



MEET THE 2025 NACo SECOND VICE PRESIDENT CANDIDATES. PGS. 4-6



PROFILES IN SERVICE: MERCED COUNTY'S JOSHUA PEDROZO PG. 11



CLARK COUNTY, NEV. CELEBRATES ROLE AS WEDDING CAPITAL. PG. 13

NACo preps for 2025 Legislative Conference

by **Mary Ann Barton**
editor

Against the backdrop of fast-moving actions taken by a new presidential administration, NACo is preparing for the 2025 Legislative Conference set for March 1-4 at the Washington Hilton in Washington, D.C.

LEGISLATIVE CONFERENCE
2025 MARCH 1-4 | WASHINGTON, D.C.

Attendees will have the opportunity to engage in unrivaled policy sessions, interact with officials from the new administration and meet with members of Congress. The conference is a one-of-a-kind advocacy opportunity for county officials to strengthen intergovernmental partnerships for years to come.

Some of the overarching themes for attendees to look for at the 2025 conference, in addition to strengthening relationships with a focus on the intergovernmental partnership, are disaster response and preparedness, early consultation on regulations, the promises and challenges of artificial intelligence (AI), land use and county workforce gaps.

See **CONFERENCE** page 7



The National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) recovers the debris of a Black Hawk helicopter involved in a mid-air collision near Arlington County, Va. Photo courtesy of the NTSB

Crash sets big stage for well-honed county mutual aid response effort

by **Charlie Ban**
senior writer

The lights may have been brighter than usual on responding agencies in the wake of the worst major U.S. commercial airline crash in more than 15 years, but the responses offered by the county emergency crews were practiced, routine and methodical in all phases of the response and recovery effort.

The collision between American Airlines Flight 5342 and a Black Hawk helicopter the evening of Jan. 29 over the Potomac River in Washington, D.C.

killed 64 airline passengers approaching Arlington County, Va.'s Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport and three service members aboard the helicopter.

The mutual aid response was rapid.

The crash site in Washington, D.C. was close to several

Virginia and Maryland counties, all of which contributed personnel and equipment in some way.

"We had several units already prepositioned, so whenever D.C. and the airport made the call, we quickly deployed and were able to arrive on scene and began assisting them with

the immediate rescue efforts and then later with recovery," said Tom Arnold, Fairfax County's deputy county executive for Safety and Security.

"Northern Virginia and the metropolitan Washington region are very fortunate, we

See **AIR CRASH** page 2

Jackson County chair combines diverse experiences for effective leadership

by **Charlie Ban**
senior writer

A fellowship funded by the Congressional Black Caucus kick-started DaRon McGee's career in public service, but his promise to his mother brought him back to Jackson County, Mo., where he put himself to work.

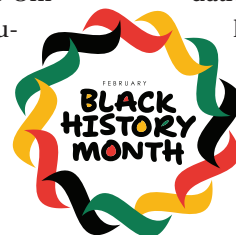
McGee learned about the

fellowship through a friend while studying at the University of Missouri-Kansas City, and when he received a fellowship, he took off for Washington, D.C. to learn from one of his state's U.S. senators. Although he worked for a white senator, Claire McCaskill (D-Mo.), the Congress-

sional Black Caucus Foundation funded McGee's housing and provided a stipend during his 18-month stint in D.C. McCaskill was a former Jackson County legislator and prosecutor.

As the fellowship concluded

See **McGEE** page 3



Maryland and Virginia counties respond to plane crash disaster at Potomac River

From AIR CRASH page 1

have mutual aid agreements — a Virginia agreement and Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments agreement — that they’ve had in place at least two decades.”

Arlington County, Va., home to Reagan National Airport, dispatched 11 units and 22 firefighter personnel to assist the Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority (MWAA) Fire and EMS with search and rescue efforts.

Fairfax County, Va. contributed 22 fire units and 68 personnel. Arlington County’s police department assisted with traffic control near Reagan National Airport that evening and assisted Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority Police Department with a visible police presence at and near the airport.

Loudoun County, Va. sheriff’s deputies handled traffic management and other functions at Dulles International Airport, which allowed MWAA to reassign personnel near the



Prince George’s County, Md. Air Boat 847 roams the Potomac River in the aftermath of the fatal Jan. 29 mid-air crash between a passenger jet and a military helicopter. Prince George’s County photo

crash site. Arlington County’s Department of Public Safety Communications and Emergency Management worked with MWAA Emergency Operations to coordinate support at National Airport and deployed staff to assist the D.C. Homeland Security and Emergency Management Agency.

The Fairfax County Police Department contributed a helicopter and the county’s dive team helped with recovery efforts the day after the crash.

The Prince George’s County, Md. Fire/EMS Department deployed command officers to the unified command post at Joint Base Bolling, directly across the Potomac River from National Airport, and Air Boat 847, based out of Fort Washington Fire/EMS Station 847, was deployed to assist the multi-jurisdictional response with debris recovery and diver shuttles.

Frederick County, Md. contributed three boats, along with water rescue personnel, to the recovery process.

Air Boat 847 continues a daily deployment to assist in re-

covery efforts. From farther inland in Virginia, Prince William County sent Command Vehicle 503 from the Dumfries Triangle Volunteer Fire Department, which served as the command post overnight until the Federal Bureau of Investigation took over operations.

The county’s Department of Fire Rescue’s Incident Management Team assisted the unified command post for the six days following the crash. This command post included fire and rescue departments within council of governments, the FBI, the National Transportation Safety Board, the U.S. Coast Guard and other federal agencies assisting with the event.

O c c o q u a n - W o o d - bridge-Lorton’s fire boat assisted the search for wreckage and victims for 16 hours the day following the crash and eight hours the next two days.

Notably, the Prince William County Department of Fire and Rescue and Frederick County are providing peer support counselors to regional agencies who have requested assistance.

“It was very cold and dark that night, and the search for survivors can be traumatizing,” said Erik McCoy, assistant chief of operations for Prince William County.

“We proactively sent peer support up, knowing how challenging an operation like that can be for first responders, and we’re making them available upon request to support those operations.”

Arnold noted that while the attention from such a national news story is elevated, the seamless response from the various county agencies is a result of nearly daily practice.

“We respond every day on a mutual aid basis,” he said. “We give and take and share resources across the line to Arlington, Alexandria, with Prince George’s County,” he said.

“These public safety agencies have a rapport for talking to each other on a monthly basis,” he noted.

“That’s standing meetings, but then also the frontline personnel are working together on a daily basis as they go back and forth between the jurisdictions responding to calls. It’s not out of the ordinary for someone to call for the fire department and have a truck from another county show up first.”

Although Arnold said the spectacle of the disaster and the county government contribution may closely compare to the response to the Pentagon on Sept. 11, 2001, the turnout from local governments in the Washington, D.C. area on par with the Flight 5342 crash happens at least once a year.

