

COUNTY LEADER



County Commissioners Association of Ohio quarterly magazine

Spring 2021



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- 3) Delaware County commissioners and officeholders at their State of the County event

A MESSAGE FROM 2021 CCAO PRESIDENT TIM BUBB, LICKING COUNTY COMMISSIONER

Greetings fellow commissioners and council members, and here's wishing you 'good health' as we move into the improving 'new normal' that is 2021. In this quarterly report, we look ahead to the improving economy in our state, the successful mass vaccination program, energy programs and success in advancing our legislative priorities.



Led by our policy team, we are off to a strong start with emphasis on a number of platform priorities including full reimbursement for indigent defense, additional monies to support kinship and wrap-around services benefiting children's services, and improvements in the upper limit on 'force account' work by county engineers, the Ohio Township Association and the Ohio Municipal League.

The counties of Ohio appreciate the support of the DeWine and Husted administration in including the indigent defense request and other favorable elements in the Executive Budget, and the heavy lifting continues with the 'pull and tug' of the many considerations in development of the biennial budget. The process is required to conclude by the end of June. Every other Friday morning at 8:30 a.m., CCAO 1st V.P. Debbie Lieberman leads a legislative update conference call to update everyone and promote issue advocacy.

A \$300,000 complete renovation of the heating, ventilation and cooling (HVAC) system at our State Street downtown Columbus headquarters building is underway. The three ownership entities, CCAO, CORSA and CEBCO, each contributed \$100,000 to the long overdue project. The timetable was moved up to this year as the original HVAC system at times was 'hardly functioning' and due to limited use of the building now seemed like the perfect time for interior construction. We can expect considerable savings in energy costs with the new modern systems, and savings in maintenance and repair costs for the out of date original system.

In addition to the HVAC upgrade, CCAO is also evaluating the addition of an updated audio/visual system in the Library Meeting room to facilitate 'virtual and hybrid' meetings, which it seems will be part of our future. Also, the improvements will include a window tinting project on the building's glass front to cut down on energy loss and UV infiltration. And an evaluation is underway to add a building intrusion alarm system to add a level of protection to the existing fire alarm system.

A 'tip of the hat' to Andrew Johnson and the entire staff for the outstanding 2021 CCAO 'full color' roster which was distributed in mid-March. This new and colorful information piece is expanded with additional advertising support and a larger printing due to demand across Ohio for this information. The aggressive timetable for assembly and printing produced this excellent piece almost a month earlier than in the past, putting this roster out and connecting county leadership to decision makers on a much more timely basis. Nice job!

Other recent initiatives include development of a new 'interactive display' for the visitor level of the Statehouse, as an education tool connecting the counties to state government. In addition a refresh of the CCAO logo is underway with results to be evaluated in the next couple of months. Also, at the March CCAO Board meeting a new regional map for the Commissioner's and Engineer's Associations was approved, with the 'carve out' of a fifth Central Region. The 14 counties in the new Central Region include Champaign, Delaware, Fairfield, Franklin, Knox, Licking, Logan, Madison, Marion, Morrow, Perry, Pickaway, Richland and Union. A kick-off event for the Central Region will be June 30 in Delaware County to view their renovated courthouse.

Finally, while just about all Board, Executive Committee and Committee meetings this first half of 2021 have been virtual; we are planning a return to in-person or hybrid meetings in the second half of the year, pandemic permitting. The first 'in-person' Board meeting in well over a year is planned for mid-August, and will include an invitation of the newly elected commissioners for some orientation programming, as well. This will include a hybrid 'virtual component' as needed. And looking ahead to year-end we are joining with CEOA in planning for a full in-person Annual Winter Conference Dec. 8, 9 and 10 in downtown Columbus, with the full Trade Show. I believe most members will have been fully vaccinated and ready to attend this 'nearly normal' annual event.

CCAO AND CEOA ESTABLISH NEW CENTRAL REGION

As mentioned in President Bubb's letter, the CCAO and CEOA boards have endorsed and officially created the new map of the five Ohio regions, with the added Central Region.

Recently both boards drafted a new 5-region map for Ohio. Added to the Northeast, Northwest, Southeast and Southwest Regions is the new 14-county Central Region.

Engineers and commissioners from these 14 counties will make up the Central Region: Champaign, Delaware, Fairfield, Franklin, Knox, Licking, Logan, Madison, Marion, Morrow, Perry, Pickaway, Richland and Union.

To help launch the new Central Region, CCAO and CEOA will host an inaugural meeting of the commissioners, engineers and guests on Wednesday, June 30 in Delaware County at 9:30 a.m.-1 p.m. The event will include an initial meeting, followed by a tour of Delaware County's newly renovated historic courthouse. More information will be forthcoming.

CCAO and CEOA Joint Regions



LETTER FROM CCAO EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR CHERYL SUBLER

Historic Support for Counties

The Ohio House of Representatives recently provided historic support for Ohio counties in its version of the next state biennial budget by providing what is estimated to be 100 percent reimbursement for indigent defense. This is CCAO's number one budget request, and House lawmakers answered the call!



THANK YOU to all CCAO members and other county officials, along with our awesome policy team who have been steadfastly advocating for this mandate to be fully funded.

Moreover, thank you to the members of the Ohio House, particularly Speaker Cupp, for their leadership! Sincere appreciation also goes to Representatives Brian Stewart and Mike O'Brien for coordinating the indigent defense amendment among their caucuses as well as the many county champions in the Ohio House.

Yet, the budget process is not over, and it won't be until the end of June. Therefore, we must continue our concerted advocacy with members of the Ohio Senate for full funding while continuing to positively recognize the Ohio House as well as the DeWine-Husted Administration's efforts.

Counties joining together to speak with a united voice is very impactful and goes a long way to strengthening the state-county partnership.

Building on a Strong Foundation

Founded in 1991 as a not-for-profit charitable foundation for the County Commissioners Association of Ohio (CCAO), the CCAO Research and Education Foundation, Inc. has had a tradition of supporting quality and effective county government.

CCAO leadership is working to renew that excellence and innovation.

In the past, the foundation has received grants and donations to support innovative training for county commissioners, county executives and county council members along with key staff. The foundation also has received grants to promote an enhanced awareness and a better understanding of county government among the general public, state officials and the media.

One of my favorite educational projects the foundation supported was a multi-media project in the early 2000's to promote an awareness of county government, and how it evolved into a much broader educational effort highlighting the state-county partnership's role in delivering services. These promotional materials included the production of a video; a comprehensive booklet explaining the functions of counties; teaching materials for Ohio government classes; and a pamphlet that folded-out into a poster highlighting the responsibilities of county commissioners along with the other county elected offices.

We are working to re-energize the foundation and support its core mission as well as explore ways it can also feature best management practices and innovative programs in Ohio's counties.

If you are interested in contributing to the foundation or know of individuals or entities that would like to support it, please contact CCAO Assistant Director John Leutz (jleutz@ccao.org/614-299-2800) or myself (csubler@ccao.org/614-746-8507). Also, individuals may make a charitable donation from their county commissioner/executive/council member campaign committee, as long as the funds remain federally tax exempt.

CCAO and the CCAO Research and Education Foundation are trusted organizations that are working to support quality and effective county government – because stronger counties result in a stronger Ohio.

CCAO POLICY TEAM

COUNTIES LOOK TO BUILD PARTNERSHIP WITH STATE ON JAIL FUNDING

by Adam Schwiebert, CCAO Policy Analyst

The county jail is an integral part of the state's criminal justice system and is foundational in ensuring justice and public safety for Ohio's citizens. The county jail is also a significant cost driver for most county budgets, and the challenge of maintaining Ohio's aging county jail facilities seems to be ever-increasing. Fortunately, there are productive discussions taking place at the Ohio Statehouse to address this significant challenge.



Over one-third of Ohio's county jails are over 30 years old – the typical lifespan of most jail facilities. A few jails even date back to the 1800s. Jails constructed decades—if not centuries—ago were not designed to address the criminal justice challenges counties face today. Increasing drug crime arrests, higher numbers of female prisoners and rising felony populations are overwhelming already overcrowded and aging jail facilities, creating substantial public safety challenges and fiscal costs for counties. A 2019 survey conducted by CCAO and the Buckeye State Sheriffs Association identified over \$1.3 billion is needed for county jail construction and renovation across the state. This need represents an immense burden on county finances, a burden that cannot be met by counties alone.

