



**MUSEUM TEACHES CRAFTS, KEEPING HISTORY ALIVE. PG. 5**



**MANY PLAYERS COMPLICATE JUSTICE SYSTEM CHANGES. PG. 9**



**COUNTY PARTNERSHIP HELPS SENIORS MANAGE DEPRESSION. PG. 12**

## Counties brief Capitol Hill staff on housing affordability

by **Charlie Ban**  
senior writer

Members of NACo's Housing Affordability Task Force offered their experiences and perspectives to congressional staff Nov. 28 at a Capitol Hill briefing.

"Don't forget the centrality of counties, it's easy to not understand how central county governments are," Wake County, N.C. Commissioner Matt Calabria cautioned the staff members. He pointed out the wide variety of staffing levels among counties of various sizes, many of which don't have the capacity to navigate federal bureaucracy — underscoring the federal government's role as a convener — but emphasized that local processes can help make up for local resource challenges.

"Having everybody in the room is really powerful and it's very healthy and has a moderating effect and also because people don't always distinguish between processes and outcomes," he said about Wake County's housing inclusive task force. "It's really healthy to have lots of community stakeholders in the mix when you're developing whatever affordable housing plans you have."

When it comes to developing housing, counties can play

a number of roles. In addition to engaging their communities, they can also help coordinate a wide swath of county authorities, including zoning, land use and infrastructure policy, finance and more.

Mack Bernard, a Palm Beach County, Fla. commissioner, outlined how his county dedicated \$60 million in American Rescue Plan Act funding to meet housing needs, including \$10 million each for housing for the homeless and housing rehabilitation.

"We wanted to focus on creating new units," he said.

Terry Hickey, Baltimore County, Md.'s Housing and Community Development director, praised counties that build housing funds, but also acknowledged that they could potentially do more, financially.

"Putting cash into deals is only going to go so far, and county governments aren't necessarily good at generating cash and putting them into real estate deals," he said. "You have to think, 'What are we good at?' Baltimore County has a AAA bond rating. If you use a credit enhancement model, we could serve as a lender. That sounds incredibly risky to

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NACo Board members tour 3M's World of Innovation Nov. 30 as part of the ForwardTogether Symposium and NACo Fall Board Meeting held Nov. 30-Dec. 2 in Ramsey County, Minn. Members also heard about innovative Ramsey County programs during presentations at the Innovation Center auditorium at 3M. Photo by Justin Cox

## NACo Board members identify 'crisis-level' concerns in survey

by **Mary Ann Barton**  
editor

A survey of NACo Board members identifying their top "crisis-level" concerns was unveiled Dec. 1 at the ForwardTogether Symposium and NACo Fall Board meeting held Nov. 30-Dec. 2 in Ramsey

County, Minn.

Conducted by NACo, the survey identified the top five concerns as: Mental health and substance use, housing affordability, transportation infrastructure construction and maintenance, county workforce recruitment and retention and broadband acces-

sibility and expansion.

In introducing the results to the Board, Teryn Zmuda, NACo chief economist and research officer, noted that "part of my job is to focus on the research and the data and also bring that to life in our

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## Counties tackle dental care for underserved

by **Meredith Moran**  
staff writer

For people struggling with substance use disorder and homelessness, dental care often gets pushed aside, due to both a lack of access to care and it simply not being a priority. The Community Health Centers of Linn and Benton

County, Ore. are working with the recovery support service Communities Helping Addicts Negotiate Change Effectively (C.H.A.N.C.E.) to alleviate those barriers through its on-site dental program, which can see up to seven patients a day.

C.H.A.N.C.E. peer mentor Curtis Parke, who has lived experience with substance use

disorder, helps coordinate the dental program. Growing up, Parke experienced housing insecurity, sometimes living in tents with his parents, and went years without any dental care. He emphasized the importance of the dental space existing at C.H.A.N.C.E., where

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# ForwardTogether Symposium explores ways to find common ground

From BOARD page 1

bodies of work, our thought leadership and our best practice cohorts.” Members conducted in-depth roundtable discussions of their concerns the following day.

The survey results and discussion were part of the three-day meeting featuring a number of speakers and panel discussions hosted by Ramsey County, home to NACo President Mary Jo McGuire. The meeting kicked off Nov. 30 with a visit to the headquarters of 3M.

### 3M tour

At the 3M Innovation Center, Board members heard about the history of the company and how it operates.

They also heard about several innovative county programs including one on how Ramsey County is working to help young people get their

driver’s licenses so they can more easily get jobs in construction, public works and other positions.

The Ramsey County Driver’s License Academy is a free program that helps young workers ages 18-24 obtain their driver’s license as a needed work credential.

After discovering that driver’s education is no longer offered in school, and how expensive private driver’s education can be, the county created the program.

A group that uses the program is Change Inc. “With a driver’s license, we have students who can take their child to childcare or a family member to a chemo appointment,” said Jody Nelson, executive director of Change Inc., an alternative school in Ramsey County. Find out more about the program at [ramseycounty.us/DLA](http://ramseycounty.us/DLA).



Mobile County, Ala. Commissioner Merceria Ludgood makes a point at the Ramsey County meeting.

### Elections, homelessness among priorities

The next day, Board members voted on 10 policy priorities. Broadband, elections and homelessness were just a few of the issues among the 10 policy priorities passed Dec. 1 by the NACo Board. (See box at right for list of priorities.)

The NACo Board also approved an event code of conduct policy noting the importance of “promoting and creating an inclusive, supportive and collaborative environment for all participants at NACo events.”

Participants also heard from a number of speakers. Minnesota Lt. Gov. Peggy Flanagan kicked off a day of discussions. “This work can sometimes seem bureaucratic and painstaking but it’s incredibly important,” she said. “As someone who grew up on public programs...we relied on SNAP to put food on the table. The work of counties is life-saving work that you do.”

Keynote speaker Bill Doherty, co-founder of Braver Angels, introduced a discussion on the “polarization” happening across the United States and the world, noting that the late House Speaker

### NACo BOARD PASSES 10 POLICY PRIORITIES

1. Amplify the unique county role in the intergovernmental system and federal policymaking.
2. Cultivate bipartisan support for direct federal investment in counties.
3. Maintain election integrity and strengthen election worker safety.
4. Pursue better outcomes within and across behavioral health, homelessness and criminal justice systems including modernize exclusionary policies that limit local innovation and investments and provide greater incentives and agility for cross-sector collaboration.
5. Pass a bipartisan Farm Bill with the inclusion of county priorities.
6. Support counties with federal public lands by fully funding Payments in Lieu of Taxes (PILT) and the Secure Rural Schools (SRS) program.
7. Promote county priorities and local decision-making in federal rulemaking around land use, environmental quality and energy development.
8. Strengthen community resilience through enhanced federal, state and county partnerships for disaster preparedness, response and recovery.
9. Enhance federal flexibilities, incentives and resources for county investments, policies and services that support at-risk, vulnerable residents, promote economic mobility and workforce readiness and alleviate the housing affordability and access crisis.
10. Deploy high-speed internet that is affordable, reliable and accessible while preserving local decision-making, partnerships and innovation.

