

# ARPA funds help county build, track broadband

by Meredith Moran  
staff writer

As it gears up to meet a goal of full broadband connectivity by 2025, Washtenaw County, Mich. has waslaunched a digital map that tracks its progress, thanks to American Rescue Plan Act dollars and general county funds.

Lack of broadband is a huge detriment to any county and its residents, particularly in the sectors of education, healthcare, employment and business development, said Washtenaw County Commissioner Jason Maciejewski.

“This goes way beyond simply trying to stream movies and music online — these are really things that impact people’s everyday lives, their ability to get broadband level internet service,” Maciejewski said.

The county contracted with DCS Technology Design to tackle rural broadband in its gap-filling effort. Chris Scharer, CEO of DCS, drove to each house in the county’s 15 townships that had been identified as not fully serviced to create an accurate map that determined the scope of what

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In advance of the upcoming Veterans Day holiday, Henry County, Va. illuminates their administration building green through Nov. 13 as part of “Operation Green Light,” a national collaborative initiative to support military veterans. Photo courtesy of Henry County

# New approach, service center pay off for Spokane County veterans

by Charlie Ban  
senior writer

The Cascade Mountains lie between Olympia and thousands of veterans in eastern Washington. Despite the physical separation, Spokane County is showing the region’s veterans that they’re not forgotten just because the state government is far away.

A new veterans’ service center is just one of several measures the county veterans service office is taking to reach out to thousands of retired service-

members, not just in Spokane, but in all of the surrounding rural counties. And the county veteran service office (CVSO) model has been crucial.

“I think Washington state has really done a lot in regard to engaging it with counties and creating opportunities for county

veteran services officers,” said Cathrene “Cat” Nichols, director of the Spokane County and Eastern Washington Regional Veterans Services Center.

“The Veterans Benefits Administration is a really hard system to navigate for our veterans, and Spokane County has

just taken on the role of being that advocate for veterans,” she said. “It has impacted every other aspect of the quality of life for the veterans that we serve.”

Soon after leaving state gov-

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# As workforce increases, county ramps up daycare

by Charlie Ban  
senior writer

Tess Moberg knew she’d be coming back to McKenzie County, N.D.

While a student at Minot State University, she thought about some apartments in her hometown of Watford City and knew it had potential.

“When I was five, it had been a daycare, so I knew it was possible,” she said. “I bought the building, renovated it and opened it up in 2007.”

Back when she was young, most childcare meant one family taking in a few kids. For her graduating class of 52, there weren’t many kids, so it was a small-scale market for a rela-

tively simple sector. Moberg subsidized her daycare by renting out the top floor of apartments and managed the affordability tightrope.

Then three years after she opened, horizontal drilling and fracking opened the Bakken shale formation centered

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# County veterans service center offers sense of belonging and community to vets

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ernment to work for Spokane County in 2017, Nichols directed the first-ever state and county co-located regional veteran services office, which opened in 2019.

The function and the aesthetics were designed to be welcoming not only to Spokane County’s 44,000 veterans, but another 25,000 from surrounding counties, including some across the border in Idaho.

“It was tailor-made to honor veterans,” Nichols said. “We incorporated very patriotic artwork; we used very welcoming paint color tones. We have a beautiful water wall that creates a beautiful, serene environment for them.”



The function and design of its building create a welcoming atmosphere for a veterans service center in Spokane County, Wash.

for job assistance counseling, with computers and Wi-Fi. And once they’re in the building,

Nichols said, the CVSOs can address overall issues.

“We make sure we’re addressing holistically the veteran, and I think that’s really the key,” she said. “The holistic approach to not just connecting them to their benefits, but connecting them to employment, connecting them to mental health, connecting them to the VA for their basic health care.”

The center employs local veterans and makes use of regional resources.

“They speak the language, they have the military cultural competency to really understand where that veteran is coming from,” Nichols said. “You can’t rebut their argument of survivor’s guilt or whatever unless you know what that is. And so, I think a lot of times it’s just a matter of outreach and education. It was an uphill battle getting our Vietnam-era veterans to understand that they are to be honored for their service. Because that was the last thing they were when they came home from Vietnam.”

Nichols and her staff create a culture of positivity and honor around military service, making it easier to overcome those

stigmas and making it a safe environment to self-identify as a veteran to begin with.

“Making it a safe environment to self-identify as someone struggling with post-traumatic stress or traumatic brain injury where it’s not a negative thing, it’s just a thing. And it’s a result of your service and the VAs promise is to take care of those who have borne the battle. And that’s what we do. We take care of those who have borne the battle by connecting them to those VA benefits.”

Creating a sense of belonging and community far away from the rest of the state’s resources is important to Nichols.

“I think that’s why county government works, period. I think the reason county government is there and will always be there is because people want to be served where they are. People want local people who understand their particular economy, their particular struggles, their particular culture in that community.”

The shift in Spokane County’s operations has widened the table from what had essentially been a triage operation for years.

When Nichols took the job, almost half of the county veterans service office’s \$1.2 million budget was going to food and gas vouchers, which, while needed, weren’t “moving the needle” on veteran homelessness, she said.

Nichols has worked to remake a system that had been working piecemeal on issues facing veterans into something more systematic by building staff capacity. Those efforts have already paid off with more than \$9 million in Veterans Administration awards.

“We took people who are working in veteran services, working with the veterans’ relief fund and providing emergency financial assistance, and we cross-trained all of those folks and got them accredited through the state Department of Veterans’ Affairs as veteran service officers,” Nichols said. “Whenever somebody came in with — it might be an urgent case where a tree fell on their car, and they can’t get to work, and they need some emergency financial assistance.

“We have been able to

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SNAP/STATS

VETERANS DAY:  
NOV. 11, 2022

States with the most veterans:

STATE	NUMBER OF VETERANS
Texas .....	1,408,464
Florida .....	1,356,882
California.....	1,342,337
Pennsylvania .....	641,525
Virginia .....	641,144

Source: Statista



# North Dakota county meets daycare demands of a growing workforce with nonprofit

From DAYCARE page 1

in North Dakota wide open to easier exploration and extraction, and McKenzie County saw the beginning of an influx that made it the fastest-growing county in the United States, according to the 2020 census.