To address Ohio's long-term county jail challenges, an ongoing state-county partnership is essential. CCAO was pleased to see the inclusion of \$50 million for county jail construction and renovation included in the state capital appropriations bill enacted late last year. This is a positive first step, but what counties need now is for this initial investment to develop into an ongoing capital funding program to meet the significant long-term jail infrastructure needs of counties. Such a program existed in the

past, but was ceased in 2003. That partnership needs to be renewed.

Fortunately, legislation has been introduced for that exact purpose. House Bill 101, sponsored by state Reps. Jason Stephens and Jay Edwards would create a financing system to direct state funding to counties to construct and renovate county jail facilities. Modeled after Ohio's school facilities construction formula, the formula would base state support for jail projects on locally available resources and local need.

Under the bill, the Ohio Facilities Construction Commission (OFCC) would conduct a jail needs assessment at the request of the county commissioners or multi-county jail board. The OFCC would then rank counties, using a percentile ranking, where the state will match a certain percentage of construction costs of a jail based on the factors used in ranking. The greater the need for jail facility upgrades/construction and the smaller the taxable retail sales sourced to the county, the higher the state support amount.

CCAO has testified in support of HB 101 and looks forward to working with the bill sponsors to continue to craft a capital funding formula that allocates state capital funds where needed most. HB 101 currently contains no appropriations of capital funds; however, it establishes the critical framework needed to make a long-term funding program possible.

CCAO thanks Reps. Stephens and Edwards for their leadership on this important issue as well as the Buckeye State Sheriffs Association for their partnership in ensuring county jail facilities serve the needs of Ohio counties.

If you have any questions about HB 101 or county jail funding, please contact CCAO Assistant Director John Leutz at (614) 220-7994 at jleutz@ccao.org.

GUEST COLUMN

SUPPORT OHIO YOUTH CIVIC ENGAGEMENT THROUGH KIDS VOTING OHIO

Matina Bliss, Program Director – Kids Voting Ohio

Kids Voting Ohio (KVO) is a free, nonpartisan voter education preparedness program for Ohio public schools, launching statewide in the fall of 2021. Kids Voting Ohio is an affiliate of Kids Voting USA. We intend to provide all Ohio students with the education and resources necessary to understand the roles of local, state, and federal governments, alongside the American voting process.

In doing so, we hope to improve voter turnout for the 18-29 age group in Ohio. In addition, we aim to empower young people to be civically active and engaged in their communities while emphasizing the importance of local government.

KVO offers program curriculum, lesson plans, and activities for grades 3-12, all available on our website. Our online resources also include a distinctive Meet Your Representatives Video Library featuring personal testimonies from Ohio’s elected officials. This video library serves to teach students and voters alike about Ohio’s government offices in a personal way.

We also offer opportunities for student scholarships, mock elections for every election in Ohio, opportunities for government field trips, training sessions for educators, online resources, and voter registration drives. Additionally, we host collaborative events with our partners: The Supreme Court of Ohio, Ohio Education Association, Educational Service Center of Central Ohio, the Ohio Association of Election Officials, and the Office of the Ohio Secretary of State.

There are a multitude of ways you can help KVO and our mission. First and foremost, we invite you to participate in the Meet Your Representatives Video Library. Instructions to participate are available [here](#). This library provides a unique way for students to learn about the functions of Ohio’s government offices and the personalities of their elected officials.



We want to help students understand that their elected officials are real, passionate people working to serve their communities and simultaneously chip away the negative stigmas that often surround politics today. Over the next couple years, we are hopeful that this library will grow to include videos from all of Ohio’s elected officials. You can also support us by sharing our social media posts on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#), volunteering to speak to students and classrooms, encouraging schools in your district and your children’s schools to participate in our programs.

Kids Voting programs across the country have improved voter turnout among young people by up to 10%. A 10% increase in Ohio would be 180,000 new voters. Ohio saw a large increase in voter turnout among the 18-29 age group during the 2020 election. We plan to use this momentum to sustain turnout growth for all elections in Ohio. While voting is in our name, it is not our sole purpose.

The KVO programs offer opportunities to better our communities, our state, and our democracy by educating, engaging, empowering, and preparing young Ohioans to fully participate in their civic duties.

COUNSELOR'S CORNER

SHINING A LIGHT ON THE SUNSHINE LAWS

by David Yost, Ohio Attorney General

More than a century ago, future U.S. Supreme Court Justice Louis Brandeis made no secret of his concerns about powerful bankers posing a growing threat to a good society.

He believed that public disclosure of the companies' huge fees, commissions, salaries and profits would rightly stir voter anger.

"Publicity is justly commended as a remedy for social and industrial diseases," he wrote. "Sunlight is said to be the best of disinfectants."

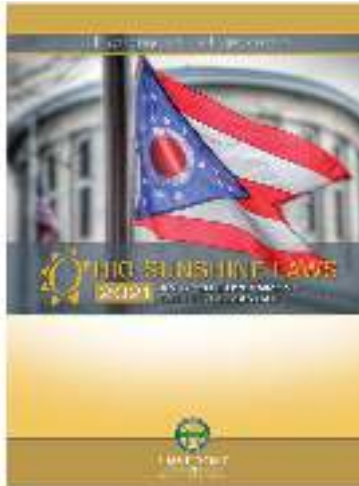
As a champion of transparency for both private businesses and all levels of government, Brandeis was ahead of his time.

All these years later, the principle of the public having both a right and a need to be fully informed of the workings of government remains crucial to a healthy democracy. Transparency has proved to be a highly effective tool for government oversight.

In 2021, any Ohio statute that guarantees the public access to government records or meetings of public bodies is grouped under the state's so-called Sunshine Laws.

Each year, my office produces a Sunshine Laws manual, a sizable public resource affectionately dubbed the Yellow Book. The manual serves as a one-stop explainer of Ohio's Public Records and Open Meetings Acts, including legal changes and legal decisions made since the previous edition. (The 2021 manual, issued in March, can be found [here](#).)

The core of Ohio's Sunshine Laws covers public records and the requirements for public bodies in



conducting open meetings. To ensure that public officials and employees are properly educated about the legal mandates of these laws, public officials (county commissioners included) are required to attend three hours of training approved by my office at least once during each term in office.

In his or her place, a public official may direct a "designee" to take the training. That designee may be an employee of the public office or a fellow elected official in offices with multiple elected officials (such as boards of county commissioners or township trustees). The designee can attend on behalf of a single elected official, or, in the case of offices with multiple elected officials, more than one.

By law, the Sunshine Laws training developed and provided by my office is free and open to anyone.

Before the COVID-19 pandemic compelled us all to rearrange our lives, assistant attorneys general from my office, often in partnership with local governments, provided in-person Sunshine Laws training at locations throughout the state. For those who were unable to (or preferred not to) attend in person, we offered an online webinar that fulfills the training mandate.

In light of the pandemic-related restrictions, however, we have been providing live virtual training sessions in place of in-person training; the webinar, too, is still an option.

With the world gradually regaining some pre-pandemic normalcy, it is my hope that we can soon return to in-person trainings. Until then, the online outlets are there for you.

To learn more about the Sunshine Laws training offered by the Ohio Attorney General's Office or to register for an upcoming virtual training session, [click here](#). Questions about our training and/or the legal requirements should be directed to Mark Altier at Mark.Altier@ohioattorneygeneral.gov.

FEATURE

METROPARKS DISTRICTS OFFER UNIQUE EXPERIENCES

Woody Woodward, Executive Director, Ohio Parks and Recreation Association

Ohio's Metropolitan Park Districts (sometime called county park districts) currently operate in 62 of Ohio's 88 counties. While park districts can vary slightly in focus, Ohio Metropolitan Park Districts are generally focused on natural resource conservation and outdoor recreation with an overall mission of improving the quality of life in the county where they operate.

Ohio Revised Code chapter 1545 allows for the creation of a park district when authorized by a resolution passed by the Board of County Commissioners. While generally formed by a county commission resolution, park district commissioners are appointed by the county probate court judge and districts exist as independent governmental entities under Ohio law. In many cases, commissioners have provided "start-up" funds for park district operations. Today, the majority for park districts in Ohio receive funding from dedicated property tax levies.

Ohio park districts are known nationally as some of the best in the United States. Within the past five years, both Cleveland Metroparks and Metroparks Toledo have won the National Recreation and Parks Association Gold Medal—a national honor presented to the best park system in the country.