Tip O’Neill (who served in the role from 1977 to 1987) “used to say all politics are local. Now, all local politics are national. And I know you’ve run into that and have experienced that.”

White House Senior Advisor Tom Perez told Board mem-

bers there’s work to be done, beyond politics, noting that the American Rescue Plan Act is not a program for “red or blue America, it’s a program for every ZIP code in America.”

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## SNAP/STATS

### Fastest-growing occupations

OCCUPATION	GROWTH RATE 2022-2023
Wind turbine service technician .....	45%
Nurse practitioner.....	45%
Data scientist .....	35%
Statistician .....	32%
Information security analyst.....	32%

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics

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“It’s important in life to know what the moment is,” he said. “It’s a time of peril and opportunity.”

“Those moments of great crisis in the ‘30s and ‘60s also ended up being moments of great accomplishment,” he said. “And that’s what’s been happening over the last three years. The American Rescue Plan is a covenant. We trust you to spend it well. We trust you to understand that what might be the best use of money in Wise County, Texas might be different in Ramsey County, Minnesota. That’s OK. From these experiments, we will see points of light. You will become the incubators of innovation. Thank you for being incredible stewards of that money.”

Following Perez, U.S. Sen.

Tina Smith of Minnesota took the podium. “I started at the local level,” she told the audience. “I always think of my roots as being in local government. To tell you the truth, I’m glad about that. It grounds me in what my work really is.”

“Those of us in Washington, D.C. should be listening really, really hard about your experiences on the ground, solving problems for people every single day,” she said.

“It’s a really interesting time, as you look at the data – unemployment is low, inflation rate is down, we’ve created manufacturing jobs,” she said.

“Yet, among our constituents, there’s this feeling of insecurity, like ‘What’s next?’ I was talking to a group of young leaders, the Girl Scout organization. We had this conversation about hope. I

said, ‘Hope doesn’t just fall into your lap. You can find hope in the work you do every single day.’ They were so bright-eyed and bushy-tailed about what we can accomplish in this country.”

“I know that every single moment, you’re [county officials] figuring out how to solve problems,” she said. “There is a ton to be hopeful about.”

**‘Mary Jo McGuiring’**

Grant Veeder, Black Hawk County, Iowa auditor and commissioner of elections, has a tradition of delivering a limerick to commemorate each Board meeting and this one was no different.

“We are really getting an up close and personal look at Mary Jo’s style of leadership,” he noted. “She’s full of enthusiasm, cheerfulness and passion. I found out from one of

**NACo BOARD APPROVES NOMINATIONS OF SEVEN NEW MEMBERS**

- **Michael E. Zurlo**, county administrator, Clinton County, N.Y.
- **Robert Wilson**, county administrator, Cass County, N.D.
- Supervisor **Jason Bellows**, Lancaster County, Va.
- **David Connor**, executive director, Tennessee County Services Association, representing NCCAE
- **Jennifer Finch**, public information officer, Weld County, Colo., representing NACIO
- **Nichole Coleman**, president, representing the National Association of County Veterans Service Officers
- **R. Charles Pearson**, president, representing the National Association of County Surveyors

our speakers there’s a word for it.”

“I learned a new verb that’s inspiring.

A verb I can call on when

tiring.

When I’m feeling weak, and things look bleak,

I’ll think about Mary Jo McGuiring.” **CN**

*Community stakeholder engagement important when developing affordable housing plans*

**From HOUSING page 1**

our budget folks and it’s going to require modeling and really good thought, but we could be a first-place lender, not a gap financier. We know that affordable housing is one of the best and safest investments in real estate.

“We have to start generating financial tools that work with for-profit and market-rate developers who have no interest in going after tax credits. So how can we do direct deals? We need to work upstream with investors, with pension fund trustees. We need to start removing some of the risk and making it easier to do direct investment, build capital stacks of private money that show a real return and then, we need to do things like we talked about.” That might mean waiving local fees to “make it easier to get through the process,” he noted.

Miami-Dade County, Fla. Commissioner Eileen Higgins lamented that the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law did not include funding for housing but noted that the investments it did make have still helped stimulate housing growth in her county. The bus rapid transit in development in the county’s South Dade corridor



**Terry Hickey, Baltimore County, Md.’s Housing and Community Development director, offers a county staff perspective on housing affordability.** Photo by Charlie Ban

will cut commuting time to downtown Miami, and even as the project is more than a year from completion, thousands of new housing units are being built along its path.

“Who’s going to build housing in the private sector and an hour-and-a-half or two hours from jobs?” she asked. “Nobody,” unless the county gives them a reason, like making them convenient to good-paying jobs.

“If I took you on a tour of that, you would see thousands of

housing units under construction, most of which are being built by the private sector.”

April Norton, Teton County, Wyo.’s housing director, faces structural and economic challenges in developing housing in the nation’s wealthiest county, which only drives up the cost of housing.

“We have a lack of land that’s appropriate for housing, whether that’s because the land is under conservation easement or it is agricultural use or it’s owned by the feder-

al government or it just lacks infrastructure,” she said. “We have a lack of construction workers. Construction workers can’t afford to live in these places that need housing, so we’re importing them, in addition to importing our nurses and our doctors, our teachers or plow drivers.

Planning for housing means zoning for housing, Norton said, “whether that’s requiring minimum densities or just letting our communities know that we’re going to put afford-

able workforce housing in this area in your town.”

“Where I live, we have a two-for-one density bonus, so for every extra two feet of market development, you have to provide us with one square foot of workforce housing,” she said. “There’s no income limit on that workforce housing, there’s no rent limit on that workforce housing, there’s no maximum sales price for the workforce housing, we just require that whoever lives in the home, works full time locally. It’s been an excellent tool for us.”

Like any infrastructure project, housing development, particularly when it’s undertaken by the private sector, can be an unwieldy process, so Hickey recommended making that process as easy and inviting for private developers by, as Calabria stressed, having a clear and consistent process.

“You can save a developer hundreds of thousands of dollars and you also have to look at your local density and land use because the amount of units equal money, time is money, certainty is certainly money and so these are things that we can to some degree control at the county level and we have to leverage all of them to get these things done,” he said. **CN**





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# Craft-makers bring history to life at county museum

by Meredith Moran  
staff writer

The Monroe County Museum is weaving the Michigan county's history into the present through its YesterWays program, which brings objects the museum has on display to life through craft activities.

"I think a lot of folks out there might think that history is something kind of boring ... they think it's just books on a shelf, it's a static collection of data from years gone past," said JJ Przewozniak, the museum's deputy director. "And in museum education, one of the challenges, but it's a good challenge, is to get people inspired by history, to have the past resonate with your visitors somehow."

"Doing hands-on stuff, making something, whether it's purely an artistic creation or if it's a replica of something that somebody did using a method from 200, 300 years ago, when you're using your hands dedicated to something, there's a lot of retention, there's a lot of enjoyment that goes along with it."

