

# COUNTY LEADER



County Commissioners Association of Ohio quarterly magazine

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1) Champaign County Commissioner Steven Hess, Gov. Mike DeWine and Henry County Commissioner Glenn Miller at the grand opening event to celebrate the 59th Farm Science Review. The College of Food, Agricultural and Environmental Sciences at The Ohio State University hosted the event, which brings together government, commodity and corporate leaders as well as OSU students, faculty and staff.

2) Fairfield County Commissioner Jeff Fix and Tim Bubb, CCAO president and Licking County commissioner. Both commissioners were members of CCAO's Strategic Plan Committee. You can read more about the Strategic Plan in this issue.

3) Shelby County Commissioner Julie Ehemann attended the Western Interstate Region (WIR) Conference. The WIR Conference brings together county officials from across the nation to focus on pressing issues facing counties and our residents.

On the cover: CCAO Executive Director Cheryl Subler, Lt. Gov. Jon Husted and Hamilton County Commissioner Denise Driehaus at the OCCO Legislative Reception



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

The year is moving quickly, and in this fourth quarter association newsletter, I would like to take a moment or two to look back on what has been a year of achievement for CCAO, and at the same time look ahead to 2022 and yet more growth and advancement. As I look back I am pleased that CCAO, using virtual and in-person interaction, is finding success for our membership as we navigate the latter stages of the pandemic.



A major achievement in the budget/legislative arena was the attainment of one hundred percent reimbursement for counties for indigent defense costs. The policy team and dozens of commissioners along with county executives and council members made the case for a number of association priorities, and we were heard. The process of relationship building with the legislature and administration is never-ending as we continue to make our case for county priorities. No sooner is one budget sequence over than it will be time to bring forth our agenda for a newly elected legislature and start of the 2023 biennial budget process.

The pandemic resulted in the ‘work from home’ transition in 2020 and into this year. A positive aspect to vacating our Columbus building was the flexibility to immediately tackle the much needed HVAC construction project. If occupied by staff, such a project would have been phased over a couple of years. Instead the project was compressed to a half year and at a cost of just under one third of a million dollars. For CCAO, CEBCO and CORSA (the owners of the State Street facility) this was a much needed investment in new and energy efficient heating and cooling systems that will carry forth for several decades.

Looking back and ahead, the development and approval of a strategic plan for both the midterm and longterm growth of the association represented a major achievement. Working with a consultant, the Strategic Planning group included Chairman Jeff Fix (Fairfield), Armond Budish (Cuyahoga), Debbie Lieberman (Montgomery), Kathryn Whittington (Ashtabula), Tony Vero (Richland), Cory Noonan (Allen), Tony Anderson (Fayette), Lenny Eliason (Athens), and John O’Grady (Franklin). The plan summarizes our purpose with CCAO helping counties effectively serve Ohioans through advocacy, education, service programs and collaboration. The longterm goal is for CCAO to be recognized as the most effective county association in the country by 2028. The association will continue to be recognized as ‘the expert resource on county government and connecting counties.’

Another ‘moving forward’ achievement was the development and acceptance of an updated logo and marketing design for CCAO. This ‘new look’ has been incorporated into all of our printed pieces, virtual platforms and soon to include signage. Our new CCAO logo pairs well with the new logo designs for CEBCO, CORSA and the Service Corporation, as we put our best foot forward.

Again, looking ahead the CCAO and CEAO boards approved an organizational map change, with the creation of a 14-county Central District. We now have five regions. The goal was to both recognize the Central Region, and to also better size the existing north east and west, and south east and west regions to encourage active member involvement. The new Central Region has already hosted meetings in Delaware and Franklin counties.

In support of our goal of educating the public and our statehouse friends on the value of the state-county partnership, we are in the final development stages of an ‘interactive display’ to be installed in the

Statehouse Map Room. This is the hub for the start of most Statehouse visits, and this display will sell the importance of each of our 88 great counties, and how we act as the service arm for many state programs. The goal is to have this new display and supporting materials in place and dedicated during the upcoming CCAO-CEAO Winter Conference in downtown Columbus.

In conclusion, I believe the success of 2021 has been a combination of hard work and innovation. CCAO's on boarding of 60 new members has been continuous both virtually and in-person, and the result will be early and more active member involvement which is our future lifeblood. While virtual meetings will be part of our future, we see the real need for traditional meeting and member interaction. Early registration is underway for the annual Winter Conference in downtown Columbus December 8, 9 and 10. Don't procrastinate, register soon and enjoy the early registration savings. Finally, to each of you, commissioners, county executives and council members, staffers and friends of CCAO – thanks for your support and active involvement this year! Together we have achieved much and look to an even better year in 2022!

**CCA0/CEAO**  
Winter Conference

**Building a Bridge to Ohio's Future**  
Dec. 8-10, 2021 Franklin County

## **THE 2021 CCAO/CEAO WINTER CONFERENCE IS COMING SOON - SIGN UP TODAY!**

The County Commissioners Association of Ohio and County Engineers Association of Ohio invite you to the 2021 Annual Winter Conference on Dec. 8 through 10, back in-person at the Hyatt Regency Columbus, 350 N. High St., Columbus, OH 43215.

The CCAO staff is planning a number of interesting sessions packed with vital information for local leaders, including how to address workforce challenges, ARPA and federal procurement procedures, and the future of solar projects. You'll also get a chance to meet the 60 new CCAO members at their orientation, and we'll have some fun with the return of Family Feud. A list of the tentative schedule can be found [here](#).

Registration is now open! You can register [here](#). As reminder you must select your number of tickets to complete the registration process. Register **by Nov. 17** to get your early-bird pricing.

If interested in an exhibit booth, click [here](#). (Note: this link will take you to the County Engineers Association website. The County Engineers Association will process exhibitor registrations.) For sponsorship information click [here](#). To request to host a hospitality room, click [here](#). Please be sure to review the sponsorship opportunity forms for possible discounts on your tradeshow exhibit if you become a sponsor!

Click [here](#) to view the tentative schedule. Plan to attend the 2021 Annual Winter Conference and join us in building a bridge to Ohio's future.

## LETTER FROM CCAO EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR CHERYL SUBLER

### Building Connections through Conversation

It's often said that associations draw their strength from their members. CCAO is no exception. CCAO achieves results because its members have strong connections with their association, with their lawmakers, and with each other. Through these connections we are able to share ideas amongst each other, inform and educate others about county government, and advocate our mutually shared goals.



These connections are strengthened when we converse with one another. From asking questions of the CCAO policy staff to sharing updates with fellow members to connecting with state lawmakers, we help build connections that ultimately benefit Ohio's counties. In recent weeks, it's been a pleasure to engage in many conversations with our members, whether it be in your county, in Columbus, or places in-between.

In mid-August, CCAO hosted its two-day new member training at the Cherry Valley Hotel in Licking County. This event brought over 50 new CCAO members together to learn about their new roles, gain insights from experienced commissioners, and build connections with their fellow members. After a year-plus of virtual meetings, I can't begin to say how enjoyable it was to finally connect once again in person as we welcomed our newest members to the CCAO fold.

The policy team also recently completed its regional legislative briefing roadshow, hosting five briefings across the five regions of Ohio. It's a tradition for the CCAO policy team to host these briefings to share the results of the latest state budget bill with our members. This year though, we expanded the briefings to include the latest information about the

American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) and Senate Bill 52 wind and solar siting legislation. There are so many large developments taking place simultaneously in county government, we had to squeeze it all in. We appreciate the many members who attended these briefings and for their valued questions and insights.

CCAO was also happy to host its recent ARPA symposium which brought county officials together with leading experts on ARPA utilization, compliance, broadband and water and sewer infrastructure. ARPA represents a once-in-a-generation investment for counties, and we want to ensure members have all the resources necessary to make the best decisions for their communities. It's exciting to see members sharing their creative ideas for how they plan to put ARPA funds to work to benefit their counties.

