

Shared costs make broadband happen

by **Charlie Ban**
senior writer

While he wrote that no man is an island, poet John Donne never had to develop an economy in San Juan County, Wash.

The archipelago south of Vancouver, B.C. is in the process of building out high speed internet access that could transform the county thanks to its power cooperative. The county, reachable primarily by ferry, is now primed to support business that

relies on information exchange.

“As a community consisting of islands, we don’t have much of an economic base outside of construction and tourism,” said Commissioner Rick Hughes. “This allows us to have people who want to have a lifestyle change live in our community and have a better connection.”

The last six years have been an epic poem as the county’s nearly 17,000 residents have fought

See **BROADBAND** page 3

County executive’s birthday cards reach 12,500 employees

by **Charlie Ban**
senior writer

Almost three years into his personal personnel project,

Sacramento County Executive Nav Gill has not filed a worker’s compensation claim.

His right wrist and hand have managed to withstand the repetitive motion of signing birthday cards to each of the county’s 12,500 employees, which Gill has been doing each year since 2017.

“This was something I saw the city manager do when I worked in Durham, and it’s really stuck with me,” Gill said. “I knew that when I got to be an executive or manager of some sort, I wanted to do that.”

A year after being appointed county executive, he followed the example of that city manager, Orville Powell, and started writing to each county employee.

The cards, produced and printed by the county, bear

See **BIRTHDAY** page 2

Engage county residents by going ‘outside the bubble’



Harris County, Texas Judge Lina Hidalgo (right) speaks to Large Urban County Caucus Symposium members Nov. 8 in Miami-Dade County. See more LUCC coverage starting on Page 4. Photo by Hugh Clarke

by **Rachel Looker**
staff writer

What do free lunches, Facebook lives and surveys all have in common? They were all part of the Talking Transition: Harris County community engagement initiative in Harris County, Texas.

Harris County Judge Lina Hidalgo spearheaded the initiative when she was elected in 2018.

“We all encounter this as county officials — folks are confused about what we do,” Hidalgo told attendees Nov. 8 at the 2019 Large Urban County Caucus (LUCC) Symposium in Miami-Dade County, Fla.

She said she wanted to figure out a way to use her budget to create policies that went be-

yond emergency response or roads and bridges. She said she felt the way to do that was to get feedback from the community and open the doors to county government.

“We hoped this could be a model in the future not just for folks who are just taking office, but for folks who want to get another sense of what their community is looking for,” she said.

Hidalgo hired Andrea Battista Schlesinger from HR&A Advisors, a consulting firm, to support her transition to her new role and held seven “Civic Saturdays” that attracted thousands of people from the community. She insisted department heads come to each event to engage and listen to community members.

Each Civic Saturday focused

on a different topic including health, economic opportunity, housing, children, resilience and flood control.

The Civic Saturdays were multilingual — attendees could wear earpieces to communicate with each other in different languages. The events also offered free childcare and free lunches.

The county used an online survey and had canvassers visit neighborhoods to get a wide range of responses to best represent the community from voices that weren’t always heard at public meetings or for individuals who may not have internet access. They received 11,000 responses. Hidalgo wanted to ensure all voices

See **ENGAGE** page 9

'That's a real connection'

From **BIRTHDAY** page 1

photographs of scenes that represent the county's beauty and variety on the front of the cards, with more information on the back. By rotating the four different photos by season, Gill ensures he has another year to go until employees would be in danger of getting a repeat.

He comes in early on Friday mornings and gets to work, signing roughly 250 cards over an hour and a half.

"Usually I write their name and then sign my name, but if I know them personally, I'll add a personal message," Gill said. "For a while, I had managers see me in the office early and stop by to chat, but I let them know I have to focus on this."

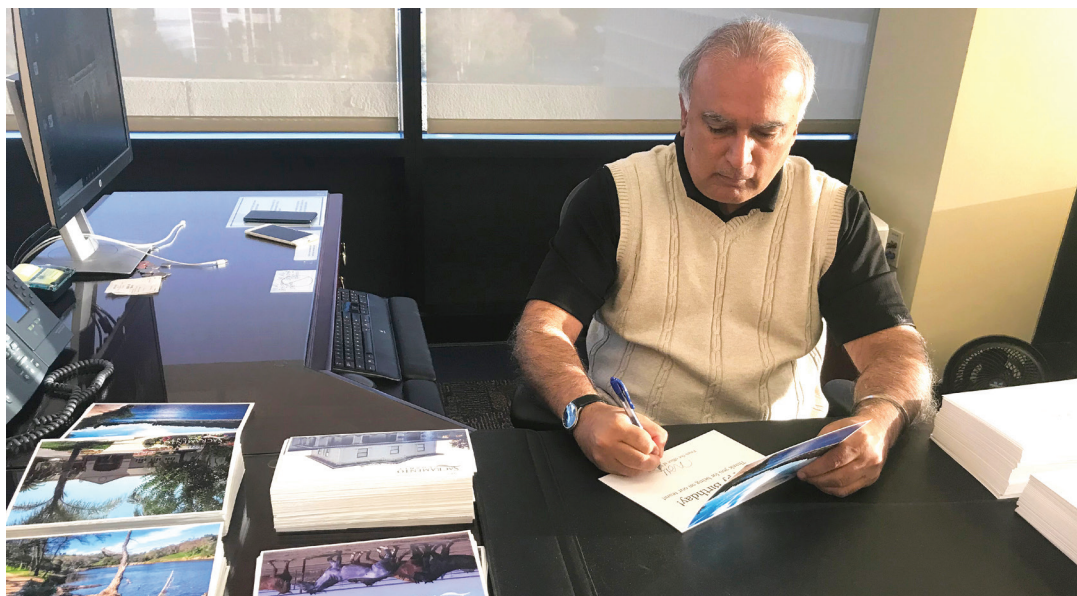
In what is otherwise a hectic and busy schedule, the ritual allows Gill a chance to be present in the task and consider

each name he writes by hand. For most of the employees who have, and expect, no daily interaction with Gill, it's a notice that at least once a year, Gill not only sees their name, but writes it by hand.

The county maintains other employee recognition programs, particularly gifts and awards for years of service, but the birthday cards are different, and personal.

The county's largest departments include the sheriff's office, human assistance and health services, and whenever Gill visits those offices, his meetings with rank-and-file employees invariably include someone recognizing his name from the card and showing him that they've saved them.

"That's a real connection that you can make," Gill said. "I had skeptics who thought it would be tedious, but when they read



Sacramento County Executive Nav Gill signs roughly 250 birthday cards early on Friday mornings.

the emails, it wins them over. I get responses back from people who say nobody else sent them a card and they felt like someone remembered them."

The cards themselves have also sent a message. One of the cards includes a photo of kite surfers on the Sacramento River delta, and sure enough the card identifies it as being in

Sacramento County.

"A lot of times, the delta is so close to the Bay Area that people just assume that's in another county," Gill said.

"This is a chance go show off another county asset to our employees and add to some county pride."

The county communications staff is scouring the county for

more photos to include on the cards, because Gill has about a year left to add new cards to the rotation. It's a ritual he plans to continue, particularly because he hasn't reached a point where his right hand is on a "pitch county," nor has he had to put it on ice, either.

"It's good to be ambidextrous," he said. **CN**

SNAP/STATS

THANKSGIVING DINNER TOP PRODUCERS

Turkey.....	Minnesota
Sweet potatoes.....	North Carolina
Potatoes.....	Idaho
Cranberries.....	Wisconsin
Pecans	Georgia

By Stacy Nakintu, NACo County Explorer
Sources: Agricultural Marketing Resource Center, The North Carolina Sweet Potato Commission, National Turkey Federation

Dept. of Homeland Security releases local government cybersecurity guide

by **Nicolette Gerald**

The U.S. Department of State and the U.S. Department of Homeland Security recently developed and released "A Guide to Critical Infrastructure Security and Resilience" as a part of the National Infrastructure Security and Resilience Month this November.

The guide serves as an overview of the U.S. all-hazards approach to critical infrastructure security and resilience. Critical infrastructure includes the assets, systems, facilities, networks and other elements the country relies on to maintain national security, economic vitality and public health and safety.

The new guide takes a holistic approach that considers all threats and hazards and can greatly enhance the effectiveness of local critical infrastructure protection. It is a useful reference for counties and can serve as a tool to engage additional partners on roles and responsibilities for protecting critical infrastructure.

The guide provides a step-by-step approach to developing, implementing and refining related cybersecurity policies and programs for a range of stakeholders, including experts in security, counterterrorism, crisis management and emergency response. It also includes coordination examples with

industry owners and operators and others with related responsibilities and capabilities.

The guide can be viewed here: cisa.gov/publications/guide-critical-infrastructure-security-and-resilience.

