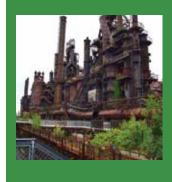
## SPOTLIGHT ON: **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

Murals make a difference in West Virginia county. **Pg. 11** 



Former steel mill brings new life to Pa. county.
Pg. 12









NATIONAL ASSOCIATION of COUNTIES

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A U.S. Customs and Border Protection agent speaks to county officials Sept. 18 at the U.S.-Mexico border in El Paso. Photo by Charlotte County, Fla. Commissioner Bill Truex

## County officials tour border, see immigration practices firsthand

by Charlie Ban and Eryn Hurley

Two dozen county officials got a close-up view of the U.S. immigration situation recently as they watched a woman and her family cross the border from Mexico into the United States after a 13-day trip from Honduras. The county officials were there to tour the El Paso Border Station Number 1 along the U.S.-Mexico border in El Paso County, Texas. The station was designed specifically to address the needs of migrant families, like the woman, her baby and two other children.

The woman made her way to the border station after standing under an overpass, where a border patrol agent spoke to her in Spanish while taking her into custody. The visitors who made eye contact with the woman took her shaky smile, the look in her eyes and a lot of information home with them to the counties they represent, in hopes of relaying the true stories of life working on or trying to cross the border.

"I feel like this is something that has been ignored for my entire life," said Bill Truex, chairman of NACo's Immigration Reform Task Force. And he didn't absolve himself. "I didn't understand it until I went there and saw it myself."

Truex and other members of the task force went there for an in-person look at conditions facing both federal agents and migrants, unfettered by the spin and opinion that tints some media coverage. The task force is designed to help county officials better understand the issues and challenges facing the immigration system.

With that perspective in hand, county officials plan to appeal to their members of Congress to address and fix structural problems in the immigration system that have led to a humanitarian crisis along the border. The trip came after the Department of Homeland Security released its Migration Protection Protocol (MPP), commonly referred to as its "Remain in Mexico" policy, which requires all non-Mexican migrants requesting asylum along the southwestern border to return to Mexico to await their day in immigration

"The rhetoric is unhealthy,"

See BORDER page 4

## County uses carbon credits to protect local forests

by Rachel Looker staff writer

In King County, Wash., a new program is protecting local forests by offering companies the chance to offset their carbon emissions.

King County's Forest Carbon Program was launched in May and allows companies to offset unavoidable carbon emissions through purchasing

See EMISSIONS page 3

## President supports stopgap funding bill

by Valerie Brankovic

The U.S. Senate on Sept. 26 approved a continuing resolution that will fund the federal government through Nov. 21, following passage in the U.S. House Sept. 19.

The stopgap funding measure ensures the continued operation of government programs as Congress negotiates spending legislation for the next fiscal year.

As of press time, President Trump was expected to approve

See CONGRESS page 2

#### Congress OKs stopgap funding

#### From CONGRESS page 1

the legislation, which would avert a government shutdown.

Important to counties, the legislation provides continued funding authority for the National Flood Insurance Program and the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program, both of which are slated to expire Sept. 30.

The legislation also contains a provision allowing funding "up to the rate for operations necessary to maintain the schedule and deliver the required data according to the statutory deadlines in the 2020 Decennial Census Program."

H.R. 4378 also contains a package of Medicaid health extenders, including a delay in reductions to Disproportion-

ate Share Hospital payments through Nov. 21, a funding boost for Medicaid block grant funding in U.S. territories and an extension of the Community Mental Health Services demonstration which expired Sept. 13.

Looking ahead, the Senate must still consider and vote on all 12 spending bills and negotiate any differences with funding levels approved in the

As in recent years, Congress could enact another continuing resolution after Nov. 21 if lawmakers need additional time to complete government funding details. CN

Valerie Brankovic is a legislative assistant in NACo's Government Affairs department.

## FY 2020 transportation appropriations in motion



#### by Zach George

The U.S. Senate Committee on Appropriations unanimously approved its FY 2020 Transportation, Housing and Urban Development (T-HUD) appropriations bill Sept. 19, setting annual spending for the nation's transportation infrastructure and transit systems.

The \$142.6 billion spending measure provides \$86.6 billion in total budget resources for the U.S. Department of Trans-

portation (DOT), \$167 million above FY 2019-enacted levels. DOT appropriations are dedicated to federal programs covering aviation, highways and highway safety, public transit, rail, maritime safety, pipelines and other related activities.

The U.S. House of Representatives approved its T-HUD appropriations bill June 25 on a 227 to 194 vote. The House and Senate bills contain almost the same amount of gross discretionary appropriations for DOT at \$25.5 billion; the House includes just \$5 million

The T-HUD bill is one of 12 appropriations bills Congress must pass before FY 2019 ends on Sept. 30 in order to avoid a government shutdown. To date, the U.S. Senate Committee on Appropriations has passed nine appropriations bills. CN

Zach George is a legislative assistant at NACo.

# SNAP/STATS THE STATE OF LOCAL

## **NEWSPAPERS**

Counties without a newspaper:	171
Rural newspapers closed, 2004-2018:	516
Metro papers closed, 2004-2018:	1,294
Newspapers closed since 2004:	1 in 5

#### Source: University of North Carolina Chapel Hill 2018 study

## DOL issues final overtime rule with impacts for counties

#### by Daria Daniel

The U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) released a final rule Sept. 24 that will increase the salary threshold for professional employees to re-

ceive overtime pay. Under the final rule, the salary threshold for overtime pay will be increased from \$23,660 annually (\$455 per week) to \$35,568 per year (\$684 per week) beginning on Jan. 1, 2020.

Therefore, employees making between \$23,660 and \$35,568 and meeting certain job requirements will become newly eligible for

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### King County, Wash. among first to offer certified carbon credits

From EMISSIONS page 1

carbon credits, which are created when threatened forests are permanently protected from development. The county is one of the first local governments in the United States to offer certified carbon credits.

According to the U.S. Forest Service, forests across the country store 10 percent of the country's carbon emissions. During photosynthesis, forests absorb carbon dioxide, store carbon and produce oxygen, helping to remove carbon dioxide from the atmosphere.

King County is located in northwest Washington in the Pacific Northwest region of the country, where forests cover more than two-thirds of the county's land area.

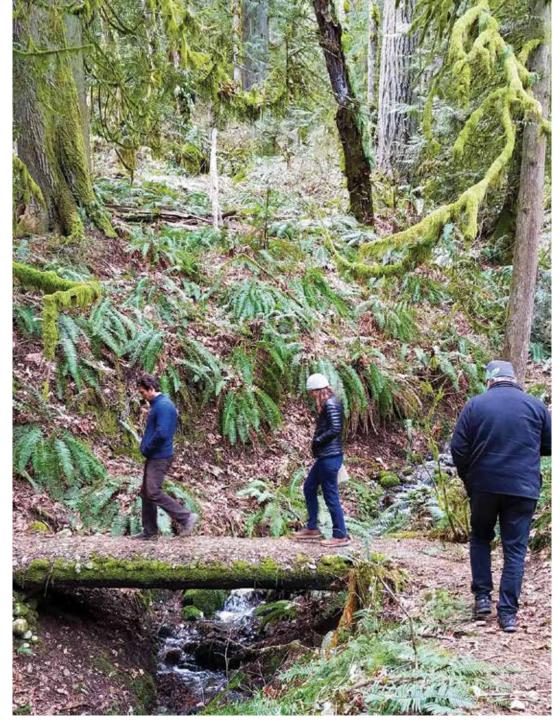
"We happen to be in a part of the world where our forests do a really great job of that [storing carbon]," said Kathleen Farley Wolf, Forest Carbon Program manager.

"We're trying to provide this extra incentive to help that happen."

Through the forest carbon program, the county acquires land and enrolls it in the project. King County is experiencing rapid population growth, Wolf said, which comes with the potential for more land to be developed, resulting in fewer green spaces throughout the county and higher land prices. The county generates the carbon credits by preserving forests on this acquired land.

"This is all kind of based on what happens to it [the land] through that acquisition versus what would have happened to it otherwise... You can calculate carbon property on the baseline, which are those scenarios if it hadn't been acquired versus in the project, which means it has been acquired. The difference between those two is your carbon credits," Wolf said.

The project is then audited by a third party to ensure the carbon is credited properly and the offsets are real and permanent. At the end of the



King County, Wash. is one of the first local governments in the country to offer certified carbon credits through the Forest Carbon Program. Photo courtesy of Kathleen Farley Wolf

process, carbon credits are issued and can be sold to businesses.

"There aren't very many forest carbon projects in Washington state or really in the Pacific Northwest generally, so for companies that do want to buy local credits, we're one of the few out there," Wolf said.

The county has two different types of credits: rural and urban.

Rural carbon credit values are reviewed by the Verified Carbon Standard, which Wolf said is the largest standard globally for forest carbon proj-

The urban project is verified by City Forest Credits, a new

smaller standard based in Se-

The first batch of King County's rural forest carbon credits are being sold to Microsoft.

The first buyer of the urban credits is a local company based in the county called Fisherman's Finest, a fishing company that operates in the North Pacific and Bering Sea.

"One of the appeals of the credits that we produce is that it's a local credit so when they buy it, there's the climate benefit and the carbon offset, but it also is contributing to a lot of co-benefits that are available here in the local area," Wolf

For county residents, ben-

efits include improved water quantity and water quality, better habitats for wildlife and more recreational opportunities on the land acquired by King County.

 $The \,process\,is\,best\,described$ as going full circle starting with the county acquiring forests at risk of development, then offering companies the opportunity to purchase carbon credits and finally, using the money from the carbon credits to acquire more land to protect.

However, Wolf said with the price of land purchases, the carbon credits alone don't fund the land acquisitions by the county. The credits are a component of land purchases,

but each purchase has different funding sources.

The carbon credit program developed out of the county's strategic climate action plan, which emphasizes the role in mitigating climate change. Wolf said this was a motivating factor to create another mechanism to maintain and increase forest cover in the county.

The program also developed out of King County Executive Dow Constantine's initiative to

"It engages the business community in King County as a participant in conservation..."

conserve the last 65,000 acres of priority land in the county. According to Wolf, an advisory group acknowledged a need for alternative funding sources to reach this goal, helping to get the Carbon Credit Program off the ground.

"We are making it possible for local companies to help us protect forests, confront climate change and promote healthy habitat right here where their employees live, work and play," Constantine said in a statement.

"Our first-of-its-kind carbon credit program has the potential to be a national model for public-private partnerships that improve the quality of life for people and wildlife in their own backyards."

Currently, the program only involves King County-owned properties, but Wolf said the department is working to find ways to involve private landowners who can view an additional income from selling their carbon credits as an incentive to keep forests on their

"It really engages the business community in King County as a participant in conservation in a way that we don't always have good mechanisms for," Wolf said.

### County officials tour U.S.-Mexican border in El Paso County, Texas

#### From BORDER page 1

Truex said of the national immigration debate. "I tell the task force that we have to be the people who have the right conversations based on data and facts. Don't buy into the media; stick to an area where we can remain bipartisan, focus on results and solutions. We all needed to have a better understanding so we can help correct the conditions that exist and what our policies are."