One of the most popular events each year on the CCAO calendar is the Ohio Council of County Officials legislative reception. Following our ARPA symposium, county officials from across the state gathered together at the statehouse to talk with lawmakers about key county priorities. These are critical conversations for our members as we thank state lawmakers for their support of county government and discuss areas of future partnership.

Looking forward, we look to keep the conversations going. CCAO staff is working hard in preparation of the upcoming CCAO/CEAO winter conference. We are planning engaging sessions and we look forward to seeing members once again for our traditional in-person conference in December.

In closing, it's my strong desire to see CCAO remain a place where members can gather together to share ideas and build brighter futures for their counties.

I hope the past several months have provided opportunities to further those conversations, and I look forward to many opportunities to come. After all, when it comes to building stronger counties for a stronger Ohio, that's a conversation worth having.

## CCAO POLICY TEAM

### HOLDING THE LINE ON SALES TAX EXEMPTIONS

Adam Schwiebert, CCAO Policy Analyst

As the budget authority for counties, CCAO members know firsthand the importance of strong, stable revenue streams. For most Ohio counties, revenue stability starts with the county sales tax.



Schwiebert

The county sales and use tax is the largest source of revenue for the general fund in most counties, providing critical revenue for key county services like public safety, the court system and child protective services. Commissioners generally have the discretion to levy a county sales tax of up to 1.5 percent, with certain exceptions for levies used to fund jail construction and operations. While commissioners have certain controls over rates, they do not establish the tax base. The state and counties share a common sales tax base, which is determined exclusively by the General Assembly. Thus, every adjustment to the sales tax base by the General Assembly has a direct impact on county revenues.

Over the years, CCAO has witnessed constant pressures to narrow the sales tax base via different legislative proposals. According to the Ohio Department of Taxation's Tax Expenditure Report, heading into FY 2022, there were 62 sales tax exemptions already in law, totaling nearly \$6 billion in forgone sales tax revenue to the state. While a number of these exemptions serve justifiable purposes, further expansion of sales tax exemptions deserves intense scrutiny.

Already during the 134th General Assembly, there are 11 bills either introduced or enacted into law which narrow the sales tax base. Of particular concern to counties is the exclusion of temporary employment services from the sales tax base via House Bill 110, which will result in revenue losses by counties and transit authorities of \$38 million per year. Again, there

are oftentimes good intentions behind a number of these bills, but the impact they have on county finances cannot be overlooked.

Unfortunately, counties are long familiar with sales tax base narrowing. Beginning in 2017, the federal government forced the state to cease applying the sales tax to payments made to Medicaid Managed Care Organizations, resulting in a permanent loss of \$166 million in county sales tax revenue annually. During State Fiscal Year 2021, Ohio's grandfather clause to the federal Internet Tax Freedom Act expired, resulting in further annual losses of \$40 million of county sales tax per year. In the face of these losses, further narrowing of the sales tax base must be prevented.

One positive development in recent years has been the General Assembly's decision to create an economic nexus standard for sales and use tax law for out-of-state vendors that lack a physical presence in state, as authorized by the U.S. Supreme Court decision, *Wayfair v. South Dakota*. This was a key modernization of Ohio's sales tax collection statutes that allows the state to keep pace with internet transactions and changing technologies. These reforms also likely supported county revenues throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.

In total, CCAO supports a sales tax that applies to a broad base with few exemptions. Each new exemption enacted works against a broad-based tax and places additional upward pressure on existing sales taxes or other revenue sources to make up for lost revenue. We encourage members to continue to dialogue with their state lawmakers about the importance of maintaining a strong sales tax base to keep counties on a firm fiscal footing.

**WE ENCOURAGE MEMBERS TO CONTINUE TO DIALOGUE WITH THEIR STATE LAWMAKERS ABOUT THE IMPORTANCE OF MAINTAINING A STRONG SALES TAX BASE TO KEEP COUNTIES ON A FIRM FISCAL FOOTING.**

## FEATURE

### CCAO BOARD ADOPTS STRATEGIC PLAN, SETS VISION FOR CCAO'S FUTURE

Jeff Fix, Fairfield County Commissioner

Recently the board of directors for CCAO adopted a 3-year strategic plan that has been put forward by a committee of commissioners and CCAO leadership. The Strategic Planning Committee met on several occasions with a consultant throughout 2021 in pursuit of presenting a plan that would guide the CCAO from 2022 through 2025.



Fix

Fairfield County Commissioner Jeff Fix was asked to chair the committee.

“We worked really hard to find the right mix of Commissioners from small, medium, and large counties, Republicans and Democrats, board members and non-board members. The best part – to me – about our process is that each commissioner as well as Cheryl Subler and John Leutz brought a unique perspective to our meetings and everyone who participated made some significant contribution to the final plan,” Fix said.

Franklin County Commissioner John O’Grady offered, “This was the most non-partisan project I’ve ever been a part of. Everyone in the room was totally focused on creating a plan that would serve the best interests of CCAO long-term. It was really a great experience.”

“We had some long discussions – deep discussions – but they were always respectful and with the end-goal in mind,” added Allen County Commissioner Corey Noonan.

The six Core Values Identified by the group are:

1. We have a heart for service.
2. We are team oriented.
3. We strive to win.

4. We’re self-motivated.
5. We eagerly snap at challenges.
6. We are creative problem solvers.

The Purpose of CCAO – as defined by the group and adopted by the board: CCAO helps counties effectively serve Ohioans through advocacy, education, service programs, and collaboration. We are a “recognized expert resource on county government and connecting counties.”

The BIG GOAL set forth in this strategic plan – where we would like CCAO to be in seven years – is that the “CCAO will be recognized as the most effective county association in the country by 2028.”

From that goal a “3-year picture” was established, and from that, a plan for 2022 came into focus.

The challenge now is for the CCAO staff and board to work collaboratively to put the plan into action, and to revisit it on a regular basis to keep it fresh and current.

Other contributing members of the Strategic Planning Committee were Armond Budish (Cuyahoga), Debbie Lieberman (Montgomery), Cory Noonan (Allen), Kathryn Whittington (Ashtabula), Tony Vero (Richland), Lenny Eliason (Athens) and Tony Anderson (Fayette).

“I’m really appreciative of all the time and effort that all of the commissioners on the committee put into this project,” said Fix. “All of us as commissioners are extremely busy. But this group set aside their daily activities on a number of occasions to travel to Columbus and do the hard work that goes into the creation of a viable, vibrant Strategic Plan.

“And kudos to Cheryl Subler for asking for this. It takes a brave leader to ask for accountability at a higher level and this plan will provide that. I’m excited to see where Cheryl and her team will go with this.”

The plan was passed unanimously by the board at its September meeting.



## FEATURE

### SOACDF: MAKING A DIFFERENCE FOR A QUARTER OF OHIO'S COUNTIES

Gwen Wolford, Independent Contractor for CCAO

Twenty years, 22 counties, \$100 million invested: that is the legacy being left behind by the Southern Ohio Agricultural and Community Development Foundation (SOACDF).

The 22 counties served are in southern and southwest Ohio, and the SOACDF began its work in 2001. Its mission has been to provide agricultural and economic development assistance to Ohio's historically tobacco-producing counties. The funding came from settlement of a lawsuit filed by 46 U.S. states and territories against domestic tobacco companies via what is referred to as the "Master Settlement Agreement" in 1998. Those entities sued the domestic tobacco companies over grounds of damage to public health and other issues. The money awarded to the State of Ohio through the master settlement was appropriated through the state budget process beginning with the 123rd Ohio General Assembly, and funding for SOACDF will sunset December 31, 2021 as established by the Fiscal Year 2020-2022 state budget bill. The General Assembly has supported SOACDF through general fund dollars since the tobacco settlement money has no longer been available.

