

NACO National Association of Counties

CountyNews

The Voice of America's Counties

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Board OKs major change to NACo drug card program

By BEVERLY SCHLOTTERBECK
EXECUTIVE EDITOR

NACo's Board of Directors approved a significant change to the popular NACo Prescription Discount Card Program, adopted a \$20.7 million consolidated annual budget for 2012 and postponed a decision to eliminate printed copies of *County News* in favor of a weekly, electronically delivered publication.

Board members also okayed new legislative policy priorities

and election guidelines for second vice president candidates at their fall meeting held this year in Orange County (Orlando), Fla., Dec. 8–10.

By a near unanimous vote, the Board directed staff to move forward with negotiating a new contract for the prescription program with CVS Caremark that provides participating counties with an option to receive a \$1 fee for each

See NACo BOARD page 7

QuickTakes

Top Five Christmas Tree Producing States

- 1 - Oregon
- 2 - North Carolina
- 3 - Michigan
- 4 - Pennsylvania
- 5 - Wisconsin

Source: National Christmas Tree Association, USDA Census of Agriculture 2009

Uranium mining could come to rural Virginia

By CHARLES TAYLOR
SENIOR STAFF WRITER

A National Academy of Sciences study, due out any day, may help determine whether uranium mining is allowed in Pittsylvania County — and elsewhere — in Virginia.

Informed by this and other recent studies, the Virginia General Assembly is poised to decide when it convenes in January whether to lift a 29-year moratorium on mining the radioactive element in the state.

The county of 63,500 in south-central Virginia is home to the largest underground uranium ore deposit known to exist in the state, worth an estimated \$7 billion. Virginia Uranium Inc. says it can safely mine a site it owns, with substantial benefit to the county's economy.

Uranium-related operations could generate more than 1,000 jobs and pump \$3 million or more a year into local and state tax

See URANIUM page 6



Photo courtesy of the Wakulla County, Fla. Sheriff's Office

Santa Claus hears gift requests from the children of Wakulla County, Fla. during Christmas in the Park, the 12th such annual event sponsored by the sheriff's office and parks and recreation department.

Warm temperatures can't melt Christmas spirit in Florida county

By CHARLIE BAN
STAFF WRITER

In Florida's panhandle, songs like "Let it Snow" demand a certain suspension of disbelief.

But as abstract as a lot of winter imagery can be for children, the Wakulla County Sheriff's Office does its best to make the holiday season special for them.

Its Christmas in the Park celebration, now in its 12th year, saw its highest participation yet, with more than 500 children waiting in line to meet Santa Claus. The event is routinely scheduled for the second Friday in December.

Maj. Larry Massa, the event's longtime coordinator, attributed the crowds to the tough economic conditions in the county of 30,000 south of Tallahassee. Even without snow, Azalea Park drew hundreds of families for activities, including train rides, face painting, art stations and a raffle for bicycles.

"It's our way to reach out to the community," Massa said. "We want everyone to have a chance to see Santa."

Massa himself once donned the jolly man's red snowsuit and held court, but recent weight loss rendered him an unconvincing Kriss Kringle. He delegated the role to one of his volunteers, who soldiered through two hours of pretty warm temperatures to hear the Christmas wishes of hundreds of children.

"We can have cold temperatures in the winter, it can be downright bone chilling, but the last week, we've had highs in the mid-70s," he said.

Despite the temperatures, Massa said the holiday spirit was evident in the more than 1,300 attendees, the copious decorations and bevy of activities.

"It's pretty good as it would be anywhere," he said. "We don't need snow to bring out the same emotions."

The Sheriff's Office sponsors the event, along with the county's parks and recreation department, and a local bank.

Happy Holidays

Whatever holiday you celebrate this time of year, may it be merry. Happy Holidays from the staff at County News and NACo.

CountyNews
Features

Helping county health through tough economic times

By ANITA CARDWELL
SENIOR ASSOCIATE

Approximately 70 county officials and county staff from nearly 40 counties attended NACo's 2011 Healthy Counties Forum, "Creating Healthy Counties: Investing in County Health in Tough Economic Times," Dec. 1-2, in Washington, D.C.

Featuring a mix of speakers including federal officials, county leaders and private sector representatives, the forum highlighted a range of topics such as tools that can help guide county health policy decisions, opportunities to improve care coordination and the importance of building broad community partnerships to support local health and wellness promotion efforts.

Dr. Anand Parekha, a deputy assistant secretary at the Department of Health and Human Services, opened the forum with a detailed overview of recent federal-level investments in prevention and public health. Dr. Jonathan Fielding, director, Los Angeles County Department of Public Health and the county's health officer, followed by highlighting how counties play a key role in creating the local-level conditions for community health and wellness through policy, system and environmental decisions.

Another session featured model county initiatives to incorporate health factors in county planning and land use decisions, as well as ways to improve county employees' wellness and promote access to healthy and affordable food. Baltimore City councilwoman Helen Holton, chair of NACo's Large Urban County Caucus, spoke about Baltimore's Food Policy Initiative, which is an intergovernmental collaboration to provide healthier food selections in areas of the city where these options are lacking.

"The initiative is based on a broad range of partnerships and is taking a very comprehensive approach to implement a number of innovative policies and programs to help increase healthy food options for residents in need," Holton said.

Among the many efforts of the initiative is a virtual supermarket which allows individuals to purchase groceries online, including using Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) food stamp benefits, and pick them up at local library branches.

The same session also featured how Manatee County, Fla. has transformed its county employee health plan using financial incentives and comprehensive health management programs to encourage employees to adopt healthier behaviors. Since



Photo by Anita Cardwell

(l-r) Joan Ralph, Premier, Inc.; DeKalb County, Ga. Commissioner Larry Johnson, chairman of the Healthy Counties Advisory Board; NACo Second Vice President and Linn County, Iowa Supervisor Linda Langston; NACo President and Athens County, Ohio Commissioner Lenny Eliason; and Nick Macchione, health and human services director, San Diego County, discuss how public-private partnerships can support county health activities during a breakout session of the Health Counties Forum.

implementing these changes in 2006, the county has already seen its employee health care costs markedly decline.

Throughout the forum, attendees also heard from many of NACo's Healthy Counties Initiative corporate partners about ways that collaboration with the business community and innovations offered through the private sector can support counties' health activities. Presenters said counties can use mapping and other data-synthesizing tools to more effectively target local public health resources and options for improving communication among safety net health care providers to provide better and more cost-effective care for individuals with chronic diseases and behavioral health care needs.

The forum's second day included a session moderated by NACo Second Vice President Linda Langston and featured federal-level speakers who outlined key issues concerning a provision in the Affordable Care Act (ACA) related to the local health care safety net.

Specifically, the ACA requires that nonprofit hospitals conduct periodic community health needs assessments to identify and address local health needs. Counties have a vested interest in ensuring that these tax-exempt hospitals will comply with the provision and are measurably taking on uncompensated care in their communities.

One of the presenters, Paul Stange from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, emphasized the need for effective regional collaboration

among local governments, private entities and other key stakeholders in the community health assessment and improvement process.

The forum was held as one of the activities of NACo's Healthy Counties Initiative, launched this year to engage county officials and private sector partners to support and promote best practices within the many areas of health that counties

are involved with, such as public health, county employee health coverage and direct care delivery services.

"The forum provided an important opportunity to examine a number of health issues, including how counties can implement and sustain prevention-focused initiatives that have strong potential to improve community health and

contain health care costs," said NACo president Lenny Eliason, whose presidential initiative directly complements the Healthy Counties Initiative as he is focusing on helping counties develop local programs and policies that promote healthy lifestyles. "We heard about a range of efforts from both urban and rural counties that have made great strides toward improving the health of their populations through innovative solutions involving public-private partnerships and other strategies," he said.

Future forums, conference workshops and webinars will be offered through NACo's Healthy Counties Initiative, which is guided by a public-private advisory board of county officials and staff, and the initiative's corporate supporters. Commissioner Larry Johnson from DeKalb County, Ga. is the 2011-2012 chair of the advisory board.

To download copies of the forum presentations, visit www.naco.org/healthycountiesforum, and for more information about NACo's Healthy Counties Initiative, see www.naco.org/healthycountiesinitiative.

Online Achievement Award Applications Now Available

Applications for the 2012 Achievement Award program are now available. The annual program is non-competitive and recognizes innovative county government programs. Since this is not a competition, each submission is judged on its own merits based on the criteria outlined in the application information.

Last year, more than 470 programs were recognized from 97 counties in 29 states.

This year's application process moves to an all-electronic format. Applicants must submit each program narrative and any supplemental materials through the online application system. This new process eliminates the time and costs associated with mailing application materials.