“We had a commercial building fire about 10 years ago in Fairfax County that brought out more response from other counties; it just didn’t get this kind of attention,” he said. “But none of it is chaotic because we work so well together.” **CN**

SNAP/STATS

Black History Month

FACTS	NUMBERS
U.S. Black population:	50,579,102
Black-owned businesses:.....	161,031
Black veterans:.....	1,997,837
Largest Black population (state):	Texas (4 million)
Largest Black population (county):.....	Cook County (1.2 million)

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

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

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

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

(USPS 704-620) n (ISSN: 0744-9798)
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Research Foundation, Inc.

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After state lawmaker stint, DaRon McGee finds traction in county legislator role

From McGEE page 1

ed, and a semester left to go, he prepared to take a job with the Congressional Research Service, but then his mother got in his ear.

“Back then, remote classes were very different, and UMKC had a rule that you had to do your last semester on campus,” McGee said. “I figured I would just start working and that would be the end of that, but my mom reminded me that I promised to finish college.”

So we went home to Kansas City, and graduated, right in the middle of the Great Recession. But a maternity leave by a county legislative staffer opened the door to five months of work for McGee, and an introduction to county government. He parlayed that experience into five years working in the county public health department, helping oversee drug treatment programs funded with \$30 million a year through a sales tax.

When his state legislator retired, McGee ran and won, serving nearly four years, including as the ranking Democratic member on the House Education Appropriations Committee. Though it was a special election, fortunate timing helped boost turnout in an off-year race.

“Election Day just happened to be the day the Royals were celebrating winning the World Series,” he said. “I ran ads saying ‘Come on out to the parade and then vote.’”

The pace of the slow state legislative process wore on McGee, who worked on what seemed to be a no-brainer bill — banning celebratory gunfire — but by the time McGee left the Legislature in 2019, the bill was still more than five years from passage.

He saw faster results two years later while working for a community development corporation. With plenty of vacant storefronts and a population in need of COVID vaccines, he helped place a clinic in an empty property, relieving bottlenecks that were slowing down the healthcare delivery

system.

“We had health people coming to the health centers to get their vaccines, which kept them out of hospitals and doctors’ offices where they might come in contact with sick people,” he said.

He was recruited to run for the Hickman Mills C-1 School District Board, serving as president, when he was again recruited to run, this time for the county Legislature. Adding to that intrigue of the county race was the redistricting effort already in progress.

“I thought I was going to be running in one district against two people and I wound up unopposed by the time it was all over,” he said. “For some people, it’s horrible, because they ended up running against friends. It actually worked out pretty well for me.”

Now in his third year in the Legislature, he’s serving his second term as president. He hopes to help the county set long- and medium-term targets for development, and to

continue progress the Legislature made after resolving an impasse with the county executive on how to spend the county’s American Rescue Plan Act funding.

“What do we want this thing to look like in three to five years?” he said.

‘It’s so important to never, ever close the door on anybody.’

- DaRon McGee

“I’ve learned that an individual county legislator does have a lot of power and influence, but if they’re not on the same page with their colleagues, it can be very difficult,” he said. “It’s necessary to build relationships and understand what people’s priorities are and how you can help each other.”

I think the biggest lesson that I’ve learned in leadership is listening to my colleagues,

hearing what they want and where we can go and work together on their priorities.

“I just try to practice inclusive leadership because we may not agree on a vote today, but tomorrow, I may need you on something else and we may agree. It’s so important to never, ever close the door on anybody.”


His district, in the southeastern corner of Jackson County against the Kansas border, is majority Black, middle class and older than the county median age, and home to many independent living centers. His 180,000-person county district is much larger than his 35,000-person state House district. He represents parts of Kansas City and Raytown and all of his native Grandview and works as community relations director for a health center.

“I think the biggest issue we’ve been dealing with here has been the rise in property taxes, as property values rise and the tax rate keeps up, a lot of residents who thought they had budgeted well after they paid their mortgages off, are finding themselves trying

to account for \$7,000, \$8,000 in annual increases,” he said. “Meanwhile, the state Legislature passed a senior property tax program that allows us to cap their property taxes at its current level, but that will be a problem long-term for counties across the state, because now you’re talking about decreased revenue. There’s no easy way out.”

McGee serves as a vice chair of NACo’s Large Urban County Caucus. He wants residents to better understand how they interact with the county government.

“City Hall gets a lot more attention than we get at the County Courthouse and people pay attention to the mayor and the City Council here and they pay less attention to the Jackson County comings and goings,” he said.

“From my perspective, I think that is problematic, because people just don’t know what we do, the public doesn’t show up for our meetings and we can be done in 20 minutes,” he said. “That’s not the kind of engagement we need to serve our residents better.” 



DaRon McGee speaks at a press conference flanked by Jackson County legislator colleagues Sean Smith (left) and Manuel Abarca.

20 NACo Second Vice Presidential Election

25 MEET THE CANDIDATES



Alisha Bell

Chair
Wayne County, Mich.
Commission

Why are you interested in serving as a NACo officer?

It has been my honor to serve on the Wayne County Commission and as a member of NACo for the last 21 years. Service, commitment, and passion have been my guiding principles for both Wayne County and NACo as I continuously demonstrate my dedication to county government. In 2002 when I became the youngest African American woman to be elected to a county board in the country, I made it my mission to make county government accessible and relevant to all residents. That includes having commission and committee meetings live-streamed via Zoom and YouTube and made available afterward on the commission's web page, as well as expanding commission outreach on social media. Being an active member of NACo has certainly assisted me in bringing that mission to fruition.

I am interested in serving as a NACo officer because I sincerely believe in the importance of county government to this country and know that my experience, dedication and vision will increase our member engagement as well as advance our legislative priorities. My dedication to NACo has been demonstrated by my positions in the following:

- Current LUCC Vice Chair
- Current Vice Chair of Justice and Public Safety Committee
- Former Chair of Justice and Public Safety Committee
- Former President of Women of NACo

- Former President of NABCO
- Former Credentials Chair
- Former Tally Clerk
- CLI Class of 2015
- Presidential Appointee to the NACo Board by 5 NACo Presidents

Serving in my seventh year as Commission Chair for the largest county in Michigan, I am keenly aware of the challenges and successes of county government. I can honestly say that many of the successes that counties have achieved throughout the country stem from the work that NACo has engaged in with our federal partners and the membership of this esteemed organization. Now, more than ever, we need leaders who can unify this nation and I believe I am the right person at the right time to lead this organization as we operate as one NACo, working together with one voice for the betterment of all. County government has always been and will remain a government for the people and I would love the opportunity to share my experiences and vision to further the mission and goals of NACo.

What do you consider to be the two or three most important challenges facing NACo in the near future on which the Officers/Executive Committee/Board of Directors should focus? Why?

Whether you're in a large, rural, suburban county or tribal community, we all have similar challenges. Similarly, NACo has challenges that our leadership must address so that we maintain our status as the leading voice in county government. We must continue to provide resources, technical assistance and best practices to remain relevant to our members. Remaining relevant and responsive while simultaneously adapting to change will be paramount over the next few years. I firmly believe that in NACo: Together we R.I.S.E.

