

International cyberattacks on the rise

by Rita Reynolds

It is imperative that local government IT support increase their vigilance on monitoring network access and disable unused and non-essential entry paths into the county network.

In recent weeks there has been a significant amount of news concerning potential attacks on Ukraine. The concerns of course have been from a political and military perspective. But even more disconcerting have been the recent attacks on public and private entities in Ukraine, where there have been a series of malicious cyber incidents, including website defacement. Further, reports from Ukraine private sector have included the downloading of potentially destructive malware on their systems that could result in severe harm to critical functions.

Why should local government be concerned? Intelligence from the FBI, the NSA and Homeland Security have issued warnings to federal, state, local, tribal, territorial and critical infrastructure stakeholders of possible cyber implications related to current geopolitical events. To be specific, the concern is

See **CYBERATTACKS** page 2



Blaine County, Idaho Commissioner Muffy Davis blends her Paralympic strengths: Handcycling and the snow. Photo courtesy of Muffy Davis

Paralympic skier moves from state to county office for bigger impact

by Charlie Ban
senior writer

Whether it was in her training as an elite youth skier or her competitive Paralympic career in both adaptive skiing and handcycling, Muffy Davis

had to be sure her equipment fit right. During her political career in Idaho, the same held true — she needed the right fit.

So after less than two terms in the state House, Davis right-

sized her role in government, filling a mid-term vacancy on the Blaine County (Idaho) Commission, representing the community where she grew up on a closer level.

“I went to the legislature bright-eyed and optimistic, but it’s hard to have much of an impact when you’re in the mi-

See **SKIER** page 3

AI opens access to county meeting videos

by Charlie Ban
senior writer

Spend enough time in county government and some of the meetings may start to run together. In Sherburne County, Minn., “going to the tape” to

check on what happened has become a lot easier.

Using an open-source program put together by a Google developer’s side project, the county’s meeting videos are now synched with transcripts, which users can search. The

search function brings viewers to the point in the meeting video where the topic came up.

What does it mean for the county?

“Transparency,” said Com-

See **MEETINGS** page 2

From CYBERATTACKS page 1

In response to this international situation, the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) has issued multiple cyber alerts and published vital information in their weekly Insights. A few key points are highlighted here and should be shared with your IT staff or outside IT consultants:

- Validate that all remote access to the organization's network and privileged or administrative access requires multi-factor authentication. (MFA is an absolute necessity)!
- Ensure that software is up to date, prioritizing updates that address known exploited vulnerabilities identified by

- Confirm that the organization's IT personnel have disabled all ports and protocols that are not essential for business purposes.

- If the organization is using cloud services, ensure that IT personnel have reviewed and implemented strong controls outlined in CISA's guidance. (This list of guidance is very important)!
- Sign up for CISA's free cyber hygiene services, including vulnerability scanning, to help reduce exposure to threats.
- Review the CISA alert — Understanding and Mitigating Russian State-Sponsored Cyber Threats to U.S. Critical Infrastructure | CISA. This information covers the three key points of being prepared, enhancing your county's cyber posture, and increasing your overall county IT vigilance.

- **NACo Cyber Security Priorities and Best Practices** — NACo Cyber Security Priorities and Best Practices, which is a publication developed with county IT leadership to identify cybersecurity priorities that counties should be implementing

- NACo Tech Xchange — County Tech Xchange (*naco.org*), which is a communication network of county IT leadership as well as a portal of online resources including templates for job descriptions as well as policies and toolkits
- NACo Cyber Attack Simulations — NACo Cyberattack Simulation, which is a series of week-long activities that mirror real-life cyber incidents. These scenarios are designed for county teams to practice how they would respond during a cyber incident and helps to improve security plans, policy, and procedures.
- NACo-Managed Cybersecurity Solution Powered by NuHarbor Security, which is a NACo Financial Services partnership with industry leading cybersecurity providers; NuHarbor Security, Splunk, Okta and Tenable to provide a comprehensive strategy to counties' Information Security Program. This program maximizes the cost and operational efficiency of leading-edge software solutions, the efficiency of county resource utilization and will uphold the highest cybersecurity standards. **CN**

SNAP/STATS

LET IT SNOW!

AVERAGE ANNUAL SNOWFALL

COUNTY	INCHES
MOUNT RAINIER, WASH. (PIERCE COUNTY).....	671
MOUNT BAKER, WASH. (WHATCOM COUNTY)	641
ALTA, UTAH (SALT LAKE COUNTY, UTAH)	583
VALDEZ, ALASKA (UNORGANIZED BOROUGH).....	326
MOUNT WASHINGTON, N.H. (COÖS COUNTY).....	282

Source: *Farmers' Almanac*



Engaged Citizens generates a word cloud of commonly used terms in each Sherburne County Board of Commissioners meeting.

From MEETINGS page 1

missioner Tim Dolan. "The average citizen doesn't want to sit through a two-hour meeting for the one item that interests them. Now they don't have to."

In his first term on the Board of Commissioners, Dolan was frustrated by the pace of technological uptake.

“The adoption of technology in government seemed to be lacking,” he said. He took to Twitter, asking Microsoft and Google about the lack of a noticeable push for innovation in government. To his surprise, he heard from Google the next day.

"It was a pleasant surprise," Dolan said.

“We worked with developer Sean Maday to adapt a system Maday had developed for his hometown of Superior, Colo.’s meetings — Engaged Citizens AI.”

Maday wrote about recorded meeting videos: “These tools are antiquated one-way panes of glass that do not foster much tangible interactivity. Even the assumption that citizens will watch video of public meetings online may be a bit of an anachronism at this point.”

Maday used Google's speech-to-text function, which he estimated at about a 90 percent accuracy rate in 2019, to transcribe the audio.

"The ability to pull out the link and instantly have access to what had been discussed...the most valuable thing is the ability to give context, the decisions we make and the conversations we have," Dolan said. "And the longer we use it, the more historical context we can get."

He sees it as a way to clearly communicate decisions through the county workforce, because no longer will managers have to rely on board packets and notes to relay pertinent discussions, when they can simply “run the tape” and prevent anything from being lost in translation.

"No shorthand, you get the answer verbatim," he said.

Speaking of translation, Dolan hopes the transcripts can be translated into Spanish, Somali and Hmong so that access to public meetings can be widened to native speakers who live in Sherburne County.

"Instead of having to know exactly what they want in English, they could search in their native language," Dolan said. "That opens up public participation to new populations in the county."

"For me, transparency and the ability to communicate directly with constituents was a big part of my platform," he noted. "This is a fundamental change because we're not just pulling back

See MEETINGS page 4

President
Larry Johnson

Publisher
Matthew Chase

**Chief Public
Affairs Officer**
Brian Namey

Editor and Senior Writer
Mary Ann Barton

Digital Editor and Senior Writer
Charlie Ban

Junior Staff Writer
Dakota Hendricks

Design Director
Leon Lawrence III

ADVERTISING STAFF
Job Market/Classifieds
representative
National Accounts
representative
 Mary Ann Barton
 202.942.4223
 FAX 866.752.1573

Published by:
National Association of Counties
Research Foundation, Inc.
660 N. Capitol Street, N.W. STE. 400,
Washington, D.C. 20001
202.393.6226 | FAX 866.752.1573
E-mail cnews@naco.org
Online address www.countynews.org

The appearance of paid advertisements in County News in no way implies support or endorsement by the National Association of Counties for any of the products, services or messages advertised. Periodicals postage paid at Washington D.C. and other offices.

Mail subscriptions are \$100 per year for non-members. \$60 per year for non-members purchasing multiple copies. Educational institution rate, \$50 per year. Member county supplemental subscriptions are \$20 each. Send payment with order and address changes to NACo, 660 N. Capitol Street, N.W. STE. 400, Washington, D.C. 20001.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to
County News, 660 N. Capitol Street, N.W.
STE. 400, Washington, D.C. 20001

(USPS 704-620) n (ISSN: 0744-9798)
© National Association of Counties
Research Foundation, Inc.



Statehouse to county: 'I'm going from a 30,000-foot view to a 10,000-foot view'

From SKIER page 1

nority," she said. "I was most effective when I was working to help constituents access state services."

Davis grew up in Blaine County, and from the age of 7, trained to be an elite downhill ski racer, with hopes of competing in the Winter Olympics.

A crash while training when she was 16 left her paralyzed from the chest down, but after graduating from college, she turned to adaptive skiing and medaled in both the 1998 Paralympic Games in Nagano, Japan (bronze) and 2002 games in Salt Lake City (three silver medals).

After her daughter was born in 2008, she turned to handcycling, and won three gold



**Blaine County, Idaho
Commissioner Muffy Davis**

medals at the 2012 Paralympic Games in London. The Paralympic Games follow each Olympiad, offering elite competitions adapted for athletes with physical and intellectual disabilities.

"While my target was the

Olympics, my goal was always to be an elite-level athlete," she said. "It was absolutely amazing. I've always felt a strong pull toward service and after my injury, this was how I could represent my country. I couldn't do it in the military."

All the while, she lived in Salt Lake County, Utah, working in healthcare fundraising while her husband worked in adaptive recreation for the county. In 2016, the family moved to Blaine County.

In 2017, Davis was named to the Paralympic Governing Board, which gave her the confidence to run for the state Legislature.

She'll travel to Beijing as part of the Governing Board for the 2022 Paralympics starting in March.

"This community gave so

much to me that I wanted to give back," she said. "We moved back here to raise our daughter and making it a stronger community is part of that. We want to make it a place she wants to come back to and raise a family."

Now, in her first month on the county Board, she's adjusting to the new pace.

"I feel a lot more pressure because I'm one of three rather than one of 70," she said. "I'm going from a 30,000-foot view to a 10,000-foot view. It's way more rewarding personally, way more diverse."

She sees her biggest priority as properly investing federal funding from both the American Rescue Plan and the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act to ensure Blaine County's long-term success.