For more information on critical infrastructure for counties, contact Associate Legislative Director Lindsey Holman Lholman@naco.org. **CN**

Nicolette Gerald is a legislative assistant in NACo's Government Affairs department, supporting the Community, Economic and Workforce Development and Justice and Public Safety steering committees.

Island county's 'fiberhoods' pay the 'middle mile' construction costs for broadband

From BROADBAND page 1

against for-profit internet service provider CenturyLink.

"We're in the middle of nowhere," Hughes said. "Everyone was fed up paying whatever they were to CL link supposedly getting 10 MB and getting 1.5, and meanwhile their broadband maps blocked us out of all the FCC money because they said they had adequate coverage for rural broadband, but they really didn't."

Piggybacking on the Bonneville Power Administration's underwater cables that brings electricity to the 20 islands that make up the county, the Orcas Power & Light Cooperative's (OPALCO) Rock Island Communications subsidiary runs fiber optic cable to the islands from the mainland.

OPALCO owns the fiber backbone and Rock Island owns the distribution and wireless sites. A report by the National Rural

Electric Cooperative Association cites Rock Island's capital costs as \$25 million with projected annual operating costs of \$3 million to \$6 million by 2022.

"BPA would go into communities that private businesses wouldn't because the cost was too prohibitive," Hughes said. "Big internet service providers wouldn't see the business sense in connecting us to broadband."

With a connection now available on the islands, homeowners associations — or "fiberhoods" — pay the "middle mile" construction costs and individual homeowners pay the "last mile," with a \$1,500 incentive for each house from Rock Island, which outsources the build-out costs to customers, but also encourages more customers to pay in to decrease the cost to the "fiberhoods." The NRECA report quotes Rock Island as predicting that at least 60 percent of the households in the county will opt in.

"It makes it easy if you work within the power company's existing easements to put multiple-layered systems at the top of the pole with a very limited permit project," Hughes said. "They just needed an engineering permit."

The effect has been dramatic. "Before, you could not drive from the ferry to my house without losing cell coverage," Hughes said. "Now you can suck data the whole way down."

Communication dead zones drove the project in the first place, when an OPALCO lineman was seriously burned while working in the field and the rest of his crew had spotty cellular coverage. A catastrophic communications cable failure in 2013 interrupted all communication, including 911 service, for 10 days.

"This is going to change the way people work in San Juan County," Hughes said. "It takes a certain kind of person to live on

an island that's served by ferries — they're going to be isolated — but now we can provide modern conveniences and technology, it can allow us to bring different businesses here. I think we'll see huge benefits as millennials change their career paths and think about where they want to live."

It also provides some security and stability to be able to diversify the county's economy.

"I have great concerns of what the next recession will bring us," Hughes said, noting that roughly 400 families left the county at the end of the last decade. "This interconnecting provides a link and an economic safety net."

Hughes makes the case that the cooperative approach that has worked in San Juan County can work in other rural areas.


"We have to push our state and federal legislators to wake up and stop listening to big corporations, listen to us when we

tell you we need help," he said.

"The big internet providers, yes they do have the market share, but they're ignoring these communities, and rural communities are capable of great advances if people there have access to the information and communication to spread those ideas.

For-profit Rock Island benefits from its relatively quick ramp-up in revenues, which enables deployment of the full network incrementally, according to the NRECA report.

"Local, state and federal government should improve and should help fund this type of local infrastructure improvement," Hughes said, if 'fiberhoods' can't shoulder all the middle-mile costs. "If we didn't have certain things lined up, we wouldn't have this.

"We're not asking for a hand-out, we're looking for a way for us to make our opportunities happen." 

Detect Ransomware in Minutes



Albert
Network Monitoring

Specialized threat identification for U.S. State, Local, Tribal, & Territorial (SLTT) government entities.

Passive, fully managed intrusion detection system

Unique SLTT-focused signature set

Monitored by a 24x7 Security Operations Center

Cost-effective solution



Center for Internet Security®

Download Free Guide  <https://learn.cisecurity.org/albert>

MIAMI-DADE COUNTY BUILDS CENTER FOR MENTAL HEALTH AND RECOVERY



Large Urban County Caucus attendees tour the Miami Center for Mental Health and Recovery. Photo by Rachel Looker

by **Rachel Looker**
staff writer

County officials representing urban counties at the 2019 Large Urban County Caucus (LUCC) Symposium in Miami-Dade County, Fla., toured a new facility during their meeting earlier this month that will offer a full continuum of care for justice-involved individuals with mental illnesses.

The concept for the Miami Center for Mental Health and Recovery began when the county passed a general obligation bond program with \$22 million in the public safety sector to create a diversion facility for justice-involved individuals, said Tim Coffey, project coordinator for the Eleventh Judicial Circuit of Florida.

Coffey explained that Steve Leifman, associate administrative judge of the Eleventh Judicial District, has had a significant influence in championing ways to divert the mentally ill from jails.

A building that was previously the South Florida Evaluation and Treatment Center, which served as a forensic treatment facility, became available and the state leased the building to the county for 99 years for \$1 per year. The \$22 million is being used to renovate the facility.

Construction started in May for the 181,000-square-foot facility, which will have 208 beds, 16 crisis stabilization beds for 3-5 day stays and 24 beds in short-term residential units for 90-day stays. The building will offer a wide variety of services including crisis stabilization, outpatient programs and transitional housing.

With a capacity to admit 1,800 individuals, the facility will have activity programs and the addition of a "living room," a crisis respite center which will look like a residential living room. The facility is expected to open in March 2021.

The Miami Center for Mental Health and Recovery will provide resources to the most dif-

'We're just perpetuating the problem because everybody is paying for it.'

-Tim Coffey

ficult and underserved populations in the county, specifically individuals with long histories of chronic homelessness, justice system involvement and hospitalizations, according to Coffey.

"The problem is that by not serving these individuals, we're not getting the right services to these individuals," he said. "We're just perpetuating the problem because everybody is paying for it."

The building is centrally located with close proximity to the courthouse, Jackson Memorial Hospital and other services. Coffey said they are working on renovating the facility to make it

more therapeutic and less institutional.

Law enforcement officers will be able to bring individuals to the facility as a pre-booking diversion or individuals can arrive post-booking. Coffey estimates 20-25 people per day will be brought to the building.

With the new facility, Coffey said there is an anticipated annual savings of \$8 million to \$9 million. Operational costs are estimated to be \$3 million to \$4 million per year. Some existing funding will be re-purposed to pay for these costs; additional funding will come from Medicaid, state dollars, federal dollars and possibly local dollars among other sources, he said.

The building for the facility was leased from the state to the county and then subleased to South Florida Behavioral Health Network, also known as Thriving Mind South Florida, which is an administrative services organization. The organization is now overseeing the construction and will oversee

the operation of the facility.

Miami-Dade County has established a Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) program as a pre-booking component in the jail diversion program.

The CIT brings together entities throughout the county including law enforcement, mental health providers, courts, the state and public defenders, according to Hopsy Caba, a CIT training coordinator.

She said police officers complete CIT training and police departments use CIT liaisons to ensure there is 24/7 coverage for individuals with mental illnesses.

With imitation being the sincerest form of flattery, county officials including Tarrant County (Texas) Commissioner Roy Charles Brooks, NACo immediate past president, said he wants to take what he learned about the facility back home to try and replicate it in his county.

"We're here because we want to build a facility like this in Tarrant County," he said. **CN**

NACo GROUP EXPLORES LINK BETWEEN HOUSING, HEALTH

by Rachel Looker
staff writer

NACo's Housing and Health Action Learning Cohort held its kick-off meeting in Miami-Dade County, Fla., in conjunction with the Large Urban County Caucus (LUCC) Symposium to discuss housing and health outcomes on the county level.

Members of the cohort met for the first time to gain a better understanding of the impact of housing quality, stability and affordability on county health outcomes. The goal of the group is to strengthen local jurisdictions to achieve health equity and address disparities.

The three learning objectives for the cohort include:

- Equipping county officials and staff with information necessary to make informed decisions toward better housing and health for residents
- Developing individual housing and health action plans to assist counties in addressing housing challenges in their communities
- Establishing a county peer learning network on the intersection of housing and health.

The cohort consists of five counties: Johnson County, Iowa; Minnehaha County, S.D.; Orange County, Fla.; Walton County, Fla. and Washington County, Ore., which all face common challenges when it comes to housing and health.

Members representing the five counties discussed similar health issues in their counties including obesity, heart disease, hypertension, diabetes, mental health disorders and the lack of insurance for county residents to address their medical needs.

County officials shared that when it comes to housing issues, challenges include rising housing costs leading to a decrease in homeowners, a need for subsidized housing and a disproportionate number of homeless individuals and affordable housing options.



County officials from Walton County, Fla., and Washington County, Ore., provide backgrounds of housing and health outcomes in their counties during the NACo Housing and Health Action Learning Cohort in Miami-Dade County, Fla. Photo by Hugh Clarke

In Walton County, Fla., where the majority of the county lacks water and sewage systems, county officials discussed infrastructure as a major challenge to establishing affordable housing.

