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NATIONAL ASSOCIATION *of* COUNTIES

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In the wake of Orange County, Calif. going to the strictest “purple” tier last week, Orange County Board of Supervisors Vice Chairman Andrew Do holds one of the 11,000 COVID-19 saliva test kits that will be available soon at clinics in Anaheim and Santa Ana, as he speaks during a press conference at the Orange County Hall of Administration in Santa Ana Nov. 17. © Mark Rightmire/Orange County Register via ZUMA Wire

Counties sound alarm about holidays, ‘COVID-19 fatigue’

by **Charlie Ban**
senior writer

As the nation enters its ninth month of coronavirus restrictions amidst rising case numbers, “COVID fatigue” is setting in right when it can be most dangerous. At the same time, dropping temperatures are making outdoor recreation less appealing, removing a much safer environment for avoiding transmission.

Adding in large, indoor-centric holidays in November and December, and counties are facing their toughest test of the pandemic just when many are setting records for daily posi-

tive tests.

Ada County, Idaho, for one, is sending a message of positive reinforcement.

“We’re trying to stay positive with our messaging,” said Commission Chair Kendra Kenyon. “We’re saying ‘Thank you for wearing your mask’ rather than ‘Do it.’”

They’ll try to draw more flies with honey than with vinegar. The county is working with the city of Boise to coordinate social media messaging, in lieu of a statewide campaign.

“We think it’s better, especially when you have a county where half don’t feel like masks do anything,” Kenyon said. “The people we’re trying to appeal to are the people who think it’s a hoax or that masks don’t work,” so there’s little good in entrenching their positions with aggression and shaming.

Kenyon can see how the duration of the pandemic has affected people.

“People are tired and they’re letting their guard down,” she said. “It’s challenging to keep people connected emotionally when you can’t get together physically, especially when they look forward to family holidays.”

That strategy, avoiding shaming people, is central to Hennepin County, Minnesota’s Take Care campaign, which highlights the vulnerabilities of sensitive groups and frontline health care workers.

“The trick is figuring out how are you trying to communicate to people’s psyches? If you’re not going to do it for yourself, do it for others,” said Carolyn Marinan, chief public relations officer for Hennepin County.

“Communication is probably the most significant weapon that can help or hurt us, because you are really trying to impact behavior, and that’s one of the hardest things to do with

Mail-in ballot count was ‘just all hands on deck’

by **Rachel Looker**
staff writer

All eyes were on county election boards across the country as they burned the midnight oil to complete counts of a record number of mail-in ballots in the election.

It was no different in Pennsylvania.

“It was just all hands on deck,” said Robert Harvie, Bucks County, Pa. chair of the Board of Elections.

Bucks County received around 165,000 ballots out of 199,000 mail ballots requested. In the 2016 presidential election, the county received 20,000 absentee/mail-in ballots.

“A tenfold increase this year,” Harvie said.

Over 2.6 million voters in Pennsylvania returned mail-in ballots for the 2020 election, according to data from the U.S. Elections Project. This number is more than 10 times the amount received across the state in 2016, according to the Associated Press.

Gov. Tom Wolf (D) signed legislation last year that allows Pennsylvania voters to vote by mail up to 50 days before an election. The law created a vote-by-mail option without the need to provide an excuse, which was previously required to vote by absentee ballot.

Per state law, election officials were unable to start the count, or even open ballots, until 7 a.m. on Election Day. County officials and the Coun-

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See **BALLOTS** page 3

Counties address pandemic housing needs

by **Charlie Ban**
senior writer

After more than eight months of the COVID-19 pandemic, millions remain unemployed while their benefits start to dry up as time and temperatures drop. In response, counties are tailoring housing stabilization and homeless services to stem the tide of home losses as eviction moratoriums end.

The common thread among counties is that the pandemic, and its effects, have gone on far longer than staff initially expected, with faint hope in sight.

New Castle County, Del.

Well ahead of winter, it was clear to New Castle County, Del. that its Code Purple shelter plan for the homeless wouldn't work. The congregate shelter, open when temperatures drop

below 20 degrees, would be incompatible with U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development guidance to reduce the spread of COVID-19.

In January, shortly after the county's point-in-time count found 665 people experiencing homelessness on any given night in the county, carbon monoxide from a malfunctioning heater killed four people in a makeshift homeless camp.

But as the pandemic shifted the county's homelessness approach to hotel vouchers, the demand was enough that New Castle County would be better off acquiring their own property, though none were available. Roughly 300 families needed shelter each week, but the county could only house 200 of them.

Then, the Sheraton Wilmington South hotel was available at auction.

"Our prayers were answered," said Nicole Waters, a New Castle County program manager, during a Nov. 11 NACo webinar. "This would be the best shelter and social services hub. Researchers found fewer clusters and outbreaks of COVID-19 among individuals who stayed in hotels than among those who remained in traditional large group settings."

And no voucher-holders in the county had tested positive, to that point, out of 634 households staying in 12 different hotels.

After a \$5.5 million opening bid, the auction for the Sheraton, which was renovated five months before, became one of the most-watched Delaware commercial real estate auctions

in recent memory, Waters said, becoming a last-minute bidding war that ended with the county winning for \$19.5 million, still under the property's assessed value.

The shelter, scheduled to open in December, will include on-site social service providers, including case management for families to identify permanent housing options. The building includes 20 suites that can be adjoined to accommodate up to 10 larger families.

"The chance for transformative change is now," Waters said. "This is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity that brings hope to not only eradicate COVID-19, but homelessness as we know it, by providing emergency shelter and temporary hous-

ing through the pandemic with onsite case management and health services, allowing people to shelter in place, self-isolate, recuperate from COVID-19 and protect the health, safety and welfare of the general population."

Hamilton County, Ohio

Hamilton County, Ohio wanted to make sure it had enough resources in its rental assistance program to last, so it started small, working with three non-profit service providers. But early demand soon proved much greater than anticipated.

Within the first 30 hours, the county received more than 2,000 calls for service.

See HOUSING page 4

Counties try to head off holiday COVID spike

From ALARM page 1

human beings."

In contrast, Charity Menefee, director of communicable and environmental disease and emergency preparedness for the Knox County, Tenn. Health Department, did not mince her words in a recent news conference, gauging her concern at an eight or nine out of 10.

"I know you're tired of hearing it and I'm tired of saying it, but I'm coming to you today pleading to please take these actions seriously," Menefee said of the county's five core actions to prevent transmission: Practicing physical distancing, wearing a face covering, washing hands, sanitizing surfaces and staying home if sick.

"There's not going to be time for the cases to come back down by the time we have our next holiday. ... If nothing about our behavior changes, these numbers will continue to

rise at a high rate."

Kenyon noted that a recent press conference by Gov. Brad Little (R) got some traction when a nurse shared her story of working during the pandemic. "That seemed to resonate with people, so we're trying to incorporate testimonials to help people relate to what's going on, using real people."


Harris County, Texas sent an emergency text alert to all 4.7 million of its residents asking them to cancel their holiday gatherings and to get tested.

Whatcom County, Wash. Health Department Director Erika Lautenbach suggested families forge new holiday traditions, including preparing meals for homebound neighbors and synchronizing remote viewing of holiday movies or football games with family and friends in other households.


"This year, we have the opportunity to be creative about how we celebrate," she said.

In the week leading up to Thanksgiving, Contra Costa County, Calif. launched a "Testing Before Turkey" campaign to encourage COVID-19 testing before gathering for meals, while nearby Yolo County encouraged families to limit their gatherings to 16 people.

But even when the holidays are over and 2020 is in the rear-view mirror, the United States will be months away from any number of COVID-19 vaccines and still looking at roughly a dozen weeks of cold weather.

Kenyon thinks Ada County residents would be well-served by continuing to enjoy the outdoors if they want to be social. "We have an influx of new residents who aren't really acclimated to our way of life, so that's something we want to stress," she said. "It's so easy to distance outside, so go snowshoeing, take a walk in the park. Get out and enjoy why you moved here." 

SNAP/STATS



TOP 6 TURKEY-PRODUCING STATES

State	No. of turkeys
Minnesota:	39 million
Arkansas:.....	31 million
North Carolina:.....	30 million
Indiana:	20 million
Virginia:	16.3 million
Missouri:.....	16 million

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

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Mail-in ballot counts took ‘around the clock’ effort for counties, volunteers

From **BALLOTS** page 1

ty Commissioners Association of Pennsylvania pushed for more time to pre-canvass, but the rule did not change.