The program's first workshop in January was centered on a 105-year-old sweater the museum has on display that was made in Monroe County and sent over to Erwin Wagner, who served with the U.S. Navy in France during World War I. YesterWays participants were taught basic knitting techniques by museum staff and given yarn and knitting needles to create a fingerless mitten or wristlet.

"We look at the significance of the craft and how it related to our community at large and that's how we prioritize what YesterWays does," Przewozniak



YesterWays participants knit mittens and wristlets at the Monroe County Museum. Photo courtesy of JJ Przewozniak

said. "... [Millions] of knit goods went over to the Doughboys (a nickname for American servicemen during World War I). If you're in 1918 living in Monroe, there were knitting circles, men and women both, and the Red Cross encouraged people to knit off the clock, like when they did their breaks at work. That was a very important part of life for people in 1918, or an aspect of it."

Today, the free workshops have engaged people of all ages and become a way for families in the community to bond over multiple generations, according to Przewozniak.

"That's one of the most special things, when a grandpa or grandma is there with their grandkids and they have a memory of this craft from the past," Przewozniak said. "May-

be their parents practiced it or maybe they did, and they get to show it to the little ones in the family in a special way. It's very heartwarming."

Monroe County resident Jody Egan regularly attends the YesterWays program with her child. Egan said she views the program as an "invaluable classroom for the next generation," and together, they've crafted a paper American lotus (Monroe County claims to be the "Lotus Capital of the World") and created watercolor painting in a session inspired by Monroe County artist Robert S. Duncanson's work, among other activities.

"Attending the Monroe County Museum's YesterWays program is like unlocking a time capsule with the key to our past," Egan said. "... These workshops

instill a deep appreciation for our local roots, cultivating a generation that understands the importance of preserving and learning from history ... Sharing these time-honored skills of the past serves as a touchstone to our ancestors, introducing skills that carry on as an investment into our future."

While most of the YesterWays workshops are centered on a certain object the museum has on display, the staff will sometimes look for inspiration elsewhere if there's something monumental in the county's history that the museum doesn't house, Przewozniak said. The museum doesn't have any paintings by Robert S. Duncanson, who was raised in Monroe County and is considered to be the first internationally known African-American artist as well as

the greatest landscape painter in the West. However, the staff knew it wanted to highlight his work and memory through the program.

The museum works to make the activities as accessible and beginner-friendly as possible, so while Duncanson worked with oil paints, the participants painted with watercolors. Przewozniak said that a participant told him that she enjoyed the session so much that she devoted a room in her own home to her newfound love for watercolor painting.

"Apparently, she had developed a condition that limited the use of her hands, so rediscovering painting at the museum was the inspiration she needed," Przewozniak said.

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# County promotes productivity for incarcerated

by Annie Qing

Across the U.S., county jails are often seen as short-term holding facilities for individuals serving sentences or awaiting trial. However, in Tennessee, some individuals can be incarcerated for up to 11 months and 29 days, or for “11 29s.” Over the last year, Hamilton County, Tenn. leaders have reimagined this population’s time in jail with a re-entry program that promotes productivity, increases higher education attainment and reduces recidivism.

Amid the pandemic-driven closure of a private, for-profit prison and its subsequent \$20 million renovation to transition the 500 individuals from the downtown jail to a larger facility, Hamilton County Sheriff’s Office (HCSO) Project Manager Scott Michiels saw an opportunity to enhance the jail’s re-entry program. Increasing vocational technical (vo-tech) education access drove the transformation. Vo-tech was a new addition to the existing “soft skills” program and is relatively rare in county jails.

“Re-entry has been in prisons forever. They can get college degrees and certificates because they got plenty of time,” Michiels explained. “[In jail], their time is limited. [But],



Counties for Career Success cohort members tour Hamilton County, Tenn.’s Construction Career Center, a skills-training and career-coaching program. Photo by Annie Qing

we want to be able to impact these people and make it possible for them to get gainful employment, a living wage, something they can start a career with.”

HCSO considered a variety of training providers, but eventually settled on the Tennessee College of Applied Technology (TCAT) at Chattanooga State Community College to provide credentials in the breadth of industries that Michiels envisioned for programming at the jail.

In 2022, the Hamilton County Jail and Detention Center kicked off its first cohort for a

cosmetology program — TCAT provides the curriculum and HCSO supplies the books and cosmetology learning kit. By the end of their 11 29 sentences, enrollees will have made approximately 200 hours of progress toward an industry-recognized credential and make an easy transition, as already-enrolled students to on-campus classes at Chattanooga State.

While initial support for the jail’s cosmetology program came from the State of Tennessee and philanthropic grant funding, Michiels said county investments were transfor-

mative. With the donation of jail-adjacent county buildings and some county funds, Hamilton County plans to expand its vo-tech program beyond jail walls to the carpentry, electrical and welding industries. County funds and resources have made this process not only possible, but also smoother. While grant funding often requires a narrow focus and stringent reporting, “it’s easier to get things done” with county dollars and partnerships, Michiels said.

County Mayor Weston Wamp is a strong proponent for the addition of vocational

education. “Investing in our jail re-entry program has the potential to change lives, save tax dollars and lower crime by reducing recidivism,” he said. “The work is not easy, but we believe that if we get re-entry right, it may be the best possible return on investment of local tax dollars.”

The program’s outlook got a boost when Michiels shared its story with county officials representing post-secondary education, workforce development and human services from across the nation during NACo’s Counties for Career Success (C4CS) peer exchange in November in Hamilton County. It was there he learned the TCAT students in the jail would be eligible for need-based assistance through the Pell Grant program, stretching existing funding further to include more individuals on 11 29s. Long term, the program’s impact on recidivism rates pays for itself by reducing costs of reincarceration for the county.

At any scale, post-secondary education programs in county jails offer the 95% of individuals in jail who will return to the community an opportunity to achieve their full potential. **CN**

*Qing is health and human services program manager in the NACo Counties Futures Lab.*

## Dental program helps unhoused people with substance use disorder in Oregon

From DENTAL CARE page 1

the counties’ homeless population receives other services, including meals, counseling and assistance with housing and employment.

“Having this safe place that they’re already coming into and being able to house that kind of service is just amazing,” Parke said. “Because when you’re [homeless with substance use disorder or SUD], you don’t keep track of your appointments, you don’t even know what day it is.

“I wish that I would have had something like this when I was out there.”

Parke said that it’s common for people experiencing homelessness and SUD to get into a cycle with substances that

worsens their dental hygiene, which can cause a reliance on using them to ease the pain instead of getting needed dental care.

### Substance use covers dental pain

“You just don’t care,” Parke said. “Having that dental pain, you do ‘use more’ to be able to cover that up. You strive to get whatever you can to take away that pain, which is never healthy.

“Going to emergency rooms or urgent care or something like that, it just doesn’t work. They give you some antibiotics, the pain goes away for a little while and you never go to the dentist appointment because you’re out using and stuff, so having them come here where

they’re already safe, they can just walk in and be like ‘Oh, the dentist is here. Can I see you guys?’ It’s an immediate thing, while it’s right there on their mind, they don’t have to have an appointment.”

