



NCGM: PROGRESS ON 'CONNECTING THE UNCONNECTED.' PG. 4



REPORT: FEDS NEED TO CLARIFY IMMIGRATION POLICIES. PG. 7



HOUSING COSTS TIED TO POOR HEALTH, STUDY SAYS. PG. 9



Volunteers race to stave off floodwaters by sandbagging along Old U.S. Highway 275 in Dodge County, Neb. Photo by Kent Sievers/The World-Herald; used with permission

IOWA VIDEOS MAKE CASE FOR FUNDING

by **Charlie Ban**
senior writer

In the fight for long-term funding for mental health services, Iowa counties are recruiting supporters from the general public.

Mary Neubauer does it pretty well.

"Where can we go? Who can he see to get the help that he needed?" she asks about her son, Sergei, who died from suicide in 2017. "Most of the time they simply didn't know."

Neubauer is one of a handful of Iowans who appear in the Iowa State Association of Counties (ISAC) videos advocating for mental health funding. They have gone out to an audience that includes new Gov. Kim Reynolds (R), who retweeted one of the videos shortly after her inauguration.

Mental health advocates, county supervisors and sheriffs, such as Marion County's Jason Sandholdt, pose tough questions to the viewer, which ISAC hopes will translate into pressure on the Legislature.

"What do you tell those parents right now? What do you tell them? That three years from now, we hope to have a better system for you?" Sandholdt asks. "You see these loved ones that are impacted and it just breaks your heart. We can do better."

Iowa counties provide and pay for non-Medicaid services for mental health and disabilities, but since 2013 have been sorted

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Midwest counties brace for continued flooding

by **Rachel Looker**
staff writer

Counties in the Midwest can't seem to catch a break.

The historic flooding that

killed at least four people is expected to continue through May, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) reported.

Flooding in the area has already devastated infrastructure, washed away bridges and closed roads in many counties.

"It's going to take a while to recover from this," said Doug-

las County, Neb. Commissioner Mary Ann Borgeson, who serves as NACo's first vice president. "Infrastructure was a problem prior to this and now it's just added to the burden of what we already had here."

County and state officials declared disasters and issued evacuation orders as waters rose after Winter Storm Ulmer

transformed into a "bomb cyclone" mid-March, according to the National Weather Service. The storm's impact was felt in Nebraska, Iowa, South Dakota, Wisconsin, Minnesota and other bordering states. According to The Weather Channel, 42 locations reached historic flooding

County declares emergency to stem measles outbreak in New York

by **Mary Ann Barton**
editor

Hoping to stop a growing measles outbreak, Rockland County, N.Y. has declared a state of emergency, barring unvaccinated minors from public places. The New York City metro area county of 300,000 west of

the Hudson River has confirmed 153 cases of measles since October, with 48 in 2019.

"We have the worst outbreak of the measles in the nation and great challenges call for bold action," Day said at a news conference held March 26. "This is a public health crisis, and it is time to sound the alarm and take the

appropriate action that, while it may be the first in the nation, is necessary to address the crisis right here in Rockland."

Measles can lead to pneumonia or encephalitis. The ban includes public spaces, schools, restaurants, businesses, public

Midwest counties face damage to roads, bridges and homes due to severe flooding

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levels. The region experienced record snowfall this season with certain areas receiving 20 to 40 inches above normal totals, according to the National Weather Service. Storm systems brought rainfall to areas with saturated and frozen soil, leading to runoff from snowmelt that caused widespread flooding in the area. The upper Mississippi and Red River of the North basins have received precipitation this spring up to 200 percent above normal, according to NOAA. The areas at greatest risk for flooding are in the upper, middle and lower Mississippi River

basins. "This is shaping up to be a potentially unprecedented flood season, with more than 200 million people at risk for flooding in their communities," said Ed Clark, the director of NOAA's National Water Center.

NOAA predicts above average spring rain and snow, which will result in flooding that will continue through May.

President Trump approved Nebraska's expedited request for federal disaster assistance and Iowa's request for an expedited disaster declaration after Vice President Pence visited both states to survey the damage. Iowa Governor Kim Reynolds estimated nearly \$1.7 billion in

damage in the state while the flooding in Nebraska is estimated to be around \$1.4 billion in damage, *The New York Times* reported.

In Nebraska, the devastation has been widespread across the state, with the northeast quadrant as one of the hardest hit areas, said Larry Dix, the executive director at the Nebraska Association of Counties.

The biggest issue facing counties in Nebraska is the damage to infrastructure from floodwaters, he said, adding that the state has many miles of river that run out of the Rocky Mountains.

Borgeson witnessed the damage firsthand in Douglas County.

"We had rescues going on for quite some time to get folks out that didn't get out right away or couldn't get out right away," she said.

Floodwaters completely wiped out bridges and homes and two Douglas County nursing homes had to be evacuated, she said.

According to Borgeson, organizations like the American Red Cross, the Salvation Army and volunteers from churches, community centers, businesses and employees from the county have pitched in to help those affected by the disaster. The Humane Society is working to take care of animals that have been displaced, she noted.

"It is absolutely mindboggling and heartwarming at the same time how people within the community and county pull together at a time of disaster," Borgeson said.

There will be a long-term impact from the flooding for both the farming and ranching world, Borgeson predicted.

She credits the county's uni-

fied command center for coordinating the disaster situation with communities impacted by the flooding. The command center encompasses fire, rescue, police and sheriff units.

Central Nebraska's Custer County received 12 inches of snow before being hit with rain and frost. County Highway Superintendent Chis Jacobsen said the damage from the flooding has been the biggest challenge he's experienced in 30 years.

"We have some roads that are still closed. Our first initial point was to get constituents in and out at least in a single lane," he said.

Custer County has 1,800 miles of active roadway and Jacobsen said he does not know of any roads that have not been affected by the weather. Asphalt roads have taken the brunt of the damage because of rapid change in temperatures, he said.

In western Nebraska, Banner County was also hit with 12 inches of snow and 60-70 mph winds. With the warmer weather melting the snow, floodwaters were expected to rise.

Banner County Commissioner Robert Post emphasized that for small counties without large budgets or large tax bases, it is difficult to face the expenses to clear and repair damaged roads.

"We think when we're done, we're going to need \$80,000 to do the repair work," Post said.

It's more than just Nebraska that has been affected by the historic floods. Water started rising in Mills County, Iowa, when a levee was breached at the point where the Missouri River meets the Platt River.

According to Mills County Supervisor Richard Crouch, water came through the breach at approximately 380,000 cubic feet

per second. Crouch said around 680 homes in the county have been affected by the floodwater or have been completely destroyed.

In the county, the City Water Works department filled with six to eight feet of water, causing the water plant to shut down, Crouch said. The county is working to repair the plant.


The biggest problem the county faces is the impact of the flooding on farmland. Crouch described how floodwaters carry sand, debris and cornstalks and leave them in large piles where they take time to dry out.

"There will be a lot of farmers who will not get a crop in and the bad part is a lot of them never got last year's crop in because of wet weather," he said.

Crouch said county residents who were evacuated are being let back in on a road-by-road basis if workers have cleared debris.

"It's taking a day to clean a mile," he said.

Crouch said he does not think Mills County will see the same volume of water as the initial flooding in the upcoming weeks, but said the county may continue to see flooded areas until the river completely recedes back down its banks.

"Hang in there, folks," he said. "We know what you're going through. It's devastating but it will come back to normal if you can stand the pressure of the cleanup that's going to take place." 

Iowa has opened a flood hotline available 24/7 that Iowans can reach by calling 211 or by visiting www.floods2019.iowa.gov. Nebraskans can also go online to www.nebraska.gov/nebraska-strong to request relief.

SNAP/STATS



Photo by Alex Trautwig

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STADIUM	CAPACITY	LOCATION
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Coors Field	50,398	City and County of Denver
Chase Field.....	48,686	Maricopa County (Phoenix)
Globe Life Park	48,114	Tarrant County (Arlington), Texas
Yankee Stadium.....	47,309	Bronx Borough (New York City)

*Oakland-Alameda County Coliseum has a seating capacity of 55,945 for football games; 47,170 for baseball games.

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Unscripted stories sell mental health funding

From IOWA page 1

into regional delivery systems. Their ability to increase funding, however, has been limited since 1996 and county property tax rates for the levy declined between 1996 and 2016 as property valuations increased. In some rural areas, where the population has fallen, regions have the money, but not enough service providers. In growing urban and suburban areas, the population increase outpaces regions' abilities to generate funding.

