

Rural issues at heart of RAC meeting

Fires wreak havoc in California's wine counties

By Charlie Ban
senior staff writer

For the first time in eight years, NACo's Rural Action Caucus (RAC) met for its annual symposium — this year in Wise County, Texas — with a new secretary leading the Department of Agriculture.

Speakers addressed areas of concern to rural counties, including Agriculture Secretary Sonny Perdue's priorities for the department, strategies to reduce opioid drug addiction and rural housing.

It started from close to the top. Jannine Miller, Perdue's senior adviser for rural infrastructure, updated members

See RAC MEETING page 9



Sgt. Thompson of the Sonoma County, California Sheriff's Department works near burned-out cars after devastating wildfires ripped through the region the week of Oct. 9. Photo by Randee Deason/KTVU Fox 2

By Mary Ann Barton
senior staff writer

It was about 1:30 a.m. Oct. 9 when Carmel Angelo, Mendocino County, California CEO, was notified by the sheriff's office that a deadly wildfire was threatening the community.

"As I was talking with our captain in the sheriff's office, who was on the ground notifying neighbors and closing roads, he was trying to apprise me of the fire," Angelo said. "It was quite a telling phone call, if you can imagine at 2 a.m., hearing the sheriff's captain tell people they need to evacuate their homes."

More than 20 wildfires whipped up by heat, high winds and a lack of humidity started Columbus Day weekend, killing at least 31 people in northern

California's wine country.

"By far, this was the biggest catastrophe we've ever faced," Napa County Supervisor Ryan Gregory said.

In Sonoma County, just south of Mendocino, Supervisor Susan Gorin discovered her home burned to the ground Oct. 10. She had been out of town for the birth of a grandchild and tried to return, but her neighborhood was evacuated.

Some of the challenges, Sonoma County Supervisor James Gore said, were "getting quick, respectable, verified information" out to the public, including in Spanish, and getting it out in a number of ways — to the media, and on social media.

Gore made room in his home

See NAPA FIRES page 2

Congress moves on CHIP, other health safety net bills

By Brian Bowden
associate legislative director

and
Valerie Brankovic
legislative assistant

Sept. 30 marked the final day of FY 2017, and with it, the expiration of funding for a number of federal health programs, including Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) and community health centers and disproportionate share hospitals (DSH). CHIP was last reauthorized for two years under the Medicare Access and CHIP Reauthorization Act of 2015. The bill funded CHIP for FY 2016 and FY2017 at ap-

proximately \$13.9 billion and \$15.9 billion, respectively.

Across the Capitol, the House Energy and Commerce Committee moved legislation to reauthorize multiple health programs, including CHIP and community health centers. Its bill to reauthorize CHIP, the Helping Ensure Access for Little Ones, Toddlers, and Hopeful Youth by Keeping Insurance Delivery Stable (HEALTHY KIDS) Act of 2017 (H.R. 3921), would reauthorize CHIP for five years, and also contains other provisions delaying the scheduled cuts to

See CHILDREN page 7

County supervisors in Mendocino, Sonoma counties were evacuated

From NAPA FIRES page 1

for two families who lost their homes in the fires, he said. He was able to return after facing an evacuation himself Oct. 11.

The fires burned more than 200,000 acres across the region; firefighters were still battling the fires late last week.

Gov. Jerry Brown (D) issued emergency proclamations for Napa, Sonoma, Yuba, Butte, Lake, Mendocino, Nevada and Solano counties. FEMA approved grants to help pay for staffing and equipment.

The worst of the fires were:

- Mendocino County: At least eight deaths; 21,000 acres burned
- Napa County: At least two

deaths; 60,000 acres burned

- Sonoma County: At least 17 deaths; 27,000 acres burned
- Yuba County: At least four deaths; 11,500 acres burned.

Three days into it, the counties were still in emergency mode. “We’ve been doing evacuations all day yesterday and all through the night,” said Sonoma County Sheriff Robert Giordano Oct. 11. “If you have a place to go, go.”

The county’s missing person list was up to 900 by Oct. 12, with 437 of those accounted for, but “we think some of those are new evacuations,” the sheriff said, especially people who can’t make phone calls because their phones weren’t charged or cell phone service was spotty.



Only the mail seems to have escaped the flames at this Sonoma County home. Photo courtesy of Cal OES

In Sonoma County, where at least 17 people died, 24 evacuation shelters were set up by Oct. 10. The Sonoma Raceway opened 50 acres of campground and the fairgrounds were being used as a shelter for large animals. The county seat, Santa Rosa, was devastated by the fires — a Kmart, Applebee’s, Hilton and many other businesses and homes were burned. “We had 20,000 acres burn in 12 hours,” said CalFire Capt. Richard Cordova. “It’s pretty much unheard of.”

In Mendocino County, 90 structures were lost including 50 dwellings, and a county-owned cell tower, Board Chair John McCowen said.

The night the fires started, shortly after 2 a.m., McCowen was busy helping set up the county’s first emergency shelter. “I could see the landscape... the full-blown fire spread across miles...I knew instantly this was going to be a terrible situation for many people,” he said.

Mendocino County Supervisors Carre Brown and

Georgeanne Croskey, were also evacuated from their homes.

In Mendocino, residents were notified of evacuations by reverse 911 calls; those with landline phones were automatically notified; those with cell phones were notified if they had signed up for the service. Officials also went door to door.

“This is what you would really call a rapid response,” Angelo said. “Our sheriff’s deputies and CalFire worked very quickly. They were trying to save lives and get animals out of harm’s way. That fire was moving quickly. They were out there doing boots on the ground.”

County employees set up the EOC at the sheriff’s training center in Ukiah, the county seat; it was up and running by 5 a.m. The county and the sheriff’s office posted information to social media, set up a phone



Scorched palm trees in Santa Rosa, Sonoma County, Calif.

Photo by Kendall Busby

bank, a 211-phone service and held daily press conferences.

“We had public employees who lost everything they had and they still showed up for work to help evacuate, staff shelters, emergency operations,” McCowen said. “People sometimes forget the role that a public employee can play, even if they’re not a first responder by profession.” **CN**



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County	State	Share Business
Pitkin County	Colo.	9.1 percent
Santa Fe County	N.M.	9.0 percent
Storey County	Nev.	8.7 percent
San Miguel County	Colo.	8.4 percent
Taos County	N.M.	8.2 percent

Source: NACo Analysis of Americans for the Arts Creative Industries data, 2017

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Concerns mount over FCC 5G rollout plans

By Mary Ann Barton
senior staff writer

The National Association of Counties and other groups are urging the chairman of the Federal Communications Commission to work more closely with local governments as the agency looks into how best to deploy the next generation of telecommunications services.

Earlier this year, the FCC appointed at least 25 telecom execs to its 30-member Broadband Deployment Advisory Committee (BDAC), which is charged with making recommendations on how local governments should work with them on executing siting proposals in their communities.

Several government officials were also appointed to the committee, including San Jose, California Mayor Sam Liccardo, as well as a utility commissioner from Massachusetts, an IT director from the Coeur d'Alene Tribe and a representative from the Utah Governor's Office of Economic Development.

With a deadline of Nov. 9 nearing for BDAC to make its proposals, according to BDAC members, NACo is raising concerns about not only the telecom-heavy makeup of the committee, but also the FCC's failure to provide timely updates about its radiofrequency exposure limits and policies. The FCC set

radiofrequency radiation limits 21 years ago. The Telecommunications Act of 1996 pre-empts local governments from looking into the effects of radio frequency emissions from an antenna.

A Department of Health and Human Services National Toxicology Program, funded at \$20 million, has been conducting experiments in rats and mice on potential health hazards from cellphone radiofrequency radiation. A preliminary report concluded that "exposure to radio frequency radiation has the potential to induce measurable DNA damage under certain exposure conditions." The complete report is expected to be released in early 2018.