A team, consisting of an expanded practice hygienist and expanded functions dental assistant with the Community Health Centers, takes X-rays of each patient’s teeth, does an initial assessment and cleaning.

They then send the patient’s information out for a telehealth review, where a dentist determines recommended treatment, according to Vanessa Rabine, the outreach dental program coordinator of the Community Health Centers of Linn and Benton counties.

### Elderly homeless report oral pain

The program avoids what Rabine refers to as “Band-Aiding with antibiotics” by connecting the patients with fol-

low-up dental visits to receive their recommended care, which C.H.A.N.C.E. helps coordinate transportation for.

See DENTAL CARE page 13



A patient and dental care professional at the C.H.A.N.C.E. clinic.



# NACo FALL BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING

PHOTOS BY JUSTIN COX



A meeting attendee peruses the latest issue of *County News* between panel discussions at the meeting in Ramsey County.



Beverly Hammond, administrative assistant for the Ramsey County Board of Commissioners, sings the national anthem Dec. 1 at the NACo Fall Board Meeting and ForwardTogether Symposium.



The Irondale Choir performs a selection of holiday tunes for NACo Board members at the NACo Fall Board Meeting in Ramsey County, Minn.



White House Senior Advisor Tom Perez discusses ARPA funding with NACo Board members.



Mary Jo McGuire pauses for a photo with Minnesota Lt. Gov. Peggy Flanagan, after Flanagan's speech to Board members Dec. 1.



NACo Board members gather for a "class photo" to commemorate their meeting Nov. 30-Dec. 1 for the NACo Fall Board Meeting and ForwardTogether Symposium in Ramsey County, Minn., home to NACo President Mary Jo McGuire.



# Many players complicate justice system changes

by **Charlie Ban**  
senior writer

Criminal justice operates as an ecosystem, just like a forest, a coral reef or a grassland. Law enforcement, court judges, court coordinators, the court clerk, public defenders, prosecutors, juvenile justice, child welfare, school districts and even financial services like bonding agencies all interact.

That makes change hard, even when participants are willing and motivated, given the number of participants.

“The criminal justice system consists of constitutionally distinct entities with distinct constitutional responsibilities, with separately elected leaders at the helm, so there’s not one system to say, ‘Let’s talk about how we are policing and who gets fed into the system,’” said Elizabeth Trosch, chief district court judge for North Carolina’s 26th Judicial District.

“Judges are independently elected judicial officers in North Carolina, they act independently, and so getting judges to do one thing together doesn’t happen. You’re not working with this one coordinated system, you’re managing various independent leaders to see a shared problem and find some shared solution.”

That shared solution is a way to eliminate racial and ethnic disparities in the criminal legal system, the mission of NACo’s CORE Justice Network — County Officials Advancing Racial Equity.

Recent studies show Black adults are currently 4.3 times more likely to be detained in Mecklenburg County than white adults.

Network members met in November in Mecklenburg County, N.C. for a peer exchange, where Trosch said the county’s creation and funding of a Criminal Justice Services division has been critical in coordinating those disparate actors.

The county’s Criminal Justice Services division includes the work done by the Criminal Justice Advisory Group, the Racial and Ethnic Disparities Workgroup and the Community Engagement Taskgroup.



**Elizabeth Trosch, chief district judge for North Carolina’s 26th District, describes how Mecklenburg County has helped coordinate disparate players in the criminal justice system.** Photo by Charlie Ban

## County investment

“I don’t think we would have gotten even to the point of being able to share and look at all our data together,” she said, without the county’s investment, which largely supports data analysis and research and gives credibility to the county’s efforts to reorient the players in

‘...you’re managing various independent leaders to see a shared problem and find a solution.’

its criminal justice system.

Even with that step, achieving a more equitable justice system has necessitated a piecemeal approach. For its part, the county’s sheriff’s office requires every supervisor to complete racial equity workshops led by local nonprofit Race Matters for Juvenile Justice.

“It really served as an eye-opener for a lot of our personnel,” said Rodney Collins, chief deputy sheriff in the Mecklenburg County Sheriff’s Office.

“We don’t control who we get in the detention environment, the disparity has already occurred before they hit the door, so there are several decision points that come along

that process ... at the point of arrest, what happens when they see the magistrate, what results in the booking versus someone having to appear in court,” Collins said. “All those decision points are what this data showed and really brought out and highlighted some of the disparities that we currently experience in Mecklenburg.”

## Different perspectives

Each of those players in the criminal justice ecosystem approach their work from different perspectives, which can complicate matters.

“When you talk about diversity, equity and inclusion, there’s no uniform definition and each institution has the power and privilege to determine the language and term based on the culture of that organization,” said Derrick Anderson, executive director of Race Matters for Juvenile Justice. “That’s why this subject matter is so hard, because based on your background, your experiences, your exposures, we all come in with a different perspective. And what we want to do is level-set to ensure that the language that we’re using is the same language.”

There was trepidation about how public to make the department’s analysis of demographic data about the county’s justice system, which was

provided to the Racial and Ethnic Disparities Workgroup, but Trosch said transparency offered its advantages in showing how various entities were working to eliminate those racial disparities.

“I don’t know that there’s any particular strategy that was persuasive and getting us over the line to just say ‘Look, this isn’t a secret we kind of know what our systems are doing,’” she said. “The raw data is available, anybody can handle it and perhaps we are better off building greater trust in our community if we just acknowledge it.”

Sonya Harper, the county’s director of Criminal Justice Services and leader of the Criminal Justice Advisory Group, said the data analysis, driven by jail overcrowding, showed an opportunity to reform the bonding system.

## Analytic insight

“We had a lot of folks in custody that were being held in our jail for offenses that we really didn’t consider to be public safety offenses,” she said. “We were seeing secured bonds being issued at rates so high for offenses that were not considered really any kind of threat to our community,” including possession of drug paraphernalia and expired licenses.

“We found if you are detained during the pretrial

phase, you’re more likely to be convicted, you’re four times more likely to be sentenced to jail and three times more likely to be sentenced to prison if you are held in custody during the pretrial phase,” she said.

That kind of analysis can help show different players in the system where their policy changes can make the most difference.

Funding from the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation through its Safety and Justice Challenge, starting in 2017, helped Mecklenburg County design unconscious bias training tailored for different players in the criminal justice system, with specific tracks for law enforcement, magistrates, judges, prosecutors and public defenders. The county has made that training publicly available.

“There is no sector of our government which has to grapple with the day-to-day existence of equity than cops,” said Spencer Merriweather, district attorney for North Carolina’s 26th District. “They’re seeing it every single day, and a lot of times people are struggling to figure out how to talk about things.

“They are on the street dealing with realities that a lot of folks in other professions were just kind of talking about theoretically. They’re seeing stuff on the ground and not necessarily knowing how to talk about it and make sense of it, so having an opportunity to do it through the kind of dialogue opportunities that we have here, I think is a value-add for our law enforcement officers.”