2020 was an interesting year for park districts. While most businesses saw reductions in attendance, Ohio park districts exploded! Many experienced visitor levels that more than doubled as people sought ways to care for their bodies, minds and spirits in the midst of the pandemic.

While districts around Ohio are constantly providing new projects and programs for their counties, we wanted to take the opportunity to highlight three relatively recent projects in different parts of the state that demonstrate some of the ways that districts are enhancing quality of life.

In Stark County, Partnering with Stark Mental Health and Addiction Recovery agency (Stark MHAR), Stark Parks set out to create a space at Petros Lake Park that was designated for meditation and self-care.

From here, the Mindfulness Walk concept originated.



Stark County Mindfulness Walk

The location for the Mindfulness Walk was chosen thoughtfully with a handful of factors in mind, ranging from meaningful to practical. Petros Lake Park in Perry Township was chosen as the spot to design the walk, as it is centrally located in the county, the park has a network of existing trails, and the space offers varied terrain, including woodland, open fields, meadows, and lake views. Petros Lake Park is also a significant location as Perry Local school district was recently the site of a suicide cluster in which six kids took their lives during the 2017-18 school year.

After some discussion, it was decided to make the walk similar to an exercise trail. At typical exercise trails, stations along the path prompt users to stop and complete a certain number of push-ups, pull-ups, etc. Stark Parks and StarkMHAR wanted the project's design to mirror that concept, but with mindful activities at each station instead.

The chosen route utilizes three existing trails and is about one mile long. Station themes were selected in two categories, natural features and traditional meditation activities.

In Northwest Ohio, Metroparks Toledo purchased a 987-acre active farm near the shores of Lake Erie for \$6 million using \$1.2 million in funds from its land acquisition levy supplemented by \$4.8 million in outside grants. In 2013, Metroparks worked with project partners to initiate an extended public planning process that ultimately led to completion of engineering and design plans in March 2016 to restore 700 acres of active farmland back to Lake



Metroparks Toledo's wetland project

Erie coastal wetlands and associated upland habitat. Park construction was initiated shortly thereafter and was completed in March 2018.

This is the single largest wetland restoration project completed under the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative. Accomplished goals included habitat restoration, enhanced water quality and improved recreation opportunities. The achieved metrics include:

- 571 acres of new restored coastal wetlands
- 116 acres of new upland habitat (including 7,500 new trees)
- 6 miles of deep water channels
- 6.6 miles of new hiking trails and boardwalk
- 191 species of song birds, shorebirds and waterfowl have been documented using the restored habitat since opening.

The park's unique design immerses park visitors into a total wetland experience with a spectacular 360 degree view of three interconnected marshland units interspersed with nine restored upland habitat islands. The main park drive allows visitors to pull off vehicles at any location for wildlife viewing without blocking traffic. All three wetland units and two habitat islands are interconnected through shared hiking trails with easy access canoe/kayak portage structures to allow boaters to create their own routes, from short jaunts to day-long adventures.

To promote accessibility, two of the wetland units have handicap accessible kayak launch ramps/platforms, and 0.25 miles of boardwalk are handicap accessible. Overall, there are 3.9 miles of accessible trail.

In the Miami Valley, The 2nd Street Market, a Five

Rivers MetroParks facility located in downtown Dayton, has offered fresh, local produce; prepared food; and artisan wares to the public for more than 18 years. With 385,000 visitors annually, the Market is a place that connects local growers and small businesses to people across the greater Dayton region.

The Market also is a go-to for people who live downtown, as it is one of the only shopping destinations in the immediate vicinity for fresh produce. Indeed, Dayton is the site of many food deserts, areas where it's difficult to find affordable or high-quality fresh food.

To help alleviate these challenges, MetroParks developed a goal to implement programs through strategic partnerships that create broader access to fresh, healthy food and cultivate a more inclusive shopping space. This inclusivity would also broaden local farmers' customer bases, strengthening their financial well-being.

Five Rivers MetroParks developed a relationship with Homefull, a local nonprofit with a mission to end homelessness in Dayton. Homefull has an urban farm located at its men's emergency shelter and a community garden, where clients grow produce to be sold at various farmers markets in the Dayton region, including the 2nd Street Market. Homefull's clients are paid to run booths at farmers markets in the region, selling produce and sharing the importance of healthy lifestyles. These client-employees also learn applicable job skills they can use to build their future careers.

These are just three of literally hundreds of life-changing opportunities provided by Metropark Districts in Ohio. Like most Metropark activities, they are free and open to the public.



Homefull at the farmers market

FEATURE

COUNTIES UPDATE COURTHOUSES, PROVIDE IMPROVED EXPERIENCE FOR STAFF AND GUESTS

by Andrew Johnson, Communications Coordinator

A county’s courthouse is the embodiment of a county and its government. Not only do many contain the offices that keep county administration running and administer justice, but they are a physical representation of a county’s history.

Maintaining these buildings often takes a considerable amount of planning, funds and teamwork. Several Ohio counties recently completed or are in the process of completing renovations on their courthouses to keep these historical local landmarks in pristine condition as they continue to serve generations of county residents.

In Delaware County, what was old is new again, as the county overhauled their Historic Courthouse to serve as a modernized center of county offices and administration.

The Historical Courthouse was constructed in 1869; over time, most of the county’s elected officials had offices in the building. By the end of 2017, however, most of the offices still in that building, including the Court of Common Pleas, Clerk of Courts and the Public Defender’s Office, had moved to a newly constructed courthouse.

The county, however, decided to renovate The Historic Courthouse and put it back in use.

“Historic preservation has taken on a lot of importance. People have realized it’s important to preserve history,” said Jane Hawes, director of communications for the Delaware County Commissioners.

Renovation work began on The Historic Courthouse in June 2019, with Columbus-based architectural firm Schooley Caldwell leading the project. Changes included updated HVAC and telecommunications systems; bringing various features up to modern code, including a larger, handicapped-accessible elevator cab and higher railings for the stairs; reopening the front entrance of the building to the public; restoring other historic features such as fixing and exposing the original stained-glass windows; and re-caning the original jurors’ chairs.

If you visit the courthouse, you’ll find historic blueprints from renovations done in 1928, 1954 and 1980 framed and mounted on the walls. The county also discovered a number of artifacts during the demolition phase and had several mounted for display, including an 1897 Indian head penny,



Delaware County Courthouse Hearing Room, before and after

two glass flasks found in the attic eaves, a local department store brochure from the 1950s, and numerous old invoices and envelopes.

The move-in to the updated Historic Courthouse was completed January 2021, with county commissioners, county administrator, human resources department, economic development department as the new occupants.

“It’s a very beautiful building to work in and it’s inspiring to work in,” said Hawes.

Miami County began work on their courthouse after discussing the project for nearly four years. The former plaza was in poor condition and posed many trip hazards and safety issues.

Partnering with Outdoor Enterprise, the project began in 2018, with construction completed in 2020. Now when you visit the courthouse, you will find a litany of improvements. Two fountains were demolished and a new single fountain built. Additionally, new paver areas, greenery, directional signage and historic markers, concrete pathways and all-new underground fountain piping, pumps and electrical supply were added. The site also had all-new lighting, posts, railings and building programmable exterior lighting installed.

“The board is very pleased with the overall outcome of the project. It makes the courthouse a much-improved site for the visiting public,” said Chris



Delaware County’s Historic Courthouse

Johnson, administrator/director of Operations & Facilities for the board of Miami County Commissioners. “First and foremost, we have a safer traffic flow for citizens and employees. Additionally, we have new areas to sit and enjoy the courthouse grounds.”

Henry County’s courthouse is also getting a bit of a lift. The statue atop the tower was removed last year and is being restored. Work will also be done to the tower starting in May and should be completed by end of August, when the statue will be returned to the tower.

On June 29, 2012, a Dericho wind storm passed through Logan County. The courthouse clock tower was damaged and potentially on the verge



Miami County Courthouse, during and after renovation

of collapse. After initial repairs were made, the commissioners chose to make further improvements. The project started in the summer of 2012 and was completed in the fall of 2018.

The commissioners decided to modernize the HVAC, technology, security and electrical systems of the building. Another goal was to improve the functionality of the courthouse without taking away from the historical aspects of the building.

To help with security and safety, the approach at the north entrance is the only one open to the public and is handicap accessible. The plaza area is designed to allow for the possibility of public speaking events and ceremonies.

“A great deal of time, effort and money was required to recondition such an old structure. However, many citizens consider our courthouse to be iconic to Logan County and its culture and are glad that it has been saved and revitalized,” said Logan County Commissioner Joe Antram.