"There is an urgent need to evaluate 5G health effects now before millions are exposed...we need to know if 5G increases the risk of skin diseases such as melanoma or other skin cancers," said Ron Melnick, a retired NIH scientist who led the design of the study on cellphone radiofrequency radiation. Melnick made his comments at a science conference earlier this year.

NACo, in a letter to FCC Chairman Ajit Pai, is also asking the agency to address the perception that the BDAC is "interested in pursuing only industry goals" and also urges the agency to make all of its meetings public.

Protecting local authority over rights of way is a main concern.

"We request that you...honor our constitutionally guaranteed protection of fair compensation on the use of public assets, and maintain our congressionally recognized right to govern the siting of cell towers and small cells in our communities," the letter states.

With regard to radiofrequency exposure limits and policies, NACo is asking the FCC to review its current rules.

In 1996, "cellphone use by children was rare, smart phones were virtually unheard of, and the FCC assumed consumers would use belt clips or holsters to carry their phones," the City and County of San Francisco said in comments to the agency nearly four years ago, when it and others urged the FCC to review its rules.

Meanwhile the BDAC has held two public meetings, with smaller groups meeting behind closed doors. Its third and final public meeting, reportedly set for Nov. 9, is expected to feature the group's recommendations on how to streamline the rollout of 5G. NACo and the other groups are urging the FCC to post information online about the meetings.

NACo is also urging BDAC to widen its focus by looking at how to increase broadband services to underserved rural and low-income areas. **CN**

CAPITAL LOOP

Supreme Court starts new term

On Oct. 2, the Supreme Court officially began its 2017-2018 session. NACo signed onto two *amicus* briefs with the State and Local Legal Center for cases on the court's docket.

House, Senate finalizing budget documents

The House approved its budget blueprint, Oct. 5. The Senate is expected to vote on its budget resolution the week of Oct. 16.

White House Opioid Commission holds third meeting

Pharmaceutical industry representatives who attend-

ed the commission's meeting, Sept. 27, said that companies would support new limits to the number of opioid pills doctors can prescribe.

Legislation moves to reauthorize CHIP

House and Senate bills contain significant differences in their funding structures that must be negotiated before a final reauthorization package is approved.

NACo outlines county priorities to address catastrophic wildfires

The letter conveys NACo's concerns about the increasing threat of catastrophic wildfires across the country, particularly on the nation's federal forest lands.

ON THE MOVE

NACo STAFF

- **Marsha Saunders** is NACo's new conference and leadership development director. Marsha previously served as director of conferences and trade shows with Futures Industry Association.
- **Blaire Bryant** will serve as a health program manager in the County Solutions and Innovations Department. Blaire previously served as senior program assistant with the National Association of County and City Health Officials.
- The Financial Services Center's latest team

- member, **Mikala Massimiani**, will serve as a marketing specialist. Mikala previously was employed as B2B acquisition associate with Wedding Wire.
- **Emilia Istrate**, managing director, NACo Counties Futures Lab, spoke on county fiscal trends and challenges at the Fall Educational Forum, Association of Governmental Risk Pools, in Baltimore, Oct. 2.
- **Hadi Sedigh**, associate legislative director, participated in the Reentry Ready Roundtable hosted by the Convergence Center for Policy Resolution, held Oct. 3-4 in Washington, D.C.



Saunders



Bryant



Massimiani

Strong, local leaders: Secret to brownfields funding

By Mary Ann Barton
senior staff writer

If your county is looking to turn a neglected property into something dynamic for your community, strong local leadership is often what it takes to get the federal funding to spark redevelopment, according to David Lloyd, director, Office of Brownfields and Land Revitalization at the Environmental Protection Agency.

"I think to be successful in brownfields, a community needs strong leadership, a champion," Lloyd said last week. "In a smaller area, you get a local civic leader and they can just drive the train really fast and hard."

Federal brownfields grants are administered through an EPA program begun in 1995 that provides funds for inspection and cleanup of contaminated sites so that they can be used in redevelopment projects.

Cleaning up brownfields in your county can increase property values by 5 percent to 15 percent and for each public dollar spent, attract more than \$17 in private investor funding. The federal government Accountability Office estimates there are 425,000 of these types of properties — think abandoned strip malls, gas stations, dry cleaners, junkyards, warehouses and industrial properties — across the nation.

Several brownfields reauthorization bills are awaiting action in Congress. Typically, the brownfields program is budgeted at about \$160 million per year.

"Administrator Pruitt has made work on brownfields sites a key agency priority goal for 2018 and 2019," Lloyd said. The brownfields plan is included in the draft EPA strategic plan, released Oct. 2, he noted.

"Cleaning up these sites and returning them to public and business uses is good for the environment, good for the



Abandoned property like this can also qualify as a brownfield.

communities where they're located and good for jobs and the economy," he said.

What is a brownfield?

The EPA defines a brownfield as "real property, the expansion, redevelopment, or reuse of which may be complicated by the presence or potential presence of a hazardous substance, pollutant or contaminant."

"Brownfield sites are in every community — urban, rural, big and small," Lloyd said. "Also abandoned properties where they're just derelict would qualify as a brownfield site. It can be a property where there is perceived contamination that is holding back investment in the property." The EPA can do some investigative work to free up the property for redevelopment.

The actual presence of contaminants must be determined by an investigation known as an environmental site assessment, or ESA. The Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act of 1980 made the purchaser of any real property liable for any contaminants on

the property.

The act's retroactive liability has made the performance of an assessment a practical necessity for any potential buyer of property, who naturally does not want to assume liability for the cleanup of any contaminants found there.

Where are most brownfields found? "The upper Midwest, the industrial states, as you might expect, have the most visible brownfields," Lloyd noted. If you look at the EPA brownfields regions, you'll find the most in regions 1, 3 and 5 have the most.

But don't think it's just urban areas that have brownfields or get funding. "A misconception I think is that all of our funding goes to urban locations," Lloyd said. "We actually have found the small rural communities are competing more effectively for our resources. We estimate 15 percent of our grants go to communities with under 10,000 population and 26 percent goes to communities with populations under 20,000."

Another way to get a leg up on grants: The EPA brownfields program has technical assistance providers "that really

BROWNFIELDS LEGISLATION PENDING ON CAPITOL HILL

Legislation concerning brownfields is currently pending in the House and Senate. The bills include:

There are three viable vehicles in which Congress could use to pass brownfields legislation.

On the House side, the House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure approved the Brownfields Reauthorization Act of 2017, H.R. 1758, sponsored by Rep. Elizabeth Esty (D-Conn.), over the summer. It would reauthorize the EPA's brownfields redevelopment program at \$200 million a year.

The House Committee on Energy and Commerce passed the Brownfields Enhancement, Economic Redevelopment and Reauthorization Act of 2017, HR 3017, which would extend liability

protections for local governments that acquire brownfields. The two House committees are in the process of negotiating a compromise between the two bills.

On the Senate side, a bill introduced by Sen. James Inhofe (R-Okla.) was placed on the Senate legislative calendar Sept. 7.

The EPA's David Lloyd said that his office is advising against "Any [legislative] changes that would designate end uses. We feel communities need to decide what they need and want. Some communities might want a big box store while others want a big public space."

help communities write their applications and get these grants," Lloyd said. "They'll walk an applicant through the whole process. 'You're weak here, you're strong there.'"

Most redevelopments are made with a combination of private and public funding,

Lloyd said. Once a federal grant is received it will almost always leverage more local or state funds, he said. And that in turn attracts private dollars.

"We estimate we leverage between \$17 to \$18 for every

See **BROWNFIELDS** page 7

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CASE STUDY



The Miami-Dade 311 Service was established as a central point to manage all citizen services county-wide. Qualtrics was implemented to gather feedback on 311 and route urgent alerts directly to department users to close the loop.