"Resources aren't in the right place," said Bill Peterson, ISAC's executive director. "They're local, can't be moved and the levy cap keeps counties from raising the revenue they need.

"It hasn't worked out that citizens are better off, and in some cases, providers aren't being paid in a timely fashion, either."

Last year's gubernatorial race, however, opened up an opportunity. The topic of mental health, particularly in an agricultural state dealing with a challenged farm economy, frequently appeared early in speeches by both candidates.

"We knew it would be one of our top priorities and with a governor's race last year that focused on mental health, we knew it would be a priority of the governor — whoever won the office," said Rachel Bennett, ISAC's member relations manager.

ISAC recruited members and residents to help form its message to the Legislature and the public in the video. The association brought in officials from each of the affiliates and groups to discuss what tone they were comfortable setting, the messages they wanted to convey, how they wanted to bring it about.

"We started by eliminating what we didn't want to say," Bennett said. "We didn't want to bring guns into the conversation, we didn't want to be passive. Everyone involved wanted to come out and say 'We have to do this right now. We've been putting it off far too long, let counties do this, they want to take this on.'"

With complex background information on the issue, messag-

ing was a challenge.

"The process of winnowing down the sound bites that you're going to be sending out is very difficult," Peterson said. "If I tried to explain everything back to 1996, they're going to be asleep. So, we focused on making the message understandable, crisp, but having somebody walking away, remembering what they encountered from the message."

The overall message was a request to invest in Iowa's counties, to invest in mental health.

"We wanted to focus on the term 'investment' because it's not just asking for money, it's

asking for things that will be a true investment for the state of Iowa," Peterson said.

Though ISAC and its video production contractor prepped the speakers with questions, they didn't provide a script.

"We came up with questions to really get them to say in their own words what we wanted to hear," Bennett said. "It was amazing to see people who had experienced all of this all say the same things that we wanted to say."

The finishing touch tied the message back to the counties.

"We come back to the point



Marion County, Iowa Sheriff Jason Sandholdt talks about funding mental health care, in a video from ISAC.

— why are counties doing this?" Peterson said. "It's because of people like Mary and Larry who are citizens of the county, and services we could provide would have led to a better outcome for Sergei. Counties need to be re-

leased from the restrictions so they can do their best for their citizens." **CN**

View the videos at <https://www.iowacounties.org/2019/01/mentalhealthmattersia/>.

New York county's measles outbreak started in October 2018

From MEASLES page 1

transit and houses of worship.

Law enforcement, however, will not patrol or ask for vaccination records. Violators will be referred to the Rockland County District Attorney's office.

The county health department, which has administered 17,000 doses of the MMR vaccine since the outbreak started in October 2018, planned to hold a free vaccination clinic.

An earlier executive order sent nearly 6,000 unvaccinated children home from school.

"Every action we have taken since the beginning of this outbreak has been designed to maximize vaccinations and minimize exposures," Day said. He noted that the county's Orthodox Jewish families have been hard hit by measles; he said the ban is not an attempt to infringe on religious rights. Rabbis, local officials and doc-

tors have helped get the word out about the importance of vaccinations in a public health campaign.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has seen six outbreaks in addition to Rockland County's, including 214 confirmed cases in Brooklyn (Kings County) and Queens (Queens County), N.Y., Clark County, Wash., with 73 cases, plus a smattering of cases across counties in Texas, Illinois and

California.

The anti-vaccine movement has fueled some resistance, which Day said in his news conference has continued despite the county's educational outreach.

"This type of response is unacceptable and irresponsible," he said. "It endangers the health and well-being of others and displays a shocking lack of responsibility and concern for others in our community." **CN**



Connecting the Unconnected: A progress report

by **Greg Cox**

In celebration of County Government Month in April, I want to take a moment to reflect on the great strides that all counties, parishes and boroughs across the United States are making toward my NACo presidential initiative, "Connecting the Unconnected."

Over the past nine months or so that I have served as NACo president, I have urged local governments to focus on bringing critical services to citizens in need. And over the past year, I've witnessed some of the best in class examples of county innovation and local government at its finest.

"Connecting the Unconnected" highlights three key areas of focus and I'm delighted to provide three examples of how California counties and local governments are providing leadership and innovation in these areas.

Connecting the Unconnected with technology

Technology is the first area of focus for "Connecting the Unconnected." NACo is showcasing best-in-class technology that helps counties deliver critical services. This includes 211 and other centralized resource centers: Telemedicine, broadband and public transportation technologies.

Utilizing the latest technology to provide an "omni channel" service that includes a free call line, searchable online database, text, chat and social media, 211 in San Diego County connects the unconnected to more than 6,000 community, health and disaster support services, 24 hours a day.

211 San Diego's mission nationwide is to "connect people to services and provide vital data trend information for proactive community planning," with an approach of providing comprehensive and collaborative services that can be a model for in-

formation and referral agencies across the country. With a \$13 million budget, about one-third coming from the county, and a team of 140 staff fielding up to 1,500 calls a day, 211 San Diego is one of the largest 211 connections centers like it in the nation. 211 San Diego connects the unconnected to human services through innovative programs including:

- **Enrollment services:** Partnering with the California

Department of Social Services and the County of San Diego, 211 San Diego's Enrollment Center helps people enroll in CalFresh and Covered California over the telephone, saving time and resources and eliminating barriers to in-person enrollment.

- **Military and veteran services "Courage to Call:"** In partnership with the County of San Diego and several local nonprofit organizations, funded in part by Mental Health Services Act dollars, 211 operates San Diego's peer-to-peer talk and chat line serving as the sin-

gle access point for information, referrals, navigation, and ongoing care coordination for active duty military, veterans and their families. Learn more about San Diego's 211 program here: <https://bit.ly/2UJWafB>

Using data to Connect the Unconnected

Technology is just one way to reach and improve the delivery of services to citizens. Data is the second focus of "Connecting the Unconnected." NACo is demonstrating the importance of data-driven decision-making in improving resource allocation. Data is being used to create targeted delivery models for core county services like mental health programs, substance abuse treatment, justice reform, housing, transportation and veterans' resources.

In Nevada County, a series of suicides among teens and young adults brought the need for early suicide prevention to the forefront. Nevada County held community brainstorming sessions to gather information and identified a Suicide Prevention Task Force to analyze community mental health per-

ception, access data and come up with solutions.

While programs existed to serve high school students identified as high risk, there was a need for comprehensive screening programs for youth in a county with a history of resistance to "outside intervention" and low access to mental health services.

The Task Force chose Columbia TeenScreen as an evidence-based screening program and integrated it into school-based What's Up Wellness Checkups (WUWC) to normalize mental health screening like any other checkup, a standard part of maintaining overall health.

Based on data from the initial round of screenings, a significant number of students faced mild-to-moderate anxiety or depression and families struggled with barriers to treatment outside of school. Nevada County used WUWC to begin providing in-school prevention groups and case management services for students. Responding to data that 10th graders have the highest suicide completion rate among youth, the WUWC

screenings were designed to target incoming 9th grade students during school enrollment.

This unique utilization of data and adaptive programming helps destigmatize mental health services and connects hundreds of students with mental health and case management services, potentially keeping youth out of juvenile hall, hospitals and other intensive mental health services. Read more about this program here: <https://bit.ly/2Cs3Z2B>

Financing helps Connect the Unconnected

The third focus for "Connecting the Unconnected" is Financing. NACo is illustrating the importance of public-private partnerships to ensure sustainable funding and coordination of services. This includes partnerships with neighboring jurisdictions, community-based organizations and other public and private sector partners to provide long-term resources to support county programs.

When Contra Costa County's

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Cox

CONNECTING THE UNCONNECTED

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APRIL 2019

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Sonoma County houses veterans in tiny homes

by **Charlie Ban**
senior writer

Throughout their lives, during their service and after, Sonoma County Calif.'s veterans demonstrated their resilience. It's what kept them alive in the field, and for those who wound up homeless, kept them alive on the streets.

It was appropriate that when Sonoma County's pilot project to build tiny homes for more than a dozen homeless veterans ran into one, then two, then three major roadblocks, it was fitting that the response was to just work around it and get the job done.

Already thrown off course by a location change and the devastating wildfires in 2017, the final work on the set of 14 tiny homes was due for December 2018. Then the rain started.