What task force members saw changed their perceptions.

"The purpose of my visit to the border was not to become a proponent of illegal immigration," Umatilla County, Ore. Commissioner George Murdock wrote in a column published by his local newspaper. "But there is no doubt that for both practical and humanitarian reasons, I have become an even stronger advocate of finding ways to address immigration policy in a meaningful way."

Murdock is the vice chairman of the task force.

Salt Lake County Mayor Jenny Wilson said it was hard for any of the county officials to not be touched by the humanity they saw in either of the two facilities on the tour.

"I had children try to hold on to my legs and try to engage with me," she said. "We were asked not to engage them. We broke the rules. We'd give smiles, we'd give some sign of affection to them just because the environment is so sterile that I don't think any of us would think we were doing the right thing if we didn't, in some way, acknowledge their presence.

"I thought I'd see a family there. We saw hundreds of people being processed in a single day. The last thing I expected to witness was a true apprehension of a family on our nation's border." That said, Wilson was one of several task force members on the tour who left with a clear path forward.

"We walked away feeling that there are two or things we could advocate for right away," she said.

First off was the Migration Protection Protocol, which shuttles migrants into uncertain situations while they await their hearings. Another was the definition of a family, which from the U.S. side, scrutinizes the nuclear family but for families from Latin American cultures may include grandparents, uncles, aunts and cousins. If people, even though they may be related, don't appear to be part of the same nuclear family, there is no guarantee they will stay together after their processing.

The tour also clarified roles and responsibilities, dispelling the myth that border security is a tightly-wound machine. Separate functions are carried out by DHS and the Department of Health and Human services (HHS). DHS conducts border security functions, while HHS provides care for children.

"The funding for HHS is really something that we have to talk about because they don't have enough support, facilities or infrastructure to handle these influxes," Truex said. "That's when (families) get held up, they're held in facilities that aren't designed for comfort. It's a temporary facility, but they're packed in a pod with no room to sit down or lie down."

"Without HHS having the ability to expand structure or staff or both, I don't think this is going to go away anytime soon."

#### Why counties?

Considering the functions of regulating immigration and border security, counties seem like an odd party to show interest. Not to Truex.

"We all need to have a better understanding so we can help correct the conditions that exist and what our policies are," he said. "Counties can advocate directly to Congress to fix what is going on. They aren't listening to a lot of people,



A family from the Honduras surrenders at the U.S. border.

but we represent boots on the ground, the people in our areas who have concerns about the influx, what services are available. We need to be aware of how this could affect our community."

The day after she returned from El Paso, Wilson said at a news conference that the money the county put into the trip was "the best \$1,000 the county has spent in a while."

Her experiences at the border helped her understand how the immigration system works. "It will better prepare me as a mayor for the future," she said. "We are engaged as a county with this community, we have a growing Latino population. Our economy is largely energized and reliant on people who come here from other nations."

She saw where local government differs from federal roles in the process.

"Ultimately the sheriff, the council and I can say we're done, we're going to set our ceiling on the Salt Lake County Jail at a certain level," she said, "We do have a soft ceiling now, we try to work within it with our policies. Border patrol and customs do not have that allowance, they serve everyone,

they have a process, they have a systemic way of doing things. The system was tested beyond its limits some time ago.

"We all know the immigration system is broken. I saw it with my own eyes."

Like Wilson, Murdock and Truex, county leaders will share their firsthand experiences at the border and work with Congress and the administration to reshape federal policies to ensure that the enforcement of immigration laws are executed in a manner that minimizes negative impacts on families and children and does not increase reliance on local social safety-net services or create new demands and administrative costs for counties. Many border counties find themselves inadvertently interacting with the immigration system if they care for migrants they apprehend inland, or deploy medical examiners and indigent burial for those who die en route. "The more we educate, and

the broader our task force grows, the more opportunity we have to increase support we have," Truex said. "It's a lack of education and a lack of knowledge of what's really going on. It's a complex issue

and it's easy to get caught up in the media hype. It really is important to focus on data and facts and work from the basis of a non-partisan approach. It can't be about a party."

Even as the task force continues its work, Wilson said it's important for counties to remain attentive to the needs of the immigrant community. "It's important that the local governments step up when federal government fails," she said

NACo's membership adopted four principles at the 2019 Annual Conference related to immigration reform, including measures that pertain to supportive services and resident well-being. NACo's new policy will allow the task force and broader membership to work with Congress and the administration toward counties' shared goals of ensuring the health and well-being of all residents regardless of immigration status.

And the woman and her children who the task force members saw? On the border and in the processing center?

Now processed and issued a court date, the woman and children left on a bus to Juarez under the Migration Protection Protocol, where her immigration status would continue.

After touring the El Paso Border Station, task force members visited a refugee center in Ciudad Juarez, Mexico. The center, which was an old concert hall, had a capacity of 1,700, and houses people from El Salvador, Honduras and Guatemala, among other Central American counties. Their presence there, rather than on U.S. soil, is a direct consequence of the Migration Protection Protocol. Here, they will await court dates in the United States to pursue their claims for asylum.

So far this year, at least 42,000 non-Mexican migrants have been sent to Mexico under the MPP program, and a growing number have opted to return to Central America instead of waiting.

## Supreme Court to examine local government issues

by Lisa Soronen

\*Indicates a case where the SLLC has filed or will file an amicus brief.

The Supreme Court's docket for its 2019-2020 term is only half full but it is already teeming with interesting cases, almost all of which involve local governments. Local governments are a party in both of the big cases: A gun case and the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) case. While it is difficult to pick only five, this article summarizes the most significant cases for local governments the Supreme Court has agreed to hear so far in its term beginning Oct. 7.

• In New York State Rifle & Pistol Association Inc. v. City of New York, New York the Supreme Court will decide whether New York City's ban on transporting a handgun to a home or shooting range outside city limits violates the Second Amendment, the Commerce Clause, or the constitutional right to travel. The Second Circuit held the law is constitutional on all

Applying intermediate scrutiny under the Second Amendment, the Second Circuit held the rule was "substantially related to the achievement of an important governmental interest." It seeks to "protect public safety and prevent crime."

The Second Circuit concluded the rule doesn't discriminate. against interstate commerce in violation of the Commerce Clause. First, it does not facially discriminate against interstate commerce. Licensees may still patronize out-of-state firing ranges-they just can't bring their gun licensed in New York City. Second, no evidence suggests the rule was intended to protect the economic interests of the city's firing range industry. Finally, the challengers failed to offer evidence that the rule has had a discriminatory effect on interstate commerce. While the challengers claim they have not attended out-ofcity shooting events with their gun they may have attended



them without their gun.

The Second Circuit rejected the challengers' right to travel argument "for much the same reasons as does their parallel invocation of the dormant Commerce Clause."

• In Department of Homeland Security v. Regents of the University of California the Supreme Court will decide whether the Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) decision to end the DACA program is judicially reviewable and lawful.

established DACA was through a DHS Memorandum during the Obama presidency. The program allowed undocumented persons who arrived in the United States before age 16 and have lived here since June 15, 2007, to stay, work, and go to school in the United States without facing the risk of deportation for two years with renewals available.

DHS rescinded DACA in September 2017 after receiving a letter from the Attorney General stating the program was unconstitutional and created "without proper statutory authority."

The United States argues that a court can't review DHS's decision to rescind DACA because the federal Administrative Procedures Act precludes review of agency actions "committed to agency discretion by law." According to the United States, DHS's decision to discontinue DACA "falls comfortably within the types of agency decisions

that traditionally have been understood as 'committed to agency discretion" - particularly because this decision arose in the immigration con-

The United States argues DACA may be rescinded because it is unlawful as it is a legislative rule which should have been promulgated through notice-and-comment rulemaking and is "substantively inconsistent" with the Immigration and Nationality Act.

Three lower courts have concluded ending the program is both reviewable and unlawful.

• Title VII prohibits discrimination "because of . . . sex." In Zarda v. Altitude Express the Second Circuit held that discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation violates Title

The main opinion in Zarda concluded the question in this case is whether sexual orientation is "properly understood" as a "subset of actions taken on the basis of sex." The court concluded it is by looking at the statute's text. According to the court: "the most natural reading of the statute's prohibition on discrimination 'because of. ... sex' is that it extends to sexual. orientation discrimination because sex is necessarily a factor in sexual orientation."

In EEOC v. R.G. & G.R. Harris Funeral Homes the Sixth Circuit held discriminating against transgender persons violates Title VII because it amounts

to discrimination on the basis of sex stereotyping. The court also held that transgender status is protected under Title VII. The Supreme Court will review both lower court holdings.

In Price Waterhouse v. Hopkins (1989) the Supreme Court held that employees may bring discrimination claims based on sex stereotyping under Title VII. In 2004 the Sixth Circuit extended Price Waterhouse's reasoning to transgender persons as they are also engaging in "non sex-stereotypical behavior." So that previous case controlled the outcome of Harris Funeral Homes.

Harris Funeral Homes argued that transgender status refers to "a person's self-assigned 'gender identity" rather than a person's sex, and therefore such a status is not protected under Title VII. The Sixth Circuit disagreed noting "it is analytically impossible to fire an employee based on that employee's status as a transgender person without being motivated, at least in part, by the employee's sex."

• In County of Maui, Hawaii v. Hawaii Wildlife Fund\* the Supreme Court will decide whether the Clean Water Act (CWA) requires a National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit when pollutants originate from a point source but are conveyed to navigable waters by a nonpoint source, such as ground-

Maui County injects treat-

ed wastewater from wells into the groundwater. Some of the treated wastewater reaches the Pacific Ocean. The Hawaii Wildlife Fund sued the County arguing it was required to obtain an NPDES permit under the CWA for these discharges.

A party must obtain an NP-DES permit if it discharges a pollutant from a point source to a navigable water. Wells are point sources and the Pacific Ocean is a navigable water. The Ninth Circuit assumed without deciding groundwater isn't a point source or navigable wa-

The Ninth Circuit held that the CWA requires Maui to get an NPDES permit in this case. It concluded that the discharges in this case are point source discharges because "nonpoint source pollution" excludes, for example, roadway runoff that isn't "collected, channeled, and discharged through a point source." Here the pollutants are collected in wells. According to the lower court, they are also "fairly traceable" from the point source to the navigable water and reach the navigable water at "more than de minimis levels"

#### Conclusion

Further developments in the gun case and the groundwater case may impact whether and how the Supreme Court decides these cases. New York City has informed the Supreme Court it thinks the case is moot as it has changed the law to allow license holders to transport handguns from various locations previously forbidden. The Maui County Council recently passed a resolution supporting settling the case. Even if these cases are removed from the Court's docket the next term will remain interesting for local governments. CN

Lisa Soronen is the executive director of the State and Local Legal Center, which files Supreme Court amicus curiae briefs on behalf of the Big Seven national organizations representing state and local governments.



# COUNTIES SHAPE ECONOMY IN POCONO REGION

#### by Rachel Looker staff writer

What does the Poconos have to offer?