An influx of voters in Bucks County began requesting mail-in ballots in early August, Harvie said. Harvie described how the county took an “all hands-on deck” approach to counting ballots and borrowed county employees from corrections, parole, the clerk of courts and the recorder of deeds to aid in the counting.

Around 250 employees and volunteers took turns working four-to-eight-hour shifts arriving at all hours of the night to help in the process. Each mail-in ballot had two envelopes, the return envelope and the privacy envelope, that needed to be opened before poll workers could flatten each ballot and then scan them through a high-speed scanner.

Bucks County elections staff counted nonstop until they finished the majority of the ballots mid-day Thursday and then moved to review provisional ballots.

“It was really neat to see the teamwork of people who didn’t really know each other,” Harvie said. “Yet there they were, side by side, figuring out the best, most efficient way to process ballots and work with each other.”

In addition to preparing for the record-breaking mail-in ballot numbers, Harvie said his staff still had to prepare over 300 polling locations for voters who chose to cast their ballot in person.

“We had a huge turnout there and we were doing the mail-in voting, so we had enormous numbers,” he said.

Handling the increase in mail-in ballots while simultaneously running polling locations will be more expensive for the county with the added costs in hiring staff to open and count ballots, Harvie said.

“It’s something we’re going to have to prepare for I think as long as we’re not able to pre-canvass days ahead of time,” he said. “We’re going to have to put people on shift 24 hours just so we can get the count done in a reasonable



Poll workers open, flatten and scan mail-in ballots at the Ehinger Gym at West Chester University in Chester County, Pa. Photo courtesy of Chester County

amount of time.”

In Chester County, Pa., Commission Chair Marian Moskowitz said the county faced additional challenges handling the influx of mail-in ballots when the county’s director of voter services retired in August. She said the county turned to the deputy director of emergency management to run the process.

“This was such a different animal than anything we’ve ever done in the county, but I think we did OK,” she said.

Moskowitz said the counting process for the nearly 150,000 mail-in ballots received took longer than expected. Chester County received nearly 19,000 absentee or mail-in ballots in 2016.

Officials called in an extra 250 employees comprised of both county employees and workers hired by an employment service to work in three shifts with about 62 people per shift, she said.

“They wanted no problems and they worked really hard to do that,” Moskowitz said of the poll workers.

Given the restrictions and social distancing requirements with COVID-19, Moskowitz said additional employees



Poll workers count the nearly 150,000 mail-in ballots received in Chester County, Pa. Photo courtesy of Chester County

would not have fit within the facility while meeting distancing rules.

Despite the hard work of the county elections staff, she said many members of the public didn’t understand why there weren’t complete numbers by Tuesday night.

“That was really difficult to keep explaining to people as they kept calling saying, ‘Where are the numbers?’” she said.

In Montgomery County, Pa., the counting process of the 248,000 mail-in ballots received went well, according to Ken Lawrence, chair of the Board of Elections. Workers

finished the count within 41 hours.

He said the county learned a lot from the June primary, when they received 126,000 mail-in ballots and took 17 days to complete the count.

“We knew that would be far too long for the general election,” he said.

To expedite the process, the county invested \$1.7 million in equipment to aid in counting and created a new position, the director of the mail-in election, who focused solely on the mail-in portion of the election while a separate individual focused on in-person voting.

He said not being able to even open the ballots prior to 7 a.m. on Election Day complicated the process.

“A lot of people say, ‘Well you started counting at 7 a.m. on Election Day,’ but no, we didn’t start counting then, we started opening those ballots,” he said.

He credited the poll workers who worked tirelessly until the counting was complete.

“They are literally the heroes of democracy,” Lawrence said. “I don’t think people realize the intensive manpower that’s needed for this and the particularness of it as well. My hat’s off to all the poll workers.” **CN**

Counties meet housing needs

From HOUSING page 2

"We wanted to make sure we didn't spend the entire (CARES Act) allocation in case there were additional needs related to rent and utilities that we weren't aware of before the end of the year," said Holly Christmann, assistant county administrator.

"Our initial plan was to spend \$3.5 million," she said, with another \$1.5 million in reserve. The county eventually increased the allocation to \$7 million.

The county modeled eligibility after the Community Development Block Grant program, and specifically required applicants (who, to qualify, could earn 80 percent or less of the average median income) to show proof of past-due rent or utility bills and a decrease in income due to COVID. The program would directly pay landlords or utility providers for up to three months or \$2,500. That was later increased to \$5,000.

As demand came in clearer, the county added more providers. With a Dec. 20 deadline for spending Coronavirus Relief Fund money, the county was in a race against time to make sure needs were met sooner rather than later. The county later made adjustments, including allowing self-attestation of income reduction because of the number of jobs paid in cash.

"Some of our criteria might have been a bit cumbersome," Christmann said, prompting revisions to make it more user-friendly. "We should have created a central online system to 'triage' applicants before they went to program partners; pre-screen them to make sure they met base criteria."

By the end of October, the program had spent one-third of its allocation, serving more than 1,400 households. Less than a quarter of the funding was spent on utility assistance.

"Our partners were overwhelmed with requests at the start but have caught up," Christmann said. "The most successful partners are working with clients in person, collecting everything at once rather than having long correspondence trying to collect all the documentation."

El Paso County, Texas

El Paso County, Texas joined forces with the city of El Paso to coordinate homeless services during the pandemic, an effort that Joel Bishop, the executive director of justice and community services for the county said has worked better than anyone expected.

"Our partnership with the city has been important through this process," he said. "We've had a better partnership with them than ever before." The county and city, which together manage 20 shelters, established a homeless shelter work group to integrate the shelter systems.

"We knew we'd have a major outbreak in our shelters if we didn't do something about this," Bishop said. "Some were siloed, some were working together," but there was potential for trouble.

So, the work group established a site — a closed recreation center — that could serve as a welcome center for people entering the shelter system. It had two gymnasiums to serve as overflow from crowded shelters, and screening procedures found 26 people with positive COVID-19 tests and was able to isolate them in hotel rooms.

Bishop noted that since many recently released jail inmates were entering the shelter system, the county paid extra attention making sure the system could accommodate them.

With a poverty rate twice the national rate, attention to housing security has been a priority for El Paso County.

"Families here have lower income on average and higher poverty on average, so we wanted to make sure we have the right infrastructure to support the issues," he said.

In addition, the county had provided more than \$750,000 for food supplies to assist the county's food banks.

"We have two- or three-mile long lines to pick up food some days, up to 8,000 people," Bishop said.

The county also offers food home delivery programs for residents who are COVID-positive, elderly and medically at-risk. The county has also worked with the University of Texas-El Paso to map food insecurity. **CN**

Counties get veto power in federal land acquisitions

by Aaliyah Nedd

Counties will have veto power over federal land acquisitions under a recent order issued by Interior Department Secretary David Bernhardt.

Bernhardt issued a secretarial order Nov. 13 regarding implementation of the Land and Water Conservation (LWCF) fund. Established in 1965, the LWCF is used for state and local conservation efforts and the acquisition of federal lands and water. This secretarial order follows the passage of the Great American Outdoors Act (GAOA) earlier this year.

The act provides \$900 million in annual mandatory funding for the conservation fund. Bernhardt's order requires written support for any federal land or water acquisition from both the respective state governor and the affected county, which NACo advocated for.

The LWCF is funded by royalties from offshore oil and gas development in federal waters. Prior to the passage of the Great American Outdoors Act, the program was rarely fully funded and was subject to the annual congressional appropriations cycle.

In addition to permanently and fully funding the LWCF, GAOA also established the National Parks and Public Legacy Restoration Fund. The Restoration Fund provides up to \$1.9 billion annually to the National Park Service, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Bureau of Land Management and the Bureau of Indian Education for projects that address the deferred maintenance backlog between FY 2021 and FY 2025. Counties support this effort as it will improve land management and encourage tourism.

Counties can be negatively impacted by federal acquisitions of private land because

counties are unable to collect property taxes from federally owned lands. Although they are eligible for the Payment In-Lieu of Taxes (PILT) program, PILT payments are much less than property tax revenues and remain subject to the unpredictable congressional appropriations process.