Resiliency - We must ensure that our legislative priorities

emphasize resiliency in our mandated functions as county officials. We must always be in the mode of preparing, responding and recovering from natural and man-made disasters, economic downturns and public health emergencies. As a former Chair of the Justice and Public Safety Committee, I brought in experts to discuss the importance of our county emergency management departments as well as the National Weather Service to highlight the role of weather patterns when preparing for possible natural disasters. Over the last five years, the United States has experienced more than 100 weather disasters each causing losses of \$1 billion or more! Additionally, our public health departments did an extraordinary job in addressing issues related to the COVID-19 pandemic. It's a stark reminder of the importance of preparedness, the capacity to withstand and recover from difficulties, and how counties remain on the front line of resiliency with NACo providing important resources and tools for effective management of these occurrences.

Infrastructure and Innovation - Many of our communities are burdened with aging bridges, roads, sewer systems and the like. Supporting the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law will greatly assist counties in making the much-needed updates and repairs to our infrastructure that our residents desperately rely on us to provide as counties operate 44 percent of the nation's public roads and 38 percent of bridges. NACo's role in advocacy to Congress played a pivotal role in developing this comprehensive bill. Our NACo leadership must continue engaging our membership and Congress by telling our story and continuing to advocate for investments in our transportation, stormwater systems, bridges, roads and airports.

Innovation - Artificial Intelligence (AI) is here to stay and counties need to understand the implications of this emerging technology. NACo leader-

ship must continuously inform members of the pros and cons and guide them on how to best use AI for greater efficiencies in government without jeopardizing our workforce. AI can assist in preventing cyber attacks and enhancing infrastructure monitoring, just to name a few of its capabilities. Staying informed on the newest and greatest innovations in technology must remain a top priority for NACo leadership and for members as technology becomes an increasingly integral part of the operations of county government.

Sustainability - Meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs is the essence of sustainability. It is important that counties create policies that balance economic development with environmental protections. Being mindful of how importance of clean air and fresh water impact the health of our residents should be a top priority. We can achieve that by encouraging communities to reduce waste, reuse materials and recycle when appropriate. NACo's commitment to providing resources and tools for more sustainable counties will certainly benefit county efficiencies as well as the health of our residents.

Engagement - Membership engagement is paramount to the continued success of NACo. Regular communication with members, especially new members, through webinars and opportunities to share with NACo best practices from their county fosters a sense of belonging and reinforce that every member has valuable contributions to offer. Checking in via phone calls or emails can make a significant difference in making members feel valued. I am proud to be a NACo Ambassador which welcomes new members and first-time attendees to our Legislative and Annual Conference and look forward to continuing with these kinds of events to

enhance our new member engagement.

What do you consider to have been your most important contributions to the National Association of Counties to date? What do you consider to have been your most important contributions to your state association of counties?

I have demonstrated my passion for county government and NACo through the various positions I have held over the last several years. I have contributed to NACo's mission by participating in countless educational sessions at conferences as a panelist and moderator and have been asked to participate in focus groups across the country. As a long standing and active member of LUCC and the Justice and Public Safety Committee, I've contributed to several policy initiatives that have helped to shape the policies of NACo.

As a founding member of NextGen NACo, I'm very proud that we initiated the community service component at the Annual Conference whereby NACo members have partnered with nonprofits to assist in various activities such as packing care packages and cleaning a domestic violence shelter. As president of Women of NACo (WON), I'm proud to have initiated a joint meeting with WON and the Congressional Women's Caucus to discuss issues we can champion together.

As a board member of the National Organization of Black County Officials (NOBCO) for 12 years, I've hosted two NOBCO Economic Development Conferences in Wayne County, bringing together hundreds of NACo members to discuss the importance of economic development in our respective communities. One of my proudest achievements as a NACo member was introducing my commission colleagues

20 NACo Second Vice Presidential Election

25 MEET THE CANDIDATES

**Bob Dixon**

Presiding Commissioner
Greene County, Mo.

Why are you interested in serving as a NACo officer?

When I first came to NACo as a new county official at my own expense 6 years ago, I was deeply impressed with the organization, the people, and the far-reaching effectiveness that had been attained by such a dedicated group of local elected officials. I immediately implemented changes in our budget, encouraged active participation in NACo steering committees, webinars and conferences. I was also appointed to the Finance, Pensions & Intergovernmental Affairs Steering Committee. Two years later, I was elected to represent Missouri on the NACo Board of Directors.

I love this organization, and I am dedicated to its continued and constant quality improvement. I want to ensure we are even stronger financially and even more effective relationally

in all of our efforts. I will leverage the friendships I built with those now in Congress through 16 years in the Missouri legislature to enhance our effectiveness even more on Capitol Hill. I'd also like to utilize my award-winning, inclusive, bipartisan approach to leadership to help further unify our organization even more and enhance that effectiveness and grow our membership further. I aim to use the same direct outreach approach used with the Missouri Association of Counties to grow NACo membership and take us to the next level.

What do you consider to be the two or three most important challenges facing NACo in the near future on which the Officers/Executive Committee/Board of Directors should focus? Why?

NACo has been effective and successful because we have maintained our bipartisanship and balance in every area and worked to enhance relationships and respect on Capitol Hill. We must continue to enhance that legacy of working together for a united and unified mission that benefits all counties.

Given the new administration, and particularly the climate which must now be navigated, we must work even harder to enhance and deepen the respect we have obtained

on the Hill and the reputation we have earned for effectiveness and professionalism. We must strive to maintain our balance in every way, and work to prevent any type of ultra partisanship or ideological inflexibility from contaminating our ranks, pulling us apart and diluting our effectiveness.

The continued effort to enhance NACo's fiscal soundness, and financial capacity must be a primary focus if we are to continue our record of achievement and leverage the organization for increased growth in the future. I also believe a direct approach to membership growth via outreach to states, counties and affiliate organizations is an area which needs fresh focus. These must all be organization-wide efforts inspired by focused leadership at the officer and board levels if we are to maintain our quality and impact and grow even further.

What do you consider to have been your most important contributions to the National Association of Counties to date? What do you consider to have been your most important contributions to your state association of counties?

Starting from my determination to be involved, beginning with my very first NACo event,

I was grateful to be appointed and actively serve on the Finance, Pensions, and Intergovernmental Affairs Steering Committee for the last five years. I also appreciated the appointment by NACo Past President Judge Gary Moore to the NACo Broadband Task Force after I saw that Missouri was not initially represented and given the matter is such a vital issue in our primarily rural state. Not only did I serve on the Task Force, but I traveled to numerous Missouri counties and held public forums with interested citizens, county leaders, and broadband providers in an effort to sort out local needs and take that feedback to the Task Force. Our report was spectacular, and it has produced results across the nation as the new BEAD funding is rolled out.

