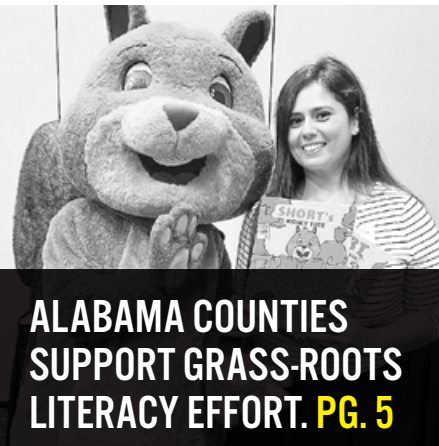




**FL COUNTY CREATES
WORLD-CLASS CROSS
COUNTRY COURSE. PG. 4**



**ALABAMA COUNTIES
SUPPORT GRASS-ROOTS
LITERACY EFFORT. PG. 5**



**COUNTY CREATES
HISTORY OF IMMIGRANT
POPULATION. PG. 8**

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION *of* COUNTIES

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OCTOBER 24, 2022

FEMA offers \$3 billion for hazard mitigation

by **Brett Mattson**
and **Julia Cortina**

On Sept. 30, the U.S. Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) announced a Notice of Funding Opportunity for over \$3 billion in Fiscal Year (FY) 2022 Hazard Mitigation Assistance grants.

State and local governments are eligible to apply for funding through FEMA's Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities (BRIC) and Flood Mitigation Assistance (FMA) programs. The application period will close Jan. 27, 2023 at 3 p.m. ET. To view the funding notices, visit: <https://www.fema.gov/grants/mitigation/fy2022-nofo>.

Under the BRIC program, \$2.3 billion of funding is available to states and localities to implement pre-disaster mitigation activities that reduce risk and disaster costs and increase the resilience of critical infrastructure lifelines.

In FY 2022, FEMA is expanding its investment in BRIC's

non-financial Direct Technical Assistance to at least 40 communities to assist.

There is \$800 million available through FMA grants to help localities implement changes to reduce or eliminate risk of flood damage to structures insured by the National Flood Insurance Program.

Utilizing funding from the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, FEMA is increasing the federal cost share for the FMA program to 90 percent to help lower the financial burden on small and disadvantaged communities.

NACo is working with members of Congress to urge FEMA to examine the building code requirements in the BRIC application process and provide alternative scoring opportunities for counties that are unable to meet these requirements due to state level restrictions. **CN**

Mattson serves as legislative director for justice and public safety and Cortina is a legislative associate in NACo's Government Affairs Department.



Manatee County, Fla.'s 20th Annual Goblin Gathering, held earlier this month, scares up enthusiasm from some of their youngest residents taking part in a Halloween costume contest. The event features a hay maze, bounce house, face-painting and is held at the county's G.T. Bray Park. The park features a fitness center, pool, amphitheater and sports field. Photo by Casey Zempel for Manatee County Information Outreach

HORROR MOVIES SCARE UP BIG BUSINESS IN RURAL COUNTIES

by **Meredith Moran**
staff writer

Many iconic horror movies are filmed in rural areas — there's a whole sub-genre dedicated to it, "folk horror" — and because the plot often revolves around the setting itself, die-hard fans travel all over the place to see the location of their favorite cult classics and slasher

franchises, leading to economic benefits and tourism boosts for the counties when the cameras are rolling and long after the film crews have departed.

"Horror movies in particular have quite a following — it's a very emotional thing," said Tim Clark, film commissioner of the Buffalo Niagara Film Office in Erie County, N.Y. "As Halloween approaches, I think the interest

gets even more piqued, because this is that time of year when the leaves are changing and the nights are a little bit cooler and you expect to see somebody popping out of the bushes scaring you and so, I think people, especially in this season, are looking for that kind of experience and they live almost vi-

see SCARY page 3

Counties shine light on veterans

by **Nora Blasi**

This coming Veterans Day, NACo and the National Association of County Veteran Service Officers (NACVSO) invite county leaders to join Operation Green Light for Veterans by lighting their buildings green from Nov. 7 to Nov. 13. NACo's initiative will shine

a light on the issues veterans face across the country and the resources available to veterans at the county, state and federal levels. Many counties have already pledged to participate in Operation Green Light to show gratitude and support for the men and women who have selflessly served our country. In preparation for Veter-

ans Day, NACo is highlighting counties participating in Operation Green Light for Veterans.

Carbon County, Pa.

Carbon County commissioners shared a social media post July 28 announcing their participation in NACo's Oper-

See GREEN LIGHT page 2



Photo courtesy of FEMA

Counties get on board with Operation Green Light to recognize veterans' issues

From GREEN LIGHT page 1

ation Green Light for Veterans. Commissioner Chris Lukasevich, who chairs NACo's Veterans and Military Service Committee, launched Operation Green Light with his colleagues at NACVSO and President Nicole Coleman at NACo's 2022 Annual Conference in Adams County, Colo. Carbon County has taken the national lead and became the first county to sign a resolution to participate in Operation Green Light. Select buildings throughout the county will be illuminated green from Nov. 7-11 to show support and appreciation for veterans throughout the county. Carbon County commissioners encourage businesses and residents to participate by changing a lightbulb to green.

Dauphin County, Pa.

On Aug. 18, Dauphin County, Pa. shared a video on social media to announce its participation in Operation Green Light. The Board of Commissioners signed a resolution to honor and support the 17,000 veterans living in Dauphin County.

Forsyth County, N.C.

Forsyth County, N.C. adopted a resolution Aug. 25 encouraging its citizens to participate in Operation Green Light by displaying a green light in a window of their place of business or residents during the week of Veterans Day.

Randolph County, N.C.

Randolph County, N.C. announced in a press release that

select county buildings will be illuminated green from Nov. 7 to Nov. 13 as part of Operation Green Light. The director of Veteran Services for Randolph County, Chad Gurley, stated that the county has one of the largest populations of Korean and Vietnam War veterans in North Carolina. County officials encourage residents to continue shining the light year-round to show appreciation for veterans.

Potter County, Pa.

In a recent press release, the Potter County commissioners announced their participation in Operation Green Light. Commissioner Paul Heimel obtained approval from the board to join the initiative and light county buildings green for the week of Veterans Day. The board of commissioners asked Mike Pepper, director of Potter County's veteran's affairs office, to spearhead Operation Green Light and highlight the

challenges veterans face across the country.

Clermont County, Ohio

Clermont County, Ohio announced its participation in Operation Green Light in a social media post and recent press release. The county encouraged residents to share their participation on social media with the hashtag #OperationGreenLight.

Iredell County, N.C.