"It rained most of the month, but Michael was out there working through most of it," said Supervisor Shirlee Zane. "He knew if people were sleeping in that, he could work through it to give them a home."

Contractor Michael Wolff, a Marine veteran who served in Iraq, had already underbid to ensure his firm got this job. And he wasn't going to let anyone down now.

In January, Community Housing of Sonoma County named the set of 14 tiny homes after Wolff and John Zane, Shirlee Zane's father, himself an enlisted Marine who fought in World War II. On March 20, the final veteran selected by the Veterans Administration picked up the keys to his home. Thanks to the HUD-VASH (VA Supportive Housing) program, 15 formerly homeless veterans, including one couple, will have rental assistance and case management on a plot of county-owned land.

"The beauty of it is that the VASH vouchers come with service providers, where a straight Section 8 voucher does not," said Paula Cook, executive director of Community Housing,



The Michael Wolff/John Zane Veterans Village in Sonoma County, Calif. houses 15 formerly homeless veterans in 14 tiny homes on county property. Photo courtesy of Community Housing of Sonoma County

"That's a much better recipe for success."

Sonoma County had been considering using tiny homes, 250-square foot minimalist structures, to house the homeless since 2014, and in 2015, Zane was pushing for an application to aid veterans, and to use county-owned land.

"There was an overwhelming consensus, not just in our community but across the country, that it was something people wanted to see," she said. "It's horrible for anyone to be homeless, but when I think of a veteran, someone who signed up to help their country, I know that they'd be willing to die for their country,

but they come home and don't have a place to live... we have to do something."

Community Housing won a competitive bidding process to oversee the project.

After picking out a plot between the sheriff's office and the human services department and designing the homes for that land, it became clear that office space needs would force the project to move, between the jail and a hospital.

"It ended up being symbolic," Zane said. "So many veterans wind up in either place, we hope that this community shows that there's another option out there."

Even after the challenge of

changing design specs, going all the way back to the drawing board, as Cook termed it, the highest hurdle had yet to even appear. The 2017 Tubbs Fire devastated the county seat of Santa Rosa, burning hundreds of homes and increasing the building material costs.

"We had to face how we were going to create new housing simultaneously with the rehousing effort," Zane said. "There were only so many resources, and I thought for a while it wasn't going to happen. Fire like that just comes out of nowhere, and nobody expected anything like that would ever happen."

She was able to persuade the

rest of the Board of Supervisors to make up the difference in costs.

"Logically, when you house people at any income, you create more open spaces for housing, there's a domino effect that opens up more housing," she said. "And it was hard to vote against housing these veterans."

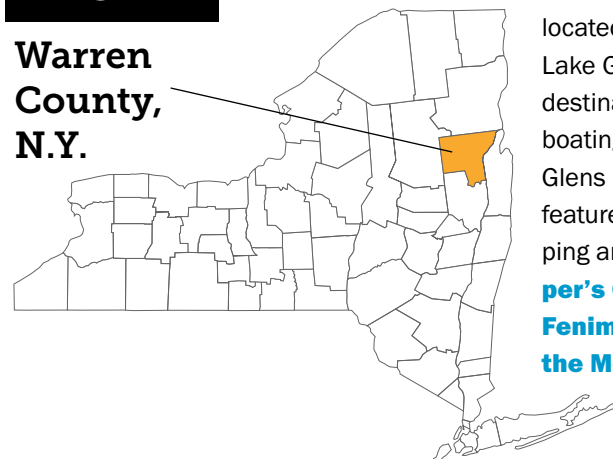
All homes are compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act, sporting ramps, sliding doors on bathrooms, with a bedroom, shelves, desks, closets and a kitchenette. A communal space offers more room, a larger kitchen and laundry facilities. Community Housing is close to securing a donation of solar panels, which will allow the tiny homes to be carbon neutral. Two formerly homeless veterans live on site and serve as peer house managers, in addition to the HUD-VASH-supplied case workers.

"It's hard when the veterans move in off the street, they need a lot of privacy and support about changing their life so radically," Zane said. "We're trying to be sensitive, but I hope to meet them all."

She also wants to present them with housewarming gifts. Word from the peer house managers was that they wanted a flagpole, so that is what Zane plans to bring them. **CN**

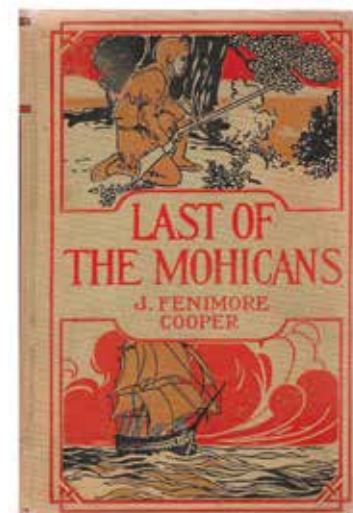
GET TO KNOW...

Warren County, N.Y.



Welcome, Warren County, N.Y.

Warren County was founded in 1813 and is **named for Gen. Joseph Warren, an American Revolutionary War hero in the Battle of Bunker Hill.** The county is located in upstate New York and includes the Lake George area, which is a popular tourist destination. Visitors can swim, tube, kayak, go boating or ski near Lake George. The City of Glens Falls is a cultural hub in the county that features museums, festivals, theaters, shopping and other recreational activities. **Cooper's Cave, which is well known in James Fenimore Cooper's novel, "The Last of the Mohicans,"** is located in Glens Falls.



Applications open for scholarships

High-school seniors whose parents, grandparents or legal guardians actively contribute to a 457(b) plan offered through the NACo Deferred Compensation Program are eligible to apply for a \$2,500 college scholarship. Four \$2,500 scholarships will be awarded in fall 2019 in honor of the scholarship program's 15th year in existence.

The NACo/Nationwide scholarship essay contest is an educational opportunity for high-school students about to transition into a new stage of their lives. "One of the most critical tasks counties face is engaging young people to civic life and responsibilities," said NACo President Greg Cox. "The NACo/Nationwide scholarship essay contest is a great way to open the eyes of high school students to the valuable roles that counties play in the lives of residents," Cox said. "As NACo president, my initiative this year is to help counties 'Con-

nect the Unconnected' to services they need. Young adults today know about staying connected through their cell phones and through various social media sites and apps. It will be our ongoing challenge, and opportunity, to get young people involved, and to stay involved, in local government."

To help students consider why saving early and consistently may be important, Cox shared key points from last year's scholarship winners who answered the following questions:

Q: Most high school students dream of the day when they will be on their own and no longer depend on their parents, but that kind of freedom requires financial independence. What does financial freedom mean to you? What is your plan to achieve financial freedom for yourself and how are you going to ensure

that your financial freedom will continue through your retirement years?

To Evan Tomas Himes, the concept of financial freedom was instilled in him by his mother. "I'm learning what she wanted me to — that saving early is really important," he said. "We are both determined to keep saving whatever small amount we can." He plans to achieve his goals by working summers to save for college expenses and retirement. An Eagle Scout who graduated from Highland Park High School in Dallas County, Texas, Evan is studying Physics at Tarleton State University while participating in the Air Force ROTC program.

For Haley Kordus, financial freedom is a process that starts with hard work and education, providing a foundation from which she can pursue her goals. "Through the hard work of doing well in college, earn-

ing a good wage, keeping costs reasonably low, and investing well — early on and consistently — I hope to achieve steady financial freedom for myself and my family." After graduating from Bonduel High School in Shawano County, Wis., Haley is pursuing studies in both Psychology and Spanish at the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point.

Dayna Pham has a different point of view on financial freedom than her peers. "Most teens' definition of financial freedom means to no longer have to rely on the salary of their parents, to no longer be dependents," she says. "However, I view financial freedom as being free from any debt or loans, such as student loans." Her goal to "end up debt-free." An Otay Ranch High School alumna from San Diego County, Calif., Dayna is majoring in Biology at University of California, Los Angeles, with

the goal of becoming an ophthalmologist.

Cody Wibirt understands financial freedom requires making sacrifices now that will benefit him later. "I know that if I start small and early and allow my savings habit to grow as my income grows, I will be rewarded in the end with financial freedom and independence." He also sees financial freedom as an opportunity to help care for his parents and future children. A Sayre Area High School graduate from Bradford County, Pa., Cody is majoring in Biology with a concentration in Neuroscience or Vertebral Physiology at Penn State University.

