

# The Iowa County

## Redesigning Public Health in Iowa

September 2006



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# The Iowa County

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## ISAC's Mission:

To promote effective and responsible county government for the people of Iowa.

## ISAC's Vision:

To be the principal, authoritative source of representation, information and services for and about county government in Iowa.

## Redesigning Public Health: The Iowa Story

*By: Martha Gelhaus, Executive Officer,  
Office for Organizational Excellence,  
Iowa Department of Public Health*

What should all Iowans reasonably expect from local and state public health? The Redesigning Public Health in Iowa initiative seeks to answer that essential question. Other questions bring further dimension to the story: Why did Iowa undertake the redesign? What approach has the state chosen? How will resources such as the National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO's) Operational Definition be used? Finally, what lessons is Iowa learning as the initiative progresses?

### Background

To understand the potential changes the initiative could bring to Iowa, it is useful to appreciate the current state of Iowa's governmental public health system. The Iowa Department of Public Health (IDPH) provides general supervision of the state's public health, with the State Board of Health serving as the policy-making body for IDPH. The board has the power and duty to adopt, amend, and repeal rules and regulations.

Possessing both a statutory and contractual relationship with local boards of health, IDPH provides information and support, as well as consultation on board roles and responsibilities, essential services, and significant public health issues. The department also provides funding to local boards through a variety of contractual agreements. Local boards of health are autonomous in some areas and seek state approval in others.

The saying, "If you have seen one local health department, you have seen one local health department," holds true in Iowa. The state has 98 county boards of health, two city boards of health, and one district board. Local boards of health have broad powers over health matters within their county, city or district under the Iowa Code and Iowa Administrative Code. While the Iowa Code requires some specific duties for boards of health, boards generally have discretion over what services to provide and how to provide them. The board may directly oversee public health staff or contract with other service providers, including non-profit entities such as hospital-based agencies.

### Why Iowa is Engaged in the Redesign Process

The Iowa Department of Public Health launched the redesign initiative in response to regional public health visits conducted in 2003 and 2004 by the department's executive team, comprised of the department and division directors. During these regional visits, local representatives expressed concerns about the public health system. They noted that in addition to the enormous demands on public health such as new diseases, health disparities, an aging population, and threat of bioterrorism, the system itself has challenges to overcome. Specifically, the executive team heard that the current system is fragmented, relies

heavily on categorical funding, lacks benchmarks or standards, has inconsistent service delivery statewide, and suffers from workforce fatigue. The conclusion of the executive team? Something needed to be done.

That "something" became a workgroup of Iowa public health professionals first convened in 2004. Recognizing that a strong local and state partnership was required for success, IDPH Director Mary Hansen oversaw the assembly of a team comprised of representatives from local boards of health, county health departments, IDPH, and organizations such as the Iowa Public Health Association and the Iowa Association of Local Public Health Agencies. Dr. Hansen tasked the workgroup with assessing the current structure of public health service delivery in Iowa and making recommendations for redesigning the system based on their findings.

### The Iowa Approach

To avoid being overwhelmed by the magnitude of its mission, the workgroup decided to focus its preliminary efforts on governmental public health: local public health departments, the state health department and the local and state boards of health. While non-governmental providers are essential to the public health system, governmental public health entities are the system's backbone and have primary accountabilities.

The workgroup identified the establishment of standards as the first step to enhancing governmental public health capacity in Iowa. The purpose of the standards will be to raise the bar for public health, improve the consistent availability of services statewide and create a system of accountability. The workgroup began by drafting local standards, with state standards to follow. Determining needs at the local level first would inform the rest of the effort.

The local public health standards will specify what has to be in place to deliver public health services in Iowa. As the entities with jurisdiction over such matters, local boards of health will have control over how they meet the standards. Several existing options include providing services through a local public health agency, through contracts with non-governmental entities, or by forming district health departments.

However, before writing the standards, the workgroup required a conceptual framework for local public health. Using the public health core functions and 10 essential services as guiding principles, the workgroup wanted Iowa's approach to be consistent with work underway by NACCHO, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and other states, yet still meet the unique needs of Iowa. They reviewed standards from Washington, Minnesota, North Carolina, Oregon, Ohio and Missouri, and

researched CDC's *National Public Health Performance Standards*. In addition, the workgroup examined NACCHO's Operational Definition of a Functional Local Health Department and its associated standards.

After several iterations, the framework contained two building blocks: organizational capacity and public health services. The workgroup designated system components for each area. For example, "workforce" is a component of organizational capacity, while "prevent epidemics and the spread of disease" is a component of public health services. The workgroup then structured nine committees around the framework components tasked with drafting the local standards. Over 100 local and state public health professionals and stakeholders served in this capacity, representing the state legislature, local boards of health, county boards of supervisors, local health departments, academic institutions, the State Board of Health and IDPH. Expertise, county size and location, and availability of public health resources determined the basis for selecting the cross-section of local health participants, representing over one-third of Iowa's 99 counties.

The workgroup set an ambitious timetable for drafting standards. Beginning in October 2005, the nine committees met monthly to draft local public health standards. The draft stan-

dards were presented at the Iowa Public Health Association Conference in March 2006. Public health stakeholders were encouraged to give feedback through June 2006. The committees are in the process of reviewing the stakeholder comments this summer to determine if any modifications to the standards need to be made. We anticipate the first version of the Iowa Local Public Health Standards to be completed in early September. The development of state public health standards will begin in October 2006. We will use the same approach to developing state standards as was used for the local standards.

### Lessons Learned

We continue to learn important lessons through the Redesigning Public Health in Iowa initiative that may be helpful to others who are engaged in a similar process of developing standards or undertaking other changes to better their public health system.

1) A strong partnership between local and state public health must exist to initiate change within the system. Certainly, such change often encounters resistance and criticism. But commit-

*continued to page 6*

## Public Health Redesign: Another Perspective

*By: Tim Hoschek, President, Iowa State Association of County Supervisors*

We all owe a debt of gratitude to the Iowa Department of Public Health (IDPH) for all of the work that they have put in on the proposed Iowa Local Public Health Standards. The Iowa State Association of County Supervisors (ISACS) seeks a partnership with IDPH to update and professionalize local public health agencies in Iowa. But ISACS does not support the proposed standards in their current form.

First of all, cost is a huge issue. IDPH has no idea how much the standards will cost, or how much counties will be required to pay. The standards may make sense to state public health officials, but they have been created with virtually no input from elected local officials, who are acutely aware that proposals like this come with a large price tag and have to be paid for with property taxes.

Second, up until now county boards of health have operated with very little regulation from the IDPH. That may need to change, but these standards go way too far in the other direction. The standards assume that there is only one right way to deliver public health services. They are very

proscriptive. They require, for instance, that every county board of health will:

- create personnel policies that include provisions for career development;
- guarantee access to a local public health website;
- guarantee access to a trained public information officer to manage media relationships; and
- assure the ability to access GIS to analyze data.

There are 34 pages of these specific mandates. Instead, the IDPH should set general goals, and then leave the rest up to the local stakeholders. For some counties, the proposed standards reflect their current practices. But for other counties, meeting these standards will be overwhelming.

Third, the educational standards are unrealistic. For instance, few public health administrators have a master's degree in public health. Hiring people with enhanced qualifications will be expensive, assuming that they can even be located.

The IDPH has developed a proposal with one-size-fits-all standards that may or may not meet the local needs, and the proposal fails to address what these standards are going to cost, or how they are going to be paid for.

Instead, the IDPH should work with the counties on securing more funding for local public health. Once that money is available, the goal should be to promote local programs that satisfy IDPH goals and at the same time meet locally-established needs.

## feature

*continued from page 5*  
*"Redesigning Public Health: The Iowa Story"*

ment, trust, and foresight from both local and state public health can overcome these obstacles. We are fortunate in Iowa that some of the strongest advocates for change and improvement in local capacity are local public health professionals.

2) A variety of opinions and perspectives is essential for developing sound standards. The redesign workgroup has engaged a broad spectrum of stakeholders. Participating local representatives hail from urban and rural counties, from resource-rich and resource-poor counties, from every region of the state. Policymakers such as state legislators and representatives from boards of supervisors and local boards of health bring varied perspectives to the process. This broad involvement will be especially valuable as we address funding issues.