"Natural beauty," according to Chris Barrett, president/ CEO of the Pocono Mountains Visitors Bureau.

The Pocono Mountains region in northeastern Pennsylvania encompasses 2,400 square miles of mountains, waterfalls, rivers and lakes. For decades, the four-season destination has been known

as the "Honeymoon Capital of the World." Now, the region and the four counties it incorporates — Monroe, Carbon, Wayne and Pike — are using that natural beauty in different ways to benefit their local economies.

Barrett explained that the region's reputation of being a popular honeymoon destination started in the 1940s, when soldiers returned from World War II.

The area started to decline in the late 1980s after the de-



regulation of airlines and the addition of cruise lines, he said.

The Poconos still have classic resorts that have survived as "legacy attractions," but now the region is focusing on indoor waterparks geared to families, convention center space targeted to business travelers and outdoor activities for sports enthusiasts, Barrett said. In the mid-2000s, the Great Wolf Lodge, an indoor water park and hotel, moved to the area and began a new kind of tourism.

"The region has been very, very good at reinventing itself in times of adversity," he said.

The economic impact of tourism, which is the largest industry in the region, exceeds \$1 billion, according to Barrett.

The Pocono Mountains Visitors Bureau collaborates with counties to attract more people to the area. Barrett said he meets with county commissioners every 90 to 180 days and frequently sends county

clerks information regarding tourism in the Poconos.

"We're meeting with our state and local officials so we're trying to just communicate as much as possible and to us, outreach is important," Barrett said.

Monroe County is home to numerous Pocono attractions including Kalahari, the country's largest indoor water park, the Great Wolf Lodge, Camelback Mountain Resort and the Delaware Water Gap.

Monroe County Commissioner John Moyer said the county has been able to benefit from Pennsylvania's hotel tax, which distributes money to a recognized tourist promotion agency, such as the Pocono Mountains Visitors Bureau. Counties may retain an administrative fee from hotel tax revenues, which Moyer said Monroe County uses to improve land for recreational purposes.

The Pocono Mountain Economic Development Corporation (PMEDC), an organization based in Monroe County, works to retain and attract businesses.

County officials appoint board members to the PMEDC. The organization also provides financial assistance to tourism properties, according to Chuck Leonard, executive director of the

While tourism is the major industry and largest employer in Monroe County, manufacturing is the largest generator of GDP, he noted.

The county's largest manufacturing employer is Sanofi Pasteur, the largest supplier of the influenza vaccine in the world.

Leonard added that part of the evolution of the Poconos region is the diversification of the economy.

"While our focus is not always on tourism, we're trying to do manufacturing and other things that we believe will ultimately be compatible with tourism," he said.

Monroe County collaborates with Wayne and Carbon

counties to publish a magazine through the PMEDC that shares positive economic development stories happening in the region.

"Our view is by maintaining open dialogue and working together, we enhance our ability to succeed," Leonard said.

In Carbon County, Kathy Henderson, the director of Economic Development for the Carbon Chamber and Economic Development Corporation, said Carbon County's economic drivers also include tourism and manufacturing, with more than 50 manufacturers located in the

The county seat of Jim Thor-

Carbon County's Henderson said the Alliance allows counties to pool their resources to attract businesses not just to their own county, but to the region.



pe is a major tourism destination, with the Lehigh Gorge scenic rail and other outdoor activities including biking, white water rafting and kayaking.

"I think what has happened with a lot of businesses as well is people really love to live, work and play in Carbon County," said Marlyn Kissner, executive vice president of the northern region of the Greater Lehigh Valley Chamber of Commerce.

"So, the folks that really love the outdoors and have that ability to open up shop or attract employees because of our backdrop is a big strength of our economic development."

Carbon County Commissioner Wayne Nothstein said the county partners with regional organizations including the Pocono Counties Workforce Development Board, the Pocono Mountains Visitors Bureau and the County Commissioners Association of Pennsylvania (CCAP) to improve the region's economy.

He added that the county has good relationships with the other counties in the region including Wayne County, which shares similar economic drivers.

Wayne County Economic Development Corporation **Executive Director Mary Beth** Wood said the county has created a group called Wayne Tomorrow, which focuses not only on economic development, but also county government, the workforce, infrastructure and technology.

With Wayne County sharing a border with New York, Wood said the county's proximity to other states, including New Jersey, is also beneficial to its economy.

For tourists, the county has a train car that rides along the Lackawaxen River, kayaking, fishing and hunting, as well as attractions at Lake Wallennaunack.

Wood said Wayne County also collaborates with the Pocono Counties Workforce Development Board, CCAP and the Pocono Mountains Visitors Bureau.

"We always look at individual counties, but we always think regionally here," she said. "We think Wayne County is really at one of the forefronts of looking at the regional economy."

The four Pocono counties also collaborate through the Northeastern Pennsylvania Alliance, a regional community and economic development agency which serves seven counties in northeastern Pennsylvania.

Carbon County's Henderson said the Alliance allows counties to pool their resources to attract businesses not just to their own county, but to the region.

"Together, we're stronger in working that way than if we would be trying to go at it alone," she said.

Adams County-owned Front Range Airport was renamed the Colorado Air and Space Port. Images courtesy of Adams County, Colo.

### by Charlie Ban senior writer

What Adams County lost in local flavor when renaming its airport, it may have gained in developing an inside track in the aerospace industry. The Front Range Airport is now the Colorado Air and Space Port.

The county-owned site is fertile with chances of developing local industrial growth and becoming a hub for space

flights for cargo transportation or passenger travel. Potential developers hope to launch test flights

in the next five years. Since the Federal Aviation Administration approved the county's launch site operator's license in August 2018, the county has been angling for how those operations will fit in. But unlike the handful of operating spaceports, Adams County won't be launching vertically, like at the Kennedy Space Center in Cape Canaveral, Fla.

"It's our proximity to Denver International Airport," said Commissioner Steve O'Dorisio. "We're so close that we have to launch space vehicles horizontally. You can't stop or divert a rocket launch going straight up, nor could you do a holding pattern on a space shuttle that's gliding down."

That compromise, which allowed the county to win licensure, considering its proximity to DIA, might be the aspect that helps it land an operator, something the county didn't have when making its application. Already in possession of a letter of intent from a Japanese aerospace company, the coun-

- SPOTLIGHT ON -

**ECONOMIC** 

**DEVELOPMENT** 

ty is working on a memorandum of understanding that will guide how the two parties

work together. That company, PD Aerospace, was looking for a place to launch horizontal flights, county Communications Director Jim Siedlecki said. They may have found it.

Finding a niche like that has been Adams County's theme throughout the process. The airport is roughly 10 miles from the Denver International Airport, which limited how big the county airport's operations were going to get.

"It's one of the top airports in the country," O'Dorisio said. "We weren't going to be an upstart, but we had an asset in the



An artists's conception of the future Colorado Air and Space Port.

Front Range Airport. That challenge is also what makes us the best potential spaceport in the nation because we are so close to a major international airport and we're close to the thriving Colorado aerospace industry."

When announcing the license in 2018, Barry Gore, president and CEO of Adams County Economic Development, staked the county's claim to an industry that was already thriving in the county. British-owned Reaction Engines already operates at the airport.

"Adams County hasn't been known as an aerospace county in the metro area, but for years we've have had Boeing, Lockheed Martin, Intrex Aerospace and a number of other aviation and aerospace companies providing lots of (services) to the industry.

"I think we're on the map

now."

Getting the FAA license was a seven-year journey once Adams County leaders decided they had to do something different if they wanted the county's airport to remain relevant. And the airport will remain just that over the next few years, as spaceport and development progresses, and beyond.

"Even as we move toward spaceport operations, we're going to continue operating a general aviation airport," O'Dorisio said.

PD Aerospace has a threepart plan for its operations, starting first with launching an unmanned suborbital flight, then progressing to launching small satellites into orbit before graduating to space tourism.

"With only 11 (non-federal) spaceports, there is no 'business as usual," O'Dorisio said. "The

regulatory environment is still pretty immature, and the process is still being developed."

But O'Dorisio doesn't see those 11 other spaceports as competitors. He sees a transportation network that will extend even beyond the United States.

"It's a long way away but it's a good mission to have," he said. "A 90-minute trip to Tokyo sounds pretty good. I see a lot more opportunities for synergy and collaboration than I do competition"

Practically, the next step will be signing a memorandum of understanding with PD Aeropspace, which will guide the county's work with the airport property.

"We need to figure out how we can support the testing they want to conduct," Siedlecki said.

The county last did a master plan of the airport in 2013, but that will require an update. It has two 8,000-foot runways, which works for PD Aerospace, but the county may add up to 4,000 feet to the runways or widen them.

"There's some infrastructure needs, some drainage and once the proprietary stuff starts happening, we'll need fencing," he said. "Fencing alone would be a multimillion-dollar operation, given the 1,000 acres we'd be doing."

The county already has a new hangar in the design phase, but that will see a lot of changes as plans evolve.

"We anticipate significant investment will be necessary on the county's part, but we'll have to see what the master planning process uncovers," Siedlecki said.

The industry's relative youth is also a factor in costs the county will bear.

"The FAA has a pool of money for aviation improvements, but spaceports are so new that the same kind of funding isn't available yet," Siedlecki said.

O'Dorisio likes how a move like this can inspire people.

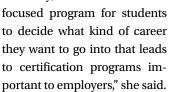
"We want to create opportunities for kids who grow up in Adams County to aim for the stars for their career development."

## Bringing international trade to your county

by Mary Ann Barton editor

Pasco County, Fla. Commissioner Kathryn Starkey recalls when she first got involved in bringing international trade to her county — helping international companies locate in her county and helping local companies export their goods around the world.

"It was 2006 or so when the school district started to focus on what we call Florida Career Academy, a more



The international realm is a comfortable space for Starkey — she's lived in France, Spain, Venezuela and the Dominican

After making trips to Germany with others in the region eager to get ideas on how to improve their apprenticeship programs she said she "started paying more attention to the word 'international."

"Having a job training pro-

gram like this, a program that's recognized in Europe and around the world as the gold standard for training, we can become an economic development engine for manufacturers looking to come to the United States," she said.

"We started telling companies when we went over to Germany, 'We're going to put in a system like you have, so if you

- SPOTLIGHT ON -

**ECONOMIC** 

DEVELOPMENT

want to move manufacturing over, we can fill that pipeline."

The program helps kids in

school get information and training on a very needed commodity in today's marketplace. "Manufacturing skills aren't being taught anywhere," Starkev said.

"We can train them, and they can get a great job. Most of our companies in our area are small and we can help them find the workforce they need to expand, and help be a magnet for international companies looking to move to the United States."

The programs, which have a waiting list, are paid for through economic development taxes.

There are about 100 students enrolled in the program, with 15 students per class. "We have a whole range of students from college students to homeless students," she said.

Students go back and forth between the training program and the company in a threeyear process. "It's a commitment for the company and the student," she said.

The benefits to a county include employing residents and helping local companies hire a trained workforce.

