



ALL IN



WHAT DRIVES NEBRASKA COUNTY LEADERS

December 2025

ABOUT

The “All In” series gave county officials an opportunity to share what they are “all in” on and what being “all in” means to the service of their communities. Each story reveals a unique perspective on what drives county leaders to invest in the betterment of Nebraska counties.

NACO would like to express our sincerest gratitude to the county officials who participated in this series. Thank you for telling your stories and for your continued commitment to your communities.



Each Nebraska county has their own story to tell. The sense of community is at the very heart of every county. That is why I am “All In”, “Nebraska 93 Strong”, and “Better Together.” Standing up for our own counties’ needs is a shared history and an innate understanding that we are “All In.” It is for counties whose citizens have a deep rooted connection to one another and among the people who have lived in Nebraska, standing together for generations and wanting the best life possible.

“All In” means the decisions we make are guided by the core mission to provide and implement innovative and cost effective solutions to meet community challenges for our citizens, children, and grandchildren. I try to create a unified commitment of service by sharing knowledge, resources, and common sense for the betterment of our community and county. This is the type of strong dedication to my county and community that I am “All In” for.

I try to improve the public’s understanding of county government and the quality services that we provide. Whether it is a resolution in our own county or speaking at a hearing in front of the Nebraska Legislature, the focus is always on community and citizens first. This commitment translates into the “Good Life” for Nebraskans, and I am “All In” for that!

**DIANA HURLBURT
GARFIELD COUNTY COMMISSIONER**

I'm all in when it comes to conducting safe and open elections. I learned a long time ago that an "Open Door Policy" is a must in county government. If you have nothing to hide, you shouldn't be nervous about having the public present during the counting process.

I have always had my counting room open to the public, rotating individuals in and out throughout the evening. I take this opportunity to do some election education as well, explaining to those present what is happening during the counting process and answering any questions these individuals may have. I have also made myself available to the local high school for voter education to our future leaders.

CHERYL FESIT
DAWES COUNTY CLERK



I am all in on the job I was hired to do: Taking care of veterans. After 20 years in the Army, I had another itch to take care of soldiers. I was a little intimidated by this job at first because it's not the same as in the Army with actual soldiers. In this job, you're dealing with veterans from every branch of the military, and they want your best. This job requires you to pay attention to what the veterans are saying so you can figure out what they actually need. The best part of this job is when they come back in the office and thank you because they're thanking you for not forgetting them. As a veteran myself, I know what that feeling is like.

I demonstrate my dedication by showing up for work every day and doing what they ask of me. I try to make it to as many community functions as possible where I know veterans will be. I try to make it to every funeral for veterans as well as celebrations for veterans. I place weekly articles in our local paper to keep veterans up to date on changes at the VA. I also serve as the Adjutant for the American Legion which keeps me in touch with the veterans.

JOHN M. LUONGO
THAYER COUNTY VETERANS
SERVICE OFFICER

I'm all in on honesty and fairness. I am most committed to providing equitable and fair values to Burt County, in addition to educating my constituents on the process of my job.

I am committed to providing the highest quality of service to Burt County. It is important for me to do the best job I can for the taxpayers in Burt County as they voted for me and expect the best work to be completed.

The Burt County Assessor's Office goes all in by providing community education, doing community outreach, and making adjustments to our current programs and procedures so we are effective in all we provide.

**KATIE HART
BURT COUNTY ASSESSOR**

We have A LOT of goals we are committed to in Seward County, but right now, we are all in on infrastructure and safety.

In 2021, my truck rolled 7 times and I was ejected – landing 75 feet away. Although I was not traveling very fast, I hit some pot holes, then washboards that threw me into the windrows and ultimately into a bean field. I cannot begin to describe how grateful I am to be alive. Above all though, I don't blame the county, our employees, or the process – accidents happen. After a lot of "dry" years and several highway superintendents in a very short period of time all doing things a different way without consistency, our roads aren't in the best shape and, frankly, we are behind.

We are constantly seeking grants. To date, we have received several rounds of Bridge Match, multiple allocations of CDS and CPF/HUD to pave a road that is a major safety concern due to it being a popular detour from i-80 and heavy use from producers, and a Safe Streets and Roads for All Grant multiple times to address a MAJOR concern of having 189 bridges – with more than 80% at or near 100 years old.



Additionally, we have implemented dust control, are paying extra attention to rebuilding our road bases, and are looking to outside assistance.

**MISTY AHMIC
SEWARD COUNTY
COMMISSIONER**

For those of us in the County Clerk, Election, and Budget Office, being all in means ensuring integrity, transparency, and accountability in every part of county government – from administering fair elections to managing county budgets and maintaining accurate records.

I'm all in on protecting the integrity of elections, ensuring taxpayer dollars are used responsibly, and supporting every department to keep county operations running smoothly. My goal each day is to serve the public with transparency, accountability, and trust – making sure that Madison County government operates efficiently and fairly for everyone.

Every day, my focus is on protecting the integrity of Madison County's operations– from fair elections to responsible budgeting – to ensure that taxpayer dollars are used wisely and public trust remains strong.

As County Clerk and Election Commissioner, I'm dedicated to safeguarding the electoral process through detailed signature verifications, secure ballot handling, and transparent poll worker training. The integrity of every vote cast in Madison County matters deeply to me.

