and tablets** to help students attend school virtually this fall. A study conducted by the St. Louis County library found that more than 10,000 households did not have access to the internet, KMOV4 reported. With CARES Act funding, the county is purchasing 12,500



HAWAII

• **KAUA'I COUNTY** launched the **Mahalo Green Card Placard Program** to distinguish between inter-island travelers and visitors who must quarantine for 14 days because of the coronavirus. Individuals with a green placard are able to proceed through a screening process when arriving on the island, KITV4 Island News reported. Those with a white placard must stop at a police checkpoint for additional screening. Kaua'i is the only island with a screening process for visitors from neighboring Hawaiian islands. Photo courtesy KITV4 Island News



hotspots, 2,500 tablet computers and access to an online tutor 12 hours a day each day of the week for all students in St. Louis County schools.

NEVADA

With eviction moratoria on the brink of expiration, the **CLARK COUNTY** Board of Commissioners approved an emergency ordinance making it illegal to discriminate against anyone applying for housing if they have a prior **eviction related to the pandemic**. It also stops landlords from discriminating against anyone based on their source of income.

NEW YORK

- On the eve of the fall semester, **RENSSELAER COUNTY** has offered two days of dedicated testing to ensure **college students are screened for COVID-19**. Any college student who is also a resident of the county may come to the county-run site in the parking lot of Van Rensselaer Manor for free testing with an appointment, along with proof of residency, valid six months before the date of testing.

OKLAHOMA

In a first for **OKLAHOMA COUNTY** Sheriff's deputies, when they searched the home of a man who died of natural causes, they found a pipe bomb. That wasn't the novel part. What was noteworthy was that the late property owner had also **left a note detailing valuable information about the explosive** which was helpful to the deputies and the county's bomb squad, which safely detonated the bomb.

OREGON

A November ballot measure will let **MULTNOMAH COUNTY** voters decide on **funding free preschool** for children ages 3 and 4. The measure would create a multitiered

tax on incomes of more than \$125,000 for single filers or \$250,000 for joint filers. The Multnomah County Department of Human Services would oversee the preschool program, *The Oregonian* reported.

PENNSYLVANIA

The state Board of Education has approved the establishment of **ERIE COUNTY Community College**. The *Erie Reader* noted that "the northwestern region of Pennsylvania represents the largest geographical swath of the Keystone State unrepresented by a community college tied to the Commonwealth's public system."

VIRGINIA

- Amid rising COVID-19 case numbers and a sharp increase in deaths, the **ARLINGTON COUNTY** Board passed an emergency ordinance prohibiting groups of more than three people from **congregating on streets and sidewalks**. Those rules apply where restrictions are posted requiring pedestrians to maintain at least six feet of physical separation from others on the posted streets and sidewalks. Violations will



NEW YORK

- The **STEUBEN COUNTY** Sheriff's Office donated 138 pounds of vegetables from its **Inmate Garden Program** to the Corning Food Pantry, including onions, green peppers, zucchini, yellow squash and cucumbers. The garden teaches inmates the skills needed to establish a garden area, plant, tend and harvest vegetables, along with teaching food sustainability to the inmates. The 138 pounds donated represented half of the harvest, with the other half supplementing inmates' meals.



NEW YORK

- Most people need rabies like they need a hole in the head, so counties across western New York will **airdrop rabies vaccines** into rural parts of **ERIE** and **NIAGARA counties**. The vaccines are laced with bait that will attract raccoons, foxes and skunks, and are usually consumed within four days.

be treated as a traffic infraction, with a fine not to exceed \$100, though Board members said the goal will be to educate the public and achieve voluntary compliance without the need to write tickets, ArlingtonNOW reported. The ordinance will be revisited in a public hearing in September.