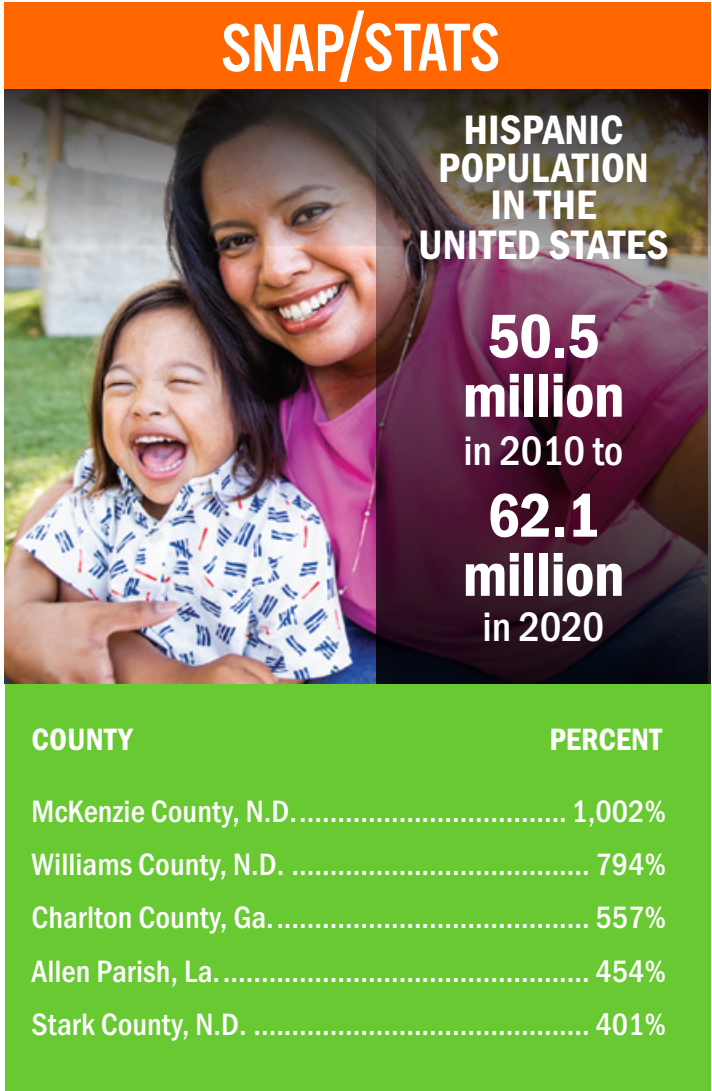
County Commissioner Gene Houpe published an op-ed in the Iredell County newspaper urging the county to join Operation Green Light for Veterans. Houpe also serves as the District 12 director of the North Carolina Association of County Commissioners and is asking all the counties in the district to participate in the initiative as well.

Wake County, N.C.

Wake County recently published a webpage to share information and encourage participation in Operation Green Light. The page includes ideas for residents and businesses to show support, including social media posts, flyers and talking points about the initiative. The county linked a toolkit to spread the word about Operation Green Light and shared a link to the County Veterans Services Office to connect veterans with available benefits.

Visit NACo's county toolkit for more information, outreach resources and a form to share how your county is participating in Operation Green Light for Veterans: <https://www.naco.org/resources/operation-green-light-veterans-county-toolkit>. **CN**

Nora Blasi is an intern in NACo's Government Affairs Department. She is pursuing a B.A. in political science at American University in Washington, D.C.



Source: Pew Research Center *Hispanic Heritage Month is held Sept. 15-Oct. 15

SBA announces \$4 million for veteran entrepreneurs

On Oct. 13, the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) announced a funding opportunity to add 12 new organizations to the Veterans Business Outreach Center (VBOC) program. The VBOC program, which currently operates via cooperative agreements in 22 locations nationwide, provides workshops, training, counseling and other services to transitioning service members, veterans and military spouses interested in starting or growing a small business. County government agencies in Alaska, Central California, Colorado, Kentucky, Nebraska, Iowa, Nevada, Oklahoma, Arkansas, Ohio, Pennsylvania, South Carolina and South Flor-

ida are eligible to apply for this funding to become part of VBOC by Nov. 23, 2022. Grantees will receive awards of up to \$400,000 for a base project period of 12 months to work with SBA district offices and Transition Service Managers at military installations to conduct Boots to Business classes for transitioning service members and their spouses. They will also provide counseling, technical assistance, financial skill development, comprehensive business assessments, and mentoring services. Additional information about the funding opportunity, including specific coverage areas and instructions on how to apply,

can be found at: <https://www.sba.gov/article/2022/oct/13/sba-announces-over-4-million-new-funding-expand-veterans-business-owner-outreach-advance-national> County government agencies with a history of providing quality entrepreneurship or business management training to aspiring entrepreneurs or existing small business owners in the veterans and military community can take advantage of these SBA investments to enhance these resources and services. NACo will continue to monitor federal funding opportunities that support economic wellbeing for veterans and transitioning service members. **CN**

'SCARY MOVIE' FILM COMPANIES, TOURISTS HELP BOLSTER LOCAL ECONOMIES



Owner of Buffalo Bills' house from "Silence of the Lambs," Chris Rowan sits in the well he had recreated from the film.

Photo courtesy of Eric Knopsnyder

From SCARY page 1

curiously through visiting these horror sites."

Clark's job is to scout locations for movie production companies that are looking to film in Western New York, one of which was an Amish farm in Allegany County, N.Y. for Paramount Pictures' "Paranormal Activity: Next of Kin." He said the film office often receives calls from fans asking for the

exact locations of scenes from different films the film office has scouted so they can visit them. Studies have shown that while horror movies set in rural areas sell more tickets than those set in urban locations, fans of horror movies are more likely to live in a city.

"I think the isolation of being in the country or in the wilderness or in a less frequented area just adds to the suspense," Clark said. "A lot of the horror movies

that are shot in this region are based in the woods and it usually involves a chase or a sudden surprise or some creature or deranged person. It just lends itself very nicely, [whereas] in the city, there's density, you have people and that kind of thing that can interrupt the surprise."

Clark said that production companies bring a substantial amount of money to their filming locations during shooting through lodging, restaurants

and more.

"Paramount Pictures in particular — we've worked with them multiple times -- and they very much want to give back to the community, so it's very important for them to spend money in those towns -- to not just bring some caterer in from Hollywood or bring all the lumber in from some giant warehouse in, I don't know, Rochester or something," Clark said. "They want to stay and spend money in the nearest towns, particularly in the town that they're in."

"And the money that they leave behind — it sounds crazy, and I used to be skeptical of these figures — but until you actually see the kinds of things they buy and the sort of money they leave behind, you don't realize, but it's thousands, tens of thousands of dollars."

In addition to bringing in money during filming, horror films — particularly ones with a huge fanbase -- have a lasting impact on the tourism in counties where they've filmed.

The film "Friday the 13th" was filmed in Warren County, N.J., and even more than 40 years after its theatrical release, the movie still attracts fans from all over to Camp Crystal Lake, where for the majority of the year, there are tours of the grounds with props and memorabilia. Blairstown Diner, which makes a brief appearance in the

film, also is a big draw for fans and cast and crew members occasionally come back for anniversaries on Fridays that fall on the 13th.

Another movie that has proven staying power among its fanbase? "Silence of the Lambs." More than 30 years after it was released, horror movie fanatic Chris Rowan purchased character Buffalo Bills' home pictured in the movie, located in Fayette County, Pa., and opened it up to the public this year for tours, even creating a replica of an iconic well in the film, with the help of people who actually worked on the movie.