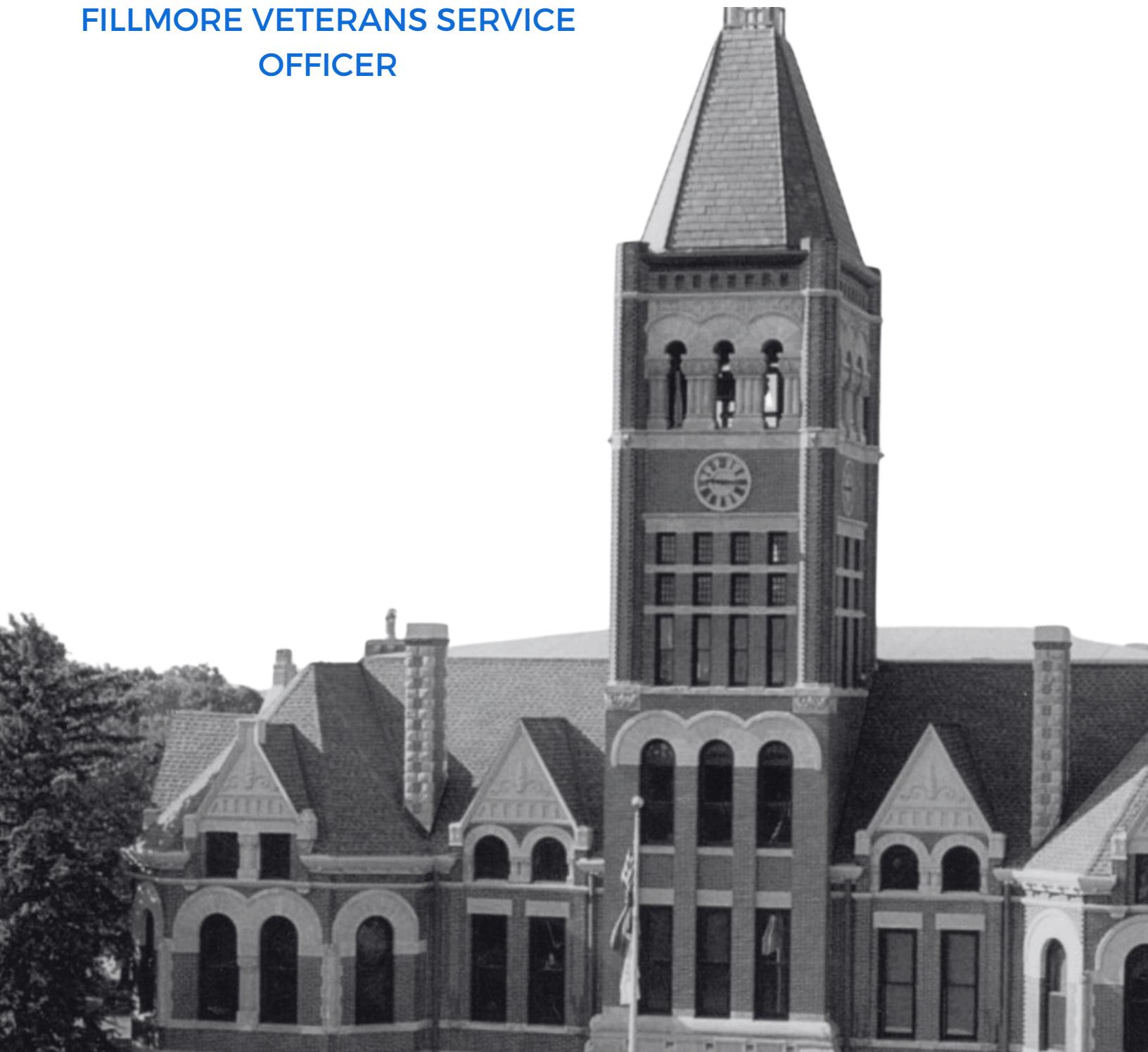
As Budget Officer, I'm equally committed to accountability and fiscal stewardship. I work closely with all departments and the Board of Commissioners to maintain balanced budgets, monitor expenditures, and ensure that every dollar spent serves our citizens effectively. By implementing tools like the MIPS budget system and standardizing financial coding, I've helped strengthen the county's transparency and compliance with state audit requirements.

Ultimately, what drives me every day is service – to the public, to our employees, and to the mission of maintaining trust in county government. Whether it's balancing the budget, certifying elections, or helping a constituent navigate county services, I'm all in on ensuring that Madison County operates with integrity, accountability, and compassion.

**ANNE PRUSS
MADISON COUNTY CLERK, ELECTIONS,
AND BUDGET PREPARER**

I'm all in on providing my services to help veterans and their families. I engage with my community by being proactive, building trust, and providing support for veterans and their families. Being a VSO is a powerful way to find purpose.

**NICK WOLLENBURG
FILLMORE VETERANS SERVICE
OFFICER**



Here in Buffalo County, we are all in with our interlocal agreements, in particular to our co-location with the Kearney Police Department. Our co-location saves our citizens hundreds of thousands of dollars each year by combining the resources and talents of the Buffalo County Sheriff's Department and our partners at the Kearney Police Department.

Through this co-location, neither department duplicates any resources. The officers and staff of both departments train together, investigate together, and solve crimes together, making this one of the most effective interlocal agreements for Buffalo County.

**BILL MAENDELE
BUFFALO COUNTY COMMISSIONER**

ALL IN means showing up for our veterans, not just with words, but with services, respect, and opportunity.

ALL IN means investing in our communities, even when the path is steep, the budget is tight, and the politics are tough.

ALL IN means not just fighting your fights, but helping every county fight to protect their citizens against unhealthy values.

ALL IN means building relationships rooted in trust, earned through integrity and action, not convenience or applause.

Being ALL IN means believing that local government is not just administration – it's stewardship. It's the quiet courage to do what's right, even when it's unpopular, even when it's hard. It's the long view, the late nights, and the unwavering belief that unity, hope, strength and unwavering confident leadership can prevail.

To every county official and NACO partner who has leaned, in, listened harder, led with heart, courage, and discernment: thank you. Together, we're not just navigating change – we're shaping it. Because when we're ALL IN, Nebraska wins.

**MICAELA WUEHLER
LINCOLN COUNTY COMMISSIONER**



We're all in on making sure we help our county have the resources they need to help navigate the system. When I am interviewing an applicant, one of my requirements is that there is no such thing as "Not My Job" in this office. We have so many resources that we can help our patrons navigate the County and State system and get them where they need to go to get questions answered.

Something that shaped my commitment is that both my parents were in a nursing home and trying to get them signed up for Medicaid and work with the DHHS system has been an utter nightmare, with little direction on how to do it. I am fortunate enough to know how to navigate the state system and know the resources available, but it was still very challenging and time consuming.

A major organizational change occurred in 1982 when the Legislature enacted bills that transferred total responsibility for social services programs to the State effective July 1, 1983. (Prior to that, each county was responsible for administering the programs and the State only supervised). Shortly after, the name of the Department was changed to the Nebraska Department of Social Services.

Every time the State takes over a resource we have at the local level, it becomes a burden for our tax payers. Bigger isn't always better. This is the exact thing I fear will happen to our people that need the Court system.