Clockwise from the top: Logan County Courthouse, the completed Common Pleas Courtroom and the completed plaza area

GUEST COLUMN

WHY YOUR COUNTY SHOULD JOIN STEPPING UP

Evelyn Stratton, Project Director, Stepping Up Ohio

WHY YOUR COUNTY SHOULD JOIN STEPPING UP: the project to reduce the number of persons with mental illness cycling through your court and jail system.

If you are one of the white counties below, you are one of 37 counties that is not a Stepping Up county. 51 counties, representing more than 80% of Ohio's population, have already joined.

Ohio Registered Counties



■ Stepping Up Registered County

TEN TOP REASONS TO JOIN

1. JOIN THE NETWORK

You will join a state and local network of partners committed to changing the jail from being the de facto mental health hospital to putting treatment and services for this group back into the community mental health system. This allows your county to benefit from lessons learned and projects developed and tested in other Ohio counties.

2. TEAM VISITS & TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

You will receive an eight member Stepping Up team visit where we invite ALL county leaders to learn

about assistance on housing, crisis centers, state and federal grants, new federal Cares Act funding, data collection and how to identify baseline data for your county. (We used to do this over a hot lunch that we provided but are zooming for now, which actually has increased attendance!) We provide technical assistance in setting up your own local Steering Committee or expanding an existing committee to carry out these projects, and we provide consultants to help with identifying gaps and developing solutions specifically tailored to meet your county's needs.

3. HOUSING SUPPORT

Sally Luken, our housing consultant, is available to work with you to demonstrate how providing permanent, supportive housing to this population reduces the high cost of the frequent users of your systems. By showing you the current, actual cost of not housing folks and how their interactions in the criminal justice and the treatment systems—not just the jail—results in more expensive and worst outcomes.

4. COURT PROGRAMS & PROBATION

Melissa Knopp, Stepping Up Ohio's Project Manager and expert on court administration and court programs, is available to work with your courts on screening and assessment tools, case flow and processing issues, funding, specialized dockets, data collection issues, and specialized probation programs, such as Probation Crisis Intervention Teams.

5. SEQUENTIAL INTERCEPT MAPPING (SIM)

You will be eligible for a free Sequential Intercept Mapping (normally a \$30,000 cost) from Northeast Ohio Medical University to discover where your county's strengths and weaknesses are and how to prioritize them and develop a data-driven, strategic plan of attack.

6. CRISIS INTERVENTION TEAMS (CIT)

You will learn about CIT assistance, training, expansion, and data support from the Northeast

Ohio Medical University (NEOMED) Coordinating Center of Excellence (CCOE).

7. NEWSLETTER

You will receive a biweekly newsletter that focuses on free resources, such as relevant topical trainings, available federal, state and foundation grants, and conferences.

8. STATEWIDE STEERING COMMITTEE

You will have access to a 45-member, statewide Steering Committee of all key state agency and association leaders who will take your local issues to the Legislature or responsible state agency to craft a resolution.

For example: A recent study showed 80 percent of jail resources were spent on dealing with offenders with mental health issues while in jail (offenders with substance addiction were not more costly even though much of recent focus has been on opioid issues). Stepping Up Ohio, through the efforts of the Steering Committee, has already obtained funding for the past four years for reimbursement for psychotropic medications, including long-acting injectables.

Unless you are one of the seven counties that have never sought reimbursement in the last four years, you have already benefited. To those seven counties not taking advantage of the psychotropic medication reimbursement, you are paying for expenses that you do not have to pay for!

9. VETERANS REENTRY SEARCH SERVICE (VRSS)

Your jail and probation departments will learn how to use the Veterans Reentry Search System, where you upload social security numbers each night to the VA to learn if you have a veteran in your system. If you do, that veteran may now be able to use the robust veteran services, freeing up local treatment dollars. Even with a veterans' intake screen, jails are missing many vets who don't disclose their status for many different reasons. Again, as a commissioner, you may be paying for services the veteran could get for free from the Veterans Administration.

10. NEW WAYS TO PARTNER

Your community will find ways to partner together, courts with service providers, housing providers with jails, and treatment providers with NAMI, as new collaboration develops through Stepping Up. Not a meeting has gone by where several admit they had no idea what all was happening in their own community.

Together, you can change the paradigm of jails being the mental health hospitals, cut costs, reallocate your resources, and help those we are working with lead happier, better lives.

We could list many more benefits but hope this will be a start. To get more information or learn how to sign up, contact Melissa Knopp, Esq., Stepping Up Ohio Project manager, at knoppm@steppingupohio.org or (614) 600-4791.



VOICE OF COUNTY LEADERSHIP

MELANIE FLAX WILT, CLARK COUNTY COMMISSIONER



How long have you been a county commissioner?
5 years.

Can you tell me about yourself? What is your professional background? What other elected positions have you held? Why did you first run?

Started Shift • ology Communication in 2008 to provide PR counsel, storytelling and virtual experiences for the agriculture, healthcare and education sectors.

Why did you want to be a commissioner?

I was serving my community in many different ways through boards, community service and volunteering, and when the opportunity came along to serve in this capacity, I thought it could amplify the impact I was having. Also, my grandfather was a commissioner (1988-1996), and I always admired his ability to represent the rural economy in this role; I wanted to continue that tradition.

What are you most proud of for having achieved in your time as commissioner?

This project is still underway, but I'm extremely proud of the work we're doing to improve our fairgrounds – aka Champions Park – through some creative partnerships with the county land bank, private businesses and the agricultural society. This project will effectively make the fairgrounds the “grand entrance” to Clark County and Springfield and visibly position the community on I-70. We anticipate reinvesting millions in the fairgrounds with this unique arrangement. It will continue to be a place for year-round events, including the Great Clark County Fair for generations to come.

What has been the biggest challenge you've dealt with as a county commissioner?

It has been challenging to get our community leaders beyond past division and come together and stay focused on our common goals. A lot of this is beginning to fade away, but it rears its ugly head every so often.

What was the biggest surprise or adjustment after taking office?

I came into this position with my eyes wide open. I had served in state government for six years as a public information officer and communication director at the Ohio Department of Agriculture, and watching my grandfather serve in the role when I was a teenager made the job very tangible to me. I think it has probably surprised others that a 38-year-old mother and business owner walked into the position and managed to quickly strike an effective balance!

How has COVID-19 affected county operations?

It was scary at first, but it has catapulted us into the 21st century in a lot of ways. We have begun to do business much more like the taxpayers and private sector expect. We hold conference calls and Zoom meetings, have streamlined systems, updated information technology, improved security, and overall have become more efficient. This was part of our strategic plan, but I believe it would have taken much longer to achieve if we hadn't been forced into “work from home” mode and social distancing.

I cannot say enough about our professional staff and leadership under our county administrator how they stepped up to the plate to manage a proactive budget cut process and implement a decade's worth of updates in less than a year. We are in a better financial position today than we were a year ago, although we're well aware the pandemic is not over.

One of the primary responsibilities of a commissioner is to develop a balanced budget and provide adequate resources to deliver county services. What has been one of the biggest challenges in that area?

We were extremely concerned we would lose 20% of our sales tax revenues at the beginning of the

pandemic. We had begun 2020 with our first budget increase since I took office. We quickly cut budgets across the board by 5-10 percent. All of the elected officials across the county recognized the need to work together to make sure we were financially stable, and agreed to voluntary cuts.

By mid-year, we were able to return a good bit of the reduced funding back to the departments and offices. We were able to maintain most of our rainy day fund by being smart money managers. In hind sight, I think we did exactly the right thing.



Flax Wilt's swearing-in ceremony earlier this year

How have you or what has your county been doing to participate in the state-county partnership? Will that change as we start 2021 with a new legislature?

We have great relationships with our state representatives and state senator. Senator Hackett was a county commissioner, so he understands our issues well. Representative Koehler is always a call or a text away, and he has a great pulse on the community. We don't expect any changes, except that we hope to find another great representative who is as easy to work with as Rep. Koehler term limits out next year.

We have more than 50 new CCAO members this year. What advice do you have for them as they take office?

Ask a lot of questions. Stay focused on the county's goals, and don't get caught up in the details. Most of you have staff and department leadership to make the day-to-day decisions. Keep in mind that your role is a strategic one and not an administrative one.

Could you discuss your involvement with CCAO as well as the benefits of being an active member?