If you're a small county trying to lure an international company to the area, it's a good idea to partner with neighboring counties, contact your state economic development department or U.S. Commerce Department or State Department and visit foreign countries on trade trips.

The federal government will pick up the costs for members of the business community to visit foreign countries, but not local government officials.

Starkey is also helping local businesses get their goods to international markets.

She launched a program called the Growing Global International Program to teach

#### **HELPFUL RESOURCES**

- International Trade Administration's Gold Key Service: export.gov/Gold-Key-Service
- Information on global trade events, webinars and trade missions: export.gov/Events
- International Economic Development Council: iedconline.
- U.S. Commercial Service (which serves as the trade promotion arm of the U.S. Department of Commerce's International Trade Administration): trade.gov/cs/services/

local businesses about taking their business international.

They advertised the threehour workshop in the local newspaper and county email blasts to get the word out.

The first workshop wasn't that well attended, but the second one was standing room only, she said.

She takes C-level executives and others on tours of manufacturing plants and holds networking events for them to meet local government and congressional representatives. "I took it from a playbook on

how a North Carolina community built their international business community."

They work closely with Enterprise Florida, the state economic development arm.

Get on the phone or have lunch with your state economic development department representative and ask for help putting together a halfday seminar, Starkey advised. "They'll be thrilled."

She points out that there are lots of programs out there helpful to local businesses, including the International Trade Administration's Gold Key Service, which provides "matchmaking appointments" with up to five interested partners in a foreign market.

The service includes identification and outreach to potential matching firms, sending client's information to identified matching firms, preparing a profile of interested firms, attending the appointments and providing a report with the profile and contact information for interested firms. CN

See an example of the support that Pasco County offers here: http://pascoedc.com/international-resources.



Pasco County, Fla. Commissioner Kathryn Starkey, center, pauses for a photo with the Global Tampa Bay group during a Panama Export Sales Mission trip in March.

## Administration continues to prioritize Opportunity Zone investments

by Daria Daniel

The Trump Administration continues to incentivize investments in Opportunity Zones.

On Sept. 3, the U.S. Department of Commerce Economic Development Administration (EDA) announced it will accept public comments on its Request for Information (RFI) on promoting economic development in qualified Opportunity Zones.

Enacted under the 2017 Tax Cuts and Jobs Act (P.L. 115-97), Opportunity Zones encourage private investment in new businesses, property development and infrastructure in distressed communities across the United States.

In June, the EDA designated Opportunity Zones as an

official investment priority for the agency. The U.S. Treasury identified a total of 8,761 Opportunity Zones (OZs) across all 50 states, the District of Columbia and five U.S. territories. Each area will retain that designation through 2028.

Many counties contain areas (see them here: https://www.cdfifund.gov/Pages/Opportunity-Zones.aspx) that are designated as OZs and are eligible for targeted investment. The complete list of designated OZs is available at Opportunity Zones Resources (https://www.cdfifund.gov/Pages/Opportunity-Zones.aspx.)

Last December, President Trump created by executive order, the White House Opportunity and Revitalization Council led by U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Develop-



ment Secretary Ben Carson to focus 13 federal agencies on leveraging resources and support to local areas to revitalize distressed communities.

The U.S Treasury has also released two proposed regulations to be finalized soon, focused on investors and what type of investments qualify.

Investment in counties, particularly rural ones, was a primary goal of Senators Tim Scott (R-S.C.) and Cory Booker (D-N.J.).

To date, no regulations have been released related to data collection or the impact of OZs investments on communities.

In May, Senators Scott and Booker joined with Todd Young (R-Ind.) and Maggie Hassan (D-N.H.) to introduce legislation that would require the Secretary of the Treasury to collect data on opportunity zone tax incentives.

Under the proposed legislation, S. 1344, the U.S. Treasury Department would be required to gather information on investments held by Qualified Opportunity Funds, or QOFs, which operate as investment vehicles for a partnership or corporation located within an opportunity zone.

Specific metrics would include the number of QOFs, assets held in QOFs and the impact of the opportunity zone designation on economic indi-

cators such as job creation and poverty reduction.

The Treasury Department would also be required to collect information on the actual investments made in opportunity zones, including the total investment amount and type of activity supported by the investment.

Counties are encouraged to share local perspectives on how Opportunity Zones investments are impacting communities

If your county has designated zones and is in the process of securing investments, have information, lessons learned or best practices to share, please contact Daria Daniel at <code>ddaniel@naco.org</code>.

Daria Daniel is an associate legislative director at NACo.

## Charting a road map to rural prosperity

SPOTLIGHT ON -

**ECONOMIC** 

**DEVELOPMENT** 

by Jack Morgan

Rural counties represent a vital piece of our nation's economy, while providing a vast majority of food, energy, natural resources and environmental benefits for the rest of the country.

Despite this critical role, rural counties too often do not share in our nation's economic growth.

Aiming to support rural counties in planning and building more prosperous, vibrant economies, NACo partnered with the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Rural Development Innovation Center to launch a new initiative, Rural Economic Development Innovation (REDI).

The REDI initiative seeks to connect local leaders to free economic development expertise in economically challenged rural communities across the country, supporting recommendations identified in USDA's 2017
"Report to the President from the Interagency Task Force on Agriculture and Rural Prosperity."



In June 2019, USDA announced the selection of 47 communities and regions that will receive two years of technical assistance to build rural capacity and support in creating and implementing long-term economic development

plans.

As partners on the initiative, NACo and NARC launcheda two-year peer-learning

network to directly support six of the 47 selected communities and regions from across the nation.

This pilot cohort of communities includes: the City of Craig and Moffat County, Colo.; East Central Intergovernmental Association in Iowa; Pend Oreille County, Wash.; Poplar and Fort Peck Tribes, Mont.; Southwest Flor-

role, rural counties too often do not share in our nation's economic growth.

ida Regional Planning Council and Tioga County, Pa.

This cohort convened for a kickoff peer exchange in July at NACo's Annual Conference in Clark County, Nev., where each community formed a team of up to five stakeholders to learn more about each communities' economic landscape, current community and economic challenges, initial goals for this technical assistance program and key community assets to help solve challenges and accomplish their goals.

While each community team presented their unique situations and challenges, common themes in initial planning goals were clearly identified, such as increasing affordable and quality housing; building stronger community engagement and buy-in; strengthening workforce development and education partnerships; capitalizing on outdoor and recreation assets and utilizing

Opportunity Zones in plans and development.

Throughout the next nine months, this cohort of community teams will embark on a learning journey of tailored mentoring and interactive virtual learning from fellow cohort peers and other community best practices.

In June of 2020, this cohort will ultimately reconvene in-person at NARC's Annual Conference in Detroit to complete and present out on a road map to rural prosperity, consisting of clear community goals and actionable steps to implement back in their communities.

To learn more about the REDI initiative and strategies for rural economic development planning, visit https://www.usda.gov/topics/rural/rural-development-innovation-center or contact Jack Morgan, NACo program manager at jmorgan@naco.org.



Artists' Alley in Princeton, W. Va. contains 22 different murals, with more spilling onto the rear of the buildings. Photo by Charlie Ban

**Charlie Ban** senior writer

Lori McKinney didn't spend much time on Mercer Street.

Growing up in Mercer County, W. Va., she was absorbed in her life of high school, music and tennis, the way many teenagers are. Downtown Princeton wasn't a part of that; she was more likely to hang out at the Mercer Mall.

But without her, Mercer Street would likely not be what it is today, a colorful, lively corridor that is bustling with business.

Greg Puckett, a generation ahead of her, saw Mercer Street react reflexively when the mall's opening changed the county's commercial gravity in the '80s and '90s. Out were the days of cruising in hot rods — the city put an end to that — along with signs with big character on the storefronts. No skateboarding. The city tried to fight the cool, fluorescent competitor with an antiseptic approach of their own and it didn't work.

"The mall drained business from two municipalities, consolidated retail in one location," Puckett, now a Mercer County commissioner, said. "When

that happened, it destroyed two downtowns. In a small community, that's what happens, but the towns made every bad decision they could. They killed their character trying to compete."

Things went south. Crime came in, low market housing came in, prostitution came in. Theater-goers fled Princeton and Bluefield for the multiplex. McKinnev left too.

"When I was in high school, the decline had already happened," she said. "I intended to go away and never come back."

While studying theater in college, she spent a semester abroad in London. On a trip home afterward, she went downtown to Mercer Street and looked around.

"I saw everything so differently," she said. "I remember driving down Mercer Street, looking at the buildings and something in me clicked."

Colored in part by her experiences abroad, she appreciated the architecture, the building stock and the opportunity.

"It dawned on me," she said. "What is it that makes a city great? People, being there and making cool stuff happen. That can happen anywhere. Why not

here?"

With her father's help, she bought a building. In addition to housing her and her husband, it is home to her

RiffRaff Arts Collective, which includes an art gallery, performance venues, practice space and a music school run by her sister. She started with one-day arts festivals downtown in 2004, which grew, and she eventually met Puckett, whose mother remembered her from school. Puckett was not yet a county commissioner, but was executive director of nonprofit Community Connections. It was Puckett's support through Community Connections, along with the participation of several other civic leaders and organizations, that allowed the nonprofit Princeton Renaissance Project to take shape in 2013. He went a little beyond that.

"I went to Greg (as Community Connections executive director) and asked if we could have a grant to paint a mural in town," McKinney said. "He told us he would give us \$1,000 but he didn't want one mural. He



rals were part of the charthat acter helped draw people back down-

town Princeton, and eventually helped convince business owners to give Mercer Street a chance again.

"I know that the arts changes communities, I knew when I'd travel and see how other places expressed themselves, it usually happened in art," Puckett said. "It's the voice of the community that reaches everyone who sees it. Rural communities should take a page from some urban communities — we each have a story to tell, and art is the most visible way to do that."

McKinney saw the way forward, leading with the arts, akin to sociologist Richard Florida's theories on urban regeneration made popular in Rise of the Creative Class, in which the presence of bohemians predicts economic development. But more simply, it shows Mercer Street in particular is a place to care about, where people are choosing to spend their time,

effort and money. It was a signal that the community had life.

"When you change the physical design of the environment, then you change attitudes," Puckett said. "You create the environment you want." Now, the murals outnumber vacancies on Mercer Street, which McKinney thinks could be gone by the start of 2020. A coffee shop, a microbrewery, a beekeeper and a bookstore complement the hairdresser and professional offices. "Lori's become the de facto economic development director for Mercer Street," Puckett said. "The city and the county can put the information together about vacancies, but she is the one selling the city to anyone who comes and checks (vacancies) out. She learned how to use arts and culture to sell economics, and now we have businesses that would never have thought about Mercer Street setting up shop here."

Beyond the murals, the Princeton Renaissance Project organizes a series of events, including street fairs, a New Year's Eve party, a trick or treating fest on Halloween, art walks and regu-

See MURALS page 14

## County revitalization leads to economic comeback

by Rachel Looker staff writer

If you find yourself standing in the center of the Steel-Stacks Campus in Northampton County, Pa., you may think you are in two different worlds. Rusted blast furnaces standing as tall as 230 feet sit on one side of the campus across from modern glass facilities on the other side. The contrast of these structures represents the old and the new and provides a visual representation of Northampton County's economy as it transitioned from the past to the present.