- Thanks to a local Eagle Scout, all 42 of **FAIRFAX COUNTY**'s medic units will carry resource kits for cases dealing with **people with anxiety disorders or autism**. Adrian's Resource Care Kits, the brainchild of 17-year-old Adrian Allred, include headphones, sensory balls, sunglasses, fidget spinners, flavored tongue depressors, pipe cleaners and stretchy men. The Fire and Rescue Department will replace the single-use items as needed, and the department reported that one of the kits was helpful hours after it was delivered in July, when crews responded to a call for assistance for a young, nonverbal child.

- FAIRFAX COUNTY** has also launched a new website to view **cold case homicide** briefs, opening the books to six decades of unsolved cases in hopes that the public will be able to offer insight and, potentially, leads.

"I know for sure, 100 percent, that there are people out there that have information that could lead to the resolution of

some of these cases," Christopher Flanagan, a detective for the county police department's cold case division, told WTOP News.

WASHINGTON

KING COUNTY reached its goal of **planting one million trees** throughout the county a year early, with the county partnering with cities, tribes, nonprofits, youth organizations, schools and businesses and has yielded 1,122,535 trees. King County Parks' Volunteer Program organized tree-planting events throughout the region with more than 31,000 volunteers contributing to the initiative and helping restore parks. The original goal — established in the 2015 Strategic Climate Action Plan — was for the county to plant a half million trees with partners planting the remaining 500,000 trees by the end of 2020.

News from Across the Nation is compiled by Charlie Ban and Rachel Looker. Does your county have some news we should consider? Contact us at cban@naco.org and rlooker@naco.org.

finally!

NACo swag is now available online!

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BRIGHT IDEAS | BEXAR COUNTY, Texas

Unit Acts as Watchdog Against Vehicle Title Fraud, Title Rejections

PROBLEM:

The state of Texas saw an upward trend in vehicle title rejections.

SOLUTION:

Create a special investigation unit to oversee the vehicle title transfer and registration process.

by Rachel Looker
staff writer

When Bexar County, Texas Tax Assessor-Collector Albert Uresti began to notice a trend of vehicle title work rejected throughout the county, he knew he needed to investigate.

The Bexar County Tax Assessor-Collector's Motor Vehicle Registration Department oversees the processing of more than two million vehicle title transfers and registrations each year. The county partners with private agencies or full-service title companies to offer more than 60 additional vehicle registration locations with extended business hours for county residents.

These full-service title companies process 40 percent of the county's title transfer work and 20 percent of vehicle registration renewals.

Uresti explained how rejections for vehicle title work came from private, unregulated individuals and full-service title companies, which led to the formation of the Special Investigation Unit (SIU). The unit serves as a quality control department and examines vehicle title transfer applications and related documents.

"We just felt like we needed to go after this problem and try to curtail the activity as much as possible," Uresti said.

The unit's staff examines titles to identify clerical errors and conducts unannounced visits to full-service title companies to review documents as well as inventory for license plates and registration stickers.

"We'll go and make surprise spot checks in order to keep everybody on their toes," Uresti said.

Fraudulent activity includes altered titles, false names and addresses and multiple transactions from the same individuals or companies. Uresti said staff in the unit check titles, odometer readings to see if they have been rolled back or purposefully written down incorrectly and sales tax numbers to ensure the state receives the proper amount. The unit also regulates full-service title companies to ensure they're not overcharging for title transfers.

"I can't tell you how many times we see people who buy vehicles and they just sign over the title and their odometer may be wrong," he said. "What it [the unit] does is protect our citizens from getting into bad deals."

The issue of vehicle title fraud was a challenge in the county and would have become a bigger issue if not prevented, Uresti said. He explained how natural disasters such as hurricanes or flooding exacerbate

the problem when vehicles come to the county from out of state.

"There's a lot of extra illegal activity so it's important that we are able to monitor everything," he said.

The SIU has now expanded its role to review and monitor the work of the Tax Assessor-Collector office and property tax operations.

"Because of the fact that we reacted quickly and put this unit together, we were able to avoid a lot of the problems that other counties had," he said.