The group heard from Evian White De Leon, the deputy director of Miami Homes for All, a non-profit advocacy group that focuses on policy, advocacy, research and collective impact coalition building. Miami Homes for All has two initiatives focusing on affordable housing and youth homelessness.

White De Leon said housing is more than just a social determinant of health.

"It [housing] is a physical determinant of health and anything you want to throw out there I will make a hard argument that it ties back to housing," she said.

She discussed how Miami-Dade County is working with the philanthropic community including the Health Foundation of South Florida, which funds traditional health programs and helps with housing to improve health outcomes.

White De Leon referred to the "theory of change." She described this concept as looking at the housing stock, finding opportunities for concrete projects and identifying the

obstacles to accomplishing a project.

In Miami-Dade County, White De Leon added that Miami Homes for All is working with Miami-Dade County Public Housing and Community Development to create a blueprint for affordable housing across the county.

Michael Liu, director of Miami-Dade County Public Housing and Community Development, which is the sixth largest housing authority in the country, said the department manages a voucher program which counts 14,000 vouchers. He added that the county has 9,000 public housing units.

He referred to the Miami-Dade County Homeless Trust, which combats homelessness and provides a continuum of care for homeless individuals. The trust receives funding based on a food and beverage tax in restaurants that makes over \$400,000 in gross receipts annually.

"There's a collaboration here in Miami-Dade County," he said, emphasizing the importance of formalized collaboration between different agencies when it comes to housing outcomes.

"We also have resources that a lot of local communities, a lot of counties, a lot of cities don't have," he said.

Liu referred to a loan program in Miami-Dade County that is a dedicated surtax fund for affordable housing based on commercial real estate transactions.

According to Liu, around 25 years ago, the state passed a

law that created a special tax on businesses to provide resources for social benefits such as the environment, housing or transportation. A component of the law said individual counties can take a special tax locally for affordable housing purposes if approved by voters.

"The people in Miami-Dade County voted on that particular component and approved it and it has been part of the affordable housing funding resource," Liu said. "It's a 0.25 tax on every dollar on commercial real estate transactions."

Both White De Leon and Liu emphasized the connection between health and housing outcomes.

Members of the Housing and Health Action Learning Cohort will participate in webinars, team check-in calls and virtual peer exchanges over the next 10 months to continue discussing housing and health outcomes. **CN**



GALLATIN COUNTY, Mont.

The current seal of Gallatin County, Mont. is based on a version of the county seal that was used from 1935 to 2003, which featured a detailed horse-drawn thresher that was used for harvesting. The seal was simplified by a printer for letterhead in the 1980s. A decade later,

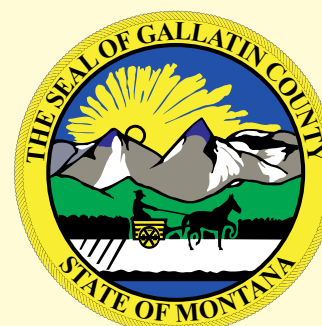
a digital seal was created in full color and is used on the county website and county flag.

The current seal speaks to the agricultural heritage in the county.

The county, which includes the Gallatin Valley, is surrounded by mountains.

The horse-drawn cart replaced the thresher from the earlier version of the seal.

In the seal, mountains depict the various ranges located in the county which include the Bridger Range, Gallatin Range and Madison Range.



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

'WE CAN ALL MAKE A DIFFERENCE,' FORMER MIAMI DOLPHINS QUARTERBACK TELLS LUCC

by Rachel Looker
staff writer

Anyone has the ability to make a difference in their community — that was the message from surprise speaker Dan Marino, the former quarterback of the Miami Dolphins, Nov. 7 at the 2019 Large Urban County Caucus (LUCC) Symposium in Miami-Dade County, Fla.

Marino spoke to attendees during lunch about his advocacy for children diagnosed with autism.

After his son received an autism diagnosis, Marino established The Dan Marino Foundation in 1992 to work to improve the lives of individuals living with autism or other developmental disabilities.

His family needed to travel to many different cities to ensure their son was receiving the best treatment, Marino told



Former Miami Dolphins Quarterback Dan Marino speaks to the luncheon crowd at NACo's Large Urban County Caucus Symposium Nov. 7 in Miami-Dade County, Fla. Photo by Hugh Clarke

county officials. The foundation wanted to establish a building that could serve as a “one-stop shop” where children with autism could receive all treatment including therapies and diagnoses, he said.

In conjunction with Miami

Children's Hospital, Marino's foundation established the Nicklaus Children's Hospital Dan Marino Outpatient Center, which Marino said is having an “extreme impact.”

“That's one of the relationships I'm talking about,” he

said. “Understanding that the relationships that you have in your community business-wise, people who have the same common interest, can make an impact in a positive way.”

The foundation has also worked to provide kids with developmental disabilities secondary education opportunities, after Marino said he learned many families needed to leave the state to find the best options for secondary education.

Marino's foundation created the Marino Campus with locations in Fort Lauderdale and Miami where kids between the ages of 18 and 25 can learn life skills and have opportunities to participate in internships that may lead to jobs.

“We've been extremely successful doing this and it's something that I'm very proud of because you can see how happy

they are to be a part of the community, being wanted, accepted,” he said.

LUCC Chair and Miami-Dade County Commissioner Sally Heyman brought Marino to speak to LUCC attendees because she said she felt it would be significant to have leaders and lawmakers hear how professionals can join together with communities to support a larger cause.

“We're starting to see more and more sports players and champions whether it's in the arts or other venue opportunities professionally come together for our hometown venue and take a special cause,” she said.

Heyman emphasized that county officials in different roles have the capability of joining forces to make a difference.

“We all can make a difference in a positive way,” Marino said. **CN**

2020 NACo LEGISLATIVE CONFERENCE

FEBRUARY

29

THROUGH

MARCH

4

2020

Washington Hilton, Washington, D.C.



JUST ANNOUNCED!

GENERAL COLIN POWELL

Former U.S. Secretary of State
Former Chairman of the
Joint Chiefs of Staff

naco.org/Leg

REGISTRATION
IS NOW OPEN!

NATIONAL
ASSOCIATION
of COUNTIES
NACo

COUNTY FUNDS HOMELESS REMEDIES WITH SALES TAX



Former Mayor of Miami-Dade County, Fla. Alex Penelas speaks to Large Urban County Caucus Symposium attendees on Nov. 7. Ron Book, chairman of the Miami-Dade Homeless Trust, looks on. Photo by Hugh Clarke

by **Rachel Looker**
staff writer

"In the late 1980s and early 1990s, we had a point in time, real count of homeless people on the street of over 8,000 people," former Mayor of Miami-Dade County, Fla. Alex Penelas said of the downtown Miami area.

Penelas, who served as mayor for eight years from 1996 to 2004 and served on the county's board of commissioners for six years, and Ron Book, chairman of the Miami-Dade County Homeless Trust, spoke to county officials Nov. 7 during the 2019 Large Urban County Caucus (LUCC) Symposium in Miami-Dade County about the homeless crisis facing local governments.

The homeless situation in Miami was so concerning, a federal judge intervened and declared two areas of down-

town Miami as "safe zones," Penelas said.

"It was a severe issue," he said. "It was impacting our economy."

During this time, Penelas explained that there was no comprehensive way to address the homeless population until the business community got involved.

He credited Alvah Chapman, former publisher of *The Miami Herald*, who led an effort in the legislature to impose a dedicated funding source for individuals who were homeless. This started the process of creating the Homeless Trust, which oversees implementation of strategies to combat homelessness and celebrated its 25th anniversary this year.

Book said the Homeless Trust is governed by a 27-member board of trustees made up of a broad cross-section of the community.

He advised county officials that local governments need a plan, as well as leadership, money and a public-private partnership when it comes to addressing homelessness.

"If you fail to have those elements, you will fail in this business," Book said.

When it comes to public-private partnerships, Penelas said there have to be three significant players: the business community, service providers and the government.

The three-pronged structure, he noted, "is the structure that's worked for Miami-Dade County" and has served as a foundation for the structure of the Homeless Trust.

Book added that the trust has a marriage with the Department of Housing and Urban Development, a close relationship with the regional director and a partnership with the public housing of-

fice. The Homeless Trust has its own budget and its own procurement process, he said. Procurement in the county is an average of 298 days, but only an average of 30 days with the trust, according to Book.

"What we do is take care of the least, the last, the lost and the forgotten in our community," he said. "We take care of our homeless. We get them off the streets. We get them housed. We get them services."

When it comes to dedicated funding sources, Penelas said the legislature allowed a 1 percent tax on the sale of food and beverages in restaurants that make more than \$400,000 in gross receipts annually. County commissioners unanimously passed the sales tax.