To guide applicants through the process, there is a Frequently Asked Questions document and a video tutorial of the application process on the Achievement Awards page of the NACo website, www.naco.org/achievementawards.

All application materials must be uploaded by Feb. 13, 2012.

In these tough times, the Achievement Award program provides a way for counties to recognize not only innovative programs, but also the dedicated employees who make these programs successful.

"As the economy continues to flounder, counties are taking innovative steps to provide services and programs to their residents," said Jacqueline Byers, NACo director of research. "Sharing innovation through the Achievement Award program is a way to help other counties with their own problems and also a way to recognize your hardworking employees for their successes."

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N.J. counties eye police department shift

By CHARLIE BAN
STAFF WRITER

Counties in New Jersey are weighing the options to change the way policing is done.

Police power in the state is largely concentrated in its 565 municipalities, but financial stresses on those individual departments are motivating some to consider consolidated county-based services.

“With a 2 percent limit on tax increases, the municipalities can’t always keep up with the fiscal demands for police protection on this level,” said John Donnadio, executive director of the New Jersey Association of Counties. “Municipalities have been increasingly looking into equipment sharing and service consolidation, but this seems like the next big step.”

The state association held a

summit on police consolidation Dec. 2.

In Camden County, budget pressures have already forced the city of Camden to lay off half its police department at the beginning of the year. So far, Donnadio said, Camden has been the first county to make serious moves to pursue that change.

“The last few mayors of (the city of) Camden have inquired about feasibility, but we’re really starting to see some traction now,” said Louis Cappelli, Camden County’s freeholder director. “We’re down 300 officers throughout the county over the last two years, and there’s no way the city of Camden can afford to hire new officers. If this movement to a county force gets off the ground, Camden city is going to be the driver.”

The city is noted as one of the most crime-ridden in the country,

though Cappelli said certain pockets of crime in the city drive up the crime rate especially high.

Camden County comprises 37 different municipalities that are home to more than 550,000 people. Representatives from several of those municipalities are serving on a planning committee that is exploring two different options for police consolidation. Both rely on voluntary participation.

The wholesale county police department would be relatively simple, with participating municipalities disbanding their police forces and reallocating their budgets to the county, which would administer the department. Urban Camden would have its own metropolitan division and other parts of the county would have regional divisions, with resources allocated based on population and call volume.

“That’s the way a lot of counties in other states we’ve been studying — Maryland, Delaware, Virginia — do it,” Cappelli said.

Another option is to keep municipal forces to provide routine public safety services, but concentrate expertise and equipment for specialized functions in specific departments, including detectives, a bomb squad or canine unit, which would serve participating municipalities.

“We have seven different SWAT teams in our municipal police departments and we don’t need that many,” he said. “This is a perfect example of an efficiency that will allow us to provide better service in a more pragmatic and cost-effective manner.”

If any municipality elects to go countywide, Cappelli estimated it would take at least four months to build the legal and administrative

framework to transfer authority to the county.

Camden County’s investigation into county-wide policing is not simply motivated by the city’s crime troubles. Smaller municipal departments are feeling pressure, too.

“I think it’s inevitable,” Cappelli said of consolidation. “The 2 percent limit will continue to have an impact on staffing and with fewer officers on the streets, municipalities will be forced to look into some kind of regional relationship.”

Donnadio said consolidation remains a touchy subject among law enforcement, but like Cappelli, he sees the alternative to be a lot less palatable.

“If municipalities don’t do something, they’ll eventually get to the point where layoffs are the only option,” he said. “Consolidation is the long-term solution here.”

Dutchess County, N.Y.’s longest-serving executive to retire

By CHARLES TAYLOR
SENIOR STAFF WRITER

Election Day 1949 is an important day in the life of Bill Steinhaus. It was that rare occasion when he wasn’t running for anything — the day he was born.

Sixty-two years later, Election Day 2011 marked another milestone. It was the first four-year cycle since 1978 that his name wasn’t on the ballot for something.

Steinhaus is retiring at the end of this month, after 20 years — five terms — as Dutchess County, N.Y.’s elected executive preceded by 13 years as county clerk. He’s been the county’s longest-serving executive and the fourth most tenured in the state’s history. During that time, he also served as president of the New York State Association of Counties (NYSAC) and as a NACo board member.

“He set a standard for county government service, and we will continue to try to measure up,” said Mary Pat Hancock, chair of the Genesee County, N.Y. legislature and president of NYSAC.

The son of politically active parents, Steinhaus was practically



Photo courtesy of Dutchess County, N.Y.

William R. Steinhaus, county executive of Dutchess County, N.Y., says the “greatest honor” of his 20 years in office was welcoming home members of the 727th Military Police Detachment of the New York Army National Guard in August 2007 as they returned from Iraq. They had flown the county flag over their base in Baghdad.

destined for elective office or some kind of public service.

“I got an introduction in my teens to civics and public service and the political process,” he said. And his first year at community college would foreshadow things to come. His government professor, Jack Lippman, was also chairman of the charter commission that created the county executive position Steinhaus would later hold.

“Here I was a 17-year-old freshman in college and the professor teaching me about government was really redefining what the county government structure was

going to be in Dutchess County for generations and decades to come,” Steinhaus said.

Later, armed with a political science degree, Steinhaus got his first Dutchess County job at age 25, as a management assistant in the executive office. He apparently did a good enough job to attract notice when word broke that the county treasurer was retiring.

“Somebody in the county building came up to me in the hallway and said, ‘A couple of us were talking over coffee, Bill, and we think you should run for county clerk,’” he recalled. It wasn’t a role

he’d ever considered, but he saw it as a way to combine vocation and avocation.

“I could have the professional vocation of being in a management, leadership position with the avocation of being involved in the political side of the world and campaigns,” he said.

In 1978, he was elected clerk at the tender age of 28. It was the warm-up act for the main attraction and helped lay the groundwork for his success as the county’s CEO.

“It was a great 13 years as the clerk and actually in many ways, I miss that to this day,” he said. “Because in a clerk’s position, it’s the ultimate retail one-on-one taking care of customers that I enjoy so much.”

But the management aspects of his next job, county executive, also played to his strengths. He was elected to the post in 1991.

“When I was in college,” he said, “I managed, organized and produced all the major concerts for the student government on the college campus, once a month — big groups like Chicago, and The Association, Brooklyn Bridge, and all the biggest names of that era in the ‘70s, and I just loved the idea of managing things and making things work.”

Robert Rolison, chairman of the County Legislature — and like Steinhaus, a Republican — said the county executive has a very “out front” personality and leadership style, and the two haven’t always seen eye to eye on the issues. “He’s

been a major part of county government whether you agreed with him or disagreed with him, whether it was a lot or a little,” Rolison said. “When you have that kind of tenure in a position, I think it is the end of an era.”

Steinhaus accepts compliments and criticism. “My leadership model is very driven by can-do,” he said, “and my leadership personality is one of being not very patient or tolerant with critics and negativity, when people then don’t offer solutions.”

After he retires at the end of this month, what’s next? There’s a to-do list on his refrigerator.

“I’m going to exhale a little bit and take a little bit of time to just sort of chill and take care of those things around the house and the yard that always seem to get set aside,” he said.

He’ll also spend more time with his two young grandsons — “I’ve already been looking at the schedule for the monster truck show that I can take the grandsons to in February.”

And eventually, after decades of “60-, 70-, 80-hour workdays,” he’ll probably go back to work. Probably not fulltime, and instead of one job he’ll probably do two or three things.

As for his NACo involvement, he’ll miss the camaraderie and intellectual stimulation. “I think as much as each county official maybe is able to contribute to NACo’s success, I think all of us walk away better prepared and better educated public officials,” he said.

CORRECTION

Immediate Past President Glen Whitley was appointed to the nationally based Governmental Accounting Standards Advisory Council. An article in the Dec. 5 issue incorrectly identified the name of the council.

County program lends a helping paw year-round

By CHRISTOPHER JOHNSON
EDITORIAL ASSISTANT

For most senior citizens, pets are companions that add sweetness and comfort to their golden years. But the volatile economic climate can require difficult choices, and struggling seniors are often forced between feeding themselves or their pets.

Brenda Young, Isabella County Mich. deputy clerk, created "Food 4 Paws," a program that assists senior citizens by providing pet food for those who can't afford it for their companion animal.

"It's all about the animals," Young said. "I couldn't live a day without them, and I never want a senior to have to give up their pet over food."

Young got the idea during a County Board of Commissioners meeting in 2010. While listening to a report from the Isabella County Commission on Aging, she realized there were things other than medical expenses that many seniors struggle to pay for. So she started baking for pets to raise money for the program.