I've enjoyed being part of the Ag and Natural Resources committee through CCAO and participating in the annual meeting. CCAO has

given me great information on changes with state legislation, and was particularly helpful in navigating the changes to online sales tax collections.

Do you have any priorities/personal issues/causes?

My passion is for the rural economy. Food and

farmers (like my dad and brother) are the backbone of our economy, and I don't ever want that to get lost for Clark County. It's not only our tradition but our future, as well.

We're lucky to have some of the best farmland in the state, as well as two great cities and several villages. It may sound odd for somebody who loves

change as much as I do to celebrate preservation, but any change should be aligned carefully with our values to build on those strengths for our residents' prosperity.

What do you find are the most successful methods for reaching out to the residents of your county to communicate what your office is doing and why it's doing it?

This is a critical element to the job (although as a professional communicator, I may be a bit biased)! We hired a PIO in 2018 who has since helped launch a new county brand. This helps us more clearly articulate our value proposition to residents, businesses and partners by focusing on "Communities, Connections and Opportunities."

In addition, we have great relationships with our local news media, respond quickly to resident and reporter calls, and remain transparent in our communication. We have an active website, social media presence and news release distribution system; and we make ourselves available for questions.

LEGISLATOR Q & A

CHAIR STEPHANIE KUNZE, SENATE TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE

What are the biggest transportation related challenges facing the state and counties today?

Ohio's economic engine is built upon its roadways and bridges. Ohioans must be able to get to work, school, and live their day-to-day lives safely and efficiently. Businesses greatly consider a state's infrastructure when choosing a place to begin or expand their business. HB 74 is a strong and sensible investment in Ohio's infrastructure that allocates a record amount of dollars towards public transit. This is a clear message to the world that Ohio is open to business and we would love to have you call the Buckeye State home.



How can county officials work with you, in your role on the Senate Transportation Committee, to further the state-county partnership in this space?

Policy created at the state level should always be done in partnership with Ohio's local leaders. Hearing from County Engineers, Commissioners, Mayors, and City Council members allowed the Transportation Committee to work towards solutions to the challenges that our locals are experiencing. I encourage all local leaders to reach out to their respective State representative, so that we can continue working together to provide solutions to meet the needs in our communities.

How do you see the role of technology, whether it be autonomous and/or electric vehicles or other advancements, impacting transportation in the years to come?

Ohio is quickly becoming the Midwest hub of innovation and development for EV and autonomous transportation. Through targeted investments and business friendly policies, Ohio is positioned to lead from the front into the new age of transportation. HB 74 allocated \$8 million towards a grant program that supports the construction of EV charging stations. This is only the beginning. We have already seen what the Voltage Valley in Northeast Ohio can produce - jobs for Ohioans, and an industry that is ready to flourish. I look forward to working with industry leaders to build upon these successes as we drive Ohio forward.

LEGISLATOR Q & A

RANKING MEMBER NICKIE ANTONIO, SENATE TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE

What are the biggest transportation related challenges facing the state and counties today?

The transportation challenges facing Ohio includes the state's lack of adequate public transportation due to the low prioritization and therefore underfunded systems throughout the state. Increased public transportation would allow Ohioans to more easily get to and from school, work, doctors' appointments, etc. quickly and safely. Another top issue is the Motor Fuel Tax (MFT), currently how we fund building and repairing our roads and bridges. As vehicles become more fuel efficient and run on alternative fuels, we must develop new ways to finance these necessary infrastructure needs for both safety and economic development.



How can county officials work with you, in your role on the Senate Transportation Committee, to further the state-county partnership in this space?

I would encourage county officials to continue their advocacy work by reaching out to my office by phone, in writing and/or testifying in committee. Its always helpful to be informed of the desired state-county partnerships county officials support. Continued dialogue is the best way I know to develop productive partnerships.

How do you see the role of technology, whether it be autonomous and/or electric vehicles or other advancements, impacting transportation in the years to come?

I believe technology can and will have a very positive impact on transportation for years to come, especially with regard to electric vehicles. The current transportation budget calls for some charging stations which we will need to increase as automakers move to electric powered vehicles in our certain future. The legislature has to keep up with the technological advances in a continuous process.

LEGISLATOR Q & A

CHAIR BRIAN BALDRIDGE, HOUSE TRANSPORTATION AND PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE

What are the biggest transportation related challenges facing the state and counties today?

Budgetary difficulties will of course continue to require our attention. Beyond that however, making sure we are addressing where Ohio is going in terms of our roads, bridges, railways, and waterways is a challenge we will have to rise to. We as lawmakers must stay connected to the big picture, and that picture is making sure economic development and transportation and infrastructure are intentionally moving forward hand and hand.



How can county officials work with you, in your role on the House Transportation and Public Safety Committee, to further the state-county partnership in this space?

Engage, engage and engage. The number of current House Members who are former County Commissioners is in the double digits. It is great that we are able to draw on our experiences and can provide historical context. However, when a sitting Commissioner builds those relationships with their Legislators it brings an unmatched impact to the conversation that even us Members as former County Commissioners cannot necessarily create.

How does your experience as a County Commissioner impact you in this role as the head of the House Transportation and Public Safety Committee?

My experience as a County Commissioner positively impacts how I execute my role as a Legislator every day. Whether it be the most local of issues or up at the county level, the education and experiences that I received over the years help me tackle those tough issues with a realistic prospective. I understand what the actual impact on the ground could look like because of my background in local government and that is an important advantage.

How do you see the role of technology, whether it be autonomous and/or electric vehicles or other advancements, impacting transportation in the years to come?

Ohio Lawmakers and Government Officials need to be forward thinkers and it is imperative that Ohio is a place of economic progress. In my role as the House Transportation and Public Safety Chair I intend to facilitate the meaningful discussions around what those technological possibilities may look like.

LEGISLATOR Q & A

RANKING MEMBER MICHAEL SHEEHY, HOUSE TRANSPORTATION AND PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE

What are the biggest transportation related challenges facing the state and counties today?

One of the biggest challenges facing the state today is the lack of passenger rail. Establishing a network of high-speed and passenger rail throughout Northwest Ohio, and the state itself, will be an immense challenge. When it comes to challenges facing the counties, perhaps keeping up with infrastructure repairs. The American Society of Civil Engineers recently released their report card on Ohio's infrastructure – we received a C-. I am looking forward to see President Biden's infrastructure plan develop further so that we are able to fund county projects across the state.



How can county officials work with you, in your role on the House Transportation and Public Safety Committee, to further the state-county partnership in this space?

Maintaining an open line of communication is extremely important for a strong relationship. When county officials tell me what they need, what they are not happy with, and what they want to do in the future, then I am able to figure out what I can do at the state level to support the counties.

How do you see the role of technology, whether it be autonomous and/or electric vehicles or other advancements, impacting transportation in the years to come?

The role of technology is completely transforming the industry. Autonomous vehicles, electric vehicles, the expansion of high-speed rail, and other technological advancements will allow us to work more efficiently and communicate better. According to the American Society of Civil Engineers, Ohio roadways and bridges accommodate the sixth most vehicle miles travelled and carry the third highest freight volume in the nation. Technological advancements will allow us to contribute even further to the national economy.

FEATURE

WHY WE RIDE (FEATURING MUSKINGUM COUNTY COMMISSIONER MOLLIE CROOKS)

by Rachel Massoud Reedy, CCAO Policy Analyst

When did you first develop a passion for riding?

When I was 18, I bought a 350 Honda motorcycle from my dad. I learned to ride, got my motorcycle license and drove it to college and my job at a pediatrician’s office. (The doctors were amused, I think.)

How did you decide to turn that passion into a business?

My husband, Rodney, always wanted to own his own business. We had looked at a variety of business opportunities where we could blend our talents (and our OCD tendencies)...without killing each other. We both love motorcycles and the freedom of riding. He loves all things mechanical. I’m most comfortable with business, sales and marketing. He came home one day in April 2008 and announced that we were going to start a business – building trikes. He asked me what I thought about a trike. I said, “A trike makes me sound old, and I’m not willing to admit that yet.” Regardless, Trikes by Rodney was born!

Tell us a little about the shop.

Trikes by Rodney began as our “hobby business” in a single car garage rented from a family member. Both Rodney and I were still working our full-time jobs and he was building trikes in the evenings and weekends. As the business grew, we moved into a larger garage space and had a small selection of chrome accessories. In 2015, we purchased a 4,000 sq ft building on Linden Avenue in Zanesville.