"We had a lot of people of child-bearing age coming to town, and they weren't bringing their grandparents," said Daniel Stenberg, McKenzie County's economic development coordinator.

"We have an industry that's powering our economy, and one of their biggest challenges is childcare."

The county grew by 131 percent, with Watford City's population expanding 250 percent. At the same time, Moberg was seeing demand explode for spots in her daycare, which had already expanded once.

The growth was making things uncomfortable elsewhere too. With new arrivals boasting oilfield salaries, the economics of housing quickly became untenable for public sector workers, and the county, city and McKenzie County Public School District No. 1 joined to build both a 42-unit housing complex for their employees — Wolf Run Village — and an adjoining 17,000-square foot childcare center — Wolf Pup Daycare. And while the new arrivals brought all kinds of talent and new blood, the nonprofit the three entities created found its director from within, after Moberg sold her daycare business.

The childcare market is challenged by the safety and licensing demands that require particular ratios of caregivers to children. While different states have different requirements, the Administration for Children and Families recommends one trained adult for every 3-4 infants, one adult for 3-6 toddlers and one adult for 6-10 preschoolers. A daycare's demographics goes a long way toward dictating the labor costs and recruiting and paying for those personnel while operating the business and keeping rates affordable for parents offers the childcare industry an extremely low-margin.

"The market just wasn't responding in childcare the way it was in other sectors," Stenberg said. He returned home to McKenzie County shortly after the housing complex and daycare opened in 2014. "We didn't go into this trying to be in the childcare business, but it's an investment. When you're growing you need roads, you need schools and you also need daycare to support that population."

"Usually with economic development, it's about getting businesses to come in, but our biggest challenge is getting the workforce equipped. If we put these resources in, we'll get a return on our investment."

Once again, growth is challenging the region.

Demand for daycare slots forced Moberg to turn the library and gym into classrooms, which prompted plans for a second facility. The coun-

ty has approved the \$18 million for the second building, along with modular classrooms that will help relieve some of the demand pressure until construction is finished in 2024.

The 200 additional spots will almost double Wolf Pup's capacity. While the housing market has caught up with demand and taken the pressure off of Wolf Run Village to house county, city and school district employees, childcare operators have not rushed in.

"We've always had a waiting list," Moberg said. "Since right after we opened, we've had more kiddos than we can take in."

As the staff has grown, though, Wolf Pup now has to provide health insurance, and Watford City has stepped in to subsidize that cost.

"It's definitely a challenge to make it sustainable but afford-

able for our police officers and teachers to bring their kids because there's a wage discrepancy with the oil industry," Stenberg said.

That wage discrepancy also challenges Moberg's budget.

"We can't hire people for \$10 an hour, we have to pay more," she said. "For things to balance, our rates would have to skyrocket."

"I do have a teaching license, but I hope I never have to use it."

Looking forward to the new facility, Moberg sees opportunities to learn from the eight years in her first building. From a security perspective, the open front desk will be a thing of the past, because a daycare is an inviting venue for adults in the middle of parental disputes. The landscaping will also change.

"No more decorative rocks or shrubs," Moberg said. "You

get kids outside and they just want to take the rocks and put them in the shrubs. They may look nice, but I found out they're more trouble than they're worth."

While McKenzie County did not plan to be in the childcare business, Stenberg said the county's response to the labor challenges demonstrates its ingenuity and creativity.

"We're not afraid to do things differently here," he said.

Commissioner Joel Brown, when approving the \$18 million for the new facility, saw the expenditure as proof the various parts of the local public sector were working together.

"In a lot of ways, I think it's become a model for what other communities across the state are doing to address these childcare needs and how they affect the workforce," he said. **CN**



**Daniel Stenberg, McKenzie County's economic development coordinator, discusses daycare needs in the county.** Photo by Hugh Clarke



**Tess Moberg, director of Wolf Pup Daycare, talks about the population growth and the demand for caregivers.** Photo by Hugh Clarke



**McKenzie County's Daniel Stenberg (right) shows off the daycare to County News Senior Writer Charlie Ban.** Photo by Hugh Clarke





# Help Ensure Your County Receives the Broadband Support it Needs

The Federal Communication Commission (FCC) is on a mission to create new and improved broadband maps to ensure all residents have the opportunity to be eligible to receive federal support for high-speed internet deployment. These broadband availability maps will be instrumental in determining the flow of funds for over \$42 billion in funds for broadband deployment from the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL).

Ahead of the new broadband maps release in November 2022, counties will be able to challenge the data contained in the FCC’s maps, as well as contribute crowdsourced data. Your county can take several actions in the coming months to ensure that unconnected residents in your community can receive federal funding for high-speed internet deployment.

**Take action today by doing the following:**

- 1 Register to receive the current production Fabric data, which lists all broadband serviceable locations in your county
- 2 Review the data to determine whether it accurately reflects your county’s broadband serviceable locations and submit corrections to location data as needed
- 3 When the FCC releases its first iteration of the new broadband map in November 2022, review the availability data and conduct challenges as needed for any determinations that appear to be inaccurate



Start this process and learn more by visiting [www.fcc.gov/BroadbandData](https://www.fcc.gov/BroadbandData) or scanning the QR code

**Sept. 2022**

FCC opens process for challenging location data

**Late 2022**

FCC publishes first iteration of new broadband map  
Challenges on availability data will begin to be accepted

**Early 2023**

FCC compiles updated availability and challenge data to submit 2nd iteration of broadband maps

**Spring 2023**

Federal agencies will consult the map to distribute funds for broadband deployment programs



# Michigan county tracks broadband buildout with accessible, interactive map

From BROADBAND page 1

needed to be done for the county and could be updated in real time for its residents.