Young makes two kinds of all-natural dog treats: traditional

cookies called "savory treats" made with unbleached flour, oats, Italian bread crumbs, broth and eggs, and "Elvis" cookies, made with peanut butter, bananas, flour, eggs and vanilla. Cookie cutters are used to create shapes that reflect the season. Currently, they are snowflakes and snowmen.

"People could try these cookies but they probably wouldn't enjoy them because of their lack of sugar," Young joked.

She decided to start selling them for \$2 per pack at three local vendors. The money raised goes to purchase pet food for dogs or cats.

Nearly nine batches of cookies, or 40 packages, are baked and sold each week. Proceeds from their sale provide an average of 250 pounds (\$250-\$300 worth) of pet food being delivered to seniors each month.

The program is growing in popularity. Requests are made monthly through the Commission on Aging with 15-16 dogs and 10 cats getting food per month. Owners talk with Young about specific types of food their pets need based on their age, breed or other factors.

Young hopes to explore including veterinarians in the program who could possibly donate time to



Photo courtesy of Brenda Young, Isabella County, Mich.

Pet owners in Isabella County help the Food 4 Paws program by buying all-natural pet cookies, made by Brenda Young, at three local stores for \$2 per pack.

make sure pets are in good health and up to date on their shots. She also would like to start educating pet owners on how to properly feed their pets.

Her advice to others considering a similar program: "The biggest thing to remember is to keep the

operation small at the start," Young said. "One of the worst things you could do is grow too big too fast and lose the meaning behind what the program is."

For more information on Food-4Paws, contact Brenda Young at byoung@isabellacounty.org.

Profiles in Service



» Frank Newton

NACo Board of Directors

Community Development Administrator
Cobb County, Ga.

Number of years active in NACo: 26

Years in public service: 45

Occupation: management consultant

Education: B.A., public administration, University of Florida; master of public administration (MPA), University of Georgia

The hardest thing I've ever done: directed the Southeast operations on behalf of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) during the Mariel Boatlift crisis between April 15-Oct. 31, 1980.

Three people (living or dead) I'd invite to dinner: Sam Nunn, President Bill Clinton and former *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* columnist Celestine Sibley.

A dream I have is to: buy an RV and see all of North America.

You'd be surprised to learn that I: commute 250 miles one-way to work (once a week.)

The most adventurous thing I've ever done is: found the courage to open my first consulting business in 1982.

My favorite way to relax is: spend an entire day in my favorite public library.

I'm most proud of: my family — especially my wonderful grandchildren.

Every morning I read: *The New York Times* and *The Wall Street Journal*.

My favorite meal is: prime rib.

My pet peeve is: when someone breaks a promise.

My motto is: "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you."

The last book I read was: *The Greatest Generation* by Tom Brokaw.

My favorite movie is: "Everything is Illuminated."

My favorite music is: music soundtracks of old Western movies, and singers like Marty Robbins.

My favorite president is: Jimmy Carter.

Keep up with NACo online ...

www.naco.org



County turns to Shakespeare to keep youth offenders out of jail

By CHRISTOPHER JOHNSON
EDITORIAL ASSISTANT

All the world's a stage, and for some Milwaukee County youth offenders treading the boards could be alternative punishment.

The county's judiciary committee voted to spend \$65,000 to start a new program to take some juvenile offenders and sentence them to perform in plays written by William Shakespeare. This gives offenders from the ages of 13-17 who are found guilty a chance to stay out of jail. The funding comes from a projected savings from a new inmate screening program that started more slowly than expected.

"This is a very good investment that will quickly pay for itself by avoiding more expensive treatment or state juvenile institutional placements," Supervisor Gerry Broderick said. Teenage offenders sent to state correctional facilities each cost the county more than \$100,000 a year.

The idea is not new — the

program was launched more than a decade ago with juvenile offenders in western Massachusetts and won a presidential award in 2006. Corrections alternatives that use theater as a means of encouraging adult offenders to deal with unresolved emotional issues and bolster their confidence also have a number of precedents nationally. Milwaukee would be the first county in the Midwest and state of Wisconsin to implement this program, according to officials there.

Shakespeare & Company has developed programs for youths that also were adapted for young offenders in Pittsfield, Mass. in 2001. A similar program would be undertaken in Milwaukee County through an arrangement with the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee's theater program in cooperation with county judges, if the full board and County Executive Chris Abele sign off on the idea.

Kids chosen for the program would be under sentence, with the Shakespeare participation likely a condition of probation. Those

chosen could have been sentenced for a variety of offenses and under supervision of a probation officer. Anyone who violates conditions of his or her probation could be handed more traditional juvenile punishment, including state incarceration.

Not everyone is excited about the new program. Sheriff David A. Clarke Jr. believes the \$65,000 proposed for the program could be put to better use.

"The money should be returned to taxpayers instead of being spent on this," he said. "It's enough money to pay the salary of a sheriff deputy for one full year."

The county has proposed laying off 61 deputies in 2012 to keep the budget from veering into the red. The overall county budget is expected to wind up \$3.3 million in the black at the end of the year.

Whether the Shakespeare program is to be or not to be is a question for the full board to answer. If approved, it would head to County Executive Abele, who has not taken a public position on it, to approve or veto the proposal.

'Heartless' Virginia supervisor raises a ruckus

By CHARLES TAYLOR
SENIOR STAFF WRITER

Jack Miller is one heartless politician.

No, the Middlesex County, Va. supervisor isn't lacking in compassion or the milk of human kindness — quite the opposite, say those who know him.

He has no heart. It was removed Sept. 15 and replaced by an artificial one. His "total artificial heart" runs on air via two tubes through his abdomen that connect to an external battery-powered device.

"All I'm doing now is marking time until we get a heart from a donor, and as soon as that occurs we're going right on into the hospital," said Miller, 62, chairman of Middlesex County's Board of Supervisors. It could be tomorrow, or it could take a year.

"Got my fingers crossed; but I declare, I feel good as you can feel in this situation," he said.

Miller has suffered from cardiomyopathy, a degenerative ailment of the heart muscle, for the past dozen years. As the condition worsens, the

heart becomes weaker, according to the National Heart Lung and Blood Institute. It's less able to pump blood through the body and maintain a normal rhythm. This can lead to heart failure or irregular heartbeats called arrhythmias.

Such was the case with Miller. When his heart rhythm became erratic, he had an internal defibrillator implanted.

"It was hard on him to have to live like that because he never knew from one minute to the next what his heart was doing to do," said his wife, Mary Lou. If his heart went into arrhythmia, the defibrillator would kick in within about two seconds, she said, delivering a painful shock to the heart that could be very stressful.

"It was a bad way to live, but it was the only way he could live," she said.

Miller's condition improved a bit last summer, but his doctors warned that he could "go downhill, and he could go downhill quickly," Mary Lou Miller continued. That's what happened in September. "He had a bad episode with the defibrillator. Within a week they made the deci-

sion that this was his only option; he had no heart function left."

After his surgery, Miller was able to return home Oct. 14, to celebrate the couple's 44th wedding anniversary.

"He is the only boy I ever dated in high school, and I married him soon after we got out of school, and he is my life," his wife said. "I told one of the nurses one day, if something were to happen to him, y'all would lose a patient. But if something happens to him, for me, I lose everything."

About three weeks later, Miller was re-elected to his fifth four-year term as a supervisor, and this year Thanksgiving redefined gratitude as never before. He is in line to become president of the Virginia Association of Counties next year, having been voted president-elect last month.

"It's pretty incredible," Mary Lou Miller said. "I'm a nurse, and I haven't worked in quite a number of years — so I've been away from this type of thing for a long time. It's new to me, and it's pretty incredible the advances that have been made over the years. And for him to be part of it is astounding. It takes a little getting used to." The mere reality of Miller's high-tech heart isn't all that takes getting used to. The contraption kicks up an audible ruckus.

At the November Board of Supervisors meeting, a woman in the audience asked, "What is that noise?" Miller's wife, who was seated nearby, replied, "It's Mr. Miller's heart." Or his "capuckka," as her eight-year-old granddaughter, Emma, calls it because of the sound it makes — a rhythmically repetitious *capuckka-capuckka-capuckka*. A reporter could easily hear it in the background — foreground, almost — while talking with Miller by phone.