This directive from Bernhardt is a win for counties as it provides them with a much greater say over any proposed federal land acquisitions. While the order mandates a key provision to mitigate lost revenue, counties encourage Congress to support long-term funding for federal land counties through the PILT and Secure Rural Schools programs. **CN**

Aaliyah Nedd is a legislative assistant in NACo's Government Affairs Department.

GET TO KNOW...

Smyth County, Va.

Welcome, Smyth County, Va.

Smyth County is located in southwestern Virginia and named after Alexander Smyth, a general in the War of 1812 and a former congressman who represented the area. The Virginia General Assembly created the county in 1832.

Smyth County includes three major valleys carved by the Holston River. A significant portion of the county is located near the popular tourist destination of the Mount Rogers National Recreation Area where thousands of tourists travel every year to visit the Hungry Mother State Park.

Smyth County has three towns: Chilhowie, Saltville and the county seat of Marion. In the

county seat, visitors can travel to the Lincoln Theatre, one of a few remaining Mayan revival theaters in the United States. The building is listed on the National Register of Historic Places and is a Virginia Historic Landmark.

Marion is also the home of William Jones, a businessman who created Mountain Dew.

"Get to Know" features new NACo member counties.



SPOTLIGHT ON
REGIONALISM
 BRIDGING THE URBAN | RURAL DIVIDE.

MICROCOSM OF RURAL-URBAN DIVIDE LIVES IN A UTAH COUNTY

The Ogden Valley in eastern Weber County, Utah. Photo by Getty Images

by **Charlie Ban**
 senior writer

Where do you keep your toothbrush? To Weber County, Utah Commissioner Jim Harvey, the answer means everything... and nothing.

It means everything because people come to their preferences through their experiences and environment — fundamental characteristics. At the same time, it means nothing, as long as everyone is brushing their teeth.

“People go to war over less,” he said. “I’m just happy they’re practicing good hygiene.”

That’s how he looks at being a Weber County citizen, whether you’re an Ogden urbanite or a rural dweller in the eastern part of the county. On the eastern shore of the Great Salt Lake, Weber, like many counties, enjoys a duality that involves balancing priorities that sometimes conflict but culminate in shared goals of prosperity for a growing county. It’s a microcosm for understanding and bridging the rural-urban divide.

“We aren’t urban to the extent of a New York City or Chica-

go, but we have a distinct urban core along with a strong rural presence,” he said. “It’s just as important that the ‘rurals’ understand transportation, homelessness and jail issues; we as ‘urbans’ need to understand mining and timber and public lands.

“The rural part of the county is very reliant on the urban part and the urban is very reliant on the rural part.”

Utah is growing fast, and Weber County is no exception, seeing a 12.5 percent increase in residents from 2010 to 2019, according to the U.S. Census Bureau. With that growth comes pressure in the form of both urban infill and rural subdivision, and the latter is a harder nut to crack.

“It has to do with home density,” Harvey said. “People who live in urban areas like their density and rural people like wide open spaces and they want to keep it that way, with as much passion and fever as they can muster.”

With a rail line making proximity to Salt Lake City and Provo even more attractive to newcomers, Weber County’s 260,000 2019 population was a 1.7 percent increase over 2018.

A few thousand people a year have to go somewhere, and they’re finding open land east and west of the county seat of Ogden attractive, making lucrative offers to landowners.

“In rural Weber County, on these generational farms, kids are increasingly not wanting to work the land the way their parents or grandparents once did, and they see that the cash that developers are willing to pay and they want to take it,” Harvey said. “What happens if the neighbors enjoyed looking out at a 200-acre farm for 20 years and now, they see houses? They don’t want their homes to change, but they don’t have the resources to buy the property for themselves.

“You can also make the point

that if a guy buys 200 acres, he should be able to do with it what he wants,” he noted.

Though the county is considering establishing a 1-acre minimum lot size in unincorporated parts of the county to manage growth, other open-space preservation efforts have not gained traction.

“The people who propose preservation are really excited as long as it doesn’t affect their property,” Harvey said.

The housing costs add tension, too. The county’s real estate average costs increased 17 percent between the third quarters of 2019 and 2020.

“We continue to have double-digit growth up here in Weber County now,” Harvey said. “That’s great, and if your kids

decide they want to buy a home, they’re looking at \$350,000, and that’s only going up. If a builder can get \$350,000, \$400,000 for a new house, there’s not incentive to go any lower, because once you put lumber in the ground, you have 15 or 20 offers on it immediately.” And even where density is scarce, there’s local pressure against change.

“In the rural areas, when you get to a four-way stop sign, you’ll have a little place for a country store with a Domino’s Pizza and a few apartments on the second floor,” Harvey said. “People don’t want apartments, but they also want a place that their kids can afford so they don’t have to move somewhere else. That’s something we need to reconcile.”


Wherever they keep their toothbrushes, Harvey wants Weber County residents to keep using them, and being vigilant with their floss.

“The message I am pushing that there is a respect, a kindness and an understanding,” he said. “It doesn’t necessarily mean that people have to agree but they have the respect to disagree without being mean or vicious or ugly with one another.” **CN**



The Weber County, Utah seat of Ogden. Photo by Getty Images

SPOTLIGHT ON
REGIONALISM
BRIDGING THE URBAN | RURAL DIVIDE.



MOVING INCENTIVES DRAW REMOTE WORKERS

by **Rachel Looker**
staff writer

Shawnee County, Kan. has adapted its moving incentive program to attract newly remote workers to relocate to the county.

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics' October jobs report, 21 percent or 1 in 5 of employed individuals nationwide are teleworking because of the coronavirus pandemic.

With this in mind, Shawnee County is building upon its already established moving incentive program to bring teleworking individuals who now have the option to relocate to the county.

Go Topeka, an economic development agency, launched the Choose Topeka incentive program last year to attract individuals to move to Shawnee County.

The Joint Economic Development Organization (JEDO), a partnership between the county and city governments, is overseeing the program. Go Topeka is funded by a portion of economic development dollars from a half-cent county sales tax.

The Choose Topeka incentive program matches performance-based incentives by partnering with employers. Incentives are available after an employee has moved to the



Photo courtesy of the Greater Topeka Partnership

county and range from up to \$10,000 for individuals renting and up to \$16,000 for individuals purchasing a home.

The cost of the incentive is shared equally between Go Topeka/JEDO and an individual's employer with both paying 50 percent of the incentive. If the employer retains the employee beyond one year, Go Topeka/JEDO will reimburse the employer 50 percent of their initial contribution.

Barbara Stapleton, Go Topeka's vice president of Talent Attraction, who is also the architect of the Choose Topeka program, said it started as a way to help employers recruit and retain employees.

According to Stapleton, Go Topeka found that 40 percent of those who work in Topeka and make over \$40,000 per year did not live in Shawnee County.

"We were looking at 'How do we generate that interest, for employees to live and work in the community in which they work for?'" Stapleton said.

JEDO approved the Choose Topeka program in December 2019 and saw high interest, with more than 4,000 individuals submitting resumes or inquiring about the program.

But when the pandemic hit and many people began teleworking, Stapleton said they knew they needed to alter the program to target remote work-

ers to come to Shawnee County.

"The pandemic has changed how things look and how people may shift," she said.

JEDO approved a percentage of the funding previously allocated for the Choose Topeka program to add a remote aspect to the initiative. Through the program, employees who work for a company outside of Shawnee County can receive up to a \$10,000 incentive for purchasing a home or up to a \$5,000 incentive for renting in Shawnee County.

Since launching in September, there have been 40 applications.

Interested individuals are required to submit an application, document and validate their current residency, prove their full-time employment and provide a remote work authorization form from their employer that validates the employer is supportive of them working remotely. After they meet the requirements with the forms, they schedule an interview

with JEDO's review committee.

Five remote workers have completed the interview process and will be the first group to complete the program from start to finish.

Shawnee County Commissioner Kevin Cook, who currently serves as the chair of JEDO, said since Choose Topeka had a large response and interested number of applicants when the program launched in 2019, they wanted to expand it to adjust to the current circumstances.

"With the pandemic that hit, we saw that there was a change in how people work," he said. "That's where we adapted the Choose Topeka program to also include remote workers attracting them to relocate to Topeka and Shawnee County."

Just 15 miles outside of the county seat and state capital of Topeka, Cook said there are rural areas with aspects that many people who have the option to work remotely find appealing.