The purposes of SOACDF have been to replace the production of tobacco in southern Ohio with the production of other agricultural products; and to mitigate the adverse economic impact of reduced tobacco production in the region by preparing, implementing and keeping a current plan to develop means for tobacco growers to grow other agricultural products voluntarily. A 12-member board of directors, made up of private and public sector community leaders, determined specific activities of the SOACDF and those activities were carried out by a small but dedicated team of paid staff.

Efforts funded by SOACDF include 15,000 agricultural projects and 266 economic development projects. 5,000 youth from southern and southwest Ohio have received more than \$16.1 million in scholarships over that 20-year period.



SOACDF Executive Director Don Branson is shown presenting a grant to GNK Sinter Metals. This metallurgy company added a location in Gallipolis, one of fewer than 20 U.S. locations for this worldwide manufacturing company. Branson's passion to help the region, his work ethic and talent played a role in the success of this 20 year program that cannot be emphasized enough. The impact of SOACDF on southern and southwest Ohio will be felt for generations to come.

In addition to farmers transitioning from tobacco production, the Foundation has invested in young farmers, enabling them to begin innovative business enterprises that utilize technology and incorporate sound conservation practices.

According to Highland County Commissioner David Daniels, it is difficult to point to any one project that made a larger difference than others. He said there were many agricultural producers who were able to redirect their operations from tobacco production to alternatives including cattle, peppers and many other products. The grants SOACDF provided allowed those producers to invest in equipment and infrastructure that would have otherwise been financially out of reach. The impacts of these grants were distributed across the 22 counties served. Daniels said that the SOACDF had a 20-year run that helped many people. Highland County was pleased to host the office of the foundation. He also gives credit to the Foundation's only executive director, Don Branson,



who had a passion for helping people and made an incredible impact with support from the board and staff members.

State Representative Brian Baldrige echoed Daniel's thoughts about no one project standing head and shoulders above the others. He said the economic development and job creation throughout the region meant so much to the people and communities. As the agricultural community moved away from traditional tobacco production, the opportunities for producers to diversify their enterprises and make the jump to new commodities were critical.

Youth development was an important emphasis of SOACDF, which invested in junior fairs and county fairgrounds improvements. The Foundation recently invested \$250,000 in Canter's Cave 4-H Camp in Jackson County. This included remodeling existing buildings, adding an HVAC system to the Harrison Powell Lodge and building a new sleeping cabin with restrooms. SOACDF also offered a cooperative leadership experience for youth. Each year 50 high school students were selected to visit universities with agricultural majors so they could experience college for a day, learn about cooperatives and explore the many career paths available in Ohio's huge agricultural industry.

The Foundation worked regularly with the OSU South Centers in Piketon to raise awareness of the agricultural diversification opportunities showcased at the center including alternative crops and aquaculture; and to provide access to business counselors for those transitioning from traditional tobacco production. The Endeavor Center Business Incubator, a part of OSU South Centers, received support from SOACDF. This business incubator has maintained a full or nearly full cadre of start up companies since its inception in 2005. Many businesses have grown and moved out of the Center to new, permanent locations. Some have invested in permanent facilities.

More traditional economic development efforts were supported as well as agriculturally-based enterprises. For example, by 2005, SOACDF grants had helped create nearly 600 jobs and retain close to 1,000 in Clermont County alone. The approximately \$1.2 million in grant funds received by these Clermont

companies has leveraged more than \$34 million in private sector dollars for approved projects.

Silver Bridge Coffee benefited twice from the SOACDF grants. Each time the access to capital allowed for growth. The second grant purchased equipment that packaged coffee in 100% recyclable K-cups. They were one of the first companies in the US to receive these machines and the only one in Ohio at the time. This expansion helped fuel a 30% increase in sales in one year. Since 2008 Silver Bridge has grown steadily to six full-time and 15-20 part-time workers in Gallia County.

Each of the 22 counties served has similar success stories to share. Every county and individual who benefitted from this program makes a long-term difference for the region and for the entire state.

**“The SOACDF grant program was a tool in our economic development toolbox to help us close the deal on company relocations and expansions in Clermont County. Huhtamaki, Inc., manufacturer of Chinet disposable plates, is one recent example of the program helping Clermont County provide local incentives for a company to locate in Ohio.**

**Huhtamaki purchased 900,000 square feet and 60 acres of property that was once part of the Ford Motor Company's transmission plant in Clermont County. The company invested approximately \$27 million in real property renovations and \$30 million in equipment. The company now employs almost 300 people at the site. By SOACDF providing the grant to Huhtamaki, Inc., Clermont County was able to bring added value to the negotiation table and close the deal.”**

**Adele Evans  
Assistant Director, Clermont County  
Department of Community and Economic  
Development  
Clermont County**

## GUEST COLUMN

### OJFSDA CELEBRATES SUCCESSSES, DISCUSSES FUTURE CHALLENGES

by Joel Potts, Executive Director, Ohio Job and Family Services Directors Association

As I reflect on Ohio's job and family services system over the last 18 months, the words resilient and dedicated come to mind. The COVID-19 public health emergency required some of the most challenging and meaningful work ever done by local JFS agencies and they responded with agility and effectiveness.



Potts

Local agencies leapt into the task of delivering services while also maintaining the safety of workers and clients. In the early weeks of the public health emergency, many Ohioans suddenly lost their ability to earn a paycheck. The state unemployment insurance system was overwhelmed and unable to get benefits out the door quickly to eligible residents. It was county agencies who stepped in to provide hundreds of millions of dollars in emergency assistance and new nutritional services, process hundreds of thousands of new Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) and Medicaid cases, and helped both employers and employees with the numerous economic challenges created by the health crisis.

While the early weeks of the public health emergency forced most people to stay at home, protective service workers, like other essential workers, risked their safety to ensure the safety of children and vulnerable seniors. Non-emergency transportation drivers ensured people got to their medical appointments. New state and federal programs were stood up quickly to help Ohioans through the unprecedented economic crisis.

While we have yet to realize the full impact on the economy and the long-term livelihoods of Ohioans,

county JFS agencies have learned many things that will help us continue to effectively serve the community. The current labor shortage is impacting employers at every level – including our own county governments. Enhanced wages and benefits have not been enough to attract new workers.

In order for Ohio to be successful in meeting the needs of employers today and anticipate the needs of employers in the future, our local agencies must pivot their focus heavily to the “job” in Job and Family Services. Local OhioMeansJobs (OMJ) centers are the preeminent resource to help residents secure employment or get training to improve their prospects. To successfully recruit prospective workers in finding and advancing their careers, we must collectively communicate that now is the time for Ohioans to get that new job, that better job, that more flexible job, and local OMJ centers provide everything they need to overcome the barriers and get back to work.

At the same time, we have developed new ways to utilize technology (including remote access and phone systems) and implemented new policies that make accessing these services more efficient. For example, last year county agencies were able to pitch in and ensure service delivery when a fellow county had to suddenly close their doors without a remote option yet in place. This new way of working has helped us deliver a seamless experience for clients in the midst of an incredibly chaotic time.

Local agencies are harnessing the power of a more modernized system and now moving into a more proactive phase. The difficulties of the last year-and-a-half have revealed that many citizens feel a deep divide from their government and we're exploring new ways to engage clients. Our experience with remote work has grown into an opportunity for us to move about more freely in our communities, serving clients where they are, and creating a more meaningful footprint.

Looking ahead to the next 12 months, alongside the workforce challenges facing all of our communities, I see varying additional challenges as counties begin to unwind the enhanced services that were necessary during the public health emergency.

The most pressing challenge counties face at this moment is the eligibility redetermination of all individuals receiving services in our system. Completion of this task will be required at an accelerated pace that has never been experienced before and will cover 3.2 million Medicaid recipients, 1.5 million SNAP recipients and 81,000 Ohio Works First recipients.

At the same time, federal waivers will end and there will be a sharp reduction in available assistance to Ohioans across programs, including an end to the eviction moratorium and current levels of rent and utility assistance. We know this will lead to confusion for many and a dramatic increase in Ohioans seeking help from local agencies.