Her main concern is addressing the lack of affordable workforce housing in Blaine County, compounded by the prohibition by the state of counties' ability to regulate short-term rentals.

"We want to have a long-term strategic plan for where we can see our county in 10, 20, 50 years," she said. "I'd like to think the way I approached my training starting at age 7 has put me in a good mindset for approaching the kind of long-term thinking we'll need to do this right."

But she also knows it won't be a linear path, and she also knows she can fall back on the resilience she displayed as a teenager following her injury.

"I know how to adapt when things change and you have to readjust," she said. **CN**

NACo launches Convening County, Court and Justice Leaders initiative with five sites

NACo has announced the first round of participants for the Convening County, Court and Justice Leaders: A Framework for Cross-System Collaboration initiative. NACo launched the initiative this month with its partners at Rulo Strategies and Praxis Consulting, with support from the State Justice Institute. It is designed to support county, court and justice leaders as they partner to establish local priorities and align resources to achieve justice and public safety goals. Participants are:

- **Albemarle County and the City of Charlottesville, Va.**

Criminal justice and behavioral health leaders in Albemarle County and the City of Charlottesville will establish a strategic planning framework designed to reduce reliance on incarceration, in appropriate circumstances, to address local public health and safety challenges. The city-county team will seek to improve its jail-to-community transition and reentry services, expand alternatives to incarceration such as diversion and reduce the stigma associated with being justice-involved or having a

substance use or mental health disorder.

As part of this effort, the team will support additional community-based services and improve community members access to appropriate mental health and substance abuse services.

- **Cuyahoga County, Ohio**

The Cuyahoga County team will leverage its existing Corrections Planning Board to build a more robust criminal justice planning group that focuses on community violence — especially the increase in gun violence and gun-related homicides - and the underlying problems that lead to violence. As part of the planning process, the team will examine opportunities to expand prosecutor and court diversion programs, develop a unified reentry program for people leaving jail and reduce racial and ethnic disparities among justice-involved individuals.

- **Lake County, Colo.**

The Lake County team will improve collaboration between county and court leaders and community stakeholders by de-



veloping and implementing a community justice plan.

Over the project period, local leaders will examine opportunities to increase access to and the quality of justice and community-based services and improve data collection and sharing practices by and between justice-related agencies to inform effective policy making.

The community's new action plan will include strategies to reduce crime and also address other court-based measures to promote community wellness and reduce associated justice costs.

- **Navajo County, Ariz.**

Navajo County's Criminal

Justice Coordinating Council (CJCC) will work to establish effective collaboration between county, court and justice partners and community-based organizations to improve the lives of the community's most vulnerable residents. Specifically, the project team will develop an action plan to bridge the gap between community behavioral health providers and the criminal justice system to better address the needs of people with mental health disorders. The planning team will examine opportunities to expand law enforcement and court diversion programs and develop and implement policies

and procedures that will support communication and coordination across CJCC member agencies and community stakeholders.

- **Potter County, Pa.**

The Potter County team will establish a data-driven road map that takes a systematic approach to criminal justice and prevention activities.

The goal is to unify existing county and justice-related efforts and enhance services and programs to improve outcomes for people involved in the justice system. The planning team will examine opportunities to build an aftercare program that assists people in jail with reentry into the community to reduce recidivism and improve individual outcomes.

Five additional sites will be selected to participate in the project starting in early spring. Interested communities should apply by 5 p.m. ET Feb. 11.

Contact Elynn Lee, NACo Justice Program manager: elee@naco.org and visit <https://www.naco.org/blog/apply-now-convening-county-court-justice-leaders-initiative> for more details. **CN**

NACo examines county role in economic mobility

by Kevin Shrawder

The phrase “economic mobility” evokes pithy responses from a range of perspectives. Many consider it to mean wealth, education and opportunity, while for others, a more nuanced illustration comes to mind of systems, environment or generations. In academia, economic mobility generally refers to changes in people’s economic outcomes or status over a lifetime or across generations — usually measured in income.

Economic mobility is a multi-faceted concept encompassing inter-generational mobility (comparing an individual’s income as an adult relative to their parent’s or grandparent’s income) and intra-generational mobility (changes in an individual’s income over their life). Inter-and intra-generational mobility is measured based on absolute or relative differences. Absolute mobility examines individuals’ upward and downward changes over

time, while relative mobility examines how individuals rank in the income distribution over their lifetime compared to their peers.

In the United States, absolute mobility has fallen over time, while relative mobility has remained constant. Furthermore, there are significant and persistent gaps in socioeconomic outcomes (i.e., opportunity, education, income and wealth) across racial and ethnic groups.

These inequities in mobility present an opportunity for counties seeking to effect change within their communities.

The county role in economic mobility is often glossed over or lost entirely. However, for NACo’s Economic Mobility Leadership Network (EMLN), the county role in mobility has never been more apparent.

The network is a cohort of county leaders who examine the range of complex issues that comprise economic mobility, including housing and food in-

security and an overall lack of opportunity.

In 2019, NACo began working on a report inspired and shaped by members of the network to examine the county role and authority in inducing mobility and highlight best practice solutions from across the country. Drawing from a survey of network participants, with grounding in academic literature, NACo deduced seven key issue areas in which county officials can employ levers to foster mobility:


- Housing
- Education and Workforce Development
- Health
- Community and Neighborhood Development
- Justice & Public Safety
- Technology and Information Access
- Financial Security.

Within these seven domains, counties possess the authority to enact policies (e.g., ordinances or resolutions), enact or administer programs (e.g., work-

force development training), form partnerships (e.g., a consortium of nonprofit and private partners) or a combination of the three. Because counties have distinct roles and authorities in these seven key factors, county policies and investments are particularly effective solutions to uplift communities and residents and drive upward mobility.

The new NACo report, “County Government Levers to Drive Economic Mobility,” explores these seven issue areas through the lens of county authority and provides tangible, means-tested solutions counties have implemented which cultivate mobility.

The case studies in the report feature members of NACo’s Economic Mobility Leadership Network (EMLN).

Read the full report at www.naco.org/county-levers. 

Kevin Shrawder is an associate economist in NACo’s Counties Futures Lab.


Meetings made more accessible

From MEETINGS page 2

the curtain, we’re making it easier to pull back the curtain. It’s a nice victory and gives you positive momentum — changes can happen if you find the right partners.”

Sherburne County has processed more than a year’s worth of Board meetings through Engaged Citizens and is adding more. Dolan hopes to have all public meetings in the county searchable, so a user looking for one topic can get what they need from the Board of Commissioners, the planning commission, school board and more.

And, he hopes it helps residents understand the Board’s decision-making process.

“It’s hard to sit in a board room and make decisions knowing how hard it can be for people to understand it all,” he said. 

The code for Engaged Citizens AI is open sourced on GitHub: <https://github.com/google/gov-meetings-made-searchable>.

SEND US YOUR MASTERPIECE.

2022 “I Love My County Because...” Art Competition now accepting entries.

Our annual NACo Student Art Competition in conjunction with National County Government Month (April) is now open. Students in grades 1-12 are encouraged to enter the competition with the theme “I Love My County Because...”

For more information, visit: naco.org/art

Sponsored by:



Eighth-grader depicts Fulton County, Ohio in NACo Student Art Competition



by **Dakota Hendricks**
staff writer

Wauseon High School student Camryn Rash of Fulton County, Ohio won the NACo Student Art Competition in the 8th-grade category last year by depicting all the things she believes her county does well.

Split by roads, each section of her artwork features a key part of the county. From farming and farmers markets, to healthcare, police services, housing, and senior care, Camryn highlights them all.

"I love my county because it keeps me safe and gives endless opportunities. Help lines are always a click away, vaccines and doctors are available, food to eat can be grown and farmed, and there's always an opportunity to help others in your community" she wrote.

An athlete from a small town with less than 6,000 people, Camryn plays soccer and runs track, and finds art a creative outlet. Her mother, Erica Rash, said her daughter focused on everything that sprang to mind when she thought about how to depict Fulton County in her artwork.

The art competition is sponsored by Americans for the Arts, the nation's leading non-profit arts organization, which serves, advances, and leads a network of organizations and individuals who cultivate, promote, sustain, and support the arts in America. They have partnered with NACo for almost 25 years to educate and inform county elected leaders about the importance and value of the arts to their community, both culturally and economically.

If you would like to give students in your county the chance to enter the 2022 competition, get all the details here: www.naco.org/resources/i-love-my-county-because-art-contest. Winning artwork will be featured in a 2023 calendar.

Winning artwork from the 2021 competition is featured in a 2022 NACo calendar and in *County News*. **CN**

Winning artwork is featured in the 2022 NACo calendar and in County News.



(L-r) Fulton County, Ohio commissioners Joe Short, Jeff Rupp and Joe Rupp present certificate to student Camryn Rash for her artwork depicting the county. Photo courtesy of Fulton County



2022 NACo ACHIEVEMENT AWARDS

CELEBRATING **52** YEARS OF INNOVATION



EARLY BIRD SUBMISSION DEADLINE:

March 4, 2022 at
11:59 p.m. EST

SUBMISSIONS DEADLINE:

March 31, 2022 at
11:59 p.m. EDT

NOTIFICATIONS OF ACHIEVEMENT AWARDS:

Week of April 25, 2022

HOW TO **APPLY**

Does your county have an innovative program that improves county government and enhances services for county residents? Apply for the 2022 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](http://www.naco.org/achievementawards)

QUESTIONS?

Contact awards@naco.org



CountyNews

HOT topics

AMERICA'S CHILDREN

Teen court intervenes for Arkansas youth. **H5**

County helps foster youth who 'age out.' pg. **H10**

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION *of* COUNTIES

JANUARY 31, 2022

HELPING HANDS:

COUNTIES HELP CHILDREN REACH HIGHER



THE STATE OF AMERICA'S CHILDREN

America's children are more diverse than ever. There were 73 million children in the United States in 2019 — 22 percent of our nation's population. In 2019, children of color made up 49.8 percent of all children and the majority of children under 5.