SOLUTIONS

- Surveys were automated to send to every citizen using the 311 service
- Based on citizen feedback, Qualtrics CX automatically routes negative feedback to department employees for immediate call out
- Analytics are run to evaluate timeliness & service delivery effectiveness to drive program improvement and adjustment

RESULTS

- Dramatically increased the speed at which services were improved and issues resolved
- Increased citizen satisfaction with county services and improved perception of county responsiveness
- Analysis has resulted in sweeping policy changes aimed at improving areas across the county where weakness has been identified

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Qualtrics has county XM consultants available to talk with commissioners, program managers, and department heads about challenges your county is facing. Call or email Qualtrics below to set up a free consultation. The consultant will take your use cases and provide a best practices demonstration about how Qualtrics can be used to better listen to citizens and make decisions with better data.

Cyber security in the workplace is everyone's business

By Dr. Alan R. Shark
executive director
Public Technology Institute

October has been designated Cyber Security Awareness month and the U.S. Department of Homeland Security has issued a series of five weekly topical themes. This week's theme is "Cyber Security in the Workplace is Everyone's Business." NACo, in partnership with the Public Technology Institute (PTI) has developed a series of useful checklists and commentary created for county elected leaders.

On Week 1, published in the Oct. 3 issue of *CN Now*, we focused on what an individual can do to be more cyber secure. This week we will focus on what an organization can and must do.

Cyber security breaches have grown some 26 percent over last year with ransomware continuing to rise. County governments have always been particularly attractive targets because they collect and store such massive amounts of personal information (tax records and payment information, for example). With the growth in the use of mobile devices and social media apps, there are now more entry points for mischief than ever before.

The weakest link continues to be our employees. One misguided click on a targeted phishing email can compromise an entire organization. To make matters worse, many phishing emails tend to come from employees whose names we know and whose email address has become compromised in an earlier attack.

Recommendations that affect individuals are largely the same, however, with an added emphasis of the potential impact on an entire organization. One careless staff person can bring down an entire county operation.

Many counties require cyber security awareness train-

ing while others simply provide optional training. Our experience shows that many programs are inadequate for several reasons, which include:

- Training is only required once a year.
- Training can be too technical.
- Training can scare some staff and can create an environment of resentment or fear of punishment.
- Training can lack real-world examples and is often out-of-date.

While much of the actual protection of the digital infrastructure resides with the technical experts, there are two paramount roles county elected leaders can and should play. The first one is for public officials to set the proper example themselves. This means following the rules

such as having and changing complex passwords.

The second role is to ensure a safe and secure cyber environment. The key component of this is to have a robust cyber security awareness program. Many programs offered today online or in person vary in quality and approach. Many public officials ask, what should I be looking for and what are the elements of a sound cyber security awareness program? Here is a list to consider.

1. Assign a senior staff member to be in charge. This person might be the chief information officer, the chief information security officer, or other designee who is both technical and people-oriented. A high-level administrator or HR professional can also fill this role.
2. The best plans are ongoing

and not just an annual event of a few hours of training.



and not just an annual event of a few hours of training.

3. Practice the elements of the plan and conduct drills to make sure everyone understands and complies.
4. Make sure there are stated consequences for careless behavior, depending on the levels of any violation.
5. While making sure you hold to your stated policies and procedures, you also want to make sure that you create a positive environment that encourages staff to report things at once if they believe they may have come across something wrong. In fact, there should be consequences for anyone not reporting an inci-

dent immediately.

6. Conduct regular, focused sessions aimed at exploring various types of cyberattacks. This will help demonstrate your organization's commitment to keeping systems safe as well as to keep the topic front and center with employees.

7. Consider role playing to help demonstrate how criminal elements use the phone, or social media to manipulate staff into providing valuable data that get into the wrong hands.

8. Employees should be trained to recognize an attack; to know not only what it looks like, but who to call and when to report the attack.

9. Always encourage employees to come forward with anything that they feel does not look or feel right. There have been many cases where an alert employee reported something as it was unfolding and as a result was able to minimize damage and loss.

10. Overall, training must be relevant and should be fun — like playing detective or guarding the "palace" as in a video game.

11. There are many digital destinations one can turn to for more information and assistance.

12. Check this story online at www.countynews.org for some very useful resources. Some are a bit more technical — so if you think it is useful, simply pass it on to your technical staff — it shows your interest. Remember Cyber Security Awareness is about awareness.

Finally, make sure your organization is a member of MS-ISAC, a NACo and PTI partner; membership is free and they are funded by DHS: <https://www.cisecurity.org/ms-isac/CN>



Offsets could damage public health efforts

From CHILDREN page 1

DSH payments by one year and providing \$1 billion in Medicaid funds to Puerto Rico. Offsets include charging higher Medicare premiums to wealthier seniors and allowing states to dis-enroll lottery winners from the Medicaid program.

The House Energy and Commerce Committee also approved a separate piece of legislation, the Community Health and Medical Professionals Improve Our Nation Act (CHAMPION Act) of 2017 (H.R. 3922), which would reauthorize community health centers for two years, in addition to other health programs.

However, the bill's expense would be offset by a \$6.35 billion cut in future appropriations

to the Prevention and Public Health Fund. The PPHF provides approximately \$900 million annually in support of state and local public health and prevention efforts, including activ-

Cuts to this fund would be a blow to already-strained county public health departments

ities such as immunizations and diabetes prevention efforts. This federal funding source is extremely important to the nation's 2,800 local public health departments, two-thirds of which are county-based.

NACo supports congressional

efforts to extend CHIP, community health centers, scheduled cuts to DSH payments and other health safety net programs, but strongly opposes efforts to cut federal funding for the Prevention and Public Health Fund. Cuts to this fund would be a blow to already-strained county public health departments and inhibit their ability to implement activities that keep their residents healthy and safe.

If Congress is not able to pass legislation to extend funding for these programs over the next few months, they could attach these into a must-pass legislative package when the continuing resolution and debt limit extension expires Dec. 8. NACo will continue to monitor legislative developments and their potential impact to counties. **CN**

Brownfields trend alert: Building affordable housing

From BROWNFIELDS page 4

\$1 of EPA funding," he said. For FY2017, brownfields grantees said they leveraged \$1.7 billion from public and private sources. Increased tax revenues also pour in once a property has been redeveloped.

Are there any brownfield redevelopment trends? "Well with the economy strengthening after the slowdown in 2008, we've seen an explosion of growth of all kinds," Lloyd said. "Mixed-use is sexy and attracts developers and gives a little something to everybody. The other area is affordable housing. Building affordable housing on former brownfields has really taken off."

return, the developer kicked in \$4.6 million to redevelop the property into an office building. More than 20,000 pounds of pure lithium and other contaminants were removed from the property's soil and ground water before building started.

The assessed value of the property went from \$1.7 million to \$5.2 million, and the property's tax revenues for the city increased by 350 percent. Before redevelopment was even complete, nearly 80 percent of the office facility had been leased by a promotional manufacturing and distribution firm that brought 100 jobs to the community. The private developer received the Twin Cities Business Journal's "Best in Real Estate Award" in the Redevelopment Category for 2003, and the National Association of Industrial and Office Professionals' "Award of Excellence" in the Multi-Tenant Industrial Building category in 2005.

But, not every brownfields redevelopment works out. Property owners and traditional developers encounter many impediments to redeveloping brownfields, according to the National Brownfield Association, including:

- Lack of necessary funding for cleanup
- Concerns over liability
- The need for environmental assessments of the properties
- Uncertainty over cleanup standards
- Unfavorable neighborhood and market conditions
- Land assembly issues, and
- Reluctance to invest in distressed communities, due to concerns with urban socio-economic conditions.