"Until very recently, our numbers of COVID-19 infection were a lot lower than what you might find on the East and West coasts, and I think that's what really kind of drew a lot of people's attention," he said.

Cook also mentioned the lower cost of living in the county and Midwest region compared to other areas of the country.

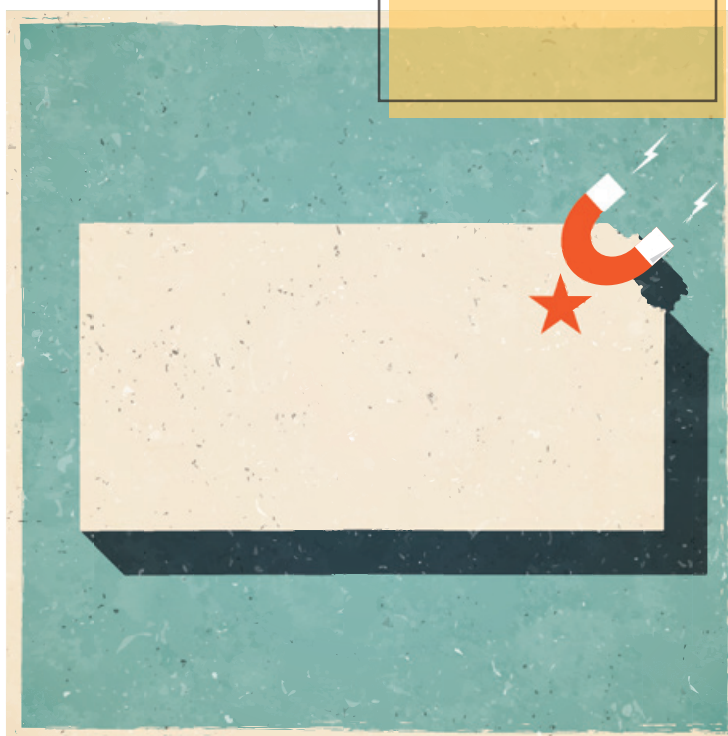
"Maybe they hadn't considered moving to the Midwest or to Topeka or Kansas before and then when you have an economic incentive that you can have reimbursement of moving expenses or purchase of your home, that suddenly may push you over the edge to that being a deciding factor in where you want to live," he said.

Cook said the city-county partnership through JEDO has been beneficial in boosting the county's economic development and noted that when people and businesses relocate to the area, it benefits the entire community.

"It really has had the ability to attract higher wage jobs that are in areas that we might not otherwise be able to fill," Cook said, "and since they're able to work remotely, they're able to fill that gap and also contribute toward the overall economy of the community." **CN**

"When you have an economic incentive that you can have reimbursement of moving expenses or purchase of your home, that suddenly may push you over the edge to being a deciding factor in where you want to live."

— Shawnee County Commissioner Kevin Cook



Bridging the Divide: LUCC/RAC Virtual Symposium Set for Dec. 10

by **Mary Ann Barton**
editor

NACo's Large Urban County Caucus (LUCC)/Rural Action Caucus (RAC) Virtual Symposium will bring together county leaders to exchange ideas and share solutions in an informative, interactive virtual event Dec. 10 from 1-5:30 p.m.

Participants will hear the latest federal policy news from Washington, D.C., and connect with national experts, innovators and elected leaders on topics of common interest, including community health, local economies, food security and public safety. The symposium will focus on four key areas important to both rural and urban county leaders: Vaccine distribution, future-proofing the local economy, feeding America and the future of pre-trial justice and bail reform.

Vaccine distribution

Counties are the frontline defense in our nation's response to the COVID-19 pandemic, collectively owning and oper-

ating more than 900 hospitals and 1,900 public health departments. While rural and urban counties are experiencing the impact on health services differently, both are creatively addressing the challenges of providing services with limited resources.

This session will highlight the availability of health resources and outline vaccine deployment efforts in rural and urban areas.

Future-proofing the local economy

The COVID-19 pandemic sheds light on the digital divide as connectivity disparities limit local solutions to addressing the public health crisis. Local governments must not only look for opportunities to leverage technology to address the immediate needs of the COVID economy, but also mitigate future challenges. This session will examine the technological challenges and opportunities related to primary education, workforce training, as well as transitioning economies and telehealth services.



Feeding America

The impacts of a global pandemic on our nation's food and nutrition system ripple throughout communities of all sizes. Farmers are losing markets and plowing under crops while demand for nutritional assistance skyrockets as the economy destabilizes. Rural and urban counties are the battery – the supply and demand – of our nation's food system and require a strong federal partner to face these challenges. This session will explore local perspectives and resources to strengthen our food and nutrition system.

Future of pre-trial justice and bail reform

Counties invest nearly \$93 billion annually in justice and public safety services, including \$26 billion in correctional facilities, and operate 91 percent of all local jails. The COVID-19 pandemic has caused urban and

rural counties to rethink day-to-day operations of the criminal justice system, including experimenting with eliminating cash

bail. This session will address pretrial justice reform initiatives and offer insights from counties on reforming monetary bail. **CN**

HERE'S A LOOK AT THE DAY'S SCHEDULE:

Thursday, Dec. 10

1-1:10 p.m.:

Welcome remarks (NACo President Gary Moore, judge/executive, Boone County, Ky.)

1:10-1:20 p.m.:

2020 election update (Matt Chase, CEO/executive director, NACo)

1:20-1:30 p.m.:

Federal policy update (Mark Ritacco, NACo director of Government Affairs)

1:30-2:30 p.m.:

LUCC Business Meeting/RAC Business Meeting

2:30 p.m.:

Refreshment break

2:40-2:45 p.m.:

Overview of combined session

2:45-3:25 p.m.:

Future of vaccine distribution

3:25-4:05 p.m.:

Future-proofing the local economy

4:05-4:15 p.m.:

Corporate partners break

4:15-4:45 p.m.:

Feeding America

4:55-5:30 p.m.:

Future of pre-trial justice and bail reform:
Reducing county costs and recidivism

5:30-6:30 p.m.:

Virtual happy hour

Register here: naco.org/lucc-rac



LUCC
RAC Virtual
Symposium

DECEMBER 10, 2020
1:00 P.M. to 5:30 P.M. EST

LEARN MORE AND REGISTER
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NACo's Large Urban County Caucus (LUCC)/Rural Action Caucus (RAC) Virtual Symposium will bring together county leaders to exchange ideas and share solutions in an informative, interactive virtual event.

Hear the latest federal policy news from Washington, D.C., and connect with national experts, innovators and elected leaders on topics of common interest, including community health, local economies, food security and public safety.



Moore: Regional approaches are necessary for county prosperity

by **Charlie Ban**
senior writer

At 2:45 a.m. on a recent November morning, two semi-tractor-trailer trucks collided on the Brent Spence Bridge, which connects Hamilton County, Ohio and Kenton County, Ky. over the Ohio River. Emergency crews from nearby Boone County, Ky. responded to the resulting fire, which involved diesel fuel and other hazardous materials.

Though the bridge, which carries two interstate highways, does not touch Boone County, there was no question that it would be part of the emergency response.

That's because the members of the eight-county Cincinnati region know if they don't work together, they won't go anywhere.

For at least a month while the bridge is closed in both directions, Boone County is about to see a lot of the traffic that would otherwise be crossing the river, taking I-275 to Indiana and Ohio.

NACo President Gary Moore has served for 20 years as Boone County's judge/executive and said the situation emphasizes the importance of regionalism in county government.

"From this detour alone, we'll see eight different counties affected, seven of them with rural components," he said.

"We have to work together on issues, no matter what size our county or whether we're rural or urban."

Moore discussed a few aspects of regionalism with *County News* and how counties can help bridge the urban-rural divide and come out stronger. Here are excerpts from the interview:

Regionalism at home

Ohio-Kentucky-Indiana Council of Governments (OKI) is our tri-state regional planning organization.

When we come together as OKI, we have three different DOTs, three different governors, three different legislatures.

The COVID-19 pandemic has really highlighted how that can



NACo President Gary Moore, Boone County, Ky. judge/executive

be a challenge, because what the governors' orders or recommendations are on travel, on business closures, on how to manage the pandemic are very different from one state to the next.

If some of our residents travel west, it's one set of rules; if they travel north, it's a different set. It does create challenges, but we still come together as a regional entity — eight counties in three states, to deal with transportation planning and other issues.