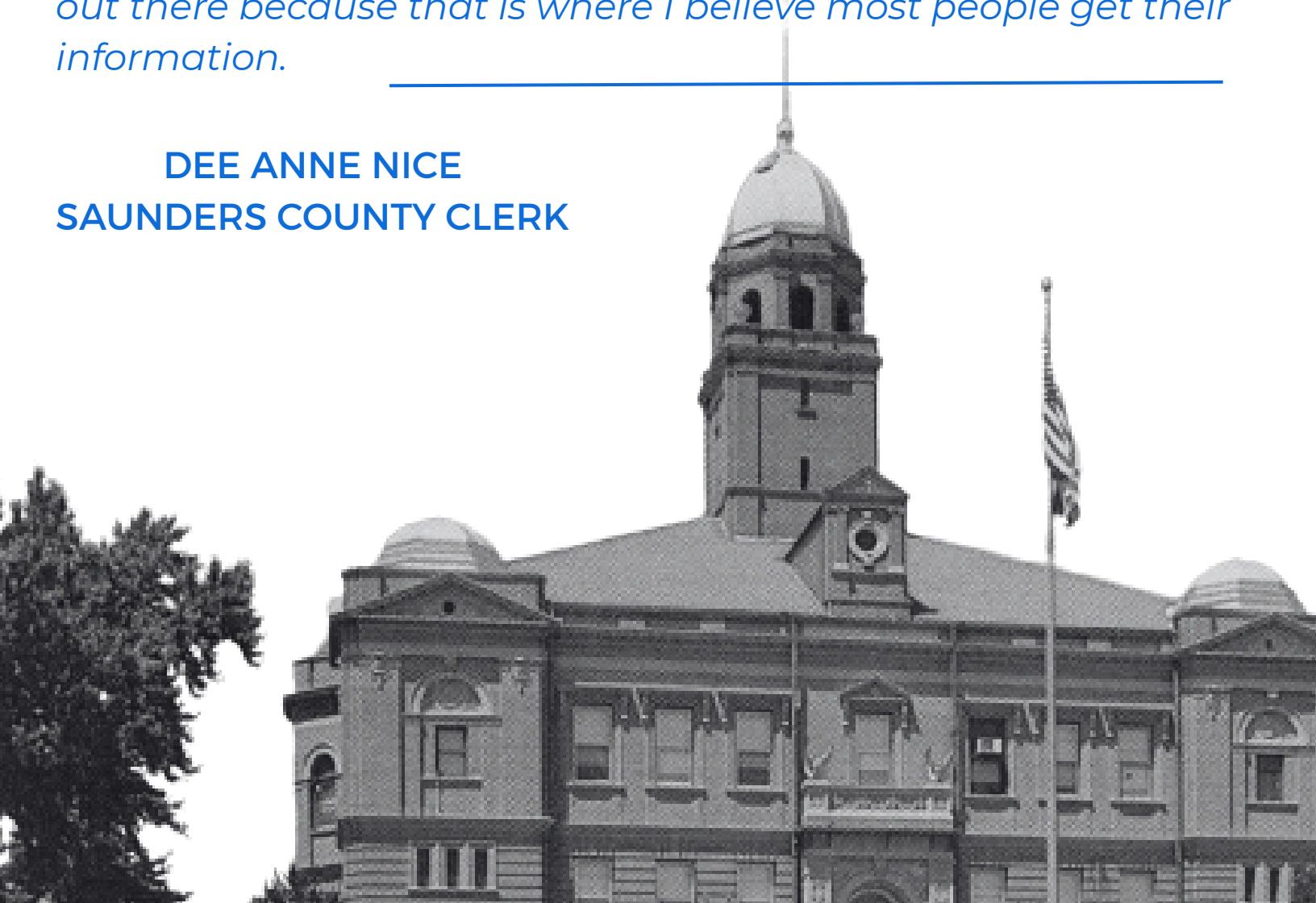
I have been fighting this consolidation for 23 years and will continue whether an elected official or a citizen. Our people need local help, not navigating the State system.

DAUNITTA BUOY
ROCK COUNTY CLERK EX-OFFICIO

I am all in on elections. There is so much distrust in our elections due to false information being circulated. I want constituents to know that the elections in Nebraska are handled with the utmost integrity. I am willing to have anyone come in to my office to answer any questions about the process of election and try to put their minds at ease with the process. I even have a few skeptics that are now poll workers and understand the process. I think that is the issue with the misinformation: people tend to listen to what they are being told, and do not do the research for themselves. I want to change that.

I always have an open door policy in my office. I do some posting on Facebook around election time. I do need to be better about posting on social media to get more information out there because that is where I believe most people get their information.

**DEE ANNE NICE
SAUNDERS COUNTY CLERK**



I am all in on giving our taxpayers the most services for their tax dollars. I demonstrate my dedication to this by being diligent and well-informed in all aspects of county government as well as city and state government.

**DENNIS OSTGREN
PHELPS COUNTY COMMISSIONER**

I am always mindful that I work for the people that come to my counter – they are the ones that elected me, and each one deserves the most helpful, courteous service that this office can provide. I am all in on my commitment to customer service. I hope that is demonstrated every day to every customer.

**MONA DAVIS
ROCK COUNTY TREASURER**

When it comes to serving Custer County, I'm all in on helping with youth activities and other volunteer services. Oftentimes, I feel our lives are so busy, and it's important to give back.

I organized our local mobile food bank for 9 years and was part of it for 11 years. If I'm available, I will always lend a helping hand and usually bring a friend or two.

CHRISTIE TRUMBULL
CUSTER COUNTY REGISTER OF
DEEDS



I am all in on serving the constituents fully from start to finish with every interaction with our office. We need to own that interaction, and as Coach Cook would say, “better the ball.” When a customer leaves our office, I want to see a constituent who was able to do their business, or if there is an issue, they understand what needs to be done to finish their transaction. Knowledge is key and we strive to educate on not only what we need, but why.

This commitment is important to me because the constituent has entrusted us with taxpayer dollars and being a custodian for the county. we take this very seriously. People want to be seen, heard, and recognized as party of our county and our world. I want people to know not only are we here to register their vehicle, but we’re also here and we’re all in when it comes to knowing them as individuals.