If your county is interested in finding out more about how to redevelop brownfields, visit www.brownfields2017.org to learn about a national brownfields training conference, Brownfields2017 "Sustainable Communities Start Here," taking place Dec. 5-7 in Pittsburgh. NACo is a promotional partner of the event. **CN**

Hennepin County success story

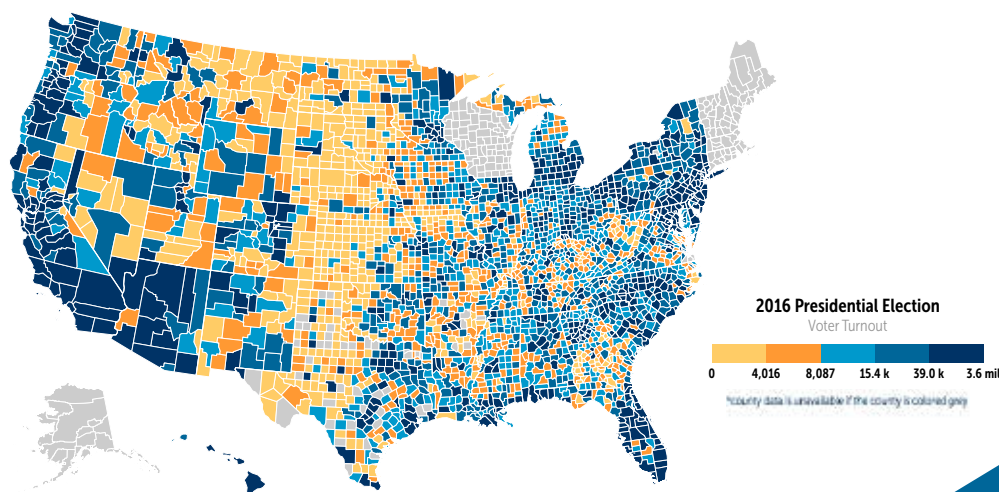
Cleaning up a blighted property has both environmental and economic plus-sides for counties including raising overall property values. Studies estimate that for every acre that is redeveloped, it produces an estimated 10 jobs and saves 4.5 acres of open space.

A success story that favored Hennepin County, Minnesota, took place when a vacant, 5.8-acre site of a former lithium processing facility was cleaned up and redeveloped. Located near a public park and an elementary school, the property attracted vagrants and drug activity, and had been the subject of 45 police calls within five years, according to the EPA.

When a private developer purchased the property, initial assessments revealed lithium-impacted soils to a depth of 16 feet, as well as petroleum, lead and barium contamination. A loan from EPA's Brownfields Cleanup Revolving Loan Fund awarded to Hennepin County and a partnership between the county and the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED) helped to cover the financing required for the \$2.3 million cleanup. In



31% of all libraries are county-supported **622** counties in 11 states have general elections in 2017



Source: NACo Analysis of U.S. Election Assistance Commission, Election Administration and Voting Survey, 2016

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PROFILES IN SERVICE

JASON BRINKLEY

Chair
Telecommunications
and Technology Steering
Committee
County Judge
Cooke County, Texas

Number of years involved in NACo: Two

Years in public service: Eight — justice of the peace for five, county judge for three.

Occupation: County judge, attorney

Education: Bachelor's degree from Texas A&M; J.D. from Oklahoma City University School of Law.

Three people (living or dead) I'd invite to dinner: Elon Musk, Sam Houston and Marcus Aurelius.

A dream I have is to: Own a major league sports team.

You'd be surprised to learn that I: Have a commercial drone pilot license.

The most adventurous thing I've ever done is: Take two mission trips to remote Zambia, Africa.

I'm most proud of: Being elected county judge.

Every morning I read: Several online news sites.

My favorite meal is: Steak.



BRINKLEY

My pet peeve is: Events not starting on time.

My motto is: I would rather fail by action than fail by inaction.

The last book I read was: *Hillbilly Elegy* by J.D. Vance.

My favorite movie is: *Lonesome Dove*.

My favorite music: Varies day to day.

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

My county is a NACo member because: NACo provides excellent advocacy at the national level.

My favorite way to relax is to: Watch college football.

FCC 'reverse auction' aims to expand rural broadband access

By Mary Ann Barton
senior staff writer

In parts of rural Jackson County, West Virginia, located just north of Charleston, about one-third of the county is without cellphone and internet service. Commissioner Dick Waybright said recently that he fields "a lot of questions about it." Areas without coverage are scattered in three to four spots around the county.

"We can remain the status quo and continue to watch West Virginia fall further behind other states or provide a middle-mile solution of high-speed internet infrastructure and create jobs," he said at the Appalachian Ohio-West Virginia Connectivity Summit.

Help might be on the way for Jackson County and the other 23 million rural Americans without broadband. The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) recently announced it will allocate nearly \$2 billion in funds over the next decade via a reverse auction that will allow service providers — including rural co-ops, fixed wireless providers and satellite providers — to bid on establishing a broadband connection, which the FCC would help fund in unserved areas.

In a reverse auction, instead of buyers raising their bids to win the goods, they underbid each other in subsequent rounds to come in with the lowest bid.

The FCC took the next step in August, when agency Chairman Ajit Pai announced details of the "Connect America Fund Phase II" auction. Formerly known as the Universal Service Fund, the system of telecommunications subsidies and fees managed by the FCC is intended to promote universal access to telecommunications services across the country.

As far as getting any help through the FCC's reverse

auction to places like Jackson County, West Virginia? "We're optimistic. The proof is in the pudding," Waybright said. The county itself put up a tower for its emergency services network. Waybright said he's hoping that a company might be able to use the tower to expand cell service.

While generally applauding the FCC's auction plans, the Arlington, Virginia-based NTCA-Rural Broadband Association's CEO, Shirley Bloomfield, said that the Connect America Fund II Auction "does not address a larger funding problem that is negatively affecting consumers and businesses in many other rural areas."

Help might be on the way for Jackson County, W.Va. and the other 23 million rural Americans without broadband.

"Damaging budget cuts to Universal Service funding in areas served by smaller, independent carriers are putting the sustainability of existing infrastructure at risk and deterring new broadband investments," she said. "So, while the CAF II [reverse] auction is a welcome step in some rural areas, without sufficient funding, rural consumers in many other areas now face the prospect of higher rates or reduced access to broadband due to arbitrary budget cuts."

Steve Traylor, executive director of the National Association of Telecommunications Officers and Advisors, said the amount the FCC is allocating for the reverse auction, \$198 million a year, is "a drop in the bucket" when it comes to building out broadband into rural areas.

One possible scenario, according to Traylor: Companies already offering landline

phone service to rural areas could bid in the auction to add broadband to their suite of services.

Ahead of the auction, set to take place next year, FCC officials said they have made an effort to get out and speak with counties about the lack of broadband in rural areas. FCC Chairman Pai took a 1,672-mile road trip from Milwaukee, Wisconsin to Casper, Wyoming, speaking with groups at 18 stops across five states.

FCC Commissioner Mignon L. Clyburn also spoke with local groups. "As part of the Appalachian Ohio-West Virginia Connectivity Summit, I heard from Melissa O'Brien, president of the Roane County Commission," Clyburn said. "She told me that approximately 80 percent of that county's rural citizens do not have access to broadband at home. But what she went on to say was the clincher: 'Access to high-speed internet needs to be as much a part of a community's infrastructure as passable roads, clean water and adequate electric services.'"

Meanwhile in the Senate, bipartisan legislation was introduced in August that aims to improve wireless networks in underserved rural areas. Sens. Cory Gardner (R-Colo.) and Maggie Hassan (D-N.H.), recently introduced the Advancing Innovation and Reinvigorating Widespread Access to Viable Electromagnetic Spectrum (AIRWAVES) Act, which is designed, they said, to encourage the federal government to continue to free up spectrum for commercial licensed and unlicensed use, and leverage the success of spectrum auctions to help close the urban-rural divide. **CN**

For more information about the FCC auction, visit <https://www.fcc.gov/connect-america-fund-phase-ii-auction> or email RBATF@fcc.gov.



USDA eyes e-commerce as major growth opportunity for rural areas, necessitates broadband



Wise County, Texas Judge J.D. Clark successfully lassos a roping dummy on his first try during a tour of the NRS Training Center facilities. Photos by Charlie Ban.