"[Rowan's] a huge fan of the horror genre, and he loves to go to horror filming locations, so if he's on vacation, he looks to see what kind of films were shot in that area and tries to go and see where they were," said Eric Knopsnyder, director of public relations and community outreach for GO Laurel Highlands, which promotes tourism for Fayette, Somerset and Westmoreland counties. "... He's really excited about that aspect of it and goes to conventions and things like that, and he really enjoys being a part of that audience. And this allowed him to extend that where he's not only a part of the audience, but can bring in the audience now too."

See SCARY page 6



An Amish farmhouse in Allegany County was the film location for the 2021 horror flick "Paranormal Activity: Next of Kin."

Greene County, Pa. calls itself 'the most haunted county in America'

by **Meredith Moran**
staff writer

While Greene County, Pa. is home to bucolic streams and rivers and lush rolling hills of farmland, its convention and visitors' bureau also tells its visitors about another side to the county, that "underneath is ... a supernatural reality brimming with ghosts,

aliens and unknown creatures."

Bigfoot, UFOs, shadow people, a lizard man, haunted houses and a giant lobster-like creature that abducts people — Greene County, Pa. has it all, making it allegedly the most haunted county in the country.

Psychic medium and Greene County native Kevin Paul has written two — soon-to-be three

— books on paranormal activity in the county. He said he experienced his first unexplained encounter when he was 5 — when he saw an apparition made of light in his bedroom — and has seen entities on and off since.

Paul found that most of the locations in the county that had paranormal activity reports are Native American burial grounds

or documented places of combat between white settlers and Native Americans. Other spots with famously bloody histories, like Gettysburg, are also well-known in the paranormal community as being extremely haunted.

Rosemary Ellen Guiley, who was considered to be a leading expert — or as Paul put it, a "rock star" — in the metaphysical and

paranormal fields, co-wrote the first book in the series, "Haunted Hills and Hollows: What Lurks in Greene County Pennsylvania." Paul invited Guiley to come investigate the paranormal activity in the county after hearing her on a radio talk show, prompting Guiley to visit Greene County and dubbing it the "most

See HAUNTED page 6



Collegiate runners compete at Leon County, Fla.'s Apalachee Regional Park in October 2022 during the Florida State Invitational. Photo courtesy of Florida State University Athletics

Leon County Parks hits triple crown with cross country course

by **Charlie Ban**
senior writer

Like most successful county development projects, it started with a pair of machetes.

Two track coaches cut their way through a plot of undeveloped forest land in Tallahassee, Fla. that was so thick they couldn't fit a golf cart through it. On one side, a swamp. On the other side, a landfill. They were surrounded, but they had backup, because Leon County was behind them, ready to turn trash into treasure for cross country runners, coaches and fans.

"Many times Brian [Corbin] and I got lost and had to back-track, usually as a result of hitting swamp that wasn't passable," Bob Braman said of the clearing process.

Braman and Corbin were victims of their own success. They serve as coaches of Florida State University's cross country team and the Gulf Winds Track Club, respectively, and the meets they held at the county's Miccosukee Gre-

enway in the 2000s drew so many participants and spectators that the neighbors complained about the traffic.

A long-distance running sport that drew more than 420,000 high school participants nationwide in 2021, cross country running carries an all-ages appeal, being offered not only on the youth and collegiate levels, but with adult competitions that include runners in their 80s and older. Many runners take up the sport later in life.

The county offered the coaches that land they were clearing, and the club and the university contributed \$10,000 each for the machinery to help blaze the trail. As the year passed, then-Commissioner Bryan Desloge saw an opportunity, and he and his fellow commissioners invested \$250,000 in the project, which would become Apalachee Regional Park.

"A lot of municipalities around the country have some public lands that are just sitting there not doing much,"

said Desloge, a former NACo president. "Maybe it's a holding pond with a fence all the way around and they're awful and they're eyesores and you look at them and you say, 'You know, I could turn that into something that people can be proud of.'"

"The course has made a huge economic impact for the community."

— Amanda Heidecker

While the course opened to runners in 2009, the job was far from finished. Amanda Heidecker got to run on the nascent course as a Seminole cross-country runner, and then three years after graduating, she was working for Leon County Parks and Recreation, which had grand designs for the property. She is now the department's director.

"Cross country runners are some of the hardest working athletes you'll ever come

across and cross country athletes aren't often respected," she said. "Football players get their own facility, soccer players get their own facility, but cross country courses are often a second thought. We're running on golf courses or around soccer fields or wherever we can get fit in.

"This [cross country course] has allowed us to really honor these athletes and give them a facility that was built for cross country and is a cross country course 365 days a year," she said. "It's not picked up or taken down."

To build a cross country course to its potential, the county had three constituencies to satisfy: The runners, the coaches and the spectators.

Braman and Corbin treated the property like their canvas.

On the front side of the course, short grass lets runners pick up speed for the majority of the spectators, along rolling hills. On the back side, crushed native oyster shell that drains quickly and gives runners a change of surface that remains

stable.

And the course is built to the specifications to hold the NCAA Championships. A canopy of oak trees covers a good portion of the course and gives it a regionally distinctive atmosphere.

"Racing through the woods on a 10-meter-wide championship course is almost non-existent," Braman said. "Most courses are loops around fields. The other unique part of the course is the consistent footing. It's never flooded, muddy or sandy."

The pair cut several trails through the "donut hole" in the middle of the course, which allows coaches to see their athletes several times per lap. And the laps would change depending on a race's length, ranging from 1 kilometer to 12 kilometers. A one-mile trail away from the course gives runners a chance to warm up while other races are going on.

"I wanted to be sure that coaches could get around the

See PARK page 6

'Turning waiting time into reading time'

by **Meredith Moran**
staff writer

A literacy program called SHORT the Squirrel is helping educate children in Alabama counties on topics ranging from recycling to the state's judicial system.

The goal is to help children read. Earlier this year, Alabama State Superintendent Eric Mackey said 22 percent of 3rd-graders statewide were at risk of being held back based on reading scores on the Alabama Comprehensive Assessment Program.

The literacy program is run by Monica Anderson Young and Dee Dupree Bennett, who have been friends since college. The idea came from Young's daughter McRae Young, a Mobile County assistant district attorney, telling her mother that many children who came to court didn't have materials to occupy themselves and are not allowed to bring electronic devices to the courtroom.

"These are the invisible kids in the courthouse — kids who testify, who are victims, who are in custody cases — there are a lot of kids that go in with adults who don't have babysitters who sit there," Monica Anderson Young said.

Young spoke to Bennett about the issue and the two of them saw an educational opportunity for children, which led to creating an interactive booklet on Alabama's court system that included counting activities, mazes, literacy-building activities and age-appropriate explanations of courthouses.

The program was created in February 2020 and "SHORT in Court," which was distributed in all of the state's courts through the DA's office, was released in March 2021.

SHORT has since expanded into a whole series including "SHORT Gets Sick," "SHORT Recycles," "SHORT'S Money Tree" and "SHORT'S Feelings," among others, through partnerships with Birmingham's Children's Hospital ER, Troy City Schools, Alabama's Securities Commission and Alabama's Department of Mental Health, respectively.

"We recognized that kids

are waiting in a lot of places and so our tagline became 'turning waiting time into reading time,'" Young said.