Penelas explained that the Homeless Trust has two entry points to the continuum of care through the Chapman Partnership, which runs two

homeless assistance centers that serve as the entry points to the system of care.

He said during a 40- to 60-day period, professionals can identify the reason why an individual is homeless, stabilize them and then move them out of the assistance center into a rehabilitative environment before graduating out of the system into some type of subsidized permanent housing.

"We have a mental health crisis epidemic in this community, so we've got a growing number of homeless individuals who are mentally ill and we also have an affordability crisis," Penelas said.

The Homeless Trust has seen a 90 percent decrease of street homelessness in the last 25 years, according to Book.

"Our community is committed," he said. "Everybody is at the table and you have to keep them at the table." **CN**

NACo 2020 ACHIEVEMENT AWARDS

CELEBRATING 50 YEARS OF COUNTY INNOVATION

SUBMISSIONS DEADLINE:

March 30, 2020 at
11:59 p.m. EDT

**NOTIFICATIONS OF
ACHIEVEMENT AWARDS:**

Week of April 27, 2020

**NACo ANNUAL CONFERENCE
AND EXPOSITION:**

July 17 – 20, 2020
Orange County/ Orlando, Florida

HOW TO **APPLY**

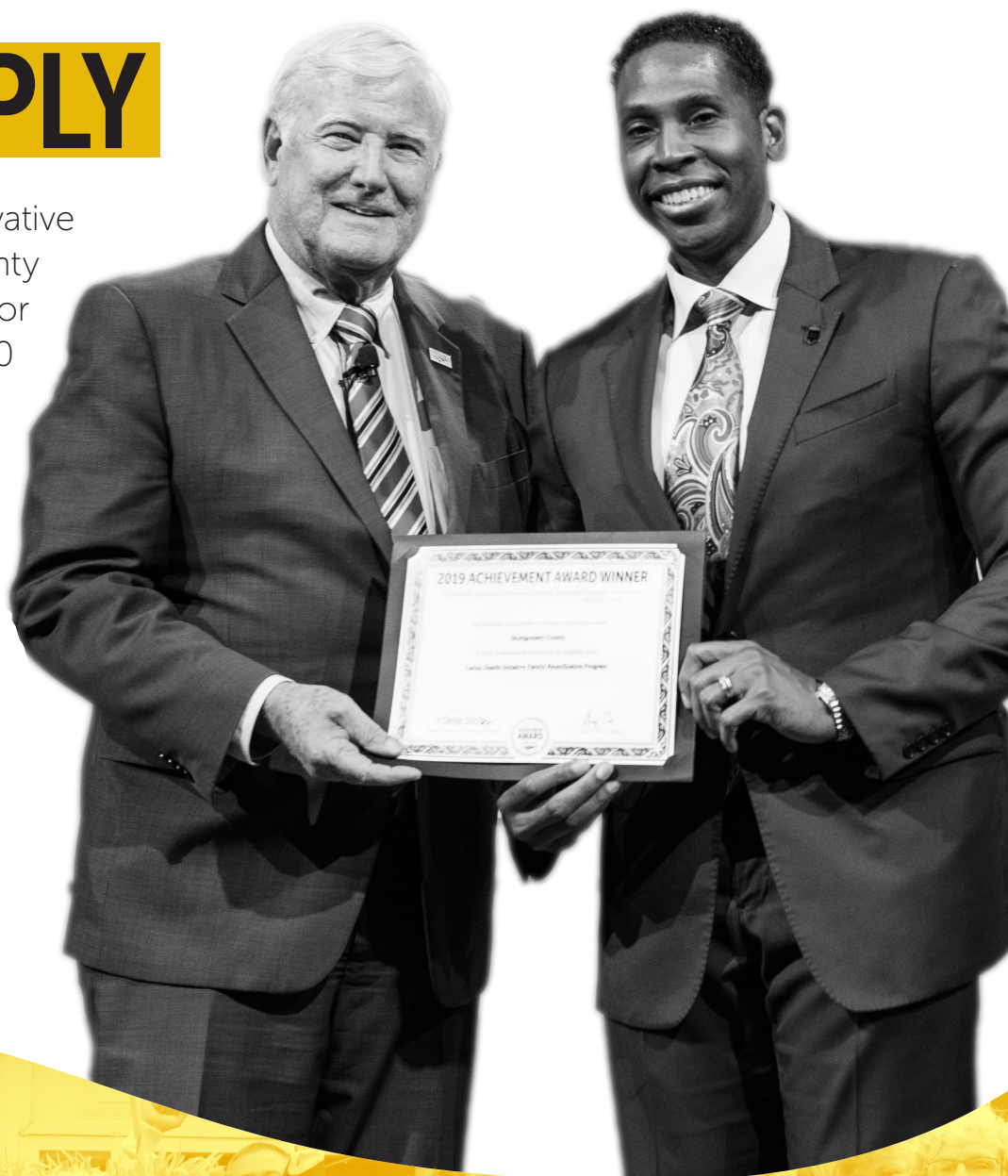
Does your county have an innovative program that improves county government and enhances services for county residents? Apply for the 2020 Achievement Awards! There are 18 categories ranging from information technology, health, criminal justice, human services and many more.

To begin your application visit:

www.naco.org/achievementawards

QUESTIONS?

Contact awards@naco.org



Survey, meetings reveal many did not know how to reach county government



Harris County, Texas Judge Lina Hidalgo speaks with county residents earlier this year. Photo courtesy of Harris County

From ENGAGE page 1

were heard, regardless of social or economic standing of their level of engagement with local government.

From the surveys, Hidalgo learned about issues that were impacting county residents on a daily basis.

For example, representatives from a neighborhood came to one of the engagements and discussed a road that wasn't working.

They were unable to connect with county government until they attended a Civic Saturday where they met with a county department and got the road fixed.

The survey and meetings revealed many individuals did not know how to reach county government.

Only one in 10 of people surveyed could name both the precinct they lived in and the commissioner who represented their precinct, according to Batista Schlesinger.

To combat this problem, Hidalgo said the county created a "311" phone system to help connect members of the community to county departments.

Hidalgo said she didn't want to walk out of these engagements only identifying problems, so she asked members of the community what the county could do to solve key issues.

"It was very actionable items that came out of these thought-leader sessions," she said.

The community engagement program, "Talking Transition: Harris County," cost \$750,000,

according to Hidalgo.

The county approached the Ford Foundation, the Houston Endowment and a health foundation in Houston and pitched the concept to them by explaining the divide between the people and their government.

"The fact was we couldn't be good stewards of public funds and our leadership position if we didn't have that ear to the ground," Hidalgo said.

The county also built partnerships with nonprofits that made the initiative successful.

"I think everyone acknowledged that county government had been operating in a bubble and blissfully so," she said. "Hundreds of millions of dollars are dispersed or allocated at each commission meeting without anyone so much as batting an eye."

Batista Schlesinger explained how she has seen "disrespectful uses of community time" just so people can say, "We've done this. We've spoken to people."

Hidalgo ensured she respected the time individuals took to attend Civic Saturdays by keeping the length of speakers to a minimum and allowing attendees to drive the discussions, encouraging county residents to return to future engagements.

"What we did was really compile the lessons. We wanted to make sure it wasn't just a 'feel-good' exercise that then dissipated into the air," she said.

"We wanted to show the results and we wanted to show the community that we heard them, and we acted on what they said." **CN**

ON THE MOVE

NACo OFFICERS

- Second Vice President **Larry Johnson** presented a NACo update to the Association of Oregon Counties Annual Conference Nov. 19-21 in Lane County.

NACo STAFF

- **Lanny Bromfield** has joined NACo as controller. He previously served as controller at Food Allergy Research & Education, Inc. Before that, he served as director of finance at the Jane Goodall Institute. He earned a bachelor's degree in Accounting and Business Administration from the University of Maryland. He is currently a CPA candidate.



Bromfield

- **Nicolette Gerald** has joined NACo as a legislative assistant, responsible for writing updates on regulatory activities, administrative duties associated with preparing for and conducting meetings and educational sessions. She previously served as manager of government affairs for Lobbyit and policy associate for the Department of Homeland Security. She earned a master's degree in Public Policy and bachelor's degree in Government and International Politics from George Mason University.



Gerald

- **Rachel Merker** has joined NACo as associate legislative director for Human Services and Education. Prior to joining NACo, Rachel served as director of Policy and Research at First Focus. Rachel holds a bachelor's degree in Public Policy from Duke University, where she minored in Religion. She also holds a Master of Public Policy degree from Georgetown University.



Merker

- **Mark Summerside** has joined NACo as corporate relations associate, coordinating the marketing activities of NACo partners and sponsors as well as helping identify and contacting prospective clients. Mark previously served as senior coordinator, logistics and operations, at The Washington Center and earned a bachelor's degree in Communication Studies from the University of Iowa.