"We developed a map that identified more than 8,000 homes that were without any connectivity, any access at all," Scharrer said. "That actually started when the pandemic hit — we were out driving, just when things were starting to get locked down, and kids were being sent home from school. It became apparent that the work we were doing was extremely important.

"The best part about that map is that it's interactive, it's tied to our construction management system and as things progress, we can continue to update it in real time from the field while we're out there inspecting new build and when we work with the ISPs [internet service provider] to update schedules. It's all interconnected."

A similar initiative was created on a larger scale by the Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC) to have the state physically mapped for infrastructure. According to Scharrer, the results of that are expected to come out early next year.

Prior to the creation of their map, five years ago, the county put together a broadband subcommittee, which led to Maciejewski authoring a resolution in 2019 to create a broadband taskforce to achieve the goals outlined in the subcommittee's report. The task force is made up of county residents and two commissioners, Maciejewski and Shannon Beeman.

Barbara Fuller, chair of the Washtenaw County Broadband Task Force, said she became invested in the county's broadband issue when she heard that some students were unable to use their iPads and Chromebooks.

The laptops, which were gifted to the Manchester School District, were useless to the students because of a lack of broadband.

That inspired Fuller to do something about what she sees as education inequali-



A fiber optic "node" is capable of providing gigabit speed data services to hundreds of homes.

Photo courtesy of Chris Scharrer

ty between children who live in urban and rural areas. She said she believes the task force was effective because of its level of involvement and input from members of the community.

"There are other efforts that launch and they're full of energy and people are off to the races on it and then it kind of fizzles because there isn't a community commitment to follow it through, but we had people on the task force representing the areas that needed it," Fuller said. "We had people who live here saying, 'Hey, what about my kids?' Or 'My grandchildren won't come, because they can't do their homework when they visit me.' And so, we had a real outcry that somehow we kept stoked along this whole process."

In September 2021, the county's Board of Commissioners devoted nearly \$15 million of its \$72 million in

funds from the American Rescue Plan Act to broadband and digital infrastructure. Funds from the Federal Communication Commission's Rural Digital Opportunity

Grant have also gone toward increasing connectivity in Washtenaw.

Because the more urban parts of the county don't have significant broadband issues — most notably Ann Arbor — Fuller and Maciejewski both spoke to how difficult it was to push through broadband funding on a large scale until ARPA was passed.

"I think one of the misconceptions was that it was exclusively a western county benefit, which isn't the case," Maciejewski said.

"It actually benefits people who live across just about every township in our county — eastern, central, western — and somewhat equally, it's not even a skewed dynamic, where

one part of the county benefits over another, so overcoming the misperception that it was just the western rural townships was a big obstacle.

"It helped that we had American Rescue Plan Act dollars that we could build a package around and include broadband as a piece of the package, so that the city of Ann Arbor, which is covered by broadband level already and contains the single largest municipal population in the county, would have things in that package that would be a benefit for them that were maybe more human services related."

Maciejewski attributes the county's success to approaching the broadband issue in a proactive way, having a task force and a plan ready before having the funding to implement it, as opposed to being given funding and then having to decide what to do with it.

"We figured out how to make it happen, and then we went looking for the funding and I think that a lot of times in government circles, that's not how things happen," Maciejewski said.

"There are a lot of communities out there with ARPA money right now that have no idea what to do with it, no idea how to be effective with it. We had

this broadband project ready to go—we knew how to be efficient and took advantage of the opportunity."

The task force will dissolve next month because it's achieved its goals with funding and its projected timeline, according to Fuller. Moving forward, Scharrer said that DCS Technology Design is involved in numerous rural broadband county efforts across the state with similar online tools for consumer information and project tracking. Leelanau, Berrien and Van Buren counties are the farthest along with their broadband build-outs, after Washtenaw.

"It's finding all of those little gaps and making sure that we have a mechanism in place, and some of it will be just negotiating with the local ISP [internet service provider] to fill in those gaps, because they might already be down the street, while other ones are going to require much bigger efforts that could be bringing in new internet service providers," Scharrer said.

"The one thing we're trying to avoid as much as possible is any overbuilding of service providers right now, trying to kind of draw the boundaries where they make sense, based on what's available to that area, so that we get as much mileage out of the funding that's coming as we can."

As other counties embark on similar efforts, Maciejewski said he views the way different entities in Washtenaw County banded together to combat its lack of connectivity as an example of something that can and should be mimicked in other counties across the country, both with broadband and other issues.

"To have everybody work in a collaborative way to get this done — we had township leaders, citizens, county officials, internet service providers all at the same table, working through issues on a monthly basis," Maciejewski said.

"I think what we did is really a model for how to bring together these disparate stakeholders and rally around something and actually get it done." **CN**



Fuller



Maciejewski



# Hennepin County invests ARPA funds to jumpstart Native American emergency shelter program

by **Meredith Moran**  
staff writer

Around 1 percent of Hennepin County, Minn.'s population is Native American, of which between 12 and 14 percent are experiencing homelessness.

"Our numbers in terms of disparities in homelessness are pretty shocking," said David Hewitt, Hennepin County's director of housing stability.

"So, we've always felt that our response needs to be rooted in and focused on service of supporting these community-based agencies who best understand the challenges in the community, who are best able to conceive of the solutions and who are best able to operationalize those solutions."

More than \$9 million, about 40 percent of the total amount of the American Rescue Plan Act funds the county received, went toward housing and homelessness measures, according to Hewitt, some of which went toward helping fund Homeward Bound, a 24/7 Native American emergency shelter created by the American Indian Community Development Corporation (AICDC) that offers physical and mental health support services.

"The goal is to put them into either supportive housing or permanent housing that's appropriate for the stage of life that they're in," said Michael A. Goze, CEO of AICDC. "We believe in a full continuum of care, but we also don't believe that people all want to be with us either and so a lot of our referrals are to other organizations or other housing options that are appropriate for the clients we serve."