For him, it's the rhythm of life. "It's like buying a new grandfather clock that you put in the house," he

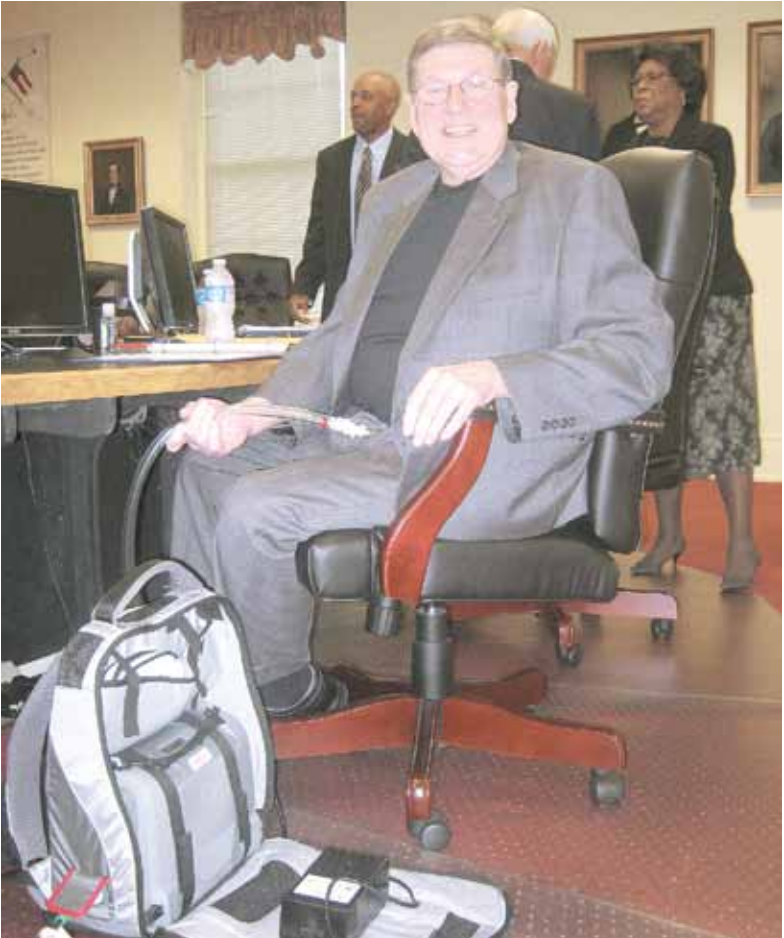


Photo courtesy of Jack Miller

Middlesex County, Va. Supervisor Jack Miller shows off his "Freedom Driver," the battery-powered external unit that pumps his "total artificial heart." The air tubes entering his abdomen cause the artificial organ to beat.

said. "The first couple of nights you hear it, but after a while it just kind of blends in and you don't notice it." It doesn't interrupt the couple's sleep, he added.

"It doesn't bother me, as a matter of fact, it gives me a little confidence to know that as long as it's making a noise it's working, and as long as it's working, I'm working."

He said the portable "Freedom Driver" air pump that he must carry with him at all times has also taken some getting used to. It weighs 13 pounds and has a battery life of about two hours. But as long as there's a 110-volt wall outlet handy, he can plug in and recharge.

As 2012 approaches, Miller has

a slew of resolutions — especially if the new year brings a donor organ. "When I get my new heart, the first thing I'm going to do is take about a two-hour, good hot bath." Since his surgery, he's only been able to take sponge baths — because of the "sterile area" where the air tubes enter his body must be kept dry.

Like many a baby boomer, Miller knows the Tin Woodsman's refrain from "The Wizard of Oz" — "If I only had a heart," the tin man sings.

"I know his feeling exactly. I'm sitting here waiting everyday for a heart," he said.

For now, Miller's capuckka will have to do until the real thing comes along.

Word Search

Counties with Holiday-themed Towns

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

BROWN (Rudolph, S.D.)
CALDWELL (Vixen, La.)
CLAY (Elf, N.C.)
CLINTON (Snow, Ky.)
FRONTIER (Cupid, Neb.)
HARNEY (Blitzen, Ore.)
JEFFERSON (Comet, Mont.)
LICKING (Swans, Ohio)
LOWRIDES (Dasher, Ga.)
MONTGOMERY (Peartree, Tenn.)

MUSCOGEE (Candlestick, Ga.)
NEVADA (Donner, Calif.)
NODAWAY (Reindeer, Mo.)
PICKENS (Bell, Ala.)
PIKE (Jolly, Ga.)
RENO (Partridge, Kan.)
SCOTT (Snowflake, Va.)
WHITE (Joy, Ark.)
WRIGHT (Antler, Mo.)
YAVAPAI (Humbug, Ariz.)

Created by: Christopher Johnson

Share your point of view ...

Letters to the Editor

Please include a phone number with your letter. Mail, fax or e-mail to:

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Washington, DC 20001
202.393.2630 • cnews@naco.org.

In Case You Missed It ...

News to Use from Past County News

► **Learn green infrastructure techniques with new NACo issue brief**

NACo's Green Infrastructure Program helps counties to use management of natural resources to enhance water quality, abate flooding, lower heat in urban centers, lessen the effects of climate change and build more resilient communities.

NACo and the National Urban and Community Forestry Advisory Council (NUCFAC) have released an issue brief, "Building Resilient Communities: Green Infrastructure for Counties," which covers the basics of green infrastructure techniques and applications. To view this brief, visit www.naco.org ► Research ► Publications or contact Carrie Clingan at cclingan@naco.org or 202.942.4246.

Decision could have impact across Virginia, beyond

URANIUM from page 1

coffers, according to a recent study by Chmura Research & Analytics, commissioned by the state's Coal and Energy Commission.

County supervisors quashed a colleague's proposal earlier this month to ask the legislature to delay lifting the ban for one year — seeking more time for study findings to be assessed.

Supervisor Hank Davis proposed the delaying resolution. "It'll be just days, the legislature says, before the final reports are in, and to ask them to hurriedly jump up and write regulations. It just wouldn't be right," he said. "They won't have a chance to even digest the studies."

But the county has already gone on record with several earlier resolutions, including one asking the state not to allow mining unless it could be done without "damage or harm ... to Pittsylvania County, its businesses, institutions, environment and its citizens...."

A majority of Davis' colleagues felt those are sufficient to convey the county's concerns. James Snead, vice chairman of the Board of Supervisors, opposed Davis' resolution "because right now the studies are pretty much on the final leg, if not already complete," he said. "Let's get the study done, and then see what happens. And then there's a possibility the board can step in."

Mining could be a boon to this county, once dependent on textiles and tobacco. But with an unemployment rate of 7 percent, according to Davis — lower than the national average — it's not in dire need.

The uranium lode in Pittsylvania County is at Coles Hill, about six miles northeast of Chatham, the county seat, and was discovered in the 1970s. However, mining interest flagged in the '80s when the bottom fell out of the uranium market. The legislature imposed the moratorium in 1982.

With the passage of time, and a change in political climate — a current Republican governor with a focus on energy independence — the time may be right for the legislature to act. GOP lawmakers also comprise a majority of the state's House, and the Senate is split 50-50, with a Republican lieutenant governor able to break tie votes.

The legislature is likely to give great weight to a National Academy of Sciences' study, due out this month.

Among other aspects, it aims to "assess the potential short- and long-term occupational and public health and safety considerations from uranium mining, milling, processing, and reclamation, including the

potential human health risks from exposure to 'daughter' products of radioactive decay of uranium."

It is also looking at how such operations have fared elsewhere in the world in places with similar geologic, hydrologic, climatic and population characteristics to those found in Pittsylvania County.

Some proponents of lifting the ban say Bessines, France is that place — with 50-some years of uranium-mining operations without significant negative consequences.

But for all its similarities, it lacks a meteorological threat common in Virginia — hurricanes. In the county, there are fears that days of torrential rains from such storms could flush uranium-contaminated water into reservoirs that supply public water systems.

Robert Bodnar, a Virginia Tech professor of geochemistry, is conducting a study of the "maximum probability rainfall event" that could be expected from a hurricane over a one-, two- or three-day period, for example.

"There are very sophisticated models that have been developed by the Army Corps of Engineers and others that allow you to predict what the stream flows would be, what the maximum flood levels would be, and so on, based on what the topography of the region is," he said. He and researchers will assess the implications of such an event occurring "right at Coles Hill."

Still, he thinks it's "likely" uranium mining, milling and processing could be done at Coles Hill with "minimal and acceptable risks to the environment and to the public health" — based on experiences elsewhere.

Bi-state Counties Express Concerns

While Pittsylvania County has been the focal point, Andrew Lester, executive director of the Roanoke River Basin Association, said he's been advising state lawmakers that this is a statewide — and bi-state — issue.

"Once it's opened up, then it can be mined anywhere (in Virginia)," he said, "and even if it's only mined in this location, it'll have ramifications for the entire state."

Water system officials hundreds of miles removed would appear to agree.