3) This kind of redesign process must incorporate frequent and open communication. The Iowa workgroup purposefully conducted its business in an open manner, including implementation of a communication plan identifying our audiences and methods of communication. We launched a website ([www.idph.state.ia.us/rphi/default.asp](http://www.idph.state.ia.us/rphi/default.asp)) to provide general information about the initiative, meeting minutes and current drafts of standards. At a plenary session during the Iowa Public Health Association Conference in March 2006, workgroup representatives presented the draft standards. Breakout sessions at the conference offered the opportunity for attendees to provide feedback. Then, the IDPH executive team held community meetings across the state in May to further discuss redesigning public health. To introduce state public health employees to the initiative, IDPH has conducted orientation sessions. Finally, articles written for IDPH publications and professional organizations' newsletters have provided additional exposure.

4) Standards should be written in clear, concise language that is understandable. Iowa modeled its approach to writing standards after NACCHO's operational definition of a local health department. The language in the operational definition is straightforward, in active voice, and easy to understand.

### What's Next?

There are many chapters yet to be written in the Iowa story. Developing standards is only one step in the larger Redesigning Public Health in Iowa initiative. Future steps may include developing implementation plans for the standards, proposing legislative changes, tackling funding issues, exploring accreditation for local public health, and involving non-governmental public health partners in system change. While the process will take time and effort for all involved, the Redesigning Public Health in Iowa initiative is the right thing to do to better the public health system for all of Iowa's citizens.

*This article appeared in the NACCHO Exchange and is reprinted with permission from the National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO). A follow-up piece regarding this issue will appear in a future issue of The Iowa County.*

## classified ad

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*Des Moines, Iowa*

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## in memory

### Dolores Rogers

Dolores Rogers, 84, of Iowa City, died July 17 at University of Iowa Hospitals & Clinics. Rogers was the Johnson County Auditor from 1955 until 1977. She was a member of the Pilot Club International, Plumb Grove Questors, the Royal Neighbors and Iowa Women's Bowling Association. Rogers had been a volunteer at Veterans Hospital, Iowa City and a member of Zion Lutheran Church.



### Fred McCaw



Fred McCaw, who served as Dubuque County's top prosecutor for nearly 20 years, died August 2 of an apparent heart attack while on vacation in South Dakota. He was 60. McCaw, who was to retire at the end of the year, was elected county attorney in 1987. Before that, he was an assistant Dubuque County attorney and worked for Dubuque Legal Services Agency. McCaw graduated from Dubuque Senior High School in 1963. He earned a bachelor of economics degree from the University of Iowa in 1968 and a law degree from Iowa in 1972.

## The Glue at the Capitol

Order or chaos? An article I recently read stated scientific researchers are poised to announce the discovery of a material they call “dark matter.” They believe this is the stuff that acts as a kind of glue in the universe. Whether galaxies, planets, people or petunias, dark matter is essentially the invisible substance that holds everything together. Without it, everything would be in chaos.

When I read that article, I was reminded of the operational network of people in the statehouse who really make the process work. While lawmakers, the governor, and sometimes even lobbyists are highly visible in the public eye, there are many other people who work behind the scenes for the successful outcomes of legislative sessions.

Hundreds of people work in the Capitol. Even though each person has an important part to play, it is not possible to name all of them here. The time has come for some of these individuals to be recognized for the colossal jobs they do. Accordingly, these are just some of the people with whom ISAC works on a regular basis.

The Legislative Services Agency provides nonpartisan staff services to all members of the General Assembly. The two primary offices are the Legal Services Division and the Fiscal Services Division. Duties of these offices include committee staffing, drafting of bills and amendments, fiscal and budget analysis, and research. These dedicated professionals are on hand at all times to help lawmakers achieve the best legislative results possible. While all 150 legislators are their bosses, these people work with state agencies and organizations like ISAC to draft legislation, research issues, and prepare for committee meetings.

Among the members in the Legal Services Division who commonly work with ISAC are Susan Crowley (ISAC staff 1989-90), Emily Gardyesz, Michael Goedert, John Pollak and Joe Royce. Their work with various legislative committees brings them in constant contact with ISAC staff and affiliate legislative liaisons. Susan Crowley said, “It’s exciting and fulfilling to be part of the legislative process because the legislators are sincerely committed to making things better for their constituents, their districts, the entire state. I also enjoy working with local officials. They have always graciously taken the time to help me understand their statutory responsibilities, their roles, and their concerns. Local officials have been instrumental in assisting me in drafting legislation and in educating legislators.”

In the Fiscal Services Division, recognition should go to Dwayne Ferguson, Susan Lerdal, Sam Leto, Mary Beth Mellick and Jeff Robinson for the work they do to prepare the state budget, track state revenues, and evaluate fiscal impacts of proposed legislation and amendments. They play a key role in obtaining input from ISAC regarding the fiscal impacts of legislative proposals on counties.

Both political parties in each house have several employees

**By: John Easter**

ISAC Director of  
Intergovernmental Affairs



called “caucus staff.” These staff members provide political assistance and research for their particular legislative caucus. While working to advance their caucus goals, they also work with lobbyists, as appropriate, on legislative issues of interest to the senators or representatives for whom they work.

House Democratic caucus staff Ed Conlow, Anna Hyatt-Crozier, Jenifer Parsons and Thomas Patterson work on issues of common interest to ISAC. The House Republican caucus staffs with whom we regularly work are Tim Coonan, Ann McCarthy, Kelly Ryan and Brad Trow. All of these individuals provide excellent service for their respective legislative members, while working closely with various interest groups.

The same holds true for caucus staff in the Senate. Republican caucus staffs with whom ISAC often works are Tom Ashworth, Pam Dugdale, Marc Elcock and Jim Frederick. Democratic caucus staff includes Eric Bakker, Steve Conway, Sue Monahan and Kerry Wright. All of these people provide thorough and professional service.

There are many other people around the Capitol who help make the whole process work. Shirley Roach is the Printing Officer in the copy center located by the Law Library in the rotunda. Betty Soener works for the Chief Clerk in the House. She provides staff services in the House lounge, coordinates lobbyist registrations and posts subcommittee meeting notices. Law librarians Linda Robertson, Mandy Easter and Cory Quist provide valuable research assistance. The Senate Bill Clerk is Jay Mosher. He manages the Senate bill room and supplies ISAC and other groups with daily bill packets early each morning. Jay said, “I am pleased to have a role in developing the laws we live by. I’m on the sidelines with no pressure other than to do my job as efficiently as I can.”

Staffs to the Secretary of the Senate and the Chief Clerk of the House keep the flow of legislative work documented and organized. Legislative secretaries often assist lobbyists and constituents when the lawmaker with whom he or she works is busy in caucus, attending a committee meeting or involved in floor debate. Mailroom clerks and switchboard operators ensure that lawmakers receive their communications from the public. Capitol security, the Sergeant-at-Arms and doormen in each chamber all play important parts in providing a safe and secure environment for everyone who works in or visits the Capitol.

Each person has a vital role in the grand scheme of the statehouse system. Thank you to all for a wonderful job year in and year out. Without the hard work and dedication of each of these people, the order in the Capitol would easily turn into chaos!

## Entering an E-Government Minefield: Searching Employees' Personal Computers

**Searching Employee Computers:** When can public sector employers legally search their employees' home computers for evidence of job-related misconduct? This was the issue in a recent federal court case in Iowa, *Sabin v. Miller* (423 F.Supp.2nd 943). In that case, Carla Sabin was an employee of the Department of Corrections (DOC). Sabin had not been provided with a computer at work, so with her employer's permission she used her personal laptop computer, and her personal desktop located at her home, for both work-related and personal activities. After Sabin was accused of misconduct, she was advised by her DOC supervisor to cooperate with the investigators. Sabin then drove the investigators to her home where the investigators entered her home and seized her laptop and desktop computers.

She sued the DOC investigators, alleging that their search of her home and seizure of her computers without a search warrant, done as part of an investigation of the employee for misconduct, violated the constitutional protection against an unreasonable search and seizure.

The DOC investigators moved for summary judgment. They contended, among other things, that Sabin had no reasonable expectation of privacy with regard to her computers. They claimed that the seizure of the computers involved a public employer's investigation of alleged employee misconduct, and that Sabin's commingling of business and personal information on her private computers diminished her legitimate expectation of privacy.