With the fire on the Brent Spence Bridge, we have emergency management responders from at least four of those counties, if not more. Everyone contributes to make this a successful recovery.

The OKI Board consists of about 120 members, and there are city, county and township officials from other states and some non-elected citizens on the Board.

During my 21-year stint with OKI, what always impresses me is that the majority of things we do get unanimous votes in favor. That kind of collaboration and cooperation between towns and large cities, smaller counties and very large counties has just been amazing.

Urban-rural divide

We have to remember that many times within a county, there are urban and rural divides, it's not just from one county to the next. In Boone County, we have the Cincinnati International Airport, we have developed areas around the airport,

but you can drive about 20 miles and still be in Boone County and you're in an agricultural, very rural part, of Boone County.

It's common in Western states to have large, spacious counties with a densely populated urban area, but you also find that in places that surprise you. When Commissioner Melissa McKinley chaired the Agricultural Affairs Committee, I was surprised because I always envisioned Palm Beach County, Fla. as tourism, coastal cities and areas and had no idea.

Her district is mostly agricultural and dramatically different from what most people think of when they hear "Palm Beach County."

We're living in interesting times, and particularly in dealing with the pandemic, in one of the things we found is while the pandemic impacted large urban areas sooner, it's now reached its way to rural and to lower-populated counties across the country.

It amazes me how often an issue does find its way to straddle both urban and rural.

Another issue where that is happening right now, caused by the pandemic, is the demand for broadband access.

I announced the Broadband Task Force to look at this issue, but we find that it's not just in remote rural parts of counties, but many times we'll have islands of the unserved or underserved areas within urban areas. It's going to be important as our task force goes to work that we definitely



need to interact with both elements of our counties.

An issue like broadband access is a way for us to not only lead to better outcomes for our residents but also develop on a foundation of common ground between urban and rural areas.

Advocating for relief

We have to look beyond our own definitions of urban and rural. When it comes to direct COVID relief allocations from the CARES Act, that difference can be as little as a single person.

Counties with populations of 500,000 or more received direct aid funding from the U.S. Treasury. Counties with populations of 499,999 and down did not.

If you were in a state where the governor suballocated based on population, maybe you did OK, but in some states, the governor did not suballocate a cent. In other states, governors suballocated but at a different percentage.

One of the things we have to focus on at NACo and in our advocacy is making sure all counties are included when we think about future relief packages, whether it's COVID or whatever the next issue might be.

Utilizing NACo as a unifying force

What other organization, what other entity is there where small population rural counties come together with large urban counties with populations in the millions? NACo is where that happens and because of how we're structured, everyone has a voice.

I've learned so much and I've gained much more than I've invested through my involvement with NACo.

The issues important to small rural counties are just as impactful to their constituents as the other end of the spectrum. At NACo, we utilize the voice of

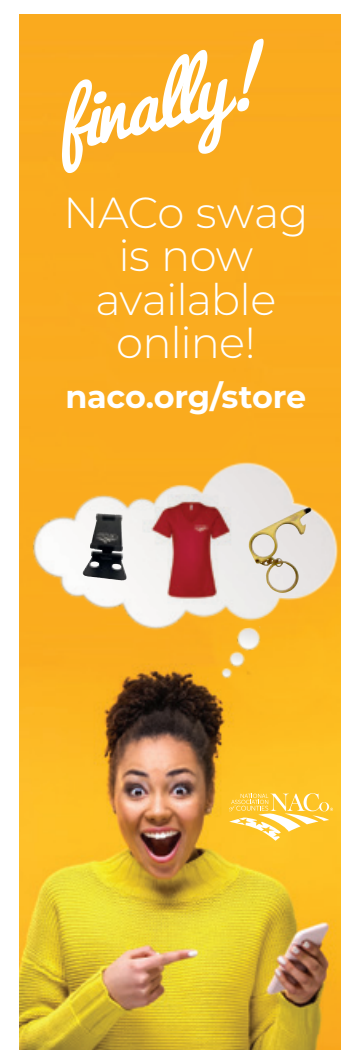
counties to educate our elected officials in D.C., to advocate for issues and positions that are important to all counties of all sizes.

I just can't imagine being an elected official in either a large urban metro area or in a small rural county and not participating in NACo. I can't fathom the awesome, amazing amount of information, the amazing number of assets NACo brings to each of us and not taking advantage of that opportunity.

Boone County can't afford to have a full-time lobbyist in D.C., there's no way we could build the relationships with staff both in the elected offices of D.C. and the administrative offices in our nation's capital.

The value that NACo brings to all of us, no matter what size we are, is amazing.

The experiences that we share with each other may be successes or they may be failures that we can share with one another and learn from one another, no matter what size of county we come from. **CN**



Pitch for Amazon HQ2 leads to a regional brand

by Victor Hoskins
and Stephanie Landrum

A hallmark of economic development in the Washington, D.C. area typically has been competition between localities and states, not collaboration. As we plan for post-pandemic recovery, it's time for that to change for good. To maximize its economic competitiveness globally, the region must expand collaboration locally.

This month marks the first anniversary of a coalition created to support regional prosperity: the Northern Virginia Economic Development Alliance, made up of 10 jurisdictions working across borders on business recruitment and marketing efforts. The joint pitch by four Northern Virginia jurisdictions that ultimately won the Amazon HQ2 bid in 2018 gave rise to the first NoVa regional brand (along with concrete proof of collaboration's regional success), followed by the Northern Virginia Economic Development Alliance agreement.

What does regionalism look

like? Already, we've launched a website highlighting the region's collective assets, embarked on marketing missions together, shared information and data, and commissioned a research program that surveyed our mutual target markets to discover their perceptions of Northern Virginia.

When we established the alliance last fall, we had no idea that the year ahead would be dominated by the storm that is the coronavirus pandemic, or that our organization would be crucial for weathering it. Our approach to regional collaboration went from nice to necessary almost overnight.

We know that "resiliency" for our business community needs to be more than a buzzword. It requires a nimble plan and achievable goals, so we have been focused on connecting businesses with resources and information they need to



Landrum



Hoskins

bridge this economic crisis. The Northern Virginia Economic Development Alliance has worked to help businesses region-wide take advantage of federal, state and local grant and loan programs. More than 20,000 Northern Virginia businesses were approved for federal programs, and more than 8,000 businesses are on track to participate in local grant and loan programs.

The alliance launched a 12-session webinar series called "Beyond COVID-19: NOVA Business Resiliency Webinars." These presentations have provided access to the latest and best possible information from experts on issues such as government financing, staffing, technology readiness, new business and revenue models, and customer retention.

Alliance partners had been working on a new website, workinnorthernvirginia.com,

to market the region to talent in New York, San Francisco, Seattle and elsewhere. More than just a job board, this platform tells the Northern Virginia story: It's a fantastic place for high-value living and a top location to further careers. The pandemic, however, made it obvious that we needed to pivot the website to connect laid-off or furloughed residents, especially in the service industries, with businesses doing surge hiring, especially in the grocery, distribution and warehousing industries.

We launched a series of virtual career fairs designed to reach new graduates searching for jobs, highly trained tech workers and the recently unemployed. These virtual fairs fostered more than 1,000 conversations between job seekers and our region's hiring companies, including Microsoft, Amazon Web Services and Hewlett-Packard Enterprise.