Children remain the poorest age group in America, with children of color and young children suffering the highest poverty rates. Nearly 1 in 7 children — 10.5 million — were poor in 2019. Nearly 71 percent of poor children were children of color. More than 1 in 4 Black children and more than 1 in 5 Hispanic and American Indian/Alaska Native children were poor compared with 1 in 12 white children. The youngest children are the poorest. Nearly 1 in 6 children under 6 were poor and almost half lived in extreme poverty below half the poverty line.



Income and wealth inequality are growing and harming children in low-income, Black and Brown families. The share of all wealth held by the top 1 percent of Americans grew from 30 to 37 percent and the share held by the bottom 90 percent fell from 33 to 23 percent between 1989 and 2019. Today, a member of the top 10 percent of income earners makes about 39 times as much as the average earner in the bottom 90 percent. In 2019, the median family income of white households with children (\$95,700) was more than double that of Black (\$43,900), and Hispanic households with children (\$52,300).

The lack of affordable housing and federal rental assistance leaves millions of children homeless or at risk of homelessness. More than 1 in 3 children live in households burdened by housing costs, meaning more than 30 percent of their family income goes toward housing. More than 1.5 million children enrolled in public schools experienced homelessness during the 2017-2018 school year. Seventy-four percent of unhoused students during the 2017-2018 school year were living temporarily with family or friends.

Millions of children live in food-insecure households, lacking reliable access to safe, sufficient, and nutritious food. More than 1 in 7 children — 10.7 million — were food insecure, meaning they lived in households where not everyone had enough to eat. Black and Hispanic children were twice as likely to live in food-insecure households as white children. The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) helped feed 17 million children in Fiscal Year 2018 — nearly a quarter of all children in America. Half of all families that received SNAP in 2019 were not able to get enough healthy food,

however, because SNAP benefits were too low. Among households with children, monthly SNAP benefits averaged just \$118 a person — or less than \$4 a day.

Our children have lost the health coverage they need to survive and thrive at an alarming rate. An estimated 4.4 million children under age 19, were uninsured — an increase of 320,000 more children without health insurance since 2018. Disparities in health insurance coverage persist. The rates of uninsured children are especially high among Hispanic children, undocumented children, children living in the South, and children in families with lower incomes. Medicaid and CHIP are the foundation of the nation's health insurance system for children. In 2019, nearly 36 million children under 19 received comprehensive, pediatric-appropriate and affordable health coverage through Medicaid and CHIP.


The high cost of child care and lack of early childhood investments leaves many children without quality care during critical years of brain development. Center-based child care for an infant cost more than public college tuition in 28 states and the District of Columbia in 2019. More than 80 percent of two-child families were paying more for child care than for rent. During the 2018-2019 school year, only 34 percent of 4-year-olds and 6 percent of 3-year-olds were enrolled in a state-funded preschool program.

America's schools continue to slip backwards into patterns of deep racial and socioeconomic segregation, perpetuating achievement gaps. During the 2017-2018 school year, 19 percent of Black, 21 percent of Hispanic, and more than 26 percent of American Indian/Alaska Native public school students did not graduate on time compared with only

11 percent of white students. More than 77 percent of Hispanic and more than 79 percent of Black fourth and eighth grade public school students were not proficient in reading or math in 2019, compared with less than 60 percent of white students. In 2017, 60 percent of Black children attended high-poverty schools with a high share of students of color while fewer than 9 percent of white children did.

For the first time since 2012, the number of children in the child welfare system fell, but too many children wind up in foster care because of poverty. Black and American Indian/Alaska Native families are disproportionately impacted by the child welfare system. Nationally, Black and AI/AN children are represented in foster care at a rate 1.66 and 2.84 times their portion of the overall population, respectively. After steadily declining since 2008, the number of children aging out of the foster care system jumped by more than 14 percent in 2019, with 20,445 youth reaching adulthood without a permanent family.

A disproportionate number of children of color are incarcerated in the juvenile justice and/or adult criminal justice systems, placing them at risk of physical and psychological harm.

Despite a 67 percent reduction in child arrests between 2009 and 2019, 530,581 children were arrested in the U.S and a child or teen was arrested every 59 seconds. Black children were 2.4 times more likely to be arrested and American Indian children were 1.5 times more likely to be arrested than white children. 

This summary of The State of America's Children 2021 is republished with permission from the Children's Defense Fund.

COUNTIES PLAN TO INVEST RECOVERY FUNDS TO:



**IMPLEMENT CHILDCARE
ENTREPRENEURSHIP TRAINING AND
EXPANSION INITIATIVES**



**PROVIDE AFTER-SCHOOL ENRICHMENT
AND SOCIALIZATION PROGRAMS**



**FUND EDUCATIONAL SUPPORTS AT
COUNTY LIBRARIES**



**SUPPLY CHILDCARE GRANTS FOR
LOW-INCOME FAMILIES**



**CONNECT YOUTH AND FAMILIES IN
THE CHILD-WELFARE SYSTEM WITH
WRAPAROUND SERVICES**



**ISSUE SUBSIDIES FOR HIGH-QUALITY
CHILDCARE**

Pennsylvania county offers children trauma-informed care

by **Dakota Hendricks**
staff writer

When Pike County, Pa. District Attorney Ray Tonkin was appointed to serve on the state's Victim Service Advisory Committee, he discovered the benefits of child advocacy centers and made plans to build a new program in Pike County.

The care centers help reduce the impact of traumatic experiences by supporting families through cross-agency cooperation and by simplifying the child interviewing process.

Child Advocacy Centers bring together mental health services, law enforcement, victim services, criminal justice professionals, family advocates and the District Attorney's office under one "tent" and together they work as a Multidisciplinary Investigative Team (MDIT). The MDIT helps bridge the gaps between agencies to better protect child victims of physical, mental and sexual abuse.

Tonkin said the CAC is a "child-focused and trauma-informed center" that conducts one forensic interview between agencies instead of each agency asking the child to relive potentially harmful memories.

"The main purpose behind a Children's Advocacy Center is that a child comes to



Pike County Dickson House Director of Victims Services Sara Loeb with Violet, the future "comfort dog." Photo courtesy of Pike County Dickson House

a child-friendly environment where they can be interviewed by a forensic interviewer to determine any disclosure they might have about the report of abuse," Tonkin said.

The forensic interviewer works closely with the MDIT to ask the right questions. The conversation is recorded with both video and audio and the recording is then used in court in place of testimony from the child. The CAC also networks

with mental health agencies to begin the healing process of working through traumatic experiences. Their shared network makes the situation easier for families to navigate the complex system of victim services, justice systems, healthcare and more.

CAC programs have been around since 1986, according to the National Children's Advocacy Center, and have expanded across the country, with more


than 1,000 facilities. Since 2011, the Pennsylvania Legislature has made it a priority to create funding sources for the program leading to the creation of many. The Pike County facility opened in 2016 and has continually grown ever since. Tonkin said the Pike CAC is part of the county instead of an independent collaborative non-governmental organization (NGO), giving it access to support, funding and structure that other CACs might not receive or be entirely responsible for.

Originally, the Pike County CAC began as a partnership with a local NGO known as Safe Haven before moving into a county facility temporarily and finally into their own building, the Dickson House.

The Pike County Dickson House has partnered with the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia to conduct medical exams for sexual abuse victims.

To date, the Dickson House has cared for 530 children.

Tonkin encouraged other counties to seek out the resources of state CAC associations as well as the National Children's Alliance and the National Children's Advocacy Center.

The National Children's Alliance provides accreditation as well as grant funding to create, train and expand CAC programs. 

Expanded Child Tax Credit helps reduce child poverty

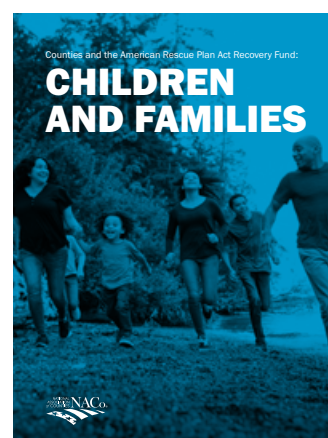
by **Rachel Mackey**

Counties are committed to ending child poverty, which can lead to adverse outcomes in child health, education and future employment. Counties are on the front lines of social service delivery and invest more than \$58 billion annually in federal, state and local dollars in human services programs. During COVID-19 and beyond, we have urged Congress and the administration to provide local governments with greater resources and flexibility to support our ongoing, innovative work to reduce child poverty in our communities.

Acknowledging that regular cash as-

sistance is one of the most powerful anti-poverty tools for households with children, Congress included a historic, temporary expansion of the Child Tax Credit (CTC) in the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 (ARPA). Typically, households can claim the CTC to reduce their federal income tax liability by up to \$2,000 per child under age 17. While this is a helpful form of financial relief for many families with children, it is only available to families with enough income to file taxes. Even then, only households earning above a certain income threshold can claim the entire \$2,000 credit. As a result, the CTC has never realized its full potential to lift millions of children out of poverty.

The temporary changes under ARPA sought to rectify this shortcoming for the 2021 tax year by increasing the size of the CTC from \$2,000 to \$3,000 per child (\$3,600 per child under age 6). It also temporarily made the credit fully refundable, meaning even households earning low or no income would receive the payment in its entirety, as well as increased the age of eligibility through age 17. ARPA also gave eligible households the option to receive half of



the expanded credit via advance monthly payments, which went out from July 2021 to December 2021. The remaining half of the credit will go to households via a lump sum on their regular 2021 tax return filed this spring.