The federal magistrate first held that looking for the computers in Sabin's home did constitute a Fourth Amendment "search." Then the magistrate said that a public employee's rights with respect to searches in her home are no different than a private citizen's. According to the magistrate, a search carried out in an individual's home without a search warrant, when conducted by a public employer, is always an "unreasonable" search under the Fourth Amendment unless it falls within one of the well-defined exceptions, such as plain view or "exigent circumstances."

The magistrate then ruled that the fact that Sabin had kept work files on her personal computers did not in any way diminish Sabin's constitutionally-guaranteed privacy rights. "Sabin had a legitimate expectation of privacy in her home entitling her to Fourth Amendment protection," said the court. If the DOC investigators wanted to "intrude on her privacy interest in her home," then they needed a search warrant, the court said.

Under most circumstances, public sector employers can search their employees' county-issued computers at work. But this case raises a huge red flag concerning conducting a similar search of an employee's home computer, even if the search is part of a legitimate investigation into employee misconduct, and even if the employee has work files on her home computer.

**By: David Vestal**

ISAC General Counsel



If there is a need for such a search, county employers either need to get their employees' permission to search their home computers or get a search warrant. Of course the best advice of all is to require that all county work be done only on county-issued computers, so the issue never comes up in the first place.

**RAGBRAI Lawsuit:** Here is a warning for counties that are thinking about being "host" counties for future RAGBRAIs. In 2004, the RAGBRAI route went through Crawford County. RAGBRAI rider Kirk Ullrich was on a county road in Crawford County when his bike tire allegedly got caught in a gap in the road. He fell and sustained serious head injuries. He died the next day from his injuries. Now the Ullrich estate has sued Crawford County, claiming that the county was negligent. The lawsuit alleges among other things that the county failed to properly design the county road, failed to warn riders of "defects and dangers" in the road, and failed to "supervise the RAGBRAI event."

With tens of thousands of riders passing through Iowa counties on RAGBRAI every year, fatalities are going to occur. Last year, for instance, a rider was killed when a tree limb fell on his tent. But I don't ever recall hearing of a county being sued for a RAGBRAI-related incident.

This lawsuit raises a lot of questions. For instance: What is the legal effect of the waiver that RAGBRAI riders sign? What is the overall duty of counties to maintain county roads for bicycles as opposed to cars? What is the county's specific duty to make the county roads safe for RAGBRAI riders? The biggest question of all may be, if the county is found to be at fault in this lawsuit, can other counties in the future tell the *Des Moines Register* "Thanks, but take your ride somewhere else.?"

**Wage and Hour:** Lawsuits asserting claims under the Fair Labor Standards Act, including those asserting wage and hour violations or overtime violations, have increased from 2,000 in 1999 to 3,400 in 2005, according to the Department of Labor (DOL). Analysts suggest that one factor is the new DOL regulations that went into effect in 2004 and increased awareness about wage and hour violations.

**Parting Ponderable:** If you ask people to list famous Iowans, they will mention names like John Wayne, Meredith Wilson and Glenn Miller. But I've got three more names for you. Who can identify Iowans Donnabelle Mullenger, Francis Marion Drake, and Dr. Byron McKeeby? First one to email me (dvestal@iowacounties.org) with the correct answer wins my undying respect. If you can do it without using the Internet, you *really* have my respect.



## Mental Illness - Becoming an Epidemic

*Editor's Note: Last month Deb Eckerman, CCMS Specialist, wrote an article about a conference that she attended in June entitled "Recovery: Reaching New Heights in Psychiatric Rehabilitation." We truly appreciate Linda Forsythe's letter and willingness to allow us to share her thoughts and experiences with all of you.*

I would like to comment on the article written by Deb Eckerman "Where Have We Been? Where Are We Going?" I really don't know where to start. It does my heart good to read about conferences focused on mental illness and I am glad to know there are those who care.

I have a son who is bi-polar. When she said it was daunting to decide which of the sessions to attend, imagine what it is like to be the parent of a child with a mental illness. Trying to find help for him is the most stomach-wrenching, frustrating, and daunting aspect of my life. Mental illness is not the person's fault, but try to equate it to a physical illness and see how far you get. We have all kinds of free clinics for every physical ailment you can think of; where are the professionals for mental illness?

Most companies don't treat mental illness the same as they treat physical illness, but believe me there is no difference. No mentally ill person would chose to be mentally ill, quite the contrary. As my son says, "he would rather have cancer," at least he can get treatment for that. Plus the stigma that is attached to mental illness. We need grand scale education on mental illness. I am appalled at most people's concepts of mental illness. They think the person is sub-human, or of less quality and less deserving of help.

One of the major problems with the programs that are out there is that the people running them seem to think that mentally ill people want to congregate together. When the truth of the matter is, they would like to have clinics that would give them tools to get help and manage their illness. They get very tired of

*By: Linda D. Forsythe, Mahaska County,  
the mother of a brilliant, beautiful son  
who happens to be mentally ill*

the theory that if they know of those with their same problems somehow that will give them hope. Well, it doesn't, it just makes them more depressed. Put yourself in their position, would you want to only hear from those with your same problems, or would you like to join the rest of the world.

As Deb stated in her article, it is high time we treat mentally ill people with the same respect that we would like to have. Education is the key, for the world at large and for the mentally ill. Most can be and are contributing citizens, but they need a boost once in awhile. My son works for a Japanese-owned business, and they have a progressive outlook on the mentally ill. They have treated my son with respect, compassion, and understanding from day one. When no one else would give him a chance, they did. They look at what he can contribute and understand that he has limitations, as we all do.

Why is it that mental illness is not an acceptable limitation in our society? He still struggles with bi-polar and always will, but let's give him the tools to overcome that limitation. Don't hamper him with stigmas and ignorance. I do believe that the majority are still just "talking the talk." They all need to walk in the shoes of the mentally ill. Then, I'm sure they would "walk the walk."

This is a disgraceful aspect of the American society. It is way past time to grow up and face facts. Mental illness is becoming an epidemic. The cases of autistic children has skyrocketed. Mental illness should not be separate from physical illness. Illness is illness. Let's get on the ball and get this changed. I would like to see this and other articles like it printed in every newspaper and magazine in the country. Make people take notice. Don't let them sweep it under the carpet any longer. We are losing wonderful, beautiful and worthwhile human beings for lack of help.

## Free Online Services

**By: Tammy Norman**

ISAC Technology  
Services Coordinator



**Q: Do know of any good, free, online services? I have heard that you can share photo albums online with co-workers, family and friends; is this true?**

A: There are many excellent, free, online services that will enable you to share photos with family and friends. The companies that provide this service are hoping that you will not only use this free service, but that you or your family and friends will decide to make hard copy prints of the photos that you are sharing. Many of these services are truly legit and offer photos at reasonable prices. [MyPhotoAlbum.com](http://MyPhotoAlbum.com) is one of these services that I have tested and utilized. There are other online service providers that offer photo sharing and printing services such as Target, Wal-Mart and Walgreens. They provide simple to use online photo albums that you can share. You also can easily view your photos, purchase them and have them shipped to your home address or pick them up at your local store.

Another online freebie that has been brought to my attention by a county official, is a web-based Internet phone service tool entitled Skype. You are able to make free phone calls through your computer by using the Internet and a headset (promotion ends December 31, 2006). If you wish to check out this free online service, you may do so by going to [www.skype.com](http://www.skype.com).

Finally, you can tap into free e-mail accounts such as Hotmail at [www.hotmail.com](http://www.hotmail.com). For more information on setting up these types of accounts refer to my May 2005 column. Excellent freebies are to be had at CNET's download page or you can access it directly by visiting [www.download.com](http://www.download.com). This website offers free music downloads, drivers, software and many other new and upcoming technologies. You will need to be aware that some of these are just free trials and you may have to purchase to retain them.

**Website Note:** The Fall School of Instruction will be held November 29 - December 1 at the Marriott & Renaissance Savery in downtown Des Moines. You are able to register online at [www.iowacounties.org](http://www.iowacounties.org) under Fall School of Instruction. Please forward any items that you would like addressed in this column to my attention at 515-244-7181 or [tnorman@iowacounties.org](mailto:tnorman@iowacounties.org). Until next month, keep clicking!