The SteelStacks Campus is

located at the former facility of the Bethlehem Steel Corporation, the second largest steel company in the coun-

> The try. opened in 1857 in Northampton County in the Lehigh Valley region

of Pennsylvania. The company produced equipment used by the United States in World War I and World War II in addition to the steel used in structures such as the Lincoln Tunnel, Chrysler Building and the Golden Gate Bridge.

In 1995, the company produced the last cast of molten steel from the blast furnaces, marking the end of steel production at the site. Bethlehem Steel officially filed for bankruptcy in 2001.

"It created a vacuum in the economy in the Lehigh Valley that people did not believe the Lehigh Valley would recover from," said Northampton County Executive Lamont Mc-

At its height, the facility em-

ployed 30,000 people.

"The bankruptcy took the entire economy with it," Mc-Clure said.

The 6.1-mile-long site was contaminated and required Bethlehem Steel to clean the soil, according to McClure. With the help of the EPA and the Pennsylvania DEP, 375 tons of contaminated soil were removed to make the site usable for future developments.

The county invested \$11.5 million of bond funds for redevelopment in the area around the former steel facility. The bond funds were part of a larger \$111 million bond initiative borrowed by the county for economic revitalization after the Bethlehem Steel closure.

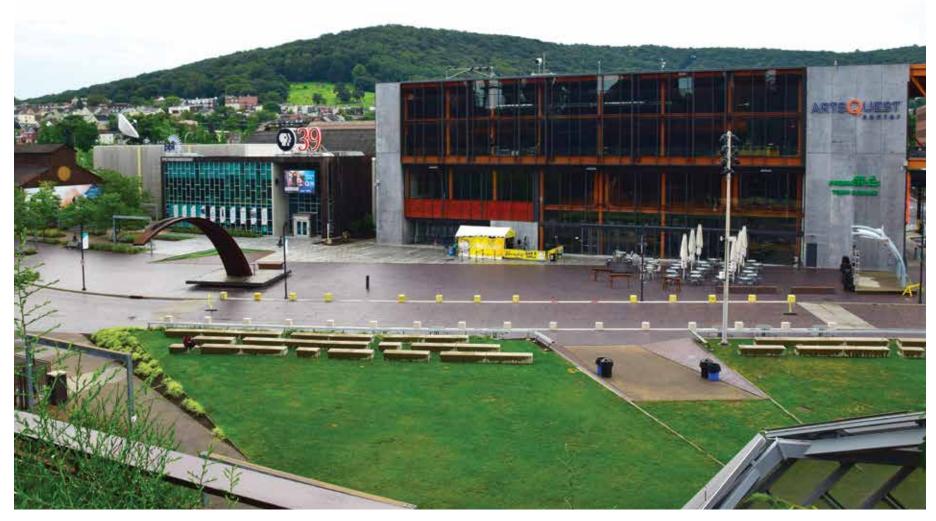
Additionally, the county provided tax incentives and created a tax incremental financing district with the City of Bethlehem and the Bethlehem Area School District, which will provide \$11.5 million in tax revenue in deferred taxes generated from new business on the site.

The first development on the land was Commerce Way, the roadway to the Lehigh Valley Industrial Park located on the end of the property. After this road opened, McClure said the state gave a substantial economic contribution to widen Route 412, the main road along the Bethlehem Steel facility.

"It was because of the county of Northampton's investment opening [Commerce Way] up that this all could happen," McClure said.

In 2004, revitalization efforts progressed when Bethworks Now, LLC was created to manage the land for redevelopment and led to the establishment of a casino, entertainment center, event center and hotel. These developments would preserve the blast furnaces.

After it was announced that a casino would be moving to the area, ArtsQuest, a nonprofit dedicated to cultural experiences and outreach programs, and PBS 39, a community-owned public



ArtsQuest and PBS39 each received \$1 million from Northampton County to construct buildings that sit across from the blast furnaces on the former Bethlehem Steel site. Photo by Rachel Looker

media station. showed interest in building near the former steel facility.

Northamp-County

agreed to fund \$1 million to ArtsQuest and \$1 million to PBS 39 as a direct contribution from hotel tax money to help construct the buildings that would become part of the SteelStacks campus, according to Northampton County Director of Fiscal Affairs Steve Barron.

The ArtsQuest building features a two-screen art cinema, a café and a music club. Thanks to a donation from a local family, the Levitt Pavilion was constructed outside the ArtsQuest building and serves as a concert venue holding 50 free concerts every year. One of the oldest buildings on the site was preserved and opened as a visitor's center. A walkway was built along the Hoover Mason Trestle, which was once used as a railroad to carry materials to the blast furnaces. The walkway, located alongside the blast furnaces, is 45 feet tall, over 2,000 feet long and connects the visitor's center to the entrance of the casino.

"It's important to remember this effort would not have occurred without a tremendous investment of public money," McClure said.

ArtsQuest holds the annual Musikfest, a music festival that draws people from around the world to Northampton Coun-



ty. ArtsQuest President and CEO Kassie Hilgert said Musikfest has a \$60 million e c o n o m i c

impact. In 2019, 1.2 million people from 26 different countries attended the festival.

Hilgert said Northampton County and ArtsQuest are "inextricably linked" and the county has provided ArtsQuest with funds to expand.

"The county has been great about understanding where we're going to take risks, that we're going to stay focused on tourism with those grants and we're going to stay focused on creating programming that will recruit employees here," she said.

According to Hilgert, the SteelStacks campus has a \$70 million economic impact throughout the year.

"We fit in our little area for economic development utilizing arts and culture," Hilgert

McClure said the development of the former steel site has brought more jobs to the area and increased revenue from hotel taxes when people visit the county. He added that these developments are all interrelated, which has led to the revitalization of the county's economy.

"After Bethlehem Steel collapsed, it was like a black hole, a star collapsing on itself and people just panicked and then they dug out of that hole," Mc-



At its height, the former Bethlehem Steel site employed 30,000 people. The company produced the last cast of steel from the blast furnaces in 1995. Photo by Rachel Looker

Clure said. "They came together and they said 'we will not let this define us."

Hilgert described the Steel-Stacks Campus as resembling a European piazza.

"In Europe, they have cathedrals and museums. These [blast furnaces] are our in-

dustrial cathedrals," she said. "These are the most important part of our history and then to show what we have done with it... you juxtapose those two things and you mash them up next to each other... it's a pretty special feeling to stand on that spot." CN



#### Welcome, Leavenworth County, Kan.

Leavenworth County is located in eastern Kansas, 23 miles from Kansas City, Mo.

The city of Leavenworth, the county seat, is known as the "first city of Kansas" and was established in 1854. The city is named after Col. Henry Leavenworth, who established Fort Leavenworth in 1827. The fort is the oldest Army post west of the Mississippi and third oldest active military installation in the nation.

Leavenworth County has several prisons including the United States Disciplinary Barracks and the United States Penitentiary, Leavenworth.

With a population around 80,000, the county has rural communities with a "Wild West feel." Visitors can stop by the C.W. Parker Carousel Museum and ride a carousel that is more than 100 years old or participate in other activities throughout the county such as fishing or golfing.

In recent years, abandoned storefronts and underground tunnels spanning three city blocks were discovered below the city of Leavenworth. It is speculated the tunnels date back to the 1800s, but the reason they were constructed is unknown.





#### **CHURCHILL COUNTY,** Nev.

hurchill County, Nev. officially adopted its current county seal in 2013. After facing challenges digitizing the county's original seal, officials held a design contest to involve the community in creating a seal that best represents the county. A group of county employees selected the best submissions and the board of county commissioners voted on the winning design. Breanna Currier, a student at Churchill County High School, won the contest. She drew the original seal in pencil and the county worked with a graphics company to create a digital version.



The outline of Currier's seal is the shape of Churchill County.

The symbols in the seal all relate to agriculture and feature alfalfa and wheat, which are both grown in the county.

A Hearts of Gold cantaloupe is included on the left side of the seal, representing how cantaloupe are prominent throughout the county and celebrated each year during a cantaloupe festival.

The county, which has agriculture in its heritage, incorporated wheat into the seal, representing the prevailing crop grown in the county.

Each symbol in the seal is related to agriculture, a significant driver in the county's economy.

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

### 'The hardest part to overcome is a negative attitude'

**ECONOMIC** 

DEVELOPMENT

From MURALS page 11

lar community conversations, which invite public input. It hasn't all gone perfectly. In 2013, Puckett set his sights on the city's theater, arguing that the marquee was the strip's crowning structure. A few months later, after buying the building, all the pipes burst during a cold snap. They have also battled negativity from longtime residents, still stinging from the city's decline. "Naysayers were extraordinari-

ly loud," Puckett said.
"That's the hardest
thing to overcome, not
even the economics.

The hardest part to overcome is a negative attitude."

And a few real estate speculators are holding out on properties, hoping for a big payday. Most of the work started before Puckett was elected to the Board of Commissioners in 2014, but even though the county's work with the Princeton Renaissance Project is peripheral, the revital-

ization is finding new forums. "(My) being a county commissioner now gives some valid-

ity to the world and allows Mercer County to share its success story on a wider stage," Puckett said. But on the other hand, "it's one part of my county and not another, and it's very difficult being an elected official of an entire county and specifically working on one side. Even though my political efforts are for the whole county, it's hard to

overcome the fact that my physical efforts have been focused in one part of the county." But, he maintains, succeeding in one place was a necessary first step. "If we would have tried to do that in other parts without proving it in Princeton, it would have been a hard sell," he said. Puckett has fielded requests for murals in other parts of the county, and is taking the county's NACo Achievement Award-winning program "Keep Mercer Clean," blending it with mural grants

and expanding that into other areas of the county that have demonstrated the robust volunteerism that is necessary to sustain successful revitalization efforts. "The mistake that people make is that they give up too soon," McKinney said. "They start something and work for a couple of months and say 'nothing will ever happen here.' For a long time, people told us we were crazy, this will never work. You just have to stay focused."



#### **NICK CROSSLEY**

#### **Board Member**

Director of Emergency Management & Homeland Security Agency Hamilton County, Ohio

Number of years involved in NACo: 13

Years in public service: 20

**Occupation:** Emergency Management and Homeland Security director

**Education:** Bachelor of Arts degree in History and Master's in Social Work

The hardest thing I've ever done is: Say goodbye to my dad when he was dying.