Thanks to the ARPA expansion, 27 million additional children qualified

for increased income support. Estimates suggested that if all eligible households claimed the expanded CTC credit, child poverty would decrease by more than 40 percent. However, because the credit was newly available to many households that typically do not earn enough income to file taxes (non-filers), outreach and education was critically important for ensuring that all eligible families accessed this temporary resource. As key partners with the federal government in designing and implementing social services and anti-poverty programs, county governments are uniquely positioned to perform education and outreach to connect vulnera-



Charlie Ban
digital editor and senior writer

Mary Ann Barton
editor and senior writer

Rashida Brown
associate program director,
Children, Youth & Families

CONTRIBUTORS

Dakota Hendricks
junior staff writer

Leon Lawrence III
design director

Rachel Mackey
associate legislative director

Arabella Pluta-Ehlers
program manager, Children,
Youth & Families

TEEN COURT INTERVENES FOR ARKANSAS YOUTH

by **Charlie Ban**
senior writer

Leadership comes in different forms, and Pulaski County, Ark. leaders are betting that many young leaders just haven't had the opportunity to step up yet.

Through its teen court restorative justice program, Pulaski County and the Pulaski County Special School District debuted a class in each of the district's four high schools — dubbed "Juvenile Justice" — where peer restorative justice takes priority over punitive measures.

"When we look at the district, they have a lot of kids suspended from schools, they don't always know what conflict resolution is," said Jamie Scott, director of Pulaski County Youth Services. "If we can teach them a different way to handle conflict, a different way to handle frustrations, to manage anger and process what they're going through, they can learn

and grow."

What sets Pulaski County's model apart from the restorative justice systems at work throughout the country is that the four high schools in the system offer it as a yearlong class, and the participants earn credit. The program partners with District Court Judge Mark Leverett, who oversees the cases and decisions.

"We build an entire curriculum and because it's not outside of school hours, it doesn't complicate things for students who have jobs or transportation needs," Scott said. "And just like any other class, this can spark careers."

The participants manage their own courtroom and students play the roles of prosecutor and defender, making their arguments and advocating for an equitable settlement and penance. That penance often involves acts of service and other restorative justice measures.

"It's kind of surprising and also reas-



District Court Judge Mark Leverett swears in Teen Court participants. Photos courtesy of Pulaski County, Ark.

suring how these kids buy in and take ownership and do a good job," said County Judge Barry Hyde. "We just provide the means, the funding and the boots on the ground and they make it work."

The program has the byproduct of being a leadership skills program, including public speaking, rhetoric and negotiation.

"These kids may not be traditional leaders, but they have it in them," Jones said. "The ACES (adverse childhood experiences) scores are high where these kids are coming from, they're living in environments with trauma and may not have been taught the skills they need to

handle issues...they just want to fight.

"We're trying to stop them before they're in the justice system. This is trying to be a speed bump in the school-to-prison pipeline."

Jones and Hyde acknowledge that often, school resource officers are forced to just move kids along in the disciplinary process, so they

have welcomed the teen court system since it started in fall 2020.

"They see our passion, they see us putting these resources toward them," Jones said. "This isn't lost on them."

The 2021-2022 school year has seen 115 students in four schools enrolled.

"We have to try and step in to help the kids who are getting involved in the system and try to see life through their eyes," Hyde said. "It's most often that there's no family life or stable home, nobody is teaching them those life lessons and we don't want them picking up alternative life lessons." **ti**



Pulaski County, Ark. Teen Court participants engage in a group activity.

COUNTIES TRANSFORM, MODERNIZE HUMAN SERVICES DELIVERY SYSTEMS



by **Rashida Brown**

County human services delivery systems are a critical touchpoint for children and families, especially those who are experiencing economic hardship and the negative impacts of the coronavirus (COVID-19). County-delivered human services provide critical supports and a safety net for moving individuals, children and families out of poverty and improving their immediate and long-term health outcomes.

However, residents in need often interface with multiple programs and services that operate in silos with different program standards and eligibility rules. This experience can be stressful and retraumatize families who are already in crisis. As families navigate the intricate maze of systems

and application standards and forms, county leaders are exploring policy and technical solutions for transforming the human services delivery system in a way that supports the whole needs of families.

Local government leaders across the nation have witnessed firsthand some of the inequities and gaps that already exist in child and family service systems and are working diligently to adopt novel approaches to address disparities exacerbated by the pandemic.

Human services transformation is a key solution for improving the customer experience and helping families navigate and access the necessary supports that strengthen their pathway to gainful employment and social and economic mobility. County leaders have found that successful transformation occurs through the

promotion and implementation of existing and new policies and resources that promote integration and coordination across the human services enterprise.

Why human services transformation matters to counties

While balancing numerous administrative responsibilities, counties deliver essential services to ensure healthy, safe and vibrant communities across the United States. Counties invest over \$63 billion annually in federal, state and local funds in human services while serving as the frontline safety net. They also employ over 257,000 county human services workers across the country who deliver these critical services to residents.

County governments are responsible

for administering federal human services programs in at least nine states — California, Colorado, Minnesota, New York, North Carolina, North Dakota, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Virginia. Federal programs include the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Child Care and Development Block Grant and other programs. They are vital components of a human services system but responsibilities vary and can either fall under a county's purview or the authority of the state. Regardless of their authority, counties possess the capability to connect and coordinate with other public sector systems such as housing, disability, health and behavioral health services to address the whole needs of families.

Oftentimes, children and families come

to the front door of downstream systems (e.g. homelessness, emergency rooms, in-patient behavioral and health care facilities, out of home placement and other entities) to receive access to services addressing root cause issues related to poor health conditions, family challenges, behavioral health needs, criminal activity, unemployment and other barriers.

Although the traditional health and hu-

as school, home and the community. The county has leveraged federal, state and local polices and funding to establish a call center and in-person one-stop shop with automated options for consumers to easily navigate and apply for services, improve the workforce and promote person-centered service delivery, launch a new integrated information technology system for income eligibility programs and create

cated services and streamlined eligibility and enrollment systems leading to fewer barriers to care, slower disability progression, less emergency and crisis care, reduced inpatient and institutional care, and lowered costs.

In 2010, the San Diego County Board of Supervisors adopted the “Live Well San Diego” vision of a region that is building better health, living safely and thriving. It aligns the efforts of individuals, organizations and government to help all 3.3 million San Diego County residents live well.


San Diego County’s human services transformation story involves a paradigm shift in service delivery, promoting a “large-scale, social movement for prevention, wellness and whole person care.” Nevertheless, the scale of the system and the costs of service delivery are major factors in the appetite for new models. This presents counties with an opportunity to learn from other local leaders and explore policy, systems and funding mechanisms that improve service delivery and outcomes for individuals, children and families.

What can counties do to transform their systems?

NACo recently launched its “Transform-

ing County Human Services Network,” bringing together county human services agency leaders and appointed and elected officials who are responsible for shaping policies and systems driving public human services programs such as the TANF, SNAP, child-care assistance, housing and homelessness and child welfare programs.

This community of practice allows leaders to network and engage in peer learning and educational activities that share innovative models and best practices for modernizing and integrating county-based human services systems. The goal of the network is for county leaders to gain strategies for advancing racial equity, reducing multigenerational poverty and working through regulatory hurdles by leveraging policy solutions that drive systems change.

Regardless of your role or position, there will be a resource for you! We encourage you to join the network of leaders who are dedicated to making bold change in their county. For more information visit <https://www.naco.org/transforming-county-human-services-network>. 

Rashida Brown is NACo’s associate program director for Children, Youth and Families.

‘...county leaders are exploring policy and technical solutions for transforming the human services delivery system in a way that supports the whole needs of families.’

man services models tend to focus on transactional approaches to eligibility determination and service delivery and outputs rather than outcomes, counties can adopt meaningful strategies and scalable approaches to identify high-risk factors, improve the customer experience, catch families early and move them upstream.

Increasingly, counties are recognizing the complexities of managing and operating within a soiled system in addition to the multiple funding streams and program rules that support them. They are also recognizing that these challenges have inevitably and historically created barriers to achieving cross-systems collaboration. As a result, counties can deploy “no wrong door,” person-centric models that meet residents where they are rather than in a siloed operation. This presents an opportunity to dismantle outdated legacy systems and embrace modernized data and information technology systems that speak to one another. To promote efficiency, counties can also invest in software and mobile applications that adopt streamlined standards and processes for service delivery. They can also leverage financing strategies that blend and braid a variety of funding streams to maximize resources for a transformative system.

How counties are transforming human services delivery systems

Many counties across the nation have shown dedication to advancing human services systems transformation to achieve better outcomes for residents and communities. For example, Buncombe County, N.C. has an integrated health and human services system that coordinates services across public and private sectors to improve outcomes for children and families.

In 2013, the county earned a NACo Achievement Award for its integration initiative, which has bridged gaps between government programs and service providers cutting across multiple settings such

community service navigators to strengthen residents’ connection to vital supports involving behavioral health, child care, public health and dental services, child welfare, child support, veterans services, housing and homelessness resources, legal services and transportation.