Summerside

- Executive Director **Matt Chase** presented a NACo update at the Virginia Association of Counties Annual Conference Nov. 11 in Bath County.

- Deputy Executive Director **Deborah Cox** updated Missouri county officials at the Missouri Association of Counties Annual Conference in Camden and Miller counties Nov. 18.

- Associate Legislative Director **Jonathan Shuffield** presented at the Utah Association of Counties Annual Convention, held Nov. 12-15 in Washington County.

- Associate Legislative Director **Arthur Scott** presented at the Alaska Municipal League Annual Conference, held Nov. 20-22 in Anchorage.

- Chief Public Affairs Officer **Brian Namey** delivered a presentation on civic engagement and media relations Nov. 21 to the Arizona Association of Counties Annual Leadership Conference in Maricopa County.

House Judiciary Committee holds bail reform hearing

by Rachel Merker

The total cost to hold people in jail who are not convicted of a crime and are awaiting trial last year was \$14 billion.

How to fix the system?

The U.S. House Committee on the Judiciary held a hearing Nov. 14 on bail reform, titled “The Administration of Bail by State and Federal Courts: A Call for Reform.”

Throughout the hearing, lawmakers considered policy alternatives and solutions to pre-trial detention financial obligations, stating that such policies can often put individuals at risk of losing their job or home.

The alternatives discussed included the expansion of citation use, better risk assessments, increased judicial discretion and the elimination of bail. Lawmakers also highlighted the financial burden placed on taxpayers, as the total cost in 2018 to detain individuals who aren’t convicted reached \$14 billion.

Rep. Ted Lieu (D-Calif.) also discussed his new bill, the “No Money Bail Act of 2019” (H.R. 4474) which would restrict the use of money bail in criminal cases at the federal level.

Counties support reforming the existing bail structure, such as enacting defendant-based percentage bail laws. Additionally, counties support greater

use of non-financial pretrial release options where public safety will not be threatened, such as citation release and release upon recognizance.

NACo will continue to monitor the Senate and House Judiciary Committees for updates on future legislation or policy reform. Contact NACo Associate Legislative Director Lindsey Holman (Lholman@naco.org) with any questions.

The committee was joined by the following witnesses during the hearing:

- Brandon Buskey – Deputy Director for Smart Justice Litigation, American Civil Liberties Union Criminal Law Reform Project
- Shelton McElroy – National Director of Strategic Partnership, The Bail Project
- Alison Siegler – Director, Federal Criminal Justice Clinic, University of Chicago Law School
- Mary Smith – President, Ohio Professional Bail Agents Association
- Sakira Cook – Director, Justice Reform Program, The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights. **CN**

Rachel Merker is an associate legislative director in NACo’s Government Affairs department. Valerie Brankovic, legislative associate, contributed to this report.



Bill offers greater flexibility in child welfare reforms

by Rachel Merker

Federal legislators introduced the “Family First Transition Act” (S. 2777/H.R. 4980) Nov. 5 to assist states, tribes, territories, counties and cities with implementation of the child welfare reforms made through the “Family First Prevention Services Act” (FFPSA) (P.L. 115-123).

ing reimbursement for Title IV-E child welfare demonstration projects. These waivers expired on Sept. 30 at the end of FY 2019.

If enacted, the “Family First Transition Act” would address these challenges by providing \$500 million in one-time, flexible transition funding to help jurisdictions with FFPSA implementation. This funding

“well-supported” requirement for prevention services, which sets the evidence threshold prevention services must meet under FFPSA to be eligible for funding reimbursement. The delay offers states and counties greater flexibility to proceed with existing, evidence-based foster care prevention programs.

Going forward, legislators in

If enacted, the “Family First Transition Act” would address these challenges by providing \$500 million in one-time, flexible transition funding to help jurisdictions with FFPSA implementation.

Enacted in February 2018, the FFPSA implemented child welfare reforms to incentivize evidence-based prevention services and curtail the use of congregate care in the foster care system.

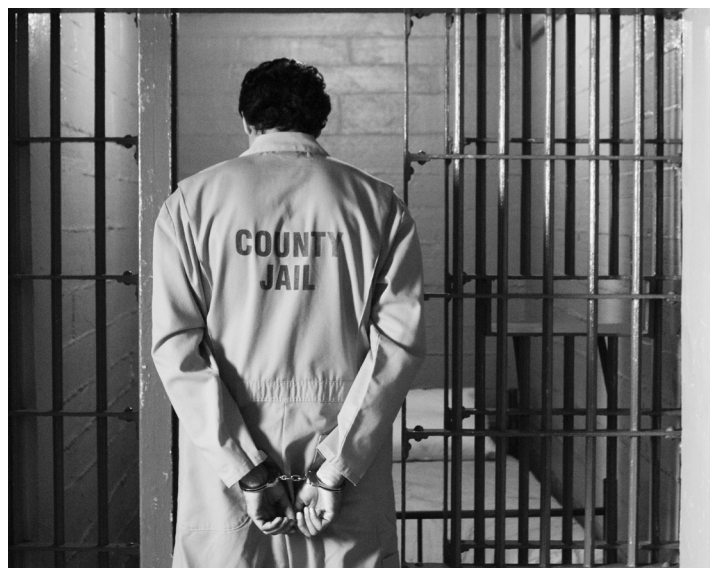
The new flexibility to use federal resources for prevention activities is a major victory for counties, which often share child welfare administration responsibilities with states. However, FFPSA posed new challenges for counties shifting to the new requirements, especially for counties receiv-

would help offset costs associated with program startup, waiver transition and improvements to foster care safety and quality. The legislation would also offer temporary grants to jurisdictions with expiring waivers if they face significant funding losses, ensuring stability and continuity of care for the children in care as the transition continues to new models under FFPSA.

In addition to these new funding resources, the bill would also create a two-year delayed phase-in for FFPSA’s

the U.S. House and U.S. Senate must still consider the “Family First Transition Act” before the bill is brought to a vote and sent to the president for his signature. On Nov. 18, NACo sent a letter to Congress expressing support for the additional resources and flexibility offered under the legislation. **CN**

Rachel Merker is an associate legislative director in NACo’s Government Affairs department. Valerie Brankovic, legislative associate, contributed to this report.



BRIGHT IDEAS | ERIE COUNTY, Pa.

Network of Initiatives Supports Veterans

PROBLEM:

Veterans who may not qualify for any form of assistance face difficulties finding resources and connecting to services.

SOLUTION:

Create a network that combines organizations under one umbrella to connect veterans to resources while gaining information about the best ways to serve the veteran community.

by Rachel Looker
staff writer

Leave no one behind.

It's a mantra for military members and has carried over to the veteran community in Erie County, Pa.

A trifecta of initiatives is making a difference for the estimated 24,000 veterans living in the county. Many of these veterans do not meet the qualifications to receive Veterans Affairs (VA)-provided services and benefits.

The county launched the first initiative, Veteran Initiative Business Enterprise (VIBE) spearheaded by George Tanner, specialist for the Disabled Veterans Outreach Program. It provides veterans and their families access to resources throughout the county.

In his position, Tanner said he found there were no collaborative services for veterans, prompting him to start VIBE. His goal is to find services for veterans who face challenges getting assistance and work to get the services to "collapse around the veteran."

Tanner worked with individuals from the Behavioral Health Center at the Erie County VA Medical Center and other non-profits to get the initiative running. The first meeting consisted of five members, but quickly grew to 13 members the next month. All members serve as volunteers.



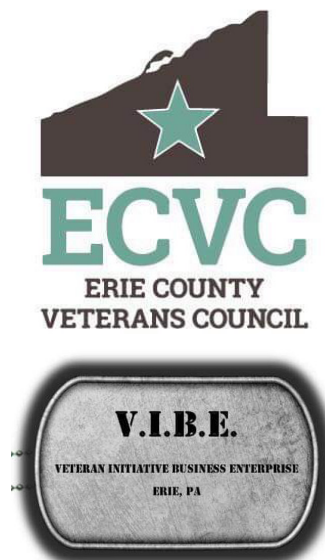
"We had to move to a bigger conference room which is always a great dilemma to have," he said.

Currently, VIBE consists of 109 members from various non-profit organizations who have access to resources or services to meet veterans' needs. If a veteran is identified as requiring assistance through a referral, an email is generated and circulated to all its members.

"The premise of the network was to avoid having the veterans bouncing all over from service to service to service," Tanner said.

VIBE typically responds to one to five requests for assistance per week. The group uses a resource chart which lists the contact information for each member and whether they can assist with housing, therapy, food, VA benefits or clothing.

Erie County Veterans Affairs Director Thad Plasczynski said they worked to build the database to the point where if a veteran had a specific need, they could pull down one of the categories and locate available resources or individuals who



may have helpful connections.

"In my office, we get dozens of veterans who come here who are not eligible for anything, so they have fallen through the cracks," Plasczynski said.