The SIU has stopped fraudulent activity and uncovered 37 different addresses reoccurring on vehicle title applications used for over 700 title transfers. The unit also stopped a group of 17 individuals working as independent consultants who were not licensed or authorized.

"We had really gotten it down to a fine art," Uresti said.

The unit has a staff of five to six full-time employees who all completed training in-house and through the department of

motor vehicles, he said.

"We took the initiative and used everybody's training including our in-house experience to be able to make our people experts," Uresti said.

According to Uresti, the unit is beneficial to the county because it reviews every transaction put forward by full-service title companies.

"To have a designated team that looks at every single transaction, that has a workplace assigned and that also checks property tax as well as motor vehicles, that's what makes us unique," he said.

During the pandemic, the county has been able to offer 60 fully operational private business partners through the full-service title companies that are available to the public when county lobbies closed. The county does not pay to operate these locations. Uresti estimated it would cost between \$3 million to \$5 million per year to operate just three of the locations if the county were to shut down the full-service title company business model.

"It protects our citizens from having bad transactions, illegal transactions and the titles not done right," he said. "People can feel good about buying a vehicle if they come to our office or to a full-service title company."

Uresti advises other counties interested in replicating the full-service title company model to ensure that businesses have brick and mortar locations and the county serves as the watchdog.

"They can be a blessing if you have strong oversight over these companies and they can provide a lot more access," he said. "As budgets are being cut back... this is a very inexpensive way to provide additional locations and additional services for the community." **CN**

Bexar County's A Proven Defense Against Vehicle Title Fraud — The Special Investigation Unit — is the recipient of a Best in Category 2020 NACo Achievement Award in the County and Administration Management category.



Roger Barrientos, lead title and registration processor, and Nieves Medrano, title and registration processor II, examine vehicle title transfer applications and related documents.

NACo 2020 ACHIEVEMENT AWARDS

CONGRATULATIONS TO NACo ACHIEVEMENT AWARDS BEST IN CATEGORY WINNERS!

Most years, the winners of NACo's Achievement Awards are feted at a luncheon at the Annual Conference. Since we weren't able to salute the winners in person this year, we're celebrating them here in the pages of *County News*. Be sure to read Bright Ideas, our column that looks at Achievement Award winners' work in-depth, in hopes that our readers can learn from these exceptional county programs. **Congratulations all!**



Children learn about the art of quilting at San Bernardino County's Old West Days. Photo courtesy of San Bernardino County

ARTS, CULTURE AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

Old West Days: Broadening Myths and Legends to Reflect Authentic Histories

San Bernardino County, Calif.

The focus of the San Bernardino County Museum's Old West Days is for visitors to experience a heretofore traditional era in ways that better reflect the contributions of diverse cultures in the myths and legends. The

event features demonstrations, re-enactors, engaging activities and entertainment for all ages and backgrounds. In two years, the event has grown from 12 to over 20 participating nonprofit partners all contributing to a rich visitor experience and presenting multiple historical perspectives. The event aspires to build a strong sense of community through inclusiveness and accessibility, making history more meaningful, culturally relevant and fun for attendees.

By participating in the program, museum visitors are in-

spired to learn more about San Bernardino County's diverse and extensive history and gain a sense of what life was like in the 1800s here in the Inland Empire. Visitors are able to see how food was made and preserved, understand what tools were used in different industries and enjoy entertainment and games. Additionally, with the participation of partners in programming, visitors can grasp how truly diverse this region was (and still is). Visitors learn how the various communities within this region laid the foundation

for what would eventually become known as the Inland Empire and evoke a sense of pride in our community's shared heritage.

CHILDREN AND YOUTH

Moving Families from the Hotline to a Helpline Los Angeles County, Calif.