"When we did 'SHORT Gets Sick,' we found out that we could not bind the books with staples because of all the children who were there for mental health reasons, and we were like, 'Oh my gosh, we've got to do something on this topic.'"

"SHORT'S Feelings" launched this summer and aims to educate children and their parents on mental health and identifying emotions.

Young and Bennett write all of the SHORT booklets themselves but enlist the help of specialists and local educators to create the best content possible, Young said.

"All of our stuff is highly researched -- Dee and I are not the experts in these fields, so we find experts who help us put these together," Young said. "And we have them make sure that what we've laid out is what they had in mind

too, if they're our grant sponsor. For example, for 'SHORT'S Money' ... [ASC] gave us the information and we turned it into content for a four-to nine-year old, an emerging reader.

"And then after we do that, the next step of our process is we take it to a circle of educators — it's a different group every time so that we make sure we're not getting stale or somebody has an unconscious bias because they've seen a prior book and helped on it — to get their input on, 'Did we hit this? Did we miss something? Are we okay?'"

Young sees the program as more of a community support system than a curriculum, she said.

"Anywhere a child might be in the community, we want them to be able to see SHORT kits all over," she said. "If a child is on a boat and the state troopers pull them over to check their safety features, which happens all the

time down around where I live, then I want the state trooper to say, 'Hey, here's a literacy kit for you -- here's a SHORT the Squirrel kit for you,' and it's 'SHORT on the Water.' So, distribution is the community as a whole, and we want the whole community to really foster a sense of shared responsibility for literacy."

Pike County and Montgomery County have been particularly supportive of the program through funding and spreading awareness of it, Young said.

Montgomery County Commissioner Ronda Walker said that she heard about the program and immediately knew it was something that she wanted to implement in the county. She helped the program get its first mascot suit and Alabama Gov. Kay Ivey has since endorsed SHORT as Alabama's literary mascot.

"Part of the magic of what they're doing -- everybody

loves a mascot -- and this little squirrel mascot is captivating to adults and children alike," Walker said.

"I have seen SHORT in schools and the kids are crazy about it. It brings it to life. It's more than just an adult standing up there holding a book."

Walker also got the county's commission on board financially and reached out to Sonny Brasfield, executive director of the Association of County Commissions of Alabama, to have SHORT present at the association's annual conference.

"Literacy is critical, especially in light of the past couple of years, how students have suffered under not being able to go to school, not having the typical routines," Walker said.

"I work with a lot of nonprofits, a lot of groups and organizations -- I have never encountered two people [Young and Bennett] who are more passionate and hardworking."

Montgomery County was also the location of SHORT's first virtual birthday party, which is an event the program puts on its YouTube channel for children and classrooms across the state to get engaged with SHORT. In its first year, 30,000 Alabama children watched the virtual birthday party and 35,000 watched it the second year.

The program's third birthday will also be SHORT's Reading Blast Off and will take place in February 2023 at Huntsville, Alabama's U.S. Space and Rocket Center, which they coordinated with Madison County officials to make possible.

While the initiative doesn't have any plans to take SHORT on the road outside of Alabama at the moment, Young said the materials, along with the program's YouTube videos and class lesson plans, are open to anyone who wants to use them and she encourages people to do so.

Along with 45 other states across the country, Alabama's second most commonly spoken language is Spanish. All of the SHORT booklets are produced in English and Spanish to make it accessible to a wider demographic of children and their

SHORT the Squirrel poses with community advisor Estela Tirado at the Council for Leaders in Alabama Schools conference.



Success yields funding for park improvements

From PARK page 4

course easily and be able to coach their kids,” Braman said. “That’s a major problem at many championship courses, where the spectators swallow up the coaches and render them almost useless.”

In addition to the spectators lining the course, Leon County provided for the fans at home. The inside of the course was lined with fiber optic cable, which allows for cameras anywhere along the course and timing mats that can keep track of runners’ progress and team standings throughout the race. That fed directly to the three jumbotrons (the standard is one) and scoreboard and to livestreams. The course currently sports nine different cameras.

“That came up big during COVID,” Heidecker said. “A lot of parents and grandparents haven’t been able to travel to see their athletes compete, but now they can see them on the livestream, and they can watch every runner that goes by, not just the runner in the lead.”

The landfill that penned in the coaches as they designed the course? It was capped and turned into a 4,000-car parking lot, steps from the course.

“You usually have to walk

pretty far to see a race,” Heidecker said.

As the course started to attract championship events, starting with 2013’s high school state championship, the visitors started filling hotel rooms. The course has played host to championships on every level, including the NCAA Division I championships and, in 2026, will include the World Athletics championships, one of the few times the race has been held in the United States.

“That’s bringing the world to Leon County,” Heidecker said. “That’s something that’s in the record books forever.”


A portion of the county’s bed tax, combined with revenue from the parks department, has funded additional improvements, including a permanent operations building, restrooms, finish line and

awards stage.

“These events have allowed us to save up and build the facility, which is what keeps it going over time,” Heidecker said. “I think what we have done here has influenced other municipalities to invest more in cross country.”

“And the course has made a huge economic impact for the community,” she noted. “In 2020, cross country races were one of the few safe events to have and we were able to hold them here. Our hotels told us when nothing was going on, these cross country events kept them alive.”

Braman has been able to put away the machete in favor of a stopwatch, and Desloge, now retired, feels like the county’s investment was worth it.

“It’s a bargain that’s paid off.” 



Apalachee Regional Park has played host to cross country championships on all levels. Photo courtesy of Florida State University Athletics

Program makes reading fun

From READING page 5

parents.

Estela Tirado is on SHORT’S advisory board and serves as the community advisor, in which she translates the booklets in a way that is approachable and meaningful for the Spanish speaking population, she said.

“I work in the education space, mainly with Hispanic and Latin American families here in Alabama, so for me, it’s super important that kids in this area have material that is appropriate for them to be reading and learning but also that is appealing to the parents,” Tirado said.

The Alabama Literacy Act went into effect in the 2021-2022 school year and was created to ensure students are reading on grade level by the end of the 3rd grade.


If students don’t demonstrate sufficient reading skills through the Alabama Comprehensive Assessment Program English Language Arts assessment, they may not advance on to 4th grade.

“It’s even more difficult sometimes with English language learners to meet that standard because standardized testing like ACAP that measure the reading level are not designed for bilingual or English language learners,” Tirado said.

“Their brain is developing in a different way because they’re capturing two languages. So, for me, it’s super important to make sure that kids have materials that are appealing, that are useful for them to be learning to read and to explore their language development.”

SHORT runs as a non-profit and Young and Bennett, along with the program’s advisory board members, contribute time and effort outside of their day jobs into the initiative because it’s a cause they’re passionate about. Young said that whenever there’s a particularly hard day or if she gets discouraged because the program doesn’t receive a grant it applied for, she’ll look at a photograph taken of a young boy with SHORT and remember why it’s worth it.


“We went to a community on the Alabama-Mississippi border — it’s just south of Selma — and this little boy, probably about six years old, sees SHORT and he comes running ... he grabs SHORT around the belly, almost knocks him over, and he looks up at him and goes ‘SHORT! I saw your birthday video and I’ve been reading every night just like you told me to,’” Young said.