"I'm very proud of the fact that we've been cited by Hennepin County as working with some of the most long-term homeless people in finally getting them into permanent supportive housing or Section 8 housing."

Homeward Bound opened in December 2020, receiving funds from Hennepin County for acquisition and renovation of the building in making it suitable to hold 50 people, ac-

cording to Goze. The first two years of the shelter's operations were funded by the county, city and state and 2023 will be entirely funded by the county, he said.

As for the name "Homeward Bound," Goze said it embodies the AICDC's vision for the shelter.

"The goal was, it was not a last place [to go], it was meant

in this lowest income bracket than we have housing that is subsidized to be affordable to them."

Through the county's supportive housing strategy, its shelter budget increased by \$1 million to implement in 2020.

"Then the pandemic hit," Hewitt said. "I've been reminded a few times by the Mike Tyson phrase about how every-

our Native American community. Homelessness disproportionately impacts our Black residents as well, but the Native American community really is at this intersection of unsheltered homelessness, the opioid epidemic and then the pandemic."

All of Homeward Bound's staff is Native American, which Goze said he considers to be

"They don't want to hear anything from nobody that hasn't been there ... so, the experience here for myself with that piece, it goes a long way, because they know I've been there."

Around 2016, Goze said he conducted a survey of 200 Native Americans experiencing homelessness. Eighty-six percent reported that they had only used a shelter once in their life and 89 percent said they would never go back to one.

"They said they didn't feel welcomed, there was no staff that looked like them, safety was a concern and the losing of property was a major concern," Goze said. "People waking up with someone else's hand in their pocket, stealing their money or going to sleep with shoes on next to their cot on the floor, only to have it gone the next morning. And so, those were some of the really concerning pieces that led to people not willing to spend the night in a shelter and looking for alternative places."

Hennepin County Native Americans had sought out shelter at a large tent encampment known as "The Wall of Forgotten Natives." It was located close to where Homeward Bound is now but was shut down in December 2018 when city workers cleared the camp out, covering the ground with metal pipes and putting up a chain link fence to keep people from setting up a new camp.

Goodman echoed the sentiment of general mistrust in shelters, but said that he's found Homeward Bound's residents to feel more at home because of its Native American staff and the sacred practices made available to those at the shelter, including smudging, which is a ritual that spiritually cleanses a space, as well as sweats, which Goodman coordinates with spiritual leader Fred Desjarlait and is used as a ceremony to heal, give thanks and purify the mind, body and soul.



**An original Native American mural highlights one of the rooms at Homeward Bound, a shelter partly funded by Hennepin County.** Photo courtesy of Michael A. Goze/AICDC

to be the start of getting to a home," Goze said. "So, the goal is always to get people in the appropriate housing that serves them the best — that provides them a level of affordability, a level of safety."

Helping create a shelter for and run by Native Americans was one of the numerous recommendations presented to the county's board of commissioners in 2019, along with adding more case management and increasing operating hours at existing shelters.

"Hennepin County -- like communities all around the country -- has been struggling with an affordable housing crisis for a very long time," Hewitt said. "We have an estimated 74,000 households in our community that earn less than 30 percent of the area median income, and we have an estimated 14,000 units of housing that are subsidized to be affordable to people in that lowest income group. So, if you're looking at those two numbers alongside each other, what you see is we have 60,000 more households

one has a strategy until they get punched in the face, and obviously it felt a little bit like that when we were gearing up to do what we thought were really exciting pieces of work that would help address some of these growing issues of unsheltered homelessness, and then this huge pandemic hit — we had to pivot completely."

The COVID-19 pandemic showed there is a need for more specialized answers to address the county's population experiencing homelessness; for example, the county noticed that family homelessness was going down, but instances of individual homelessness were increasing, Hewitt said.

"What we talk about often is we need to increase the quantity, quality and variety, and I think that's true in both shelter programming and deeply affordable and supportive housing programming, because we know that one size doesn't fit all," Hewitt said. "... We see a really disproportionate impact and intersection of these issues, particularly impacting

one of the most important elements of the shelter.

"A lot of the [staff] have had life experience similar to the residents — the guests — that come to Homeward Bound shelter," Goze said. "Because our community is so small, there are a lot of instances where there are actually relatives helping relatives, and that seems to provide a level of strength."

David Goodman, Homeward Bound's manager, said his past struggles with alcoholism give him a unique perspective that allows him to help the shelter's population who have substance use disorder.

"Prior to going into social service work, I was an electrical lineman, climbing telephone poles and doing construction work, and I lost that due to my drinking," Goodman said. "I believe some of it was due to the trauma of being Native American, so when I sobered up — I've been sober going on 30 years now — but what I've been through, what I've seen, [it's] just trying to give back."



# Justice Peer Learning Network gathers to explore keeping mentally ill from jail



Holly Matthews, executive director of the Criminal Justice Coordinating Council, addresses county leaders last month in Lucas County, Ohio. County officials participated in NACo's County Justice Peer Learning Network.

by **Chelsea Thomson**

Reducing the number of people with mental health problems who end up in jail was the topic at a recent gathering of county officials in Lucas County, Ohio.

County leaders participating in NACo's County Justice Peer Learning Network got together last month to learn more about how Lucas County supports justice-involved community members with mental health conditions.

Lucas County was chosen as the site of the peer exchange due to a county-wide effort to reduce the number of people with behavioral health conditions in contact with the criminal legal system.

The county is also working to increase connections to community services, collect and use data to inform decision-making and advance racial equity.

Those efforts start with the county commissioners.

"We are the behavioral health advocates for the county," said Commissioner Tina Skeldon Wozniak.

"We want to continue Lucas County's momentum to have real reform so that those who need help can get help. We don't want people cycling in and out of our criminal justice system."

## Leveraging data

Attendees learned about a local Criminal Justice Coordinating Council that provides an integrated criminal justice information system.

It also governs NORIS (Northwest Ohio Regional Information System), a central repository for criminal justice information that helps manage and improve data quality, sharing and integration and cross agency/jurisdiction workflow.

