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August 11, 2025

Thanks to Lucas County for hosting the Northwest CCAO/CEAO District Meeting last week! The meeting featured a presentation from Metroparks Toledo and included tours of the homes of the Toledo MudHens and the Toledo Walleye.

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ASSOCIATION AND MEMBER NEWS

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Final two 2025 Ohio Counties Scholarships awarded

Congratulations to Angela Freeman of Summit County and Anna Ritter of Washington County for receiving the Ohio Counties Scholarships! Angela intends to pursue a law degree to become a public defender, while Anna plans to become a criminal profiler.

Angela and Anna join Keaton Foster (Van Wert County), Katelyn Wynkoop (Fairfield County), and Halle Ann Jones (Highland County) as the receipients of 2025 Ohio Counties Scholarships.

Angela Freeman, a graduate of St. Vincent–St. Mary High School, received an Ohio Counties Scholarship from Summit County Executive Ilene Shapiro and Summit County Council President Rita Darrow. Angela plans to serve the public by becoming a public defender.

Anna Ritter of Washington County received an Ohio Counties Scholarship from Washington County Commissioners Charlie Schilling, Eddie Place, and James Booth . Anna plans to serve the public by becoming a criminal profiler.

State to Relaunch Application Process through for BEAD funding

BroadbandOhio, a part of the Department of Development, recently announced it is launching the application process for the Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) program, intended to help bridge the digital divide and deliver broadband service to remaining unserved areas across the state.

The BEAD program was established in 2021 as part of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act which provided $42.5 billion across the nation to build broadband networks. The goal of the program is to reach universal broadband coverage by 2030.

Ohio held a challenge process last year to determine the final map of unserved addresses, which was subsequently reviewed and approved by the National Telecommunications and Information Administration. The BEAD program is another avenue designed to help the state reach its goal of offering high-speed internet coverage to every Ohioan.

More information about the BEAD program, including eligible locations and how to apply, can be found at BroadbandOhio's website.

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STATE AND FEDERAL NEWS

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Grand opening of the 2025 Farm Science Review to be held in September

On September 16, the Ohio State University College of Food, Agricultural, and Environmental Sciences will be hosting the grand opening of this year's Farm Science Review. Registration ends today, so RSVP now!

The program will begin at 9:00 a.m. with a breakfast and opportunities to network before the welcoming remarks at 9:45 a.m. by the dean of the college, Cathann Kress. After the remarks, the grounds will be open for self-guided tours.

You can register for the event here.

Auditor of State provides payment re-direct scheme prevention training, checklist

The Auditor of State is offering training on payment "re-direct" spear phishing schemes through a recorded webinar and a checklist on recommended internal controls.

"Re-direct" schemes are those where a bad actor impersonates a vendor or employee and deceives a fiscal agent into re-directing legitimately-appropriated funds into fraudulent accounts.

The checklist includes important steps that employees should take to ensure any change in payment destination is legitimate. A vital step that can cut off spear phishing schemes before they start involves verifying basic information.

Ensure the email address the request comes from matches the vendor or employee's actual email address. This can be particularly difficult for certain names. For example, "nciolli@ccao.org" versus "nciolIi@ccao.org". The two look identical, but the second subs out one of the lower-case "L"s in "ciolli" with a capitalized "i". If anything in an email gives you pause, it is best to contact the individual through alternative means (such as a phone call).

In addition to the checklist, the Auditor of State is also offering a pre-recorded webinar to provide more details on the steps of the checklist. Completing the webinar will count towards the training portion for CORSA's Loss Control Incentive Program Bonus.

If you have questions about the training, please contact CORSA Risk Control Consultant James Hale.

EDUCATION AND GRANTS

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ODNR accepting proposals on mine land revitalization

The Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR) is accepting letters of intent through Friday on projects to revitalize former coal mine sites. Up to $10 million in federal funds are available through the program.

Eligible sites include unreclaimed land, previously reclaimed land, places adjacent to abandoned coal mine land or polluted waters, and communities impacted by historic coal production.

If your county is interested in submitting a letter of intent, it must include a brief project summary, the nexus with abandoned coal mining sites, the anticipated grant amount requested, other potential funding courses, and a project map. ODNR will invite entites that submitted letters deemed eligible to complete a full application.

More information regarding the program can be found on ODNR's website.

County Capital Planning webinar to be held on Tuesday

On Tuesday (August 12), CCAO will host a webinar with County FIRM (Facility Investment Retrofit Maintenance) on capital planning. County FIRM discuss the current state of county capital funding and provide a live demonstration of a capital planning tool.

The webinar will be held from 10:00 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. If you are interested in attending and did not receive an e-bulletin from CCAO with the invite, please contact Joe Sokol at jsokol@countyfirm.com to receive an invitation.