“And Dee and I looked at each other and were like, ‘That’s why we’re doing this.’” 

‘Scary’ means big business

From SCARY page 3

Knopsnyder said that visitors from 23 states and five counties have toured the home since it opened over Labor Day weekend.

“I think obviously you can see from the horror genre and the market that it has, the attraction that it has to people,” Knopsnyder said, “and especially when you’re talking about a movie with the legacy of ‘Silence of the Lambs,’ where it won five Academy Awards and is pretty much the gold standard in terms of scary movies, that people want to be able to experience something like that and see where some of their favorite scenes were shot and just experience what that location is like.” 

Pennsylvania county promotes its ‘haunted’ sites to tourists

From HAUNTED page 3

haunted county.”

“For someone like her to come here and say, ‘Mile per square mile, there’s more activity in Greene County than a lot of these more well-known places’ — it was kind of a big deal, and that’s what got us put on the [paranormal] map,” Paul said.

“You know you try to debunk it and you can’t, so you just kind of put it into the category of ‘supernatural.’”

In 1977, a Greene County woman had a supernatural encounter that started out as a vivid dream.

“Some bizarre-looking creature that sort of looked like a lobster, but also had lobster claws instead of hands at the end of its arms,

had reached out and dragged her from the bed, and was trying to drag her out the window like they were going to abduct her,” Paul said.

“So, she had what she thought was this really freaky dream, but when she woke up in the morning, she was laying in the middle of the bedroom floor and her arm in the dream that the creature had a hold of had turned black and blue, like something actually had grabbed her.”

The woman, who was given the pseudonym Sherry by Paul, was 14 when the incident happened, and she said she experienced a lot of paranormal activity in Greene County in her youth, particularly on her farm.

“It was weird because that time period where I grew up, we saw

lots of alien ships, a lot of lights in the sky, a lot of unexplained activity, from the time I was little,” Sherry said. “But that one left a mark in my memory because it left a big bruise around my elbow.

“I was scared, but I was curious. We had experienced so many strange things at the farm that it kind of became part of my life.”


Greene County’s website features 19 sites of paranormal activity, including Mon View Park, Sugar Camp Road and the Greene County Historical Society.

“At the Greene County Historical Society, we were able to catch a series of lights in the air close to the ground out behind the barn that we’d tried for a couple of years to get debunked,” Paul said. “Even the camera manufacturer mentioned the word UFO — it

appeared to be a row of flying lights. It used to be the county poor farm, so it’s fairly active, but there’s a lot of non-human activity there.”

Paul said that there were also entities inside the historical society that they used traditional Appalachian dowsing rods to communicate with through “yes and no” questions.

“During the night, the camera caught the exit light in the hallway coming on in a circuit that at the time had no electricity in it,” Paul said.

“It was set up on a switch, so when you flip the ceiling lights on, all the ceiling lights and the exit lights on the second floor would illuminate, but this one time the exit light came on by itself and nothing else did.” 

PROFILES IN SERVICE

JAMIE STEPHENS

NACo Board Member
Council Member
San Juan County, Wash.

Number of years active in NACo: Two

Years in public service: 16 (four as a port commissioner and 12 as a council member)

Occupation: Property Manager
Education: University of Notre Dame, B.A. in American Studies/Communications; Wharton School, executive finance courses

The hardest thing I've ever done: Professionally, make decisions when there are wildly divergent views -- where the decision will affect people emotionally and economically. A recent example is a local ordinance regulating vacation rentals.

A dream I have is to: Visit Africa

You'd be surprised to learn that I: Sold a wide array of products to grocery stores, including candy and feminine products.

The most adventurous thing I've ever done is: Land on an aircraft carrier. tour it, spend the night and get launched off the deck to return.

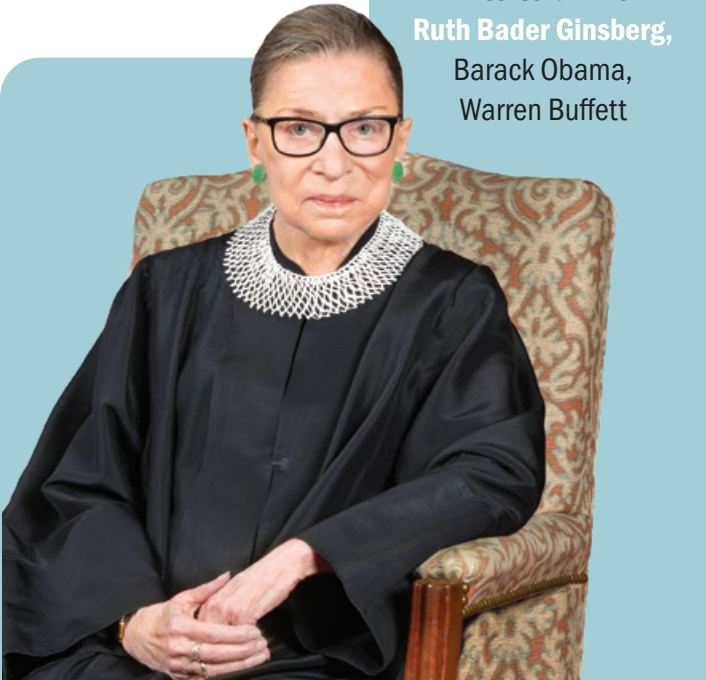
My favorite way to relax is: Enjoying a cocktail and the sunset with my wife.

I'm most proud of: Being a father and my service on the Council



STEPHENS
Every morning I read: *The New York Times*
My favorite meal is: What I cook. I'm a chef and have cooked for my family for years.
My pet peeve is: When people don't listen.
My motto is: Great things can happen if no one cares who gets the credit.
The last book I read was: "The Gatekeepers" by Chris Whipple
My favorite movie is: "Ferris Bueller's Day Off"
My favorite music is: Bruce Springsteen
My favorite U.S. president is: Past: Harry S Truman; Living: Barack Obama
My county is a NACo member because: We see the value in the services it provides to its member counties, the leadership education it provides its individual members and the clout it provides on the national stage of our common issues and priorities.

Three people (living or dead) I'd invite to dinner:
Ruth Bader Ginsberg,
Barack Obama,
Warren Buffett



ON THE MOVE



Teryn Zmuda discusses American Rescue Plan Act successes at Harvard University's Infrastructure Innovation Summit in Middlesex County, Mass.

NACo OFFICERS

- President **Denise Winfrey** and Associate Membership Director **John Losh** attended the Tennessee County Services Association Fall Conference held Oct. 11-13 in Rutherford County.