How eligible students can apply: Parents, grandparents or legal guardians should talk to their eligible high school seniors about applying right

See APPLY page 7



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NRM-3181AO-NX.13 (03/19)


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away. Starting April 1, the application can be completed online at www.nrsforu.com/scholarship.

Eligibility requirements:

- Graduating high school seniors who are legal U.S. residents are eligible to apply.
- Applicant's parent, grandparent or legal guardian must be enrolled in and actively contribute to a 457(b) plan offered through the NACo Deferred Compensation Program.
- Applicants must enroll in a full-time undergraduate course of study no later than the autumn term of the 2019-2020 school year at an accredited two- or four-year college.
- Immediate family members of NACo employees, members of the NACo Defined Contribution and Retirement Advisory Committee or its governing board of directors, staff of individual state associations of counties that are members of the LLC, and Nationwide employees are not eligible to apply; this program is not offered outside the United States.
- Application and entry must be submitted online at www.nrsforu.com/scholarship between April 1 and May 31.

Scholarship honors 40 years of partnership

The NACo/Nationwide Scholarship is just one of many benefits of four decades of partnership between Nationwide and NACo and its member counties. For additional information about the NACo Deferred Compensation Program, please contact Amy Humphrey at humpha1@nationwide.com or 860-480-1211; or contact your Nationwide representative at 877-677-3678. 

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Local, state officials want clarity from feds on immigration

by **Charlie Ban**
senior writer

Federal inaction on immigration reform is ceding responsibility for handling the issue to state and local governments, which are further stymied by the lack of clarity on those policies.

That's one of the main conclusions drawn by a Bipartisan Policy Center report covering a series of roundtable discussions among county officials and state legislators over the past two years.

Participants believed partisanship in Washington, D.C. has prevented Congress from making progress reforming immigration laws, and expressed a unanimous agreement that Congress needs to create a simple, fair and efficient immigration system.

They also do not want to see federal funding tied to cooperation with Immigration and Customs Enforcement orders that could put them in legal jeopardy or be made to enforce civil immigration laws.

"We're asking the federal government to cooperate, have adult conversations and set policy that makes sense," said Bill Truex, a Charlotte County, Fla. commissioner and chairman of NACo's Immigration Task Force. He spoke at a briefing on the report's findings March 25 at the NACo/NLC Joint Conference Center in Washington, D.C.

The report's conclusions were drawn from four roundtable discussions held over 2017 and 2018 with members of the National Association of Counties and the National Conference of State Legislatures representing a variety of geographic areas and political positions.

The debate over federal immigration reform has been brewing for most of the past two decades, and Susan Parnas Frederick, senior federal affairs counsel at the National Conference of State Legislatures, said she has experienced a constant sense of urgency



Bill Truex, Charlotte County, Fla., speaks during a March 25 briefing on a Bipartisan Policy Center report on immigration reform. To his left are Theresa Cardinal Brown, Bipartisan Policy Center, and Susan Parnas Frederick, National Conference of State Legislatures. Photo by Hugh Clarke

over that time to get something done.

"We've reached that precipice several times over the last 15-20 years," she said at the briefing. "It's hard to gauge when the perfect moment might arise. We hope it's soon and that we can coalesce around it."

Participants agreed that immigration was key for the workforce and employers, not just in agriculture but also in hospitality and the STEM fields. Many found that immigration was critical for replenishing population, especially in areas with aging residents who were no longer part of the workforce.

The Bipartisan Policy Center hoped to see if there was room for agreement on future immigration reform, said Cris Ramon, the policy analyst and author of the report. Political polarization came up as the biggest threat to legislative progress on several levels.

Participants "struggle with polarization over immigration that you've been seeing at the national level filtering down to the state and local level, frequently they said they felt they had to take stands on immigration issues due to pressure from outside advocacy groups from both the left and the right, that made it hard to forge agreements with individuals

across the aisle," he said.

They also reported being worried that constituents were getting news from polarized national news sources instead of local news sources that had more nuance and understanding about immigration in their communities.

Participants believed partisanship in Washington, D.C. has prevented Congress from making progress reforming immigration laws

Truex said that local resistance to immigration in Charlotte County, Fla. comes from concern from retirees on fixed incomes that their tax dollars are being spent on services to aid immigrants. The local immigrant population, however, lives in neighboring counties, though they often work in Charlotte County.

"I hear people say that immigrants come here and they take U.S. citizens' jobs and work for less money," he said. "What I see is that they have a strong work ethic. The people I talk to ... can't find U.S. workers, so they're paying market rate," to immigrants.


In the absence of federal legislation, states are passing immigration legislation themselves. So far, 13 states have passed 21 bills affecting refugees, Frederick said.

"They may not be moving it at the rate they did 10 years ago, but they do it in a way that benefits their states," she said, noting particular progress on workforce and integration issues. "Economics drives consensus. If there's a benefit to the state doing something a certain way, why object?"

On the local level, Truex sees the political will to advocate for federal legislation and the rational, but quiet, majority.

"We forget to understand that the world lives in the middle two-thirds (of the political spectrum)," he said. "There's more work to be done in the middle two-thirds than what happens on the edges."

It's not enough to just understand the issues, Truex said, but advocates of immigration reform must make themselves heard.

"People are looking at Washington right now to set a course of action that results in a direction that allows us to move forward together in a harmonious manner," he said. "The middle two-thirds are frustrated and those are the folks who need to start speaking out more and more and more." 



KNOX COUNTY, Tenn.

Knox County is located in the center of the Great Valley of East Tennessee. The county's seal is a slightly modified version of the original Tennessee state seal that was adopted in 1801, according to Chair of the Knox County Commission Hugh Nystrom.

Steve Cotham from the East Tennessee History Center said the seal incorporates "1792" to represent the year when Knox County was created. William Blount, who was governor of the Territory South of the River Ohio from 1789 to 1796, founded the county.

The original design of the seal has been modified over the years, but the symbolism of the original seal remains the same.



The seal is a circle with the top half featuring a plow, a sheaf of wheat and a cotton plant with the word "agriculture."

The bottom half of the seal features a boat and a boatman with the word "commerce."

Similar to the original Tennessee state seal, the number "XVI" represents Tennessee being the 16th state admitted to the federal union of states in 1796.

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

Counties, arts and culture storm Capitol Hill

by Jay H. Dick

Arts advocates got a bonus from counties during this year's National Arts Action Summit and Arts Advocacy Day as both the NACo Legislative Conference and the Americans for the Arts-led event landed in the same time period.

This allowed the 500-plus Arts Advocacy Day participants from 48 states to interact and learn from county officials as they prepared to storm Capitol Hill asking legislators to support a budget of \$167.5 million for both the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) and the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH), along with increases to the Department of Education's Assistance for Arts Education Programs and changes to tax policy.

NACo and Americans for the Arts will present the 2019 Public Leadership in the Arts Award for County Leadership this summer.

Arts Advocacy Day supporters joined NACo to call upon Congress to increase our nation's infrastructure investments in order to help promote economic development, public safety and overall mobility. Further, arts advocates called for measures to prevent and treat mental health and substance use disorders, both in the community and within the confines of the criminal justice system.

"People don't often think that counties and the arts have legislative topics in common, but the reality is that they really do and once people realize this, they can work together to advance public policy to benefit everyone," said NACo Executive Director Matt Chase.

NACo's Arts and Culture Commission Chair Shelley



Oakland County, Mich. Commissioner Shelley Goodman Taub, chair of NACo's Arts and Culture Commission Photo by Jerry Frishman, courtesy of Americans for the Arts

Taub, an Oakland County, Mich. commissioner, joined Arts Advocacy Day attendees for an afternoon training session to not only give them tips on how to communicate with their federal officials, but to educate them on what counties do for the arts and culture every day.

In her remarks, Taub connected the dots on how counties affect the arts from running hospitals that often have art-therapy programs, to providing logistics for festivals and other local events. She fielded a wide range of questions from the audience, who were curious about messaging strategies to how to educate county officials about what the arts really do. Taub referenced Americans for the Arts' Social Impact Explorer (see it here: www.AmericansfortheArts.org/SocialImpact which lists 30 different topics including housing, workforce development, community cohesion or health care which county officials deeply care about and work to find new solutions.

"We are so grateful that Commissioner Taub could represent NACo and speak to our advocates," said Robert L. Lynch, president and CEO of Amer-

icans for the Arts. "She conveyed a great perspective about effective partnership between arts organizations and counties. I hope everyone will take back home her enthusiasm and if they are not already doing so, work with their county's elected officials."