Each year, the Department of Children and Family Services' (DCFS) Child Protection Hotline receives over 220,000 calls re-

porting suspected child abuse or neglect. Not all calls rise to the level of needing an investigation, but thousands of those families can benefit from community prevention supports. Yet, only one out of every 10 families offered community services by DCFS in 2017 were connected. Many families declined, and excessive wait times for those who were interested resulted in an additional 339 families dropping out of the process, never getting the help they needed.

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ACHIEVEMENT AWARDS



Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services celebrate Moving Families from the Hotline to a Helpline.

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Lean Six Sigma principles were applied to streamline the linkage process, re-imagine DCFS and community-partner roles, and create multidisciplinary teams. As a result, 734 families were connected to prevention supports in one year, more than tripling the number from 2017. Enrollment wait times were reduced by 48 percent, as families received services up to 13 business days faster. The rate of children re-referred to DCFS who had been abused or neglected dropped by 1.22 percent, and, of those re-referred, 16.54 percent more children safely remained in their homes, resulting in a cost avoidance. In just its first year, this project has already improved

child safety and increased family stability for our residents.

CIVIC EDUCATION AND PUBLIC INFORMATION

Public Business from The Floor High School Speech Contest Sutter County, Calif.

Five years ago, the Sutter County Board of Supervisors created a novel program to engage high school students in local government affairs. The annual "Public Business From The Floor" high school speech contest encourages high school students to research county issues and advocate a position from the lectern at a real board of supervisors meeting.

The contest stresses the right of an individual to petition their government and gives students an opportunity to learn how to address locally elected leaders with their point of view while generating widespread interest in what the students have to say.

With the press in attendance and the event streamed live on the internet, each participant gets three minutes at the lectern—the same amount of time allotted to speakers at Board meetings—to argue a position on a topic that falls under the jurisdiction of the county. Participants are encouraged to visit the county's website to learn what the county does and are judged, among other things, on how relevant the topic is to county business. County supervisors and members of a local service

club which provides cash prizes are the judges. In 2019, 17 students from seven public and private high schools participated.

COMMUNITY AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Engaging Diverse Business Communities in Public Procurements King County, Wash.

King County successfully implemented a new program that improves competition for public procurements and engages our diverse business community. Since January 2019, we've promoted contracting opportunities using a combination of free posts or inexpensive ads on social media. The program's goal is to increase the number of bids we receive, and target suppliers that are traditionally underutilized such as small businesses or women/minority-owned businesses. Few government agencies currently use social media to advertise contracts. After a full year, our program shows measur-

able results. Depending on the contract type, the number of bidders increased 7 to 37 percentage points when we advertised using social media. We've connected with new audiences; 30 percent of our Facebook clicks are from our Spanish ads, whereas before we had no Spanish advertising.

King County's unique social media program encourages broader participation among diverse suppliers to compete for our contracts. These additional bidders create new economic development opportunities in our community and ensure better value for our taxpayers. Best of all, this strategy can be easily reproduced in other counties for little or no cost.

COUNTY ADMINISTRATION AND MANAGEMENT

A Proven Defense Against Vehicle Title Fraud: The Special Investigation Unit Bexar County, Texas

The Bexar County Tax Assessor-Collector's (TAC's) Motor Vehicle Registration Department oversees the processing of over 2 million motor vehicle title transfers and registrations annually in compliance with Texas Department of Motor Vehicle regulations. To ensure vehicle transactions are completed in a timely and professional manner, Bexar County uses a business model that partners private agencies with its TAC's Office. The partnership has been cost-effective and beneficial for Bexar County and its 2 million plus citizens because private business partners are able to offer over 60 additional vehicle registration locations with extended business hours at minimal cost to the county.

The Bexar County TAC's Special Investigation Unit (SIU) was created to be the ultimate quality control department. Formed in 2016 to combat increasing title fraud in the state, the County TAC's SIU was tasked with examining vehicle transactions presented by its 20 Full-Service



Sutter County, Calif. students celebrate after taking part in the Public Business from the Floor speech contest.