In Fairfax County — 200 miles away in northern Virginia, courthouse to courthouse — the water authority has commissioned a study of the possible effects of uranium mining and milling if the moratorium is lifted and the activity were to be allowed in other parts of the state.

"There's no identified site in our



Photo courtesy of the Chatham Star-Tribune

A technician drills uranium core samples at Coles Hill in Pittsylvania County, Va., where there are deposits valued in the billions of dollars. The Virginia General Assembly may decide early next year whether to lift a ban on uranium mining in the state.

watershed at this time," said Jeanne Bailey, a spokeswoman for Fairfax Water, an independent authority whose board members are appointed by the Fairfax supervisors, "but it's a significant enough issue that our board felt it was important to prepare to understand the issue should there be sites identified in our watershed."

Officials in Culpeper, Fauquier, Madison and Orange counties are also watching closely; in the 1970s, the now-defunct Marline Uranium Corp. leased thousands of acres in the area — nearer to northern Virginia than to Pittsylvania County — with hopes of mining uranium.

The city of Virginia Beach, about 200 miles east of Chatham as the crow flies, has already conducted a water study. Its drinking water source, Lake Gaston, is downstream of the Coles Hill site.

Closer to home, several nearby counties such as Mecklenburg and Halifax have passed resolutions expressing concerns, as have Halifax, Granville, Vance and Warren counties in North Carolina, Lester said.

Chatham, is closer to Raleigh, the capital of North Carolina, than to Richmond, its Virginia counterpart. And the issue has reverberated across the state line — Pittsylvania County's southern boundary — because the region's watershed drains through a lake that straddles the border, whose outflow runs south to the Outer Banks.

Counties in the Tar Heel State are also concerned about water pollution.

"North Carolina is very irate because they have nothing to gain and everything to lose down there," said Lester, who has met with state officials. "They're just waiting in the wings to see what's going to happen,

"Unfortunately, they couldn't prove this because there's no location in the United States that I'm aware of where federal regulations have ensured that disasters don't occur at uranium mining locations," Lester said. He also fears uranium mining could stigmatize Virginia and scare off businesses considering locating there. He hopes that possibility might resonate with pro-business Republicans in the legislature.

Bodnar, the professor, acknowledges that this is an issue fraught with controversy, but he said decisions should be based on science.

"If we can develop mining and milling methods so that there's no possibility of endangering the public health, then we should make the decision," he said. "But I don't think that we should make the decisions prematurely until we have all of the data that are needed."

Harkening back to the Chmura study, Davis, the Pittsylvania County supervisor, said uranium mining could potentially be great for the county. "However, there's a good potential for harm," he cautioned. "To me, if the legislature follows that report and decides to roll the dice and take a chance with uranium mining — which is probably what they're going to do, in my opinion — then we're in trouble."

Federal Regulations May Not Suffice

Lester doesn't think it's worth the risk. He said the Chmura study emphasizes "over and over" that their findings are subject to strict enforcement of federal regulations, and the hope that those regulations will be effective.



Photo courtesy of Cattaraugus County, N.Y.

Like father. Like son: In January, NACo Past President Jim Snyder, Cattaraugus County, N.Y. (right) will be joined on the County Legislature by his son, Jim "Joe" Snyder (l) for the first father-son legislative duo in the county legislature's history. Jim, senior, who was NACo president in 1988–1989, has served on the legislature for nearly 30 years. This will be his son's first term.

Survey on County News delivery in the works for 2012

NACo BOARD from page 1

prescription filled when the NACo card provides a discount. NACo would receive a 50-cents marketing fee per prescription filled, which it would share with state associations that endorse the NACo program. State associations would receive 40 cents and NACo would keep 10 cents. The prescription discount card would continue to be free.

Counties now enrolled in the program could continue under their current contract, which provides no revenue to counties, or they could opt to switch to the new program. Residents in counties that choose not to receive revenue would receive a slightly higher discount savings rate — 2 percent to 2.5 percent.

NACo sought the change because a number of competitors are challenging NACo's leadership in the prescription discount card industry by offering revenue to counties and state associations that buy into their programs.

The proposal was discussed in a Board forum a day before the vote was taken. Some Board members expressed their unease with approving the revenue option because they felt that residents should receive the highest savings possible and did not want to change the program from its original purpose.

Others, however, suggested that given the strain on county revenues and the competition for county business, it would be a prudent move for the association to offer a revenue option.

With a positive vote on the

proposal, NACo staff is working with Caremark to finalize the new contract with the goal of having the program in place by Jan. 1, 2012.

A second proposal to the Board signaling a dramatic change to the delivery format and schedule of *County News* sparked wide-ranging discussion and a 40–39 vote for postponing a decision until the next Board meeting at NACo's Legislative Conference in March 2012.

As proposed, two current electronic newsletters — The Legislative Bulletin and eNews — would be consolidated into *County News*, which in turn would become a weekly, emailed publication. *County News* and eNews are now mailed or emailed every two weeks on an alternating schedule.

The new emailed version was slated to be launched around the time of the Annual Conference in July 2012. There would be no more printed versions of *County News*.

The move would save the association approximately \$350,000 annually in printing and mailing costs, and take advantage of the growing popularity of tablets, like iPads, and smartphones.

Board members expressed reservations about the total elimination of the printed version, citing some members inability to access email in their counties. Others spoke of the marketing and retention value to NACo of having printed copies in county offices nationwide.

It was suggested that NACo staff survey NACo members about their preferences. A survey



Photos by Bev Schlotterbeck

Veteran NACo Board members announce their resignations: (l-r) Dutchess County, N.Y. Executive Bill Steinhaus; Forrest County, Miss. Supervisor Lynn Cartledge; and Armstrong County, Pa. Commissioner James Scahill bid adieu to their colleagues.

is expected to be undertaken in the first quarter of 2012.

2012 Legislative Priorities

NACo's key legislative priorities for 2012 program year support a balanced approach to the federal deficit that would not gut programs of significant benefit to counties and their citizens. They also present a balanced demographic support for programs that benefit rural, suburban and urban counties.

The key priorities support reauthorizing the Farm Bill, surface transportation and aviation programs, maintaining partnerships for financing Medicaid and social services and full funding for PILT and SRS, among others. (See "2012 Key NACo Legislative

Priorities," for expanded list.)

On the budget front, the 2012 budget appears little changed from the one adopted by the Board in 2011. An anticipated decline in membership dues and new federal regulatory requirements associated with NACo's retirement programs restrict the budget's growth for

2012. Nonetheless, NACo remains in sound financial shape with revenues expected to increase in some areas, expenses to remain under control and a small surplus of revenue over expenses anticipated.

In his report to the Board, CFO

See NACo BOARD page 8

Larry Naake to Retire in 2012

NACo President Lenny Eliason has announced the resignation of NACo Executive Director Larry Naake effective in the fourth quarter of 2012. The announcement came during the fall Board of Directors meeting in Orange County (Orlando), Fla.

Naake was named NACo executive director on July 8, 1991. Prior to becoming NACo's chief executive, he served as executive director of the County Supervisors Association of California (CSAC) for 10 years.

Eliason said the Board Search Committee expects to hire a search firm early in 2012; begin interviewing candidates by NACo's Legislative Conference in March; and select and introduce the new director at the 2012 fall Board meeting, generally held the first week in December.

2012 Key NACo Legislative Priorities

- Promote a balanced approach to deficit reduction. Protect County programs during budget deficit reduction and appropriation considerations. Balance includes looking at discretionary, defense, entitlement spending and revenue enhancements.
- Support reauthorization of the Farm Bill and priority for Rural Development Programs
- Work to eliminate the federal health benefits "inmate exception" for persons in county jails and detention centers who are in custody pending disposition of charges.
- Maintain the original federal-state-local partnership for financing and delivering Medicaid and social services, and oppose measures that will shift Medicaid and social service costs to counties.
- Maintain full funding for Payments in Lieu of Taxes (PILT) Program. Reauthorize the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act.
- Reauthorize Surface Transportation and Aviation Programs.
- Oppose unfunded mandates and preemptions.



NACo President Lenny Eliason (r) congratulates outgoing FSC Managing Director and CEO Steve Swendiman on his imminent retirement. Waiting in the wings (l) is the new FSC CEO Peter Torvik.