The system serves as a model for data-sharing and integration across the country.

Lucas County's data-sharing and dashboards provide criti-

cal insight into the local justice and behavioral health systems to inform decision-making and strategies to reduce incarceration and understand disparities and needs.

## Continuum of care

Peer exchange participants toured the Zepf Center, a certified community behavioral health clinic, that provides behavioral health and vocational services to community members with severe and persistent mental illness.

The center also offers crisis stabilization services and accepts walk-ins and law enforcement drop-offs.

To support community members who live with serious and persistent mental illness and whose crimes are driven by that untreated illness, the Felony Forensic Assertive Community Treatment (FACT) team provides an alternative to incarceration at the sentencing phase of a felony-level case.

The program connects defendants to a team of professionals who provide intensive supervision and comprehensive, wrap-around services.

"Through several innovative initiatives, Lucas County seeks to improve outcomes for those with mental illness through reducing inappropriate incarceration, increasing access to services and enhancing public safety," said Judge Lindsay Navarre, Common Pleas Court in Lucas County.

## Public safety


While working to reduce the overuse and misuse of incarceration, Lucas County is also enhancing programs and practices to ensure justice-system involved residents have access to services that improve well-being and reduce future harmful behavior.

The Opportunity Project offers pretrial felony defendants support from a social worker, who is paired with a public defender, to identify needed

services and develop a plan for engaging the individual in those services.

Between January 2018 and June 2022, the program has supported more than 1,400 participants and nearly 74 percent have successfully remained in the community without re-arrest.

Lucas County's collaborative and data-driven programs, practices and policies have increased access to appropriate services for community members with behavioral health conditions and right-sized the local criminal legal system.

This peer exchange was generously supported by the MacArthur Foundation. 

*Find out more about Lucas County's efforts on NACo's website: <http://bit.ly/3NCHcEr>. County Justice Peer Network information is available here: <https://bit.ly/3FFGPqA>.*

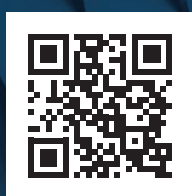
*Chelsea Thomson is the justice program manager in NACo's Counties Futures Lab.*



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# Automating Data and Analytics to Improve Public Health in LA County

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

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

## Connecting the Dots with Data

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

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

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

## 1.6 Million Cells of Data ... and Counting

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

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

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

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

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

## Improving the Course of Public Health with Analytic Automation

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

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

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

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

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





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# Shelter speaks to Native Americans

From SHELTER page 6

“There’s a lot of mistrust from other shelters that they’re in, but coming here, with it being a cultural thing, they trust us more,” Goodman said. “I would say just the atmosphere. I’m a very cultural person myself — I’m a traditional dancer, and most of my staff are traditional dancers and singers. One of the nationwide singers for The Boyz, he’s a lead singer for the [Native American] drum group and he’s one of my lead workers here during the day.”

Along with providing Hen-nepin County Native Amer-icans who are experiencing

homelessness with a place to stay and providing services involving mental health, sub-stance use disorder and finding permanent housing, AICDC is focused on destigmatizing homelessness, Goze said.

“There are a lot of reasons why an individual or a family become homeless — some-times it’s unavoidable and sometimes it’s with cause, but at the same time, we have to look past that and move to the next step and look at how we can help people,” Goze said. “AICDC looks at the lives and livelihoods of the people we serve, and by keeping that in our focus, we feel centered.” 

## ON THE MOVE

### NACo OFFICERS

- President **Denise Winfrey** and Associate Membership Di-rector **John Losh** attended the Kansas Association of Counties’ Annual Conference, held Oct. 17-19 in Johnson County.

### NACo STAFF

- **Audrey Boroshok** has joined NACo as a human resourc-es administrative assistant. She previously worked as a recruiter specialist with McKinley Market-ing Partners and an operations specialist with Zillow Group. She earned a bachelor’s degree in Business Administration and Hu-man Resources from Roanoke College.
- **Zachary Spencer** has joined NACo as a legislative assistant for Transportation and Energy, En-vironment and Land Use. He previ-ously worked as a staff assistant for the Senate Committee on Indi-an Affairs and as an energy policy intern for Sen. Joe Manchin (D-W. Va.). He earned a bachelor’s de-gree in Environmental and Natural Resources Economics from West Virginia University.
- **Nicole Weissman** has joined NACo as director of strategic com-munications. She was previously senior director of communications and program strategy with Halcyon and senior communications man-ager at the Urban Institute. She is pursuing an MBA at Johns Hop-kins University.
- **Losh** attended the Missouri Association of Counties Annual Conference in Camden County.



Boroshok



Spencer



Weissman

## PROFILES IN SERVICE

### OZ NESBITT, SR.

**NACo Board Member**  
Chairman/CEO  
Rockdale County, Ga.

**Number of years active in NACo:** 13 years

**Years in public service:** 13 years in Rockdale County

**Occupation:** Chairman/CEO, Rockdale County, Ga. Board of Commissioners

**Education:** Voorhees College, Organizational Management/ Political Science

**The hardest thing I’ve ever done:** Purchase and build my home.

**Three people I’d invite to dinner:** Mom, Grandmother and Dear Aunt Mattie (all deceased).

**A dream I have is to:** Be a speaker at the Democratic National Convention.

**You’d be surprised to learn that:** I’m afraid of cats.

**My favorite way to relax is:** Power-walking.

**I’m most proud of:** My family.

**Every morning I read:** I listen



NESBITT

to motivational/inspirational messages.

**My favorite meal is:** Breakfast

**My pet peeve is:** Getting inter-rupted when I’m making a point.

**My motto is:** Attitude is EV-ERYTHING.

**The last book I read was:** “Leaders Eat Last” by Simon Sinek

**My favorite movie:** “Django Unchained”

**My favorite music is:** Old School R&B/Gospel

**My favorite president is:** John F. Kennedy

**My county is a NACo member because:** Rock-dale County leadership clearly sees and recognizes the value of being an active member of NACo. The networking is immea-surable, and the resources are unlimited when assisting with local initiatives. The ability to bring workable, reasonable and feasible solutions to Rockdale County is a great return on our investment.