And better coordination across the criminal justice field will help them align for better outcomes. “I can’t change who gets arrested, I can’t tell Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department, ‘Don’t arrest for this offense’ or ‘Don’t arrest in this neighborhood’.. I don’t have any authority,” Trosch said.

“I can’t fix who the police officers bring to me, but I can try to fix what my magistrates and my colleagues are doing when they have encountered someone and have to make that critical decision about whether to release or detain.” **CN**





2024 NACo EDGE

# Excellence in Strategic Planning Award

**SUBMISSION  
DEADLINE:**

March 30, 2024

**NOTIFICATION  
OF AWARD:**

Early May 2024



The NACo EDGE Excellence in Strategic Planning Award recognizes counties that have created and communicated a thoughtful and comprehensive annual strategic plan to help improve the services and infrastructure they provide to their constituents.

For more information and to apply, visit:

[www.naco.org/page/naco-edge-excellence-strategic-planning-award](http://www.naco.org/page/naco-edge-excellence-strategic-planning-award)

**QUESTIONS?**

Contact Kyle Cline at [kcline@naco.org](mailto:kcline@naco.org)



# ON THE MOVE

## NACo OFFICERS

- President **Mary Jo McGuire** attended the Association of Minnesota Counties Annual Conference in Hennepin County, the County Commissioners Association of Ohio Winter Conference in Franklin County, and along with Legislative Director **Brett Mattson**, the Nebraska Association of Counties Annual Conference in Buffalo County.
- Immediate Past President **Denise Winfrey** attended the Kansas Association of Counties Annual Conference in Sedgwick County.

## NACo STAFF

- **Charlotte Mitchell** has joined NACo as a legislative assistant. She previously worked as a senior legislative assistant in the Oklahoma congressional delegation with time in both the House and Senate. She earned a master's in public administration from George Washing-



Mitchell



Crittington

ton University and an undergraduate degree from the University of Oklahoma.

- **Darrin Crittington**, formerly NACo's senior conferences manager, has been promoted to conference director.

- Legislative Director **Jonathan Shuffield** attended the Arizona Association of Counties Annual Conference in Maricopa County.

## PROFILES IN SERVICE

### ROBERT WILSON



WILSON

**NACo Board Member**  
County Administrator  
Cass County, N.D.

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

**Years in public service:** 14 years

**Occupation:** County Administrator

**Education:** BS, Willamette University; MPA- University of Nebraska-Omaha.

**Three people (living or dead) I'd invite to dinner:**

My mom and dad (both deceased) and FDR.

**You'd be surprised to learn that I:** Was a reporter before working in county government.

**The most adventurous thing I've ever done is:** As a reporter, I spent time in Berlin, Dresden, Prague and Brussels as part of a fellowship. Whenever I had downtime, I'd do my best to get lost in a new part of the city and see what I could discover finding my way back to a familiar area.

**My favorite way to relax is:** Exercising or reading.

**I'm most proud of:** My family; wife Emily and daughter Annalise.

**Every morning I read:** Our local newspaper. (The *Cass County Reporter*.)

**My favorite meal is:** Grilled salmon at Ivar's Salmon House in Seattle.

**My pet peeve is:** Bullies.

**My motto is:** Work hard. Share credit. Own blame. Repeat.

**The last book I read was:** "His Excellency: George Washington," by Joseph J. Ellis.

**My favorite movie is:** "Rudy." It still makes me tear up.

**My favorite music is:** Varied. My iPod has everything from Janis Joplin to Tupac.

**My favorite U.S. president is:** Abraham Lincoln

**My county is a NACo member because:** NACo is the accelerant that coordinates and focuses the voice of all the talented, hardworking, amazing people who serve our communities through work in county government.

## WORD SEARCH

### SANTA BARBARA COUNTY, CALIF.

Created by Mary Ann Barton

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

**LARGEST:** The largest city in the county is Santa Maria.

**NEWSPAPER:** Although the *Santa Barbara News-Press* declared bankruptcy this year, residents can still find out what's going on by reading the *Santa Barbara Independent*.

**OPRAH:** Oprah Winfrey is one of the many celebrities who make their home in the county.

**PACIFIC:** The county sits along the Pacific Ocean coastline.

**POPULATION:** The county population stands at 448,229 as of the 2020 Census.

**RIVIERA:** The county is known as the "American Riviera" due to its climate and landscape.

**SEAT:** The county seat is Santa Barbara.

**SPANISH:** Visitors will notice Spanish architecture from the first European settlers who arrived in 1782.

**TOURISM:** Tourism spending generates about \$56 million a year in tax revenue.

**WINERIES:** The county is home to nearly 300 wineries.

**YNEZ:** The Santa Ynez Mountains ring the county.

**ZOO:** The county features a private 30-acre zoo which includes gorillas, lions and penguins.

**COURTHOUSE:** The Spanish-style county courthouse was built in 1850.

**FILM:** The county was once home to the largest movie studio, Flying A Studios.

**HISTORY:** The county was founded in 1850.

**ISLANDS:** The Channel Islands are split between Santa Barbara County and two other counties: Ventura and Los Angeles counties.

finally!  
 NACo swag is now available online!  
[naco.org/virtual-store](http://naco.org/virtual-store)

A dream I have is to:  
 Get my CDL (commercial driver's license) and drive a semi.



## BRIGHT IDEAS | VENTURA COUNTY, CALIF.

# Program by Ventura County Partnership Helps Seniors Manage Depression

### PROBLEM:

The older generation is less likely to seek help for mental health issues.

### SOLUTION:

A program pairs elder county residents with social workers to identify and manage depression.

by Meredith Moran  
staff writer

A majority of Americans 65 and older believe it's "normal" to get depressed with age, according to the National Institute of Mental Health. Ventura County, Calif. is aiming to shift that mindset through its Program to Encourage Active, Rewarding Lives (PEARLS), a partnership between the county's agency on aging and behavioral health department.

PEARLS pairs interested Ventura County residents ages 60 and older with social workers, who work with the seniors to identify the sources of their depression and ways to manage it over the course of eight home-visit counseling sessions, according to Jason Sagar, the agency on aging's program manager.

For many, the holidays exacerbate feelings of loneliness and isolation. A National Alliance on Mental Illness survey found that 64% of Americans with mental illness reported their conditions worsened around the holiday season.

"A lot of our clients are definitely isolated," Sagar said. "They might not have family members around anymore and that's a big part of one of the reasons that they're feeling the way they feel, so some of the things that we try to do is get them back out into the community."

PEARLS acts as a "problem-solving treatment" for older adults to manage their depression and isn't intended for people expressing signs



of suicidal ideation, who the agency refers to more intensive counseling through the behavioral health department.

"It's very active," Sagar said. "They get their own homework assignments, 'These are the things I have to work on,' and then the next session, they go over, 'OK, what have you done? What can we do more about this?'"