We completely gutted the building and created a garage space, tire room (for mounting & balancing tires), trike showroom, and retail space featuring chrome and motorcycle/trike accessories, leather apparel and a “Unique Boutique” for women. Rodney retired from AEP in 2016 and is now full-time with the business.

Why do people consider “triking” their motorcycles?

Bad knees, bad backs, decreased balance...or your wife says she’s not riding with you any more unless you add a third wheel. We’ve also had several ladies



Muskingum County Commissioner Mollie Crooks and her husband, Rodney

who loved to ride with their spouses. When their spouses died, they triked “their bike” so they could continue riding. Carolyn’s husband died unexpectedly at age 50. Shortly after his death, she had Rodney trike her husband’s Harley Davidson. She told us that when she rode, she could feel her hubby with her. If you love to ride, you never want to give up that sense of freedom. But as we age, we may experience limitations – with knees, hips, balance – or we seek added safety and stability with our ride. Trikes are more visible on the road and enable us to continue doing something we love with added security.

How long does it typically take to convert a motorcycle into a trike?

What we do is convert 2-wheeled motorcycles into 3-wheeled trikes. The process takes approximately 10-14 days for the conversion.

Where do your customers come from? Local? Out of state?

TBR is the 7th largest dealer for California Sidecar Trikes in the USA. Our customers are from all over Ohio, West Virginia, Pennsylvania, Michigan, Indiana, and Tennessee. The gentleman in Tennessee for whom we built a trike was himself a custom motorcycle builder. We were honored he chose TBR for his trike.

Are the designers local? How do you decide what to carry/what to stock?

We use two manufacturers for our trike kits. These conversion kits are custom designed and engineered specifically for trikes. The factories do the fabricating and painting. Rodney removes the back wheel and saddle bags and replaces it with an independent suspension trike kit and fiberglass body. The front wheel is “raked” out...much like adding power steering to your car.

We have done trike conversions on Honda, Harley Davidson, Indian, Victory, and Yamaha motorcycles. While the majority of our business is converting owner’s motorcycles to trikes, we also build and sell “ready-to-ride” trikes.

TBR is a “specialty shop.” We have a nice selection of chrome, accessories and leathers. My favorite part of the store is the “Unique Boutique” that features tons of “blingy” ladies’ apparel...made in the USA in Springboro, Ohio. Our leathers are from Unik International, based in New Jersey.

Is there a particular or unique story or memory behind any of your projects that stands out?

When we began Trikes by Rodney 13 years ago, we thought we were establishing a business to make Rodney’s dream come true. What we’ve been blessed to witness is the absolute joy we bring to motorcycle enthusiasts who can continue to enjoy the free-spirited days of riding on three wheels. We have so many stories. But Fred’s story was the one that told me how truly powerful my husband’s work is. I accompanied Rodney to pick up Fred’s motorcycle. When it was time to load up the bike, I was shocked when Rodney asked Fred if he wanted



TBR's showroom

to drive the bike into our trailer. (Rodney always did the loading in and out.) Fred laid down his cane, grabbed hold of his pant leg, guided his leg across the seat and with a bit of unsteadiness drove the bike into the trailer. When I asked Rodney why he didn't drive the bike, Rodney replied “because that’s the last time Fred will be able to ride his two-wheeler.” When we delivered their trike a few weeks later, Fred and his wife both cried as Rodney backed the trike from the trailer. After dumping their motorcycle twice, Fred thought their riding days were over. My husband ensured that they have many more (trike) riding days ahead.

Where are your favorite places to ride in Ohio?

We love any back, winding roads, but we are particularly fond of our southeastern Ohio roads, especially between Zanesville and Athens.

How does your experience as a business owner help you in your role as Muskingum County Commissioner?

I have found my experience as a business owner invaluable in my role as a commissioner. Prior to owning a business, I was the executive director of a non-profit. Both roles gave me expertise in customer relations, sales, marketing, conservative financial management, networking and leadership. I believe this was excellent preparation for being a public servant leader.

Anything else you would like to add?

Last year, we celebrated our anniversary by purchasing and triking a Honda Goldwing 1800 for ourselves. It's super sweet...and I'm looking forward to a summer of riding!



TBR's trike kit

FEATURE

SPOTLIGHT ON COUNTY SANITARY ENGINEERS

by Adam Schwiebert, CCAO Policy Analyst

County sanitary engineers across Ohio’s counties work to deliver critical services to countless Ohioans. Water, sewer, storm water and solid waste disposal services are all under the county sanitary engineer umbrella. While Ohioans rely upon these vital services, few know the men and women whose job it is to carry out these critically important functions.

CCAO recently discussed the numerous responsibilities and challenges of county sanitary engineering with Randy Gilbert, P.E., MPA. Gilbert serves as Assistant Director of the Greene County Sanitary Engineering Department and also serves as president of the County Sanitary Engineers Association of Ohio, a CCAO affiliate.



Gilbert

What is the role of the county sanitary engineer?

The position of county sanitary engineer is created by statute as the professional engineer hired or appointed by the board of county commissioners to manage county drainage systems that can include both sanitary sewers and storm water systems. Other items that fall under the jurisdiction of the sanitary engineer are county-owned water systems, county solid waste districts, and sanitary landfills. The county sanitary engineer is normally also the director of the sanitary engineering department, having responsibility for all functions of the department, including compliance with Ohio EPA regulations.

How did you get involved in sanitary engineering?

I got started in the industry when I began working as an engineering co-op with the Montgomery County Solid Waste Division in 1980, supporting the operation of facilities that managed solid waste, including a transfer station and a municipal solid waste incinerator. After graduation from college, I was hired full time by Montgomery County Sanitary Department and transitioned to working with the water and sewer engineering division, where I was

focused on capital improvement projects. As I gained experience, I began managing increasingly complex water and sewer system projects for Montgomery County and eventually become chief engineer.

After Montgomery County, I became the sanitary engineer for Preble County where I managed their municipal landfill and multiple small sewer districts. Following my tenure in Preble County, I moved to Greene County where I am now involved in a major capital improvement program as part of our Greene Forward campaign. We expect to spend between \$90 to \$100 million to update and expand multiple treatment facilities along with collection and distribution improvements over the next 5-8 years.

What does a typical day as a county sanitary engineer look like? Is there a typical day?

I don’t know that there is a typical day. What could be considered typical varies between small or large systems; stable low growth systems with minimal development, to systems experiencing high growth rates and the need for expansion to meet the growing demands and regulatory requirements.

However, there are some tasks that are common to all systems. The first is dealing with your customer base in a friendly and respectful manner, remembering that the customer is paying your salary as a part of the rates they pay for the services provided.

Second is operation and maintenance of the existing drinking water and water resource recovery treatment facilities, along with the associated distribution, and collection systems. Obviously, this requires the third task of managing the department revenues and expenditures within the approved rate structure for the department. This can require creativity at times to solve problems and stay within budget.

Then there is the need to review and approve developer plans for conformance with system specifications and standards before they are submitted to the OEPA. Once these are approved, the



construction of the improvements must be inspected with the assistance of staff.

Lastly there are the capital improvement programs for expansion of water and waste water distribution and collection systems and treatment facilities to keep up with demand or to meet regulatory requirements.

What are the greatest challenges facing county water/sewer/storm water systems today?

There are two major issues facing all systems: aging system components which are expensive to replace or upgrade, and the high retirement rate in the workforce resulting in a lack of certified operators to manage the highly complex treatment facilities. The lack of operators with higher level certifications is resulting in challenges for systems to meet staffing requirements. Smaller systems are having difficulty competing with the higher salaries larger systems can afford.

Sanitary departments have significant interactions with state regulatory authorities. What tips do you have for working with these state agencies?

Working with state agencies requires building relationships and getting them involved in major projects early in the process. We may not always agree on how to best apply the regulations and will sometimes have serious differences of opinions.

However, having a good working relationship with the agencies allows you to problem solve through these differences of opinion and arrive at a resolution that is affordable for your system's rate payers and protects the environment.

There has been a lot of discussion around PFAS as it relates to public water systems. What is PFAS and how has it impacted county water systems?

Per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) are a group of man-made chemicals that includes PFOA, PFOS, GenX, and many other chemicals. PFAS have been manufactured and used in a variety of industries around the globe, including in the United States since the 1940s. PFAS chemicals are very persistent in the environment and in the human body – meaning they don't break down and they can accumulate over time. There is evidence that exposure to PFAS can lead to adverse human health effects.