NACo STAFF

- Grace Blanchard** has joined NACo as a program manager for the Resilient Economies and Communities program. Grace worked as a regional planner with the Central Shenandoah Planning District Commission and was a Virginia Governor's fellow. She earned a bachelor's degree in Policy and Leadership from the University of Virginia.
- Chief Economist **Teryn Zmuda** discussed American Rescue Plan Act successes at Harvard University's Infrastructure Innovation Summit in Middlesex County, Mass. She also made a presentation on state and local policy trends to the U.S. Chamber of Commerce in Washington, D.C.; introduced the Housing Policy Solutions Matchmaker Tool at the Prosperity Now Summit in Fulton County, Ga. and analyzed the affects various public service issues have had on counties for the Consortium of University Public Service Organizations' Fall Board of Directors meeting in Arlington County, Va.
- Chief Public Affairs Officer **Brian Namey** attended the Nevada Association of Counties Annual Conference in Storey County.
- Legislative Director **Jonathan Shuffield** spoke at the Idaho As-



Blanchard



Shuffield



Thomson

- sociation of Counties Annual Conference in Ada County.
- Shuffield** was on hand for the WIR Board of Directors' fall Board meeting in Malheur County, Ore.
- Legislative Director **Brett Mattson** and Legislative Associate Julia Cortina managed the Gulf Coast Counties & Parishes Coalition convening in Nueces County, Texas.
- Legislative Director **Jessica Jennings** attended the Michigan Association of Counties Annual Conference in St. Clair County and the Association of Indiana Counties Annual Conference in St. Joseph County.
- Associate Legislative Director **Sarah Gimont** spoke on a panel on community and economic development perspectives at the Office of Clean Energy Improvements in Rural or Remote Areas Western Workshop in Boulder County, Colo.
- Program Manager **Chelsea Thomson** moderated a panel discussion on sustainable justice reform momentum at the Safety and Justice Challenge Network Meeting in Fulton County, Ga.

BRIGHT IDEAS | CATAWBA COUNTY, N.C.

North Carolina County Library Creates Record of Its Hmong Population

PROBLEM:

Catawba County, N.C. wanted to fill in a gap in their local history to tell the story of the Hmong population.

SOLUTION:

Create a program including a collection of artifacts and oral histories, to tell their story.

by **Meredith Moran**
staff writer

The Catawba County Library collaborated with DigitalNC (the North Carolina Digital Heritage Center) and the Historical Association on the Hmong Heritage Project to create a digital collection of artifacts and oral histories from the county's Hmong population.

"One gap in our local history was the Hmong story," said Siobhan Loendorf, director of the Catawba County library. "The director of the history museum at the time said, 'I have like two artifacts representing the Hmong story and we are the fourth-largest population of Hmong immigrants in the United States.' And so, we decided to try and reach out to the Hmong community so that we could digitize some of their artifacts, and at the same time, help them preserve them."

The Hmong largely began migrating to the United States in the late 1970s and early 1980s following the fall of Saigon and Laos to North Vietnam Communist troops in 1975, when many Hmong escaped to Thailand where they were incarcerated in refugee camps. There are about 305,525 Hmong people in the United States, 14,232 of whom are in North Carolina, according to 2020 U.S. demographic data.

The project to tell their story in Catawba County ran from February to December 2018 and consisted of the Catawba County library hosting book discussions about "The Song Poet: A Memoir of My Father" by Kao Kalia



Traditional Hmong dancers from Challenger High School pose after performing at the library's first collection day on Feb. 24, 2018.

Yang and "Bamboo Among the Oaks: Contemporary Writing by Hmong Americans" edited by Mai Neng Moua; an Evening of Hmong Performing Arts featuring a Song Poet and a local Hmong man playing the qeej, a traditional Hmong instrument and collection days in which local Hmong community members shared their belongings and experiences related to their Hmong identity.

"On our very first collection day, a gentleman came in with his box of things and he had these tags, and it looked like it was just a brown cardboard stock tag with a string on it, and it would have their picture and it would have some of their information, but it was basically their passport when they left the country -- when they left the refugee camps to come to America," Loendorf said. "That paper tag was everything, and he had them all in pristine condition for his whole family."

The tags were a particularly exciting find for the Catawba County library, because of how rare it was to have intact and preserved, Loendorf said. A man who had taken part in a similar endeavor to gather historic artifacts, with the intent of

preserving Hmong culture for a museum in Michigan, said that the tags were something they had specifically put out a call for, and that they were unable to obtain any, according to Loendorf.

"Nobody in Minnesota, which was another big location where people migrated to, had any samples of that tag, because they were paper and got wet or ruined or lost," Loendorf said. "And that gentleman had five pristine examples of it that we've now documented, and it's preserved online so people can be like, 'Remember that tag?' And they can see what it looked like. So, I thought that was really cool, because it was a piece of history that nobody else had."

To get the word out about the project, Loendorf said they put up flyers at the county's Asian market and met with local Hmong community groups and churches. A local Hmong woman was also hired to coordinate the recruitment events.

The project received a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities, which provided funds to hire a coordinator, allowed them to purchase flatbed scanners for documents and page and photo protectors



Travel tag and photograph of Hmong refugee Tong Xiong from 1992. This card acted as a passport and was issued by the International Organization for Migration to track the travel of refugees.

to keep everything in good condition. The grant also helped them purchase a 35-mm digital camera to photograph the artifacts and a multi-directional microphone for the oral history recordings. One of the oral histories moved Loendorf to tears, she said.

"We said, 'We're preserving this online, is there anything that you would want your grandchildren or great-grandchildren to know about your experience? If

they come across us online and they're listening to your stories, is there any message you want to give to your future family members?'" Loendorf said.

"And they just said, 'We did all this so that they could have freedom -- we went through all of this so that they could have opportunities that we never had.' And I was just like, 'Oh my gosh.'" Another comment from one of the men involved in the collection particularly emphasized the importance of the project and similar initiatives, Loendorf said.

"We had a special program here at the library one night and all of the gentlemen came in dressed in full uniform and they gave their oral histories and gave us their documentation to

put into the collection," she said. "And one of them said to the girl that organized that, 'We just are so grateful to the library because we've been here for 20 years, and nobody's ever recognized us,' and so they felt recognized or seen through this project."

The library received positive feedback about the heritage project from people outside of the Hmong community as well, according to Loendorf.

"I was meeting with a Latina woman, and I said, 'If you're not busy, come to this celebration -- we're having a Hmong cultural heritage thing and we're having Hmong food,'" she said. "And she came downstairs with her son and participated in it, and she was like, 'I had no idea,' and she was also an immigrant, so she has her own experience, but then to recognize that this whole other population of people had an immigrant experience that parallels theirs in some ways was great."

The project also heightened Loendorf's own appreciation for common ties among different cultures, she said. She said a specific moment when

‘We’re a grow-
ing melting pot’

From HISTORY page 8


a Hmong woman brought in a cross-stitching project stuck with her.

“There was one Hmong woman I was talking to, and I said, ‘This is beautiful’ and she said, ‘Oh my gosh, my mom used to force me to learn how to do this when I was like 13.’ And I said, ‘That’s really funny because my mom forced me to take cross-stitch lessons when I was 13,’” Loendorf said. “The whole project was called ‘Common Heritage,’ and I just thought it was funny that growing up in two different worlds, we did have that common heritage.”

During the summers of 2021 and 2022, Appalachian State University created a similar project, “Roots and Routes,” that developed a digital photo story of Latinx migrants and Hmong refugees.

“I think they had seen what we had done and wanted to kind of springboard on that, so they reached out to some of the same people and just did a deeper dive into their immigrant experience,” Loendorf said.

Loendorf hopes the county continues to create initiatives that help represent all of the diverse backgrounds there.