We show the community, county, and our constituents that we are all in by making sure they know we are here and continually work to understand their needs and better ourselves. I want people to leave our office knowing that we are a trusted resource for anything.

**SHERI BRYANT
CUSTER COUNTY TREASURER**

Priority #1 of the ELVPHD Community Health Improvement Plan is mental and behavioral health, with a goal of improving access to and utilization of mental health services to support overall well-being. As such, our region is all in on recruiting behavioral health providers, connecting individuals with resources, promoting the Credible Mind platform for assessments, and programs geared toward substance abuse prevention.

Aside from the universal mental health crisis that everyone is aware of, we surveyed our constituents and results were as follows: 19% indicated mental health not good for 6 or more of the last 30 days. 53% indicated mental health was their highest concern. 49% indicated that over the past 2 weeks they have felt down, stressed, anxious, depressed, or hopeless on several days or more. 34% indicated that drug and/or alcohol abuse was a top health concern for the community.

We have purchased and made free to the public the Credible Mind platform. With this, we have marketed through all of our programs, activities, and services, have had the platform available in two languages, and have marketed the resource on our social media accounts, newsletters, and e-mail signatures. When compared to August, in September we were +15.6% in returning Credible Mind users and +17.7% in new Credible Mind users. These increases show that our dedications are reaching the people.

**GINA UHING
ELKHORN LOGAN VALLEY PUBLIC
HEALTH DEPARTMENT**

I'm all in on listening first, creating space where voices are heard, respected, and woven into our shared decisions. In public health, our strength comes from collaboration – working hand in hand with partners, because in the Panhandle, we know that the whole truly is greater than the sum of its parts.

I'm all in on building consensus, ensuring that our direction reflects both data and the stories of the people we serve. Transparent and frequent communication keeps us aligned and accountable, while integrity ensures that every decision we make is grounded in what's best for the community.

I'm all in on humility and continuous learning, recognizing that we don't have all the answers – but together, we can find them. By keeping our work community-centered and involving local voices in every step, we ensure that our solutions are meaningful and sustainable.

And I'm all in on bringing light and laughter to the work we do. Public health is serious business, but a shared smile, a bit of humor, and the human connections we build along the way are what keep us resilient.

At the end of the day, being "all in" means showing up with integrity, compassion, and collaboration – every single day – for the health and well-being of the people who call the Panhandle home.

Public health is in the midst of a profound transformation, and we are determined to rise to the challenge. As the expectations of our communities continue to evolve, we are committed to adapting, listening deeply, and leading through our values and purpose. In navigating these complexities, our mission remains clear: Working together to improve the health, safety, and quality of life for all who live, learn, work, and play in the Panhandle.

I'm all in on serving the Panhandle through a foundation of servant leadership and gratitude. For me, leadership means prioritizing the needs of others – our staff, partners, and the community – so that everyone has the opportunity to thrive.

JESSICA DAVIES
DIRECTOR OF PANHANDLE PUBLIC
HEALTH DISTRICT

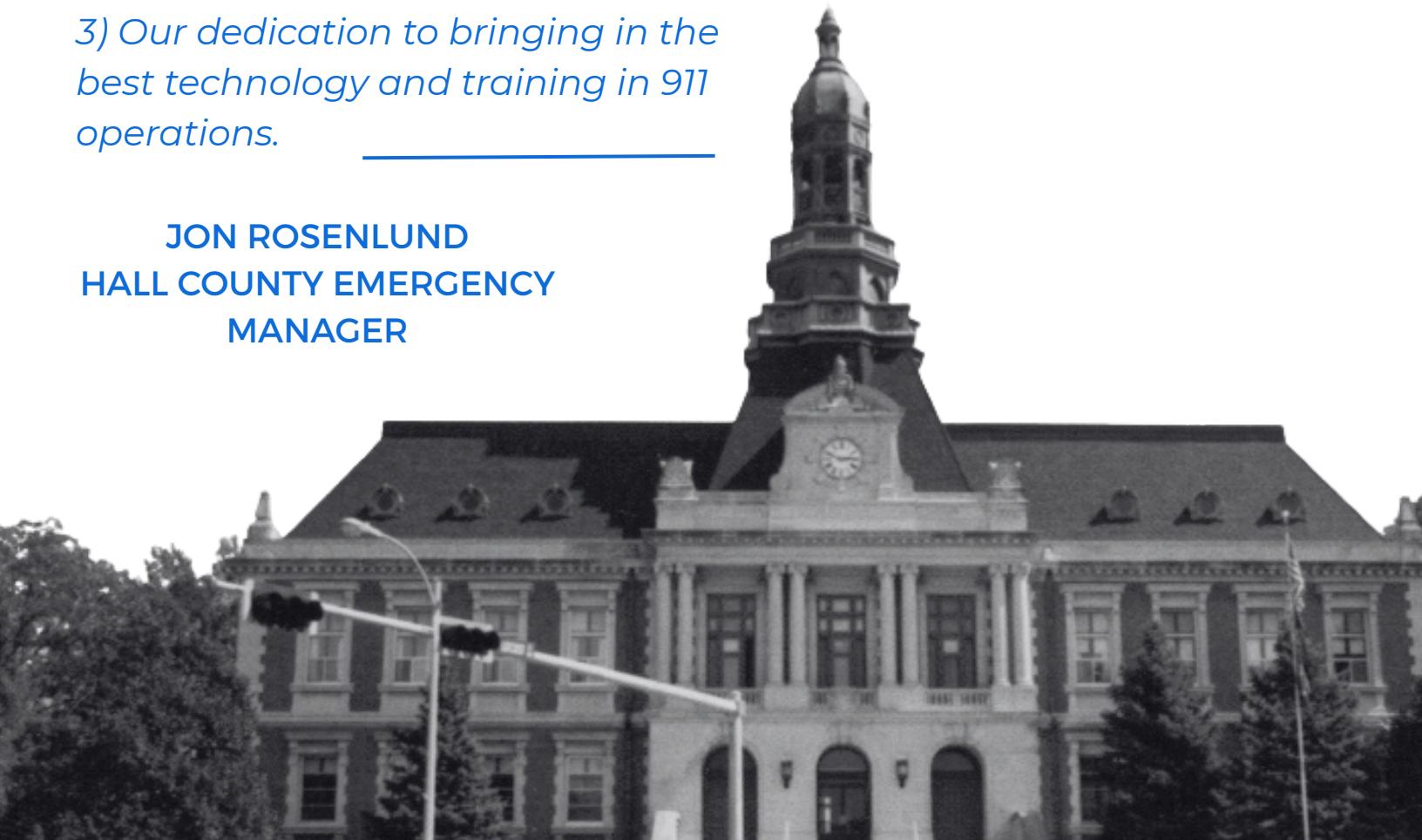
I'd say that we are all in for planning, training, and exercising our local partners for effective response and management of a large and complex emergency incident. We are also "all in" on empowering volunteers with the ability to make a real difference in their community.