## The Baby's First Steps

**By: Robin Harlow**

ISAC Technology  
Project Manager



I view developing a Technology Clearinghouse (or anything new) much the way a baby learns to walk. As the baby learns to walk, there will be both the joy of the first steps and the initial shock of landing on their rump. The first steps and the rump landings are important to the process of learning to walk.

As we take these first steps, the Clearinghouse will result in changes. I will work to help everyone understand:

- why making the changes is important;
- what happens if we don't make the changes;
- how the affiliates/counties will benefit from the changes;
- how the changes will impact the affiliates/counties both individually and statewide; and
- how the affiliates/counties can contribute to the changes.

The last item will be critically important. Our affiliates and counties will need to feel a sense of ownership in developing a Technology Clearinghouse strategic plan. Since this ownership is so critical, the first step is to engage all affiliates in a review of some of the objectives that were originally developed for the Clearinghouse. It is planned that once the objectives are in place a temporary Technology Clearinghouse Board will be appointed to help in assessing and making strategic and operational recommendations.

Here is a sample of some of the questions the board/affiliates/counties will need to answer:

- What is ISAC's role in providing services that give all counties a basic online presence?
- Where are the opportunities for regional cooperation for sharing technologies?
- What other technologies or services could ISAC provide?

My future columns will detail some of the results of these initial meetings. Hopefully with everyone's help we can keep the rump landings to a minimum.

### 2006 NACo Annual Conference

In August I attended the 2006 NACo Annual Conference in Chicago, IL. I sat in on technology committee meetings and several educational seminars. The topics in the committee meetings were Net Neutrality, Next Generation 911 (NG911) and the status of a re-write of Telco legislation. I will discuss these topics in future columns. In the coming years, it will be important that we have a good basic understanding of these topics and the possible policy or budget ramifications they may have at the county level. In the meantime, please check the Clearinghouse website ([www.iowacounties.org](http://www.iowacounties.org) then 'Services', 'Technology') for links to these different topics.

## Local Government Employment

By: Jay Syverson

ISAC Fiscal Analyst



You can almost set your calendar by it. Every couple of months a newspaper columnist or an anti-government group will complain that Iowa has too much local government and that our government infrastructure is stuck in the horse and buggy days. If we could just get some cities to disincorporate and counties to consolidate, well, we'd save some money and could lower taxes. Lower taxes would attract businesses, bringing jobs that encourage people to come to our state. People would build homes, expanding the tax base, and we could enhance those "quality of life" aspects of government, like parks and trails, that keep people in Iowa, without raising taxes. What a modern-day Eden Iowa could become if only those darn local governments would get out of the way. When anti-government types complain about too much government, they're generally not complaining about too many roads or too much public safety. It seems to me that they're complaining about inefficiency: too many people providing services that, in their eyes, could be done just as well – and for less money – by fewer people. At its heart this anti-government attitude seems to be about too many government employees. With that in mind, this month's *By the Numbers* looks at local government employment in Iowa, surrounding states and the nation as a whole. (All data refers to 2005 and was provided by the US Census Bureau and the State Library of Iowa.)

There are just under 12 million full-time equivalent employees (FTEs) in local government nationwide. Those people comprise about 7.7% of the total labor force, and their diverse jobs range from public safety to education to solid waste management. That breaks down to a national average of 396 local government FTEs per 10,000 population. Iowa has 133,000 local government FTEs, or 448 per 10,000 population (13% higher than the national average). Iowa's rate is the second highest among its border-state region, trailing only Nebraska's 450 local government FTEs per 10,000 population. Minnesota (380), South Dakota (389), Missouri (391), and Illinois (395) are all below the national average, and Wisconsin is just above it at 404. So are the critics right – does Iowa have significantly more city and county employees (per capita) than other states?

Before we answer that, let's look at one more set of data – local government employees in the education field. ("Education" includes elementary, secondary and higher education – both instructional and administrative/support – as well as local libraries.) Nationwide there are 234 local government education FTEs per 10,000 population. In Iowa, that number is 284 – 21% above the national average and by far the highest rate among Iowa and its border states. South Dakota's rate of 261 education FTEs per 10,000 population is second high-

est and Minnesota's rate of 223 is lowest.

Now let's exclude the education employment data and look at everything else, the so-called general purpose local government (GPLG), which includes things that cities and counties do: public safety, transportation, public health, water and sewer infrastructure, and parks and recreation, among others. In this category, the national average is 162 local government FTEs per 10,000 population. Iowa's rate of 163 FTEs, while still second-highest in our border-state region, is only 1% above the national average. Nebraska's rate of 197 GPLG FTEs per 10,000 population is the highest in the region; South Dakota's rate of 127 is the lowest. Missouri's rate (147) is also well below the national average, while the other states (Minnesota-157, Wisconsin-158, Illinois-160) are pretty close to Iowa's rate and the national rate.

Looking at Iowa by itself, we see that 84,000 of its local government FTEs are in the education field, most of those in elementary and secondary education. According to ISAC's FY05 salary survey, Iowa counties employ between 12,000 and 14,000 FTEs. That would leave 34,000 to 36,000 FTEs employed by cities, municipal utilities, public hospitals and other local governments in Iowa.

Of course, it's not just the number of employees that drives costs, but also what they're paid. The Census's payroll data shows that Iowa's local government payroll costs are well below the national average, on both a per-FTE and per-capita basis. On both bases, Iowa is third lowest within the seven-state region. The national average GPLG payroll cost is \$46,423 annually per FTE; Iowa's is \$38,476. Likewise, the national average GPLG payroll cost per capita is \$750; Iowa's is \$629. For both of these measures, Iowa is about 20% below the national average. In the seven-state region, South Dakota has the "cheapest" GPLG by every measure: it has 127 FTEs per 10,000 population; its annual payroll per FTE is \$34,375; and its annual payroll per capita is \$437. All of these are far and away the lowest in the region. But that doesn't necessarily imply that South Dakota has the most efficient general purpose local government. A determination of efficiency will depend also on the quality and quantity of services provided with a given set of resources, something that's well beyond the scope of this article.

So the answer to the question of whether Iowa's GPLG employment is out of whack with other states seems to be twofold: 1) the number of Iowa's GPLG employees is about in line with the national average, although it is higher than most of our neighboring states; and 2) the cost of Iowa's GPLG employees is well below the national average and is lower than most of our neighboring states.

**Correction:** July's *By the Numbers* listed Calhoun County as having the biggest decline in both property taxes and property tax rates from FY 2006 to 2007. However, the article inadvertently omitted the county's general supplemental levy and rate. When those are included, Calhoun County property taxes increased by 9.4% from FY 2006 to 2007, and the county's property tax rate increased by \$0.10.

## health check

### Migraine Headaches

By: **Sandy Longfellow**

ISAC Administrative Assistant



How often do people mention that they have a headache? It really is a pretty common occurrence in today's society. A headache can be brought on by a number of things. There is a type of headache that is very severe called a migraine. An estimated 28 million Americans experience these extreme headaches, and women experience migraines three times more often than men.

A migraine headache is one-sided and/or pulsating and made worse by routine physical activity. Nausea, vomiting and sensitivity to light and sound can accompany it. I recently saw a video that included interviews of women who suffered with migraines. They expressed their frustration with the pain and inability to carry on daily life when they have a migraine.

It can sometimes be difficult for spouses of those who suffer from migraines to understand just how bad it feels and how much their spouse wants to carry on a normal life. Family routines can be badly disrupted. There are now prescriptions, such as Relpax, that can help a great deal.

Lifestyle changes can also help prevent migraines. Seek a calm environment. Turn out the lights and relax in a dark quiet room. Unwinding and relaxing at the end of the day can promote better sleep. Try to listen to soothing music, soak in a warm bath or read a favorite book.

Migraines can keep you from falling asleep or wake you up at night. Likewise, migraines are often triggered by a poor night's sleep. Try to establish regular sleep patterns. Use your bedroom for sleep only and use a fan to muffle distracting noises. Check your medications, as well - they can cause sleeplessness. Try not to take long naps, those over an hour can interfere with nighttime sleep.