PFAS can be found in items such as commercial household products like stain and water-repellant fabrics, non-stick products, paints, cleaning products, fire-fighting foams and more.

These chemicals are very pervasive and persistent in the environment. Fortunately, most water systems do not have contamination issues at this time. Recent testing by the OEPA of water systems in the state only identified a few with levels that are currently listed as a concern.

The Greene County system utilizes ground water and recent testing results showed non-detects in all samples of raw and finished water from our treatment plants. Testing for these chemicals is near the limit of technology at the parts per trillion level. All water systems need to remain very vigilant and pay close attention to their Source Water Protection Plans to protect their wellfields from future contamination.

GUEST COLUMN

THE NEED FOR LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

by Tim Rahschulte, CEO of the Professional Development Academy

Recently, the National Association of Counties and the National Council of County Association Executives conducted research on the top challenges across the states. As expected, the challenges are many. Among them, and interestingly enough, what is needed to address all of them is leadership development: making existing leaders better and emerging leaders ready.



Preparing the next generation workforce, managing a growing retiring workforce, and instilling a positive leadership mindset, capability, and culture is a big challenge; among the most challenging of challenges, for sure. Challenges also included COVID management, fiscal constraints, rural deployment of broadband, jails, preemption, unfunded mandates, taxes, justice reform, schools, election fraud, and the opioid crisis, among others. As noted, the challenges are many. One point of absolute consensus was the need to continuously improve service delivery amid constraints, limitations, and pressures.

Continuous improvement requires leadership. To address the myriad of challenges amid the unique constraints of county government (fiscal and otherwise) requires positive leadership. General Colin Powell said, “Perpetual optimism is a force multiplier.” This leadership mindset is true for any four star general in the US Army, secretary of state, county commissioner, or frontline leader responsible for the deliver of services. Our counties need positive leadership to continuously improve. And, because of the changing landscape of county business, our leaders need continuous development; to sharpen skills, increase capabilities, and broaden their network of peers and collaborators.

It’s because of the challenges facing county leaders and the need to continuously improve that the NACo High Performance Leadership Academy exists (www.naco.org/skills).

Our goal is to make leaders better, period. In collaboration with General Powell, Dr. Marshall Goldsmith, and over 100 industry executives, this Academy addresses the five most needed leadership competencies:

- leading and making decisions: **Engage teams and stakeholders to foster positive climates and exceed common expectations**
- organizing, planning and managing change: **Plan, lead and execute organizational change more effectively and consistently**
- collaborating and building relationships: **Establish alignment and strong partnerships through building stronger relationships**
- communicating and presenting data: **Create clarity, confidence and community**
- executing and delivering business value: **Measure projects and processes to deliver results aligned with county and community priorities**

The NACo High Performance Leadership Academy is an online 12-week program that will empower frontline county government professionals with the most fundamental leadership skills to address the greatest challenges in the business of our counties and deliver results for our community constituents. [Learn more and enroll your county frontline leaders here.](#)

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



GUEST COLUMN

NEW RETIREMENT PLANNING SERVICES FROM CCAO COMING SOON

by Lori Paulenich, Senior Communication Strategist, Empower Retirement

The CCAO 457(b) Deferred Compensation Retirement Plan – the supplemental retirement plan for county employees – is offering additional services through its partnership with the plan recordkeeper, Empower Retirement.

Beginning in May, you can access a team that can provide advice in other financial areas. For example, do you have questions about how much you should be saving and if you should have the money taken out of your paycheck before or after taxes?

The Empower Retirement Solutions Group (RSG) can help you decide where your next dollar saved for retirement should go, whether you should contribute to your CCAO 457(b) Deferred Compensation Plan using pre-tax or Roth (if offered by your county) and help you roll outside monies into your Plan. There is no additional cost for this advice. Consider all your options and their features and fees before moving money between accounts.

RSG can also help you decide how to invest the money you are saving for retirement, as well as what you should do with the money you've saved once you've left employment.

We call it “point-in-time advice” – when you need a little extra help in making a decision with the best option for you in planning your retirement – whether

it's at the time you enroll, during your time in the Plan or when you prepare to retire.

Call Empower RSG at 833-301-9355 to schedule a meeting to talk about rollouts, distributions and other retirement topics and let us help you meet your retirement and financial goals.

In addition to the new services outlined above, don't forget that you always have your local CCAO Retirement Plan Advisor (RPA) available to help you with your retirement planning needs.

Your local CCAO RPA can provide you help with personalized savings strategies, including investment recommendations and advice. They know the Plan inside and out and can help you prepare for retirement at no cost. You can set up a one-on-one Retirement Readiness Review with your local RPA at any time.

These additional services, a benefit offered by CCAO, are designed to assist program participants as they plan and prepare for retirement.

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CEBCO NEWS

AN UPDATE FROM CEBCO

by Mike Kindell, Managing Director of Health and Wellness

The CEBCO 2021 Annual Membership Meeting was held virtually on April 2.

Board President Mike Welch of Ashland County opened the meeting and welcomed the counties, consultants and guests attending the meeting.



After introducing the CEBCO board of directors and CEBCO/CCAO staff in attendance, elections were held for four board seats and Commissioners Lenny Eliason of Athens County, Lew Hilkert of Williams County, Mike Stegall of Darke County and Ken Stiverson of Marion County were each re-elected for another three-year term. Finance Manager Thisbe Butcher provided the 2020 Unaudited Financial Reports and reported that CEBCO's Member Equity will increase from \$68 million to approximately \$75 million, which is primarily driven by investment gains from 2020. A keynote address was given by Lisa Ryan, CSP, which provided gratitude strategies to boost leadership and promote engagement in the workplace.

The following counties were recognized for their Wellness Program efforts for the 2019 – 2020 year: Preble County, Shelby County, Union County, Crawford County, Morrow County, Delaware County, Hardin County, Darke County, Logan County and Fayette County. A review of the 2020 CEBCO claim results, including a COVID-19 claim update, was presented. The primary driver of claims in 2020 were high claimants above \$50,000, as 2.4% of the membership drove 47% of the total claim cost.

Diabetes continues to be the largest diagnostic category for the medical portion of claims, while specialty medications drove the increase on the pharmacy side. The two largest Rx categories are inflammatory conditions and diabetes, which drove 48% of Rx spend. The meeting was adjourned with the expectation that an in-person meeting will be held in 2022.

2021 Initiatives

Effective 1/1/2021, CEBCO expanded coverage for LiveHealth Online to include behavioral health video visits at no member cost share for all PPO members. Previously, only medical visits were covered with no member cost share. Through the first quarter, CEBCO members were taking advantage of the expanded coverage.

With passage of ARPA, which includes a COBRA Subsidy program, CEBCO reached out to the counties that use our enrollment and billing company to determine who may be eligible for the subsidy. Notification will start shortly and the program runs from 4/1 through 9/30.

CEBCO notified counties that there will be a change in vendors for our Diabetic Prevention Program (DPP) that will become effective 10/1/21. The program targets prediabetics and works with them to control their weight with a goal of 5% or more weight loss. Weight gain is the largest factor in moving an individual to a diabetic state.

Including last year, CEBCO has paid \$6.3M in COVID-19 claims through the first quarter of 2021. At the beginning of the pandemic, it was decided that diagnosis and treatment of COVID-19 would be covered at 100%. Beginning June 1, claims will be processed the same as any other illness. CEBCO will cover the administration of the vaccine at 100%, while the federal government is covering the cost of the vaccine.

The CEBCO board of directors, CEBCO staff and invited guests will convene for the Annual Board Retreat at the end of April.

Additional programs and initiatives will be reviewed and considered for the balance of 2021 and 2022 benefit year.

CORSA NEWS

NEWEST/TRENDING RISK MANAGEMENT SERVICES & GRANTS

by John Brownlee, Managing Director, Property and Casualty Insurance

CORSA has the ability to provide risk management services and grants to our members at no additional cost. The board and staff analyze trends in claims data and are proactive in implementation and/or enhancement of services yearly. This year the board of directors has allocated \$2.061 million for risk management services.



General Risk Management Services available to our members are categorized under the following topics. Human Resource Hotline, Online CORSA University, Defensive Driving Webinars, Onsite Property Inspections, Best Practice Personnel Policy Manual & HR Toolkit, HR Training Webinars and Facility Dude.

The Loss Control Incentive Program was implemented in 2011. Since inception, every program year members are given the opportunity to meet educational and property inspection requirements to help prevent future property and liability claims. Completing the Loss Control Incentive Program, also provides a potential credit, which could reduce member program cost.