Plans are personalized to each client, so the first steps can be anything from a senior taking up a new team sport to just making sure they leave their home, Sagar said.

"Sometimes, they're so critical in their needs that we'll start them off with, 'Maybe today, let's just start with you just going and stepping outside,' Sagar said.

"That'll be basically the first step and then we can work with that afterwards.

"... A lot of symptoms of depression are because of being overwhelmed with something or dealing with something that

'A lot of our clients are definitely isolated. They might not have family members around anymore...'

Jason Sagar, Agency on Aging

is just making them sad, so giving them the tools to actually take action on their issues is what we look for and what we strive to help people have positive outcomes."

Late-life depression affects around six million Americans ages 65 and older, but, according to WebMD, only 10% get treatment, which is largely attributed to the stigma of seeking help for depression, which seniors disproportionately feel compared to younger generations.

According to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, older adults are at least 40% less likely to seek or receive treatment for mental health conditions

than younger individuals.

Sagar said meeting the seniors at their homes for the counseling sessions helps alleviate that stigma and makes them feel more comfortable. If home visits aren't possible, the counseling sessions are conducted by phone.


"There is a stigma out there about going to counseling or therapy," Sagar said. "... Our staff is mainly social workers, it's a more personal experience, so we're not there to provide them the traditional counseling ... it's more ground level, foundational."

PEARLS is a national evidence-based program that reduced depressive symptoms by at least 50% over 12 months

in patients involved in a trial conducted by the University of Washington's Health Promotion Research Center and the City of Seattle's Aging and Disability Services.

Sagar said Ventura County has seen overwhelmingly positive results as well, with 83% of clients reporting "a more positive outlook on life and better situations" following the eight counseling sessions.

A PEARLS client who wished to remain anonymous said the program made her "hopeful," and that she's since gotten more into cooking and started going to the local senior center, where she hopes to do art.

"The program is wonderful," she said. "... My [social worker] set goals, and I'm a goal person, I'm a retired teacher ... I think one of the main reasons I liked it is because the counselor I had believed in me." 

*The program was a 2022 NACo Achievement Award winner in the Health category.*



# Dental health key to well-being; partnerships create progress

From DENTAL CARE page 7

Starting next year, the program will also add an in-house dentist to provide basic restorative care once a month. Community partner Interdent donated the necessary dental equipment to expand the program's services.

In a study of older homeless adults conducted by the Benioff Homelessness and Housing Initiative, more than half of the participants were missing at least half of their teeth and reported oral pain in the past six months, with nearly 29% reporting that oral pain prevented them from eating and nearly 21% reporting that the pain prevented them from sleeping.

C.H.A.N.C.E.'s goal is to "care for the whole human," and the dental program is an important extension of that work, said the organization's director, Emma Dean.

"A couple of years ago, I was driving into work and saw an

individual that I had known for years, super close to my heart, who was experiencing homelessness and addiction," Dean said.

"I stopped, connected with him, and the thing that I could do in that moment was provide food for him. As I'm getting ready to leave to go get him some food, he starts telling me what he can eat because he doesn't have all of his teeth and has dental pain.

"And it was a thing that I would have never thought about, paying attention to what food we're providing for people that don't have access to dental care — it was just a moment of realization."

C.H.A.N.C.E. is an ideal site for the dental program not just for its convenience in offering other services at the same location, but also because of its judgment-free nature, according to Dean.

Christine Mosbaugh, the Community Health Centers'

population health and engagement manager, echoed that sentiment.

"The experience of going to an urgent care or an emergency room and the billing that will result from that, the trauma that comes from those spaces and the limited actual sort of curative healing space that that is, it's really expensive to our system," Mosbaugh said.

"And our hospital doesn't have the capacity or the desire probably to want to do most of that, so these are those unique partnerships that I think start to have these ripple effects through our community."

Samaritan Health Services also helped provide funding for dental instruments and supplies and partnerships were a key part in the program's success, according to Mosbaugh.

"Health is an interrelated experience, and our teeth aren't separate from the things that flow through our veins and our ability to manage pain and

eat the right foods," Mosbaugh said.

"So, it's really great when we can identify people who are a hospital system, who have opportunities for funds or a dental company that has extra pieces that they're looking to get into use or to reallocate somewhere, but I think what it really comes down to when I think about it is like 'Who do we know who's good at a thing and then what things do we need?'"

Since opening in June, the dental program has attracted people outside of C.H.A.N.C.E.'s existing clientele, according to Parke.

About 10% of people who have utilized the dental services are those who didn't previously receive other services through the organization, but now do, he said. "It's something that I think has turned out to be a beautiful thing," Parke said.

"We have helped so many people." **CN**



## CARBON COUNTY, WYO.

Upon realizing that Carbon County, Wyo. didn't have an official seal, Carbon County Clerk Gwynn Bartlett proposed a county-wide design contest. Bobbie Herman, from the town of Elk Mountain, designed the winning seal for a \$600 prize.

The seal features the outline of Carbon County's shape.

The top portion includes imagery of a Union Pacific steam locomotive, a coal bucket, pickax and shovel.

Also depicted are a wind turbine, the Carbon County's Sinclair oil refinery and a pumpjack, which is used to extract oil from the ground.



Two figures flanking a shield represents the importance of agriculture and manufacturing in the county

The bottom portion features a cowboy, a cow, sheep and bull elk.

The eagle at the top of the design is holding a banner in its beak. The banner reads "December 16, 1868," the date of the county's establishment.

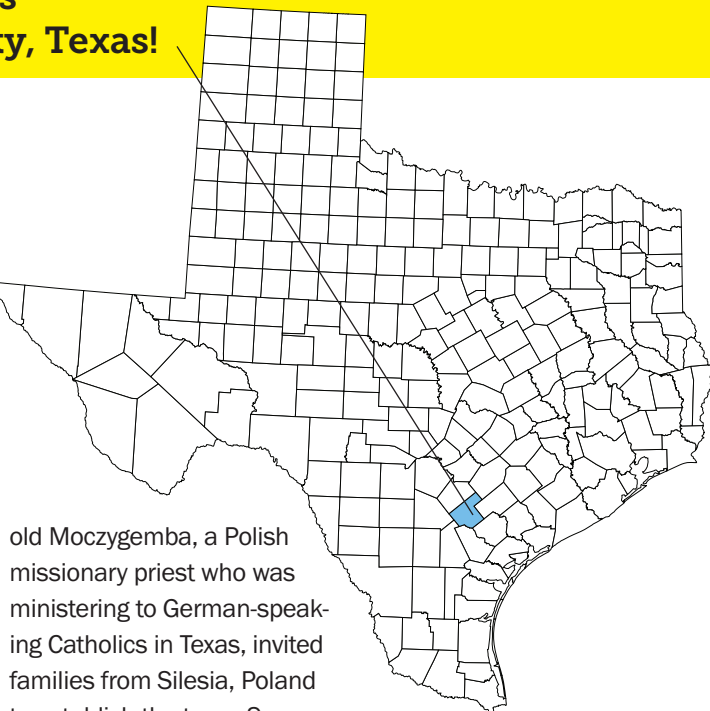
Would you like to see your county seal featured in Behind the Seal? Email Meredith Moran at: [mmoran@naco.org](mailto:mmoran@naco.org).