The second initiative, My VACOAT, which stands for Community Outreach and Action Team, serves as a community veterans engagement board.

My VACOAT conducts veterans expos and partners with members of Congress to gather information related to the immediate needs of veterans.

This differs from VIBE because it serves as an advisory and information-gathering initiative, while VIBE is a referral initiative.

"It was a cloaked version for us to go into the community and extract information so that we could try to recruit members to our VIBE community to be able to support those needs," Plasczynski said.

The Erie County Veteran's Council (ECVC) serves as the third initiative and completes the triangle of services to help veterans in Erie County.

The council provides a safety net of resources, both monetary and service-oriented, and supports veterans who may not qualify for certain benefits. The council works to obtain state and federal grants to build monetary capital.

"The ECVC is the bank because we did VIBE and My VACOAT without any funds at all," Plasczynski said.

The three initiatives work together to support the Erie County veteran community with VIBE referring veterans to resources, My VACOAT as an

advisory board to learn more about the current needs of veterans and the ECVC assisting financially.


"You can see all three of them are intertwined," Tanner said.

Before the initiatives, the Erie VA Medical Center was the only source for veterans to be connected to available resources, which were mostly medical benefits.

"What I did is I basically created a program so that in theory, no veteran could fall through the holes in any aspect, from whatever variable possible," Tanner said.

"There's a net in front of a net, in front of a net."

Plasczynski emphasized the importance of recruiting the right people to help when trying to create initiatives for veterans.

"If you recruit the ones that have fire in their hearts, good things are going to happen," he said. 

Erie County's Veterans' Initiatives are the recipient of a 2019 NACo Achievement Award in the Volunteers category.

PROFILES IN SERVICE

KURT GIBBS

Board Member
Board Chairman
Marathon County, Wisc.



Gibbs

Number of years involved in NACo: Eight

Years in public service: 16

Occupation: Tax accountant

Education: Two years at the Community College of the Air Force

The hardest thing I've ever done: When I was serving in the Air Force from 1977-1983 at Clark AFB Philippines, I attended eight fellow crewmembers'

memorials following the plane crash in Subic Bay Philippines of a 1st S.O.S. (special operations squadron) MC 130/E/Y aircraft on April 23, 1981 where 23 people lost their lives — eight crew and 15 special forces from various countries. The same flight that I was scheduled to fly on, however, the pilot told me just prior to takeoff that the systems I was to repair were not scheduled to be used during this training mission and therefore I would not be required to fly that night (to facilitate the repair).

Three people (living or dead) I'd invite to dinner: George Washington, General MacArthur, my father

A dream I have is to: Some-day leave Marathon County in a better place than when I started 16 years ago.

You'd be surprised to learn: One of my hobbies is woodworking and making cabinets and furniture.

The most adventurous thing I've ever done was: Parasail in Thailand.

My favorite way to relax is: Fishing pole in hand in a boat on any lake.

I'm most proud of: My family — my wife of 42 years and daughter.

Every morning I read: The Wheeler Report and Wispolitics.com.

My favorite meal is: Any seafood

My pet peeve is: People who only have their interests in mind as a motivating factor for getting involved.

My motto is: Treat everyone the way I would wish to be treated.

The last book I read was: *Strengths Based Leadership* by Tom Rath and Barry Conchie

My favorite movie is: "Star Wars"

My favorite music is: Country music

My favorite U.S. president: Ronald Reagan

My county is a NACo member because: The educational opportunities (EI, the Stepping Up campaign, the TestIT app) and the leadership opportunities (CLI, NACo's High Performance Leadership Academy.) The ability to network with other county elected officials who may have had some of the same issues we are dealing with now and the ability to advocate on behalf of counties' priorities.

WORD SEARCH

HINDS COUNTY, Mississippi
Created by: Mary Ann Barton

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

BALLET: The county is home to the USA International Ballet Competition every four years.

BLUES: The state is home to the "birth of the blues" and the Mississippi Blues Trail tells its story with markers, including a dozen sites in Hinds County.

CATFISH: Designed to promote the catfish industry, The Catfish Institute, founded in 1986, is located in the county.

CLEAN: Harry A. Cole, a native of the county, invented Pine-Sol floor cleaner in 1929.

GENERAL: The county is named for Gen. Thomas Hinds, a hero of the Battle of New Orleans, during the War of 1812.

JACKSON: The county has two county seats: One in Jackson, the state capital, and Raymond.

MOVIE: The county was the setting for author Kathryn Stockett's best-selling novel, "The Help," which was turned into a film; numerous scenes were filmed there.

MUSEUM: The Mississippi Civil Rights Museum, which tells the story of strengths and sacrifices of a national movement, is located in the county.

NEWSPAPER: *The Clarion-Ledger* traces its roots to 1837; it won a Pulitzer for Public Service for reporting on the state's education system.

PAYTON: NFL great Walter Payton played college football in the county, at Jackson State University. He set an NCAA record for most points scored, 464, in a four-year period.

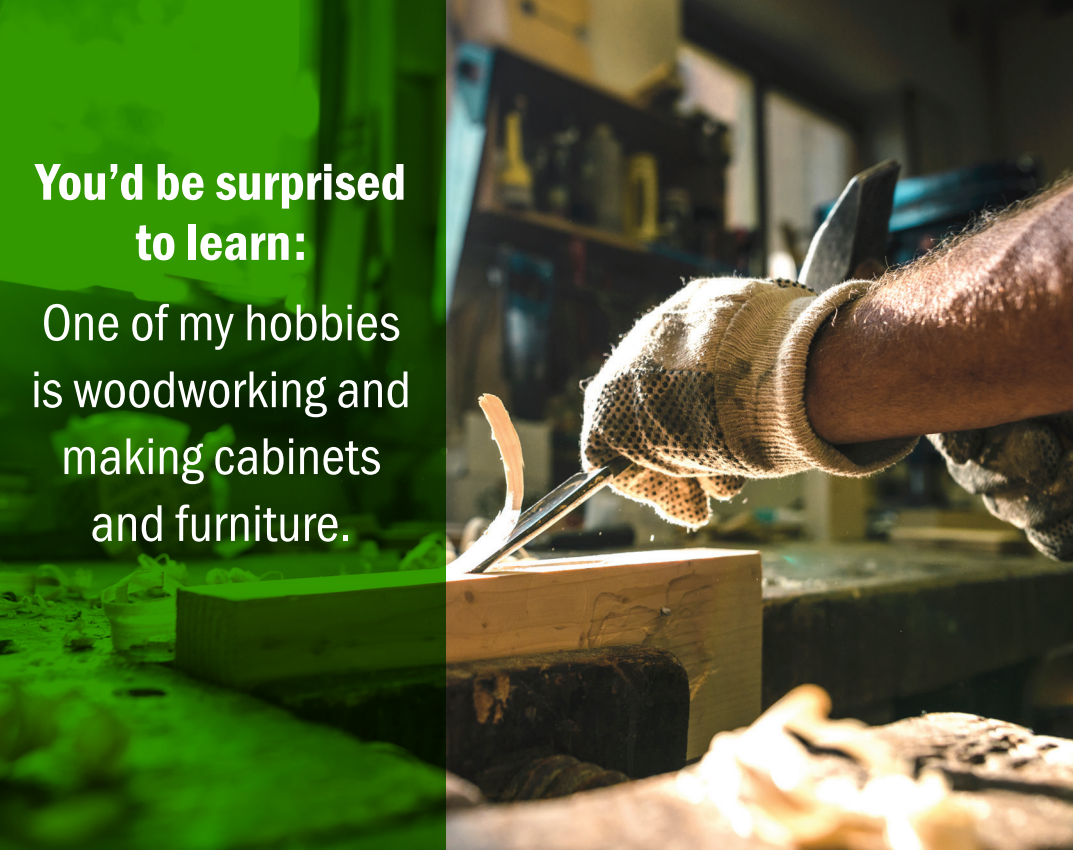
PEARL: Jackson is located on the west bank of the Pearl River.

PLAYWRIGHT: County native Beth Henley won the Pulitzer Prize for Drama in 1981 with her comedy "Crimes of the Heart," which was made into a film.

RODEO: The largest rodeo east of the Mississippi is held in the county each year.

TRANSPLANT: The first human lung transplant took place in 1963 in the county at the University of Mississippi Medical Center.

WELTY: The late Pulitzer Prize-winning author Eudora Welty was a native of Hinds County. She won the prize in 1973 in the Fiction category.



You'd be surprised to learn:

One of my hobbies is woodworking and making cabinets and furniture.

Hire Quality Staff
@ Jobs Online
www.naco.org/jobsonline

LEADERSHIP EDGE

There's Power in Thanks



by Tim Rahschulte

Cathie Brow is the senior vice president of human resources at Revera. She once provided me a simple, yet powerful, fact: “People like to be asked and they like to be thanked.”