The next morning, Taub joined arts advocates on Capitol Hill for an arts breakfast kickoff where she represented NACo and spoke to the group about why she personally supports the arts and what the arts do for Oakland County and all counties across the country.

She was joined by Lynch, NEA Acting Chairman Mary Anne Carter, NEH Chairman Jon Peede, artist Rita Moreno, Broadway star Brian Stokes Mitchell, musician Ben Folds along with a number of members of Congress who extolled the extraordinary value of the arts and culture.

NACo members were invited to join Americans for the Arts at the Kennedy Center as they hosted the Nancy Hanks Lecture on Public Policy featuring Moreno, who was introduced by Associate Justice Sonia Sotomayor. Mitchell joined the group and sang three songs for the audience.

"This was a magical night and I am pleased that so many of my NACo colleagues could join me in seeing Rita weave together her life story with how the arts enabled her to crack so many barriers that existed for women from Puerto Rico in the 1960 and 1970s," Taub said. (To see the full lecture, please go to Americans for the Arts YouTube channel at: <https://www.youtube.com/user/americansforthearts>.)

NACo and Americans for the Arts share a 20-plus year partnership which we collaborate not only on legislative topics but educating county officials about the value of the arts and culture to their county's economy. NACo and Americans for the Arts will be presenting the 2019 Public Leadership in the Arts Award for County Leadership during the Awards Luncheon at NACo's Annual Conference in Las Vegas. To recognize a county official who has excelled in advocating for the arts and culture, please nominate them by contacting Jay Dick at jay@artsusa.org.

Jay H. Dick is the senior director of State and Local Government Affairs at the Americans for the Arts.

STUDY: HOUSING COSTS TIED TO POOR HEALTH



by **Mary Ann Barton**
editor

Housing costs play a significant role in the health of county residents, according to the 2019 County Health Rankings released earlier this month. The report explores housing affordability by place and by race.

More than one in 10 households spend more than half their income on housing costs. Those who own their home do not see a burden, according to the report, because housing costs have decreased in the past decade.

“Our homes are inextricably tied to our health,” said Richard Besser, MD, RWJF president and CEO. “It’s unacceptable that so many individuals and families face barriers to health because of what they have to spend on housing.”

“This leaves them with fewer dollars to keep their families healthy,” he said. “Imagine the stress and pain that come with unplanned moves. We are all healthier and stronger together when everyone has access to safe and affordable housing, regardless of the color of their skin or how much money they make.”

It’s a different story for renters. High housing costs are associated with food insecurity, more child poverty and more people in fair to poor health, the study noted.

The more segregated a community is, the higher the rates of cost burden are for both white and black households, according to the study. Nearly one in four black households spend

more than half their income on housing.

Home ownership helps not only build savings for education, but also for improving opportunities important to health. In large urban and smaller metro counties, the vast majority of households headed by whites own their homes while more than half of households headed by blacks are renters, the study noted.

That trend has changed very little over the past decade.

“All communities have the potential to be places where everyone enjoys full and equal opportunity,” said Sheri Johnson, PhD, acting director of County Health Rankings & Roadmaps. “But the data show that’s not happening in most communities yet.”


“Children of color face a greater likelihood of growing up in poverty, and low-income families struggle to pay rent and get enough to eat,” she noted.

“It is time to do the difficult work of coming together to undo policies and practices that create barriers to opportunity,” she said.

“The Rankings can help communities ground these important conversations in data, evidence, guidance, and stories about challenges and success.”

Visit countyhealthrankings.org/takeaction to learn more.

How healthy is your county? Find out here: <https://bit.ly/1d-mhoJm>

To delve further into the rankings, be sure to participate in a webinar on Tuesday, April 23 at 3 p.m. ET. Register here: <https://bit.ly/2urcRkF> 



(L-r) **Kris Knochelmann**, Kenton County; **James Carroll**, Office of National Drug Control Policy; **Sen. Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.)**; **Gary Moore**, Boone County; **Steve Pendry**, Campbell County and **Matt Chase**, NACo, pause for a photo during a tour of the Kenton County, Ky. Detention Center.

NACo OFFICERS

- Second Vice President **Gary Moore** and Executive Director **Matt Chase** toured the Kenton County, Ky. Detention Center March 18, along with Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.) and Office of National Drug Control Policy Director Jim Carroll.
- President **Greg Cox** spoke at the Michigan Association of Counties March 25.
- West Region Representative **Gordon Cruickshank** briefed the Payette Forest Coalition March 21 on his meetings with USDA Secretary Sonny Perdue and Forest Service Chief Vicki Christiansen during the Legislative Conference.
- Northeast Region Representative **Christian Leinbach** pitched NACo’s TestIT app to the Tri County (Berks, Chester and Montgomery counties, Pa.) March 21.
- Central Region Representative **Cindy Bobbitt** spoke to the Association of County Commissioners of Oklahoma about the TestIT app March 21.
- South Region Representative **Ruby Brabo** met with Virginia Secretary of Veterans and Defense Affairs Carlos Hopkins to speak about veteran suicide and access to care.

NACo STAFF

- Deputy Executive Director **Deborah Cox** gave an update on NACo’s legislative priorities to the International City/County Management Association’s Governmental Affairs and Policy Committee March 9.
- Chief Innovation Officer **Cheryl Burnett** spoke about Opportunity Zones to The Summit, a symposium held in Weber County, Utah, March 15-17.
- Program Manager **Jack Morgan** spoke about economic diversification in coal-impacted counties at the Colorado Plateau Economic Development Symposium in Coconino County, Ariz. March 7-8.
- Program Manager **Nastassia Walsh** provided an update on NACo’s Stepping Up campaign at the Iowa State Association of Counties’ Spring Conference March 15 in Polk County (Des Moines).
- Associate Program Director **Rashida Brown** presented information about the Pritzker Children’s Initiative to the N.C. Early Childhood Action Plan Presentation and Workshop March 21 in Transylvania County, N.C.
- Associate Program Director **Kathy Rowings** provided training to state criminal justice leaders on effectively engaging with local stakeholders in Hartford County, Conn. along with the National Criminal Justice Association, March 14-15.
- Associate Legislative Director **Blaire Bryant** outlined NACo’s partnership with the National Sheriffs’ Association at a meeting of the National Association of City and County Health Officials in Washington, D.C. March 14.
- At the County Commissioners Association of Pennsylvania meeting in Dauphin County, Pa. March 25, Associate Legislative Director **Jessica Jennings** gave an update on unmanned aerial vehicles (drones), Associate Legislative Director **Arthur Scott** briefed attendees on NACo’s broadband mapping efforts and **Matt Chase** provided a general update on NACo.

BRIGHT IDEAS BOULDER COUNTY, Colo.

Partnership Takes On Affordable Housing

PROBLEM:

County lacks affordable housing as costs of homes rise and outpace wage growth.

SOLUTION:

Create a partnership that creates more affordable housing options by 2035.

by **Rachel Looker**
staff writer

It may mean more than just a roof over your head.

“What we’re trying to do is help people stabilize themselves and their families, so they don’t have to struggle with other things like food or healthcare or childcare or just stress,” said Jim Williams, the strategic communications director for the Boulder County, Colo. Department of Housing and Human Services.

The Boulder County Regional Housing Partnership set an ambitious goal to address the affordable housing crisis in the community: Make 12 percent of all housing inventory permanently affordable to low- and middle-income earners by 2035.

“It basically means out of all the housing that we know is going to be built or we expect to be built based on projections, 12 percent of that should be affordable in 2035,” Williams said.

With only 5 percent of affordable housing stock currently available in the county, a coalition, which includes Boulder County, the city of Longmont and the city of Boulder, formed the Boulder County Regional Housing Partnership in 2016 to address the future of affordable housing.

The partnership, which brings together cities, elected officials, community organizations and members from the public, created a plan known as the Regional Housing Strategy. The strategy



Boulder County leaders meet to discuss the strategies and goals set forward by the Regional Plan. Photo by Geneva Z. Bailey

seeks to create long-term housing affordability to boost the community and help working families, single mothers, teachers, first responders, seniors and those with disabilities.

All but one jurisdiction in the county supports the plan and the 12 percent goal.

According to Williams, the increase in the costs of homes in Boulder County, which rose 13.7 percent in 2016 to \$529,000, has caused many individuals to move out of the county.

He said this resulted in more people on the roads, increased commute times and made it more difficult for businesses to attract and retain talent.