CyberOhio releases webinar recording, information on cybersecurity requirements

Last week, CyberOhio hosted a webinar to brief local governments on the new cybersecurity program requirements included in House Bill 96 that public entities must comply with. The effective date of the Revised Code provisions governing the cybersecurity program (R.C. 9.64) will take effect September 30.

The recording is available here, as are the slides. CyberOhio, which has responsibility for coordinating and guiding Ohio's wide-ranging cybersecurity efforts across all state executive branch agencies, also has more information on the program requirements on its website.

The Auditor of State is also preparing a bulletin to distribute to local governments regarding the new requirements. CCAO will share the bulletin when it becomes available.

BWC offers firefighter protection grants

The Bureau of Workers' Compensation (BWC) reopened its safety grants program to help employers purchase equipment that significantly lowers the risk of workplace injuries. About $41 million is available through the program.

One of the currently available grants may be of interest to counties: The Firefighter Exposure to Environmental Elements Grant (FEEEG).

The FEEEG is intended to assist fire departments in acquiring protective equipment that minimizes exposure to dangerous substances that may be encountered during the line of duty. For the first time, the program offers funding to volunteer emergency medical services units.

Due to the high volume of applications the last time the grants were open, any previously submitted applicants must be entirely resubmitted.

You can learn more about the FEEEG and other BWC grant offerings here.

COUNTY NEWS

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Each week Counties Current highlights the happenings in our counties in the words of their local media. One story from each of the CCAO's five districts is highlighted, and on occasion other stories may be highlighted as well.

Northwest District

Bigger building on the way for Putnam County EMA

LimaOhio.com, August 5, 2025

The need has grown for full-time emergency medical services in Putnam County. The staff has grown. Now it's time for its physical facility to grow, Putnam County Commissioner Brad Brubaker said Wednesday.

Brubaker shared the commissioners' plans to build a $6 million expansion onto the existing Putnam County EMA facility on Ottawa-Glandorf Road during Tuesday morning's meeting of the Ottawa Area Chamber of Commerce at Henry's Restaurant.

"Our full-time EMS has expanded. We're outgrowing the house," Brubaker said, noting first responders await their next run at a ranch-style house purchased in the early 2000s next to the EMA office. "Plus, with its age, it's coming where we're going to have to start putting money into that. It's not really conducive."

Plans call for a 14,000 square foot expansion off the existing EMA facility, which would offer nine male and six female dorm-style bedrooms along with a weight room and common areas for the staff, which works 24 hours on and 24 hours off running to support volunteer departments at accident scenes and fires and also uses an ambulette to transport people to medical appointments from area nursing homes.

The county currently has $14 million in reserves, Brubaker said, so the county won't have to go to voters or borrow money to fund the project. It should go out to bid soon for the Putnam County EMS, which celebrated its 50th anniversary in 2024.

Northeast District

Commissioners to discuss creating county public defender's office

The Chronicle, August 8, 2025

Citing the annual cost of paying attorneys to represent indigent criminal defendants, the Lorain County commissioners is having early discussions about creating a countywide public defender's office.

The Sixth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution protects the right of all people accused of a crime to have an attorney. If a defendant is indigent and can't afford an attorney, one must be provided for them.

In some counties, that's a public defender who is a government-employed attorney. In other counties, like Lorain County, private attorneys are paid by the county to represent criminal defendants.

Lorain County spent about $3.8 million in 2024 on indigent criminal defense, according to commissioner David Moore, a Republican, who at an Aug. 1 commissioners meeting brought up the possibility of a county public defender's office.

That cost may seem high, but Lorain County has been reimbursed for at least $3 million of that since January, veteran Lorain County criminal defense attorney Zack Simonoff said Thursday.

He said he's critical of any plan to replace private appointed defense counsel with public defenders employed by the government, and will be writing an open letter to Moore saying so.

At the commissioners meeting Aug. 1, Moore said 72 criminal defense attorneys were paid $3.8 million by Lorain County to represent the indigent in 2024. Twelve of those 72 attorneys received between $100,000 and $194,000 for their services, he said.

That's "well above" what comparable-sized counties with dedicated public defender's offices spend, Moore said, citing Montgomery County in southwest Ohio as one example.

"We are spending more than necessary, receiving less in return and exposing ourselves to legal and ethical concerns that can be mitigated with one decision: The establishment of a Lorain County Public Defender's Office," Moore said, reading from a prepared statement.

Central District

Richland County commissioners provide new 'recipe' to clear Black Fork logjams

Richland Source, August 5, 2025

A ditch petition was never filed in Richland County prior to 2021.