From RAC MEETING page 1

on what the department is doing, or getting out of the way of, to enhance rural prosperity — President Trump's charge for USDA.

Perdue has established an undersecretary for trade and reassigned the assistant secretary for rural development to report directly to him. That all reflects Perdue's attitude toward government, and Miller alluded to his restructuring of the Georgia DMV while he was governor, which resulted in reducing waiting times despite a smaller budget.

"It was all about the customer, and that's what Secretary Perdue is doing at USDA," she said. "He's refocusing all of that department on the customer."

Miller said barges, which move about 50 million tons of crops per year, are an underappreciated shipping mode that will become more influential.

"This is important because it puts price competition on the railroads, and anytime the railroads have to compete on price, everybody wins," she said.

She emphasized the need for a built-out broadband internet network that can support use by rural areas.

"Internet is about to be the most important infrastructure," she said. "E-commerce is one of the biggest growth areas for rural small businesses and farms," and it supported 70,000 jobs and \$24 billion in economic impact in 2015.

"Nationwide, e-commerce had a 17-percent growth last year," she said. "Rural America has to be a part of that. It can't be unless there's high speed internet everywhere."

Miller solicited input for the Interagency Task Force on Agriculture and Rural Prosperity at tinyurl.com/ruralprosperity. The submissions will not be made public.

Health

Recent years have seen an increased disparity in mortality between rural and non-rural areas. Much of the reason falls to social determinants of health, classified as economic stability, education, social and community context, health and health care and neighbor-



Emily Phillips, NORC Walsh Center for Rural Health.

hood, and built environment.

Emily Phillips, of the NORC Walsh Center for Rural Health, outlined some of the issues rural counties must address. The University of Chicago's Walsh Center was commissioned by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation to develop recommendations for foundation involvement in rural health. The Walsh Center's team performed field studies on rural counties on the U.S.-Mexico border, the Mississippi Delta, the Northeast and the Upper Midwest.

"There are far, far more rural persistent poverty counties



Vance Stuehrenberg, Blue Earth County, Minnesota asks about rural housing programs.

than urban," she said, "This, we know, has significant impacts on quality of life and health because a lot of these issues are intergenerational issues."

In addition to continuing study on rural areas by foundations, Phillips's recommendations include identifying and developing rural leadership; fostering collaboration between sectors of government, not just health and human services; developing messaging specific to rural communities; offering funding and organizational support to existing local and regional programs, and supporting general communi-

ty development in rural areas.

Opioid drugs

A key facet to reducing the number of opioid dependencies could reside in workers' compensation programs and a change Texas put in place six years ago. That's what DC Campbell, research director at Texas Department of Insurance, told RAC members.

"We have a problem and it can be fixed," he said. "Our experience in the workers comp system will drive that message. We can see what can happen

See RAC MEETING page 10

FROM THE NACo PRESIDENT

America's Counties and Middle-Income Taxpayers Need SALT

By Roy Charles Brooks
NACo President

As county officials, we are all too familiar with efforts to limit our local control. This is especially true with state limitations on county property tax assessments and amounts. We are now facing a similar confrontation at the federal level – one that we would rather not have to fight, but one that is incredibly important.

As you have likely seen over the past few weeks, discussions in Washington, D.C. have shifted to tax reform. Current proposals have included eliminating or scaling back the federal deductibility of state and local taxes (SALT), which would undermine local decision-making

authority and our ability to deliver services to residents.

The SALT deduction is claimed by 44 million households in all 50 states, in both Republican and Democratic congressional districts. It helps to support vital public services and investments essential to every resident, including infrastructure, public safety and education.

The concept of deducting your state and local taxes from your federal taxes dates back to Alexander Hamilton's Federalist Papers, was advanced as part of the first national income tax during the Civil War and was codified in the original federal tax code of 1913. In fact, it was one of six federal deductions when the code was only

three pages long. There are three simple reasons why SALT has been enshrined in our national tax policy for so many years:

- State and local taxes are mandatory payments by our residents and should not be double taxed.
- Our founders, including Hamilton, feared that the federal government would seek a monopoly on taxation at the expense of state and local governments.
- States and local governments are uniquely positioned to address state and local issues with state and local resources.

Eliminating SALT to pay for tax reform efforts would reverse more than 150 years of national tax policy and consti-

tute a \$1.3 trillion federal revenue grab. That's \$1.3 trillion less in our residents' pockets to support local services our communities need.

Additionally, according to the National Association of Realtors, eliminating SALT would increase federal taxes on middle-class homeowners by an average of \$815, while gutting federal homeownership incentives. Even if the standard deduction is doubled, middle-class households would see an increased tax bill because the plan consolidates deductions for dependents and related items.

While we share the tax reform goals of boosting the national economy and reducing federal deficits, the reality of

the blueprint doesn't match the rhetoric.

To protect our communities' priorities and make sure taxpayers are not double-taxed, we must continue to advocate to preserve the SALT deduction. Americans should not be *taxed on their taxes*. It isn't right, and it is detrimental to middle-class residents and counties across the country. **CN**

With two dozen nonpartisan state and local government groups, public safety organizations, the real estate and education communities and others, NACo co-founded Americans Against Double Taxation to advocate for the full preservation of SALT. Learn more at American-againstdoubletaxation.org.

Zeroing out rural housing programs in budget proposal worries housing advocate



Scott Fortner, Weakley County, Tennessee discusses using the workers' compensation programs to limit opioid prescriptions.

From RAC MEETING page 9

in a very short period of time if you have the right laws, right rules and right motivations behind them."

As of Sept. 1, 2011, the state's insurance department established a list of drugs that can be prescribed in connection with workers' compensation claims.

A 2016 study found that in addition to reducing drug costs by 15 percent, including an 80 percent drop in the costs of drugs that were no longer recommended and needed an advanced rationale by a doctor to prescribe, the change led to an 81-percent drop in opioid prescriptions.

That drop, Campbell said, reduces the number of excess opioid pills out in the world and the number of people who are prescribed those medications when others will suffice. That would shrink the gateway to opioid dependence and addiction.

Housing

David Lipsetz, a senior fellow at the Housing Assistance Council, addressed the public role in housing in rural areas and expressed his concern for the federal budget requests that would eliminate funding for several USDA housing programs.

The nature of housing lends itself to political arena.



Jannine Miller, U.S. Department of Agriculture, talks about USDA's goals over the next term.

"Housing work is not rocket science, it's art," he said. "We don't have immutable laws of gravity and all those fancy things, it's personal relationships. So, if you're not connected to the person who can build the next apartment building in your town, you have got to send a note."

No amount of deregulation or market forces, he said, will

make up for the need for safe rural housing. As a result, he was struck by the stark appearance of zeros in the FY2018 budget requests for such programs as the Single Family Housing Direct Home Loans, Section 542 Rural Housing Vouchers and Farm Labor Housing Grants.

"Someone has to step in and assist these communities in housing the population," he

said. Not only is there a need, there is an appropriate role in rural geographies where there is no established market to have public intervention in these markets.

"To draw down many of these programs is going to be extremely challenging. We are talking about geographies that don't have functional housing available." **CN**

Resilient Counties Advisory Board seeks input

Over the past five years, the NACo Resilient Counties Initiative has worked to bolster counties' abilities to thrive amid changing physical, environmental, social and economic conditions. Through its solutions-oriented programming, the initiative has tackled a wide range of issues, from the green economy and nature-based infrastructure to water quality and flood management. As we continue to build the program and expand its reach, the Resilient Counties Advisory Board seeks to help counties strengthen their resiliency by building leadership capacity to identify and manage risk, while allowing them to become more flexible and responsive.