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From AWARDS page 12

Title Companies, numerous vehicle dealers, and certain individuals. The SIU's goals were to defend against title fraud, minimize title errors and to collaborate with external and law enforcement agencies. As part of its original goal, the SIU's role has expanded to include review and monitoring for the TAC's 220 employees and their internal motor vehicle and property tax operations.

COUNTY RESILIENCY: INFRASTRUCTURE, ENERGY AND SUSTAINABILITY

Bring Your Green Challenge Montgomery County, Ohio

Addressing the difficulty in making sustainability important to the people we serve, especially for small businesses and organizations lacking resources, Montgomery County has developed and launched an innovative Bring Your Green Challenge,

a web-based software platform for engaging communities in sustainability competitions leading to measurable impacts in carbon and energy cost savings, and waste diversion. The platform enables entry of utility data and actions, informs participants about their energy use effectiveness, tracks business participation and results, engages participants in fun and engaging competitions, measures and displays organization, community-wide results, and offers awards to individual organizations for action.

The challenge creatively leveraged businesses' needs to green their operations as a means to achieve community-wide impactful energy and resources reduction by allowing enrollment at all scales (city, city organizations and people within organizations, as well as citizens at large) and thus is designed for national scalability.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE AND PUBLIC SAFETY Fresh Start Criminal



A K9 therapy dog comforts a family in Montgomery County, Ohio as part of the county's efforts to provide emotional and mental health resources to residents following tragedies.

Record Relief Program San Diego County, Calif.

Fresh Start is the Office of the Public Defender's Comprehensive Criminal Record Relief Program designed to educate and advocate for community members in all areas of conviction relief. A criminal record creates barriers to employment, housing, education, volunteering and other forms of civic engagement. Yet each of these opportunities that would be blocked with a criminal record are critical to reducing recidivism. Reducing recidivism not only improves individual outcomes, it advances families' well-being, supports the economy and increases public safety.

With recent criminal justice reform, there are more opportunities to mitigate criminal records and reduce these barriers, but many individuals do not know their options nor how to seek relief. Staffed by experienced attorneys, paralegals, support personnel and legal interns, Fresh Start provides community education and individual representation for people seeking criminal conviction relief.

Our attorneys investigate clients' criminal histories, develop comprehensive Fresh Start case plans, and seek all appropriate conviction relief on the clients'

behalf. The goal of the program is to remove barriers to successful community reintegration, improve individuals' access to employment, housing, education and other forms of civic engagement and thus reduce recidivism and improve community safety.

FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

Balancing Act Baltimore County, Md.

Leading into the Fiscal Year 2020 budget submission and facing an \$81 million deficit, Baltimore County launched an online tool called Balancing Act. This tool allows county residents to learn more about the state of Baltimore County's budget and the difficult choices under consideration during the budgeting process.

Through the tool, residents can closely examine the county's projected situation for the coming fiscal year and simulate reallocating funds, and increasing possible revenue streams, in order to balance spending and revenue.

HEALTH

Spreading Our Wings During Tragedy

Montgomery County, Ohio

In 2019, Montgomery County, Ohio, which includes the City of Dayton, faced what many describe as one of the most challenging years of all time. During this year, the county faced two large crises within three months of each other that created the unprecedented need to provide residents with emotional and mental health resources.

The first crisis occurred the evening of Memorial Day, May 27, 2019, when a total of 15 tornadoes touched down in the county, with the largest tornadoes hitting the cities of Trotwood, Brookville, Riverside, and Dayton directly. It was later discovered that the largest of the tornadoes carried winds up to 170 mph and would be rated an EF4. While the tornadoes either severely damaged or destroyed more than 2,200 structures in Montgomery County; it also displaced over 1,100 households. Within days of the devastating tornadoes, Montgomery County Alcohol, Drug Addiction, and Mental Health Services (ADAMHS), and Public Health of Dayton & Montgomery County established a Family Assistance Center to serve the community.