Despite these challenges, we stand at a precipice that we have never experienced before and I am hopeful about the opportunities ahead.

I believe we can emerge better than we were. I'm proud to represent the county JFS agencies and excited to see what the future holds.

*Joel Potts is the executive director of the Ohio Job and Family Services Directors' Association. Ohio county departments of job and family services (CDJFS) administer one of the largest health, human service and workforce systems in the nation, with one in four Ohioans receiving assistance from the local office at any point in time. Local agencies administer cash assistance, food assistance, childcare, Medicaid (including long-term care, children's health insurance, and services to aged, blind and disabled), adoption, adult protective services, child protective services, foster care, refugee services, local workforce initiatives and child support programs.*





## FEATURE

### **HOTEL AND LODGING BUSINESSES FACE LONGER RECOVERY**

Joe Savarise, President and CEO, Ohio Hotel & Lodging Association

Ohio's hotel & lodging industry is the cornerstone of the state's vital travel economy. Lodging businesses in virtually every county are vital contributors to growth and progress, including sales tax, lodging tax, payroll taxes and jobs. Hotels are franchised businesses and often locally-owned and operated. Ohio's fast-growing unique lodging sector, including B&Bs, cabins and other types of properties, is bringing exciting development to rural and remote corners of the state.

The pandemic has produced challenges for much of the industry. Record low occupancy, loss of revenue, and worker shortages have threatened the core of our travel economy infrastructure. In 2020, Ohio lost approximately \$250 million in state and local taxes due to lost hotel business. Ohio hotels will see a revenue decline from lost business travel of more than \$10 billion dollars this year compared to 2019. More than 70 percent of the industry's workforce was displaced at the height of business closures. Only half of those workers have returned.

All credible industry analysis points to recovery for hotel & lodging taking until late 2023 or even 2024, to fully achieve pre-pandemic levels and lost growth for 2020-21. Many hotels benefited from federal and state relief programs, but some could not access those dollars. Unlike the Restaurant Revitalization Fund, there was no equivalent federal program for hotel and lodging.

Ohio's hotel & lodging industry has proposed using a portion of federal American Rescue Plan dollars provided to the state to help these pandemic-

impacted businesses make it through the current period of continued lost business into 2022 and early 2023, when forecasts predict more normal levels of business travel, meetings and events. Working with local governments, we believe relief dollars could be leveraged from the state utilizing matching programs or other mechanisms.

The American Rescue Plan contains language which prioritizes assistance for the travel economy. Section 9901 of the Act states that funds should be used for "aid to impacted industries such as tourism, travel and hospitality." Section 6001 states that 25 percent of Economic Adjustment Assistance Grants "shall be for assistance to States and communities that have suffered economic injury as a result of job and gross domestic product losses in the travel, tourism, or outdoor recreation sectors."

Congress recognized the impact of the pandemic on this vital part of our economy. Ohio hotel & lodging businesses, prior to March 2020, employed more than 43,000 individuals directly, but also supported more than 192,000 jobs in the state. They produced \$27 billion in business sales, \$2 billion in federal taxes and \$2 billion in local taxes.

A good number of these businesses are still threatened by the possibility of closure if they cannot survive into the recovery phase. A reasonable amount of support from available federal dollars provided to the State of Ohio can preserve this economic infrastructure and ensure far into the future the availability of the jobs and tax revenue they produce.



## FEATURE

### THREE COUNTIES RECEIVE NATIONAL AWARD FOR HIGH-PERFORMANCE LEADERSHIP TRAINING

Andrew Johnson, CCAO Communications Coordinator

CCAO and the National Association of Counties (NACo) presented the inaugural Award of Excellence for High-Performance Leadership to Fairfield, Franklin and Hamilton counties for their commitment to strengthening the leadership skills of elected officials and the county workforce through the NACo High Performance Leadership Academy. The award was presented to counties at a ceremony in Columbus.

Over 100 Fairfield County employees at all levels and within multiple departments of the county participated in NACo's High Performance Leadership Academy, a 12-week, online program with small group cohorts that equips public servants with practical leadership skills to achieve results for county residents.

"We have gained new leadership skills at multiple levels of the organization. There was almost an immediate effect of positive communications with shared language," former Fairfield County Administrator Carrie Brown said. "Some departments have included standing agenda items about leadership topics. There have been employees to comment that they feel more confident and are ready for the next step in their careers. Others have indicated that the experience helped them through some difficult times at work."

Some participants were at the beginning of their public services career while others were more experienced. Most were supervisors, managers, or directors. All commission department heads participated to show support of the program.

"It is our job as leaders to improve our skills with positive leadership – to work hard to build trust and show we truly care – to behave in selfless ways," Fairfield County Commissioner Dave Levacy said. "Making sure we have high-performance leadership training opportunities for our team is one way we are showing we care."

Franklin County Administrator Ken Wilson participated

as an instructor for NACo's High-Performance Leadership Training, and Franklin County also enrolled participants in the training academy.

"It's an honor to be recognized for Franklin County's strong leadership that not only effectively supports residents but shares that wisdom for tomorrow's leaders throughout the country," said Franklin County Board President Kevin L. Boyce. "While we face unprecedented challenges and decisions every day, the backbone of good government is strengthened by sharing best practices and standards to ensure our next generation of county workforce is fully prepared to take on the future. My colleagues and I are proud to serve as positive examples in county leadership."

Robin Ross, Franklin County public information officer, said she was glad NACo recognized the need and offered a training that was widely available.

"This is yet another invaluable benefit to a NACo membership. We appreciate NACo's foresight and acknowledgment that the future of good government lies firmly with strong elected and supportive professional staff throughout county governments nationwide," she said, adding that the virtual training allowed staff to participate at their own pace, during convenient work hours with few financial limitations.

Hamilton County saw 41 participants successfully complete the training.

"NACo gave us the tools to invest in the next generation of county leaders at a critical time for local governments throughout our country," said Jeffrey Aluotto, Hamilton County administrator. "Developing these crucial management skills in the ranks of our emerging leaders has a tremendous and long-lasting effect on empowering our entire workforce."

CCAO Executive Director Cheryl Subler said she was pleased to see the three counties plan for future success.

“I admire Fairfield, Franklin and Hamilton counties’ decision to commit leaders to the program to address succession planning needs, professional growth and workforce development,” said CCAO Executive Director Cheryl Subler. “At CCAO, we believe in leadership development to build even stronger leaders for stronger counties for a stronger Ohio.”

“We applaud these county leaders for their commitment to sharpening leadership skills that help build healthy, safe and vibrant counties,” said NACo Chief Public Affairs Officer Brian Namey. “By strengthening the skills necessary to overcome obstacles and seize opportunities, county officials are building a brighter future for county residents.” Professional Development Academy CEO Tim Rahschulte said, “These counties have enrolled over 100 existing and emerging leaders. We commend them for strengthening personnel management.”

With a curriculum developed by Gen. Colin Powell and public and private sector leaders, The High

Performance Leadership Academy focuses on five essential skills: leading, organizing, collaborating, communicating and delivering. It emphasizes real-time instruction, small-group learning and knowledge exchanges.

“Given high turnover rates, competition in the market, and the need for succession planning, we must not neglect the essential leadership skills people need to succeed. There is a need for a new generation of leaders who can promote strategic and cultural alignment in the face of rapid change. Supporting the growth of such leaders takes time and commitment,” Brown said. “The NACo High Performance Leadership Academy is a quality program that makes the most of your investment of time and resources.”

Counties interested in participating in the High Performance Leadership Academy can learn more about the program and sign up for more information [here](#). The next session begins January 2022.



Award winners from Fairfield, Franklin and Hamilton counties with Academy and CCAO staff members and leadership



**FEATURE**

**APPLICATIONS FOR OHIO'S \$500 MILLION BROWNFIELDS AND BUILDING DEMOLITION PROGRAMS COMING SOON - GET READY NOW!**

by Craig A. Kasper, PE, and Jenny Carter-Cornell, APR, Hull & Associates, LLC

The state will soon launch its \$500 million programs for brownfields and underutilized properties. Sometime within the fourth quarter of 2021, the Ohio Department of Development will release guidance and applications for this two year program.