Each of our counties has felt the effects of disasters, and hardly a week has gone by this summer where we have not heard about the threat of a new wildfire, hurricane or shooting. With the increasing occurrence and severity of hazardous events, like Hurricanes

Harvey, Irma and Nate in the Gulf, the 2017 wildfire season out West and the Las Vegas massacre, it is more important than ever for us to incorporate resilience into our county planning and preparedness efforts. Therefore, this year Resilient Counties will create a Disaster Toolkit for Counties to aid county leaders as they work to prevent disasters — both nat-



James Gore
Sonoma County, California

ural and man-made — within their communities.

The Disaster Toolkit will contain information on strategies, timelines, financial management, funding opportunities and best practice case study examples for each phase of the emergency management cycle, for all major hazards. The toolkit will be an ongoing project, and we ask for your emergency management tips and examples as we create the initial version for release next summer.

In addition to an open call for suggestions, we will host two Twitter chats and a workshop at the NACo 2018 Legislative Conference. The first Twitter chat will be held later this fall on Disaster Response and Recovery, and the second Twitter chat will be held in

spring 2018 on Disaster Mitigation and Preparedness. The Legislative Conference session will be a joint meeting of the Resilient and Healthy Counties Advisory boards on Strengthening Counties' Resilience by Addressing the Public Health Impacts of Natural Disasters.

As we continue to tackle these issues, it is important for us to foster new relationships and have these critical discussions across committees and caucuses. With that in mind, the Resilient Counties Advisory Board will continue to partner with other committees and caucuses — such as Justice and Public Safety, Environment, Energy and Land Use, and Community, Economic and Workforce Development steering committees, and the Healthy Counties Advisory Board — as we work to address best practices in not only disaster management but also sustainability. We invite anyone and everyone to join the conversation.

Each year the Resilient

Counties Advisory Board looks at its programming through the lens of an overall theme. Last year, the initiative examined water-related issues. This year, we are excited for you to join us as we explore the many ways that new and emerging technologies can be used to bolster resilience efforts!

We have a busy year ahead of us, and we are excited to work with all of you to continue to strengthen the resilience of our nation's 3,069 counties. **CN**

James Gore
chair, Resilient Counties Advisory Board

Kitty Barnes
vice chair
Catawba County, North Carolina

Patricia O'Bannon
vice chair
Henrico County, Virginia

Victoria Reinhardt
vice chair
Ramsey County, Minnesota

Darryl Stacy
vice chair
Cleveland County, Oklahoma

WORD SEARCH

ALLEN COUNTY, OHIO

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

Created by: Mary Ann Barton

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

- JOHN ALLEN:** The county is named for Col. John Allen. He was killed leading his men at the Battle of Frenchtown during the War of 1812.

BLACK SWAMP: A glacially fed wetland about 25 miles wide and 100 miles long in northwestern Ohio. It was eventually drained and settled and is now farmland.

COLLEGES: There are 12 colleges within 50 miles of Lima, the county seat.

COUNTY FAIR: The Allen County Fair has been held annually since 1851.

COURTHOUSE: The county courthouse standing today, in the Empire Style, is the county's third; it was built between 1881-1884 at a cost of \$360,000.

PHYLLIS DILLER: The eccentric comedienne, a native of the area, moved to California where she hit it big with her wacky hairdo, self-deprecating jokes and crazy cackle.

DILLINGER: Infamous bank robber John Dillinger escaped from the Allen County Jail in 1933 after two other gangsters shot and killed Sheriff Jess Sarber.

HUGH DOWNS: Longtime broadcaster from Lima, Ohio.

HAMBURGERS: The Kewpee Hamburger chain is headquartered in Allen County.

HOG CREEK: Another name for the Ottawa River; the Shawnee Tribe gave it its name.

AL JARDINE: A native of the county, he and his family moved to California where he co-founded The Beach Boys; he sang lead vocals on "Help Me Rhonda."

LIMA: The county seat was named for Lima, Peru, where quinine bark was found to treat malaria in Ohio. The names have different pronunciations (Lie-muh, Ohio) and (Lee-muh, Peru).

OTTOWA: The Ottawa River flowing through the county is also known as "Hog Creek."

SHAWNEE: The Shawnee Tribe surrendered much of their land in Ohio with the signing of the Treaty of Greenville.

ST. RITA'S: St. Rita's Medical Center is the largest employer (3,000) in the county.

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS!

Gilmer County, Georgia

Grady County, Georgia

Tippecanoe County, Indiana

Lowndes County, Mississippi

Bergen County, New Jersey

Pickens County, South Carolina

Deaf Smith County, Texas

LEADERSHIP EDGE

Connect with Communities Before Disaster Strikes

By Jennifer Finch
Weld County, Colorado

A little over a month ago, St. Charles Parish, Louisiana, found itself facing the third threat of the tropical hurricane season, Hurricane Nate. The storm was rapidly forming in the Caribbean Sea, and the parish had just days to inform and possibly mobilize the public to evacuate. The good news: It was prepared.

Before the 2017 hurricane season began, the parish had launched an awareness campaign to ensure community preparedness. The initiative included videos, a website and social media.

More importantly, the campaign got the Emergency Operations Center (EOC) director and public information officer out into the community and in front of the elderly, a specific group not always targeted in communications plans that emphasize technology.

The public presentations allowed officials to build relationships with the community while educating them on preparedness by using a platform they were more familiar with: a print brochure.

On Nov. 28, 2016, Sevier County, Tennessee, experienced a ravaging wildfire that burned more than 17,000 acres, 2,500 structures with 14 lives lost. Perrin Anderson, assistant county mayor for governmental affairs, recalls the challenge of communications. "People who are new to the area, have limited financial means, speak English as a second language, are not tech-savvy or who are 'off-the-grid' may prove difficult to locate and inform. Messages broadcast via phone calls, texts, emails, television and radio don't always reach everyone."

In each of these examples,

hard-to-reach populations required special work to establish relationships. Introducing county services, describing available assistance and building a bond with residents is important work done in advance of a threatening disaster.

Relationships with houses of worship, schools, small businesses, food banks, health clinics and donation centers can be very helpful. Social service leaders, ministers, doctors and teachers often have knowledge of certain segments of the community that most do not.

When an official can get a message to the director of the food bank or the pastor of a Vietnamese church or the neighborhood store owner, the message not only gets delivered, but it gets delivered by a trusted source.

Weld County, Colorado, went so far as to put its relationships into the 2016 "Blizzaster" emergency exercise. Located just north of the Denver metro area and extending up to the Colorado/Wyoming border, Weld County's 4,000 square miles can present communication difficulties. It, too, faces the challenge of finding ways to share information with hard-to-reach populations including a growing senior population, multinational refugee communities, English-as-a-second-language residents and even commuters who live in one county but work and spend much of their time in another county.

During the "Blizzaster" training, the county's Office of Emergency Management invited members from a local Amateur Radio Emergency Services group (ARES) to help establish lines of communications should traditional communication means be interrupted (loss of cell tower

service as well as land lines). County staff had been meeting with the group informally for several years, discussing ways they could assist the county during an emergency. The training was a success as the ARES group was able to help the Emergency Operations Center (EOC) set up communications between three EOCs in two states. Now more than ever, out-of-the-box thinking is crucial in developing a strong communication plan with residents.

It isn't enough to develop in-house platforms (websites, social media sites) and expect residents will find important messages. The fact is, as county populations become more diverse, so, too, do all of the communication channels through which those populations receive information.

During an emergency, no amount of technology can replace boots-on-the-ground strategies and personal relationships when it comes to making sure residents stay informed.

Mail carriers may be willing to deliver printed information to all areas of your county. Municipal leaders and staff (librarians, building inspectors) can assist in posting information on local bulletin boards. Transit bus drivers may be able to help distribute information to riders.

A few years ago, Boulder County, Colorado, worked with Meals on Wheels' drivers to help get information about flood preparedness into the hands of their elderly population.

The key to successful communication planning for hard-to-reach populations, is simple in theory: Learn how they prefer to get information (face-to-face or a bulletin board?) Know where they go to get that information (a church, a coffee shop?) and

find out who they trust in their community (a teacher, a worship leader, a mail carrier?).