Early on in my career, we had a brief but impactful tornado strike our community and I was grateful for the many aspects of our planning and preparedness that came to fruition in the aftermath of that event. Local emergency responders, disaster volunteers, and regional partners all worked together and we emerged a more resilient and focused community.

We show the community that we're all in with:

- 1) Our commitment to regular training and exercises, particularly in Incident Command and EOC operations*
- 2) Our campaign to increase local volunteerism and public education in our CERT and Teen CERT program.*
- 3) Our dedication to bringing in the best technology and training in 911 operations.*

JON ROSENBLUND
HALL COUNTY EMERGENCY
MANAGER



The Gosper County Roads Department is all in on providing safe, efficient transportation of citizens, visitors, commerce, and critical services as they drive the roads of our county.

It is my duty and privilege to serve Gosper County; maintaining the county roads in a safe and efficient manner as the Highway Superintendent.

I try to respond to all immediate concerns of the citizens, commissioners, law enforcement, and schools in a professional and timely manner.

To show how I am all in, I volunteer to assist in community events; allowing the citizens to see the individual outside of my official capacity in a real world one-on-one setting away from the job.

**KELLY LEHMANN
GOSPER COUNTY HIGHWAY
SUPERINTENDENT**

As an elected official, I am all in on treating others as I would want to be treated – with respect and fairness. That's why it's called the "Golden Rule," because it's a standard we can all agree on. It's a principle that keeps leadership grounded in fairness, respect, and humanity.

I often hear people say they are always greeted with a smile and treated with respect in my office and I take great pride in that. I don't just campaign once every four years; I campaign every day by how I serve the people who walk through my door.

**JULIE SESTAK
PERKINS COUNTY TREASURER**

I'm all in on service and doing what I can to help the public feel secure. As the Sheriff, I feel that there are so many aspects of the job – far beyond just law enforcement. I think the public needs to feel that we serve them in so many other ways.

KEVIN DARLING
RED WILLOW COUNTY SHERIFF



I'm all in on helping people. When it comes to being a dedicated public defender, you must have a passion for helping people - individually, and as a community. Our goal is to provide Constitutionally and statutorily mandated rights through the effective assistance of counsel to everyone our Office represents, to treat people fairly and humanely, and to try to help them make the connections they need to have a better life in the future. We fight for our clients daily, whether it's through pretrial motions to challenge violations of rights, having trials, or working out the best resolutions to cases for them. I also believe it is vitally important to educate our community about their rights and share that whenever and wherever I can.

I've been a public defender for 36 years, and I've seen people hurt and also helped through the criminal justice system. In order to benefit our community, and our society, as a whole, we have to work together with a common goal to help people learn to be better so that they can do better. I've seen many clients who have benefitted from treatment and classes and go on to have a better life for themselves and their families. Creating more and more felony offenses and imprisoning people isn't working. Diversion and problem solving programs and problem solving courts help. Not criminalizing mental health and substance use issues would go even farther. Diverting people from the criminal justice system from the beginning should be the goal, not the exception.

I strongly support and aid whenever I can the following: Justice in Action, Community Corrections, the Center for People, Matt Talbot, problem-solving programs and problem-solving courts, food banks, and all community agencies who support education and fairness, to enhance rights for all people so that we can be a more kind, inclusive, diverse and equitable society where the amount of money you have, your gender, the color of your skin or any other perceived differences are not barriers to justice. We are all in this together.

KRISTI EGGER
LANCASTER COUNTY PUBLIC DEFENDER

I'm all in on taxes: how they are assessed and collected, because I, too, am a taxpayer. I try to explain to my land owners just how taxes are figured out or at least have the assessor explain it.

**MARCIA R. KASLON
SHERMAN COUNTY TREASURER**



I am fully committed to serving the residents of Douglas County. I am "all in" when it comes to serving the people! Every decision I make, I want it to be transparent. I want to prioritize my residents' best interests, as well as, the well-being of our county and community. I do not make decisions because of political parties or self-interest. As county commissioners, we oversee critical areas that directly affect residents' daily lives, including criminal justice, health and human services, and taxes. We must always remember that our duty is to work for the people we serve.

Transparency is essential when conducting the public's work. This is important to me because as elected officials, we are chosen by the people to serve their best interests, and they are ultimately our bosses. Regardless of the issue, transparency allows the public to objectively evaluate the pros and cons of our actions. By being transparent, especially during challenging times, we strengthen our leadership and build trust with the community, which in turn garners greater respect for us as leaders. This fundamental principle is something we, as elected officials, must always remember.

I am committed to making informed decisions by being transparent, thoroughly studying issues, avoiding partisan politics, and seeking diverse input. My process involves doing good old fashion research before taking a position or making a decision. This ensures that decisions are based on accurate information and helps prevent overlooking critical factors or potential negative consequences. I also believe it is crucial to avoid partisan politics during discussions. This approach keeps the focus on our shared values and goals, fostering trust and allowing for a wider range of ideas, which ultimately leads to better outcomes. Since we are not experts in all areas, I actively seek input from those most knowledgeable about an issue, as well as those most affected by it. As the saying goes, "those closest to the problem, come up with the best solutions!" The perspectives of those experiencing the issue are invaluable in identifying root causes and effective solutions. This inclusive approach ensures that our policies are not only effective but also fair and responsive to the community's needs, empowering residents to have a seat at the table and a role in shaping their future. I also believe we must always remember to lead with our hearts!