Of course, we do! It makes us feel valued. It's for this reason that the best leaders ask, lis-

ten and thank people around them. Think of the last time you received a genuine thank-you. We hold the door for someone and in exchange receive a kind gesture of thanks. We pass the salt at a dinner party and receive a gracious nod. We wave someone changing lanes on a busy freeway in ahead of us and see a courteous wave and peace sign in an

effort to say thanks. All that's great, but when was the last time you got a truly heartfelt thank-you for a job well done? Or, perhaps even more important, when was the last time you gave such a thank-you?

“Thank you!” is the simplest form of recognizing someone. William Shakespeare expressed the importance of giving thanks in “Twelfth Night.”


You may be familiar with the play, and if so, you'll likely remember the line: “I can no other answer make, but, thanks, and thanks.”

Expressions of gratitude often are given at a low cost but received with great worth. That's the kind of exchange great leaders are always looking to make. There are few ways to make someone feel more valued, validated and recognized than telling and showing them you're grateful for them — what they accomplish, how they show up, what they contribute, what they enable and who they are.

When people are valued, validated and recognized, they feel as if they're an important part of the team, organization or community, and it shows in their work and overall attitude. If you're looking for a simple way to create a heliotropic effect (as noted in an earlier article in this series), this is it!

So, when was the last time you really felt valued, validated and recognized? What made you feel that way? Chances are it involved either someone asking you for your input

or thanking you for your contribution. Sure, there are a variety of things that can make someone feel valued. Right at the top of the list is asking and thanking. People love to be heard and to know that their voices and opinions count. Equally, people enjoy hearing that their efforts matter and that someone else saw the value of their contributions and was pleased as a result.

Make a difference today. Ask for input. Get involvement from others by asking their opinions. Tap into the expertise and differences of others. And then provide a sincere thank-you. Write a short note of gratitude. Leave a voice mail of thanks. Or stop by, look them in the eyes, and offer a sincere thanks. Watch how people respond. They'll be glad that you asked and thanked, and so will you! 

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

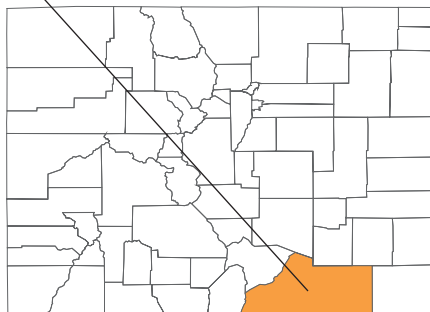
GET TO KNOW...

Las Animas County, Colo.

Welcome, Las Animas County, Colo.

Las Animas County is located in south-eastern Colorado and has a population of around 14,000. At nearly 4,800 square miles, the county is the largest in Colorado. Its county seat is Trinidad.

The county has various geographical features including the Spanish Peaks State Wildlife Area, the Ratón Pass and the Purgatoire River, a tributary of the Arkansas River. Established in 1866, the county is named after the Mexican-Spanish name of Purgatoire River, which was originally called “El Río de las Animas Perdidas en el Purgatorio,” which translates to “River of the Lost Souls in Purgatory.” “Las



animas” translates to “souls” in Spanish and refers to the Spanish soldiers killed along the river.

Picket Wire Canyon, located along the Purgatoire River, is home to a dinosaur track site that includes over 1,500 prints that are estimated to be 150 million years old.



NEWS FROM ACROSS THE NATION

CALIFORNIA

SONOMA COUNTY instituted new rules that prohibit property owners from beginning do-it-yourself **debris removal** after the Kincadee wildfire. The county declared that work for fire-damaged homes and properties must be completed by licensed, qualified contractors, *The Press Democrat* reported. Property owners must submit an application to the county for approval that states the contractor they plan to use to ensure debris clean-up does not create a community health hazard.

COLORADO

A new screening tool in **LARIMER COUNTY** is helping corrections officers when it comes to determining whether offenders will transition into **community corrections programs** such as counseling, drug treatment and job training, according to the *Reporter-Herald*. Individuals who are eligible may serve part of their sentence in community corrections. The screening tool will facilitate consistent acceptance rates between programs and promote transparency behind the decision-making process.

FLORIDA

- A program in **INDIAN RIVER COUNTY** is helping **individuals with special needs**. The Combined Indian River County Law Enforcement (C.I.R.C.L.E.) program obtains information such as emergency contacts, disabilities and emotional triggers of individuals with special needs to allow law enforcement to better respond, WFLX Fox 29 reported. Those who register for the program receive an ID card and a bracelet with a number to help identify individuals in the field.



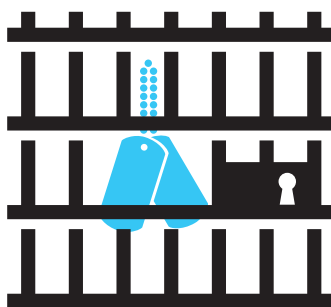
- Residents in **WASHINGTON COUNTY** have the option to participate in a **flood mitigation property buy-out program** for properties impacted by Hurricane Michael. Through the program, eligible residents may sell their properties to the government at the value of the property before the hurricane, WMBB-TV reported. These properties would then turn into permanent green spaces. The county is eligible for more than \$6 million in federal disaster funding through the buy-out program.

INDIANA

- DUBOIS COUNTY** will soon allow **food trucks** to operate year-round.

The County Commissioners approved an ordinance that will allow mobile food establishments to operate all year or seasonally, which is up to eight months in a year. The county previously only permitted food trucks for temporary events, *The Herald* reported. The trucks must operate from a health department-permitted commissary each day for food and supplies, as well as cleaning and services to operate.

- A veterans court program in **HAMILTON COUNTY** is helping **break the criminal patterns of veterans**. The goal of the program is to rehabilitate veterans and keep them out of jail, according to WRTV-The Indy Channel. Veterans Court has three phases which include treatment, education



and growth and graduation. The Hamilton County Prosecutor reviews each case. Since 2005, the program has graduated 25 veterans.

IOWA

Car thefts are down in **SCOTT COUNTY** after the expansion of the **Auto Theft Accountability Program** that aims to keep first-time youth offenders from re-offending. County officials implemented the program after a spike in juvenile crime and car thefts in recent years, WQAD News 8 reported. The program brings offenders face to face with their victims to hold juveniles accountable for their actions. The program has been expanded for first-time juveniles who have committed non-violent property crimes.

KENTUCKY

- A new program in **McCRACKEN COUNTY** brings law enforcement and rehab facilities together to help those

struggling with addiction, KFVS12 reported. The Badges of Hope program allows those struggling with addiction to call the county sheriff's office to receive free transportation to a drug rehab facility to start the program.

- A different set of voters executed their first amendment rights in **NELSON COUNTY** on Election Day. Kids between the ages of 6 and 17 went into the booth, made their picks and cast their ballots, WDRB reported. The program aims to **educate youth about the voting process**. Each youth ballot showed pictures of the candidates. The local newspaper published the results of the youth votes to compare them to official vote counts.

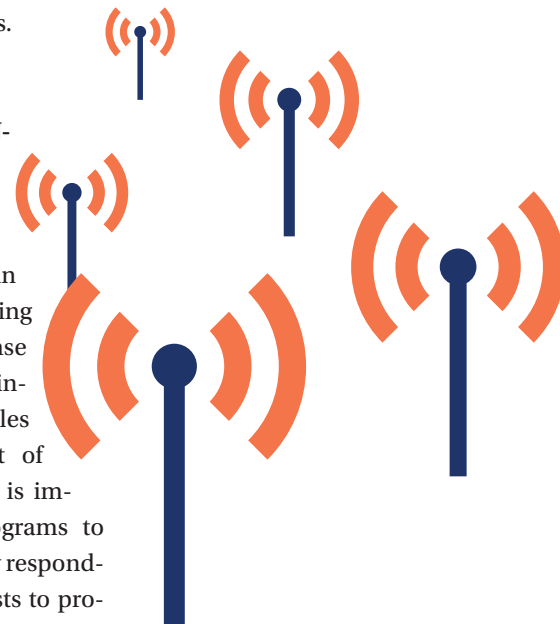
MARYLAND

CHARLES COUNTY is adopting two **resuscitation quality improvement programs** in the hopes of advancing pre-hospital response to cardiac arrest incidents. The Charles County Department of Emergency Services is implementing the programs to prepare public safety responders and 911 specialists to provide

vide high-quality CPR, *The Journal of Emergency Medical Services* reported. The learning programs provide simulation to 911 specialists for delivery of high-quality telephone CPR to bystanders.

MICHIGAN

One hundred **mobile hotspots** are now available to residents in **OTTAWA COUNTY**. The county received over \$80,000 in grant funding to distribute the hotspots to the nine Ottawa County's public libraries, according to *Government Technology*. The hotspots are available for one-week check-outs to provide residents with wireless internet connections to devices without needing an internet connection at home.