While Montgomery County

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Individuals learn about conviction relief through San Diego County, California's Fresh Start Program.

ACHIEVEMENT AWARDS

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and the City of Dayton continued to put in effort to rebuild after the tornadoes, a second crisis occurred. In the early morning of Sunday, August 4, 2019, a lone gunman opened fired in Dayton's entertainment district, known as the Oregon District. Sadly, the gunman killed 9 people and wounded 17 others. Community and governmental agencies worked together to quickly establish the Recovery & Resiliency Center (RRC) to again serve the community.

HUMAN SERVICES

Helping Hands Orange County, Calif.

Airport travel, while an exciting and fun experience for some, can be especially stressful for an individual with an autism spectrum disorder or other hidden disability. John Wayne Airport strives to provide a superior guest experience for all travelers and wanted to ensure it was meeting the needs of families traveling with individuals with hidden disabilities. To ease some of the stress associated with airport travel, the Airport created "Helping Hands."

The Helping Hands program facilitates communication with TSA to arrange for TSA Cares assistance; coordinates with airlines to arrange special assistance; provides personalized help guiding travelers through the arrival, check-in, security and boarding processes; and conducts pre-travel tours to help prepare for the trip. Participants are provided with yellow bracelets to inform airport employees that additional time and extra care may be required. Customer Relations staff, airport tenants and airlines receive specialized training, and ongoing marketing efforts continue with participation at community events, presentations and publicity.

The program continues to expand as new partnerships arise, such as collaboration with the Alzheimer's Association and veterans organizations. Since the program's inception, 96 requests for personalized assistance or tours have been

fulfilled, and 181 individuals attended eight trainings. Because of the community, airline and staff support, Helping Hands continues to grow.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

Medical Examiner's Open Data Portal San Diego County, Calif.

Every day, Medical Examiners and Coroners investigate deaths that are sudden, unexpected, and sometimes unclear. The San Diego County Medical Examiner strongly believes that when death has a story to tell, one should listen. The department's primary mission is to work with the medical and law enforcement community to understand each person's story of death, to seek justice, and to bring closure to families. Each story contributes to an important bigger picture that is the health and well-being of our community.

Understanding the value in these stories and the data collected, the San Diego Medical Examiner released more than 22 years of death record infor-

mation onto San Diego County's searchable public internet portal in March 2019. The idea was to make the data available for the public, media and any other agencies that work in academia, public health or public policy, who could take the data, analyze it and provide valuable insights back to the department and even advance broader changes to improve public health and safety. Since its release, this data set has been viewed over 16,000 times and downloaded nearly 600 times, making it the most popular data search on the county's web portal.

LIBRARIES

Library to Go Catawba County, N.C.

The Catawba County Library views community-based library services as essential and at the core of what keeps libraries strong and relevant. We understand that to truly turn outward and serve everyone we must get outside of our library building to meet people where they are.

Beginning in 2018, in alignment with the county's strategic initiatives, the Catawba County Library established our version

of a pop-up library we call the Library to Go. This new service has expanded the library's capacity to build relationships, target areas of need, and partner in the community to bring services, materials, programs, technology resources, and internet access beyond the library walls and to the people that need them the most, especially to non-traditional locations and underserved audiences.

During the school year, the Library to Go provides library services to schools without media centers, nursing homes, child-care centers, afterschool programs and more. In the summer, the Library to Go works out in the community at summer learning programs in disadvantaged neighborhoods, community festivals and farmer's markets meeting people where they are with the resources they need.

PARKS AND RECREATION

Supportive Aftercare Program: Community Reintegration, a Collaboration with Parks & Rec

Bernalillo County, N.M.