That year on Valentine's Day, Shelby Mayor Steve Schag and several city landowners signed a ditch petition — declaring their interest to have the Black Fork River cleaned up — and filed it with the Richland County Board of Commissioners.

What followed was about two and a half years of meetings, research, plan development and drone work, among other procedures.

"In the meantime, nothing really happened," Richland County Commissioner Cliff Mears said Monday night during a Shelby City Council meeting.

"The intent was to clean out the Black Fork as much as we could. But because of our inexperience, but also because of other considerations, we incurred a lot of costs," Mears said. "We incurred engineering costs… drone footage costs, legal concerns… and in the end it was determined that the costs far outweighed the benefit."

But the commissioner came to Monday's council meeting with "another recipe" to ultimately accomplish the same goal desired in 2021.

Mears said commissioners will contribute $46,495 to Shelby for logjam removal in portions of the Black Fork which run through the city's unincorporated areas to State Route 13.

Southwest District

Warren County to sell fairgrounds to city of Lebanon

Dayton Daily News, August 8, 2025

Warren County will sell the 94-acre fairgrounds property to the city of Lebanon to boost the county seat.

With the fairground's existing financial and operational model no longer viable, city ownership is expected to unlock new economic investment opportunities and opens doors to state and federal grants to energize North Broadway Street while preserving the county's rich agricultural heritage, county commissioners announced in a statement released Friday afternoon.

"We're excited to partner with the city of Lebanon to support its vision for a thriving downtown and expanded North Broadway corridor," the statement read. "At the same time, we honor our agricultural past by preserving the fairgrounds, sustaining youth development and ensuring those traditions remain part of our future."

The city and county have not yet disclosed the financial details of the planned sale. A formal agreement will be presented this fall to both the commission and city council for approval.

"This partnership between Warren County and the city of Lebanon is a clear example of how thoughtful collaboration can fuel economic vitality without compromising the character that makes Lebanon unique," Mayor Mark Messer said. "This investment ensures the Warren County Fairgrounds will remain a place where our history is honored and reimagined; and where families, youth and local industry continue to thrive."

Southeast District

Prime Time making good use of levy

Herald Star, August 4, 2025

Prime Time Office on Aging Director Trudy Wilson wants Jefferson County voters to know the funds generated by the replacement levy they passed in November are being used exactly how they meant them to be.

"We've provided more than 318,000 meals to senior citizens in Jefferson County (during the 2024-25 fiscal year)," Wilson said in her annual report to the county commissioners on Thursday. "We have grown, year-over-year, by more than 67,500 meals. That's just an extraordinary (number) of meals that we're providing to people, and that's Monday through Friday."

Wilson said they currently do 10 home-delivery routes, though they're looking to add one or two more. They also have congregate sites as well as several drive-through sites where people can pick up their meal and take it with them.

"We opened a congregate site in Hammondsville — it has been just fabulous to be that far north into the county," she said. "They started out with about 30 meals and then went to 50 and then a hundred — they run up as high as 150 meals a day. They also offer activities including bingo, and even an exercise class for their people there. So it's getting all that community activity and all those people together for just congregate fellowship, which is good for what we're trying to do with seniors in Jefferson County. We also opened another site down a little bit further south in the county, at Rivers Landing Apartments in Brilliant. We were asked to start that (and) now we deliver about 30 meals a day down there to the residents who live there."

She said a member of City Council, who she didn't identify, asked her what they'd have to do to get a congregate site in the South End of Steubenville because "a lot of those people are older" and don't have transportation.

"And I said, just find a location that has a refrigerator, a sink, a microwave and a place where people can sit and eat. And so, he worked with Catholic Charities Center of Hope downtown — we met with them, with the bishop almost immediately approving the plan," she said. "So, I think during the next couple of months, we'll able to open a new site downtown that is walking accessible for those people who live down there, I think that'll be a big, big hit to offer food there. So, you know, we're just growing by leaps and bounds. We have to be careful now that we don't overextend ourselves based on the number of employees we have, the number of vehicles we have, the number of staff that we have, we are getting so many (requests) that occasionally we have to (put them on a waiting list.)"

DATES TO REMEMBER

Please view the CCAO Calendar for a comprehensive list of events to note.

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AUGUST 15
CORSA Board of Directors Meeting

AUGUST 24 - 26
2025 CCAO Summer Symposium
CCAO Board of Directors Meeting (August 26)

AUGUST 29
CEBCO Board of Directors Meeting

SEPTEMBER 1
Labor Day - Legal Holiday

SEPTEMBER 12
CORSA Annual Meeting

SEPTEMBER 19
CCAO Board of Directors Meeting

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