### The most adventurous thing I’ve ever done is:

Fall in love with Sapelo Island, Ga.



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# Center in Spokane County offers custom, long-term strategies for veterans

From VETERANS page 2

change the entire nature of veteran services.”

That means developing long-term strategies for each veteran, rather than triaging their crises when they happen.

“It’s connecting a veteran to the benefits that they’ve already earned. It increases their income, it increases their health benefits, it increases all different types of programs and services that can help them have a positive transition from

military service into the civilian sector.”

The complexities of the VA system can frustrate, if not infuriate, laymen, causing many claims to be rejected on technicalities.

“Veterans just shoot a claim in there thinking ‘OK, I hurt my knee in the service, I’m going to apply for a service-connected disability for my knee,” Nichols said.

“Well, because they didn’t word it right or they didn’t use the right codes when it comes

to diagnosis, there’s just so many pieces that the veteran could get wrong. Actually, even just using an outdated form, an outdated VA form, can get the claim denied just right out the gate. If they have to go through the appeals process, that could take five-to-seven years.”

Nichols’ said her staff’s successes are shared by the veterans and the local community.

“They’re getting a VA claims award so they’re buying homes, they’re buying cars,” Nichols said. “All of the county sales tax, all of that federal funding coming into the community, it’s just another huge return on investment for the county leaders. So, I think that we’ve been able to kind of show the proof in the pudding there, that it’s a win-win for everybody. It’s a win-win for county government because we’re able to have a sustainable model that’s working. I feel at some point we’re going to work ourselves

out of a job but win-win. If we do that, then ‘bonus,’ in my mind.”

Spokane County welcomes veterans from surrounding counties, and even nearby Idaho, but Nichols is creating a consortium with all of the county veteran service officers in eastern Washington to give them the same training Spokane County’s CVSOs receive.

“We’re serving all of our surrounding counties in eastern Washington and Spokane,” she noted. “But we’re also encouraging and educating those counties like Stevens County and Whitman County, for example. “It’s been a conglomerate effect of quality veteran services, but also embracing the county veteran services officer model.” **CN**



A service center in Spokane County offers help to veterans.

WORD SEARCH

STEARNS COUNTY, Minn.  
Created by: Alyxa Hawkins

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

Pulitzer Prize and a Nobel Prize. His childhood home is now a museum.

**MAJERUS:** Named in the National Register of Historic Places, the Michael Majerus House was built in the Second Empire style and now operates as a bed and breakfast.

**MINNESOTA:** The county is located in the central part of the state.

**MISSISSIPPI:** The northeastern border of Stearns County is marked by the Mississippi River.

**MUSEUM:** Interested in learning more? The Stearns History Museum depicts local and global history throughout various exhibits.

**POPULATION:** As of the 2020 census, the population of Stearns County was 162,038.

**SEAT:** The county seat is St. Cloud, Minn.

**SIZE:** The total size of Stearns County is 1,390 square miles.

**STEARNS:** The county is named for Charles Thomas Stearns, a member of the Minnesota Territorial Council active in establishing the county.

**STEVENS:** Originally, the county was named Stevens County for Isaac Ingalls Stevens, a Union brigadier general during the Civil War.

**UNIVERSITIES:** Several universities are located in Stearns County, including St. John’s University and St. Cloud State University.

**COURTHOUSE:** Constructed in 1922, this courthouse was built in the Beaux-Arts style and is located in downtown St. Cloud. The county plans to celebrate the upcoming centennial of the courthouse soon.

**CROW:** Crow Lake is located within Stearns County.

**DUCKS:** Scenes from the 1992 Disney Film “The Mighty Ducks” were filmed

in the Stearns County Courthouse.

**JOSEPH:** The Church of St. Joseph is listed in the National Register of Historic Places. The church was constructed in 1869 and completed in 1884.

**LEWIS:** Famed writer and playwright Sinclair Lewis was born in Stearns County in 1885. Lewis won many awards for his works including a

GET TO KNOW...

York County, Pa.

Welcome, York County, Pa.!

Established in 1749, York County, Pa. was named for the duke of York, who was a close friend to Pennsylvania founder William Penn. The county is referred to as “the White Rose City” after the symbol of the House of York. Its county seat is York, which was the birthplace of the Articles of Confederation and where “The United States of America” was first spoken. York was also the nation’s capital for nine months in the late 1770s.

York County measures roughly 904 square miles and its population in 2020 was 456,438, according to the 2020 census. The county refers to itself as the Snack Food Capital of the World, as it’s the location of five snack food manufacturers

including Snyder’s of Hanover and Martin’s Snacks, and the animal cracker was created in the county in 1871. America’s first iron steamboat was also created in York County.

The York Fair, which is considered to be the first fair in the country, was first held in 1765 and takes place every July. The fair’s events include “hot dog pig races,” where spectators watch dachshunds dressed as hot dogs and pigs run on a track; the Wild Wheels Thrill, where riders tackle the “Wall of Death” on antique motorcycles; a sea lion splash show and a jetpack flying water circus. Other attractions from this year’s fair included a butter sculpture and “goat mountain.”

“Get to Know” features new NACo member counties.

Local pigs unleash their competitive side for the York State Fair’s annual Hot Dog Pig Racing. Photo courtesy of York State Fair



## BRIGHT IDEAS | SUMMIT COUNTY, Ohio

# Summit County Invests Settlement Funds to Tackle Opioid Epidemic

### PROBLEM:

The drug overdose death rate in Ohio is one of the highest in the country, according to the Centers for Disease Control.

### SOLUTION:

Summit County is using opioid settlement funds to tackle the epidemic in their county.

by Meredith Moran  
staff writer

Fresh off receiving a \$104 million settlement from the nation's three largest drug distributors and a major drug maker over their contributions to the opioid crisis, Summit County, Ohio has created an Opioid Abatement Advisory Council (OAAC) to provide recommendations for programming and resources for how the county can best tackle the epidemic.