To achieve our ultimate economic goals, the Northern Virginia Economic Development Alliance is the first step on a path toward a true economic devel-

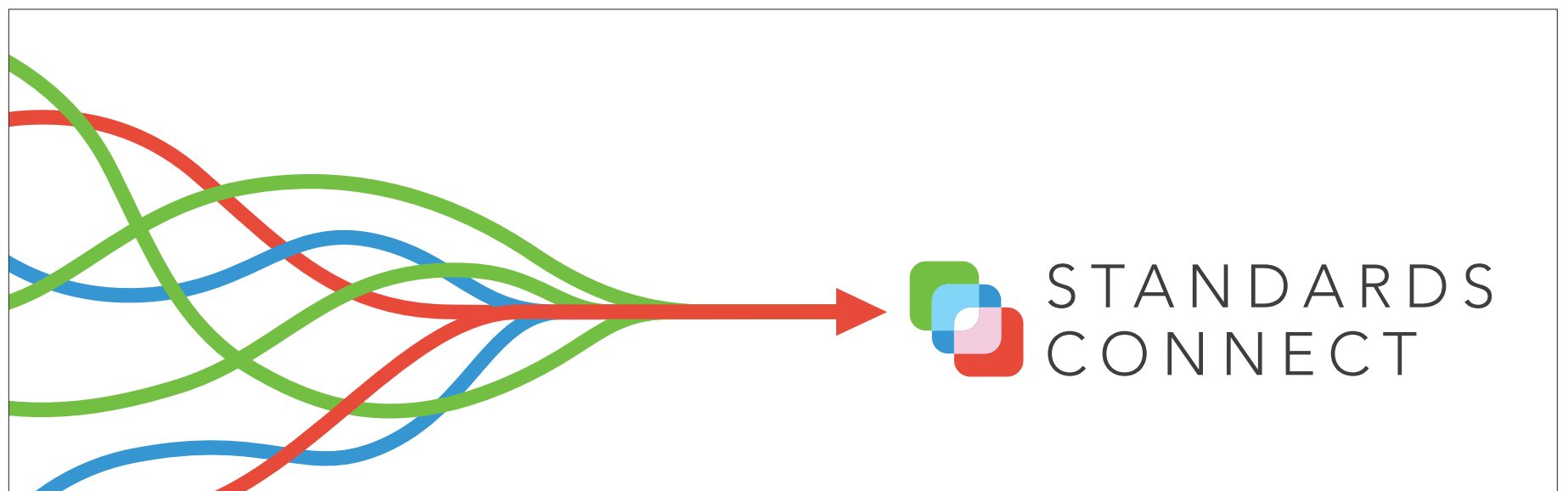


opment collective among D.C., Maryland and Virginia. This can be achieved if our colleagues from the District and suburban Maryland band together at unprecedented levels to collaborate and communicate. We must identify and play to each of our many and different strengths.

We all agree that a win for one is a win for all when it comes to economic recovery and long-term regional prosperity. We learned that with the Amazon pursuit. While HQ2 will physically be in Arlington, its value in terms of job creation, innovation and trail of businesses to follow will be felt throughout the region, and it will make this entire region more competitive economically.


That is critical, because we aren't just competing with other American metro areas for jobs, talent and innovation. We are

See *REGION* page 11




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WORD SEARCH

GILES COUNTY, Va.
Created by: Charlie Ban

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CASCADES: A 66-foot waterfall that draws 150,000 visitors a year.

CORNER: “Dirty Dancing,” filmed in Giles County, demonstrated Baby’s resistance to being put in one of these.

DRAPER: Mary Draper Ingles escaped from captivity by the Shawnee and returned home to Giles County from Kentucky.

EGGLESTON: The county’s first permanent settlement, established in 1745.

GILES: William Branch Giles served in public office for 40 years in the Virginia General Assembly and U.S. House of Representatives.

HIKE: The Appalachian Trail winds through the county.

JEFFERSON: Giles County contains 92.4 square miles of the Jefferson National Forest.

LIMESTONE: The county’s limestone base is home to many caves and caverns.

MOUNTAINLAKE: One of two freshwater natural lakes in Virginia.

NARROWS: A town in the county named for the narrowing New River that flows through it.

NEWRIVER: The river stretches 37 miles throughout the county.

OUTDOORS: Fishing, boating, hunting and hiking attract many visitors to Giles County.

PEARISBURG: The county seat is named after George Pearis, who donated a 50-acre tract for the town to grow around the county courthouse.

PEMBROKE: A town known as the “Gateway to the Cascades” and a starting point for trips on the New River.

SINKING: The centennial Sinking Creek covered bridge draws visitors to the town of Newport.

PROFILES IN SERVICE

BOB WILCOX

NACo Board Member
Executive Director of the South Dakota Association of County Commissioners (SDACC)

Number of years involved in NACo: 14

Years in public service: 16 years as a county commissioner, 14 years as an executive director

Occupation: Executive director of SDACC and owner/operator of Wilcox Grass Creek Ranch

Education: BA in Criminal Justice

The hardest thing I’ve ever done: Travel a cancer journey with my son for three years.

Three people (living or dead) I’d invite to dinner: Colin Powell — he demonstrated such strong knowledge of the military and government when he spoke at the NACo conference; Tom Brady — for his work ethic and strong sense of team play, and former South Dakota Gov. Bill Janklow — for his no-nonsense approach to getting things done.

A dream I have is to: Snow ski again with my now-adult daughter.

You’d be surprised to learn: Much of our cattle handling is done on horseback.



Wilcox

The most adventurous thing I’ve ever done: Participate in an eight-hour blizzard rescue of a neighbor family stranded in the snow, pre-cell phone, so our status was unknown during the entire event.

I’m most proud of: The fact that our office represents both the county commissioners and the county officials.

My favorite meal: T-bone steak with three fried shrimp on the side, grilled potatoes and anything chocolate for dessert.

My pet peeve is: When people commit to a task and then do not follow through.

My motto is: Only worry about what you have control over, leave the rest to God.

My favorite movie is: Any James Bond movie. It’s what I grew up watching.

My favorite music is: ‘70s music, Fleetwood Mac in particular.

My favorite U.S. president: Ronald Reagan. The Reagan Revolution aimed to strengthen the American people and reduce their reliance on the government. We need that optimism and growth today.

My counties are NACo members because: They see the valuable benefits of NACo. Currently, 100 percent of South Dakota’s 66 counties are members.



Branding a region

From REGION page 10

competing against the mega regions of the world, such as London, Shanghai and Mumbai. To do that, we need a bigger team. Armed with a proof of concept in Northern Virginia, we have an opportunity to win for this region like never before. **CN**

Hoskins is president and CEO of Fairfax County Economic Development Authority. Landrum is president and CEO of the Alexandria Economic Development Partnership. This column was first published in The Washington Post.

ON THE MOVE

NACo STAFF

- Associate Program Director **Rashida Brown** was reelected as a Washington, D.C. Advisory Neighborhood commissioner. She was elected to represent her neighborhood on issues related to sanitation, economic and business development, housing, zoning, transportation and public safety.
- Program Manger **Kirsty Fontaine** discussed diversity, equity and inclusion in a presentation to the National Association of County Behavioral Health Department Di-

- rectors, at their Fall Board Meeting: Defeating Racism through Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Nov. 9 – 10.
- Program Manager **Jack Morgan** played host Nov. 10 to the Department of Defense Readiness and Environmental Protection Integration program webinar “Supporting National Defense and Strengthening Local Communities: County and Military Partnerships.”
- Chief Technology Officer **Rita Reynolds** participated on a panel Nov. 10 on “Cyber Infrastructure Under Fire,” held by Nextgov and Route Fifty.



Brown



Morgan



Fontaine



Reynolds

2021 NACo ACHIEVEMENT AWARDS



CELEBRATING 51 YEARS OF INNOVATION

SUBMISSIONS DEADLINE:

March 31, 2021 at
11:59 p.m. EDT

NOTIFICATIONS OF ACHIEVEMENT AWARDS:

Week of April 26, 2021

HOW TO APPLY

Does your county have an innovative program that improves county government and enhances services for county residents? Apply for the 2021 Achievement Awards! There are 18 categories ranging from information technology, health, criminal justice, human services and many more.

To begin your application visit:

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QUESTIONS?

Contact awards@naco.org



BRIGHT IDEAS | ALACHUA COUNTY, Fla.

Florida County's Training Educates All Employees on Mental Health Issues

PROBLEM:

County employees working on the frontlines need to know how to respond to individuals experiencing mental health issues.

SOLUTION:

Provide training to educate all county employees on how to identify mental health issues at the first stages of crisis.



by **Rachel Looker**
staff writer

It's known as "CPR for the mind."

In Alachua County, Fla., county officials implemented a new type of training that equips public sector employees with how to best respond to an individual experiencing a mental health problem.

The county created a three-year training initiative using the National Council on Behavioral Health's Mental Health First Aid training program.

The training teaches employees about a five-step action plan to respond and identify mental health issues among citizens.

With Florida ranking as the 43rd state in providing access to mental health care by Mental Health America's *America: The State of Health in America* report, Stuart Wegener, Department of Court Services Criminal Justice liaison, said the county had a strong interest in expanding mental health activities.

"We had a huge reason to do this and to give frontline employees some tools to identify somebody, particularly at the beginning stages of a mental health crisis, and then give them a little action plan for how to respond," he said.