A local integrated service design that leverages a “no wrong door” approach can promote preventive, whole family strategies leading to improved outcomes. These types of systems often include coordinated case management, fewer points of entry for clients, co-lo-

RESOURCES FOR HELPING CHILDREN

Children’s Bureau

The Bureau focuses on supporting foster care and adoption facilities, protecting children through grants, advocacy, and action. <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/cb>

Child Care Network

The Child Care Technical Assistance Network provides extensive resources including grants, tools, and education to better support communities. <https://childcareta.acf.hhs.gov/>

Child Welfare Information Gateway

The Gateway has extensive trainings in recognizing abuse and reporting methods for allegations. <https://www.childwelfare.gov/>

Coalition for Care

The National Child Abuse Coalition provides resources, advocates for policy changes and aids in the fight against child abuse. <https://national-childabusecoalition.org/>

Early Childcare Support

The National Child Care Association provides accreditation, support, and resources for early childcare providers. <https://nationalchildcare.org/>

Health Resources and Services Grants

Programs and grants are available through the Maternal and Child Health Bureau of the HRSA which focuses on prenatal-to-3 care. <https://mchb.hrsa.gov/>

Mental Health Support

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration has a branch specifically for assisting children and families recovering from trauma called the National Child Traumatic Stress Initiative. <https://www.samhsa.gov/child-trauma>

National Children’s Alliance

A leader in intergovernmental coordination, the Children’s Alliance provides accreditation, grants, and resources for Child Advocacy Centers. <https://www.nationalchildrensalliance.org/>

No Kid Hungry

The No Kids Hungry NGO provides grants and advocacy focused on feeding children. They partner with schools and local organizations to provide food and funding to feed the hungry. <https://www.nokidhungry.org/>

Traumatic Stress Network

The National Child Traumatic Stress Network aims to raise awareness and access to services for children who have experienced traumatic events. They provide extensive information about trauma informed care. <https://www.nctsn.org/>

THE RECOVERY FUND AND CHILDREN AND FAMILIES:

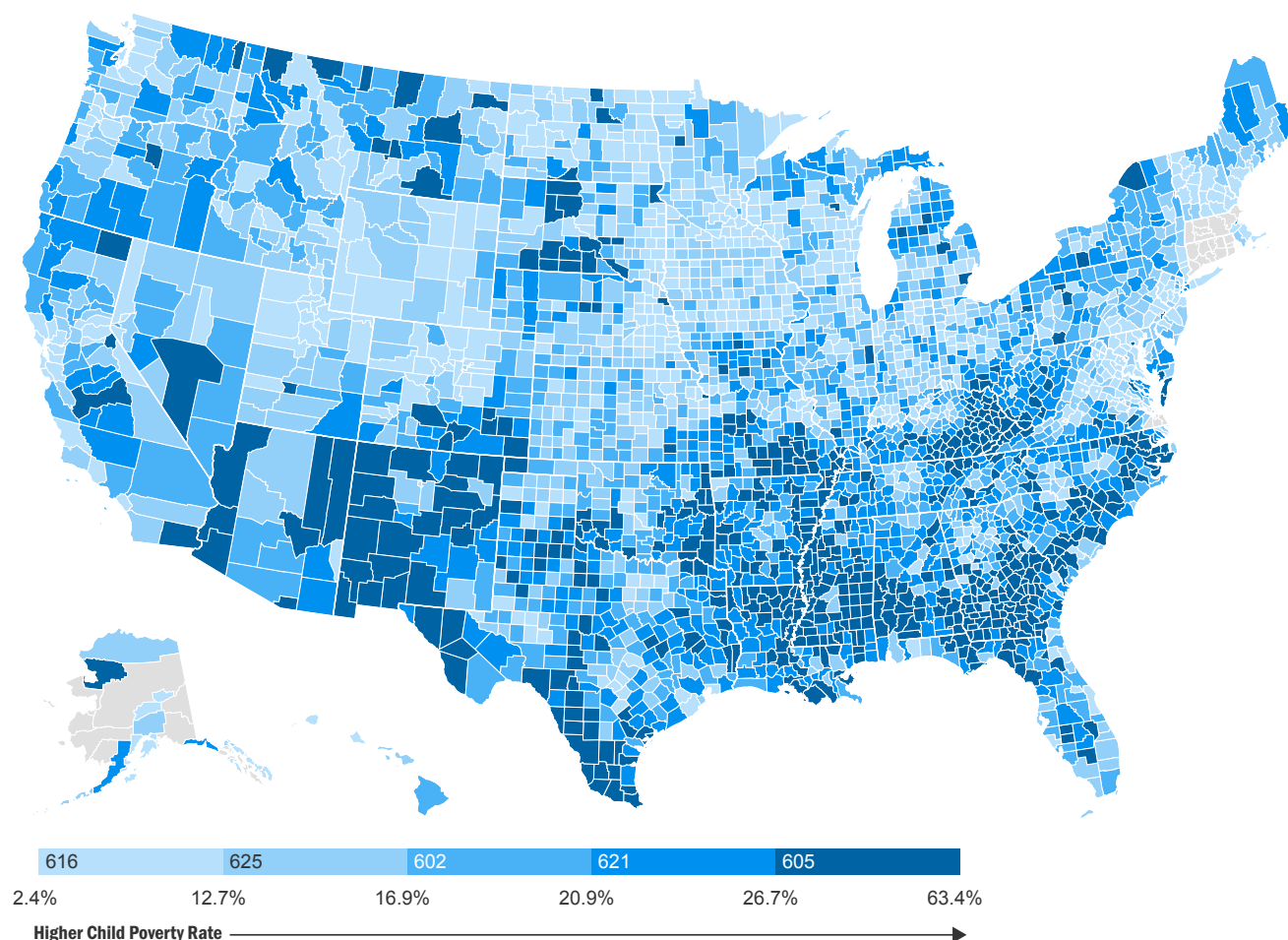
The Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Fund (Recovery Fund), part of the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA), which NACo helped to develop and strongly advocated to pass, allocates \$65.1 billion. **These funds provide direct, flexible aid for every county, parish and borough in America.** Counties are on the front lines in delivering this aid to residents and are a driving force connecting communities and strengthening the economy.

As directed by the ARPA and the U.S. Department of Treasury, counties can invest Recovery Funds into a broad range of programs, services and projects under five categories to: support the public health response; address negative economic impacts caused by COVID-19; replace lost revenue; provide premium pay to essential workers; and invest in water, sewer and broadband infrastructure.

Since the enactment of the ARPA, America's counties have been working hard to develop Recovery Fund implementation plans that will help spur an equitable economic recovery across the nation. As sound financial stewards, **counties are investing these critical Recovery Funds to ensure the health and well-being of our nation's residents and the economic vitality of our local communities.** Many counties are in the preliminary stages of development and implementation of Recovery Fund Plans. This report highlights investments that expand affordable childcare, support educational opportunities and provide financial services for low-income families.

CHILD POVERTY IS A PRESSING ISSUE ACROSS THE NATION

Across the nation, child poverty continues to be a pressing issue. In 2019, over **70 percent** of counties had a child poverty rate that exceeded the national average.



Map: 2019, U.S. Census Bureau, Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates; U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2015-2019 5-year Estimates.

How are counties taking action for infants and toddlers?



by **Arabella Pluta-Ehlers**

For nearly two years, families with young children have dealt with the negative impacts of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, including economic hardships, limited access to child care and increased stress and social isolation. In recent months, as the pandemic has surged, many parents are once again seeing disruptions to their work schedules and facing temporary childcare closures. These issues have short-term and potential long-term effects on children's health, learning and well-being.

Through these tumultuous times, counties have been on the front lines — supporting childcare providers with grants and resources, serving families through health and human service agencies and investing in systems that make it easier for families with young children to access supports. Through the Counties for Kids initiative, NACo Research Foundation is increasing awareness among county leaders on the important role they play in making prenatal-to-three (PN-3) investments and sharing county wins like the

ones below. The following are examples of what some counties are doing to take action in this area.

Supporting infant, toddler and parental well-being

■ **Warren County, Ohio:** Inspired by a long-standing program in a neighboring county, Butler County, Ohio, Warren County first launched its Therapeutic Interagency Preschool (TIP) program to support preschool-aged children who experience trauma. In recent years, the county has seen increases in reported substance abuse, family violence and foster or kinship care arrangements. Recognizing the need to serve young children before they reach preschool, Warren County created “Baby TIP.” The program serves infants, toddlers and their families through an Early Head Start-Child Care Partnership.

When it comes to best practices and working with evidence-based programs like TIP, Warren County Commissioner Shannon Jones encourages counties not to reinvent the wheel but be mindful of what additional or unique needs exist in

your county: “We saw the TIP program working in another county and that gave us some confidence that we could enact it here.”

“As the program was established, we heard from our partners that infants and toddlers who were too young for TIP would also benefit from these services,” Jones said. “So, we took the existing best practice and what we had learned from working with 3- and 4-year-olds and tweaked it to serve children birth to three.”

■ **New Castle County, Del.** County Executive Matt Meyer announced a \$3 million investment of the county's American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds over the next three years to expand the Nurse-Family Partnership (NFP) home-visiting program, which connects trained nurses to first-time expectant mothers. These nurses provide home visits through the child's second birthday and provide support, advice and connection to resources. With these new funds, NFP will serve an additional 120 first-time mothers in New Castle County and track outcomes for three years.

Increasing access to affordable, quality childcare

■ **San Diego County, Calif.:** The county is prioritizing childcare in its recovery efforts, recognizing the role it plays in supporting working parents. ARPA funds will be used to provide grants and vouchers to child-care providers and parents. The county is also piloting a program that will provide job training for new educators joining the field.

■ **Becker County, Minn.:** The Becker County Board of Commissioners leveraged ARPA funding to create two grant opportunities for childcare providers. The Family Child Care Startup Grant offers up to \$10,000 to help offset startup costs for new licensed providers. The Childcare Provider Emergency Assistance Grant offers existing providers support for costs incurred due to COVID-19.

“As a community, we recognize how important quality and affordable childcare is to our local economy,” said Guy Fischer, coordinator for the Becker County Economic Development Authority. “We’ve

See INFANT pg H12

Harris County facility will house ‘aged-out’ foster youth



Artists' conceptual drawings show the design of common spaces at the planned HAY Center campus. Illustrations are courtesy of Harris County, Resources for Children and Adults

by **Charlie Ban**
senior writer

A new facility breaking ground in March will house not only staff offices for Harris County, Texas Resources for Children and Adults, but 50 apartments for foster children who are aging out of the system.

The new HAY (Houston Alumni and Youth) Center campus will include all of the resources essential to transitioning to adulthood, including life skills training,

job placement, housing assistance, education assistance and a coaching and mentoring program. The center, which has operated since 2005, left its previously leased office facility for 27 staff members last year and expects completion of the new campus by fall 2023.