## GET TO KNOW... Karnes County, Texas!

**Welcome to Karnes County, Texas!** Karnes County, founded in 1854, was named for Henry Karnes, a Texas Ranger and soldier in the Texas Revolution. The county seat, Karnes City, is 54 miles from San Antonio and its population is about 3,269, according to the 2020 census.

Karnes City is the hometown of Goldie Hill, one of the first women singers in country music. Her 1953 hit "I Let the Stars Get In My Eyes" was only the second song ever to hit #1 on the country music charts by a solo female artist. The "Wow Longhorn Museum," located in Karnes City, holds the full-body taxidermy of "Wow," who was a 2,200-pound, four-time World Grand Champion Longhorn trophy steer and three-time International Grand Champion. Several of Wow's relatives are also on display in the museum.

Panna Maria, located in Karnes County, is the oldest permanent Polish settlement in the country. Rev. Leop-



old Moczygemba, a Polish missionary priest who was ministering to German-speaking Catholics in Texas, invited families from Silesia, Poland to establish the town. Some descendants of those families still live in Panna Maria, which today has a population of around 45. Karnes County has the fourth-highest rate of oil production in the state and 22nd in the country, with 6.190 million barrels last year.

**The town of Kenedy in the county was deemed the "Horned Lizard Capital of Texas" by the State Legislature in 2001. Each summer, scientists from Texas Christian University (TCU), whose**

**mascot is the horned frogs, come to Karnes County to study the reptiles. In 2021, the San Antonio River Authority completed a horned lizard habitat restoration project at Escondido Creek Parkway, which is located in Kenedy. The parkway also has a sculpture of a horned toad on display.** Kenedy hosts a Bluebonnet Days festival each spring to celebrate the arrival of the wildflowers, which are the state flower of Texas. The festival features live music, a parade, a barbecue cook-off and a cornhole tournament.





# NEWS FROM ACROSS THE NATION



## CALIFORNIA

• **SAN DIEGO COUNTY** is using sleeping cabins to expand **emergency housing** for its homeless population. The county's Health and Human Services Agency is currently looking for partner organizations for the program. In exchange for the around 100 Pallet Shelter cabins that are available through the program, the participating organizations need to operate the cabins on their property, have the proper funding and structure necessary to maintain the site and provide resources to serve those experiencing homelessness.

## CALIFORNIA

• The **TULARE COUNTY** District Attorney's Office median age is skewing a little younger after swearing in an **18-year-old prosecutor**. Peter Park, who passed the California bar exam when he was 17 — a state record according to the

DA's office — joined the office earlier this year as a law clerk. He completed a four-year law school program while concurrently completing high school during the first two years. He completed proficiency exams that allowed him to apply to law school after completing a proficiency exam in lieu of college, KVPR-FM reported.

## ILLINOIS

**COOK COUNTY** is providing **cell phones to domestic violence survivors**, who often have had their own technology taken away by their abusers. Cook County Sheriff Tom Dart emphasized the importance of cell phones in keeping in contact with their loved ones and getting connected to necessary services. Made possible through a partnership with the 911 Cell Phone Bank, the initiative will give survivors cell phones with at least 60-day unlimited minute plans, after which survivors can pay a minimal monthly fee to keep them.

## MAINE

**YORK COUNTY** programs focused on the **health and financial stability of single mothers and their children** are receiving new funding from United Way of Southern Maine's Women United. New Ventures Maine's initiative Mothers Thriving, York County Community Action Corporation's



## MICHIGAN

**DICKINSON COUNTY** library created a **snowshoe lending program** in the hope that more residents get outside this winter. The program provides the necessary winter hiking gear for library card holders who don't have access to the equipment and who might not be able to afford it.

MomCore and Quality Housing Coalition's Project HOME are all receiving funding — \$24,000, \$33,000 and \$40,000, respectively. The programs offer single mothers direct cash assistance, coaching and peer support with financial knowledge.

## MARYLAND

• **PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY** is helping youth exiting the foster care system and senior citizens with its first **guaranteed basic income program**. Thrive Prince George's, a \$4 million, two-year guaranteed basic income pilot, is providing \$800 each month to 50 youth

ages 18 to 24 and more than 125 seniors.

## MICHIGAN

**DICKINSON COUNTY** library created a **snowshoe lending program** in the hope that more residents get outside this winter. The program provides the necessary winter hiking gear for library card holders who don't have access to the equipment and who might not be able to afford it.

## MONTANA

The Montana Supreme Court

See NEWS FROM page 15



## MARYLAND

• **MONTGOMERY COUNTY** is enlisting **drones to assist with emergency response**. The Drone as First Responder program, which the Montgomery County Council voted unanimously in support of, will have one drone for the downtown Silver Spring area and another for the downtown Wheaton area. Following a 911 call, the dispatcher and drone pilot will deem if the drone is necessary, and if it is, it will be dispatched so that the pilot can assess if there's a credible threat and if more emergency response is needed prior to police arriving to the scene. The drones don't have face-recognition technology and aren't permitted for surveillance.



## FLORIDA

**POLK COUNTY** Jail is teaching interested **incarcerated women** how to braid hair and the necessary business information to do it for a living through its nine-week "Knot Your Average Academy" class. The instructor, Alisha Hinton, is a local salon owner and told *FOX 13 News* that braiding is a great skill for incarcerated people to learn because it can bring in a decent income, doesn't require a license in the state of Florida and teaches patience and dedication.



**From NEWS FROM page 14**

has ruled that **counties must collect their full share of property taxes**, an issue that became a point of contention between most counties and the state this year, following a dramatic increase in real estate values during the most recent statewide assessment. The ruling means that the 49 of 56 Montana counties that chose to collect a lower, 77.9-mill rate on tax bills sent to property owners this fall will likely have to make up the difference when they mail their next round of semi-annual tax bills in the spring, the *Montana Free Press* reported.

**NORTH CAROLINA**

Following a report from the International Public Safety Association that counted nearly 2,000 occupational deaths involving fire and EMS personnel in the United States between 2000 and 2017, **WAKE COUNTY** has distributed **bulletproof vests and helmets to firefighters** in 17 departments that serve rural areas. Wake County commissioners allocated nearly \$1 million this year to buy ballistic gear for firefighters and EMS responders, WUNC-FM reported.

**OHIO**

The **LUCAS COUNTY** Vet-

erans Service Commission is partnering with the county's Canine Care & Control, pairing veterans and rescued dogs through the **"Dog Tags for Dog Tags"** program. Veterans Services will offer vouchers for free adoption and dog licenses.

"They're both pushed to the margins for something they experienced that is not their fault," said Anna Brogan, community engagement manager for the county's animal control.