MARY ANN BORGESON
DOUGLAS COUNTY COMMISSIONER

We are all in on creating meaningful, lasting change through community-driven public health. At West Central District Health Department, that means being deeply committed to prevention, access, and connection—values that guide us as we work to serve every resident across our six-county rural jurisdiction. Whether we are training a classroom in lifesaving CPR skills, walking alongside a parent who needs health resources for their family, or building partnerships with schools, clinics, and first responders, our focus is always the same: building healthier people in healthier communities.

I was born and raised in rural Nebraska, and I'm raising my own family here. I know what it means to live far from the nearest hospital or specialist, and I understand the power of a trusted local resource. That's what public health should be—trusted, local, and responsive.

This work is personal because I have lived it—not just as a public health professional, but as a community member, parent, and neighbor in rural Nebraska. I have seen how health is shaped not only by access to care, but by trust, connection, and the ability to get support when and where it's needed. I have watched families in our region struggle silently with substance use, isolation, or chronic health conditions—not because they don't care about their health, but because the resources feel out of reach. I have experienced what it's like to need support and not know where to turn. I have seen friends, neighbors, and even my own family members face barriers to care, whether it was navigating mental health, substance use, or simply finding reliable information in a moment of uncertainty. Those experiences made it clear to me that public health cannot just exist on paper. It has to show up in real life, in real communities, with real compassion.

I believe rural communities deserve every opportunity to be healthy, and I believe public health is the bridge that makes that possible. That's why I'm all in.

Our work isn't just professional—it's personal. It is woven into the fabric of our daily lives, and that's what makes it meaningful.

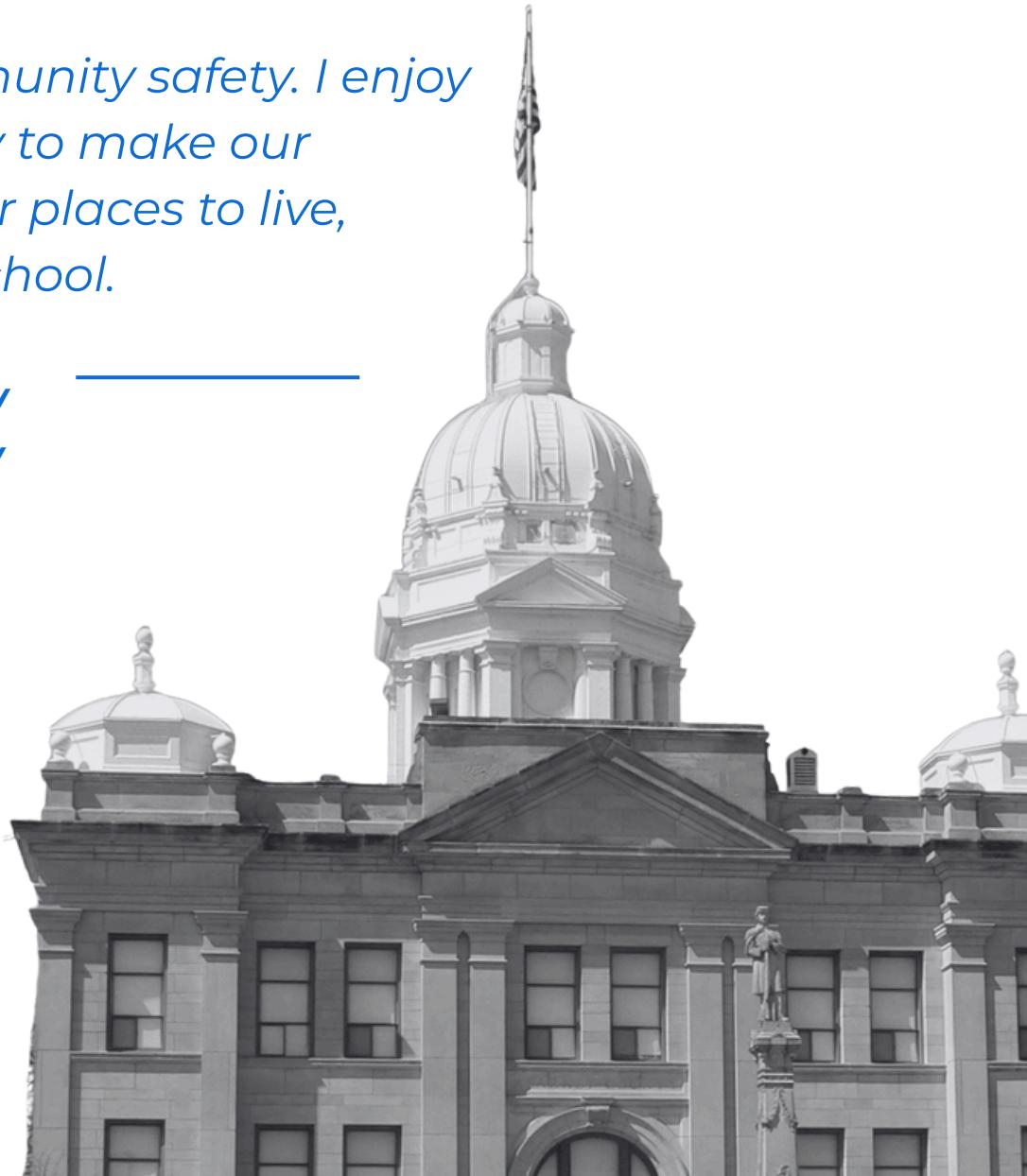
**MEGHAN TREVINO
WEST CENTRAL DISTRICT HEALTH
DEPARTMENT**

I show up every day doing my best to hold offenders accountable. I have developed a pretrial diversion program for juveniles designed to make sure that their first encounter with law enforcement is hopefully their last.

My brother was killed by a drunk driver, and I recognize what an impact crime has on victims and their families. I strive to make sure that fewer people get that phone call or have to deal with the effects of criminal behavior.

I'm all in on community safety. I enjoy working every day to make our communities safer places to live, work, and go to school.

**MELODIE BELLAMY
KEARNEY COUNTY
ATTORNEY**



I am involved in the communities in the county. You need to be available to answer questions and let people know you care. I attend most city council/village board meetings who contract law enforcement with the sheriff's office. I have achieved putting full-time SRO's in the Arlington and Fort Calhoun School District. This builds relationships with the students and helps provide a safer environment for the students and faculty.