"There won't be any timeline on how long they can stay, we want to get them to the point where they can secure long-term housing and move ahead with their lives," said Estella Oguin, community re-

lations director for Harris County Resources for Children and Adults. "Homelessness among foster youth creates other challenges like unemployment and risk of involvement in the criminal justice system. They end up couch surfing or forced to resort to unsafe living situations.

"Fifty units is, of course, not enough, but it's a start."

Harris County estimates that roughly 200 foster children turn 18 every year and age out of the system, though Ogu-

in notes that the services Harris County offers and the number of potential foster families in the county often attract youth from surrounding counties and regions. The HAY Center will be open to people up to age 25, and includes services from the Texas Workforce Commission and local housing authorities.

"The HAY Center will be a safety net for some Houston-area people when they leave foster care without a responsible adult's support to guide their transition to



adulthood,” said Commissioner Rodney Ellis, whose district includes the center. “These youth, many of them still teenagers, are expected to shift overnight from being dependents of the state to independent adults. The facilities will assist with that transition as well as be a one-stop center designed to feel like home.”

The \$35 million project includes Community Development Block Grant funding from both the county and the city of Houston, along with \$5 million of Harris

County’s allocation from the American Rescue Plan.

“The American Rescue Plan funding was crucial to getting this done, because the costs of materials and labor skyrocketed during the pandemic,” Oguin said. “This funding helped make sure we could keep pace with the costs and make it happen.”


The campus will include a 41,000 square-foot residential building and 17,000 square-foot office building, with

plans to add more residential units and emergency shelter units.

The residential building will include laundry facilities, a gym, indoor study and business rooms and an outdoor gathering space.

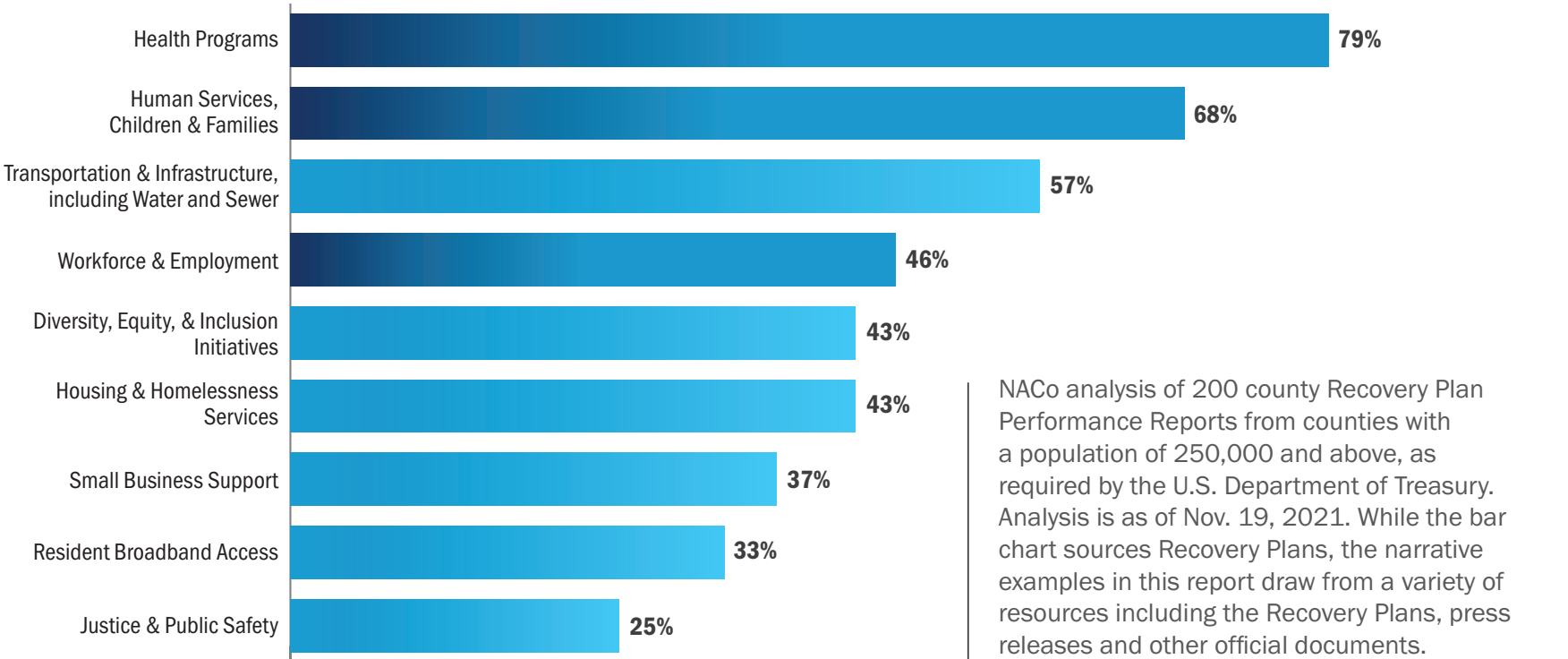
“We designed this with the input of foster youths,” Oguin said. “While it won’t be a long-term housing solution, we want it to be a place where they can feel comfortable and at home, and we took a lot of their suggestions into account.”

Conceptually, the youths identified four elements for the new HAY Center campus: home, security, community and wellness.

“No foster youth should face homelessness simply because they turn 18,” said County Judge Lina Hidalgo. “Providing these young adults with stable housing, along with the programs and services that will help them on their path to becoming successful adults, is an investment in our future.” 

COUNTIES ARE PRIORITIZING CHILDREN & FAMILIES THROUGH KEY INVESTMENTS

How will counties invest the funds? NACo analysis of 200 county ARPA Recovery Fund plans reveals county-designed investments in the community across key areas of need. These local priorities are found within county plans at the rate displayed in the chart, **e.g. sixty-eight percent of county plans include investments in human services, children and families.** The darker bars are the investment categories adjacent to children and families that support the continuation and expansion of services in counties. The examples in this report further illustrate the allocations to support children and families on the local level.



Child-tax credit readily available

From TAX CREDIT pg H4

ble residents with the expanded CTC.

Throughout the latter half of 2021, counties invested in numerous efforts to boost enrollment, often in partnership with local non-profits and other key stakeholders. In Allegheny County, Pa., the Department of Human Services sent text messages to families, while the Harris County, Texas Board of Commissioners invested \$500,000 to expand free tax preparation services via a community-based organization. The Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors invested in an outreach campaign that included radio spots during Dodgers games.

County officials also joined NACo webinars and convenings to learn about the credit's expansion and best practices for enrolling families, including using simplified non-filer tool designed by Code for America. Leaders of NACo's Human Services and Education Policy Steering Committee have also urged Congress to pass legislation to make the CTC expansion permanent.

Thanks to national, state and local efforts to ensure uptake of the expanded

CTC, eligible families received more than 200 million payments totaling more than \$93 billion last year. By December, the expanded CTC had lifted an estimated 3.7 million children out of poverty for a 30 percent reduction in the overall child poverty rate. However, gaps in access persist, and it is likely that a few million children were and are at risk of missing out on this new income support. This possibility is especially high for families experiencing homelessness, first-time parents and non-filers.

Therefore, work remains to be done to ensure that all eligible households receive the full, expanded CTC payment during the 2021 tax filing season. This includes helping families who did not receive any advance CTC payments file for the full amount on their 2021 tax return, as well as assisting those who did receive advance payments properly file for the remainder.

To help county officials continue this important outreach and education work, NACo will continue to provide updates and resources as they become available. For more information on the child tax credit, visit <https://www.childtaxcredit.gov/>.

Find out about 'Counties for Kids'

From INFANT pg H9

listened to our business community, parents, child care providers and other stakeholders to create programs that increase child care slots, stabilize existing child care providers, help would-be providers navigate the licensing process and create learning and certification opportunities at our local high school for students interested in the field."

Creating sustainable financing for early childhood systems

In November 2020, voters in both Escambia County and Leon County, Fla. created independent tax districts that will invest in community programs demonstrating positive outcomes for children. These successful efforts show promise for other counties considering dedicated funding streams for children prenatal-to-three.

■ **Leon County, Fla.:** Leon County established a ballot measure initiative by forming a planning committee charged with engaging more than 80 community groups and organizations, including the chambers of commerce, sheriffs and

law enforcement, clergy and the county school board on the effort. Many of these leaders then wrote op-eds in local papers in support of the measure and to build public will on the significance of investments in children.

■ **Escambia County, Fla.:** Achieve Escambia, a cradle-to-career coalition, reviewed local data among stakeholders and found that outcomes for children in the county were remaining flat or worsening. The group worked with over 200 community members to write letters to the commission board expressing support for a ballot measure and held over 100 virtual events to increase awareness and share messaging on the importance of dedicated investments in children's services.

Counties are uniquely positioned to create innovative approaches promoting PN-3 that meet the unique needs of the community. To learn more about what your county can do for infants and toddlers or to share your success story, visit www.countiesforkids.org.

Arabella Pluta-Ehlers is program manager, Children, Youth & Families at NACo.

OPINION

American Rescue Plan Act Reality Check

by **Chris Holman**
Portage County, Wis.
Executive

In recent weeks, there have been comments and insinuations made about the funding that local jurisdictions received from the federal government via the CARES Act and — by extension — the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA), which is also referred to as State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds (SLFRF).

Apparently, the misunderstanding centers around the notion that local governments aren't quite sure what to do with the funding.

First, it's worth describing the fiscal reality and status quo that local jurisdictions are faced with.

Local governments in Wisconsin operate under what is likely one of the strictest levy limit policies in the United States.

I can appreciate some of the thinking that went into this, but the prolonged nature of this policy has led to some unintended consequences and started pitting things that the public values at a high level against each other.