The Brownfield Remediation Program was allocated \$350 million in the FY 2022-2023 state budget; the Building Demolition and Site Revitalization Fund received \$150 million. Specific allocations are reserved for each county: \$1 million for brownfields and \$500,000 for demolition/site revitalization. Remaining funds will be issued through statewide competitive grants received on a first-come, first-served basis. All eligible applicants, including counties, can submit projects for the statewide competitive grants.

There is urgency to plan for your projects immediately. If the county-reserved funds are not requested, or perhaps awarded, within one calendar year from the date of the appropriation (we currently

understand that to be July 1, 2022), those funds will move to the statewide competition account. We anxiously await more details on what stage in the process the funds are considered secured from moving to the statewide account and the plans for selecting projects and distributing the county-reserved funds. The county-reserved funds are not expected to require a match, as opposed to the statewide competition funds, which will require a 25% match of the total project costs. For those projects requiring match, we anticipate that there will be a look back for match expenses, perhaps two or more years from the time of application submittal.

While many details of the programs will not be known until the guidelines and applications are released, some basic program information is known or anticipated. Proactive planning can help ensure that the county-reserved dollars are not lost and that statewide competitive applications are submitted while funds remain in the budget.



## **Brownfield Remediation Program**

When one thinks of a brownfield, it is probable that a vacant factory comes to mind, but don't forget about the closed dry cleaner, abandoned warehouse, or former auto repair shop. The state's definition of a brownfield is an "abandoned, idled, or under-used industrial, commercial, or institutional property where expansion or redevelopment is complicated by known or potential releases of hazardous substances or petroleum" (ORC Section 122.65). This broad definition allows for many opportunities to address property challenges in urban, suburban, and rural communities.

Similar to the prior Clean Ohio Revitalization Fund (CORF) program that operated from 2002-2013, we anticipate that the brownfield program will fund acquisition, demolition, remediation, and on-site infrastructure improvements. Match-eligible expenses will likely include those activities, as well as site clearance, environmental insurance, and immediately adjacent off-site infrastructure improvements that benefit the project.

Many stakeholders are advocating a similar grant award as the CORF program, which was up to \$3 million. There is also speculation that some funds might be set aside for Phase II Environmental Site Assessments. Keep in mind that anyone who caused or contributed to contamination at the property will not be an eligible applicant or end user.

## **Building Demolition and Site Revitalization Fund Program**

As defined in the legislation, funds for the building demolition program are dedicated to "demolition of commercial and residential buildings and revitalization of surrounding properties on sites that are not brownfields." As part of past state programs, eligible activities associated with demolition projects included tear down activities and material management, as well as removal and disposal of asbestos-containing materials, general waste, and universal waste (such as mercury-containing thermostats or fluorescent lamps).

There are many uncertainties about how this demolition program will be set up and the amount available per project. Many stakeholders have speculated that this program could have some components similar to the former Moving Ohio

Forward Demolition Grant Program and Ohio Housing Finance Authority's Neighborhood Initiative Program.

## **GET READY NOW!**

There are things you can do as soon as possible to be prepared to submit funding applications. Consider making plans or taking action to:

- Acquire properties, establish purchase agreements, or gain legal access.
- Establish agreements with development partners or end users, if appropriate.
- Procure environmental and legal professional services to support your efforts.
  - Prepare Voluntary Action Plan (VAP) compliant Phase I property assessment.
  - As needed for your project, prepare a VAP Phase II property assessment, asbestos survey, remedial action plan, demolition plan, infrastructure improvement plan, and cost estimates.
- Prepare project area survey with legal description.
- Develop potential end use details and prepare concept plans.
- Gather and document prior expenses for match consideration.
- Share project ideas with the public to gain stakeholder input and support.

Counties and other eligible public applicants should strongly consider the pursuit of these funds. These projects are not always easy, but they can be transformational to a community with many positive ripple effects.

*Hull is a consulting firm specializing in environment, energy, and infrastructure. Founded in Ohio and with offices in Cincinnati, Cleveland, Columbus, St. Clairsville, Newark, and Toledo, Hull experts were pioneers with Ohio's brownfield program. Hull helped their clients prepare over \$400 million in successful funding applications, including 75 grants worth over \$124 million through the former Clean Ohio Revitalization Fund program. For more information, please contact [ckasper@hullinc.com](mailto:ckasper@hullinc.com) or [jcornell@hullinc.com](mailto:jcornell@hullinc.com).*

**FEATURE**

**AN UNTAPPED RENTAL SUBSIDY FOR PERSONS WITH MENTAL ILLNESS**

Sally Luken, President, Luken Solutions and The Stepping Up Ohio Project housing

**811 UNDERUSED FOR PERSONS WITH MENTAL ILLNESS AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE INVOLVEMENT**

Housing people with mental illness, especially those with histories of incarceration, continues to be a challenge in most Ohio counties.

One stumbling block to acquiring decent, affordable housing for this population is a rent subsidy that will look past the applicant’s criminal history. Yet, we have an option that is sorely under-utilized in our state for this population.



Luken

**STATE RENT SUBSIDY TARGETED TO PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES WITH FEW RESTRICTIONS**

Ohio is one of 27 states to receive the specialized, federal, rental assistance fund called 811 Project Rental Assistance (eight-eleven/811 PRA). 811 PRA eligibility is solely for persons with any disability including physical, developmental and/or mental illness. Unlike some rental subsidies that restrict people with criminal records, 811 PRA only requires two federal limitations – one for lifetime registrant sex offenders and the other for anyone who manufactured meth in federally assisted housing.

Despite the flexibility and targeting of 811 PRA, it is severely underutilized by people with mental illness in our state – the population many county sheriffs, local officials, mental health providers and homeless service providers find are most challenged finding housing. This is not limited to Ohio. A federally funded program evaluation of 811 found people with mental illness are ineligible for admission to units at higher rates than other disability groups – not because the person is a barrier – the barriers are state and local systems and the lack of strong requirements to make access by people with mental illness easier.

In Ohio, 811 PRA works like this – a developer of

affordable, low to moderate income rental apartment buildings who applies for capital funding from the Ohio Housing Finance Agency, can gain more points in their application score if the developer promises up to 25% of the new apartments to people with disabilities. The additional reward for the promise is the highly prized rental subsidy for those promised units – through an 811 PRA allocation.

It takes local collaboration across systems to know the projects in your county and to work together with the housing property manager to prioritize any 811 PRA apartments for your Stepping Up population. A local Stepping Up county literally stepped up to make this happen. Logan County’s housing provider, Residential Administrators, following our Stepping Up Town Hall worked to access 811 PRA apartments in a new complex, Campbell Crossing, in their county. Residential Administrators maximized not only Campbell Crossing’s 811 PRA apartments, but took advantage of additional new 811 PRA units in a new project in downtown Urbana (which they learned about from their 811-program training.)

**ONE LEADER CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE**

Jon Brown, Residential Administrator’s executive director, says his staff found the 811-program training and process easy. They continue to add people with mental illness to the program referral process and successfully support people with disabilities in affordable housing.

**COUNTY COMMISSIONERS CAN ALSO LEAD**

Stepping Up Ohio urges all county commissioners to ask their local mental health and housing providers and their local Mental Health and Recovery Board directors – what are you doing to leverage the 811 PRA program in Ohio? For more information, please visit the Ohio Housing Finance Agency’s 811 PRA program website at <https://ohiohome.org/811pra/default.aspx>. For help in knowing how to access existing units or to develop new ones in your county, please contact Sally Luken, Stepping Up Ohio housing consultant at [sally.luken@lukensolutions.com](mailto:sally.luken@lukensolutions.com).