My service on the NACo Board of Directors the last four years has given me insights as to our ongoing financial and relational strengths and areas where we could become even stronger. I have worked to enhance NACo membership through the Missouri Association of Counties, including travel to other counties in order to encourage membership and participation in our webinars, steering committees, and conferences. I would commit to further developing this direct outreach approach with other states, counties and affiliate organizations.

What measures would you recommend to increase and retain NACo membership and to encourage broad participation in NACo by elected officials and employees of NACo member counties? What specific role would you be willing to assume to help build and sustain membership in NACo?

I have found that leveraging respected, long-built relationships across Missouri, speaking at gatherings, and direct outreach via phone, email and travel for face-to-face meetings, to have enhanced NACo membership and participation in our state. Missouri participation is now at some of our best levels ever. We can replicate this across the nation and even go direct to employees to show them the benefits to them of NACo participation.

Additionally, enhanced and direct outreach to affiliate organizations that have not filled their board seats on the NACo Board of Directors could improve participation, effectiveness, data and advocacy outcomes and provide the benefit of greater effectiveness of the board, steering committees and entire membership. I would welcome the opportunity to do this nationally in similar fashion to what we've done in Missouri.

NACo second vice presidential election to be held in July at Annual Conference

From BELL page 4

to the Stepping Up Initiative which resulted in our county creating a Behavioral Health Initiative and ultimately establishing a Behavioral Health unit in our Probate Court.

The Wayne County Commission is a dynamic, diverse board with 15 members. That said, I am proud that our board has been very active in the Michigan Association of Counties (MAC) participating in committees and leadership roles. As we divide our association participation among our commissioners, I'm proud

to support and encourage my board members who participate in MAC, which now is led by our very own Wayne County Commissioner, Melissa Daub, as MAC President. MAC has been an integral part of important legislation in our state and I'm so proud to have their support.

What measures would you recommend to increase and retain NACo membership and to encourage broad participation in NACo by elected officials and employees of NACo

member counties? What specific role would you be willing to assume to help build and sustain membership in NACo?

NACo is only as strong as its membership, and it is vital that our members understand the value and resources that NACo brings to them and their county. We must continue with our advocacy efforts, services and innovative programs providing valuable information that other counties can implement. We must also identify what barriers might exist that prevent county officials from being involved. Whether it's cost, time, or not

understanding NACo's value, we must address those barriers so that more county officials participate and feel welcomed.

I would recommend conducting virtual information sessions on each of the steering committees so that new and potential members understand the goals of those committees. I would also create a mentorship program pairing new members with a seasoned NACo member to help them navigate through all the amazing opportunities that NACo offers. Leveraging technology to assist members and creating a portal for members to share

best practices is also a way to increase member engagement. Ensuring that every member and potential member has a voice and a safe place to discuss policies that matter with them and their community is key to our continued success.

Counties across the country face many challenges, regardless of size or geographic location. However, by actively listening to member concerns, learning from one another and fostering collaboration, we can strengthen NACo's role as being the premiere advocacy organization for counties nationwide.

DC conference set for March 1-4

From CONFERENCE page 1

As of Feb. 10, more than 2,000 attendees were registered to attend the 2025 conference, about three weeks before the conference begins. County officials will choose from more than 100 sessions and get a chance to hear from more than 300 speakers.

County officials will also meet with their counterparts to share solutions on topics ranging from disaster preparedness and affordable housing to infrastructure investments and immigration and much more.

Some of the highlights include:

Members of NACo's 10 policy steering committees will gather March 1 to hammer out policy proposals that will be voted on March 2 by the NACo Board of Directors.

On March 2, members of the Large Urban County Caucus will hear from Rep. Johnny Olszewski (D-Md.), a former Baltimore County executive and other speakers. Also on March 2, the Rural Action Caucus will hear from Chris Estes, co-executive director of the Aspen Institute as well as others.

The inaugural meeting of the Midsize County Caucus on March 2 will bring together county leaders to discuss challenges and opportunities facing midsize counties across the nation. This session will focus on establishing key priorities and

objectives to guide the caucus's efforts in advocating for the unique needs of midsize communities.

NACo launched its First 100 Days membership series in January to provide timely updates and analysis on key federal developments impacting counties. For the first time, NACo is hosting the popular series in person during the Legislative Conference, on March 3, offering direct engagement on federal funding, regulations and intergovernmental partnerships. Attendees are welcome to join the meeting for in-depth discussions on how these changes shape county priorities and operations.

Attendees will also get a chance to meet with federal agency representatives at a Federal Agency Expo on March 3. A resource center featuring new NACo publications on a variety of topics will also be available throughout the four-day conference.

County officials can also meet with NACo Edge staff to find out about their programs (*see story, right*).

The conference will culminate with NACo members mobilizing to advance legislative priorities on Capitol Hill and at federal agencies, including a Capitol Hill press conference on disaster reform. **CN**



For the full schedule and more details, please visit: naco.org/event/2025-naco-legislative-conference

2025 NACo LEGISLATIVE CONFERENCE SCHEDULE-AT-A-GLANCE

FRIDAY, FEB. 28: CIO forum (pre-conference event)

SATURDAY, MARCH 1: First Time Attendee Breakfast, policy steering committee meetings and NACo governance meetings

SUNDAY, MARCH 2: NACo caucuses (Large Urban County Caucus, Rural Action Caucus, Gulf States); NACo affiliate and affinity meetings; newly formed exploratory committees (Southwest Border Counties Forum, Great Lakes Counties Forum, Mid-Size Caucus); reception hosted by LUCC and RAC, open to all

MONDAY, MARCH 3: General Session, Board of Directors meeting, Federal Agency Expo

TUESDAY, MARCH 4: General Session, Capitol Hill Press Conference on Disaster Reform, closing reception

SPONSORED CONTENT

GAME-CHANGING SOLUTIONS FOR COUNTIES: EXPLORE NACo EDGE AT THE LEGISLATIVE CONFERENCE



Counties today are tackling big challenges — tight budgets, workforce demands and the need for more efficient services. **NACo EDGE**, the enterprise arm of the National Association of Counties (NACo), helps counties navigate these challenges by leveraging the collective strength of **3,069 counties and 3.6 million employees**. Through strategic partnerships and cost-saving initiatives, NACo EDGE delivers solutions that improve **performance, purchasing, and people**.

How NACo EDGE supports counties

NACo EDGE offers **seven key programs** designed to support county governments:

- **Retirement Planning:** A partnership with **Nationwide Retirement Solutions** provides county employees with **deferred compensation plans and financial planning tools** to help them save for the future.
- **Cooperative Purchasing:** **Public Promise Procurement (PPP)** streamlines purchasing with **peer-vetted contracts for elevators and escalators, public safety solutions,**



equipment rentals and more.