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

Joe Crossley (my dad), Winston Churchill and Jimmy Carter

A dream I have is to: Retire in relative comfort

The most adventurous thing I've ever done is: Zipline, face-first at 55 MPH over a crocodile-infested river in Costa

**My favorite way to relax is to:** Go off-roading in my Jeep

Wrangler

**I'm most proud:** Getting my master's degree and having my dad at graduation in the audience to witness it



**Crossley** 

**Every morning I read:** The news. All of it...

**My favorite meal is:** Chicken fried steak, mashed potatoes and spinach

**My pet peeve is:** People who chew with their mouth open (smacking).

**My motto is:** Everything is negotiable.

The last book I read was: House of Spies by Daniel Silva

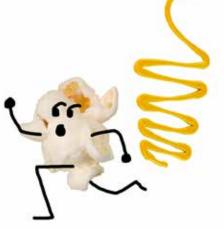
**My favorite movie is:** Pulp

My favorite music: Classic

My favorite U.S. president:
Bill Clinton

My county is a NACo member because: NACo provides an opportunity for counties to work together to handle issues faced by counties every day. We are stronger together than apart.







#### **ESSEX COUNTY, N.Y.**

**Created by: Mary Ann Barton** 

P K Z F F W B T B D Y E U R N E J M ZUZDAIVOOIRLOGOGGTN ARCYOLUBCBIEZVRROJK YVVIRAAHZSOWVRSVHS V N H I J L G A U D L D D I P Q D V T P B B V R X R E W M X L V B S IEICMKRPDNS K R O A N T S I N O I T I L O B A ECPSHTNOMREVUAIDKOS H D A T D E W D A L M A L J J E U T Z ZTODDUWPMOBSZLMNPSH EWVZNYHSAOJNJOMGAKT N P U D W O I A J B K Y N H Y L Q O P A I J Q O R E O S Z O L F B A X O Y Z F H U Z Z I A U S A B L E N NOQJYALDVFHNXG D ONSAOXUAOZUAF RIMGWVIUEQHE 1 1 Τ 1 IHHYDIVOJERHXSXFTUW T S G X R A G H T S X L A V C R I D M S

**ABOLITIONIST:** Abolitionist John Brown is buried in the county at the John Brown Farm State Historic Site.

ADIRONDACK: Essex County is located entirely within the Adirondack Park.

**AUSABLE:** The Ausable River forms a partial northern boundary for the county.

**BOBSLED:** The Mount Van Hoevenberg Olympic Bobsled Run is in Lake

**BOOKSTORE:** The Bookstore Plus in Lake Placid has been around since 1946.

**BREW:** The Great Adirondack Steak and Seafood Brewing Company was named one of the top 10 ski resort breweries in the United States by USA Today.

**ELIZABETHTOWN:** The county seat of Essex County.

**ENGLAND:** The county was named for Essex, England.

**HUDSON:** The Hudson River borders the county on the southwest.

**IROQUOIS:** North American tribes that occupied the territory.

**MARCY:** The county's Mount Marcy is the highest natural point in New York, at 5.344 feet.

**MIRROR:** Located in the village of Lake Placid, the lake's name comes from its calm ambience. No motorized boats are allowed on the lake.

**PLACID:** The county's primary industry is tourism surrounding Lake Placid, a village that was the site of the 1932 and 1980 Winter Olympic Games.

**TOURISM:** The Adirondacks attract about seven to 10 million tourists every year.

**VERMONT:** The state of Vermont borders the county on the east.

## **Redevelopment in the Rust Belt:** 'One county can't do it alone'

#### by Jim Johnston

After the collapse of the steel industry in the late 1980s, Allegheny County, Pa., decided much earlier than most local governments to consider using public funds to spur economic development. The biggest lesson learned was that one entity can't do it alone.

Over the years, Allegheny County has used a variety of resources to achieve our goals. Our funds have been used to purchase equipment, improve buildings, install infrastructure, purchase inventory and acquire real property. We have partnered with state government, local government, school districts, community development corporations and the private sector.

In a nutshell, we have done everything, used funds from everywhere joined and with all viable partners to re-

shape our future.

Much of the county's efforts have focused on the Mon Valley, an area that contains 17 of the county's 130 municipalities. McKeesport, Duquesne, Homestead and Braddock all had steel mills close where thousands of residents lost their jobs. Allegheny County helped each of these towns redevelop these sites as a catalyst to reviving the community.

In McKeesport and Duquesne, the county arranged for a private non-profit to agree to own and develop the properties.

To support that effort, state and federal funds were used to make public infrastructure improvements. Additionally, Community Development Block Grant, county loan funds and small business



Johnston



loans were used to provide low-interest loans to private companies willing to relocate to these sites.

These efforts helped attract Greater Pittsburgh Community Food, which built their distribution center in Duquesne.

> Bedding manufacturer American Textile located its manufacturing to Duquesne and distribution center to

McKeesport.

- SPOTLIGHT ON —

**ECONOMIC** 

**DEVELOPMENT** 

In Homestead, the county partnered with the school district and three municipalities to create a tax increment finance district, where a percentage of future tax revenue was diverted to pay for the creation of a new road system on the former mill site.

This supported large-scale multi-use development. Additionally, a portion of the tax increment financing proceeds were diverted to a fund designed to support development along the communities' major corridor.

Perhaps the most challenging redevelopment was the Carrie Furnace site.

The site covers 136 acres and at one time, was the largest producer of iron ore for USX's Homestead Steel Works. The site includes a National Historic landmark, spans three municipalities, was considered "undevelopable" because of environmental contamination and lacked sufficient infrastructure to support development.

Allegheny County stepped in and acquired the property. Since that time, \$43 million has been invested in remediation, infrastructure and site

Funding was provided from CDBG dollars (\$17 million), Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery or TIGER grant (\$10 million) and state funds (\$16 million).

The property is currently being offered as a mixed-use property in a national request for proposal.

To support the Carrie site, Allegheny County invested \$6.1 million into the redevelopment of a former hospital site in Braddock.

Those funds were able to leverage \$26.5 million in state and private funds to create affordable senior housing (53 units), affordable housing (24 units) and commercial development including a much-needed urgent care

That's just a snapshot of what has been possible in one specific area of the county. We have used these same tools and resources throughout Allegheny County to improve the lives of our citizens, create jobs and bolster tax bases.

While facing these challenges, Allegheny County plans on continuing to use public resources for economic development for many years to come as the county continues to adapt to its changing economic environment. CN

Jim Johnston is manager of Municipal Development at Allegheny County, Pa. Economic Development.

## 

#### **NACO OFFICERS AND MEMBERS**

- President Mary Ann Borgeson spoke Sept. 23 at the Wisconsin Counties Association Annual Conference in Sauk County and Sept. 25 at the Montana Association of Counties Annual Conference in Cascade County.
- Tarrant County, Texas Commissioner Roy Charles Brooks, a NACo past president, participated in the NOBCO Board Meeting Sept. 12 in Washington, D.C.



- Sharon Ondeje has joined NACo as a justice program manager. She previously worked as technical assistant manager at JBS International, Inc., as a case management specialist at the Maryland Department of Juvenile Services and program manager at PRS, Inc. She earned a master's degree in criminal justice from Tiffin University, a master's degree in psychology from Northeastern University and a bachelor's degree in psychology and sociology from Mount Holyoke College. Associate Legislative Director
- Blaire Bryant updated the New York State Association of Counties Sept. 17 in Sullivan County, on the work of the NACo-National Sheriffs' Association Task Force.
- Associate Legislative Director Arthur Scott spoke Sept. 25 to the National Association of Telecommunications Officers and Advisors Annual Conference attendees, about NACo's TestIT app in Hillsborough County.
- Program Director Nastassia Walsh spoke about the Stepping Up initiative Sept. 9 at the National Institute of Corrections Large Jail Network meeting in Franklin County, Ohio. She also presented the NACo and Appalachian Regional Commission report Aug. 21, on opioid abuse, at the Alabama Association of Counties Annual Conference in Baldwin County and Aug. 23 at the North Carolina Association of Counties Annual Conference in Guilford County.



**Borgeson** 



**Brooks** 



Ondeje







## Congratulations to the LATEST NACO HIGH PERFORMANCE LEADERSHIP ACADEMY CLASS!

Some 112 county employees took part in NACo's fourth High Performance Leadership Academy. The 12-week online program empowers front-line county government employees with fundamental leadership skills. The curriculum is developed by the Professional Development Academy in partnership with Fortune 1000 executives, public sector leaders, academics and thought leaders including Gen. Colin Powell and executive coach and author Marshall Goldsmith. To learn more about the academy, visit the NACo website: naco.org/skills

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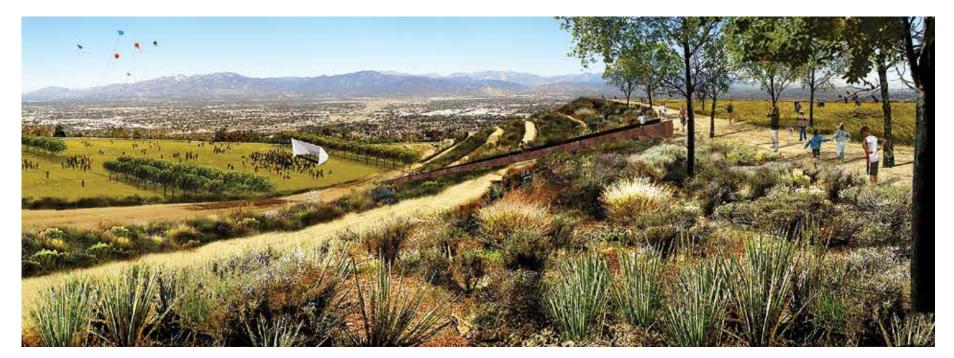
#### **Joshua Winter**

**IT Security Analyst** Washington County, Minn.



## BRIGHT IDEAS LOS ANGELES COUNTY, Calif.

## Plan Turns Landfill into 'Park for All'



Renderings show the completed park along the western and eastern decks of the Puente Hills Landfill in Los Angeles County, Calif. Photo courtesy of the Los Angeles County Department of Parks and Recreation

#### **PROBLEM:**

A 1,365-acre landfill is located in a community that lacks parks and recreational space.

#### **SOLUTION:**

Create a plan that transforms a landfill into a park.

#### by Rachel Looker staff writer

When some see a problem, others see an opportunity.

That's how the Department of Parks and Recreation in Los Angeles County, Calif., viewed the Puente Hills Landfill when it ceased operations in 2013 and they were left with one of the country's largest former landfills rising above the San Gabriel Valley.

The department envisioned converting the landfill into usable, open space for the community, leading to the creation of the Puente Hills Landfill Master Plan.

The landfill, which has collected 130 million tons of trash over 57 years and encompasses 1,365 acres, was permitted with the understanding that upon its closure, portions of the landfill would be transformed into usable park space.

The Puente Hills Master Plan, led by the Department of Parks and Recreation, will allow the department to reclaim the landfill and establish a new regional park in Los Angeles County for the first time in 30

Alina Bokde, deputy director for the planning and development agency within the department of parks and recreation, said the plan for the park was a commitment made to the community.

"The community would then benefit from the development of a park that would obviously serve the benefit of the local residents nearby that had for many years had to deal with the impact of the second largest landfill in the country," she said.

Michelle O'Connor, the departmental facilities planner for the planning and development agency for the department of parks and recreation, oversees the trails program and was a principle planner involved in the development of the Puente Hills Master Plan. She said the landfill was split into three areas available for recreation: the western

deck, eastern deck and southern deck. The project will be implemented in three major phases over the next 30 years to reflect the settlement of the landfill that occurs over time.