I was raised in Washington County. I graduated from high school, raised my children, and now have grandchildren. My extended family still lives in Washington County. By being all in on providing professional and proactive law enforcement and preventing crime, it affects not just the citizens, but my family. Being Sheriff is not a job, it is a life. I plan vacations around when there are activities in the county such as the county fair. I plan time off around budget time and county board meetings. Only once have I been out of the county for more than 3 days in the 25 years I have been sheriff. I need to be available if one of my deputies, corrections officers, or dispatchers gets hurt. I need to be available in times of natural disaster or major crimes. My philosophy is family first, but being sheriff is part of the family. My family understands this and fully supports it.

I show that I'm all in by being in the communities. I help with fundraisers, sit on dunk tanks, and shave my head, just to name a few. I lead parades or help with the traffic control I patrol and run traffic in the communities, assist on accident scenes, and host town hall meetings when needed to discuss a major incident. The community sees me in the aftermath of a natural disaster such as a tornado or major flooding. They see that I care and I am there to support them.

**MICHAEL ROBINSON
WASHINGTON COUNTY SHERIFF**

My number one issue that I'm all in on is public safety. I have invested myself in nineteen years of public safety. I am the Assistant CERT Coordinator for the Scotts Bluff County CERT Team, which is sponsored by the Scottsbluff Police Department. I have completed ICS 100, 200, 700, 800, NIMS 300 and 400. I am one of two Certified Man Trackers in the state. I have assisted law enforcement with tracking skills for missing people and also with crime scene security. I am our Emergency Manager's Commissioner Liaison. I have attended many certification trainings to become more informed of the many aspects of search and rescue, disaster operations, and other public emergencies. I am a Licensed and Ordained Emergency Services Chaplain serving in CISM, CISD, Peer Support, and Crisis Intervention. I have served in Corrections and currently work as a U.S. Marshal Contractor.

I am deeply motivated to listen to and serve the citizens of Scotts Bluff County. Their voice is important to me to help make the tough decisions. Communications has to be a priority in all that I do as a public servant.

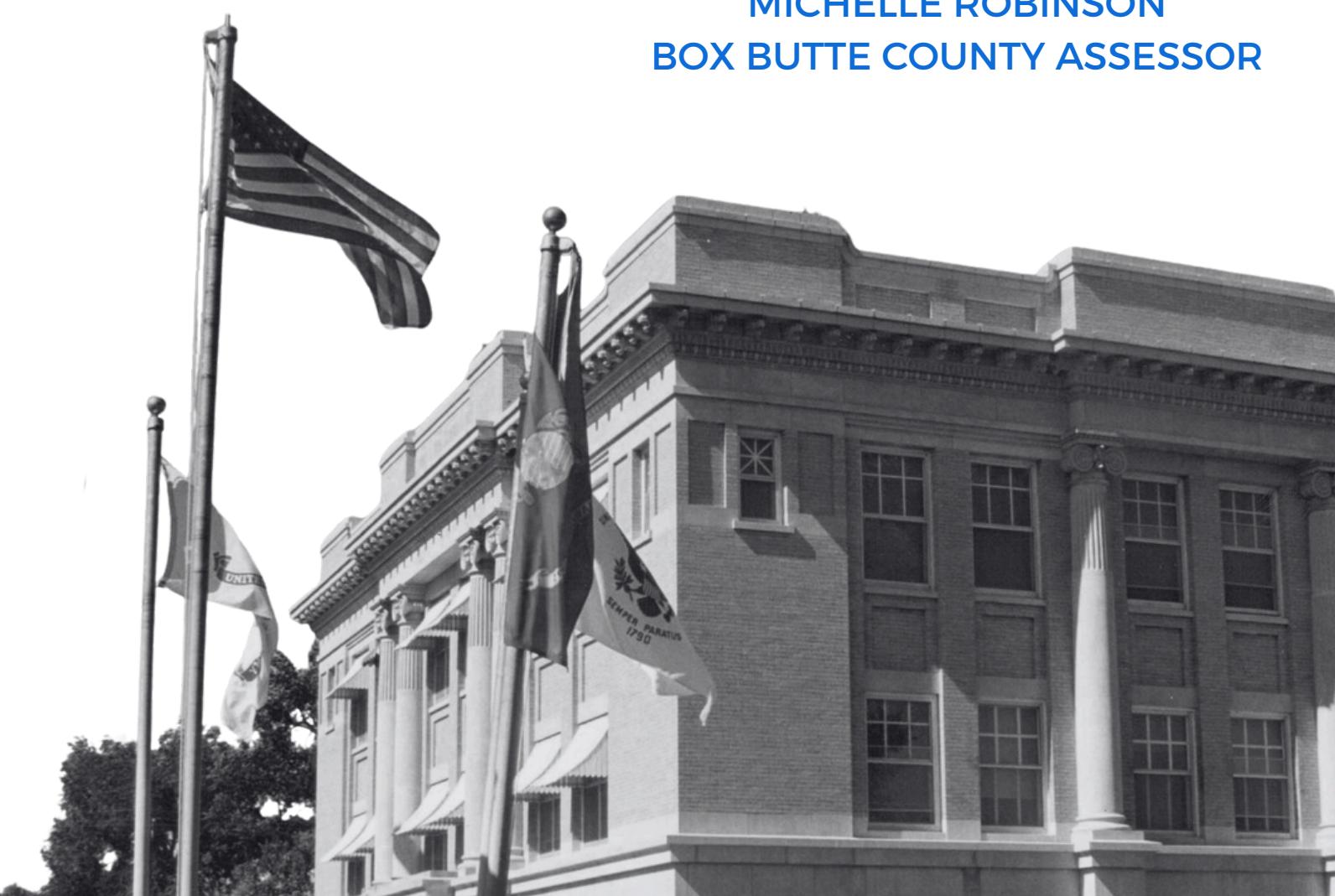
I demonstrate my commitment by my active engagement in emergency response situations such as responding to a midnight call to help find a lost dementia patient in a nearby county, responding to assist at crime scenes, leading search teams on frequent occasions, and going to the county jail to conduct debriefings after significant events. I help lead GriefShare groups throughout the year. I respond to citizens who call me with concerns by going out to see what they see and taking the necessary steps to resolve them.