- **Healthcare & Financial Benefits: Public Promise Insurance (PPI)** can help counties **cut prescription drug plan costs by 15-20%** and offers student debt repayment assistance through SAVI.
- **Financial Strategy & Budgeting:** NACo EDGE partners with **three+one** and **ClearGov** to provide **liquidity analysis, budgeting, and strategic planning tools** for counties.
- **Leadership & Mental Health Training:** Programs in partnership with the **National Council for Mental Wellbeing** and the **Professional Development Academy** support leadership development and mental health awareness.

Visit the NACo EDGE Solutions Center

Heading to NACo's **annual Legislative Conference (March 1-4 in Washington, D.C.)**? Make sure to stop by the **NACo EDGE Solutions Center** to chat with experts, explore county-focused solutions and enjoy **coffee and**

giveaways while networking with peers.

Put your knowledge to the test at the NACo EDGE game show workshop

For a fun, interactive way to learn about NACo EDGE, join the **game show-themed workshop on Sunday, March 2, from 1:45-2:45 PM in Columbia 9 and 10 (Terrace Level, Hilton)**.

- What to expect:
- **A fast-paced, interactive game show-style game**
 - **Insights on NACo EDGE programs and how they benefit counties**
 - **Prizes, desserts and a chance to win!**

This session is designed to be both educational and entertaining, giving attendees practical takeaways while having some fun.

Whether you're looking for ways to streamline procurement, strengthen your workforce, or enhance financial planning, NACo EDGE offers tools and strategies to help counties succeed. Join us in D.C. and explore how your county can benefit!



Special Opportunity:
Counties with **fewer than 50,000 residents** can **apply for free** during the Early Bird submission period.



2025 NACo ACHIEVEMENT AWARDS

CELEBRATING
55 YEARS OF
INNOVATION

**EARLY BIRD
SUBMISSION DEADLINE:**

March 3, 2025 at
11:59 p.m. ET

SUBMISSIONS DEADLINE:

March 31, 2025 at
11:59 p.m. ET

**NOTIFICATIONS OF
ACHIEVEMENT AWARDS:**

Early May 2025



HOW TO **APPLY**

Does your county have an innovative program that improves county government and enhances services for county residents? Apply for the 2025 Achievement Awards! There are 18 categories ranging from information technology, health, criminal justice, human services and many more.

To begin your application visit:
www.naco.org/achievementawards

QUESTIONS?

Contact **awards@naco.org**

WORD SEARCH

ST. JOHNS COUNTY, FLA.

Created by Mary Ann Barton

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

FLAGLER: Standard Oil co-founder Henry Flagler built a series of hotels in St. Augustine in the late 19th century.

HISTORY: The county was founded in 1821 and is one of the state's original counties.

JOHN: The county is named for the St. Johns River, the longest river in Florida at 310 miles long.

LIBRARY: The county has a program, "Food for Fines," that allows county library patrons to donate food to a county-run pantry to reduce their library fines.

MUSEUM: The county will help oversee the preconstruction activities of the Florida Museum of Black History located in the county.

NEWSPAPER: The daily local newspaper is the *St. Augustine Record*, founded in 1894.

NORTHEASTERN: The county is located in the northeastern part of Florida.

POPULATION: The county population is about 320,110, as of 2023.

RESTAURANT: The oldest restaurant in the county is the Columbia Restaurant, founded in 1903.

WATER: The county is located between the Atlantic Ocean and the St. Johns River.

AUGUSTINE: The county seat is St. Augustine, founded in 1565.

BEACH: The county picked up 1,000 pounds of trash last at its annual Trash Bash Beach Cleanup.

CREATURE: The movie, "The Creature from the Black Lagoon" was filmed in the county.

FAST: The county was the fastest-growing county in the state 2020 to 2022.

FISHING: There are plenty of fishing opportunities in the county including at the St. Johns County Ocean Pier.

ON THE MOVE

NACo OFFICERS

- First Vice President **JD Clark** and Membership Manager **Priscila Chrappah** attended the Police Jury Association of Louisiana Convention in East Baton Rouge Parish.
- Executive Director **Matt Chase** attended the Association of Indiana Counties Legislative Conference in Marion County and the California State Association of Counties Leadership Forum in San Diego County.

NACo STAFF

- **Shalini Wickramatilake** has joined NACo as the health and human services program director. She previously served as senior advisor in the Office of the Assistant Secretary of the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, Associate Director of Intergovernmental Affairs for the White House Office of National Drug Control Policy. She is pursuing a Doctor of Public Health at Johns Hopkins University, where she earned a Master of Health Science degree. She earned a Bachelor of Arts in International Affairs from George Washington University.
- Legislative Director **Brett Mattson** attended the National Sheriffs' Association Winter Conference in Washington, D.C.



Wickramatilake
 in International Affairs from George Washington University.



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

PROFESSIONALS:
Keep Your Career on the Move

- **POST** a resume or anonymous career profile that leads employers to you
- **SEARCH** and apply to hundreds of new jobs on the spot by using robust filters
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20
25

LEGISLATIVE CONFERENCE

MARCH 1-4 WASHINGTON, D.C.



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www.naco.org/leg

PROFILES IN SERVICE



JOSHUA PEDROZO

NACo Board Member
Merced County, Calif.
Supervisor

Number of years active in NACo: I have been active in

NACo since I first got elected in 2020. Starting with the High Performance Leadership Academy, then as a member of the NACo Ag Policy and Rural Affairs Policy committee, vice chair of the committee and now chair.

Years in public service:

Prior to becoming a member of the Merced County Board of Supervisors, I served nine years on the Merced City Council, I will complete my first term as Board Member in December and was re-elected to the Board to serve my second term.

Occupation: Prior to becoming a Board member, I was a high school United States history teacher.

Education: Bachelor of Science in Agriculture Business Finance from Cal Poly San Luis Obispo and



Baseball great Willie Mays meets with then-President Obama in 2009. White House photo by Pete Souza

master's in public administration from Golden Gate University.

The hardest thing I've ever done: My first triathlon in 2007

in Philadelphia. I know how to swim, but not like that. I can ride a bike and run but not like that. Hard, but incredibly rewarding.

A dream I have is to: Continue to be a leader that people trust to be accountable, responsive and a difference maker.

You'd be surprised to learn that: I once had to spend the night in Penn Station in New York City because the concert I went to, the White Stripes, went longer than we anticipated, and we missed our train back to Philadelphia. The show was worth the scare.

The most adventurous thing I've ever done is: In 2006, my now wife and I decided to quit our jobs, pack up our belongings and head to live in Philadelphia with our close friends. We had no jobs, a little bit of money but decided to figure it out as we went. When we got there, we both got jobs working at a visa backlog center, processing labor visas for immigrants wanting to come into the country. It was definitely an adventure that I am glad I had the opportunity to have and took a chance.

My favorite way to relax is: Go to the beach or spend time with my family.

I'm most proud of: My family.

Every morning I read: CalMatters, Digital News Clippings from CSAC, local newspapers and emails.

My favorite meal is: Pizza

My pet peeve is: Singing the Happy Birthday song.