## VOICE OF COUNTY LEADERSHIP

### CHRISTIANE SCHMENK, UNION COUNTY COMMISSIONER



#### How long have you been a county commissioner?

I took office in January 2019, so I've been a commissioner just a little under three years.

#### Can you tell us about yourself?

I've spent most of my life in Union County, growing up and going to school in Marysville. I've been married for 40 years to my husband Mike, and we have two grown children. We have a 2-year-old grandson, so we're enjoying being grandparents. I like to jog, bike, hike and read in my spare time.

#### What is your professional background?

I'm an attorney by background and have been in private and corporate law practice. I also served on Governor Kasich's Cabinet from 2011-2013 as Director of the Development Services Agency. I focused on economic development law before retiring recently from private practice.

#### What other elected positions have you held?

I served as the elected Mayor of Marysville from 2008-2011.

#### Why did you first run?

I ran for office because I cared about my community and wanted to be involved to help it grow and prosper.

#### Why did you want to be a commissioner?

I had worked with former Union County commissioners in my past roles, and I admired the way they collaborated with other county office holders, businesses and residents. They were able to help our county grow in a smart way, so I wanted to try to help that continue.

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

Several things we've been able to achieve include starting a multi-jurisdictional task force regarding affordable workforce housing; reinvigorating our county's workforce development efforts, and working with our county Parks and Trails coalition to build support for county multi-use trails.

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

Solar project development has been my biggest challenge. Our county has at least two large solar projects that will apparently soon be approved by the Power Siting Board, and we're aware of at least two more projects actively acquiring land leases in our county. In the past, we were a county with a primarily agricultural economy, but that has changed. It's been challenging for our county in the last 10 years to maintain a good balance between residential/business growth and rural development, and solar projects have made that balance harder to maintain.

#### What was the biggest surprise or adjustment after taking office?

My biggest challenge was trying to understand the vast variety of issues that county commissioners face. Even though I'd worked in municipal and state government, county government is a whole new ballgame!

#### 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?

I was very blessed to follow a long line of fiscal conservatives in our Commissioners Office. Our county budget has been strong for many years, and my predecessors established fiscal policies that kept our budgets balanced and our reserves full. As a rapidly-growing county, we do have many places we could spend dollars, including larger county facilities, road expansions and public safety. However, our board of commissioners is united in maintaining strong county finances.

**How have you or what has your county been doing to participate in the state-county partnership?**

Our board of commissioners stays in close communication with our state legislators and officials, providing feedback on proposed legislation and programs. It helps to have a former state legislator on our current board, as he has great relationships in the Statehouse! Our other elected county officials are very active in their state associations and also get involved with proposed legislation and state programs. That helps us work in partnership with the state.

**We have 60 new CCAO members this year. What advice do you have for them as they take office?**

First, I encourage them to reach out to other elected officials in their county, learn about what they do and work collaboratively with them for the betterment of their county. That includes township and municipal officials. Second, I encourage them to support the work of their county economic development function, as it plays a critical role in bringing and keeping jobs in their communities. Finally, I encourage them to use the resources of CCAO to better understand issues they'll face. The CCAO Commissioners Handbook is posted online and provides an amazing amount of information about the powers of boards of commissioners as well as detailed topics like taxation, finance, elections and planning/development. CCAO also offers great training programs for new commissioners and has great staff willing to answer questions and offer assistance. I strongly encourage new commissioners to get involved in CCAO, as it will shorten their learning curve!

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

I was encouraged to participate in CCAO from the day I won my commissioner election, so I jumped in and attended the Winter Conference, particularly the sessions for new commissioners. I then ran for and was elected to a board seat on the CEBCO board, as I was interested in helping it continue its strong legacy of providing good health insurance and wellness programs for county employees. Last year, I also ran for and was elected to a seat on the CCAO board, and I've enjoyed working with commissioners from other counties on that board. Being active in CCAO has allowed me to better serve my county. I know who to call when we need help from CCAO, and I have a seat

at the table when CCAO board decisions are made. I also have made friends among commissioners from other counties, and I've become very comfortable reaching out to them to get help on issues that our counties have in common. I definitely feel that my CCAO involvement has made me better able to serve Union County.

**What are your main priorities or personal causes? What is it about those particular issues that matter so much?**

I have taken a personal interest in several areas, including homelessness, affordable workforce housing, public transportation and a county parks district that could focus on multi-use trails. All of those issues have become important to our county's ability to attract and retain workers to fill jobs that include retail, public safety, teachers, advanced manufacturing and high tech. If we are to attract and retain our next generation of workers, we need to provide a good quality of life for them and their families, and these issues are part of that quality of life.

**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 your office is doing it?**

I have to admit that this is a big challenge to our board of commissioners. We don't have a PIO or a communications specialist in our office, so we don't have much time to communicate. We do try to maintain good relationships with our local newspapers and communicate to the public through them. I also personally use social media to let our residents know of important initiatives. We issued our first Annual Report this year, and we posted it online and presented it to local groups. One silver lining of COVID was to add Zoom access to our Commissioners Sessions, and we've continued that after we returned to in-person meetings. One of my goals for the future is to try to increase our regular communications to our public.

**Do you have anything to add?**

I have loved serving as a county commissioner, as it allows me to serve our public to the best of my ability. I feel very blessed to be in this role!

## LEGISLATOR Q & A

### REP. KRISTEN BOGGS, ASSISTANT MINORITY LEADER

#### What are your legislative priorities for the remainder of this year?

Unfortunately, Ohio has seen an increase in violent crimes since the pandemic started, and we now know that domestic violence fatalities are up 20 percent in Ohio. Consequently, I have several bills that if enacted would make our communities safer. Specifically, the Reagan Tokes Act which will help modernize our post release control policies for individuals convicted of the most violent crimes, and HB 245 which would permit counties to create Domestic Violence Fatality Review Boards.



#### Counties greatly value a strong state-county partnership, and the state has helped strengthen that partnership in recent years through key investments in priorities like indigent defense reimbursement, broadband and children services. How do you see the state-county relationship continuing in the future?

I think the state and county will continue to have a mutually beneficial relationship that will prioritize and support the needs of all of our constituents. It's critical for the state to fundamentally understand each county's unique needs in order to best allocate the appropriate funding and resources. As a representative serving areas throughout Columbus, I recognize my partnership with Franklin County as one of the biggest assets in enacting lasting change.

#### What do you enjoy most about serving in a leadership role within your caucus?

The members of our caucus are incredibly talented and come from such diverse professions. We have everything from doctors and magistrates to teachers and farmers. Being able to help connect our members to the issues they care about and elevate the experience and expertise they bring to the legislature is the best part of being in leadership.

#### What is your favorite fall activity?

I love the season changes in Ohio! I have two kids under the age of 5 so Halloween is a very big deal in our house. We are fortunate to live near some great pumpkin patches, and while I don't trust my kids to carve pumpkins yet, we have enjoyed painting them!



**FEATURE**

**ENROLLMENT CAMPAIGN EFFORTS RECOGNIZED WITH GOLD MARCOM AWARD**

by Lori Paulenich, Senior Communication Strategist

As a valued Ohio county employee, we want to ensure you have access to retirement planning options that can help give you peace of mind for your future. While most county employees and elected officials benefit from one of Ohio’s public pension systems, the income provided from these programs may not adequately cover all retirement expenses.

To help supplement this potential shortfall of retirement income, CCAO has sponsored a 457(b) deferred compensation plan in partnership with Empower Retirement since 1999. Like its private sector counterpart 401(k) plan, a 457(b) plan offers public employees an excellent way to save through tax-deferred contributions to their own individual retirement accounts.

In June, CCAO partnered with Empower Retirement to initiate an enrollment campaign with the goal of attracting new employees and individuals wanting to save for additional income in retirement through the 457(b) Plan.

The campaign included educational webinars, emails, website content and a recorded presentation, all featuring information designed to help explain and demonstrate the importance and benefits of participating in the Plan and the retirement planning resources made available through Empower Retirement.