In reality, however, this communication planning will take time and effort, but proves essential when preparing residents for disasters.

County officials can begin by taking an assessment of the types of disasters they might encounter: wildfires, tornadoes, flooding and hurricanes.

At the same time, consider all of the various community groups that must be reached such as the hearing-impaired,

non-English speakers, the elderly and shut-ins. Reaching out to these citizens often requires partnership and ingenuity, but may very well mean the difference in keeping people out of harm's way. Good communication starts with good relationships, and good relationships are made before an emergency situation occurs. **CN**

Finch is Weld County's communications director and a National Association of County Information Officers board member.



ALLEN COUNTY, OHIO
Adopted in: Oct. 27, 1953



As part of Ohio's sesquicentennial in 1953, the Lima Association of Commerce in Allen County surveyed the county's historically significant features to depict on plaques, which were popular mementos at the time. In time, the plaques became the county seal.

County Commissioners Jay Begg and Cory Noonan assisted.

The two men in the foreground represent the county's industrial and agricultural forces, which combined to make Allen County one of the largest in West Central Ohio.

On the left, industry includes a Standard Oil refinery, which drew much of the county's population, and manufacturing, which includes the only plant that builds Army tanks. The county is also home to a Proctor and Gamble chemical plant and a Ford plant.

In the center, the county's outline delineates its 12 townships, and the county courthouse, now being restored, towers above all else.

The seal includes the county's 1931 founding date, and the outside of the seal depicts buckeye flowers, from the state of Ohio's tree.

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

BRIGHT IDEAS | CAMPBELL COUNTY, Tennessee

'Relatives Raising Relatives' Helps Kids in Opioid Crisis

PROBLEM:

Families who suddenly find themselves caring for relatives' children and don't have the means to be "new parents."

SOLUTION:

Campbell County Children's Center "Relatives Raising Relatives" program offers free diapers and more — and help navigating family resources.

By Mary Ann Barton
senior staff writer

When a grandfather in his late 70s on a tight budget showed up with his infant grandson one day at the Campbell County Children's Center in eastern Tennessee, he was wondering where the baby's next meal would come from. He told a center case manager he had been sitting in his truck after picking the child up from daycare, praying that help would come from somewhere.

The state Department of Children's Services had told him about the center and about its Relatives Raising Relatives program, which helps people who suddenly find themselves caring for a relative's child.

The grandfather, a "new" parent going it alone, walked into the center that day and told case manager Maggie Inscho: "I don't know what to do, they told me to come to you." She asked him what his needs were: "Diapers, formula, wipes."

The man was surprised that he could get the items there at no cost. "You have that stuff here?" He just started to cry," Inscho said last week. "I ran and got two cans of dry formula from our stash. I'll never forget that."

Last year, the center helped 125 families (about triple the number from its first year) who were in similar dire situations. Inscho said the opioid crisis is



Staff members from Campbell County, Tennessee Children's Center pause for a photo during a spring fundraiser. Photo courtesy of Campbell County Children's Center

one of the driving factors behind an increase in the number of relatives caring for children who walk through their doors. "About 75 percent (of the parents) are on drugs," she said.

The opioid crisis has left many children in the care of extended family members in counties across the country.

Tennessee logs more opioid prescriptions per capita than any state in the nation except West Virginia and saw a 13.8 percent in its overdose death rate between 2014 and 2015, according to the CDC. The eastern portion of the state, where Campbell County is located, is particularly hard hit. The county saw 21 overdose deaths in 2015.

When children there are left with relatives because a parent is in jail or prison or on drugs and has left them, the Campbell County Children's Center can step in to help the relatives who are caring for the children, Inscho said.

The center, founded 16 years ago to provide a safe haven for sexually and physically abused children — and continues those services today — started its Relatives Raising Relatives program six years ago.

"Our executive director, Tracie Davis, saw a need for help," Inscho said. "A lot of children were being placed with relatives." After receiving a \$50,000 grant from the LaFollette Medical Foundation to launch the

program, Davis recruited Inscho to head up the new endeavor.

The center has six full-time staff members and is funded with a combination of grants, government funds, fundraisers and donations from local churches.

Unlike foster parent programs, where people prepare to take in children by going through classes, and receive a monthly stipend and clothing allotment, relatives are often called upon to care for children at a moment's notice, without any resources, Inscho said.

In Campbell County, 65 percent of children removed from their homes are placed with relatives. The center can help any family as long as the offending parent or caregiver is not living in the home.

Relatives Raising Relatives clients get a lot of support from the community, coordinated by the center, including donated children's gifts during the holidays, holiday meals from a local grocery store and donations from local motorcycle clubs. Teens from the local high school pitch in to help at the center's fundraisers.

In addition to donations of things like diapers, wipes or formula, the center also helps clothe children, offers tutoring and finds resources clients might not realize they qualify for, such as the WIC program. The center is even converting

one-off items that clients might need such as cribs or toddler beds, often posting requests to social media; center supporters throughout the county often heed the call by responding and dropping off items.

The center uses social media to get the word out about its services. The state Department of Children's Services often refers families to the center and many hear about it through word of mouth.

"We all step up and do what we need to do," said Inscho. "If we can't help, we put them in touch with someone who can." **CN**

New NACo★
Member
**GET TO
KNOW...**



Welcome, Deaf Smith County, Texas

Deaf Smith County is named for Erastus "Deaf" Smith, a partially deaf scout who served during the Texas Revolution. **He was the first to reach the Alamo after its fall.** The county is also home to Clint Formby, a radio broadcaster whose commentary holds the record for a continuously running broadcast by a single host in U.S. radio history. Formby's program, the "Day-by-Day Philosopher" ran daily from 1955 to 2010. And if anyone asks "Where's the Beef?" they'll find it in the Deaf Smith County city of Hereford, known as the **"Beef Capital of the World,"** thanks to the large number of cattle fed in the area.



NEWS FROM ACROSS THE NATION

ALABAMA

JEFFERSON COUNTY'S Department of Health will receive \$300,000 from the Justice Department to help **establish a resource recovery center to prevent overdose deaths.** "The Jefferson County Department of Health is very pleased to receive this financial and technical assistance from the DOJ to enhance our ongoing efforts to prevent overdose deaths," said Mark E. Wilson, county health officer. The county saw 251 opioid deaths last year — 100 from heroin and 105 from fentanyl, more than double than in 2015.



CALIFORNIA

Forget about that man who sailed the ocean blue in 1492. Starting no later than 2019, the second Monday in October will be observed as **Indigenous Peoples Day instead of Columbus Day** in **LOS ANGELES COUNTY.** "The motion, let me be clear, is not about erasing history," said Supervisor Hilda Solis, who introduced it with Supervisor Sheila Kuehl. "This is about understanding that for centuries, America's ancestors oppressed certain groups of people. And while we can't change the past, we can acknowledge and make that history right today." The motion, which makes Indigenous Peoples Day an official county holiday, also designates Oct. 12 as Italian-American Heritage Day.



FLORIDA

• **HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY'S** medical examiner confirmed the county's **first death from Kratom** or Mitragynine, an herbal supplement. The victim's mother told a local TV station that she found two empty packets of Optimized Plant Meditated Solutions (OPMS) Gold. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Kratom is a plant consumed throughout the world for its stimulant effects and as an opioid substitute. It is typically brewed into a tea or chewed, smoked or ingested in capsules. Kratom is also known as Thang, Kakuam, Thom, Ketum and Biak. The Drug Enforcement Administration includes it on its "Drugs of Concern," substances that are not currently regulated by the Controlled Substances Act. Some states have banned the sale of Kratom.