My motto is: I really have two, one is Get Stuff Done; that was taught to me by a colleague when

Three people (living or dead) I'd invite to dinner:
Pope John Paul II,
Willie Mays,
Barack Obama

I first got elected, and the other one is more of a quote from Harry Truman, "It's amazing how much work you can get done if you don't care who gets the credit."

The last book I read was: "The Nineties," by Chuck Klosterman

My favorite movie is: "The Godfather"

My favorite music is: Alternative rock

My favorite U.S. president is: Bill Clinton

My county is a NACo member because: Regardless of where you are in the country, or if you have a big county or small county, we are all dealing with similar issues. It is important to have a large network of people who have similar interests and who are passionate about wanting to serve the people of their counties. Not very many people get to do what we do, so it's a great opportunity to network and pick up on best practices.

GET TO KNOW...

Scott County, Illinois

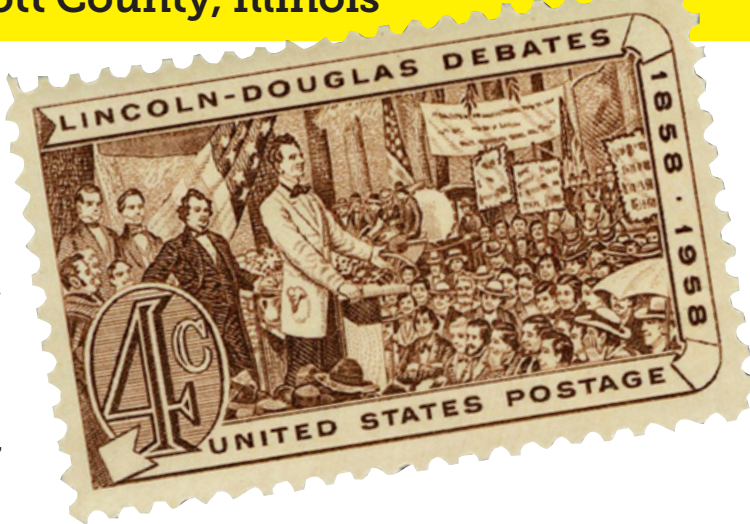
by Meredith Moran
staff writer

Founded in 1839, Scott County, Ill. is named for American Revolutionary War Gen. Charles Scott. Many of its residents emigrated to the state from a county of the same name in Kentucky, where Scott was governor from 1808 to 1812.

Scott County, Ill. has a population of about 4,700, the fourth-least populous county in the state, according to the 2020 census.

The county seat of Winchester is where Abraham Lincoln gave his first speech against the Kansas-Nebraska Act, which repealed the Missouri Compromise and opened the door for the expansion of slavery. U.S. Sen. Stephen A. Douglas, a Scott County native, introduced the bill.

Lincoln declared in his speech, "We shall have so saved it [from slavery], that the millions of free happy people, the world over, shall rise up, and call us blessed to the latest generation." He repeated the statement during his better-known



speech against the act in Peoria, Ill., which is considered to have resurrected his political career.

Lincoln's Winchester speech was given at the Scott County Courthouse, during a county convention for the Whig party. It marked his reentry into politics after five years of retirement.

In 1860, Lincoln was elected as the 16th president of the United States, with the Civil War starting the following year. Lincoln signed the 13th amendment in 1865, making the Kansas-Nebraska Act moot, freeing the remaining millions of enslaved Black people in the country and banning slavery forever.

Visitors to the county can also tour the Old School

Museum in Winchester, which houses local historical artifacts, including Native American arrowheads and tools; early electronics including phonographs, cameras and recording devices; early forms of transportation including wagons, carriages and a barn-storming biplane and a collection of early agriculture tools and machinery.

Notable Scott County natives include Greene Vardiman Black, the father of operative dentistry (who has a statue in his honor in Chicago's Lincoln Park), and labor law scholar Clyde Wilson Summers, who was once considered the country's leading expert on union democracy.

Get to Know features new NACo member counties.

SAVE THE DATES

Upcoming NACo Conferences

2025 Western Interstate Region (WIR) Conference

May 20-23
Pennington County, S.D.



2025 NACo Annual Conference & Exposition

July 11-14
City and County of Philadelphia, Pa.



NACo Fall Board of Directors Meeting

December 4-6, 2025
Wise County, Texas



BRIGHT IDEAS | CLARK COUNTY, NEV.

Where Millions Say I Do: Clark County Celebrates Wedding Capital Status

PROBLEM:

People come from near and far to Clark County, Nev. to get married.

SOLUTION:

Preserve the history of its status as the Wedding Capital of the World with a museum telling the stories of the couples who get married there.

by **Meredith Moran**
staff writer

A sea of white dresses and veils, show dancers, an Elvis impersonator, a Family Guy voice actor officiant — in traditional Vegas fashion, there was a lot going on — but amid all the flash, the nearly 300 couples who attended Clark County, Nev.’s vow renewal celebration only had eyes for each other.

“You have all come here today with something in common — you are married,” said actor Patrick Warburton, the event’s officiant. “The fact that you’re here today shows that you haven’t just promised to live your marriage in an honorable estate, you have walked the walk.”

Diana and Charles Printzen got married at Las Vegas’ infamous Little White Wedding Chapel in 2022. The couple jumped at the opportunity to come back to Vegas to retie the knot, Diana said.

“I think that love is the one thing we can all give, so that [vow] renewal ceremony, we couldn’t help it,” Diana said. “We wanted to be part of the love. We would get married over and over again, but there’s something special about getting married in Vegas. There’s a love in Vegas that you can’t find anywhere else in the world.”

JJ and Bill Snyder, who are now Clark County residents, had their 2009 wedding on a farm, but have always felt a special connection to Vegas. When the couple first started dating, they would often go to

Vegas, and it was where their “romance could come alive,” JJ said. While Vegas is dubbed “Sin City,” the vow renewal event represented that sense of romance and was a testament to the beauty of evolving together as a couple, JJ said.

“Being in a room of other couples and celebrating love and celebrating partnership, it was really inspirational,” JJ said. “You had couples of all ages and at different stages of their life — it was really wholesome.”

“And I don’t think that’s always what you think of when you think of ‘Las Vegas’ — you think of debauchery — but I was like ‘Wow, there are a lot of people who have strong partnerships and are celebrating their union.’ It was very cool.”

The event was hosted by the Clark County Clerk’s Office, in celebration of issuing its 5 millionth wedding license and Vegas’ 70-year anniversary of being “The Marriage Capital of the World,” as proclaimed by the London Daily Herald.

“One of the chapels that we work closely with said, ‘Well, it’s not really the 5 millionth wedding license — it’s 5 million love stories, and that’s where the concept came from,’” said Clark County Clerk Lynn Goya. “In Las Vegas, weddings are so much a part of our history, that as a county clerk and the person who’s in charge of permanent public records for the county, that historical aspect really caught my interest, so I started wanting to capture as many of those 5 million love stories as possible.”