This program centers around teaching individuals to use transitional living communities as a safe space to continue working on their recovery and to learn to utilize the strengths of their surrounding community. Addiction often forces individuals into isolation, so learning to be part of a dynamic community is often something individuals trying to maintain recovery struggle with. The program focuses on how the Supportive Aftercare Program (SAC), in the heart of Albuquerque's International District, is teaching individuals how to access various community resources and use them as an asset to their overall well-being, while living as part of a unique sober community.

Due to the overall success of the SAC program and the desire to show individuals in the community that their community does in fact care about them and want them to be a part of the community, Bernalillo County decided to combine forces between two departments for the greater good of the community.

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A child participates in Orange County, Calif.'s Helping Hands personalized travel assistance program which aims to ease the stress of traveling for individuals with disabilities at the John Wayne Airport.



Buncombe County is seeing success making housing more affordable with its Community Oriented Development program.

From AWARDS page 14

This application highlights this successful and creative collaboration between Bernalillo County's Parks and Recreation Department and the Department of Behavioral Health Services.

**PERSONNEL
MANAGEMENT,
EMPLOYMENT AND
TRAINING**

**A New, Collaborative Strategy to Build Awareness of Mental Health Issues and Provide a Practical Response
Alachua County, Fla.**

There is an essential need for county employees to have the tools necessary to understand mental health issues presented by those citizens who may be affected, and also to be empowered to respond to such persons appropriately. The training curriculum of Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) is an evidence-based strategy to assist lay people, including our employees on the front line, to identify such issues among citizens when presented

and then respond with a five-step action plan.

With the full support of the county's leadership, we organized and implemented a three-year initiative to fully train our employees and those of multiple allied organizations in MHFA. Through participation in over 100 sessions, 2,126 staff were trained in the MHFA curriculum. County staff combined planning and training services with local charitable organizations to leverage scarce resources, enabling a more cost-effective program. Innovative, positive strategies are needed to address the increasing level of mental health issues prevalent in our communities. This county's initiative demonstrates the significant value of extending awareness of mental health issues and practical strategies to our staff engaged in delivering services daily to those who may be in need.

PLANNING

**Buncombe County
Community Oriented
Development
Buncombe County, N.C.**

Buncombe County's Com-

munity Oriented Development program was developed to incentivize density and design flexibility (based on a points-based system menu), in exchange for affordable or workforce housing units, sustainability features, and community amenities. The program is allowed by-right in the Zoning Ordinance and seeks to provide opportunities for the creation of new affordable housing near major transpor-

tation corridors, where public water and sewer infrastructure is available. The program includes requirements for income eligibility and set rental rates/housing price affordability for a minimum period of 15 years.

Since the creation of the program, 130 new affordable and workforce housing units have been approved through the program and more projects are in the planning stages.

**RISK AND
EMERGENCY
MANAGEMENT**

**Preparing for a Wildfire with Neighborhood Fire Drills
Travis County, Texas**

Climate change is causing deadlier and more extreme weather across the planet. In

See AWARDS page 16



Officials in Travis County, Texas hold a neighborhood-based fire drill to prepare for future wildfires.

ACHIEVEMENT AWARDS

50 YEARS OF INNOVATION



Volunteers working in Loudoun County’s Busy Buddies program help to reduce euthanasia rates of shelter animals.

From AWARDS page 15

particular, more intense rains, followed by deeper, longer droughts are increasing the threat of uncontrollable wild-fires, such as the fires in Australia. The Austin-Travis County area was recently ranked fifth nationwide for risk of devastating wildfires by Core Logic.

A plague of wildfires broke out around Travis County driven by persistent drought and high winds. They overloaded fire and emergency responders who were pulled in many directions. Residents didn’t know what to do. In response to this threat, Travis County Commissioner Brigid Shea’s office, along with numerous county departments, created a neighborhood-based fire drill pilot project to see if such a fire drill would be useful. If it worked, they planned to replicate the model and share it.

They worked for over a year with an isolated, fire-threatened community to create a model program. In March 2019, they ran the first known neighborhood-based fire drill in Texas. It worked.