The plan has five main strategies:

- Establish a regional goal
- Bolster financial resources
- Secure land and development/redevelopment opportunities
- Preserve affordability, and
- Consider regulatory processes.

The partnership hopes to in-

crease funding by \$20 million per year to invest in community housing from sources in the private sector, the state and federal resources.

According to Williams, the partnership has established a sub-committee of financial experts in the housing arena who can look at what it takes to build affordable housing.

He said the additional \$20 million may come from the business community, foundations or a future property or sales tax.

Once funding has been secured, the housing authority contracts with private construction companies for affordable housing developments, which Williams said has mainly been new developments over the past decade.

Based on the numbers, the partnership and strategy is working.

The housing authority has added around 200 affordable homes in the past few years with plans to construct around 500 more; the city of Boul-

der has added 212 affordable homes with plans for 621 more and the Longmont Housing Authority has added 434 homes with 92 in the works. This is almost 2,000 more affordable homes that will be added to communities over the next two to three years, Williams said.

“I think what we’ve seen is a pretty rapid increase in these past couple of years in affordable housing that we’ve built and planned affordable housing that we have in the pipeline,” he said.

The affordable housing issue is too big for one community to solve on their own, said Mackenzie Sehlke, spokeswoman for Boulder County Housing and Human Services. Solving the affordable housing issue requires a community to think in collaborative and innovative ways, she said.


“I’ve been very impressed to see the work of the regional housing partnership in individual jurisdictions allowing members of the community

who don’t typically talk about housing to have an honest conversation about housing and to address some of the public health implications upon affordable housing,” she said.

Williams advised other counties to identify their partners and to begin having conversations on ways to collaborate.

“Just start the conversation, bring people together from across the county, from across the region, and start talking about ‘How can we come together to find new solutions to this problem that is getting worse for us?’” Williams said.

Because of the collaboration, Williams said he is confident the partnership will reach their 12 percent goal by 2035, if not before.

“We have a bright future ahead of us,” he said. 

The Boulder County Regional Housing Partnership’s Regional Housing Strategy was named “Best in Category” for Planning in the 2018 NACo Achievement Awards.

WORD SEARCH

BRAZOS COUNTY, TEXAS

Created by: Mary Ann Barton

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

AGGIES: Texas A&M University was originally called the Agriculture and Mechanical College of Texas. It was established in 1871 and renamed Texas A&M in 1963.

BARBECUE: Fargo's Pit Barbecue in Bryan is often ranked among the top barbecue restaurants in Texas.

BLUEBONNETS: Look for the Texas state flower blooming across the Brazos Valley in the springtime.

BRYAN: Bryan is the county seat of Brazos County.

BUSH: The county is home to the George Bush Presidential Library and Museum, located at Texas A&M University.

CHICKEN: Texas A&M's favorite watering hole is the Dixie Chicken, also known as "The Chicken."

HOMES: The median home value in

the county is \$214,800, according to Zillow.com. The median rent is \$1,450.

HOWDY: If you're strolling the Texas A&M campus, it's likely you'll hear the official greeting from everyone you see: "Howdy!"

OIL: Oil was first discovered in the county in 1942, according to the Texas Almanac.

POPULATION: The county's population is more than 250,000

REVELLE: The Texas A&M mascot is a Rough Collie, named Reveille.

RIVER: The county was named for the Brazos River.

SANDERSON: Sanderson Farms poultry producer employs

STATION: College Station, the location of Texas A&M University, was named for the train station located to the west of campus.

WHATABURGER: The county is home to six Whataburger locations.


Connecting the Unconnected works for all sizes of counties

From NCGM page 4

Employment and Human Services Department (EHSD) determined it needed more data to effectively manage its programs, it looked to a neighboring county for a cost-effective solution. Santa Clara's Social Services Agency had invested over \$2 million in a Business Intelligence Solution with a robust database, dashboards and drill down reports. After conducting a multi-step review of the project including a feasibility study and MOU, Contra Costa EHSD was able to integrate its data with Santa Clara's existing database, run its own reports and deliver improved productivity and better compliance. Through the partnership, Santa Clara achieved an overall cost reduction for its business intelligence solution and Contra Costa achieved its goals in a shorter timeline and for significantly

less money than if it had contracted a solution on its own. Learn more about this cost-saving partnership here: <https://bit.ly/2HDINtG>

As these examples illustrate, "Connecting the Unconnected" is designed for counties of all shapes and sizes. There is no cookie-cutter approach to connecting residents; what works in one county may not work in another. But we share similar challenges and can learn from one another's experiences to be an immense force for the public good.

In coordination with NACo, CSAC will honor County Government Month in April by showcasing case studies and examples of how California counties are working to "Connect the Unconnected." 

Greg Cox is NACo president and supervisor, San Diego County, Calif.



Preliminary Schedule Now Available!

Find out more at www.naco.org/WIR



NACo's
WESTERN INTERSTATE REGION
 2019 CONFERENCE

May 15-17, 2019 • Spokane County, Washington

LEADERSHIP EDGE

Excellence Is Not an Exception



by **Tim Rahschulte**

As you go about preparing to realize your vision, it's important to plan for excellence. Often — too often, actually — planning efforts are focused on “what” and not “how.” Certainly, knowing what to do is vitally important if you have any chance of realizing the future state of a vision. But knowing how you will do it is even more important, because success is grounded in discipline. Planning the details of what will be done needs to be coupled with the way you and the team plan to get it done. Ideally, how you will do it is with an unparalleled level of excellence. Think about it: If not excellence, then what?

Excellence is preferred to any alternative, for sure. Excellence is the desired state for every individual and team, and it's realized through the discipline of executing details of a plan.

Perhaps the most consistent display of excellence is among the team of ladies and gentlemen at the Ritz-Carlton. They're known for their service excellence. Whether you've stayed at one of their hotels and experienced the level of their service firsthand or know of their service from others who have, you know they're the standard-bearer of excellence.

The most common understanding of excellence is being the best — the best quality; the

best service; the best product; the best, period. Among teams today, leaders must drive excellence at the point of preparation so that it's an ingrained expectation throughout every action the team members take. You must drive excellence in the small things to realize excellence in all things. That's what makes the Ritz-Carlton team so renowned. They just get it because it's ingrained into them to do so. They prepare properly, measure expectations against outcomes appropriately, and have uncompromising follow-through.

It's important to note here that your sense of excellence mirrors how excellence is perceived by your customers, team members and all other stakeholders. You see, excellence is similar to personal brand; it's important that you define it clearly so you understand it, but it's determined only from the perceptions of others.

Legendary football coach Vince Lombardi saw excellence as more than simply doing your best. He said, “The quality of a person's life is in direct proportion to their commitment to excellence, regardless of their chosen field of endeavor.” How's your level of personal excellence? What level of excellence are you driving and realizing every day, with every action and every person? Are you delivering Ritz-Carlton levels of excellence in your work? If not

excellence, then what?

Think about the immediate and downstream residual impact from delivering excellence in everything you do and everything your team does — not just for customers, but also for one another on the team and within the organization. Do you know the value of your excellence in service? Research from the American Society for Quality found that while 9 percent of customers will leave because they are lured away by the competition and 14 percent will leave because of dissatisfaction with a product, the vast majority — 68 percent — will leave because of the experience they've had with one person. This is true with your customers and highlights the level of excellence you should be focused on delivering. How's your level of excellence? Is it where you want to be, or are there improvements you need to make?

Don't sacrifice. Remember, your excellence is not an exception. It needs to be infused in the preparation of your work and in how you and your team go about work in everything and with everyone — every day. **CN**

Tim Rahschulte is the CEO of the Professional Development Academy and chief architect of the NACo High Performance Leadership Program (naco.org/skills).

PROFILES IN SERVICE

BEVERLY PERRY

Board Member
Senior Advisor
to Mayor Muriel Bowser
Washington, D.C.



Perry

Number of years involved in NACo: Three

Years in public service: 25

Occupation: Senior Advisor to Mayor Muriel Bowser

Education: J.D. from Georgetown University Law Center, B.S. from George Washington University.

The hardest thing I've ever done is: Managing a community oil spill while at Pepco, engaging both the community and government agencies to find a solution.

One person I'd invite to dinner: Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg

A dream I have is to: Secure statehood for the District of Columbia.

You'd be surprised to learn: I grew up in a tobacco farm and worked full time starting at six years old.

The most adventurous thing I've ever done is: Riding a horse in the ocean during a trip to Jamaica.