On Tuesday, Oct. 26, it was announced that the campaign is being recognized with a Gold Award by the MarCom Awards. MarCom Awards are an annual competition that honor excellence in marketing and communication while recognizing the creativity, hard work and generosity of industry professionals.

Nearly 6,500 entries are submitted from dozens of countries every year in both print and digital mediums. Being a Gold Winner is a tremendous achievement.



The campaign on Empower’s website

**About MarCom1**

MarCom Awards are administered and judged by the Association of Marketing and Communication Professionals (AMCP). The international organization consists of several thousand creative professionals. The Association oversees awards and recognition programs, provides judges and sets standards for excellence.

Judges are industry professionals who look for companies and individuals whose talents exceed a high standard of excellence and whose work serves as a benchmark for the industry. The MarCom Award graces trophy cases of some of the top business and communication firms in the world, and winners range in size from individual communicators to media conglomerates and Fortune 500 companies.

For more information or to review the full winner’s list, go to <https://marcomawards.com/>.

You can view the recorded overview of the campaign [here](#).

## FEATURE

### HAMBLEY WRITES MEDINA COUNTY'S STORY

by Rachel Massoud Reedy, CCAO Policy Analyst

**Can you tell us a little about your background and when you became interested in Medina County history?**

I remember loving history, and in particular, Ohio history ever since I was in 7th grade at Saint Ambrose in Brunswick. My parents would take us on vacations hauling a trailer and camping all over Ohio every summer. I loved and still do love maps, following them as we traveled and guiding my father as he drove us around. Occasionally, I would discover something interesting to see on the journey and we would stop. Just sharing the joy of discovery and learning about Ohio History with my entire family (5 kids) inspired me to continue discovering Ohio for years to come.



Hambley

**When did you decide to take this interest to the next level and begin publishing?**

When I decided to pursue my PhD in History at the University of Akron, I chose that department specifically because they had a faculty of successful and prolific published historians. I studied under some of Ohio's best historians and outstanding teachers: Dr. George Knepper, Dr. Roger Grant, Dr. Keith Bryant, Dr. Robert Zangrando, Dr. James Richardson and Dr. David Kyvig. In terms of my academic career, I was also directed to the field of Urban Studies and Political Science and used my writing abilities, and skill in quantitative methods, to author a number of primary research projects dedicated to advancing public policy. I have continually tried to approach public policy analysis and political science from a historical perspective.

**Why is it important to you to tell the story of Medina County's history?**

Aside from the benefits of promoting local history to visitors of our great county, the stories of our

past encourage the many residents – some new, others lifetimes, and many in between – to treasure the past, while engaged in making a better future. Seeing the good of our past, encourages us to be the good for our future.

**I understand the first book you published was "Timeline of Medina County History." Can you tell me about that? What kind of information did you include? How did you decide what and what not to include? Why did you opt to make that your first book?**

Initially, I started the Timeline of Medina County History in the late 1990's as part of an annual presentation to Leadership Medina County History Day. The basic premise of the timeline was to show the connection between national, state and local historical events, people and conditions. What emerged from the historical study was a consistent theme about Medina County people that transcended all ages. Our most cherished, common and consistent values were the importance of families, faith, education and democratic government.

Every year, as part of the presentation of Medina County history, I would ask the class for advice of what other events or themes that I ought to research and include in the following years and classes. Essentially, I would ask what would they consider to be important to know about Medina County families, communities, organizations, and businesses, and why?

After being approached by an organized group of local residents that were home schooling their children, I started to publish it on the county website. Even though it was copyrighted, I gave blanket permission for reproduction provided physical copies were distributed free of charge.

**I also read that you released a bicentennial version. Why was it important to you to do that? What updates did you make?**

To celebrate the bicentennial of Medina County, I

added a considerably greater number of events, stories, and illustrations to the timeline than all the prior versions, nearly doubling its previous size.

**How do you choose the illustrations in the book?**

Illustrations like pictures, maps, tables and charts need to augment the story being told, as well as grab the attention of the reader. Often, as I work on the manuscript, I am always in search of some historical postcard or photograph that has not been previously published and meets the criteria to improve the story telling. In the age of the internet, that is increasingly difficult and sometimes a challenge, while still being mindful of publishing rights and copyrights laws.

**How did you release the book when it was published? What was the response from the county?**

I published using one of the largest providers of integrated publisher and book printing services in the United States, located in Ashland, Ohio. I distributed it through an agreement with our countywide adult literacy non-profit called Project: LEARN, which operates three bookstores in the county. The book was also available at several other local shops. All net proceeds from the sale of the books went to Project: LEARN adult literacy program. My wife and I donated copies to all of our local school districts, so that every school building that had a library, had a copy of the book. The first printing sold out the first month, requiring a second printing in February of 2018. At current time, over 1,000 copies are in circulation.

**Your second book is due in January. Can you tell me about it?**

Historic Tales of Medina County is being published by History Press (Arcadia Publishing) in January

of 2022. Many of the chapters of this book are extended versions of articles which I wrote for Helping Hands Newsletter – a bi-monthly publication of the Medina County Hands Foundation distributed to 11,000 households free of charge. At the time of the articles, my major focus was to connect the history of our great county with the events and activities of the State of Ohio, largely with insight as a member of the Ohio General Assembly from 2015 to 2020. I have added additional stories and tales, as

well, to provide a more complete picture of Medina County’s past. The roles that some of our most prominent citizens have played in the history of Ohio are also prominently described. The book Foreword is being authored by fellow Medina County resident and former Ohio Senate President Larry Obhof.



Hambley presents a copy of “Timeline” to Sen. Rob Portman at the Medina County Career Center. Also pictured are Steve Chrisman, Superintendent of the Career Center, and Bethany Dentler, executive director of the Medina County Economic Development Corporation

**Do you have any plans to publish additional books? If so, what can you tell me about them?**

I am also currently working with the Northern Ohio Railway Museum (NORM), a non-profit group dedicated to preserving and promoting the history of electric railways in Ohio – interurban and streetcar companies. It is primarily based on a chapter regarding the Cleveland & Southwestern Railway from my 1993 PhD dissertation entitled, “The Vanguard of a Regional Infrastructure: Electric Railways of Northeast Ohio, 1884-1932.”

My contribution will be added to the work of six other authors forming a compilation of numerous illustrations, maps, and photographs documenting the history of the Cleveland & Southwestern system. Publishing costs are being underwritten by NORM and the proposed printing date is late 2022 or early 2023.



## CEBCO NEWS

### AN UPDATE FROM CEBCO

by Mike Kindell, Managing Director of Health and Wellness

CEBCO hosted the 2022 Renewal Meeting in early September at the Airport Embassy Suites. The final average renewal increase was 3.8% after the use of Member Equity. The range of renewal increases was -0.2% to 13%.



While 2021 was an extremely unusual year for members, CEBCO was able to continue to provide quality service and the rate stability needed by our counties. All of our member counties have completed their renewal paperwork indicating that they will remain in the pool.

One of the enhancements added to the CEBCO program for 2022 was the addition of an Employee Assistance Program (EAP), administered by

ComPsych, that will be funded by Member Equity. The EAP program focuses on employees and their household's wellbeing and helps support the medical and wellness programs that are offered! The EAP benefits include; five complimentary counseling visits for each issue a member may be experiencing, work/life balance solutions, legal guidance and legal service discounts, financial guidance, and a vast network of online resources. The program is available to all CEBCO county employees and members of their households. In addition, each county will have four in-person training sessions.

There are two new counties joining the CEBCO family on Jan 1, 2022. They are Columbiana County and Miami County, which brings total membership on the Medical/Rx plan to 42 counties. CEBCO now covers approximately 12,800 employees and 29,000 members. We are extremely pleased to continue the pool's slow and steady growth.

Currently, the CEBCO staff is conducting open enrollment meetings for our new and existing counties as we highlight the program changes and re-emphasize the outstanding benefits and programs available to our members. Health insurance can be confusing and overwhelming during certain times in most people's lives and it can be difficult to remember all the benefits that are offered.