NACo in strong financial position, CFO tells Board

Guidelines for Candidates for NACo Second Vice President

Section 1. A candidate who wishes to run for the office of NACo Second Vice President should:

- notify the NACo **Executive Director**, in writing, of his or her intent to run for NACo Second Vice President. The written notification should be made no earlier than **October 1** of the year preceding the election and no later than January 31 of the same calendar year as the election
- agree to limit all non-travel-related campaign expenditures to no more than \$25,000
- agree to limit travel-related campaign expenditures to travel only to those state associations that endorse candidates at meetings held in-state prior to the NACo Annual Conference and to those **NACo-sponsored meetings** and events that occur after written notification is made (e.g., the fall meeting of the NACo Board of Directors, LUCC meetings, RAC meetings)
- submit to the NACo Executive Director a completed candidate certification/profile questionnaire by January 31, so that it may be timely published in a February edition of *County News*;
- agree that all campaigning, and spending of campaign funds (**except for materials necessary to commence campaigning**), is restricted to the period that begins on the day written notification is made and ends on the day of the election at the Annual Conference
- **sign a statement acknowledging these**

guidelines, and submit it concurrently with the candidate's written notification, and

- **sign a statement acknowledging that he or she complied with these guidelines**, and submit it to the NACo Executive Director not later than the first day of the Annual Conference.

Section 2. A candidate who follows the guidelines provided in Section 1:

- shall have his or her letter of intent and completed questionnaire published in a February edition of *County News* and posted on the NACo website, and
- will be introduced at a general session at the Legislative Conference, and afforded an opportunity to address the delegates.

Section 3. A candidate who chooses not to follow the guidelines in Section 1 will not be afforded the benefits provided in Section 2, but will be afforded other benefits generally provided to all candidates (e.g., campaign tables at the Western Interstate Region Conference and the Annual Conference, lists of the names, mailing and/or email addresses of all conference registrants who permit such a release of information).

Note: Bold-faced material indicates changes.

NACo BOARD from page 7

David Keen said the association is in a strong financial position with more than \$8 million in cash and nearly \$20 million in investments — due to its diversified revenue sources — and well-positioned to withstand tough economic times.

In other Board action:

- The Board approved revisions to the “Guidelines for Candidates for NACo Second Vice President,” which it had initially adopted in

2009. (See “Guidelines for Candidates for NACo Second Vice President”).

- Accepted a report from the Programs and Services Committee, which included among other items, information about a new credentialing program, Credential in County Leadership, that NACo is expected to offer to members. Credits would be available in three areas: Leadership Perspectives, Communications and Management. The program will be piloted in 2012.



Photo by Bev Schlotterbeck

The Lady of Hats and new Audit Committee chair, Carol Holden, commissioner, Hillsborough County, N.H., swaps her stylish chapeau for a Kringle cap.

Research News

Despite Tight Budgets, Holiday Celebrations Continue

Counties across the nation have been facing tighter budgets when it comes to holiday celebrations. Many seasonal activities have been downsized or curtailed altogether because of the shortage of funds. But in the face of this challenge many counties have discovered other methods of making sure that residents can continue participating in specially designed holiday events.

Los Angeles County continues to sponsor at least one major holiday event. Its Los Angeles County Holiday Celebration, a concert that is funded by the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors, is an admission-free, three-hour seasonal music and dance show. The entire event is simulcast live on KCET public television.

One popular option for counties that can no longer afford major events is partnering with private sector sponsors to continue to provide some of the events that residents have come to expect. Partners can include the local Chamber of Com-

merce as well as local businesses, arts venues, religious institutions, clubs and neighborhood associations.

Wakulla County, Fla.'s annual Christmas in the Park event was hosted by county Sheriff's Office volunteers, the county parks and recreation department and a local bank.

Kalkaska County, Mich. has a series of events planned including a holiday cookie sale sponsored by the friends of the county library and a pancake breakfast sponsored by the friends of the seniors at the county senior center. The elementary school PTO is sponsoring a Holiday House Craft Shop, and the local area hockey association is sponsoring a free holiday swim and skate.

Grayson County, Ky.'s Home-town Christmas Parade is sponsored by the Chamber of Commerce, and the theme this year honors the military. The county's celebrations will also include a beauty pageant sponsored by the county Jaycees,

and a home and business decorating contest sponsored by the *Grayson County News* and the county tourism commission. The county public library is also sponsoring a Kiddie Christmas, and the Grayson County Historical Society is sponsoring the Christmas home tour.

Kinney County, Texas is launching its first ever Frontier Christmas this year which, in addition to the city and county, has numerous sponsoring organizations and individuals helping to make it a success. These activities range from a Deck the Streets program, which, for \$125, allows various businesses and individuals to purchase holiday banners that will be hung on streets around the county. A list of donors will be published in the local newspaper.

An event called Lighting of Downtown Bracketville (the county seat) will kick off the holiday season and a hayride is also scheduled. The hayride will provide a tour of the city and pass by the county historical

museum where volunteers will be dressed in frontier-period attire. A night parade with floats will move through the county and culminate in the downtown area where singers, craft booths and food vendors, all sponsored by local businesses, will provide a push for holiday shopping.

Another option that counties are using to increase the holiday spirit in this tight economy is creating a section of the county Web page that lists all of the holiday activities in the county in one location. This makes it easier for residents to locate events whether county-sponsored or not, and allows for maximum ease of participation. By offering these comprehensive lists, many counties are providing substitute activities for residents who might miss those previously conducted by the county.

Bucks County, Pa. has created a website called “2011 Christmas, Hanukkah, and New Year Events” which provides a lengthy day-by-day list of activities that are occurring in the county around the holidays. The

Web page also provides a link and directions for private organizations and individuals to add their events to this list.

Grand County, Colo. has created a page called “A Grand Colorado Christmas” that lists activities conducted in cities throughout the county. Dutchess County, N.Y. Tourism has created a website called “What's New — In the Dutchess County Spotlight,” which currently features notices about numerous events in the county from candle-light tours to cut-your-own tree locations.

Orange County, Calif. has a website called “Holidays in the O.C.” that lists activities in all of the cities in the county. It also includes a link to download a special holiday song sung by a local artist and has live links to the Web pages of all of the cities in the county to check for additional holiday information.

(Research News was written by Jacqueline Byers, director of research and outreach.)



News From the Nation's Counties

► CALIFORNIA

• **TULARE COUNTY** is forming a crack team of doctors, nurses and other medical personnel to respond to local disaster and major health-related emergencies.

Members of the **Tulare Medical Reserve Corps** could be called out to help deal with emergencies ranging from pandemic virus outbreaks to natural disasters to chemical or biological terrorist attacks.

The Tulare County Health and Human Services Agency would recruit and train the volunteers in responding to emergencies and disasters.

The *Tulare Advance-Register* reported the program would require no additional county funding, though it will include granting HHSA authority to receive grant funding for the program.

► FLORIDA

• Concern over whether **Internet sweepstakes cafes** are illegal gambling parlors has motivated **HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY** to ban the games.

Commissioners say devices at the cafes function much like slot machines and are at the center of a quickly spreading form of business in Florida.

PINELLAS and **SEMINOLE counties** have also cracked down on the businesses, *Tampa Bay Online* reported.

An undercover sheriff's deputy told commissioners that employees of sweepstakes cafes unabashedly refer to their business as gambling operations. Their customers are invariably elderly, often lured by free food. He said he was even recruited to attend the commissioners meeting in support of owners with the offer of a free ride and pizza.

• Angry over a gun law that went into effect Oct. 1, the **PALM BEACH COUNTY** Commission has **sued Gov. Rick Scott (R)**, Attorney General Pam Bondi, and the Florida House and Senate.

The commission's lawsuit complains that the new law, which nullifies local gun ordinances, is unconstitutional because it violates the separation of powers by giving the governor the ability to remove local officials from office and stripping local officials of immunity from lawsuits, the *Palm Beach Post* reported.

Local officials who violate the law could be removed from office and face a \$5,000 fine.

After the law went into effect, municipalities, counties and state agencies were forced to scrap



Photo courtesy of Madison County, Ga.

► GEORGIA

More than 60 people showed up to watch **MADISON COUNTY** commissioners **re-enact the first commission meeting** held two centuries ago, costumed in suspenders and wide-brimmed hats and adorned with jugs filled with (pretend) moonshine, the *Athens Banner-Herald* reported. No one knows for sure if the first commission meeting — called the Madison County Inferior Court at the time — had moonshine, but it's likely, said Madison County Historian Linda Fortson, who organized the event.

The agenda included events from the county's first two years of agenda items from the county's record. The re-enactment is the last bicentennial event for Madison County, officially formed in 1811.

hundreds of measures dealing with firearms and could no longer bar people from bringing guns into government buildings.

The lawsuit asks the court to find that the law is unconstitutional, stop the governor from being able to remove local officials from office and order that they can't be fined for breaking the law.

• **POLK COUNTY** is evicting a colony of at least **30 feral cats** in one of its parks. A group called the Feral Fanciers had secretly set up shelters and feeding stations for the cats.