"When we filed the lawsuit, we didn't anticipate ever receiving money from it," said Greta Johnson, Summit County public information officer. "We filed the lawsuit in order to effect change ... It's important for people to know that it's truly our intention to spend these dollars in the way in which they were intended. It's one of our paramount goals to not have this turned into tobacco settlement money -- this will be spent purely on the abatement strategy."

The advisory council focuses on treatment, system and infrastructure, harm reduction and education and evidence-based prevention and is made up of subject experts — such as physicians, police chiefs and school superintendents — as well as those with lived experience with substance use disorder (SUD), either themselves or with a loved one.

"So, folks who were assembling to discuss current issues, we asked some of our judges about individuals who participate in our drug court pro-

grams," Johnson said. "And then honestly, just people who had been zealous community advocates for themselves or for their child or their spouse in that particular way."

The members of the 17-person council were chosen by five stakeholders: County Executive Ilene Shapiro, County Health Director Phil Bonduant, Akron Mayor Daniel Horrigan, Barberton Mayor William B. Judge and Coventry Township Trustee Jeff Houck.

"The OAAC reviews proposals, they put out requests for proposals, they review those bids, they make a recommendation to the stakeholders, and then since this money is held in an account of our general fund, our County Council ultimately has to give the authority for the expenditure and then the executive signs off on that as well, so there are multiple layers of sort of checks and balances," Johnson said.

The council meets monthly and through its recommendations, Summit County has in-

vested over \$3 million in training doctors and over \$2 million in a program called CenteringPregnancy that addresses issues women can have with pregnancy, including those related to substance abuse.

"We also address the folks who are in absolute emergency," Johnson said. "They can now walk through the doors of the emergency rooms at any of the Akron General Cleveland Clinic facilities, any of the Summa [Health] facilities in Summit County and can walk into the emergency room, present with the emergency of opioid use disorder or active addiction, and have it treated like an actual medical emergency instead of a moral failure."

The county has also invested \$750,000 in one of its community foundations to give grants from around \$25,000 to \$50,000 to small non-profits that don't receive Medicaid funding and aren't large enough to work with the county's Alcohol, Drug Addiction and Mental Health Services Board.

"They're what I like to call 'boots on the ground providers' who sadly are typically borne out of some sort of tragedy, that are just looking to provide — whether it's a Christmas party for kids who have lost their parents to addiction or an organization that helps folks transition back into the workforce who needed to buy work boots for a particular training group," Johnson said. "The things that really do make a difference in some of these smaller organizations are truly helping people every day."

The OAAC recently closed an RFP, which is a business document that details a new project for prospective contractors, on trauma-informed services, and also recently made a recommendation to increase case management and client services in the county jail, according to Johnson. The council noticed that the county's overdose rate wasn't going down as much as it had anticipated, which led to the discovery that between release and 14 days

out of the jail, those who had recently been incarcerated had an extremely high incidence of overdose.

Moving forward, the council has plans to expand on school-aged education regarding the opioid crisis and is also working on creating a data platform that will connect treatment providers, hospitals and the criminal justice system.

"So that way, when someone is standing in front of — whether it's a judge, or it's a treatment provider — if you've signed a release at some point, that person will be able to look at your history and say, 'I know why you're here. I know what's worked. I know what hasn't. Let's chart a path to better success,'" Johnson said. "So, trying to break down some of the barriers for people to access treatment and services is important." **CN**

*Summit County was the recipient of NACo's 2022 Best in Category Achievement Award in the Health category.*





# NEWS FROM ACROSS THE NATION

## CALIFORNIA

**LOS ANGELES COUNTY** officials are partnering with the Metropolitan Transportation Authority to come up with a solution to the increasing number of **unhoused residents** who use Metro stations, trains and buses for shelter. The county's Board of Supervisors approved a motion to combine the county's homeless outreach teams with Metro efforts to help find alternative shelter options. Los Angeles County's unhoused population is around 69,000.

One plan under discussion is developing "navigation hubs" at the end of several train and bus lines to help those without housing find shelter and services at night, instead of building encampments in neighborhoods. Another is to sign them up for shelter beds during the winter.

## COLORADO

• **CLEAR CREEK COUNTY** will test a **four-day work week** in 2023, in an effort to attract new job applicants.

The policy will apply to non-emergency service departments, with sheriff's office, emergency medical services, public works, transit and public health continuing current schedules. As a result, all county buildings will be open for an extra hour Monday through Thursday. The trial period will last through May 12.

• **DOUGLAS COUNTY's** new **homeless** outreach program -- The Homeless Engagement, Assistance and Resource Team (HEART) -- employs case-workers to connect people without housing to resources instead of sending law enforcement. About 50 referrals were given in the program's first two weeks.

"This community approach helps ensure people experiencing homelessness do not end up in emergency rooms

or jail, but rather are directed to community services," the county said. "Our goal is that each individual's experience with homelessness becomes rare, brief and infrequent."

## HAWAII

**MAUI COUNTY** is partnering with **energy efficiency** company Johnson Controls to save the county \$73 million through reducing energy, water and fuel usage by retrofitting buildings with LED lighting, installing electric vehicle charging stations and replacing plumbing fixtures.

"This is a fiscally responsible project that saves taxpayer dollars, creates local jobs, reduces our carbon footprint, and importantly, frees up clean water that we can use for affordable

housing," said Maui County Mayor Michael Victorino. "Reducing dependence on fossil fuels means we are taking money out of an oil tanker and keeping it right here, investing in jobs for our residents."

## MONTANA

**MISSOULA COUNTY's** new Domestic Violent Court program will expedite court cases involving **domestic violence** to prioritize the safety of survivors. The plan is to cut down the resolution time from six months to two months through a combination of improved case processing, quicker trials and more efficient agent coordination.