CEBCO will continue to look for ways to enhance our program for now and the future. Regional meetings will be scheduled in 2022 to look at potential solutions for counties looking for strategies and ideas to mitigate their risks and potentially lower their health care spend. Details will be announced after the first of the year.



Pictured: Crystal Siembida-Boggs, Columbiana County deputy clerk; CCAO Executive Director Cheryl Subler; Columbiana County Commissioner Tim Weigle; Mike Kindell, managing director of health and wellness; and Columbiana County Commissioner Roy Paparodis

**CORSA NEWS**

**2022-2023 CORSA RENEWAL IS UNDERWAY**

by Ali Redmond, CORSA Membership Services Manager

Autumn is not only known for cooler weather and leaves changing color for the CORSA Underwriting Team; it also means the beginning of the renewal season. The Underwriting team is small but mighty made up of two employees: Underwriting Manager Sherry Barbosky and Program Assistant Tricia Callihan. They are facing one of their busiest times of the year.

On Oct. 8, 2021, we marked the start of the 2022-2023 CORSA Renewal with the Agent’s Webinar. The webinar is held annually, and we highly recommend that our local agents participate. This year, we had representation from 100% of our member agencies. During the webinar, Sherry Barbosky reviewed the application step by step with the Agents and CSRs. This way, they will be well versed in understanding why questions are being asked and how the information should be presented on the application. The Agent’s webinar not only kicks off the renewal process, but it is also part of a collaboration effort between our members, agents and CORSA.

Underwriting is an important part of the overall process in determining insurance coverage. There are many factors one takes into account with the information submitted by the agent and/or member during application time. Accuracy is very important because all the information collected is used in determining, not only rates, but coverage enhancements and looking for solutions that might reduce risk of future claims. CORSA’s application is reviewed and enhanced each year taking into consideration our members property and liability exposures.

Specializing in county government the CORSA staff is aware that this time of year is also budget season and a very busy time for our members. Starting last year, CORSA reduced the application to only include information needed for rating. The other questions previously asked on the application which relate to loss control will still be gathered but later in the year. We are hoping this change will minimize the workload in October/November for our members and agents.

Agents review the following applications and schedules to make sure all the information being submitted is accurate.

- County Renewal Application
- Non-County Renewal Application
- Corrections Facility Renewal Application
- Location Schedule
- Mobile Equipment Schedule
- Vehicle Schedule
- Watercraft Schedule
- Bridge Schedule
- Drone Schedule

Our agents and member contacts will be working diligently over the next few weeks gathering information needed to submit the application by Nov. 15, 2021.

Your local agent is a great resource of information and CORSA appreciates having that local connection with our members.

If you have any questions regarding the renewal process, please contact your agent, Sherry Barbosky or Tricia Callihan.



Sherry Barbosky  
 CORSA Underwriting Manager  
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## CCAO SERVICE CORP NEWS

### WRAPPING UP NATIONAL RETIREMENT SECURITY MONTH

by John Leutz, Assistant Director

Our [CCAO Deferred Compensation Plan](#)

continues its track towards \$1 billion in member assets. Plan assets currently are approximately \$960 million. Our retirement plan advisors have conducted over 950 retirement planning reviews and held over 2000 meetings with program participants so far this year. Additional plan features that have been added this year include offering an “after-tax” Roth saving option and allowing plan members to borrow from their plan accounts through a loan program.

As commissioners it is important for you to ensure that your county’s employees are made aware of our CCAO deferred compensation plan and encouraged to participate in the program. We offer this deferred compensation plan as a benefit to help your employees plan for a successful retirement future.

National Retirement Security Month is a great time for commissioners to personally communicate with your county employees about the benefits of our program and urge them to review their accounts with their [regional plan advisor](#) to take steps to improve their personal retirement readiness.

National Retirement Security Month is an annual



event that highlights the importance of saving and investing for the future income your county employees will need and want. This is a good time for county employees to make their next move towards securing a retirement future that they desire. Encourage your employees to take three steps:

- **Increase their contribution amount**  
One of the best strategies for a winning approach to your financial future is to regularly increase the amount you contribute to your retirement account.
- **Schedule a Retirement Readiness Review and make any needed adjustments**  
Meet with your retirement plan advisor to review your account, discuss your specific financial situation and make sure your portfolio has the right balance of investments to help you reach your retirement income goals.
- **Designate/update their beneficiary**  
When it comes to your final wishes, you don’t want to leave anything to chance. It’s important to keep your beneficiary information current so the money in your account goes to those who matter most.

When it comes to planning and saving for retirement, it doesn’t have to be hard work. Encourage your employees to make their next move to strengthen their retirement portfolio.





**COUNSELOR’S CORNER**

**IN IT FOR THE LONG HAUL: LONG COVID AND REASONABLE ACCOMMODATIONS**

by Marcus A. Pringle, Zashin & Rich

The COVID-19 pandemic continues to present employers with a multitude of practical and legal issues impacting their workforces. One such issue revolves around employees suffering from long-term effects of COVID-19, i.e., Post-Acute COVID-19 Syndrome or “long COVID,” and whether an employer must provide these employees with reasonable accommodations under the Americans with Disabilities Act (“ADA”).

Under the ADA, a covered “disability” includes a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits a major life activity. Employers cannot discriminate against individuals with disabilities and have a duty to reasonably accommodate employees/applicants with disabilities, unless doing so creates an undue hardship. A reasonable accommodation is a change or adjustment to a job or work environment that permits a person with a disability to perform their job. For example, reasonable accommodations can include a modified work schedule or leave, reassignment, or providing/modifying equipment to aid the employee.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, individuals suffering from long COVID experience “a wide range of new, returning, or ongoing health problems . . . four or more weeks after first being infected,” including, but not limited to: difficulty breathing or shortness of breath; tiredness or fatigue; worsening symptoms after physical or mental activities; difficulty thinking or concentrating; chest or stomach pain; headaches; and dizziness. Furthermore, COVID-19 can cause long-term damage to organs including the heart, lungs, and brain.

In July, the Department of Health and Human Services (“HHS”) and the Department of Justice (“DOJ”) jointly issued guidance (available here) addressing long COVID as a disability under the ADA and related statutes. The guidance does not address Title I of the ADA, which covers private employers, and states that “employment is outside of the scope of this guidance document.” However, the guidance still provides information on how government agencies and courts may apply the ADA with respect to employees suffering from long COVID.

In the joint guidance, HHS and the DOJ state that long COVID can meet the definition of a disability under the ADA. In making this determination, an individualized assessment is necessary, i.e., whether a particular person’s symptoms substantially limit a major life activity. The guidance provides the following as examples:

- “A person with long COVID who has lung damage that causes shortness of breath, fatigue, and related effects is substantially limited in respiratory function, among other major life activities.”
- “A person with long COVID who has symptoms of intestinal pain, vomiting, and nausea that have lingered for months is substantially limited in gastrointestinal function, among other major life activities.”
- “A person with long COVID who experiences memory lapses and ‘brain fog’ is substantially limited in brain function, concentrating, and/or thinking.”

The guidance also advises that individuals suffering from long COVID may be entitled to reasonable accommodations. While it does not address employment-related accommodations, the guidance provides examples in other contexts, including allowing a student additional time to take a test on account of difficulties with concentrating and allowing a service animal to accompany an individual experiencing dizziness.

In light of the HHS/DOJ’s guidance, it is possible that the U.S. Equal Opportunity Commission and courts may take a similar approach with respect to the ADA and long COVID. As such, employers should consider whether long COVID may trigger the ADA’s (and similar state laws’) protections and requirements, including providing employees with reasonable accommodations. As the ADA requires an individualized approach, employers should contact counsel with questions regarding whether an employee with symptoms of long COVID may qualify as disabled and the types of accommodations that they may have to provide.

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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](mailto:ajohnson@ccao.org) or 614-203-8920.