County Manager Jim Freeman said the group's activities violate the county's parks ordinance and has given them two weeks to come up with plan to remove the cats. Otherwise, county officials will trap the cats and turn them over to the county's animal services.

Commissioner Melony Bell told *The Ledger* that Feral Fanciers representatives would like the county to lease some land to them at a nominal rate to house the cats.

County Attorney Michael Craig said the fact that children are coming in contact with the animals heightens his liability concern.

► MARYLAND

GARRETT COUNTY has lived life well enough without **Rocky Mountain elk**, and the commissioners want to keep it that way.

Garrett County Commission Chairman Gregan Crawford told the *Times-News* the commission officially

opposed the reintroduction of elk by way of a letter to the Maryland Legislative Sportsmen's Foundation, which is supporting the effort.

"We were never included in preliminary talks and we would be the ones that would have to live with the elk," he said. "I learned about it by reading the newspaper. Why not wolves or bison?"

Nearby **ALLEGANY COUNTY** Commissioner Bill Valentine said meetings with sportsmen's groups in that county will be set up to receive input about elk reintroduction.

► MICHIGAN

The Michigan Sheriffs' Association (MSA) is objecting to a bill in the state legislature that would allow **concealed handgun applicants** to get permits outside their home counties.

Such a measure would allow would-be gun purchasers to bypass the permitting process they might consider too slow or overly difficult. The association represents Michigan's 83 county governments and sheriffs.

The **MICHIGAN ASSOCIATION OF COUNTIES** and Prosecuting Attorneys Association of Michigan are also opposing the effort, the *Grand Rapids Press* reported.

Home-county authorities have information about pending arrests or troublesome contacts that don't show up on traditional electronic checks, said MSA Executive Director Terrence Jungel, a former **IONIA COUNTY** sheriff.

► NEBRASKA

Nebraska counties' courthouse "Do a Good Deed, Feed Those in Need" **Food Drive Challenge** has become a two-state affair. Kansas counties joined in the effort for the first time this year — and won.

Kansas will receive the "State Traveling Trophy." Fifteen counties collected 21,882 items from 1,286 employees with an average of about 17 items per employee. **LANE COUNTY**, Kan. accounted for nearly a third of those items with 7,149 collected by 44 employees.

NEMAHA COUNTY, which won the "Nebraska Traveling Trophy" in 2009, reclaimed it from the last year's winner, **ROCK COUNTY**.

"First and foremost, the winners were the food banks throughout Nebraska and Kansas," Nebraska county officials said. A combined total of 44,865 items were delivered to participating counties.

► NEW YORK

The **SUFFOLK COUNTY** Legislature has created what it says is the nation's first **rating program for pet stores** that sell puppies.

Legislator Jon Cooper, the bill's sponsor, modeled the law after New York City's restaurant ratings system, which rates eateries based upon the cleanliness of their operations. Cooper's Puppy and Dog Protection Rating Program, however, will reflect the quality of care provided to puppies at pet stores as well as the standard of care provided to dogs at the sourcing breeders.

Cooper described the program as appealing to socially conscious consumers as a means to combat substandard dog-breeding facilities or "puppy mills."

"This rating system will use the powers of the free market to make pet buyers — and the stores that want their business — more responsible," he said. "Raising the bar will benefit the county's four-legged residents as well as our two-legged (ones)."

► NORTH DAKOTA

Commissioners in **CASS COUNTY** recently denied a petition from 15 residents of the rural county who want to **secede from the county** and become part of **RICHLAND COUNTY**.

Residents of Pleasant Township believe the neighboring county would better protect their interests regarding a proposed Red River diversion project. They live in an area designated to hold back extra water during times of severe flooding, *inforum.com* reported.

Commissioner Darrell Vanyo said the democratic process is the traditional path to address such concerns. "It seems to me the opportunity is there next November through the normal process of electing officials," he said. Border-change measures previously have been on the ballot.

County Auditor Mike Montplaisir said 15 of the area's 19 voting-aged residents signed the petition to "de-annex" from Cass County.

► OHIO

Counties are asking state lawmakers for the same ability universities and regional transit authorities have to **upgrade outdated government buildings** more cost-effectively.

Counties, unlike those entities, can't sell their buildings to private developers and then lease the space while the developer renovates and modernizes the building to standards set by the county, the *Toledo Blade* reported.

The **COUNTY COMMISSIONERS ASSOCIATION OF OHIO (CCAO)** supports the concept being pushed by **LUCAS COUNTY** that would allow a county to buy back the improved building at the end of the lease, which could last no longer than 40 years. "At a time when county financial resources are limited, the sale and lease-back option would not require any county to upfront the cost of renovations," said Brad Cole, a CCAO spokesman.

Financial Services News

U.S. Communities Announces New Flooring Products Services Contract

U.S. Communities Government Purchasing Alliance, a NACo-founded and sponsored program, has announced a new flooring products and services contract.

The city of Seattle acted as the lead public agency, managed the competitive solicitation process and awarded the national contract to Empire Today, a leading provider of installed carpet and flooring, delivering quality products and world-class service for more than 50 years.

Empire's U.S. Communities contract delivers end-to-end flooring solutions, including free on-site consultation, comprehensive account management, installation and customer service for organizations of all sizes.

The contract also provides LEED certification efforts, including carpet and padding recycling programs in conjunction with Carpet America Recovery Effort (CARE). This program helps assure that used carpet and padding does not end up in landfills. The major recycling efforts began earlier this year, and as of Oct. 31, Empire has recycled more than

8 million pounds of carpet and padding and is projecting a total of 18 million pounds by the end of the year.

One of the key components allowing Empire to provide quality products at great prices is its direct mill and manufacturer relationships — allowing the company to streamline, simplify and reduce the cost of the selection and procurement of carpet and flooring products. Carpet manufacturers include Shaw Flooring, The Mohawk Group and Bolyu. Vinyl and hard-surface manufacturers include Armstrong Flooring, Mannington, Congoleum, LSI Floors, Daltile and Johnson Premium Hardwood Flooring. The contract also allows Empire to source from other manufacturers at competitive pricing to provide virtually any products needed by public agencies.

Empire provides just-in-time delivery and installation to enable public agencies to coordinate replacements, remodeling and new construction, with all installers being locally sourced from the communities that Empire services. It also provides specialized instal-

lation services for facilities that require unique treatments such as dense cubicle environments and libraries. The Empire team can also assist public agencies with product performance reviews, calculating the total cost of ownership and making recommendations for specific flooring solutions in public spaces.

The contract is available to all public agencies, including counties, cities, schools, universities, housing authorities, ports and airports. The program is also open to nonprofit organizations. U.S. Communities will be conducting webinars for registered agencies. Registered agencies can sign up by visiting www.uscommunities.org and clicking on "What's New" and on "Webinars." The webinars are scheduled for Tuesday, Jan. 17 and Thursday, Jan. 19, 2012 and will last approximately one hour.

For more information, contact Jim Sawyer at jsawyer@naco.org or Empire Today at 866.588.2353 or visit www.empiretodayuscommunities.com.

(Financial Services News was written by Steve Swendiman, managing director/CEO, NACo Financial Services Center.)

Salt Lake County moves budgeting responsibilities away from auditor

NEWS FROM *from page 9*

► TENNESSEE

A tire disposal program that was supposed to help counties has ended up costing many of them. MADISON COUNTY has lost more than \$100,000 over the past four years in a state tire waste management program, county officials said.

The state reimburses counties in part for participating in the program run by Department of Environment and Conservation, in which tire dealers dispose of tires through a recycler, the *Jackson Sun* reported.

"Ninety percent of the counties lose money on it," Madison County Mayor Jimmy Harris said.

County Finance Director Mike Nichols said rural areas lose more money because of the prevalence of tires used in agriculture, which are heavier and cost more to dispose of. However, the state repays counties the same amount regardless of tire weight. "That's where we get caught

losing on this program," Harris said.

► UTAH

SALT LAKE COUNTY voted recently to move budgeting responsibilities from the elected county auditor's office to the mayor's office. The auditor, Gregory Hawkins, was not amused and is suing the county, the nine members of the County Council and County Mayor Peter Corroon to block the change, *Deseret News* reported.

Corroon said he supports the County Council's decision to move the budget office based on a consultant's analysis. "Litigation is unfortunate," he said, "but my office will follow the legal process in place for this type of situation."

► WISCONSIN

While other county departments struggle to get by, the Medical Examiner's Office in FOND DU LAC COUNTY is prospering, thanks to an entrepreneurial move the county

made five years ago.

In 2006, the County Board voted to make the ME's office independent of the state system, and it now draws revenue from 14 other counties.