Do you have headaches that limit your ability to work, study, or enjoy life? Have you wanted to talk to your healthcare professional about your headaches? If so, answer these three questions:

1. Did you feel nauseated or sick to your stomach with your last headache?
2. Did light bother you (a lot more than when you don't have headaches)?
3. Have your headaches limited your ability to work, study, or do what you needed to for at least one day?

If you answered yes to two or more of these questions, you may have migraines. Take your symptoms seriously and speak with your doctor. Find out today what can be done!

## ISAC meetings

### ISAC Fall School 2006

By: **Jerri Noboa**

ISAC Meetings Administrator



ISAC's Fall School of Instruction will be held November 29-December 1 at the Downtown Marriott & Renaissance Savery in Des Moines. Online registration is available at [www.iowacounties.org](http://www.iowacounties.org).

ISAC is excited to announce something new happening during ISAC's Fall School general session on Thursday, November 30. Instead of one keynote speaker, a keynote panel is being planned to discuss government accountability. Jeaneane Beck, KUNI Public Radio in Cedar Falls; Mike Glover, Iowa Statehouse Correspondent and Chief Political Writer for the Des Moines bureau of the Associated Press; Kay Henderson, News Director for Radio Iowa (tentative) and Doug Neumann, *Cedar Rapids Gazette* have agreed to serve on the panel.

The ISAC room block at the Marriott is now full. There are still rooms left at the Renaissance Savery and Hotel Fort Des Moines - both connected by skywalk to the Marriott. The Marriott does not accept purchase orders but can send out a preliminary bill so a county can get a check cut (call 515-245-5500 and ask for bookkeeping). The Marriott will become a smoke-free facility September 1<sup>st</sup>. This means sleeping rooms that allowed smoking in the past will no longer be available, but the hotel will designate area/s for smokers.

The process to make hotel reservations for ISAC's Spring School (March 18-20, 2007) will be different. The Marriott and Renaissance Savery will take reservations December 4, 2006, either by calling the hotels directly or online through ISAC's website ([www.iowacounties.org](http://www.iowacounties.org)). You will not be able to make reservations for ISAC's Spring School during ISAC's Fall School.

There is still construction on I-235, which will affect your route to downtown Des Moines. A construction update regarding getting in and out of Des Moines will be in the November magazine. You can read the latest closures at [www.i235.com](http://www.i235.com).

Alumni Association members will be having a luncheon/meeting (dutch treat) on Thursday, November 30, at the Marriott in Allie's Restaurant at 11:30am. If you will be retiring by the end of the year, please feel free to join us. Contact Jerri Noboa at 515-244-7181 or [jnobo@iowacounties.org](mailto:jnobo@iowacounties.org) to make your reservation.

## Legislative Process Begins

ISAC Steering Committees will be meeting September 8 and October 6. County officials have been appointed to the seven ISAC steering committees by their affiliate presidents. Each ISAC affiliate is entitled to name three members to each steering committee. Most of the steering committees have approximately 35 members. Members of the steering committees can be viewed on ISAC's website ([www.iowacounties.org](http://www.iowacounties.org), 'Services', 'Legislative.')

These committees provide the public policy platform for ISAC in dealing with the legislative and executive branches of state government. The committee process is where policy statements and legislative objectives are introduced, debated, and rejected or adopted.

Committee chairs are appointed by the ISAC President and approved by the ISAC board. Below are the ISAC Steering Committees and chairs for 2006:

- County Administration & Organization - Pat Gill, Woodbury County Auditor/Recorder
- Environment & Public Health - Larry Roehl, Louisa County Engineer
- Human Services - Rod Sullivan, Johnson County Supervisor
- Land Use & Rural Affairs - Lannie Miller, Palo Alto County Supervisor
- Public Safety - Curt Braby, Louisa County Sheriff
- Taxation & Finance - Dianne Kiefer, Wapello County Treasurer
- Transportation - Royce Fichtner, Marshall County Engineer

The following ISAC staff members are appointed to each of the steering committees: County Administration and Organization - Bill Peterson; Environment and Public Health - Deborah Westvold; Human Services - Linda Hinton; Land Use and Rural Affairs - Tammy Norman; Public Safety - David Vestal; Taxation and Finance - Jay Syverson; Transportation - John Easter.

Committee meetings will be held September 8 at the Holiday Inn Airport in Des Moines and October 6 at Adventureland Inn in Altoona. Any county official is entitled to attend and participate in steering committee meetings, but members must be specifically designated by their affiliate in order to vote. Once the steering committees have done their work, the ISAC Board of Directors reviews, amends, and approves each report and identifies "top policy priorities" during the October board meeting. At the ISAC Fall School, November 30, the entire package (including the identified top priorities) is ratified by the full membership. ISAC publishes the package in a booklet for the General Assembly and other interested groups. ISAC also produces a brochure highlighting the top policy priorities.

## ISAC District Officers

### District I

President - Mary Mosiman, Story County Auditor  
Vice President - Steve Pence, Hardin County Recorder  
S/T - Dennis Parrott, Jasper County Auditor

### District II

President - Sis Greiman, Hancock County Supervisor  
Vice President - Phil Dougherty, Cerro Gordo Co. Supervisor  
S/T - Holly Fokkena, Butler County Auditor

### District III

President - Jack Bensley, Sac County Supervisor  
Vice President - Rick Hecht, Sac County Supervisor  
S/T - John Schneider, Plymouth County Supervisor

### District IV

President - Chuck Rieken, Cass County Supervisor  
Vice President - Richard Crouch, Mills County Supervisor  
S/T - Joyce Jensen, Cass County Recorder

### District V

President - Mike Petersen, Wapello County Supervisor  
Vice President - Ernie Greiner, Keokuk County Supervisor  
S/T - Phyllis Dean, Wapello County Auditor

### District VI

President - Sally Stutsman, Johnson County Supervisor  
Vice President - Rhonda McIntyre, Clinton County Treasurer  
S/T - Mary Williams, Benton County Community Services

## ISAC Board Adopts Legal Information Policy

At its meeting on July 20, 2006, the ISAC Board of Directors adopted a Legal Information Policy to clarify the role of ISAC's legal staff in providing legal information to ISAC members. The policy clarifies that ISAC's legal information services are intended to provide general guidance to county officials and does not create an attorney-client relationship with its attendant confidentiality requirements. County officials can review the entire policy on ISAC's website at [www.iowacounties.org](http://www.iowacounties.org).

The policy reiterates the goal for ISAC legal staff is to respond to requests for information as quickly as possible, but cautions members to not expect immediate answers. Members will be reminded to contact their county attorney when they seek guidance from ISAC, and ISAC may ask permission to share questions with the county attorney to ensure coordination between the asking official and the county attorney. As always, county officials are reminded not to act on information provided without consulting with their county attorney.

## Meth Survey Results

County law enforcement officials across 44 states reported that methamphetamine remains the number one drug problem in their county, according to a July survey released by NACo.

In addition, the survey of 500 county law enforcement officials found that while meth lab seizures are down significantly – due largely to new precursor laws – crimes related to meth continue to grow; that meth has increased the workload of public safety officials; that meth use remains popular in western states and is spreading east across America; that the majority of meth currently being abused is imported from out-of-state locations; and that meth-related arrests continue to represent a high proportion of crimes that require incarceration.

The survey, “The Methamphetamine Epidemic: The Criminal Effect of Meth on Communities,” was conducted by NACo to determine the effect of methamphetamine abuse on counties and their residents and to raise public awareness of the meth epidemic.

“The abuse of this highly addictive brain-altering drug continues to destroy lives and strain essential county services across America,” said NACo President Bill Hansell, commissioner, Umatilla County, Ore. “NACo has taken a leadership role in fighting meth abuse and conducts these surveys because counties are on the front lines in responding to the methamphetamine epidemic. Meth abuse causes remarkable financial, legal, medical, environmental, and social problems for counties.”