(New) 2021 Loss Control Incentive Bonus Program- In addition to and independent of the Loss Control Incentive Program members can earn credits to be applied to program costs by completion of a specified Auto Incentive or Cybersecurity Incentive.

An additional \$200,000 has been allocated by the board of directors to be distributed amongst members. The Loss Control Incentive Program + Loss Control Incentive Program Bonus = \$1 million allocated by the board of directors for 2021 loss control incentives.

Cyber Risk Management is a hot topic and the Board of Directors have allocated \$300,000 to **(New)** Cybersecurity Training for Member IT Professionals and Cybersecurity Reimbursement Program.

Approved member IT reimbursements are firewall upgrade, dual factor authentication, hardware upgrade,

email upgrade, positive pay, IT certifications, anti-phishing software or approved member cybersecurity grant application (\$4,000 per member max).

Law Enforcement Risk Management Services available to the sheriffs' offices are categorized under the following topics. Best Practice Policy Models- Law Enforcement/Corrections, Policy Development with LLRMI, Policy Review & Revision with LLRMI, On-Line Training-Bridge, Crisis Management Hotline (Deputy Shooting or Death-in-Custody), **(New)** Regional Law Enforcement & Corrections Legal Update Training Presented by Defense Panel Attorneys, Regional Law Enforcement and Corrections Training with LLRMI, MILO Training Simulator, Leadership Perspective Classes, Performance Reviews for Law Enforcement & Corrections Operations and Law Enforcement/Corrections Help Desk.

2021 Law Enforcement Reimbursement Program- Body Scanners - (5 grants-\$10,000), Guard 1 Pipe System or Guardian RFID - (8 grants-\$2,500), Jail Software Upgrade - (8 grants -\$2,500), Selected OPOTA & **(New)** Non-OPOTA Classes, \$130,000 Pre-Employment Background Checks (Polygraph-Psychological Testing- CVSA), ACA- Jails entering into initial phase of ACA (3 grants-\$10,000.00), NCHC (5 @ \$2,000), Jail Medical Contract Consultation, **(New)** Body, Dash, Jail Cameras & Data Storage \$225,000, 750 grants @ \$300 per camera or storage equivalent (\$7,500 individual member maximum reimbursement).

Risk management has become a daily topic of conversation amongst our members, board of directors and staff. Member equity is used to provide these services at no additional cost to our members, which hopefully encourages members to participate in all the risk management services offered to help mitigate general liability or law enforcement liability claims.

If you have any ideas for services that we could add to our robust list of offerings or have any questions regarding our current services, contact Frank Hatfield, Risk Manager at fhatfield@ccao.org or (614) 220-0639.

CCAO SERVICE CORP NEWS

ELECTRIC AGGREGATION’S TIME HAS COME

by John Leutz, Assistant Director

Twenty-six of our counties are currently offering an electric governmental aggregation program and four more are in the onboarding process.



Many municipalities and townships are now offering similar cost saving programs to their residents, including Cincinnati and, most recently, Columbus. Your constituents should not be left behind. The time has come for your county to bring an electric governmental aggregation program to the residents in the unincorporated area of your county.

We are here to guide and help you through the necessary steps to bring an electric aggregation program to your constituents. We believe so strongly in this program and the timing, that our focus this spring is to extend our electric aggregation program opportunities and work your county to bring your constituents an electric aggregation program before the end of this year. An electric aggregation program makes sense and cents:

- Energy prices are projected to rise. Timing is critical.
- There is greater cost savings for all in a larger program. The greater the energy load the more advantageous the pricing becomes for your constituents.
- We have a strong track record of saving you and your constituents money on their energy costs. Estimated savings were over \$3.2 million in the electric program and \$1.9 million in the natural gas program last year.
- By participating in our program your residents can rest assured that they won’t find themselves in a contract that allows their rates to escalate beyond market pricing.
- Our program utilizes Palmer Energy Company which is an independent energy advisor with no

ties to any supplier, broker or generation company. You are assured of unbiased information to make decisions on behalf of your constituents.

Your residents are beginning to hear about and discover the savings potential of electric aggregation and we want to help you make this opportunity available to them. Not only are homes eligible for the program, but so are many small businesses. The CCAO Service Corp and Palmer Energy look forward to meeting with your county to map out an aggregation program. The process requires the commissioners hold two public hearings prior to adopting and timely filing with your board of elections a resolution placing the issue on the ballot for a vote.

ENERGY PRICES ARE PROJECTED TO RISE. TIMING IS CRITICAL.

We believe that an aggregation program will provide significant savings to your constituents and that now is the time to act on behalf of your constituents to provide them with the opportunity to participate in a program designed to save them on their electric energy costs.

To begin working towards providing an electric aggregation program for your residents contact me at 614-299-2800 or jleutz@ccao.org or Kirkland Mizerek, executive vice president with Palmer Energy Company at 419-539-9180 kmizerek@palmerenergy.com.



GUEST COLUMN

A FEW TIPS TO EMPOWER YOUR RETIREMENT PLAN

by Lori Paulenich, Senior Communication Strategist, Empower Retirement



Protecting your retirement account

Did you know that Empower Retirement offers a [Security Guarantee](#) as part of its commitment to your account safety? Your Empower accounts are automatically eligible for this protection provided you follow current and prudent online security practices. You can do your part, too, by considering these steps to keep your account secure. For more information regarding the Security Guarantee's conditions, click on the Security Guarantee link above.

Register your account (if you haven't already)

If you don't register your account, it's easier for a fraudster to pretend to be you.

Choose a strong username and password

A username and password unique to your savings plan is ideal.

Let Empower know where to find you

Add or update your email and phone number.

Stay current on recommended security practices

Review the [Security Tips on your ccao457.com website](#) for the latest information about how to protect your identity, keeping your personal devices safe, how to take action if you suspect unusual activity and more.

If you need help keeping track of all of your passwords, consider using a password manager to keep your information and passwords secure.

Take your CCAO 457(b) Plan on the go

The Empower Retirement app is a convenient way to stay on top of your estimated retirement income, track the performance of your 457(b) Plan portfolio and change your contribution level and investment options – all from your smartphone or Apple Watch®.

Once you've logged in, click on the collapsible menu icon and you'll see your Plan name at the top. Manage your financial future from anywhere by downloading it today from the Google Play™ or the App store.

This [video](#) gives you a quick overview of the features and functions of the Empower mobile experience.

It's never too early—or too late—to restart your retirement savings

Your CCAO 457(b) Deferred Compensation Plan can be a great way to save for your future and could help with expenses not covered in retirement. Regardless of your age, if you haven't contributed to your retirement savings in a while, you might want to consider starting again.

Let's say you have 30 years until you are planning to retire. What could \$25, \$50 or \$75 mean per month if you were average a 6% annual return?

If you are 50 or older, it's not too late to start. There are two special catch-up options designed to help you.

IRS regulations limit the amount you can save each year through your Plan. But with catch-up contributions, you may be eligible to save more than the annual limit. Catch-up contributions come in two types: age 50+ and three-year.¹

Sign into the website at www.ccao457.com and or call at 800-284-0444 to learn more about these two contribution types, including differences and advantages.



Here are some other items to think about:

- Account consolidation—Combining eligible accounts into a single account can make it easier to apply a consistent retirement strategy across all your assets—and there are fewer statements and website passwords to handle. Consider all your options and their features and fees before moving money between accounts.
- Asset allocation and risk management—As you get closer to retirement age, you may want to reduce the investment risk in your retirement portfolio. Log into your account to ensure that your current investment mix matches your changing risk tolerance.
- Retirement budget and income—Now that you’re getting closer to retirement, you have a more realistic picture of your future expenses. You may also have a better idea of the total that your various sources of retirement income will provide on a regular retirement paycheck.

Even a small amount per paycheck can add up over time. Contact your [CCAO Retirement Plan Advisor](#) to learn more about the advantages of the Plan or to schedule a meeting to discuss a strategy for your retirement.

1) Asset allocation and diversification do not ensure a profit or protect against loss.

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County Leader, CCAO's quarterly e-magazine, provides an in-depth look at the news, programs and policies affecting Ohio's 88 counties. The e-magazine also showcases our members, offers best county practices as well as ways to enhance the state-county partnership practices and shares the offerings of the association. If you have questions or story submissions, contact Editor Andrew Johnson at ajohnson@ccao.org or 614-203-8920.