Similarly, it has put many jurisdictions into the position of having to make difficult funding decisions in core, mandatory service and program areas like Health and Human Services and Public Safety.

So, what local governments have been discussing is how to best leverage this one-time funding to address recovery efforts, shore up areas within their organization that have come under tremendous pressures due to increased workload in mandated areas that are out of their control, and to attempt to put their organizations and their constituents on better footing in a



Holman

post-pandemic reality.

This is no small feat, and it requires careful thinking and being prudent.

In turn, this requires taking your time.

Thankfully, the window within which governments can use this funding is through the end of 2024 and in certain scenarios through

2026.

Is there an urgent need to get that funding out the door? In some cases, yes, but given that this needs to be treated differently than the annual budget cycle and we have the time to use, why wouldn't we? The annual budget process is often like a bad cast on a fishing trip where a bird's nest of line

needs to be untangled throughout the year so that when one budget is adopted, we can cast again and start dealing with a new bird's nest.

As anyone who fishes knows, you have to take your time to untangle that knot and local government — unlike us who enjoy getting out on the water — cannot simply

cut the line and re-string.

In many ways, the ARPA/SLFRF funding presents more casting opportunities and taking time to load one's reel, treat the line, and prepare for casts we know will catch fish.

In summary, this is not the

'It requires careful thinking and being prudent.'

time for hurrying.

Local governments are hard at work and should be afforded the time they need to make prudent, fiscally sound decisions that mirror the work they do each year to carry their jurisdictions forward into another year of pain points driven by the levy limit, unfunded mandates, and all of the surprises we encounter along the way that cannot be planned for but must be addressed.



Connecting Top Employers with Premier Professionals.

jobs.naco.org

EMPLOYERS:

Find Your Next Great Hires

- **PLACE** your job in front of our highly qualified members
- **SEARCH** our resume database of qualified candidates
- **MANAGE** jobs and applicant activity right on our site
- **LIMIT** applicants only to those who are qualified
- **FILL** your jobs more quickly with great talent

PROFESSIONALS:

Keep Your Career on the Move

- **POST** a resume or anonymous career profile that leads employers to you
- **SEARCH** and apply to hundreds of new jobs on the spot by using robust filters
- **SET UP** efficient job alerts to deliver the latest jobs right to your inbox
- **ACCESS** career resources, job searching tips and tools

For more information on recruitment options, contact Customer Service at clientserv@communitybrands.com or (727) 497-6565.

ymcareers[™]
 by communitybrands

BRIGHT IDEAS

Family Stabilization Unit Breaks Down Barriers for Better Living

PROBLEM: Some families have experienced generational poverty with no end in sight.

SOLUTION: Create a wraparound support network tailored to individual family needs, helping them break through the barriers keeping them from self-sufficiency.

by **Dakota Hendricks**
staff writer

Franklin County, Ohio was one of the first to declare racism a public health crisis. The county had collected extensive data, interviewing their residents, that showed minorities had higher rates of incarceration and poverty than others and the community was concerned. The county chose to act, attempting to break the cycle — one impoverished family at a time.

The Franklin County Board of Commissioners started the process of tackling equity in 2018, drafting an extensive data-driven analysis of the barriers in the community keeping the poor in poverty. They launched several initiatives in the years since, tackling everything from housing to education.

In 2020, the commissioners approved a new pilot program called the Family Stabilization Unit (FSU) proposed by Joy Bivens, deputy administrator for Health and Human Services. The FSU is a partnership between the Brooklyn County Juvenile Justice System and Franklin County Human Services aimed at supporting families through a two-generation approach.

Bivens said the data is clear: Young boys involved in the juvenile justice system experience high rates of poverty.

The FSU works to recognize these vulnerable children as they enter the system and help identify struggles within their



family. Walter Dillard, the deputy director of Strategic Initiatives, said the FSU then works to identify the strengths and shortcomings of the family in several categories, called economic mobility pathways or EMPATH, which then add up to a “bridge score.”

The team uses the bridge score to help identify exactly what the family is lacking, working across siloed organizations to determine what care the family needs to achieve self-sufficiency. The bridge score indicates 70 and above as self-sufficient families. Most of the families FSU cares for fall around a 50-point average.

Dillard said after working in organizations like children’s services, he was tired of “all these agencies working with left brain, right brain and nobody’s talking to each other.”

Instead, he set out to break down programmatic barriers and make proper connections between agencies.

‘Where are the barriers, and how can we assist?’

“This is a collaboration for all of the Human Services entire ecosystem,” said Dillard. The FSU can offer SNAP, childcare, job assistance, education, housing, substance abuse counseling, Medicaid and more to support the needs of the family.

The FSU doesn’t simply “hand you off to somebody that helps with education” but forms a partnership, helping people through each step of the process, he noted.

The program gives partic-

ipants “a chance for them to raise a healthy family in a safe home.” Bivens said it is not enough to improve the lives of the children in the justice system.

“There’s an environment they are going back into,” she said. “We need to look at that environment to figure out ‘Where are the barriers and how can we assist this family stabilization so that this young person does not reoffend?’”

The FSU continues to be a frontline program throughout the pandemic with trained specialists making home visits, creating relationships and building trust within the communities they serve. Dillard said the FSU may network with local schools and universities for even greater detection of those in need.

Deputy Director of Communications Bart Logan said the

county went to its residents to ask what the pain points are, where are they being prevented from accessing services? FSU took that information and tries to “wrap our arms around these families” helping them move forward, he noted.

The success of the program has already encouraged other communities to contact Franklin County for advice on implementing their own version of the program.

“When you break down silos, people succeed,” said Bivens. “If we’re not talking to each other and we’re disjointed, what are we putting those families through who are already overwhelmed?”

The Franklin County Family Stabilization Unit program is the recipient of a Best in Category 2021 NACo Achievement Award.

WORD SEARCH

ALAMEDA COUNTY, Calif.
Created by: Dakota Hendricks

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

- ATHLETICS:** The Major League Baseball team of Alameda.
- BAY:** The western edge of the county borders San Francisco Bay.
- BERKELEY:** A city in Alameda.
- CREEK:** The Alameda Creek runs through 45 miles of the county
- DIESEL:** Actor Vin Diesel was born in the county.
- EAST:** The county is in the East Bay region.
- FAIR:** The Alameda County Fair runs for four weekends in June and July
- FOUNDED:** The county was founded in 1853.
- HORNET:** The USS Hornet is a floating museum of military history.
- LANDMARK:** The county has eight national landmarks.
- ORACLE:** The Oracle Arena is a large stadium in the Bay area.
- PINBALL:** Alameda County is home to the Pacific Pinball Museum.
- RECIPE:** A new wellness program called Recipe4Health started in the county focused on quality food.
- REDWOOD:** Towering trees of immense size can be found in the forest.
- YOUTUBE:** Alameda County has had a YouTube channel since 2010 to better connect with the public.

PROFILES IN SERVICE

GLORIA D. WHISENHUNT

NACo Board Member
Commissioner
Forsyth County, N.C.

- Number of years active in NACo: 24
- Education: High School and Cosmetology Degree.
- The hardest thing I’ve ever done: Run for elected position.
- Three people (living or dead) I’d invite to dinner: Billy Graham, husband and son.



Whisenhunt

- A dream I have is to: Spend more time at the beach.
- The most adventurous thing I’ve ever done is: Get married and raise a son.
- My favorite way to relax is: Reading and walking.

- I’m most proud of: My family.
- Every morning I read: The local paper, online news and daily devotion.
- My favorite meal is: Salmon.
- My pet peeve is: Lazy people.
- My motto is: Do my best every day.
- The last book I Read was: Golden Girl by Elin Hilderbrand.
- My favorite movie is: The Way We Were.
- My favorite music is: Beach music.
- My favorite U.S. President is: Ronald Reagan.
- My county is a NACo member: Because of the networking with other counties and NACo lobbying for all counties on federal issues.



ON THE MOVE

NACo STAFF

Ariana O’Rourke

O’Rourke

Peter Savarino

Savarino

Mellerio

Mellerio

focusing on finance, pensions and intergovernmental affairs. She previously served as a legislative associate at Acalde & Fay. Prior to that, she served as a legislative intern in the office of Congressman Don Beyer (D-Va).

- Associate Legislative Director **Jonathan Shuffield** was a guest on the Western Governors’ Association podcast “Out West,” discussing federalism.

BEHIND THE SEAL

MOHAVE COUNTY, Ariz.

The Mohave County seal, modernized in 2013, was inspired by a territorial seal created in 1879, before Arizona became a state.

The old Mohave County seal has not been in use for some time and was replaced with the modern and digital-friendly seal.

The newly redesigned Mohave County seal depicts a larger elk in the foreground, with mountains and trees in the background.

Underneath, the Latin words *Ditat Deus* are encribed, meaning “God Enriches.”

If you would like your county’s seal featured in “Behind the Seal,” contact Dakota Hendricks at dhendricks@naco.org.

NEWS FROM ACROSS THE NATION

ALABAMA

• **MADISON COUNTY** recently welcomed the opening of a new **911** center in partnership with the city of Huntsville. WHNT-TV reports the new 30,000 square-foot facility will better help the response time of fire and EMS services in the area. The county has seen considerable growth and the expanded services provided by the new center will help answer the increased call volume.

• The **MOBILE COUNTY** District Attorney's Office has launched a program combating **human trafficking** called "Don't know don't click." According to WKRG-TV, the initiative aims to provide an easy method of reporting and is paired with an education and awareness campaign in local schools. The DA's office is concerned that social media plays a more significant role in children's lives and that without proper support, children are more vulnerable.

CALIFORNIA

• **SAN DIEGO COUNTY** has taken aim at the rampant spread of **ghost guns**. In a 3-2 decision, *Rancho Santa Fe Review* reported that the county has made it illegal to possess or distribute gun parts without

serial numbers. Ghost guns are made of parts acquired separately without serial numbers, skirting regulations and making the firearms all but untraceable by law enforcement.