The NACo survey found that:

- Meth continues to be the number one drug problem. More counties (48%) reported that meth is the primary drug problem – more than cocaine (22%), marijuana (22%) and heroin (3%) combined.
- Crimes related to meth continue to grow. Fifty-five percent of law enforcement officials reported an increase in robberies or burglaries in the last year, 48% reported an increase in domestic violence and 41% reported an increase in simple assaults. Thirty-one percent reported an increase in identity theft crime, which is up from the 27% reported in the July 2005 law enforcement survey.
- Legislation that restricts the sale of precursors works. Ninety percent of counties have some kind of precursor legislation in effect. Forty-six percent reported that the number of meth lab busts is down because of precursor legislation in their jurisdictions.
- Meth has increased the workload of public safety staff.
- Sixty-three percent of counties reported an increased workload in the last year and 73% reported that they are paying more overtime.
- Meth use remains popular in the west and is spreading east.
- In Arizona, California, Idaho, Nevada, New Mexico, Utah,

Washington and Wyoming, 100% reported that meth is the number one drug. However, this information was followed by Oklahoma with 88% reporting meth is number one, Iowa at 79%, Louisiana at 75%, Nebraska at 74% and Oregon at 71%. This information correlates with the national trend that meth is a drug that is largely popular in western rural areas and is spreading across the country from west to east. In Georgia 63% reported that meth is number one. In North Carolina 44% reported that meth is number one, and in Alabama 43% reported that meth is number one. This information verifies law enforcement trends that meth is growing dramatically in the Southeastern region of the country.

- The majority of meth currently being abused is from outside of the state.
- Eighty-five percent reported out-of-state importation and 71% reported importation from Mexico.
- Meth-related arrests continue to represent a high proportion of crimes that require incarceration.
- Forty-eight percent of the counties reported that up to one in five inmates are incarcerated because of meth-related crimes. Seventeen percent reported that one in two inmates are incarcerated because of meth-related crimes.

The new survey is the fifth released in 12 months by NACo. In July 2005, NACo released two surveys on the impact of meth abuse on counties. Key findings indicated that meth was the top drug threat to county law enforcement officials and that meth was responsible for an increase in out-of-home placements for children. In January 2006, NACo released two additional surveys that found that meth was the largest drug that drove people to county public hospital emergency rooms and that the need for meth treatment was growing.

“The primary objective of our effort is to promote action by the Administration and Congress to control and reduce the production, distribution and abuse of meth, including assistance to counties in responding to the problem locally,” Hansell said. “We need a comprehensive strategy that will deal with all aspects of the meth problem.”

*NACo retained the services of Research, Inc. of Washington, D.C. to conduct the telephone survey. All survey responses were collected in June. The full survey is available at [www.naco.org](http://www.naco.org).*

## NACo Membership Update

The all-time county membership record of 2,075 was broken August 1 when NACo added 90 new member counties and three new 100% membership states in one week and surged to a total of 2,173 county members. Currently, 73 counties in Iowa are NACo members.

## New Meth Video Teaches Just One Time - Just Don't!

*Dying for Meth* is a new video on the dangers of methamphetamine use produced by Full Fathom 5 Productions and Matt Farnsworth Films. Farnsworth was the featured speaker on methamphetamine abuse at the 2005 NACo Annual Conference. His presentation featured clips from a documentary called *Poor Mans Dope* and a feature film called *IOWA*. The presentation was very well-received by NACo members in attendance and many requested that the information be made available on DVD.

Since his presentation, the film *IOWA* was released theatrically in New York, Los Angeles, Chicago and many smaller cities in the Midwest. Farnsworth has been featured on a number of news shows, including *Fox News Live*, *Good Day New York*, *Fox and Friends*, and the *Situation with Tucker Carlson* regarding the meth epidemic and his films.

Farnsworth's presentation last year focused on the need for education on the methamphetamine problem, particularly the need to educate young people on the dangers of the drug. Listening to NACo members' desire for a vehicle to provide this knowledge, he produced the DVD *Dying for Meth*. This DVD targets junior high school, high school and college students, law enforcement agencies, governmental agencies, church groups and other community organizations with the message JUST ONE TIME - JUST DON'T.

*Dying for Meth* shows kids how dangerous the drug really is, and the message JUST ONE TIME - JUST DON'T provides the warning that this drug is not one to experiment with. This is a particularly important message right now, when control of precursors is making the mom-and-pop labs of old give way to much more powerful Mexican Ice. Education should now be the focus to slow meth use by controlling demand.

*Dying for Meth* is designed for viewing in a group setting and is perfect for integration into a junior high or high school curriculum on health education and in law enforcement training. The program, designed by NACo and Full Fathom 5 Productions, provides NACo members with an incentive to purchase multiple copies of *Dying for Meth* for distribution across their county. The incentive available to NACo members involves the following discounts on the purchase of the video:

- Regular Price - \$150 per copy
- NACo Price - \$135 1-4 copies, \$127.50 5-9 copies, \$120.00 10+ copies

Each county is encouraged to purchase at a volume that is commensurate with the number of junior high schools, high schools, law enforcement agencies and other pertinent organizations within the county. *A sample of this video may be viewed at [www.dyingformeth.com](http://www.dyingformeth.com). To purchase under NACo pricing, visit NACo's website at [www.naco.org](http://www.naco.org).*

## NACo Receives Meth Grant

NACo will initiate a two-year project to raise public awareness and help county governments respond to the nation's methamphetamine epidemic. The project will emphasize substance abuse treatment and prevention programs. The U.S. Department of Justice's Bureau of Justice Assistance is funding the project. In consultation with its Meth Action Group, NACo has prioritized potential grant activities to support county efforts in best responding to meth in their communities.

NACo plans to carry out a mix of research and educational programming to meet this goal. For example, outreach efforts could involve informing counties of creative ways to fund task forces and other collaborative response groups, and how to identify and work with local partners. NACo will also identify promising research, models and practices with an emphasis on treatment and prevention and will share that information through the Meth Action Clearinghouse on the NACo website ([www.naco.org](http://www.naco.org)), workshops, teleconferences, *County News* and other list-serve communications.

During the two-year effort, possible activities include: educational sessions at NACo and state association conferences; online trainings or teleconferences that describe promising models and approaches for developing a local comprehensive response to meth in communities; developing and distributing a toolkit of materials, and continuing research efforts regarding the methamphetamine epidemic and the impact to counties.

## NACo Election Results

Sonoma County, Calif. Supervisor Valerie Brown emerged as the winner in the 4-candidate race for NACo second vice president during NACo's Annual Conference in Chicago, IL. She stated, "Demands for county services increase each year and funding is always a problem. The future will just grow more challenging. Homeland security, potential federal funding cuts to Medicaid and Medicare, disaster preparation and repair, unfunded mandates and un-reimbursed local costs, support for agriculture, federal lands policy, CDBG - the list goes on. We must be ready. I am prepared and willing to do the hard work that will be required as a NACo officer. I have prepared myself for the NACo second vice president position, announcing my candidacy back in early 2005. I sought this position with the encouragement of my fellow Sonoma County Board members and chose to run only when I could ensure that I could fully commit the time and effort this office requires."



# counties in the spotlight

## National Sheriffs President

On June 21, Ted Kamatchus, Marshall County Sheriff, was sworn in as 65th President of the National Sheriffs Association (NSA), the largest law enforcement association in America. Sheriff Kamatchus is a 30-year veteran of law enforcement who has served for 19 years as sheriff of Marshall County.

At his swearing in ceremony, Sheriff Kamatchus addressed several thousand law enforcement professionals, including sheriffs, deputies, and federal, state and local criminal justice experts. During his address, Sheriff Kamatchus introduced his "ONE VOICE" strategy. He spoke of the need for all who worked in the field of law enforcement to work together, ensuring that the citizens of the United States of America are given the service they deserve. He said, "Let these words ring forth from this hall that the nation's sheriffs are strong and unified. That we have been elected to provide the citizens of this nation with a safe environment in which to live. We recognize this charge and do not take it lightly. As President of NSA, I pledge to work side by side with our fellow brothers and sisters in law enforcement as "One Voice", and protect this nation, maintain the war on drugs, ensure that our Homeland is safe and to work in partnership with local, state and federal leaders in securing our way of life."