The office performed 431 autopsies last year, only 86 of which were from Fond du Lac County. The rest were done for other counties on a contract basis at a cost of about \$1,600 apiece, according to the *Fond du Lac Reporter*.

"When it comes to autopsies, we felt we could do it more efficiently by ourselves," County Board Chair Martin Farrell said. "We're performing services to other counties, saving money and easing the property tax burden at the same time."

(News From the Nation's Counties is compiled by Charles Taylor and Charlie Ban, staff writers. If you have an item for News From, please email it to ctaylor@naco.org or cban@naco.org.

The H.R. Doctor Is In

An HR Doctor Holiday Card

'Twas the night before Christmas
And throughout County Hall
Not a bureaucrat was stirring
No sounds heard at all

The janitor's night off, the alarm
systems set
The beacons for security and decorations met
The ambient light kept the stars out of sight
No Bethlehem star could be seen on that night

Those bringing gifts were turned back at the door
No gifts could be given, auditors hired galore
No risk of polluting the ethics machine
Even frankincense and myrrh would have to be screened

While Christmas and Chanukah meet in December
We seem to forget what we all should remember
Of friendship and family, of futures so bright
Of civil behavior and doing what's right

The holidays tell us of great lessons learned
A safer and better world to be earned
Give gratitude and joy — the greatest gifts, we believe
It's better to give than it is to receive

With Love and Best Wishes for a "Service to Others" Holiday Season...

Phil Rosenberg, HR Doctor
Charlotte Rosenberg, HR Spouse
Elyse Rosenberg, HR Daughter
Rachel Brown, HR Doctor Daughter
Toby Brown, HR Son-in-Law
Evie Brown, HR Granddaughter

www.hrd.net



NACo on the Move

» NACo Officers and Elected Officials

• **Chris Rodgers**, NACo second vice president, spoke about NACo, including Healthy Counties, at the Nebraska Association of Counties annual conference in Buffalo County Dec. 14-16.



Chris Rodgers

» NACo Staff

• **Jim Philipps**, media relations manager, spoke on a workshop panel discussing how to effectively use social media during the Colorado Counties, Inc. 2011 Winter Meeting in El Paso County (Colorado Springs) Nov. 28-30.

» Coming Up

• **Andrew Goldschmidt**, director of membership marketing, will be presenting a workshop on NACo and exhibiting on behalf of NACo Membership Recruitment and Retention at the Virginia Association of Counties 2012 County Supervisors Forum, January 6-8, 2012 in Richmond, Va.

On the Move is compiled by Christopher Johnson.

Model Programs From the Nation's Counties

DeKalb County, Ga.

County Pledge Urges: Guns Not for Celebrations

By CHARLIE BAN
STAFF WRITER

When a New Year's celebration inadvertently claimed the life of a four-year-old, DeKalb County, Ga. put its foot down on partiers with their fingers on a trigger.

The fatal wounding of Marquel Peters, while he sat in a midnight church service with his mother, spurred the county to crack down on celebratory gunfire. A ballistics expert told the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* that the bullet, which broke through the church's roof, most likely came from an AK-47 assault rifle and was probably a half-mile away, which underscored the far-reaching and unintended consequences of firing guns into the air.

In response, DeKalb County's public safety department developed Marquel's Pledge, a community outreach program to spread the word about the danger of celebratory gunfire.

Sgt. Adrion Bell, DeKalb County sheriff's spokesman, floated a theory as to why people choose to celebrate that way.

"Up until a few years ago, you couldn't buy fireworks in Georgia," he said. "It seems to

me that shooting guns substituted for the fireworks shows that cost professionals thousands of dollars to put on."

Holidays at 911 call centers have been inundated with calls reporting gunfire for years, mainly around July 4 and New Year's Eve.

"Our reports show that it crosses socio-economic lines," Bell said.

William Z. Miller, director of DeKalb County's public safety department, said what was once a widely accepted cultural feature in the South has largely faded as population density increased.

"People used to consider it a rite

of passage to be old enough to fire a gun in the air," he said. "That's faded a lot, but unfortunately, not enough."

The pledge focuses on two groups. Business owners who sell ammunition are asked to refrain

from or limit its sale in the two days prior to those holidays, and individuals can agree to stop celebrating by shooting firearms and promise to urge others to do the same. The pledge also petitions the Georgia Legislature to further penalize those charged with engaging in celebratory gunfire.

Miller said in the years before Marquel's death, DeKalb County would get an average of 500 phone calls on July 4 and New Year's Eve expressly to complain about gunfire. Since the pledge publicity push began in 2010, that number dropped significantly, almost 50 percent, for the following July 4.

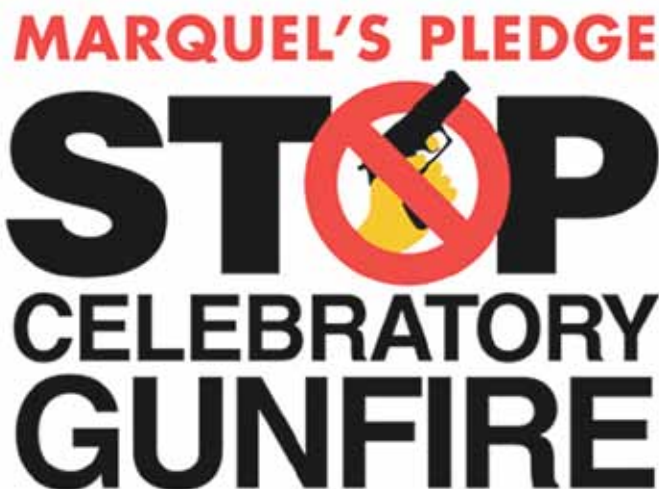
Meanwhile, outside DeKalb County, two more people in the Atlanta metropolitan area have been struck by celebratory bullets in the nearly two years since Marquel's death. One died,

and two Gwinett County men were charged with involuntary homicide.

The program relies mainly on word-of-mouth promotion and costs very little. The public safety department produced an in-house public service announcement that broadcasts on the county's public-access television station.

Closing on the two-year anniversary of Marquel's death, more than 20,000 people have signed the pledge, Miller said, and the county hopes to get 100,000 signatures.

Model Programs from the Nation's Counties highlights Award-winning programs. For more information on this NACo Achievement Award winner, visit NACo's Web site, www.naco.org ► *Research & Publications* ► *Find Solutions*.



Job Market & Classifieds

►DETENTION WARDEN – EDDY COUNTY, N.M.

Salary: \$69,640–\$73,166; DOQ.

The Warden works under the supervision of the five-member Board of Commissioners and the County Manager. Benefits include: paid vacation, sick leave and holiday pay; PERA retirement plan; health, dental, vision and life insurance paid at 100 percent for full-time employees and 60 percent for dependents. Full specifications may be acquired at the Eddy County Administration Complex, 101 W. Greene Street, Carlsbad, NM 88220; the Department of Workforce Connections or online at www.co.eddy.nm.us.

Starting Salary: DOQ. FLSA Ex-

empt. Closes Jan. 16, 2012, 5 p.m. MST. EOE M/F V/D.

►DIRECTOR OF EQUALIZATION – MINNEHAHA COUNTY, S.D.

Salary: \$2,541–\$2,737 biweekly; DOQ.

Minnehaha County in Sioux Falls, S.D. area invites applications for the Director of Equalization to lead the planning, operation and management of a 20+ staff who annually values all real residential, commercial, industrial and agricultural County property. Develop policies to comply with applicable law; prepare budgets; analyze market income and construction data; and oversee the calculation

and preparation of assessment appraisals. Requires Bachelor's in business administration, mathematics, statistics or related field plus five (5) years' experience appraising real property for tax purposes. Comparable experience may be considered. CSDA, CAE designation, budget management and previous supervisory experience preferred. Salary: DOQ. Appointment above the hiring range DOQ/DOE. Competitive benefits package with health, life, paid time off, and retirement.

For full list of qualifications and application process: <http://jobs.minnehahacounty.org> or contact HR at 605.367.4337. Application deadline: Jan. 16 at 5 p.m. EO/AA Employer.

What's in a Seal?



» Potter County, Texas www.co.potter.tx.us

Potter County, Texas was formed in 1876 from the Bexar District. The county is named after Robert Potter, legislator, cabinet member and signer of the Texas Declaration of Independence.

During the California gold rush, gold seekers passed through the area following trails blazed by explorers such as Josiah Gregg and Randolph B. Marcy. In the 1870s, buffalo hunting decimated the herds that once roamed the area and forced the Indians, who were dependent upon the buffalo, to leave.

The seal shows a star in the center, representing the state of Texas.

(If you would like your county's seal featured, please contact Christopher Johnson at 202.942.4256 or cjohnson@naco.org.)

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