The Alachua County com-

mission required the Mental Health First Aid training for all county employees in 2016. Wegener said it is listed as a requirement on each employee's performance evaluation.

The county launched its training initiative in three phases. The first focused on employees directly hired by the board of county commissioners, which included the county's core departments.



Wegener

The second phase focused on employees of a supplemental set of agencies known as the Constitutional and Judicial officers followed by the last phase which included the line staff of seven county municipalities as well as members of charitable agencies that receive county funding for social services.

"We trained everybody," Wegener said. "It didn't matter if you weren't at the front desk. We trained every single county employee."

More than 2,000 staff received training over the three years of the county's initiative.

Each training included an eight-hour interactive session in groups of no more than 25. The curriculum provides information on the key strategies needed to assist someone who may be at risk or in the early stages of developing a mental health problem. Participants receive a certification from the

National Council on Behavioral Health at the end of the session.

Specialized staff from two Alachua County-based charitable behavioral health agencies who completed a two-day certification program served as the training faculty.

The training covers all types of mental illness ranging from schizophrenia to depression.

"Mental Health First Aid saves lives and reduces stigma by teaching what to say and do when a person is in crisis in a way that keeps both you and them safe," said Robert Hutchinson, chair of the Alachua County Commission.

Wegener noted that the training gives participants a stronger sense about mental illness and how it affects individuals.

"It sensitizes people I think to a greater degree than they may already know or understand," he said.

The training is a cost-effective way to transmit knowledge about mental illness to staff, according to Wegener.

Expenses for the county included the equipment, training manuals and costs of operations including hiring training instructors to conduct the program.

The program piqued the interest of the City of Gainesville, the county seat of Alachua County, which held the same training for its 1,100 employees, separate from Alachua County's initiative.

"Everybody countywide and inclusive of the city has this

training, including law enforcement," Wegener said.

The training is now held through virtual sessions because of the COVID-19 pandemic, which Wegener said has shed light on mental illness and proved the importance of learning about mental health.

"We now find ourselves in a time where it is more useful than ever and probably more needed to take steps to understand mental health," he said. "Having employees of counties be able to understand and

come to grips with this is more important than ever."

For more information about the Mental Health First Aid training, visit <https://www.mentalhealthfirstaid.org>. **CN**

Alachua County's Collaborative Strategy to Build Awareness of Mental Health Issues and Provide a Practical Response is the recipient of a Best in Category 2020 NACo Achievement Award in the Personnel Management, Employment and Training category.



SAGINAW COUNTY, Mich.

The Saginaw County, Mich. seal uses colors and symbols to represent the county's heritage and history.

The color red represents the blood shed by American patriots.

White symbolizes the indomitable American spirit.

Blue represents the county's skies and waterways.



Petals radiate from the star with symbols that represent the county.

The green petal symbolizes Saginaw County's first industry involving white pines.

The brown petal includes a gear to represent the county's place in the automotive industry.

The fish and water represent the Shiawassee, Tittabawassee and Saginaw rivers throughout the county.

A sheaf of wheat in the yellow petal depicts how the county is rich in agriculture.

An Indian on the red petal represents the county's history of the Chippewa Indians and the Sauks who inhabited the area.

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

NEWS FROM ACROSS THE NATION



Commissioners celebrate the completion of two safety projects alongside Sen. Burt Jones, Rep. Rick Williams, Georgia College & State University President Steve Dorman and Baldwin County Schools Superintendent Noris Price. Photo courtesy of Baldwin County

GEORGIA

- Commissioners in **BALDWIN COUNTY** celebrated the **completion of two safety projects** completed in the county by the Georgia Department of Transportation. The first project added a new traffic signal near the Baldwin High School and the second created a reduced conflict U-turn at the Georgia College & State University campus. Both projects are at intersections with heavy traffic and help to improve the safety of county residents.

ARIZONA

Attorney's offices in **MARICOPA, PIMA** and **YAVAPAI counties** are dismissing all pending charges for marijuana-related offenses after **voters legalized recreational marijuana** in the state. The proposition passed with 60 percent of the vote and decriminalizes most recreational use of marijuana. The new legislation also allows for the expungement of marijuana convictions, CNN reported.

CALIFORNIA

Officials in **ORANGE COUNTY** are using CARES Act funds to roll out \$2 million in **mental health initiatives**. Help Is Here, Stigma Free OC and Be a Friend for Life are publicity efforts that aim to connect individuals experiencing a mental health crisis with necessary resources, *Voice of OC* reported. The three programs will use billboards, print and broadcast advertisements and websites to help solve mental health issues brought on by the pandemic.

DELAWARE

NEW CASTLE COUNTY Executive Matt Meyer proposed a \$5 million investment in **COVID-19 testing lab capabilities** at Delaware State University. The lab will establish a diagnostic facility for short-term, inexpensive COVID-19 testing with plans to later be adapted for conducting other diagnostic testing. It will begin processing COVID-19 tests next month and plans to reduce the turnaround times for results. The proposal uses CARES Act funds.

GEORGIA

- GWINNETT COUNTY** is using CARES Act funds to **prevent evictions** for as many as 400 families who have been impacted by the pandemic. Through the Project Reset program, funds will be used to help families whose landlords have already filed for evictions, *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution* said. The first phase of the program will cover up to six months of past-due rent and make payments directly to landlords.

IOWA

DUBUQUE COUNTY law enforcement **switched to a digital radio system** to increase radio coverage in the county. EMS workers, fire and law enforcement will now be able to communicate on the same network, which increases the county's coverage to 96 percent from 86 percent, KCRG reported. Supervisors approved a \$10.3 million levy bond to pay for the additional towers needed.

MARYLAND

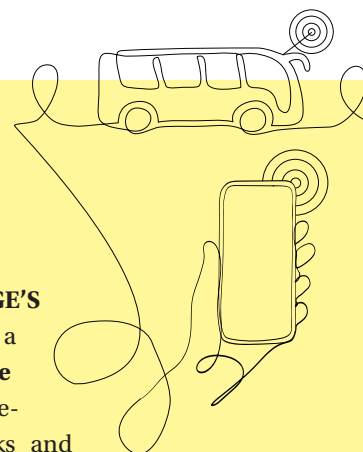
- In an effort to examine public safety, **MONTGOMERY COUNTY** is asking residents to complete a survey to **receive feedback on the area's police department**. The county has partnered with Effective Law Enforcement for All, Inc. to create a task force and conduct an audit of the county police department, WTOP News reported. The survey is part of County Executive Marc Elrich's Reimagining Public Safety initiative.

MICHIGAN

CASS COUNTY partnered with the Van Buren/Cass District Health Department to **provide up to \$1,000 in health services for local veterans**. Honorably discharged veterans and their spouses residing in Cass County are eligible for the services which include dental care, immunizations and vision and hearing examinations, ABC57 reported.

MINNESOTA

A program in **RAMSEY COUNTY** is **assisting landlords** who are experiencing losses because of the coronavirus pandemic. Through the federally funded Ramsey County Investment and Support Efforts program, the Landlord Assistance Program allows landlords to



MARYLAND

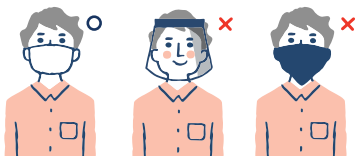
- PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY** is launching a **micro transit rideshare service**. The county Department of Public Works and Transportation launched Prince George's Link where riders can use a smartphone app to schedule micro transit trips at \$2 per trip, according to Fox 5 DC. A neighborhood-friendly bus will pick up and drop off riders who are required to socially distance and wear masks.

apply for one-time assistance grants of up to \$20,000 if tenants have not made rent payments because of COVID-19, the *Pioneer Press* reported.

MISSOURI

• Voters in **CLAY COUNTY** approved local constitution amendments that **change the county's form of government**. Five positions including the county clerk, collector, recorder of deeds, public administrator and treasurer that are elected every four years will now be hired by the county administrator, according to FOX4. The changes also expand the county board from three members to seven. Other changes include term limits for commissioners, campaign contribution limits and the creation of a citizen review commission to propose constitutional amendments.

will be equipped with stop-arm cameras to catch and ticket motorists who **illegally pass stopped buses**. So far, 48 school districts have opted into the program. The first ticket costs \$250 and goes up by \$25 for every subsequent incident, with the county splitting proceeds with its equipment vendor. Suffolk County is the first county in the state to use the technology.