## New Jail Opens

An open house for the new Iowa County Law Enforcement Center was held June 10-11, with 500 visitors touring the facility. The 14,000 square foot building contains eight cells with the capacity to hold 40 prisoners. The facility houses the sheriff's office, 911 dispatch and features an exercise court, a commissary, kitchen, laundry room and evidence room. The total cost to build the facility was \$3.56 million. The county bonded \$3.52 million to pay for the construction, and the bond money collected \$74,800 in interest, giving the county \$3.56 million at its disposal. (*Taken from the North English Record, June 15*)

## Correction:

In the August issue of *The Iowa County* it incorrectly stated that Johnson County was awarded a 2006 NACo Achievement Award for the County Land Record Information System (CLRIS). The NACo Achievement Award is being attributed to a lot of different entities and should have been credited to the Iowa County Recorders Association.

# miscellaneous

## National Innovation Awards

Harvard University invites you to apply for an Innovations in American Government Award. All units of government - federal, state, local, tribal, and territorial - are eligible to apply. Administered by the Ash Institute for Democratic Governance and Innovation at the John F. Kennedy School of Government in partnership with the Council for Excellence in Government, the Innovations Award is heralded as the premier public-sector award in the nation. It is given annually to programs that serve as examples of creative and effective government at its best.

Each of the seven winners of the 2007 Innovations Award, including the winner of the Fannie Mae Foundation Innovations Award in Affordable Housing and the Annie E. Casey Award in Children and Family System Reform, will receive a \$100,000 grant to support replication and dissemination activities. Applications are due September 12. Applications and additional information are available at [www.innovationsaward.harvard.edu](http://www.innovationsaward.harvard.edu).

## Government Training

Today's government is asking employees to do more with less to keep up with and outpace citizens' needs and internal change. Organization challenges and employee responsibilities may increase at a moment's notice and require different or greater skills. Continuous learning enables an organization to create its future. State of Iowa, Performance & Development Solutions (PDS) provides employees and their organizations with the knowledge, skills and tools needed to improve performance and prosper in today's changing environment. The workshops utilize best practices and are facilitated by skilled practitioners from around the country. A sample of the courses available include: Conflict Resolution, Computer Security: At Home and in the Office, Dimensions of Leadership, Investigating Employee Misconduct, Grant Writing, Managing Effective Meetings and Strategic Planning. Courses vary in length from a half day to two days and cost \$40-\$225 per course. Information about PDS programs can be found at [www.das.hre.iowa.gov/LearnAtPDS](http://www.das.hre.iowa.gov/LearnAtPDS) or by calling (515) 281-5456.



## County Poems of Iowa

By: John D. Thompson,  
author of *County Poems of Iowa*

*99 Voices, 99 Lives: County Poems of Iowa* has been a two-year literary project of mine that fuses two academic passions: Iowa history and poetry. The books of poems, which debuted as a performance on the closing day of the Iowa State Fair, has taken me on a 24 month quest of all 99 counties. Oh, the places I have seen!

Being born and raised in Iowa probably contributed as much to the drive of the project as any other incentive. I grew up in Lamoni, on the southern border of the state and dreamed as a child of traveling Iowa during summer breaks. Finally, well into adulthood, that dream came true.

I began my first poem in the summer of 2004 while watching RAGBRAIers dip the front wheels of their bicycles into the Mississippi River. I thought to myself, "If these people can brave the wind, hills, and heat of Iowa summers, certainly I can travel the state in an air conditioned car and write a book of poems, one for each county." Friends and fellow poets wondered if I could create the ideas for 99 subjects. That was the easy part. Each county and town therein offers so much culture, care, and history, that the difficult part was selecting one subject.

From the onset, I had three primary goals: (1) visit each county; (2) use the county-seat library as a base; and (3) go with my instinct and inventory of literary skills when deciding the poetic topic for a given county. Visiting all 99 counties was the most challenging aspect of the project, for the trusty barriers of time and money often presented themselves. I applied for an Iowa Arts Council grant and missed by 0.25 of a point, so I relied on friends, family, and myself to achieve the book: the Iowa way, you might say.

I chose Pella as a central base of home for the *County Poems of Iowa* project. Good friends there talked me into moving to Pella for a more central location where I would find supportive people while I wrote the poems and book. I found just that. Pella schools, the library, the media personnel, and my landlord have all been wonderful allies. I found good part-time work, while my full-time job became the book itself.

The plans I have for the book and project are many. *County Poems of Iowa* is a trademark register at the Secretary of State's Office in Des Moines. I want to donate a book to each county-seat library and the state library to ensure its place throughout Iowa. I also plan to travel the state, again, this time with the book published, and give readings and discussions. I've decided on a flat reading fee - \$99. One buck per poem—after two years and heart and soul poured into the project. I hope Iowans will think it's worth it. Who knows? First editions may become quite collectible.

Was I surprised on my any of my travels? Sure. For example, several towns and counties of the same name are not in the same county: Des Moines isn't in Des Moines County, Osceola isn't in Osceola County, and my favorite—

Webster City is in Hamilton County next to Webster County, which has Fort Dodge as the county seat. Of course, we have no Dodge County, though you find the word *Dodge* throughout Iowa. Writing some of the poems, too, surprised me. I knew from the beginning that the Little Brown Church in the Vale was to be the Chickasaw County poem. I call it a *gift*. The poem was written in one take, a matter of minutes. It was one of the most emotional experiences of the project and my life. The decision to write about TV puppet Floppy was also a fine moment. He's the Polk County poem, one for the baby boomers. My home county, Decatur County, is a pheasant hunting poem, though I don't hunt.

Iowa is a beautiful place, and the sites in my memory are many. I turned a rural corner in Boone County and came upon the Kate Shelley High Bridge with two trains passing. It was the first time I saw the bridge. It took my breath away twice - one for its altitude structure and another for the chance to catch passing trains. That is when I felt someone, somewhere must be on my side. I also spent a few days at the Grotto of the Redemption in West Bend and became inspired by the work of Father Dobberstein. Of course, the Grotto is the Palo Alto County poem. The Des Moines River in the deep southeast of the state along the Van Buren villages and mills is another holding image. Finally, the bluffs and rivers of Little Switzerland in northeast Iowa and Loess Hills of western Iowa are natural wonders.

What type of poetry will you find in *County Poems of Iowa*, my fifth book? Well, I consider myself a nostalgic traditionalist. I enjoy to rhyme and slant rhyme. I also prefer form poems, such as sonnets. Carroll County's poem is a French sonnet for Private Merle Hay, the first Iowan and perhaps first American to die in WWI. He died in France. His name, Merle, is French for blackbird. The poem is entitled, *Ascent of the Blackbird*. The book begins and ends with two general poems for the state, *December 28, 1846*, which is a tribute to our date of statehood admission, and *Villanelle for Iowa's 160<sup>th</sup> Birthday*. We turn 160 this December, and I hope to be reading the book somewhere in Iowa, December 28, 2006.

Finally, where can members of ISAC purchase a book or hear a reading? I think *County Poems of Iowa* and ISAC could be a happy union. If invited, I'd be more than happy to be a guest at your Fall School in Des Moines, and I'd bring plenty of books and collected souvenirs. The book will also be available at The Book Store on Locust in Des Moines. Or email me at [statepoetpro@yahoo.com](mailto:statepoetpro@yahoo.com).

Those of you ISAC members whom I've already met, thanks so much for lending an ear and support during the creation of *County Poems*. Those of you I've yet to meet, thanks for serving Iowa, and I hope to see you soon.