FLORIDA

• **ESCAMBIA COUNTY** has launched a new **emergency medical service (EMS)** dashboard to publicly track ambulance responses. The *Pensacola News Journal* reported that the dashboard tracks daily EMS responses, hospital transports, cardiac arrests and more. Proposed by the county EMS Chief David Torsell, the dashboard is designed to better inform the public about the importance of EMS response and how busy the county services are.

ILLINOIS

COOK COUNTY has opened a 24/7 **domestic violence court** to allow survivors of abuse access to orders of protection at all hours. The *Block Club Chicago* news website reported that the change comes at the urging of victim's advocacy groups and domestic violence organizations during a time when the number of reports has surged, likely exacerbated by the pandemic.



KANSAS

HARVEY COUNTY has launched a new program for **reusing paints, stains and cleaners**. The *Newton Kansan* reported that the Harvey County Transfer Station is now storing the paints and more so that residents may use the materials. Hazardous waste disposal is difficult and expensive; by saving some materials for later use, the county can reduce expenses while providing a service to residents.



MARYLAND

MONTGOMERY COUNTY recently launched an **Electric Vehicle (EV)** Purchasing Cooperative pilot program. County Executive Marc Elrich said the goal is to "accelerate the adoption of EVs by the public in an effort to reach the county's Climate Action Plan goal." The

goal is to convince 1,000 county residents and 50 businesses to sign a pledge saying they will purchase a new or used EV as their next vehicle.

MICHIGAN

The commissioners of **WASHTENAW COUNTY** are taking **climate action** seriously. *MLIVE* reports the county has launched a new online portal for residents to provide feedback on a \$200,000 climate action planning initiative with the end goal of being carbon neutral by 2035. The county itself has a more ambitious plan to be carbon neutral by 2030, leading by example. The online portal allows for residents to provide feedback, even tying their suggestions to specific locations on a public map.

NEVADA

WASHOE COUNTY Housing and **Homeless Services** is introducing nearly two dozen temporary sleeping units, called ModPods. They are small hard-walled sleeping spaces that contain a bed, electricity, a heating source, lighting, storage and a lockable door located at the county's limited eligibility Safe Camp.

NEW YORK

MONROE COUNTY and the city of Rochester have launched a program meant to provide more efficient care for residents who call **911**.

"Nurse Navigation" will divert emergency calls for non-life-threatening conditions to a licensed nurse who can assess symptoms, give instruc-

tions on self-care or call for a virtual visit with an emergency physician, Rochester First reported. County officials hope this will alleviate demands on EMTs and paramedic staff, to allow them to respond to life-threatening emergencies more easily throughout the city and county.

SOUTH DAKOTA

MOOD COUNTY may establish its own **Commercial Driver's License (CDL) training program** for county employees as a new federal regulation gets set to take effect.

New regulations taking effect in February will require training before taking a state-administered CDL examination, which will drive the price up for drivers or the county between \$3,000-\$5,000 and place demand on the eight truck driving schools in South Dakota, the *Moody County Enterprise* reported.

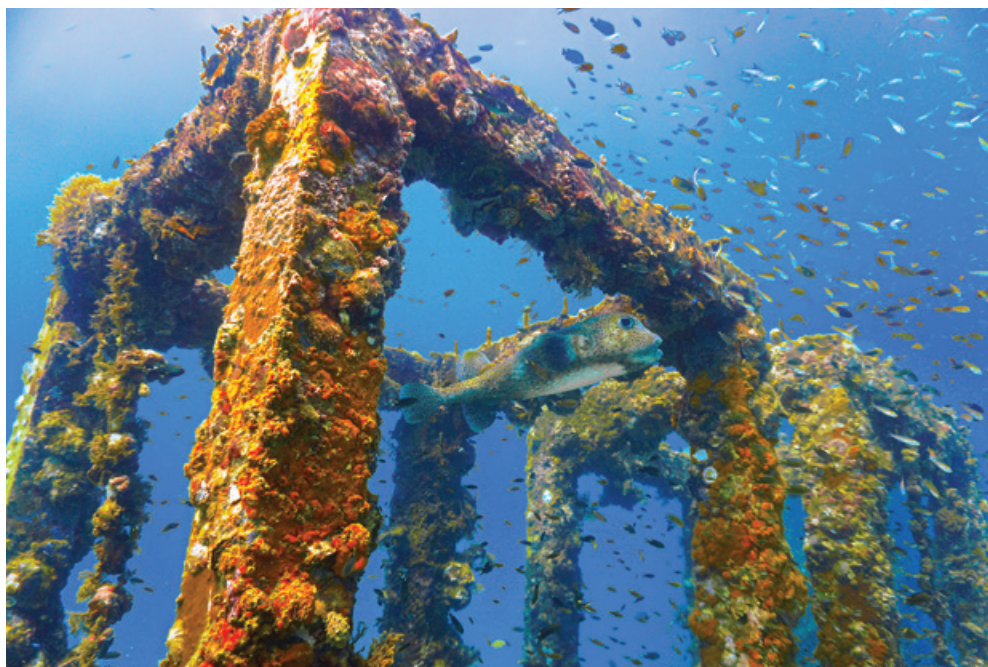
TEXAS

HARRIS COUNTY has adopted a plan to remove barriers for **job candidates** with criminal histories who apply for positions with the county.

The "Fair Chance Policy" bans most Harris County agencies from including questions about criminal history on job applications and it prohibits consideration of arrests that did not end in conviction, disqualifying applicants solely because of a conviction and mandates criminal history checks be conducted only after a conditional offer of employment is made. In cases where state and federal law require questions about criminal backgrounds on job applications, however, Harris County will follow those laws. There will also be more scrutiny of applications for positions that deal with children, the elderly and transporting hazardous materials.

UTAH

WASHINGTON COUNTY's new "Property Watch" Program will protect against **title fraud** — in which fraudulent documents are filed with the county recorder's office. Private companies have developed and marketed title-watch software to alert property title holders to



FLORIDA

• **LEE COUNTY** has accepted a \$120,000 grant from the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission to build an **artificial reef**. WINK-TV reported that the grant will be used to purchase at least 1,000 tons of clean repurposed concrete which will be placed in the Gulf of Mexico in a zone called the Chris Koepfer's ARC Reef Site.



OHIO

FRANKLIN COUNTY is supporting a part-time **apiary inspector** who will maintain relationships with beekeepers and conduct inspections. Her inspections in the spring and summer will look for pests and diseases that have decimated bee populations in recent decades, which have cascading botanical and agricultural consequences. She will also educate beekeepers about proper bee management, *The Columbus Dispatch* reported. Franklin County has 370 registered apiaries — more than any other Ohio county.

any actions taken against their property titles, and now the recorder’s office has worked with the county’s IT and GIS offices to offer the same service.

Property Watch tracks all the property deeds and paperwork recorded each day in the Washington County recorder’s office and if a property owner/deed holder has registered an existing Washington County property tax account with Property Watch, they will receive an email notification if any paperwork relating to their property parcel is recorded. This notification gives the deed holder/

property owner the opportunity to quickly contact the county Recorder’s Office if they did not record the deed or take the action against the title.

VIRGINIA

LOUDOUN COUNTY supervisors are considering a new loan program to help **affordable housing** developers buy rental complexes. The Rental Housing Acquisition and Preservation Loan Program would work alongside the existing Affordable Multifamily Housing Loan program by offering an estimated two-month ap-

proval process compared to an estimated five-month approval process. Developers would apply to the county to be pre-qualified, creating a pool of certified developers and skipping that part of application review when they apply for a loan, Loudoun Now reported. Applications would also be accepted on a rolling basis.

News From Across the Nation is compiled by Charlie Ban and Dakota Hendricks. Does your county have news we should see? Contact cban@naco.org and dhendricks@naco.org.



WISCONSIN

While many counties **collect Christmas trees for mulching**, the **MILWAUKEE COUNTY** Zoo keeps theirs on the premises.

The zoo’s resident elephants, Brittany, Ruth and Belle, get the trees. They’re a new element in their enclosure, for both play and later, for lunch. Photo by Joel Miller

GET TO KNOW...

Guernsey County, Ohio



Welcome
Guernsey County, Ohio

Located in eastern Ohio, Guernsey County was named after the Isle of Guernsey in the English Channel off the coast of Normandy. The county was created in 1810 from parts of nearby Muskingum and Belmont counties. Largely a rural area, the county sits in the heart of Appalachia.

The largest city and the county seat of Guernsey County is Cambridge, “the Crossroads of Southeastern Ohio.” The county was once home to six Native American tribes, Chippewa, Delaware, Miami, Mingo, Shawnee and Wyandotte. The county is well known for its quality glasswork

which has become prized by collectors and its “S bridges,” four of which still stand. The bridges made from cut stone were created in the early 1800s and resemble the letter “S,” which was an easier shape for workers to construct.

Astronaut and former U.S. Sen. John Glenn was born in Cambridge, Ohio. Glenn was part of the first group chosen to become astronauts and the first American to orbit the Earth.

“Get to Know” features new NACo member counties.



John Glenn

**UNTOLD
STORIES**

Join NACo's **Untold Stories** campaign to highlight the human impact of county services

Since the beginning of the coronavirus pandemic, counties have served on the front lines, working to protect the health and wellbeing of our residents, and driving economic recovery in our communities.

Now, we have an opportunity to tell the full story of our efforts and how we have made incredible differences in the lives of our residents through the American Rescue Plan Act, a historic direct investment in our nation's counties. Let's demonstrate how counties are helping our residents stay in their homes and keep food on the table. How we are supporting small businesses. How we are steering our communities into the future.

Visit NACo.org/UntoldStories to submit your story and access resources to engage your local audience, including a letter to the editor template, a media relations guide, social media templates and more.