The county is working to create a wedding museum or memorial that will feature the stories of couples who have gotten married in Las Vegas, according to Goya. The Clerk’s Office is installing a kiosk at the Harry Reid International Airport for couples to share their stories, and from Feb. 11-25, it’s hosting a pop-up marriage license bureau at the airport.



Diana and Charles Printzen pose with an Elvis Presley impersonator after getting married at the Little White Wedding Chapel in Clark County, Nev.

Last year, around 53 million people visited Clark County, with roughly 4% of them visiting to get married. About 80% of couples who get married in Vegas are not from Nevada, and 20-25% of the out of state population is flying in internationally, so the Clerk’s Office saw it as an opportunity to partner with the airport and make the documentation process of getting married easier for couples, Goya said.

“It’s really fun when people fly in or walk around town in their wedding dress,” Goya said. “They just feel like stars because everybody’s so happy to see them and congratulate them.”

The annual marriage license bureau pop-up initiative launched in 2018 and brought in roughly \$15 million in publicity in its first year alone, according to Goya.

“Everybody just loved it,” Goya said. “The airport loved it. We love it. The couples love it. And it’s just really fun. It’s something that’s totally Vegas and unique to who we are.”

The Printzens are both first-generation Americans, and Vegas represented a movie-magic ideal of an American wedding to them. Diana wore an American flag dress at the vow renewal.

“We wanted to get married again and just celebrate our patriotism for the country that kind of saved our parents — they immigrated after World War II,” Diana said. “And it was just a celebration of love, and to share that with everyone — the ambiance and the love that was felt in that room was just really amazing.”

The couple dated briefly in the 1980s before Diana, a teen at the time, moved to Copenhagen with her mother. She came across Charles’ social media profile decades later, and reached out. After messaging back and forth, they knew they never wanted to spend another moment without each other, Diana said.

“We never forgot each other,” Diana said. “When we reconnected, it was a matter of one

day and he said, ‘Let’s go get married.’ And I said, ‘I agree.’”

A few weeks later, the couple went off to Vegas to get married — a New Year’s Eve wedding — with rings made out of an antique silver spoon.

“He’s my best friend,” Diana said. “I’ve known him forever, we can talk about anything — it’s a genuine love, genuine connection, we can be ourselves. It’s like marrying your childhood best friend — I’ve known him since I was like 8 years old. I used to play with his sister, I know his whole family. We lived on the same street, just like five houses down.”

“We had spiritually gotten married when I was 14, and he was like ‘I’m not going to lose you again.’”

Before the vow renewal, there was a brunch and a “Vegas through the decades” show, featuring performances that represented something someone would see in Vegas in each decade since it had been crowned as a wedding capital, according to JJ Snyder. After retying the knot, the couples had a champagne toast and were served a replica of the cake from Elvis and Priscilla Presley’s iconic Vegas wedding, made by Carlo’s Bakery (from the reality television show “Cake Boss”).

Couples came from all over the world to attend the event. Celebrating the county’s status as the wedding capital of the world not only helps boost tourism, but it’s also part of preserving its history, Goya said.

“Every love story is an interesting story,” Goya said. “And every one of them are really part of Las Vegas history and part of what helped turn a dusty frontier town that was all Western into the Las Vegas that we know and love today.” **CN**

Clark County’s program earned a 2024 NACo Achievement Award in the Arts, Culture and Historic Preservation category.

NEWS FROM ACROSS THE NATION



GEORGIA

Every day, **DEKALB COUNTY** dispatchers are busy with call after call, so county leaders say a new program utilizing **nurse navigators** is helping them determine which calls are the highest priority, WSB-TV reported. "As for 2024, we had more than 700,000 911 calls alone," Dekalb County E911 Director

Carina Swain said.

Nurse navigators allow dispatchers to send calls that are not high-priority calls to nurses who are ready to answer. "This allows us to connect the right resource at the right time," said Gerad Troutman, medical director of Global Medical Response, the parent company of DeKalb County's ambulance service.



KENTUCKY

Applications are open for **KENTON COUNTY's** annual Trash for Cash program, which allows nonprofit organizations, schools, churches, and civic groups to earn \$100 per mile by **cleaning up designated roadways**, the *Northern Kentucky Tribune* reported. The program helps keep the county clean while offering a unique fundraising opportunity. Eligible groups can apply online or by paper, and after completing the cleanup, they'll receive a check based on the miles covered.

ALASKA

The **DENALI BOROUGH's Community Wildfire Protection Plans** recently received support from 15 parties, reflecting strong collaboration during a 12-month planning process. Community input was gathered through meetings at various locations and virtual platforms, where residents shared concerns, defined boundaries and set priorities. The plan was approved unanimously by the Borough Assembly.

Selected inmates will work with the nonprofit to train and care for puppies that will become support dogs for service members. The program first launched in 2019 but was paused due to the pandemic.

NEW JERSEY

SOMERSET COUNTY's Volunteer Services and AARP have teamed up to offer a **free Tax-Aide program** to help residents, especially older adults, those with disabilities and lower-income individuals, prepare their federal and New Jersey tax returns, Tap Into Basking Ridge reported.

"Most of us aren't tax experts, so we might miss deductions or credits for things like buying an

electric car or turning 65," said Commissioner Paul Drake. "We want to help residents take advantage of available breaks, so we've brought in the Tax-Aide team to offer free tax preparation through April 15."

Volunteers, who are trained, certified by the IRS, and background-checked, will review and file both federal and state returns electronically for faster refunds.

NEW YORK

• **WARREN COUNTY** has completed a draft **Outdoor Recreation Economy Strategic Plan**. The Warren County Planning Department and a team of outdoor recreation planners led the initiative.

The goal of the strategic plan is to provide a county-wide perspective on outdoor recreation priorities for county government and its many municipal, busi-

ness and nonprofit partners. The plan identifies the current status of outdoor recreation opportunities, economic impact and assets in the County, and provides guidance on how to make it better based on the input of many community partners.

• **SUFFOLK COUNTY** Executive Ed Romaine announced Jan. 27 that the County is accepting applications for the **Down Payment Assistance Program**, offering eligible first-time homebuyers up to \$30,000 toward the purchase of a single-family home, provided they live in the property for at least 10 years, TBR NewsMedia reported.

Launched in 1993, the program aims to help young professionals and first-time buyers

KANSAS

The **SEDGWICK COUNTY** Zoo has **adopted a dog**, Slinky, a brindle mix, from the Kansas Humane Society, to help raise a maned wolf cub, Amora, whose mother died, KSN-TV reported. According to the zoo, as per the Species Survival Plan, Amora will eventually transition to living with other maned wolves. Slinky will then retire with one of the county zoo employees who has fallen "head over heels in love with him."



From NEWS FROM page 14

achieve homeownership, with the assistance covering part of the down payment, while buyers are responsible for the remainder and closing costs. Last year, the program helped fund six home purchases, totaling \$162,000 in assistance.