The first phase will occur primarily on the western deck in areas that can support infrastructure and will create an entry plaza and visitor center, a maintenance and operations area and an ADA-accessible trail that leads to a scenic over-

O'Connor added that there will be a bike skills park, a large area for performances and events with a removable band shell and a children's play area.

This phase will connect the top areas of the landfill to the base with plans to construct a trail lift, similar to a gondola, to transport visitors from the base of the landfill to the top, she said.

The first phase is estimated to cost \$96 million.

"It's about really taking a former landfill and postindustrial site and converting it into recreational space," O'Connor said. "Just the mindfulness, the thoughtfulness that went into the conceptual planning for the project and trying to design elements that are really sensitive to the fact that it is on a landfill instead of trying to ignore that."

With expected settlement of the landfill up to 125 feet in the next 30 years, the phases in the master plan are adaptable and designed to build upon the previous phase.

"We have to be really careful with the type of facilities that we build on top of surfaces that could be responsive to that shifting and settling," O'Connor said. "Other areas are going to be by and large passive areas."

The plan depicts a "Park for All" with recreational activities for a diverse audience. The department conducted an extensive outreach effort when establishing the plan for the park which included six community workshops in four languages, interactive booths at 31 community events and schools, hiking tours of the landfill, numerous presentations to members of the community and a project website where information informed county residents who couldn't attend

"It was really important that

the community be at the forefront in determining how the space would be developed for parks within the constraints of a landfill," Bokde said.

The biggest challenge with the Puente Hills master plan has been with funding, according to Bokde.

"All the other pieces have come together," she said. "I would say the cost of building parks is expensive and it's a regional park so it's a significant project."

The master plan will meet an important need in the community by providing recreational spaces in an area where there is a lack of parks, Bokde added.

"I would say this is not something that happens every day. ...Transforming one land use to another is what is unique about this project and exciting," Bokde said.

The department is currently seeking funding to build the first phase of the park.

"I think it's really well situated to serve as a great destination park," O'Connor said.

The Puente Hills Landfill Park Master Plan is the recipient of a 2019 NACo Achievement Award in the Planning category.

### LEADERSHIP EDGE

## You're Leading and Leaving a Legacy — Act Accordingly

#### by Tim Rahschulte

Your actions and reactions influence. Whether you're intentional about how you show up or not, your presence will define you. You're either building up or tearing down your personal brand, team culture and those around you with every action every day. That might be hard to think about - every action, every day? Yes, every action, every day! Although the last article in this series talked about this, it's important enough to reiterate it here.

David Whyte is a poet, speaker and the author of The Heart Aroused: Poetry and the Preservation of the Soul in Corporate America. He found that "every action taken, from the moment we switch off the alarm clock in the morning to the way we write a line of poet-

ry or design a product, has the potential to change the world, leave it cold with indifference, or perhaps more commonly, nudge it infinitesimally in the direction of good or evil." Similarly, Jody Davids, a senior vice president at PepsiCo and author of A Tale of Two Heroes, said that you must "know that you will have a legacy. Act ac-

Everything we do is creating influence and our legacy. Our action or inaction, our speech or silence, our engagement or disengagement — everything we do, intentionally or unintentionally, is being observed by others and will determine our legacy. Act accordingly in-

Now the fact that everything you do creates influence can lead to paranoia. That's certainly not the intent of pointing out this fact. It's simply meant

to provide an awareness of how you choose to show up. Any action without this awareness may very well result in influencing others in a way that's not aligned with the kind of leader we want to be. Tom Murphy, the chief information officer at the University of Pennsylvania, shared a lesson with me about how he learned about his actions getting in the way of his message. He had just given a motivational talk to his staff. He left them energized and inspired about organizational changes on the horizon. As he left a meeting later that day, he walked across the skybridge spanning two buildings of the company. It was there that someone else noticed him portraying a negative demeanor. His head was down, his shoulders were slouched and his gaze was a distant stare. He said, "I had no idea I was

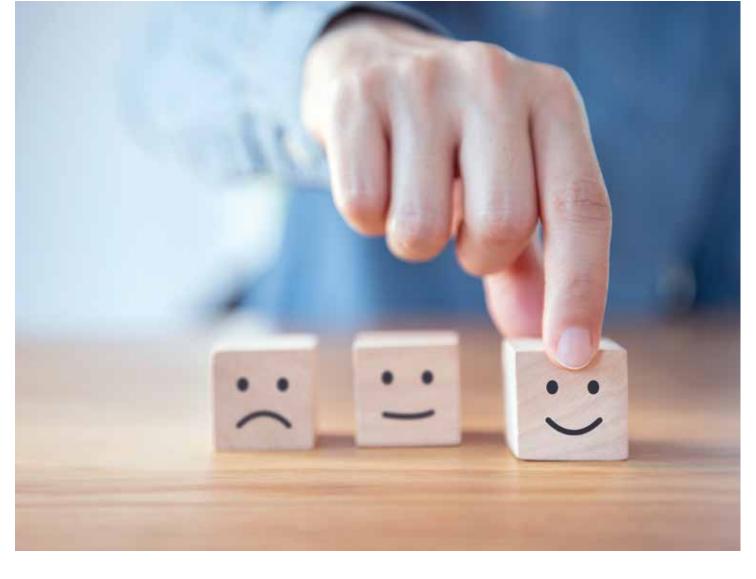
conveying that message until it was pointed out to me. That was certainly not my intention, but I learned quickly that I can completely undo everything I just said by the nonverbal signals I send. As leaders, we need to be self-aware. We need to realize that we're on stage all the time and people are watching and taking cues from not only the verbal, but also the nonverbal messages we send. We're always being judged and always influencing those around us."

Think about your role in your organization, in your family and in your community. Think about the activities and experiences you face every day. Some, no doubt, are joyous. Others may challenge your beliefs. It's for this reason that Marc Varner, the chief information security officer at YUM! Brands, told me, "Bad days will come that will put you under pressure and you may not act the way you would want to act. It's because those days will come that you need to know who you are, what you stand for and what vou want to be known for." Your actions in these situations will be your legacy.

We all face moments when the makeup of our legacy is threatened to be lost and when "positive" leadership seems out of reach, yet it's times like these that require us to demonstrate our positivity, hope and leadership. It's during times like these that we need to leverage care, consideration and patience. It's during times like these that we need to know who we are, the brand we aim to display, what we stand for and the legacy we want to leave. It's times like these that make us need to know what we'll do with the world as we find it. It's times like these that you must know the answer to the question, "What shows up when I do?"

This question is about presence and intentionality. The best leaders never forget that whether you're intentional or not, your presence shows up. So be more than simply prepared for bad days and challenging circumstances. Be intentional!

Be intentional about who you are and what you do. Be intentional about your attitude, thoughts, actions and reactions, mental readiness, emotional balance and physical presence. Be intentional about it all. Your legacy is depending upon it and will be defined by it. CN



Rahschulte is the CEO of the Professional Development Academy and chief architect of the NACo High Performane Leadership Program (naco. org/skills). He is the co-author of My Best Advice: Proven Rules for Effective Leadership.

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### the HR **DOCTOR** with Philpot & Winkeler

ale has a vacant position and his staff has been dividing the workload until a replacement can be found. Morale is dipping lower each day. On Tuesday, Dale interviewed six candidates with his team. They just want him to hire someone. Dale wants someone that will take his team to the next level, complement their skill sets and bring new skills to the department. He also wants someone who wants to grow in the profession and has great customer service

Mike has a vacant position and has been carefully analyzing his team. Many of the staff have 15 or more years of service and Mike is thinking about succession planning. His staff is interested in mentoring those new to the profession. He would like to get someone younger in the office, but he knows if he uses that word HR will give him a lecture on age discrimination. Besides, they are a lean team, and every member of his team is expected to be a generalist with broad expertise, so the minimum qualifications don't lend themselves to new grads.

Rosa has a position that has been open for three months. There have been several applicants who meet minimum qualifications, but none of them seem like a good fit for her small team. While running errands at the mall, Rosa meets Emery, an engaging, cheerful customer service representative. Rosa tells Emery to apply for her position. Later, HR sends the latest applications to Rosa, but Emery is not on the list. HR says Emery did not meet minimum qualifications. "Why do we require two years of experience and a degree?" Rosa asks. "I just want someone with great customer service."

# Minimum Qualifications to Maximize Recruitment VACANT

Contrary to popular belief, minimum requirements are not an excuse for HR to control the candidates for a department interview. Minimum requirements are part of the job description to ensure the employees who perform similar work have the necessary skills and are compensated fairly. Minimum requirements set the baseline education and experience a candidate must possess to have the essential knowledge, skills and abilities. Minimum qualifications do more than just establish your classification and compensation system; they create an objective means of narrowing the candidates eligible for a position. Otherwise, candidates may be eliminated in a subjective fashion that is vulnerable to accusations of unlawful discrimination or predetermi-

To allow for some flexibility, most job descriptions allow consideration of "any equivalent combination of education, training and experience which demonstrates the ability to perform the duties of the position." Organizations often have documented guidelines about what may be substituted. For example, a bachelor's degree may be equivalent to two years of experience. Some organizations include the equivalent combination in their minimum qualifications, so applicants don't have to guess what the equivalent standard is.

So, what are some minimum requirement best practices?

- First, routinely review the minimum qualifications to ensure they represent the knowledge, skills and abilities necessary to perform the duties of the position as it is performed today. Out-of-date language is not helpful for candidates or employers.
- Second, add preferences that demonstrate the soft skills that will help a candidate be successful in the role. This language should paint a picture of the position, connecting them to the work. It will help potential applicants determine whether they want to be in this role, as part of this team, at this organization.
- Third, create a document or

matrix to demonstrate how the candidates do and do not meet the minimum qualifications. Show that your processes and procedures are consistently followed. This will be particularly helpful if you receive an EEOC claim from an applicant.

- Fourth, if a candidate does not meet minimum qualifications, do not interview them. If you think they would be a good fit for your organization, encourage them to apply for future positions. Identify entry-level positions in your organization so you can understand how new graduates may enter your talent pipeline.
- Fifth, partner with HR so that your recruiter fully understands your line of business, the challenges you experience and can help you to expand or deepen your applicant pool.
- Sixth, ask interview questions that help you assess the strengths of the applicants, including their soft skills. Help them to relax in the interview so they tell you about themselves, rather than just saying what they think you want to hear.

What are some possible next

steps for our colleagues mentioned above?

Mike is correct: he cannot recruit for younger employees. He can, however, work to identify career ladders, high turnover positions and entry-level positions within his team. He can consider the different ways to get experience in his profession. Mike can advertise with schools for the entry-level positions he has identified. He can also consider special projects that give internal employees growth opportunities, which will then open new opportunities within the department.

Rosa might want to have candidates respond to a scenario, such as "You are working at our front desk and you have two customers in line, someone on hold on the telephone and a coworker needing help. What do you do?" Additionally, Rosa might want to include preferences in her posting, addressing outstanding customer service, ability to deescalate difficult customers and working closely with others. Finally, Rosa may want to discuss with HR whether the minimum qualifications are reflective of what is needed in the position.