OHIO

• If you go to any of the **CUYAHOGA COUNTY** Public Library's 29 branches, you won't have to go find the dictionary to learn the definition of a **face covering**. Face shields, bandanas or gaiters will no longer be enough to enter — a tight-fitting face mask is now mandatory for anyone over the age of 2. The library will have face masks available for any customer who enters the building without one.

• **LUCAS COUNTY's** administrative judge **suspended jury trials** through the end of the year in response to the rising threat of the coronavirus. Exceptions will be made in un-

usual circumstances, including if a witness is expected to become unavailable or if a defendant had an issue of needing a speedy trial, *The Toledo Blade* reported.

OREGON

MULTNOMAH COUNTY voters approved a ballot measure that will offer **free pre-kindergarten** to anyone who needs it, likely starting in 2022. It will be funded by a new tax that will range from 1.5 percent to 3 percent for households that make over \$200,000, representing 6 percent of filers in Multnomah County.

TEXAS

• **HARRIS COUNTY** commissioners allocated more than \$2 million to fund an **immigration legal services** program, offering representation to people facing deportation. Commissioners also approved \$500,000 to support immigrants who are victims of a crime and therefore eligible to obtain legal status by cooperating with law enforcement, Houston Public Media reported.

• With three positive tests Nov. 17, **LOVING COUNTY** was the last of 3,069 counties to record **COVID-19 cases**, *Texas Monthly* reported. The least populous county is home



UTAH

As winter weather forces people indoors during the pandemic, **SALT LAKE COUNTY** is trying to encourage careful behavior by **sharing the stories of people impacted by COVID-19**. Videos, billboards and bus ads will bear messages about people grieving or facing chronic illness after catching the virus.

"We see people in our state and county right now who still deny the difficult situation we're in," said Mayor Jenny Wilson. "It's only sharing the truth, whether it's a spreadsheet or personal story, that's going to help us move the needle right now."

to 169 people on 669 square miles.

• NACo Past President Glen Whitley is asking Gov. Greg Abbott (R) for the authority to **penalize people who do not follow mask mandates** in **TARRANT COUNTY**, where he is the county judge. "I just cannot stress how important it is to wear a mask. The elections are over. Quit making it a political issue. Let's get on the same team and let's beat this thing"

Judge Whitley said, according to the local Fox affiliate. "If we had the ability to give a couple of citations, it'll be the cities and it could be the sheriff's department. But I think if folks felt like we're serious about this they'd say OK we're going to wear a mask."

VIRGINIA

A directory created by the **FAIRFAX COUNTY** Department of Planning and Development's Community Revitalization Section is **connecting local small production manufacturers** to networking groups, marketing opportunities and potential customers. It features dozens of small manufacturers making a variety of products in the county including custom furniture, baked goods and jewelry.

WASHINGTON

This year's presidential election weeded out 19 counties that had voted with the presidential winner since 1980, and left **CLALLAM COUNTY** as the only county with a **perfect record** in that time, according to the *Kitsap Sun*.

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

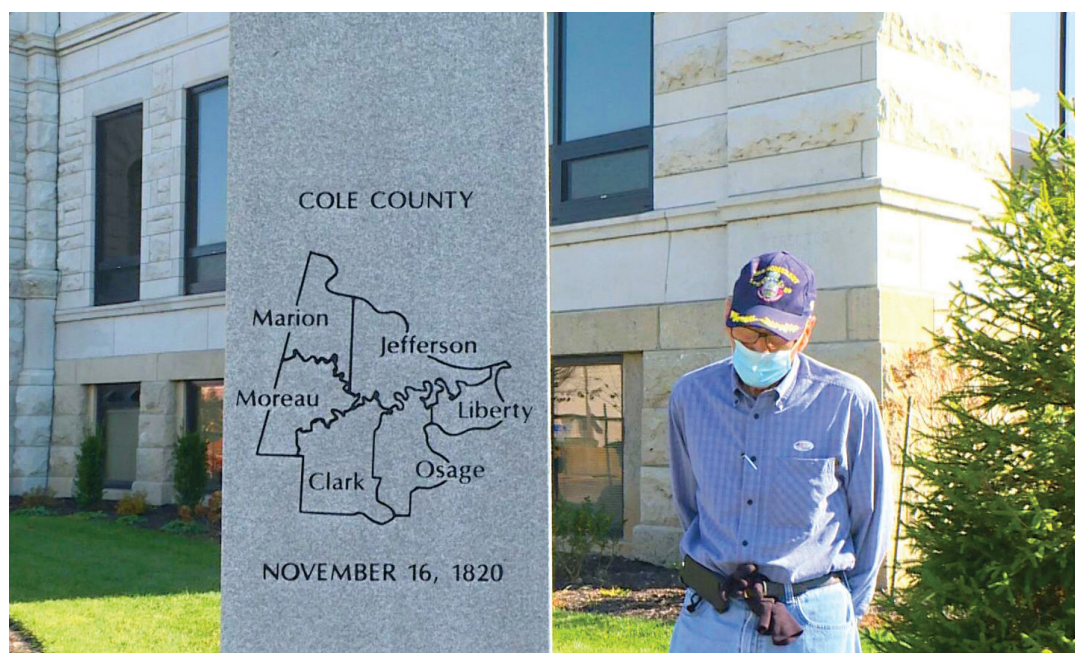


NEVADA

NYE COUNTY is developing an ordinance regulating the operation of **hot air balloons** in the county. Balloons approaching too close to homes and landing on private property have troubled residents, pets and livestock. Current Federal Aviation Administration laws regarding balloons have been unevenly enforced, *The Pahrump Valley Times* reported.

NEW YORK

More than 6,000 school buses in **SUFFOLK COUNTY**



MISSOURI

• **COLE COUNTY** held a **bicentennial celebration** for its 200th birthday on Nov. 16. County officials dedicated a marker outside the courthouse to celebrate the anniversary. The marker has three sides that display the state Capitol dome, a map of Missouri and a map of Cole County. Officials also presented a version of the American flag with 24-stars to mark Missouri becoming the 24th state, KOMU 8 reported. The flag will fly outside the courthouse through 2021. Photo by Sara Moyers, KOMU 8

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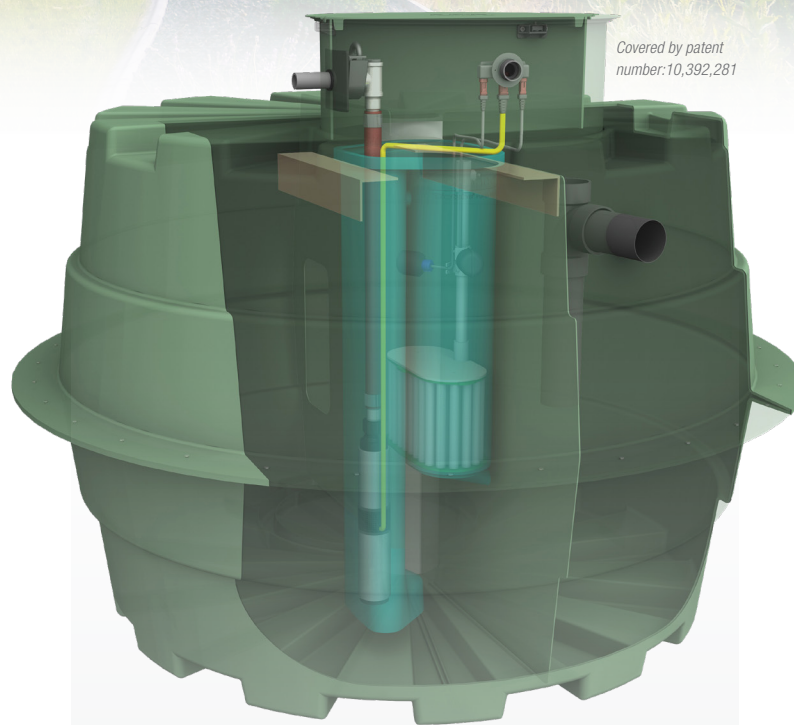
- Brundtland Report, United Nations, 1987

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*WERF Fact Sheets C1, C2, & C3, “Performance & Cost of Decentralized Unit Processes,” 2010.



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