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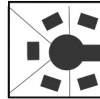
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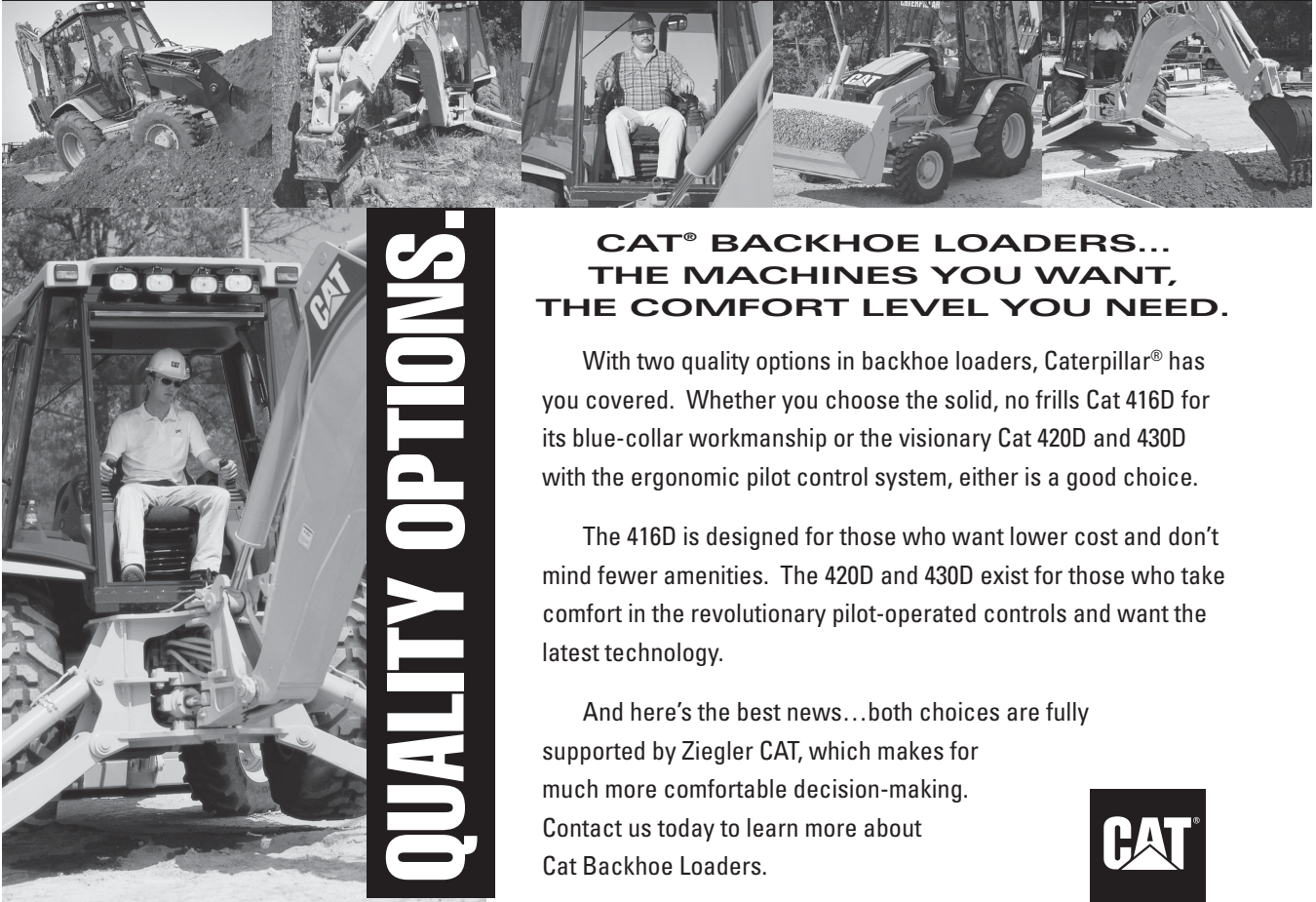
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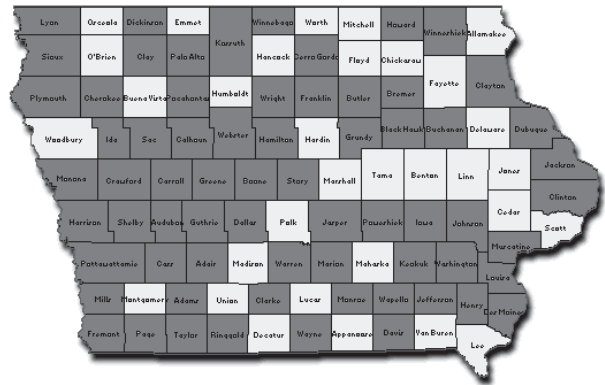
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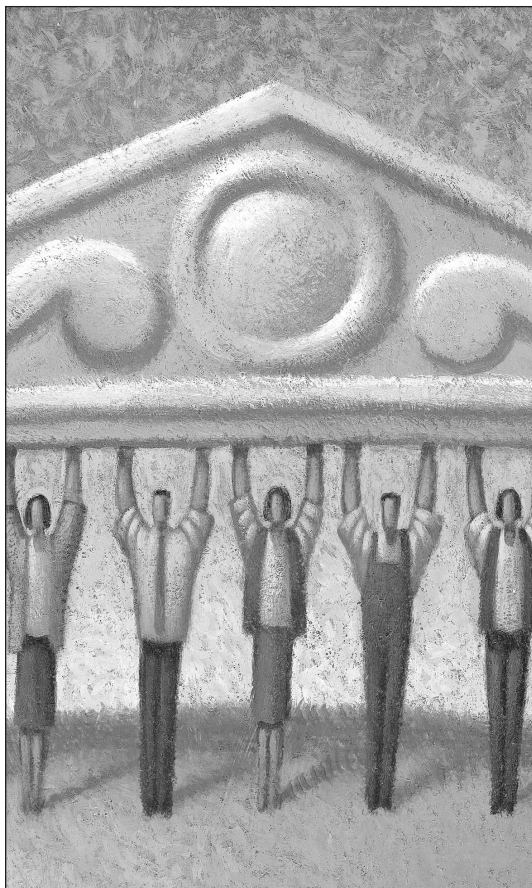
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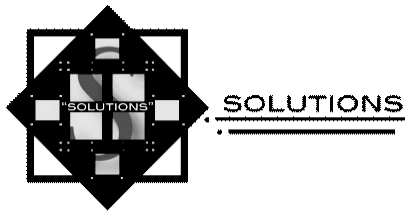
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- Anon

# calendar

## SEPTEMBER

- 8 ISAC Steering Committees  
(Holiday Inn Airport, Des Moines)
- 14 CCMS NE Support Group  
(El Dorado, Independence)
- 20-22 CCMS Fundamentals  
(Baymont Conference Center, Des Moines)
- 21-22 ISAC Board of Directors (Dubuque Area)
- 21-22 Community Services Statewide Meeting  
(Best Western/Fun City, Burlington)
- 21-23 Conservation Directors Conference  
(Davenport)

## OCTOBER

- 3 CCMS Administrators  
(Hilton Garden Inn, Des Moines/Urbandale)
- 6 ISAC Steering Committees  
(Adventureland Inn, Des Moines)
- 18 CCMS Support Staff Training  
(Hilton Garden Inn, Des Moines/Urbandale)
- 19-20 CCMS Strengths  
(Hilton Garden Inn, Des Moines/Urbandale)
- 21-25 Assessors Fall School & Conference  
(West Des Moines Marriott)
- 26-27 ISAC Board of Directors (ISAC Office)

## NOVEMBER

- 2 CCMS Advanced Case Managers  
(Hilton Garden Inn, Des Moines/Urbandale)
- 12-15 County Attorneys Conference (Waterloo)

- 28 SEAT (Des Moines) CANCELLED
- 29- ISAC Fall School
- Dec. 1 (Marriott & Renaissance Savery, Des Moines)

## DECEMBER

- 5-7 Engineers Conference  
(Scheman Center, Ames)
- 7 District II Winter Meeting (location TBA)
- 13 District IV Winter Meeting (location TBA)
- 13-15 CCMS Fundamentals  
(Hilton Garden Inn, Des Moines/Urbandale)
- 15 ISAC Board of Directors (ISAC Office)
- 25-26 ISAC Office Closed

## JANUARY

- 9 CCMS Administrators  
(Hilton Garden Inn, Des Moines/Urbandale)
- 17-18 New County Officers School  
(Holiday Inn Airport, Des Moines)
- 19 Statewide Supervisors Conference  
(Holiday Inn Airport, Des Moines)

## MARCH

- 3-7 NACo Legislative Conference  
(Washington DC)
- 18-20 ISAC Spring School  
(Marriott & Renaissance Savery, Des Moines)
- 28-30 CCMS Fundamentals  
(Hilton Garden Inn, Des Moines/Urbandale)

Please visit ISAC's online calendar of events at [www.iowacounties.org](http://www.iowacounties.org) and click on 'Upcoming Events.' A listing of all the meetings scheduled thus far in 2006, agendas and meeting notices can be found on ISAC's website. A majority of ISAC's meetings offer online registration. If you have any questions about the meetings listed above, please contact Jerri Noboa at (515) 244-7181 or [jnoboa@iowacounties.org](mailto:jnoboa@iowacounties.org).



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