“I think it’s important for us as a county that we recognize all of the people in our county as we evolve,” Loendorf said. “We’re a growing melting pot and we cannot ignore the contributions of this huge population and what they bring to us to make us a richer, stronger community, and we need to recognize it and celebrate it.” 

The project earned a NACo “Best in Category” Achievement Award this year in the Arts, Culture and Historic Preservation category.

WORD
SEARCH

PLYMOUTH COUNTY, Mass.
Created by: Alyxa Hawkins

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

COURTHOUSE: The Old County Courthouse is on the grounds of the original courthouse established by the settlers of Plymouth Colony. It is believed to be the oldest wooden courthouse in the country. Built in 1749, it was used for business until it was converted into a museum in the 1970s.

CRANBERRY: The county features numerous cranberry farms. The town of Carver is considered the cranberry capital of the United States.

HISTORY: Known as “America’s Hometown,” this county is one of the oldest municipalities within the United States.

KINGMAN: The Gardner J. Kingman House was built in 1886 and was the first brick residence built within the county seat of Brockton. It features a Queen Anne Styling and is listed in the U.S. National Register of Historic Places. The house was commissioned and lived in by local businessman Gardner Kingman.

MASSACHUSETTS: The county sits in the southeastern corner of the state of Massachusetts.

MAYFLOWER: Plymouth County is where the Mayflower landed; it was colonized in 1620 by the Pilgrims.

PLYMOUTH: One of the county seats was named by English explorer John Smith in 1614. This was the site of the first permanent European settlement in New England.

POPULATION: As of the 2020 census, the population of Plymouth County is 472,972.

POST: The Old Post Office Building in Brockton was built in 1989 and designed to be a copy of Independence Hall in Philadelphia. Today, it serves as the central administrative offices to the Brockton Public Schools.

ROCK: The county features Plymouth Rock, the first step the Pilgrims took when disembarking the Mayflower.

SIZE: The county is 1,093 square miles.

THANKSGIVING: This county is the site of the first Thanksgiving feast in 1623.

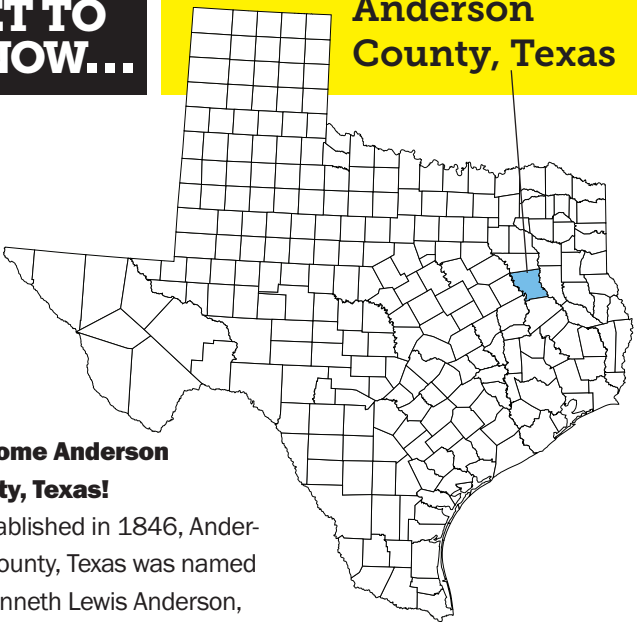
UNIVERSITIES: The county features several colleges and universities including Stonehill College, Bridgewater State University and Wheaton College.

WHALING: Whaling was a crucial industry to the county until the mid-1800s.

WIND: The other county seat, Brockton, is the second windiest city in the country, with average wind speeds of 14.3 MPH.

GET TO
KNOW...

Anderson
County, Texas



Welcome Anderson
County, Texas!

Established in 1846, Anderson County, Texas was named for Kenneth Lewis Anderson, the last vice president of the Republic of Texas. The county seat is Palestine, which is equidistant from Dallas and Houston, and home to one of the four sites in the world for launching unmanned high-altitude balloons, NASA’s Columbia Scientific Balloon Facility.

Anderson County measures about 1,062 square miles and its population is just under 58,000, according to the 2020 census. The Engeling Wildlife Management Area, which is 10,958 acres of floodplain, wetlands and moss bogs devoted to wildlife research, is located in the county. Anderson County has one newspaper, The Palestine Herald-Press.

The Anderson County Jail,

known as the Texas Jail House, is no longer a working jail but is on the National Register of Historic Places and offers tours and themed events, including “Quarantine: Zombie Outbreak” for Halloween and “Grinch’s Lair” for the holiday season.

The county’s Youth Livestock Association hosts an annual rodeo and the Davey Dogwood Park puts on a Fairy Garden Trail contest in the spring to encourage people to go to the park and see the dogwood trees in bloom, in which Anderson County residents create little fairy village models.

“Get to Know” features new NACo member counties.



BEHIND
THE
SEAL

UNION COUNTY, N.J.

Union County, the final county created in New Jersey, was established in 1857 by the state legislature and named for the union of the United States. The county’s seal is an unusual one, depicting the murder of the

first woman, Hannah Caldwell, killed in the Revolutionary War in New Jersey. Caldwell was shot by a British soldier in her home while trying to protect her family. Her death became a symbol of the fight for independence among the

Patriots. She is said to haunt the property, which is now known as the Caldwell Parsonage and has been the location of several ghost hunting events

Would you like to see your county seal featured? Contact Meredith Moran at mmoran@naco.org.



NEWS FROM ACROSS THE NATION

ARIZONA

The **MARICOPA COUNTY** Board of Supervisors recently approved a **small-business advocacy program** that will help small and local businesses with less than 100 employees and annual sales of no more than \$4 million. According to county officials, the goal of the program is to have the small businesses provide county departments with goods and services not covered by existing contracts with a one-time estimated cost of less than \$100,000. Other eligibility requirements include the business being independently owned and operated, current on all county taxes and in operation for over a year.

"Small businesses are the heartbeat of Maricopa County's economy, and I believe the action taken by our Board of Supervisors will directly enhance opportunities for small and local businesses and have good, long-term results for our economy," said Kevin Tyne, director of the Office of Procurement Services.

COLORADO



DENVER COUNTY's Office of Climate Action, Sustainability and Resiliency is partnering with BlocPower and Energy

Outreach Colorado to **decarbonize 200 low-to moderate-income households** in the county as part of the Healthy Homes Program. The program's focus will be on building access to community solar gardens, replacing gas appliances with electric induction stoves and heat pump heating and cooling systems specifically designed for cold climate performance. It will also conduct indoor air quality tests and resident health surveys before and after building improvements to measure its impact on public health.

"BlocPower is committed to making buildings smarter, greener and healthier while ensuring decarbonization upgrades are affordable for all Americans," said BlocPower founder and CEO Donnel Baird. "The only serious path to addressing the climate crisis is through prioritizing marginalized communities, and we applaud Denver for recognizing this and taking real climate action."