NEVADA

Frustrated by the response times from the state for health crises that could exceed 72 hours, **ELKO COUNTY** is considering **forming its own health department**. Though the state currently acts as the county's health department, the county can be billed for costs beyond a certain point. The department would also take over the responsibility and the revenue from conducting restaurant inspections and other inspection and licensing functions. The county's Board of Health has approved the planning stage, the *Elko Daily* reported. The planning stage, which should be completed in July 2020, could also propose the creation of a health district instead.

NEW YORK

SULLIVAN COUNTY is hoping to help two of its farms duck a New York City law.

The County Legislature passed a resolution calling on the commissioner of the New York Department of Agriculture and Markets, to "act in accordance with Agriculture and Markets law 305-a," and protest the law **banning the sale of foie gras** beginning in 2022. Two farms in Sullivan County employ about 400 people

producing foie gras and other products made from ducks, according to *The River Reporter*.

NORTH DAKOTA

The **GRAND FORKS COUNTY** Commission approved the **creation of a Human Services board** to oversee the county's zone of delivery, following the transfer of delivery of social services to state administration from counties' purview.

The board has yet to be approved by the state, but it aims to reduce overhead for state social services programs. The county can potentially qualify to become its own Human Service Zone, the *Grand Forks Herald* reported. Counties with less than 60,000 population are expected to organize with other, less populated areas, to form regional zones of delivery.

PENNSYLVANIA

Recycling policies are causing confusion in the Keystone State, due to mounting changes, particularly in regions with a large number of different municipalities. The **ALLEGHENY COUNTY** Controller's Office has assembled a map of its 54 municipalities that allows users to search geographically for private and municipally run **recycling services** and links to those services. Users can select from a variety of criteria, including light bulbs, appliances and construction materials.

SOUTH CAROLINA

In an effort to suss out "fake news" sources, the **RICHLAND COUNTY** library has installed a program on its computer browsers. When searching for topics, a shield graphic will pop up next to the media outlets name and placing the mouse over the shield will break down the article's credibility and transparency.

"This way you can tell whether it's a balanced and fair source instead of one that tends to swing one way or the other or tends to publish false information," Chantal Wilson, a research and advisory manager with Richland County



VIRGINIA

The **HENRICO COUNTY** Board of Supervisors approved a plan to **redevelop a dead shopping mall** into a multimillion-dollar sports and convocation complex. The county will contribute up to \$50 million toward securing the land and building the facility, which is estimated to be about 200,000 square feet. Whether the mall structure itself would be torn down or repurposed has not been determined, according to WRIC News, but it will contain basketball courts and can be used for graduations.

Library, told Columbia's ABC affiliate.



TEXAS

• The **DALLAS COUNTY** Criminal District Attorney's Office will throw the book at anyone caught **looting in tornado-ravaged areas**. A new state law allows prosecutors to seek harsher punishment for crimes like burglary, assaults and robberies committed in disaster areas, Dallas' CBS affiliate reported.

• **SMITH COUNTY** is in the market for a **new courthouse**, and it wants to know what the public wants in it. The county's website, Smith County Courthouse Planning, lays out the county's intentions, includes courthouse studies conducted over the last 20 years and has a citizen input survey, KLTW News reported.

• **TARRANT COUNTY** is hoping to regulate **game rooms** with new requirements approved by commissioners. A new ordinance requires permits for gaming room owners and sets rules regarding hours and locations. In addition to restrictions near schools, churches, neighborhoods or other game rooms, the ordinance requires that an outside sign that reads "game room" be displayed and at least two windows must provide "a clear and unobstructed view of all machines." The ordinance also makes requiring membership to a game room a misdemeanor, which will allow law enforcement into the rooms to enforce the law. The city of Fort Worth already enforces various requirements beyond state law, *The Star Telegram* reported. The state law gives regulatory authority to cities.

VIRGINIA

LOUDOUN COUNTY is floating the idea of forming a **county police department** under county administration.

If the Board of Supervisors approves, the plan would be before county voters for a referendum, the *Loudoun Times-Mirror* reported.

Neighboring **FAIRFAX COUNTY** has both a sheriff's office and a county police department, which divides the tasks of law enforcement to the police and oversight of the county courthouse and jail to the sheriff.

WISCONSIN

Veterans incarcerated in the **DANE COUNTY** Jail will have access to specialized **veteran treatment options** and an environment sensitive to their needs in a special housing unit. "Barracks Behind Bars" is the first in the state according to Elise Schaffer, a spokesperson for the Sheriff's Office. The county has operated a veterans' specialty court since 2014.

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

ILLINOIS

County officials in **COOK COUNTY** have proposed a new program that targets areas that have **limited access to transportation**. The plan adds 22 trains each day to the Metra Electric train lines that run through the area and discounts Metra fares, according to *Chicago Magazine*. Many riders opt to take the bus because it is cheaper and provides a free transfer even though it is a longer route. The county will provide a subsidy to offset the initial losses from lower fares but hopes the program will be "cost neutral" in the future.

the HR DOCTOR

with Philpot
& Winkler

With Thanksgiving and the other holidays approaching, our schedules are filling up with events and errands and any number of obligations we place on ourselves to accomplish. It's a harried time with little opportunity to stop and reflect. But the nature of the holidays also invites such reflection. The whole notion of Thanksgiving is to recognize the gifts we already have and all we have to be grateful for. The end of the year inspires us to reflect on the past year and consider the next — what we would change, what we would improve, what we aspire to.

As public employers, we also can use this time to reflect on what our offices and departments have accomplished and express gratitude to our employees.

Our employees are doing challenging work, every day, whether that's working outside in the elements to lay asphalt for road maintenance, advocating through social service agencies for disadvantaged or mentally ill members of our communities or putting their own safety at risk to respond to emergencies. Though we may be expressing our appreciation after completing particularly big projects or busy seasons, an expression of gratitude at the end of the year can show how even the day-to-day work, the small tasks, add up to a large accomplishment.

How might we genuinely show gratitude to our employees? In the private sector, employees might anticipate bonus checks at the end of the year. Of course, that's not really an option in the public sector as public entities are generally prohibited from providing "gifts" to individuals without

adequate consideration. Since we already receive compensation for our work, any additional compensation would be likely to violate those prohibitions. Those of us in the public sector have to get creative.

Floating holiday — Paid time off may be the next best thing to financial compensation. Your county could consider implementing a floating holiday to be used in December so that employees could take an extra day for a holiday vacation, to spend some time with the kids while they are off of school, or to take a break from the rush of the season.

Breakfast in the office — It's small but bringing in coffee and bagels or donuts is a change of pace from the standard potluck lunches or similar events. The breakfast could even be set up in a separate conference room or somewhere else out of the office to encourage staff to take a real break from work.

Thank you notes — Crafting a handwritten note of thanks to recognize our employees' efforts can really speak to them and show them that what they

do has real meaning.

Gratitude is not just about the person receiving it. Rather, giving gratitude and expressing appreciation for someone or something can be immensely valuable for the person expressing it. A study described in Harvard Health Publishing found that practicing daily gratitude increased optimism and positive feelings of the study participants. The results further showed the study participants who practiced daily gratitude "exercised more and had fewer visits to physicians than those focused on sources of aggravation." While you are appreciating your staff, you can also engender a culture of gratitude in your office:

Add appreciation to the next office party — The party, whether it's held during work hours or "off campus" in the evening, is a good chance for your employees to relax and get to know each other better. But add a gratitude twist: Have everyone take a turn describing how another person in the office has supported them or helped them perform their best work. Having the employ-


ees make these statements in a group setting also allows the recipient of the comments to feel that they are getting the support and appreciation of the entire office.

Secret Santa — Just like the traditional Secret Santa game in which each employee draws the name of another to give a small gift to. But along with the gift, the Santa writes a personal note to say thank you to the recipient.

Service project — Plan a service project that the entire staff or small groups of staff can engage in. Maybe employees could volunteer together for a shift at a food bank, clean up a local trail, or run a water table at a charity race. If your county offers paid volunteer time-off, they could even find volunteer opportunities during work hours.

Gratitude project — Take what researchers have been finding about the benefits of gratitude and recruit volunteers to embark on a gratitude experiment for the office. Have them take some time each day to write down three things they are grateful for, big or small.

After a few weeks, the volunteers can get together, discuss what insights they had by noting these things each day, and discuss how they could apply those insights to better develop a mindset of gratitude within and among the rest of the office.

Whatever you might choose to do, the best effect of gratitude comes when the expression is genuine. Tokens given out without intention or personal thought are just tokens. Our employees do great work and appreciating them and reminding them of how their efforts and contributions fit into the larger mission and vision of public service can benefit them and the rest of the office in more ways than we may be able to see. The more we practice expressing gratitude, the more we feel it. With that in mind, we would like to thank you for your support of this column and wish you happy holidays! 

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

Showing Gratitude