I'm most proud of: My career achievements.

Every morning I read: *The Washington Post*

My favorite meal is: Anything with steak.

My pet peeve is: When people don't read.

My motto is: Don't let anyone outwork you.

The last book I read was: Anything and everything by John Grisham.

My favorite movie is: *Pretty Woman*

My favorite music: Rock 'n roll, Frankie Beverly.

My favorite U.S. president: President Barack Obama

My district is a NACo member because: We are a city, county and state.

My favorite way to relax is to:
Golf



the **HR**
DOCTOR
with Philpot
& Winkler

A Policy Inspired by the Saddest Movies of All Time

Take a moment and think of some sad movies — the ones that made you cry in the theater or make you teary just thinking about them now. Odds are, several movies on that list involve the relationships between parents and children. Think of the scene in *Dumbo*, when Dumbo's mom cradles him in her trunk through the bars of the circus wagon window while singing the song "Baby Mine." Or maybe *Terms of Endearment* or *Steel Magnolias*?

According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Adolescent Health, "the relationship between children and their parents or caregivers is one of the most important relationships in a child's life, often lasting well into adulthood." Yet, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, only 15 percent of all workers have access to paid family leave. Way back in 1963, paid maternity leave was recommended in a report of the President Commission on the Status of Women, saying "paid maternity leave or comparable insurance benefits should be provided for women workers; employers, unions and government should explore the best means of accomplishing this purpose." Yet, according to a September 2016 article by the Pew Research Center, "the U.S. is the only country among 41 nations that does not mandate any paid leave for new parents." The article goes on to state, "in almost half of two-parent households, both parents now work full-time, and in 40 percent of all families with children, the mother is the sole or primary breadwinner."

Many employers are finally tackling this shortcoming.

A variety of private companies offer paid family leave, including American Express,

Ernst & Young and IBM. Last August, Microsoft expanded their paid parental leave policy and now requires its suppliers to offer a minimum of 12 weeks paid parental leave. Its policy applies to "suppliers with more than 50 employees and covers supplier employees who perform substantial work for Microsoft."

Public sector organizations are also creating paid parental leave policies. California law grants six weeks of leave at 60-70 percent of pay with a maximum of \$1,252 per week for birth or adoption of a child or to care for a seriously ill family member. New Jersey law ensures six weeks at 66 percent of pay with a maximum of \$677 per week. Rhode Island law requires four weeks at 60 percent of pay with a maximum of \$831 a week for private companies. New York's paid parental leave began with eight weeks in 2018, expanded to 10 weeks in 2019 and increases to 12 weeks in 2021. Washington State's law takes effect in 2020 and provides 12 weeks with a sliding percentage of base pay and a maximum of \$1,000. Washington, D.C. has eight weeks at 90 percent with a maximum of \$1,000 for birth or adoption, six weeks for a sick relative and two weeks for a personal medical emergency. San Francisco provides six weeks fully paid for birth or adoption of a child. And according to the National Partnership for Women and Families, 22 counties have paid family or parental leave policies.

What are some things to consider when creating and implementing such a policy? First, gather statistics regarding the number of maternity and paternity leaves employees have taken over the last several years. Be certain to note any particularly high years, with baby booms. This will assist in pro-

jecting the costs of such a program. Second, consider design options of a paid parental leave program that will best meet the needs of your organization and fit culturally with your other, existing leave programs. Other questions to ask:

- Who would be eligible? Would employees need to be employed for six months or a year in order to be eligible for the leave? Must the months of employment be continuous? Must the employee work a cer-

tain number of hours a week?

- What types of situations would the leave cover? In addition to birth and adoption, how about fostering a child? What about still births, miscarriages, prenatal bed rest? Would the policy provide leave for sick relatives or personal medical emergencies?
- How many weeks of paid leave will be offered? Some policies differentiate between leave for the addition of family members and leave for illness.
- How often can the leave be used? Are there a certain number of weeks in a year? Can it be

used intermittently?

- What is the rate of partial pay or wage replacement? Will employees using the leave receive 100 percent of their base rate of pay? Is there a sliding scale?
- Is there a maximum or cap on the wage replacement? A cap can aid in projecting the costs, especially at the inception of the program.
- What order is the leave used in? Is the leave required to be taken before any other type of leave?
- Is there a payback provision? A policy might require an employee to return to work for a minimum of 90 days after using the leave unless failing to return to work is related to the onset, recurrence or continuation of a serious health condition of the employee or the child. If so, how will you define serious health condition? Will any payback be prorated if they return for a portion of the time?

Allowing employees to take time to bond with a new child entering the family is not just important for families; it also attracts and retains employees. According to a November 2017 article in *The New York Times*, 83 percent of American millennials would "be more likely to join a company" with a paid parental leave program.

At the end of the movie *Field of Dreams*, Kevin Costner's character, Ray, asks his dad, "Hey dad, you wanna have a catch?" His father replies, "I'd like that." Just one more tear-inspiring movie about the bond between parents and children. Only this time, the tears are for joy. **CN**

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



"The relationship between children and their parents or caregivers is one of the most important relationships in a child's life, often lasting well into adulthood."

NEWS FROM ACROSS THE NATION

ARIZONA

• **LA PAZ COUNTY** is now able to **purchase nearly 6,000 acres** from the Bureau of Land Management after President Trump signed the La Paz County Land Conveyance Act, the *Parker Pioneer* reported. The act directs the secretary of the Interior to convey approximately 5,935 acres of federal land to the county for future economic development opportunities.

La Paz County is required to pay fair-market value for the acreage and the costs related to the conveyance. "The passing of this bill is a huge economic driver for our county," said Holly Irwin, La Paz County vice-chairman of the Board of Supervisors. According to the *Parker Pioneer*, the county is considering using the land for possible solar power development.

• **COCONINO COUNTY** is educating families on the dangers of **lead poisoning**.



The county received a \$25,000 grant from the Arizona Department of Health Services to bring awareness to the issue, according to the *Arizona Daily Sun*. The Coconino Public Health Services District will partner with local care providers to encourage families to test infants for lead poisoning when they are 12 months old and 24 months old.

Lead poisoning remains a concern for those in the county after high levels were found in an elementary school's drinking water. The school was tested during a statewide pilot program in 2017. Arizona's state health department created a 2018 Arizona Targeted Lead Screening Plan to iden-

tify ZIP codes with the highest risk for lead poisoning by analyzing previous cases, housing characteristics, the poverty level and the demographic characteristics of different areas. The grant-funded project hopes to prevent future poisoning by identifying risks.

COLORADO

LARIMER COUNTY is using a **Senior Tax Work-Off Program** to allow residents to apply for work to pay their property tax bill, according to the *Reporter-Herald*. Residents who are 60 years or older can apply to cover up to \$400 of their county property tax bill. The program was established to help seniors reduce their tax bills by working temporary jobs throughout the county, specifically helping those who are on fixed incomes as property taxes increase. Eligible residents must have a gross monthly income at or below \$2,082 for one person or \$2,818 for two people.

ILLINOIS

LAKE COUNTY has launched a program to help residents **renew their driver's licenses**. The Road to Reinstatement Pilot Program is intended for individuals who are unable to

restore or renew their driving privileges because they can't pay the fines and fees. Because it is difficult for those who are unable to drive to maintain employment, individuals who qualify for the program will be able to get their driver's license renewed or reinstated to help support themselves and their families. Residents will not be eligible for the program if they have DUI citations, are habitual/dangerous offenders or have felony cases, child support suspension, financial responsibility suspension, insurance suspension, toll violations, unpaid parking tickets or citations issued outside of Lake County.

INDIANA

BENTON COUNTY is adding locations to its **Safe Place Program**, according to *WCINews*. The goal of the program is to

assist youth who are in immediate need of help and safety. Safe Place is a national youth outreach program that designates businesses and organizations as Safe Place locations where those under the age of 21 may go to receive immediate help.

Safe Place locations can be found at libraries, YMCAs, fire stations, some businesses and social service facilities, according to its website. New locations in Benton County include the Fowler Sheriff's Office, Benton Health and Wellness Center, Boswell Public Library, Pizza King of Otterbein, Oxford Public Library, Boswell Farmers and Merchants Bank, Fowler IGA and Templeton Ceres Solutions. Designated locations have yellow signs with the Safe Place logo outside the building.