Dale should not hire a person merely to fill the role quickly. Rather than settling, Dale should regroup, consider why a successful candidate did not connect to the posting, and try again. Vacancies are opportunities. Looking through the candidates who did not meet minimum qualifications may give Dale insight into who was attracted to the position and the available labor pool at that moment.

The minimum qualifications are there to protect you and make sure you get the skill set you need on your team. Minimum requirements are just that, minimums. Set your sights higher so you can get the best possible candidate to bring new levels of success to your team. They deserve the best and so do you and your citizens. CN

Erika Philpot is the human resources director and Rose Winkeler is the deputy county attorney for Coconino County, Ariz.

# NEWS ACROSS THENATION

#### **ARIZONA**

MARICOPA COUNTY Attorney Bill Montgomery is headed to the Arizona Supreme **Court.** Governor Doug Ducey appointed Montgomery to the seven-justice court, KSAZ FOX10 reported. The court interprets state laws including business regulations, election rules and criminal codes.

#### **CALIFORNIA**

- The LOS ANGELES COUN-TY coroner will now collect data on sexual orientation and gender identity to track suicide rates and hate crimes against LGBTQ individuals. The Board of Supervisors approved a motion to have the county coroner collect the data which can be used to create policies that protect communities at risk, according to the Los Angeles Times.
- The Board of Supervisors in SAN DIEGO COUNTY backed a proposal that provides confidential mental health services to first responders, including responders who have retired. The behavioral health program is funded through a realignment of Health and Human Services funding and will cost \$450,000 in this fiscal year's budget, The San Diego Union-Tribune reported. The goal of the proposal is to reduce suicide rates among first responders.
- A new program in SANTA BARBARA COUNTY is encouraging county employees to commute to their jobs using mass transit. The Clean Commute

Program provides incentives for employees to use other forms of transportation, telework or have alternative schedules, Santa Ynez Valley News reported. The goal of the program is to reduce traffic congestion, demands for parking spaces and greenhouse gas emissions.

#### **ILLINOIS**

A website is telling the story of the opioid epidemic in COOK COUNTY through maps, statistics and narratives that draw attention to the opioid crisis. The website focuses on information about the rise of fentanyl use, prescription disposal locations, treatment centers and naloxone, WTTW reported. Through these resources, the county's Department of Public Health sees the website as a resource for county residents to access help. The county saw nearly 400 opioid-related deaths in 2017.

#### INDIANA

VIGO COUNTY school officials introduced a new program to combat vaping and **e-cigarette use** for high school and middle school students. The "Catch My Breath" program educates students who are caught vaping instead of disciplining them, WTHI-TV reported. Vaping numbers are higher districtwide compared to last year for Vigo County School Corporation. Thirty students have completed or are currently enrolled in the program.

#### **KENTUCKY**

Kentucky is changing its plan to allow state residents to obtain Real ID licenses from local circuit court clerk's offices, WDRB reported. After Oct. 1, 2020, without a

Real ID license, Kentucky residents will need a passport or other valid ID to board domestic flights or enter federal facilities. The Kentucky Transportation Cabinet wants to use regional locations across the state for residents to apply for Real IDs instead of county offices. This change comes after local circuit court clerks and lawmakers commented on the additional workload on offices that manage county courts.

#### **MARYLAND**

• A new bill has been introduced in MONTGOMERY **COUNTY** that requires elected officials to implement a racial equity plan for county government. The Racial Equity and Social Justice Act defines racial equity as "changes in the policy, practice and allocation of county resources so that race does not predict success and opportunities can be improved for all people," Bethes*da Magazine* reported. The bill also requires legislative and budget requests to include a racial equity and social justice impact statement.



Commissioners in **GRAND** TRAVERSE COUNTY launched a program that will hire five part-time court bailiffs to increase jail staffing, reduce overtime costs and provide more security, the Ticker reported. Currently, the Grand Traverse Sheriff's Office uses corrections officers to serve as bailiffs, leading to staffing shortages at the county jail. A shortage of corrections officers required the county to use neighboring county jails, resulting in boarding fees. The part-time bailiffs will be hired using available funds in the Sheriff's Office budget with a combination of approved grant funding and Probate, Family and District Court bud-

#### **MISSOURI**

The CALLAWAY COUNTY Commission appointed new members to an anti-domestic violence board that has not had new appointees since the 1980s, Fulton Sun reported. The members on the five-person board aim to identify and support unmet needs of domestic violence programs and services in the county. The board allocates \$10,000 annu-



Howard County Executive Calvin Ball (second from right) announces that the county has joined the Bee City USA Coalition. Photo courtesy of Howard County

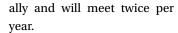
#### **MARYLAND**

• There's a new buzz in **HOWARD COUNTY** after officially being declared a **bee sanctuary** county. The county joined the Bee City USA Coalition and is committed to reducing pesticide use as well as creating sustainable habitats for bees, according to WBAL-TV 11. To help protect bees, the county created a pollinator-friendly meadow habitat on county parkland that encompasses 55 acres. In addition to reducing the use of harmful chemicals such as neonicotinoids, the county will also hold educational events and expand habitats.



#### **TENNESSEE**

• An interstate football matchup meant a windfall of snacks for KNOX COUNTY Mayor Glenn Jacobs. The University of Tennessee at Knoxville beat the University of Tennessee-Chattanooga 45-0. **HAMILTON COUNTY** Mayor Jim Coppinger sent Jacobs 3,402 Moon Pies, made in Chattanooga, as a reward, the Knoxville News Sentinel reported. Had Chattanooga won, Jacobs would have only had to turn over a case of Mountain Dew, which was developed in Knoxville.





#### **NEVADA**

After all of the uncertainty of who would show up and what they would do when prompted to "Storm Area 51," the eventual assembly in LINCOLN COUNTY was manageable and peaceful. Though projections indicated upwards of 30,000 people were planning to descend on a few sparsely-supplied rural towns, roughly 5,000 people attended a camping and music festival designed to keep the revelers from trouble. Only two people were cited by the sheriff's office for trespassing near the boundaries of the large U.S. Air Force facility within the Nevada Test and Training Range, the Los Angeles Times reported.

#### **NEW YORK**

In hopes of cutting down plastic waste, ALBANY COUN-TY Executive Dan McCoy has banned the distribution of plastic straws and stir sticks in county-owned facilities.

NEWS10 reported that people with disabilities requiring the use of plastic straws would not be affected, nor would it affect items with plastic straws already attached.

Albany County can use compostable, recyclable or reusable items and vendors who sell products to the county will have to make the switch. Mc-Coy has also submitted legislation requiring all private businesses that sell beverages like coffee and soft drinks to get rid of their plastic straws and stir sticks, too. Medical and dental organizations would be exempt from the legislation.

- The **DUTCHESS COUN-**TY Department of Emergency Response is partnering with a local amateur radio club to hold a technician-level amateur-level radio licensing class for HAM radio operators. The class will include FCC license exams.
- Pending signature by the county executive, ULSTER **COUNTY** will soon have a **De**partment of Economic Development, following approval by the County Legislature. The executive will appoint the department's director, who will be subject to approval by the Legislature. The county already has an Office of Economic Development within the Planning Department, the Daily Freeman reported.

#### **NORTH CAROLINA**

Following an agreement be-

tween the **ORANGE COUNTY** Sheriff's Office and its commissary contractor, the automated teller machine in the county's detention center lobby will no longer impose a \$3 direct fee on those making cash deposits on behalf of incarcerated individuals.

"It's really important for families that do have the money to put in there that they are able to do that and not get assessed an excessive fee," Caitlin Fenhagen, Orange County criminal justice resource director, told the Daily Tar Heel. "We're really happy that that can happen, and I hope that it will ease the burden for some of the families and loved ones."

#### **TENNESSEE**

• The **DICKSON COUNTY** Commission approved a contract for an outside business to provide 24-hour medical care to inmates. That change will also include mental health care services, which Sheriff Jeff Bledsoe told The Tennessean would reduce the county's liability. The new services would also relieve the burden on jail officers who had to do healthcare administrative work.

#### **WASHINGTON**

• CLARK COUNTY is narrowing in on a policy for handling homeless encampments on county property, according to The Columbian. The County Council directed staff to move forward with a policy that would ban daytime camping and prevent business entrances from being blocked by tents and people sleeping. The policy would expand the public rights of way where camping would be prohibited.

It would also prescribe how crews should handle personal property and hazardous materials. In 2016, a federal judge found the county violated the constitutional rights of homeless individuals after work crews seized and threw out their property during an encampment sweep.

• KING COUNTY Executive Dow Constantine's budget proposal includes a \$300,000 request for measures designed to attract more filmmaking to the county. Of that, \$100,000 would go toward grants for film producers who work with traditionally disadvantaged populations and the rest would pay for an industry consultant to coordinate film-friendly policies.

He also requested a \$25 fee for filming on county property, reduced from \$500, and KUOW reports he has signed an executive order directing the county to focus on shortterm real estate deals to support film production.

#### **WYOMING**

PARK COUNTY is considering regulations on shortterm rental properties in rural parts of the county. Those talks, however, are less driven by concerns over competition with hotels and more so because of nuisance issues. The Powell Tribune reported that complaints about trespassing, parking problems and residences advertised as being able to house more guests than septic systems might be able to handle spurred commissioners to address the issue. **CN** 

News From Across the Nation is compiled by Charlie Ban and Rachel Looker. Do you have an item for us to consider? Contact cban@naco.org or rlooker@ naco.org.



## Department of Labor expands overtime pay threshold

#### From OVERTIME page 2

overtime pay. Once enacted, DOL estimates the rule will extend overtime eligibility to approximately 1.2 million workers.

Under the Fair Labor Standards Act, most workers are entitled to minimum wage and overtime pay for working more than 40 hours a week. However, under what is known as the "white collar" exemption, employers are not currently required to provide overtime pay for employees who earn above the \$23,660 threshold and meet the job duties criteria for administrative, executive and professional employment. The final rule from DOL boosts that threshold to \$35,568.

In addition to increasing the salary threshold for employees who would qualify



for overtime pay, the final rule will also permit bonuses and incentive payments (including commissions) to be used to satisfy up to 10 percent of the salary level at which employees qualify for overtime pay.

The rule would not change the job duties criteria for administrative, executive and professional employees, nor would it institute automatic updates or increases to the salary threshold. However, DOL indicated it would propose updates to the salary threshold every four years using the notice-and-comment rulemaking process.

As passed, DOL's rule is expected to impact some county governments, as the nation's 3,069 counties employ more than 3.6 million employees and provide services to over  $316\ million\ county\ residents.$ In approximately 40 percent of counties, average wages for local government employees do not meet the new salary threshold. NACo recently released an analysis of DOL's proposed overtime rule and its potential impact on counties. CN

Daria Daniel is an associate legislative director at NACo; Valerie Brankovic, legislative assistant, contributed to this story





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