• **PALM BEACH COUNTY'S** state attorney said they will **seek the death penalty in a 27-year old murder case** police dubbed the "Killer Clown Cold Case." Sheriff Ric Brad-



ILLINOIS

Winning pumpkin princesses show off their trophies at the annual pumpkin festival in **TAZEWELL COUNTY.** The Pumpkin Capital of the World — a town called Morton — is located in the county, where residents recently took part in the festival's pageant, pie-eating contest and pumpkin weigh-off. The county is home to a Libby's pumpkin cannery, which reportedly produces 85 percent of the world's canned pumpkin. After Tazewell County, the top three pumpkin-producing counties in Illinois are **KANKAKEE, MASON** and **LOGAN.**

shaw credited new DNA evidence and recent witness interviews with helping to close in on suspect Sheila Keen Warren, arrested Sept. 26 in Washington County, Virginia.

Authorities say Warren, now 54, dressed up as a clown May 26, 1990, to deliver flowers and balloons to Marlene Warren, who died after being shot in the face. At the time, the suspect worked with Marlene Warren's husband, Michael Warren, who had a used car business. She married Warren 12 years after the murder.

ILLINOIS

The fizz has gone out of **COOK COUNTY'S** soda pop tax, which some called the most expansive and expensive in the country. On Oct. 11, by a 14-2 margin, the Board of Commissioners **voted to repeal the tax** enacted in November 2016 and implemented in August. Revenue from the 1-cent-per-ounce tax on sweetened beverages was expected to help plug a \$1.8 billion gap in the county's budget and reduce the county's obesity rate.

MARYLAND

There are other Amazon fish to hook besides its second headquarters: The **BALTIMORE COUNTY** Council voted unanimously earlier in September to support the state's \$2.2 million incentive package designed to help lure an Amazon distribution center to Sparrows Point, the site of the former steel mill, according to a *Baltimore Sun* report.

While there's been no official word from the online retail giant, Baltimore County officials have said **Amazon is in negotiations**

to build an 855,000-square-foot distribution center with 1,500 employees at the industrial and transportation hub being developed on the site of the former steel mill.

Baltimore County also is offering a \$200,000 conditional loan, which represents a required 10 percent match of the state loan.

MICHIGAN

- **INGHAM COUNTY** wants to replace its court-appointed attorney system with a public defender office that would employ full-time lawyers and investigators. Currently, the county appoints private attorneys on a case-by-case basis. The county's plans for a public defender office is an effort to meet the Michigan Indigent Defense Commission's standards. Counties have to submit compliance plans by Nov. 20. A study puts the cost of the new public defender office at \$2 million.

- **IRON COUNTY's** Circuit Court has been notified by the Michigan Supreme Court that it has been awarded a \$55,000 grant for an intense probation supervision program. It is the only county in the Upper Peninsula to be selected for the Swift and Sure Sanctions Probation Program, which targets high-risk felony offenders with a history of probation violations or failures.

According to the Michigan Supreme Court, more than 1,000 current probationers have participated in Swift and Sure across the state. Among graduates, 67 percent were unemployed at admission, and only 14 percent were unemployed at discharge. The Michigan Supreme Court says the cost per probationer is declining steadily.

OREGON

The number of complaints from residents living near residential marijuana crops has prompted the **JOSEPHINE COUNTY** commissioners to establish a "pot patrol" group to monitor the grows.

Two members of the group would be code enforcement

officers and one would be a sheriff's deputy. The patrol's funding could come from marijuana permit fees and potentially county-wide marijuana taxes. Commissioners hope to have the patrol in place Jan. 1, 2018, KBOI News reported.

PENNSYLVANIA

LEHIGH COUNTY is appealing a federal judge's ruling that would likely a redesign of its seal. Judge Edward Smith ruled in favor of the Freedom from Religion Foundation, which claimed that the large cross at the center of the seal violated the Constitution's Establishment Clause forbidding government from favoring one faith over others, the *Morning Call* reported. Existing case law required Smith to find that the county was honoring the settlers because they were Christians.

He asked the foundation's lawyers to propose an injunction that would likely bar its future use. Lehigh County includes the seal on its flag, buildings, website, letterhead, legal documents and as a screen saver on displays in the county meeting room. Adopted in 1944, the seal also contains the historic Lehigh County Courthouse, a heart said to symbolize Allentown, a bison representing the herd at Trexler Nature Preserve, cement silos and bunting.

TEXAS

HARRIS COUNTY officials

have recommended replacing its 100-year flood maps, following Hurricane Harvey — the third 500-year or greater storm in three years. That will have wide-ranging consequences for where development can take place.

County Engineer John Blount told the *Houston Chronicle* that he recommended expanding to a 500-year standard or greater to further regulate new development in the county and is considering forcing developers looking to build in those areas to elevate homes more than currently required. The 500-year designation is a storm that has a 0.2 percent chance of occurring in any year.

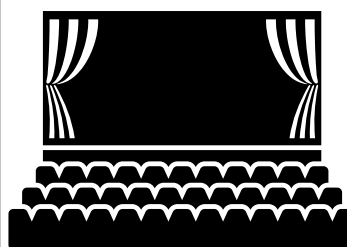
- Dozens of **HIDALGO COUNTY** officials, advocates and community members donned purple shirts in honor of the third annual Purple Day, an event hosted by the county Criminal district attorney's office and the Hidalgo County Family Violence Task Force that aims to raise awareness and connect the community with resources during October, Domestic Violence Awareness Month.

VIRGINIA

Located in a region with one of the highest costs of living in the country, **ARLINGTON COUNTY** is considering a proposal to introduce a housing conservation district to preserve existing

market-rate affordable housing that will be part of a zoning ordinance amendment.

The district will aim to retain and renovate affordable housing units, encourage construction of affordable housing, encourage renovation and infill development while accommodating redevelopment. Consultation with various commissions within the county will continue through the fall and community outreach is expected to begin sometime this winter, as is a General Land Use Plan amendment.



- **BOTETOURT COUNTY** is ready for its close-up. A movie screen manufacturer is opening there, adding 50 new jobs to the area. The company, Harkness Screens, will occupy a 100,000-square foot building that had stood vacant for several years. "We are pleased to welcome another company to Botetourt County that is a leader in its industry," said Todd Dodson, vice chairman of the Botetourt County Board of Supervisors.

WASHINGTON

KING COUNTY deputies will provide juveniles a simpler version of the Miranda warning

to make it easier for children to understand their rights when they get arrested. It follows research that shows teens often lack the experience and judgment to recognize and avoid choices that could be detrimental to them, and that they can be easily swayed into waiving their rights, according to The Associated Press.

Instead of saying, "You have the right to remain silent" and "Anything you say can and will be used against you in a court of law," deputies will tell them, "You have the right to remain silent, which means that you don't have to say anything," and "It's OK if you don't want to talk to me." The new warning was developed with input from the county's Department of Public Defense and a nonprofit organization called Creative Justice.

WISCONSIN

New procedures by the **MARATHON COUNTY** Circuit Courts are showing increased compliance by domestic violence offenders in treatment programs. A series of probation hearings, all scheduled for Fridays, can lead to immediate weekend jail sentences if they are found to be in violation.

Before the first hearing, 60 days after sentencing, the offender should have a domestic violence intake and assessment completed with a treatment plan set up. If offenders have not set up treatment plans, they go to jail.

Service provider Peaceful Solutions reported that in January and February 2017, about half of the abusers failed to show up for their intake process (to get started on treatment). In July and August, the no-show rate was down to about 6 percent, the *Wausau Daily Herald* reported. **CN**



Jada Lopez (left) and Helen Gonzalez look over memorials for victims of domestic violence, Oct. 3 at the HIDALGO COUNTY Courthouse during ceremonies observing domestic violence awareness.

Photo by Nathan Lambrecht/themonitor.com

News from Across the Nation is compiled by Charlie Ban and Mary Ann Barton, senior staff writers. Gene Smith, Iron County, Michigan and Bev Schlotterbeck, executive editor also contributed to this report. If you have an item for News From, please email cban@naco.org or mbarton@naco.org.

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Looking forward to hearing from you,
Bev, Charlie, Mary Ann