IOWA

STORY COUNTY is working to make Home Base Iowa, a program to help its **veteran population**, more visible in the county. The program began in 2013 and connects veterans who are transitioning from the military to the workforce, according to the *Ames Tribune*. The Board of Supervisors adopted an incentive package of \$10,000 bud-



CALIFORNIA

Areas in **LOS ANGELES COUNTY** are experiencing a "**super bloom**" of **wildflowers** after a recent period of heavy rains. Flowers have bloomed in different areas of southern California, including along the runways at Los Angeles International Airport. One field of flowers stretches nearly 11,000 feet along the length of the runways, KTLA5 reported. The super bloom is a result of rare, heavy rains throughout the state during the winter. Wildflowers are also blooming in Lake Elsinore near Walker Canyon, which is located 60 miles southeast of Los Angeles. In adjacent **RIVERSIDE COUNTY**, it's much the same. "It's better than going to Disneyland," Randy Solis, a Riverside County Habitat Conservation Agency patrol officer, said at a trailhead near Lake Elsinore, the *Los Angeles Times* reported.

geted annually for the initiative in 2015, creating the Welcome Home to Story County Relocation Assistance Program. This program provides veterans a one-time grant of up to \$2,500 to assist with relocation and finding work in the county. Veterans who are enrolled in the program can use the funds for appliance purchases, utility deposits, down-payments on homes or rent deposits.

burse all county costs associated with the representation of the indigent. Ten full-time attorneys handle more than 7,000 cases a year, with their 200-350 felony case load well above that optimal maximum of 150 recommended by state officials. The *Post-Journal* reported that the number of attorneys will increase to 18-20.

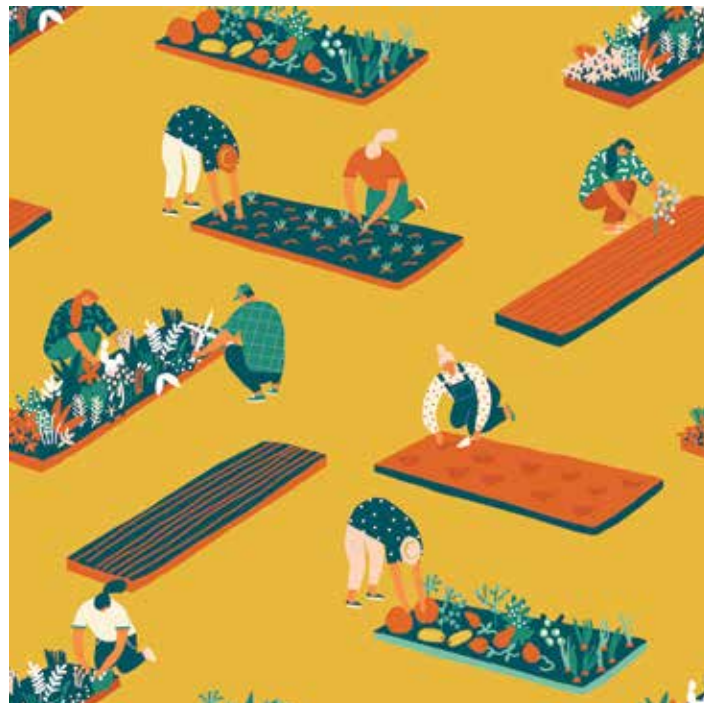
- The term “dirt cheap” apparently hasn’t kept up with inflation, because at \$4 million, it will be more economical for **NIAGARA COUNTY** to cover a town’s landfill with artificial turf. The County Legislature voted to do just that. The turf will be more cost effective than soil because it won’t require maintenance or mowing, WIVB News reported.

NORTH CAROLINA

- Distressed counties could see some **staffing help** thanks to a program through the University of North Carolina’s School of Government that will train and place college graduates in county and city governments in distressed communities. “Lead for North Carolina” is funded in part by a \$500,000 grant from the State Employee’s Credit Union Foundation. Grants will cover their first year’s salary and housing stipends.

Training programs will prepare fellows to work in emergency management, community health, citizen engagement or business process improvement. Fellows will take a bus tour of counties across the state to see firsthand the collective challenges these communities face. Twenty-five fellows will serve for two years and county placements will be chosen from among the 40 most distressed counties. They will start training in July and begin working in their local governments in August.

- A bill in the state House would force county sheriffs to



NORTH CAROLINA

- Residents hoping to start **community gardens** can get some help from **ORANGE COUNTY**, which has allocated \$5,000 in grant funding. Groups of three or more people can apply for \$500 grants to buy equipment or materials to start, improve or maintain a community garden, *The Daily Tar Heel* reported.

cooperate with Immigrations and Customs Enforcement and honor requests to detain suspected **undocumented immigrants** for two days after their release. Several sheriffs have broken off arrangements with ICE. The bill would threaten fines of up to \$25,500 a day, Raleigh’s ABC affiliate reported.

NORTH DAKOTA

Beneficiaries of the **Women, Infants and Children program** in **CASS COUNTY** will be issued debit cards for the program, rather than paper vouchers. Previously, they had to check off, on the voucher, the items they were buying. They had to turn in the voucher when they made a purchase. *The Brainerd Dispatch* reported that participants could lose out on some items for which they qualified if they didn’t want to stock up all at once.

A cardholder can shop for one or two items daily for up to a month if the items have not been exceeded in her allotment for the month. The cards expire once a month, then are re-loaded.

OREGON

MULTNOMAH COUNTY has filed amicus briefs in two cases that argue the government has an obligation to protect the atmosphere and the natural environment from **climate change** because they are public trust resources.

A group of 21 plaintiffs, many of whom are minors, are suing the federal government over its climate change policies. The federal government has repeatedly filed motions to dismiss and delay action on the case, which has slowly made its way to the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals. Another case involves young people suing the state of Oregon for failing to protect natural resources from climate change. The plaintiffs filed a request to have their case reviewed by the Oregon Supreme Court.

County Chair Deborah Kafoury said the county is the first sovereign government to support plaintiffs in both cases — *Chernaik v. Brown* and *Juliana v. United States* — in large part because county leaders feel governments do have a moral and a legal duty to protect natural resources

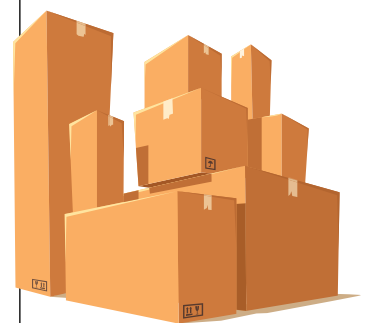
from the impacts of climate change, such as record-breaking wildfires and ocean acidification.

UTAH

The elevation and surrounding mountains make **SALT LAKE COUNTY** victim to temperature inversions in the winter that keep pollution close to ground level. With that in mind, Mayor Jenny Wilson has created an **Office of Environmental Services**. For now, the *Salt Lake Tribune* reported, the office will be staffed by one person, who will build partnerships with outside organizations. The county has already reduced its vehicle fleet and replaced them with energy-efficient models, but a population boom is expected, bringing with it more cars and pollution.

VIRGINIA

Nearly a year after winning the race to play host to Amazon’s new facility, the **ARLINGTON COUNTY** Board officially approved a \$23 million set of incentives for the online retailer. The **incentives** will be tied to the floor space Amazon occupies. The company would need to occupy 64,000 square feet in 2020 next year to obtain grants, but those occupancy targets will increase. The agreement anticipates Amazon occupying more than 6 million square feet in 2035. WTOP News reported the funding will be drawn from the county’s hotel occupancy tax.



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



MINNESOTA

WRIGHT COUNTY is expanding a program to stop **invasive aquatic species** from spreading, according to Minnesota Public Radio News. Boaters will now be required to stop at a regional inspection station before entering specified lakes. The county voted to add six more lakes to the program where boaters will be required to have their trailers and boats inspected before putting them in the water.

In 2017, Wright County was the first Minnesota county to require inspections and have boats or trailers tagged before being allowed in certain lakes. Boaters face possible citations if their boats are not inspected and tagged at the regional inspection station. The nine lakes included in the program are all within 15 miles of the regional inspection station. Boaters who take a class on how to inspect their own boat may receive a special decal and do not have to go to the regional inspection checkpoint, Minnesota Public Radio News reports.

NEW YORK

- A \$15 million state grant will allow **CHAUTAUQUA COUNTY** to possibly **double the size of its public defender’s staff**. The grant from the Office of Indigent Legal Services will completely reim-

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