MIKE BLUE
SCOTTS BLUFF COUNTY COMMISSIONER

My “all in” is to advance professional standards of assessment and appraisal practices through education, technology adoption, and association leadership. I like to share my knowledge and experience. I enjoy seeing others in the assessment/appraisal industry grow in knowledge and experience.

I have learned through my 30+ years in assessment that sharing knowledge and experience is one of the greatest learning tools. Mentorship is vital in this profession. I am truly grateful for the learning opportunities and mentorship I received and want to share that with others. I seek out educational opportunities not only as a requirement for my job, but to help me grow as an individual. I like to share what I learn with others. The more we learn and grow, the more competent we become, thus building public trust.

**MICHELLE ROBINSON
BOX BUTTE COUNTY ASSESSOR**



My office protects the Constitution and the Rule of Law. We provide valuable service to individuals, ensuring that the state does not overreach when prosecuting a case. We also save taxpayers a lot of money by providing a legal defense for indigent citizens who would otherwise have a court-appointed lawyer who would be charging the county by the hour for their work.

A civilized and just society only exists if we take care of the least among us and ensure that the law applies to everyone equally.

I show my community I'm all in by advocating for everyday justice.

MIKE MEISTER
SCOTTS BLUFF COUNTY
PUBLIC DEFENDER

I am all in as a member of the LEPC with Region 21 Emergency Management for emergency preparedness. I also work with the Veterans Office helping with their fundraisers and any other requests for my help.

With the LEPC, because we are such a rural area and have a lot of elderly citizens, we need to be better prepared for any emergencies that can happen. We don't have immediate access from emergent support that cities may have. We rely on people helping people.

For the Veteran's office, I am all in because my Dad was a proud Veteran and member of the American Legion after serving during the Korean War. I have the passion to make sure that Veterans receive all the help they can get, especially those that are proud to accept the help. They deserve so much more than they do. My dad lost most of his hearing while in the Air Force and finally received his first pair of hearing aids paid by the VA a few years before he passed. He was so proud that they finally recognized his need. I don't want other veterans to wait so long for something that is owed to them for their service or leave them without the medical assistance they deserve.

**SUSAN KELLY
MORRILL COUNTY CLERK OF THE
DISTRICT COURT**



We are all in on working with community members to determine what they need to be healthy and then doing our best to work with them to meet those needs so that they can be healthier.

We understand that it is more effective to “do with” rather than to “do for,” and here is my story: Many years ago, we worked with UNMC College of Nursing to bring a mobile clinic to a small rural community in order to provide access to screenings for blood pressure, breast cancer, diabetes, etc. I was so excited to meet with a small group of women in the community to share my “wonderful” news. Their reaction to my announcement was: “What makes you think we need that?” I explained that because they lived some distance from healthcare, we understood it was difficult for them to get the services. Their response was that “if someone here needs to see a doctor, we get them to the doctor.” I responded saying that this was a great opportunity to get preventive screenings, but I was stopped short. The response to this was that they take care of their own, and I realized that they clearly saw me as an outsider (which I literally was). What a valuable lesson I learned that day! You cannot just waltz into a community to “save folks.” You first must become part of the community, learn what the needs are directly from the people who live there, and then include them in planning any interventions.

The women did eventually allow us to bring out the mobile clinic, and we were successful, but not until after I learned this lesson of “doing with” rather than “doing for” is the way we truly make a difference.

In everything we do, we first build relationships that allow us to learn more from, and become part of the communities we aim to serve. No assumptions. No preconceived notions. Just become part of the community and keep learning the needs, priorities, and assets that exist before making plans.

TERESA ANDERSON
HALL, MERRICK, AND HAMILTON COUNTY
HEALTH DIRECTOR

I am all in on personal and community preparedness.

In our rural area, you might be your own first responder. Whether it's fighting wildfire or saving a life, emergency preparedness reduces panic, fosters resilience, minimizes impact, and eases the strain on emergency services and recovery.

I'm all in on personal preparedness and community preparedness.

Personal preparedness: Among the several programs we have either established or increased, our working collaboration with several agencies offers more opportunities for our citizens to receive vital CPR training. From Basic Life Saving classes held the day after school breaks for summer to the Chamber of Commerce offering reduced priced trainings for participating businesses, it's important that we can all be prepared to take care of ourselves and each other.

Community preparedness: Our commissioners fully supported our time and efforts in pursuit of the US Forest Service's Community Defense Wildfire Grant in both 2024 and 2025. Our grit paid off this year, having been awarded \$24.8 million to remove Eastern red cedar trees, creating imperative fire breaks in high-risk areas of each county. This award highlights the importance of fire prevention to locals managing their lands and having the resources necessary to proactively mitigate our risks.

TRACI BOOTH
BROWN AND ROCK COUNTY EMERGENCY
MANAGEMENT DIRECTOR

I'm "all in" on trying to educate the public on the assessment process and the role it plays in county government. SO many people think Assessors survey property lines, set tax rates & do building code inspections which, as we know IS NOT a function of the Assessor's Office.

Property assessment is an area that is sorely misunderstood in Nebraska at ALL levels, whether it's local, county, or in the Legislature. Educating the public on the process is a vital step in establishing good relationships with constituents. No matter how hard you try, some people do not want to understand or learn, but it's great when we do break through the misnomers and people understand why we have to do the things we do in order to achieve equity and follow the law at the same time.

Every year, when sending out valuation notices, we include inserts explaining all the actions that were completed to arrive at that year's assessed values for all classes of property. This insert includes statutory language and explanations. These inserts have led to property owners asking more insightful questions, and we then have a better chance to educate the public on why we do what we do in the Assessor's Office. I honestly believe that these valuation notice inserts have helped our relationship with the public. Since I took office in 2019, I have never had any more than 4 protests in a single year! This tells me we are getting our message out there.

**AMY PETERSON
THAYER COUNTY ASSESSOR**

NEBRASKA ASSOCIATION OF COUNTY OFFICIALS

1335 H STREET, LINCOLN, NE · 102 DIAMOND SPRINGS TRAIL, OGALLALA, NE

402.434.5660 · WWW.NEBRASKACOUNTIES.ORG



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