NORTH CAROLINA

WAKE COUNTY EMS has launched the **Medication for Opioid Use Disorder (MOUD) program**, equipping Advanced Practice Paramedics with buprenorphine to treat patients affected by opioid use disorder. Buprenorphine helps prevent overdose and eases withdrawal symptoms for 18-24 hours, aiding in breaking the cycle of addiction.

When paramedics respond to suspected opioid-related incidents, they screen patients and can administer the medication on-site if eligible. Commissioner Cheryl Stallings praised the program as an innovative, empathetic solution, while Dr. Andrew Godfrey, associate medical director, emphasized that opioid use disorder is a disease that can be treated just like other conditions, reducing stigma and improving access to care.

OHIO

CLERMONT COUNTY's Park District has launched a **free hiking gear loan program** at Clingman Park to make outdoor adventure more accessible, WVXU-FM reported. The initiative offers backpacks, sleeping bags, cooking stoves and field guides at no cost, helping to reduce the financial barrier to activities like camping and backpacking, which can be expensive.

With nine backpacks available in various sizes, the program caters to people of all experience levels. Community Engagement Manager Kara Luggen explained that many people are deterred by the upfront costs, like a \$200-\$300 backpack, and shared the story of a mom concerned about the costs of supporting her son's new outdoor hobby.

TEXAS

WILLIAMSON COUNTY



PENNSYLVANIA

ALLEGHENY COUNTY held its first design contest for the "I Voted" sticker to be distributed during the 2025 and 2026 elections. Mt. Lebanon High School sophomore Molly Bozick's winning entry combined the Pittsburgh skyline, elements from the city and U.S. flag and celebrates the local "Pittsburghese" dialect.

took a significant step in combating **human trafficking** with the recent launch of its Child Sex Trafficking Care Coordination initiative, the county announced. The program ensures that every child survivor of sex trafficking has access to compassionate, community-based services tailored to their needs.

The launch event at the Williamson County Children's Advocacy Center featured speeches from Judge Stacey

Mathews and Sheriff Matthew Lindemann, who emphasized the urgent need for collective action. The Care Coordination Team, led by Unbound Now's Kaylee Wolf, is committed to providing wrap-around services, safety and long-term support for survivors.

UTAH

• **WASATCH COUNTY and SUMMIT COUNTY Search and Rescue** teams responded to a snowmobile accident Feb. 2, involving a man in his 50s who fell into a vertical mine shaft leaving him stranded 20 feet below, KPCW-FM reported. First responders from a high angle technical rope rescue team helped pull him out, and he was flown to the hospital, though his condition was not immediately known.

VIRGINIA

• **FAIRFAX COUNTY** is celebrating **Black History Month** with a number of activities and events including a concert by Black Opry Revue at a local county community center. "Country music has been made by and loved by Black people since its conception," the county noted. "Country, blues, folk and Americana music over-

lap or are woven together by a proper revue of Black country music artists from around the country."

• Jacqueline Smith, the **PRINCE WILLIAM COUNTY Circuit Court Clerk**, hosted the 7th Annual Valentine's Day Bash Feb. 14, at a local arts center, offering couples the chance to exchange vows in an elegant civil ceremony. The inclusive celebration unites couples from all backgrounds and traditions, with couples walking down an aisle adorned with rose petals and exchanging vows beneath an arch. After the ceremony, couples enjoy photo stations, refreshments and thoughtful gifts from local businesses.

WISCONSIN

The **MILWAUKEE COUNTY Zoo** is closing its aviary amid concerns over the **bird flu**, Spectrum News 1 reported.

Officials said the closure of the aviary is a precautionary measure and that it will be closed "for the foreseeable future." It comes after dozens of birds were found dead on the Chicago shores of Lake Michigan.

Seven red-breasted mergansers have been admitted to the Wisconsin Humane Society Wildlife Rehabilitation Center with symptoms consistent with the bird flu. Milwaukee County Zoo said it wants to protect its avian population from a similar fate.

Wisconsin had its first positive human case of bird flu last December in **BARRON COUNTY**, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention confirmed.

Bird flu has been in circulation among wild and domestic birds in North American since December 2021. The virus is highly contagious and often fatal for poultry. It's caused by influenza type A viruses and is spread by contact with infected birds, wild birds or their droppings, equipment or clothing worn by people working with animals.

Do you have news to share? Send your news tips, releases and photos to Mary Ann Barton: mbarton@naco.org.



CASS COUNTY, MICHIGAN

The Cass County, Mich. seal was designed in the 1980s by longtime Cassopolis resident Vivian Purkhiser at the county's request.

Her design centers on a gold compass featuring five graphics that portray Cass County. The county was formed in 1829 and named after Lewis Cass, Michigan's territorial governor and Secretary of War under Andrew Jackson.

A log cabin pays homage to Cass County's history and iconic Log Cabin Museum, which features historic tools, dollhouses, a bird collection, household items, a Civil War collection and many other items related to the early history of Cass County.



Two sailboats illustrate the many water sports available on the county's more than 200 lakes

A recreational vehicle depicts many camping opportunities

A tall stalk of corn pays tribute to the county's agricultural character

A large hog represents the county's livestock contributions to the United States.

Would you like to see your seal featured in County News? Contact Charlie Ban at cban@naco.org.



UTAH

• Once reliant on coal, rural **CARBON COUNTY** is attempting to **diversify its**

economy by attracting tourists to its museums, outdoor activities and cultural history, KSL-TV reported. The office has created a "Discover the Corridor" series on YouTube that will spread the word to fellow Utahns and out-of-staters, as well, about all there is to do in the county.



Student loan benefit for Counties, Cities, Towns, and all Government Employees



Savi Overview

Savi is the leading social impact company helping student loan borrowers manage repayment and apply for federal programs. Programs like income-driven repayment and PSLF can lower monthly payments but the paperwork is complicated. Savi's free assessment tool and digital application simplifies work for members, while partners track impact & engagement data on a custom dashboard.

Savi Impact

Average Savi users save over \$2,000/yr on their student loan payments and Savi has found over \$3 billion in projected loan forgiveness. Savi works with some of the largest organizations around the country.



Partners

Savi partners with organizations to deliver a cutting edge student loan platform that is easy to implement, scalable, and impact-driven technology. Partners can access a unique dashboard to track impact and get a revenue share.

Members

Average users find over \$2,000 a year in savings with Savi. The online platform assesses their unique repayment options, and digitizes all the paperwork to make the process as simple and accessible as possible. Savi can help members with debt for themselves or their children, and can be made available to family members.

Features



Customized Microsite



Educational Resources



1:1 Support With Student Loan Experts



Partner Dashboard



Integration Options Via API



Measure Impact

To learn more about Savi, email:

Tony@bysavi.com

Leading professionals trust Savi on student debt.

The Savi Impact

Improve Engagement

Boost Financial Health

Support Members