"If there are folks out there who are survivors of domestic violence and are not sure if they want to come forward, I want to make sure they understand all the services that are available and that the court system wants to make sure that we're not an impediment to that either," said Alex Beal, Missoula's Justice Court 1 justice of the



## MAINE

An **AROOSTOOK COUNTY** program provides high school students who are interested in pursuing **agricultural careers** with the opportunity to work on a 38-acre farm. Students learn how to drive and repair tractors, grow and harvest crops and then sell them at local stores. Participants in the program are now harvesting apple crops and will soon start to plan the crops they will plant in the spring. "I feel it's very important. It's getting back to the roots of what we used to do," said John Hoffses, the educational farm's manager.

peace, who will hear cases for the new program.

## NEVADA

The **CLARK COUNTY** Commission is looking into banning the sale of **dogs and cats** at pet stores. The proposal gives businesses

a year from passage to comply.

## NEW YORK

• The **MONTGOMERY COUNTY** Legislature voted to make the county government the "**tourism promotion agency**" for the annual "I Love NY" Tourism Matching Funds Program. The county contracted with the Fulton Montgomery Regional Chamber of Commerce for the service.



See NEWS FROM page 15

## FLORIDA

• **HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY** Children's Services' new program, Duffels of Dignity, collects donations of personal care items and luggage for children who are in **foster care**, are experiencing homelessness or escaping domestic violence. The county's Children's Services has found that many of the children it assists don't have duffel bags or suitcases and instead have to use garbage bags to carry their belongings, so it created the program to allow at-risk children to have something to call their own.



## FLORIDA

• **LEON COUNTY** Schools are teaming up with the Tallahassee Fire Department in a new "Lunch Buddies" program that will have firefighters act as **mentors to middle school students**. They will meet biweekly for the remainder of the school year. "With COVID, our kids were isolated a lot and didn't have a lot of interaction with their peers much less with mentors so we're so thankful that the firefighters have stepped up," said Leon County Schools Superintendent Rocky Hanna.





**WISCONSIN**  
The **MILWAUKEE COUNTY** Transit System has installed the first **electric bus charging station**. To keep the electric bus batteries fully functioning, a charge management plan calls for topping off each bus battery for nine minutes every third lap of the 18-mile roundtrip route. The buses will also be charged for two hours overnight.

**From NEWS FROM page 14**

- **ULSTER COUNTY** has created a task force for preventing and responding to **domestic terrorism**. The task force is composed of law enforcement, mental health professionals, school officials, faith leaders and other community stakeholders.

**NORTH CAROLINA**  
The **STOKES COUNTY** Register of Deeds is recruiting local businesses to offer discounts to veterans through its **Thank a Vet** program. The office records veterans' IDs and discharge forms and issues a veterans' discount card. Participating businesses are then advertised on the register's website.

**OHIO**  
**LUCAS COUNTY**, the City of Toledo and Lucas Metropolitan Housing (LMH) are providing incentives to **recruit more landlords**.

The Landlord Incentive and Mitigation Program offers a sign-on bonus and the opportunity to receive monetary reimbursement for move-out damage expenses that are beyond normal wear and tear for landlords who rent to applicants to the Housing Choice Voucher Program. Participating landlords will also receive guaranteed payment of LMH's portion of rents, free promotional listings of properties,

free inspections by LMH staff as required by federal regulations and assistance with property compliance. A new landlord portal will provide access to information including direct deposit statements, inspection schedules and results, abatement/payment hold details and annual reexamination dates for families.

**TEXAS**  
If a housing property is being developed or redeveloped using **HARRIS COUNTY**, state or federal funds, it is now bound to **protect renters** from discrimination and allows for due process for evictions, under a new policy passed by commissioners.

Renters will be able to get free repairs and apply for housing free of charge. If landlords don't comply, the county will remove funding from the housing properties. Funding has totaled \$256 million so far for affordable rental units and plans are to put another \$200 million from the American Rescue Plan into building and preserving affordable housing, Houston Public Media reported.

**UTAH**  
While gas prices have been higher all over the country this year, they seem inexplicably so in **CACHE COUNTY**, compared to their neighbors. County Executive David Zook has formed a local **gas price task**

**force** to study the economics of the market and report back about the disparity. Members of the task force include an economist, a gas station owner and operator, an economic developer, an auditor and other citizens, the *Cache Valley Daily* reported. Last week, the cheapest gas in Cache County on *gasbuddy.com* was \$3.95 per gallon compared to \$3.87 per gallon in neighboring **WEBER COUNTY**.

**VIRGINIA**  
The **FAIRFAX COUNTY** Police Department is changing

the way it **reports incidents**. The department will stop publishing weekly crime reports for each district in favor of an online map that shows the location of incidents with limited details, *Annandale Today* reported. Those details will not indicate whether anyone was arrested and won't give a description of the suspect.

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



**WASHINGTON**  
A pilot program in **KING COUNTY** is offering fentanyl test strips and naloxone from **vending machines**. The test strips are dipped into drug residue dissolved in water and within minutes, a person can know whether the drug contains fentanyl. Harm reduction is one of the pillars of the national drug control policy.

# BEHIND THE SEAL

## INDEPENDENCE COUNTY, Ark.

**I**ndependence County, Ark. was established in 1820 by the state legislature and named for the Declaration of Independence. The county held a contest in 2020 to create its new seal, and the winning design was created by someone who lives in Norway. The seal received a lot of scrutiny from community members, so an Independence County designer used the winning design as inspiration — still including the Liberty Bell, chicken and fish — to create an updated version, which was unveiled the following month.



A river was added to an updated seal to celebrate the county's natural resources.

A mining image was added along the edge to highlight the jobs it's brought to the county.

Stalks of corn and a cow represent how agriculture has been a stabilizing factor for the county, according to Independence County Judge Robert Griffin.

*Would you like to see your county seal featured? Contact Meredith Moran at [mmoran@naco.org](mailto:mmoran@naco.org).*





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