**UTAH**

Celeste Maloy, a former **WASHINGTON COUNTY** deputy county attorney and a former public lands attorney for the **UTAH ASSOCIATION OF COUNTIES** was **elected to the U.S. House of Representatives** in Utah's 2nd District.

**VIRGINIA**

The **ARLINGTON COUNTY** Department of Parks and Recreation has installed **a pickleball court** in the county's detention facility, with hopes of improving the health of inmates and staving off burnout among deputies. Two dozen inmates played a tournament after receiving lessons from an inmate services counselor and the parks depart-

ment, Arlington NOW reported.

**WASHINGTON**

• The **CLARK COUNTY** Council has approved the creation of a **new public defender's office**. *The Columbian* reported that the new office will initially consist of 10 positions, including six attorneys who will handle felony-level cases, but the county will continue contracting public defenders for misdemeanor cases.

• The **KING COUNTY** Council approved a 0.1% sales tax increase that will generate **funding for arts, heritage, science and historical preservation nonprofits** over the next seven years. The "Doors Open" program is expected to distribute more than \$100 million each year. 4Culture, a semipublic county organization that distributes funds to arts and culture projects, will oversee the program, the *The Seattle Times* reported, with the county Council and peer review panels providing additional oversight.

*Do you have news to share? Contact Charlie Ban (cban@naco.org) or Meredith Moran (mmoran@naco.org).*



**Program bonds generations**



**YesterWays participants paint with watercolors during a workshop inspired by Monroe County artist Robert S. Duncanson.**

**From MUSEUM page 5**

"That's what it's all about."

The museum offers YesterWays each Saturday during what Przewozniak refers to as the museum's "off-season," which is December through April, and the activity changes monthly. Starting the program back up again this month, the museum hosted a workshop to create a pomander, which is a ball made of perfumes that was a popular gift during the Victorian-era and thought to protect

against infection.

"We wanted to create an atmosphere where there was always something going on. On any given Saturday, during the cold months, you can pop into the museum and see what's happening and have a fun, hands-on experience," Przewozniak said. "... There may have been a 10-year gap between the last time they set foot in this building, and if YesterWays was something that brought them back, we're very happy for that." **CN**



**Pierce County artist Hillarie Isackson with her work "The Shenandoah," which adorns a traffic signal box in the county's Artondale neighborhood.** Photo courtesy of Kala Escobar

**WASHINGTON**

• There's nothing in the books that says infrastructure can't be beautiful, and apparently **PIERCE COUNTY** has read the books. The

county's arts commission has covered ubiquitous traffic signal boxes with **vinyl wraps of artwork** created by county residents. The commission picked 35 of the 300

pieces submitted, installing the wraps and paying the artists for their work, along with tracking their locations on an online map, Gig Harbor Now reported.

**COUNTY SPOTLIGHT**

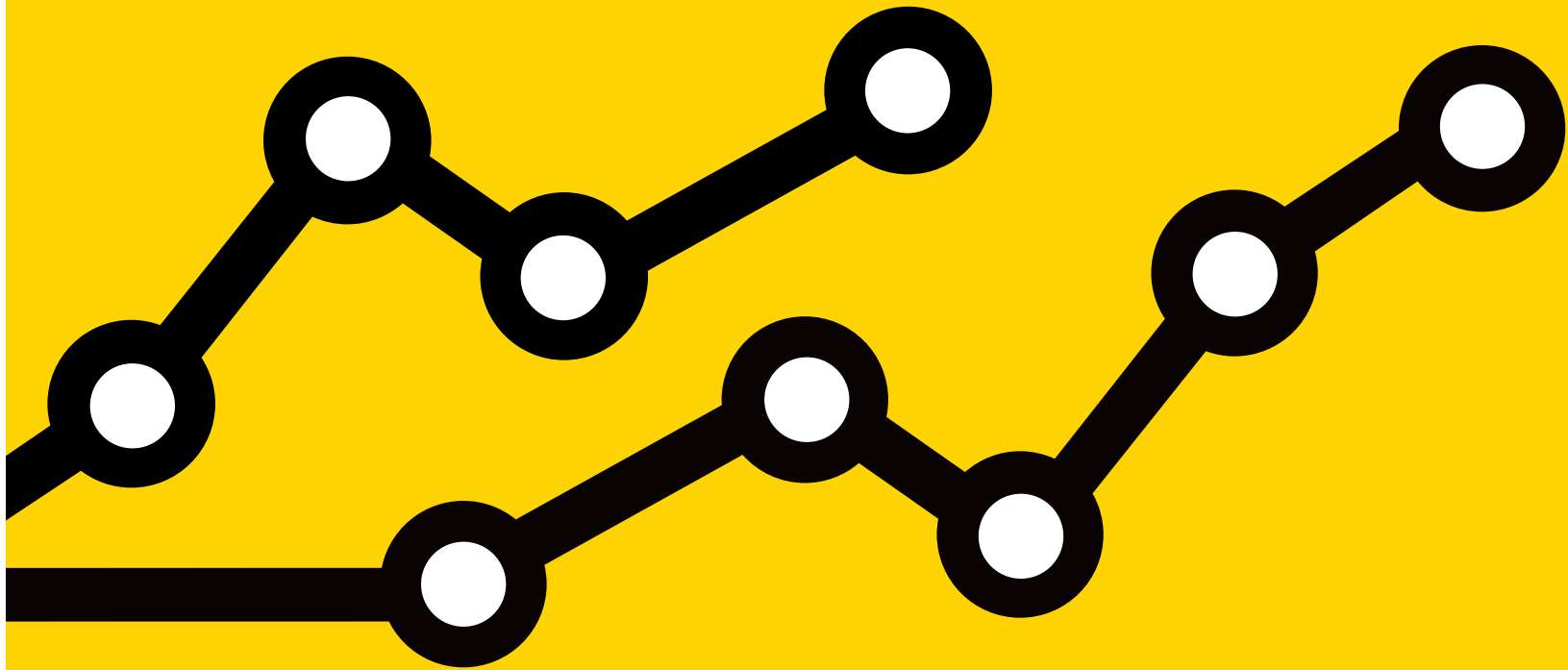


**Hays County, Texas held its annual holiday-lighting ceremony Nov. 17, when hundreds of residents and visitors came to see Hays County Judge Ruben Becerra and The Grinch turn on the lights. The county added more than 13,000 lights to the courthouse this year. The courthouse dates to 1908 and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.** Photo courtesy of Hays County



**NEW**

# 2024 County Economies Study



## Ensure your county's voice is heard!

NACo is conducting a **new survey** to understand local economic trends under the hood of the national economy. Scan the QR code to access the survey.

## We need your help!

National indicators reveal how the U.S. economy is performing as a whole, but **local perspectives** help us understand the wide variations across county lines.

## Highlight the county perspective!

Without a thorough understanding of local economic drivers and trends, **key county issues** are lost at the state and federal levels. Please respond by *Sunday, Dec. 31.*



## Scan to take survey

Thank you for your support!  
Contact: [Research@NACo.org](mailto:Research@NACo.org)