FLORIDA

• **ORANGE COUNTY** officials recently launched the second phase of the county's **Emergency Rental Assistance Program**. While the program's first phase required proof of financial hardship due to COVID-19, the second phase makes households that experienced financial hardship during the pandemic eligible for funding, which will allow more renters to apply. Other eligibility requirements include income restrictions —



NEW YORK

• The Halloween hangover is more than just a sugar crash. The decorations and accouterments that give the holiday its flair have a shelf life that is often rapidly expiring, but **ONTARIO COUNTY** is offering three **composting** locations to accept pumpkins, gourds, flowers, hay and corn stalks. The drop-offs are sponsored by the county Department of Sustainability and Solid Waste Management.

a single renter's household income cannot surpass \$46,480 — and showing documentation that they're at least one month behind on rent or have received more than a 10 percent increase to their base rent. The county plans to provide an additional \$13.5 million in rental assistance to keep at-risk families in their homes.

KANSAS

SEDGWICK COUNTY has launched the "One Pill Can Kill" fentanyl awareness program as the county is on track to exceed 300 **fentanyl-related deaths** this year. The initiative has a data and resource guide that includes videos outlining the danger of fentanyl and how to spot signs of addiction and overdose. "Many people will say 'Not my kid' and I know that, because we've said that," said Christie



KENTUCKY

CAMPBELL COUNTY Public Library has launched a **Cards for Veterans** program, which will provide library-goers with materials to make cards for local military veterans throughout the month of October. The cards will be sent to the Fort Thomas Veterans Affairs Medical Center and local Veterans of Foreign Wars organizations for Veterans Day. "A handmade card is a simple yet heartfelt way to honor the service of local veterans to their country," officials said.

FLORIDA

• The **ALCHUA COUNTY** Library System is reviving its **Read to a Dog program**, which partners children ages 5-11 with a registered therapy dog. A study published in the "Early Childhood Education Journal" found that children are significantly more inclined to read when reading weekly to a therapy dog. Service dog owners can sign their pet up to participate and there are typically two dogs available per event.



McCullough, who's 19-year-old son died of a fentanyl overdose earlier this year. "People are so quick to judge when it comes to drug-related deaths. The drugs that are killing our kids today is actually poison."

MICHIGAN

SAGINAW COUNTY Health

See NEWS FROM page 11

From NEWS FROM page 10

Department's new **harm reduction program** offers substance users free and safe injection supplies, Narcan, fentanyl test strips, hygiene kits and clean syringes to reduce health risks. Drug addicts who use clean syringes are half as likely to spread HIV and hepatitis C and it's five times more likely that people will seek out help for their drug addiction with harm reduction programs, according to Rebekah Willard, a public health nurse at the Saginaw Health Department.

MISSOURI

BENTON COUNTY Emergency Services has created a **text-to-911** program so that those who are potentially in danger and unable to make a phone call can still contact emergency services. E911 Director Jessica Mayfield listed domestic violence, kidnappings and active shooters as situations where the text option could be beneficial.

NEBRASKA

A new **false alarm ordinance** has taken effect in **DOUGLAS COUNTY** after a sheriff's office analysis found that nearly all of their responses to automated security system alarms were false. Homeowners with security systems that notify the sheriff's office after an alarm is tripped must call the authorities to stand down after tripping their own alarms. The first call for registered false alarm calls comes at no cost, but the second and third false alarm calls will cost \$100. After that, it bumps up to \$250.

NEVADA

• **CLARK COUNTY** has deployed a team of **social service outreach workers** on the Las Vegas Strip, partnering with the Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department to engage with those suffering from homelessness, mental health or substance abuse issues.

The social workers will connect residents in crisis with programs and services such as addiction and mental health treatment, counseling and housing assistance. The teams were established three years



NEW MEXICO

For three years, **LEA COUNTY** has led all counties with the most active oil rigs — 71, a total surpassed only by all of Texas and all of New Mexico, according to data published by oil field services company Baker Hughes.

ago to help individuals and families who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless.

• An increase in local incidents has prompted **DOUGLAS COUNTY** to launch an **in-house emergency management team**. Since 2007, the county has contracted with East Fork Fire District, which will still respond to fires. The move will also coincide with the revision of the county's emergency plan to include policies for COVID-19, active shooters, infrastructure and civil unrest.

NEW YORK

• The **ALBANY COUNTY** Legislature passed a law that

requires county employers to **post the minimum and maximum salary range** when advertising an open position, promotion or transfer.

NORTH CAROLINA

MECKLENBURG COUNTY is recruiting volunteers to be "**Age-Friendly Ambassadors**," serving in a number of capacities including educating seniors about scams and fraud, driver safety, senior meals, digital education and more.

OHIO

• A new program will help **BELMONT COUNTY** residents with small but important tasks. The Community Access Re-

sources Education and Solutions Act will include, according to Cumberland Trail Fire District Chief Tim Hall, assistance with prescriptions, smoke and carbon monoxide detection, installing railings in homes, helping with transportation to doctors and such, and just getting home care that's needed.

Hall hopes the assistance, funded by the county and Senior Services of Belmont County, will divert people from calling 911 for **assistance with non-emergencies**.

• **Seniors who would like to stay in their homes** but need a little help will get some in a **CLARK, WASHINGTON and WOOD counties** program. CAPABLE for Community Aging in Place – Advancing Better Living for Elders, is being designed by Johns Hopkins University School of Nursing using a team approach, with the homes visited by a registered nurse, an occupational therapist and a home repair professional. Each county will have an expected goal of helping approximately 20 consumers per six months, for a total of 120 households helped from 2023 to 2026, Bowling Green Independent Media reported, with \$3,000 to \$4,000 for each consumer funded by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

OREGON

MULTNOMAH COUNTY prosecutors will **consider immigration consequences** when charging, making plea bargains and sentencing non-citizens in an effort to avoid deportation when possible, under a new policy. It aims to miti-

gate disproportionate impacts the criminal justice system can have on immigrant communities. The new policy directs deputy district attorneys to bring charges that don't result in automatic deportation for noncitizens and explicitly restricts prosecutors from threatening an immigrant with criminal charges that would lead to deportation in an effort to get a plea bargain, the *Portland Mercury* reported. Under the new policy, prosecutors may opt to charge an immigrant with reasonable charges that do not trigger automatic deportation proceedings under federal law.

TEXAS

• **BELL COUNTY** will no longer allow **scofflaws** to renew their vehicle registrations. Residents who have unpaid tickets or fines in the county will have to pay them and clear their record before renewing.

• The **DALLAS COUNTY** clerk's office has created a tutorial for residents trying to **reclaim property** that has been stolen through fraud. Clerk John Warren told WFAA-TV that while the forms are free to file, the average person without a legal background would likely find the process difficult.

• The **EL PASO COUNTY** Commissioners Court allocated \$6.8 million to open a **migrant support center** to help immigrants coordinate travel to other cities. The county expects to be reimbursed by FEMA, and the county is coordinating with destination communities. The city of El Paso operates a similar support center.

• There's plenty to keep a couple busy while planning a wedding, but in **TARRANT COUNTY** at least, they have one less errand to run. The county clerk's office is the first in the state to **approve marriage license applications via online video**, following passage last year of a bill allowing clerks to offer that option.

Charlie Ban and Meredith Moran compile News From Across the Nation. Does your county have news we should know about? Contact cban@naco.org and mmoran@naco.org.



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>> *Washington D.C.*

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