TRANSPORTATION

Gravel Roads Resurfacing Program: Innovation in Local Government
Adams County, Colo.

Gravel maintenance and repair is the process of treating roads at the optimum time to

maximize their useful life, thus enhancing gravel longevity at the lowest cost. If neglected for extended periods of time, roads will rapidly deteriorate. The Adams County Public Works Department manages the Gravel Roads Resurfacing Program for residents in Eastern Adams County. The intent of this program is to fund safe and efficient gravel roads that have been identified as unstable and hazardous.

Prior to 2017, these essential arteries were not always well cared for, suffering from nearly two decades of disrepair. New management in 2017 began a period of change in Adams County. A shift from previous operations and new management encouraged innovation by employees at every level. Embracing the unknown, employees conducted a series of trials to develop a unique mixture that transformed gravel roads to more closely resemble their paved counterpart.

After several failed attempts, our team discovered something extraordinary... a new standard for gravel roads everywhere. This new approach to gravel roads creates a surface that provides a better driving experience, greater durability, and less maintenance. This endeavor has brought local, national and international visitors to Adams County in pursuit of the same success.

VOLUNTEERS

Busy Buddies
Loudoun County, Va.

Loudoun County Animal Services (LCAS) receives over 2,400 animals a year, and as widespread spay/neuter efforts and access have taken hold in the community, the population of animals in need of sheltering has changed. Consistent with nationwide trends, more than 60 percent of homeless pets in Loudoun County arrive at the shelter in need of additional medical and/or behavioral intervention prior to adoption. Consequently, the staff combined a set of volunteer-driven in-kennel enrichment programs to reduce stress in dogs which had historically led to behavioral decline, increased rates of contagious disease and euthanasia.

LCAS developed “Busy Buddies,” which carries minimal cost and is almost entirely volunteer-operated, to significant success. Euthanasia over the past four years dropped 21 percent, disease outbreaks have dropped by 60 percent, and length of stay has dropped by nine days. Volunteers report high levels of satisfaction with the youth-friendly craft programs, and spots for volunteer opportunities now routinely have a waitlist.

Read about these award-winning programs in the Bright Ideas column in each issue of County News. **CN**

WORD SEARCH

ALLEGHENY COUNTY, PENNSYLVANIA

Created by: Mary Ann Barton

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

- BASEBALL:** The first World Series was played in Pittsburgh in 1903, between the Pittsburgh Pirates and the Boston Americans.
- BRIDGES:** The county seat of Pittsburgh is known as the City of Bridges for its 446 bridges, more than any city in the world.
- COURTHOUSE:** The Allegheny County Courthouse was designed by H.H. Richardson in the Romanesque Revival style and built in 1888.
- FERRIS:** County resident George Ferris invented the Ferris wheel.
- HISTORY:** The county was created Sept. 24, 1788 from parts of Washington and Westmoreland counties.
- KETCHUP:** The condiment was invented in the county by Henry John Heinz, founder of H.J. Heinz Company.
- LENAPE:** The county is said to be a Native American word from the Lenape tribe meaning “fine river.”
- NEWSPAPER:** The local newspaper, the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, has been around since 1786.
- PITTSBURGH:** The county seat was named in 1758 in honor of British statesman William Pitt.
- RADIO:** The world’s first commercial radio station, KDKA, is located in the county; it began by broadcasting results from the presidential election Nov. 2, 1920.
- STEELERS:** The hometown team is tied with the New England Patriots for most Super Bowl wins, at six championships.
- TRAIL:** The Great Allegheny Passage, a 334.5-mile car-free trail is for hikers, runners and cyclists.
- VACCINE:** Dr. Jonas Salk invented the polio vaccine here at the University of Pittsburgh.
- STEEL:** Since 1875, hundreds of steel-related businesses called the county home.
- WARHOL:** Pop artist icon Andy Warhol grew up in Pittsburgh.

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