

COUNTY LEADER



County Commissioners Association of Ohio quarterly magazine

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County Leader, CCAO's quarterly e-magazine, provides an in-depth look at the news, programs and policies affecting Ohio's 88 counties. The e-magazine also showcases our members, offers best county practices as well as ways to enhance the state-county partnership practices and shares the offerings of the association.

If you have questions or story submissions, contact Editor Andrew Johnson at ajohnson@ccao.org or 614-203-8920.

- 1) Clinton County Commissioners Michael McCarty, Kerry Steed and Brenda Woods at the Clinton County Courthouse 100th Anniversary Celebration.
 - 2) Lawrence County Commissioners Freddie Hayes and DeAnna Holliday with Sen. Bob Peterson
 - 3) CCAO Executive Director Cheryl Subler and Assistant Director John Leutz recognize retiring Allen County Commissioner Greg Sneyary for his service to county government.
- On the Cover: Miami County Commissioners - Current and Former, at their Courthouse Plaza Renovation Dedication Ceremony and Ribbon Cutting

A MESSAGE FROM 2020 CCAO PRESIDENT CARL DAVIS, MONROE COUNTY COMMISSIONER

As the leaves change color and begin to fall and we enter a new season, we take time to reflect on a year that will forever be remembered as the most unusual in our lifetimes.

Although the COVID has influenced how we have lived our lives and conducted business, it has not prevented us from accomplishing many of our goals. Ohio was well represented at the Legislative Conference in Washington D. C. Feb 29-Mar 4. As always, there were educational opportunities as well as a time for entertainment and enjoyment and visits to the capital to meet with our legislators.

I know many of us from Ohio were looking forward to the NACO Summer Conference scheduled for July 2020 in Orlando Florida, which unfortunately became a virtual event with business as usual being conducted. What was missing was the opportunity to be together and discuss our county issues and to just relax and have a good time with each other. We now look forward to the Legislative Conference in Washington DC in February and the Annual Conference in Austin Texas in July.



Our Executive Committee and Board of Directors meetings have also been conducted remotely, where we can see some of the participants, with others joining without video access.

As this is written, the CCAO Nominating Committee, chaired by Athens County Commissioner Lenny Eliason, is accepting request forms to be considered for Officer or Board of Director positions. The deadline is November 1 2020. All commissioners, county executives and council members should have received an email with this information.

Unfortunately, senior staff and officers, working with our colleagues at the County Engineers Association of Ohio have made the difficult decision to not hold an in-person winter conference this year. It would be impossible to safely conduct the conference as we have known it in past years. There are many issues to be considered and we encourage you take part in our virtual event December 9-11, 2020.

Our staff has done an awesome job in taking care of the counties' needs and providing services as usual in trying times. We commend them for their outstanding performance.

As we close the chapter on 2020, let us all look to 2021 as a time to return to normal. Have a great Thanksgiving and Christmas and stay safe. I look forward to seeing each and every one of you in person in 2021.

Respectfully,
Carl M Davis
Monroe County Commissioner
CCAO 2020 President

LETTER FROM CCAO EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR CHERYL SUBLER

With the roar of the heightened election, this season is bittersweet as we anticipate the changing of the guard in some county courthouses. Certain elected officials will retire, move on to higher office or face new frontiers. In the CCAO ranks, we anticipate approximately 50 commissioners and county council members will say farewell.

Standing for election and serving as an elected official is tough work and not for the faint of heart. Putting yourself out there, particularly in today's climate of public discourse, is commendable; and investing your time in public service to not only give back to the community, but to chart a course for a stronger county, is noble.

Therefore, we'll be honoring our departing members for their outstanding dedication and leadership during the CCAO Membership Business Meeting in a few weeks. Please mark your calendar for Thursday, December 10 at 10 a.m. for this celebratory virtual event.

As we wish our members well on their future journeys, we hope they will remain friends forever as well as active members with the CCAO Alumni Association. One of the main purposes of the alumni association is to help individuals stay connected with former colleagues. In the future, we'll be working with the association to explore ways it can support the CCAO Research & Education Foundation along with helping to recognize counties' best practices.

On the other side of the spectrum, CCAO leadership and staff are developing strategies to support our incoming members, given the ever-changing world of the pandemic. A welcome packet explaining the association's mission and various programs will be mailed in November. Our traditional new member training will be moved from February to late spring, possibly May, because we recognize the value of in-person training. Plus, we're working to offer additional educational and networking opportunities to strengthen our members. Stay tuned!

Membership is about belonging. Every member benefits from being part of the group, and the group benefits with every member active. It's about collective action and achieving what individual members can't accomplish on their own. Moreover, it's about supporting one another. CCAO looks forward to continuing this tradition with new Alumni Association members as well as new county commissioners and county council members joining our ranks.

Members are the lifeblood of CCAO, and we look forward to supporting all our members in 2021!



CCAO POLICY TEAM UPDATE

PRESIDENTIAL PROGNOSTICATION: OHIO COUNTIES TO WATCH ON ELECTION NIGHT

by Adam Schwiebert, CCAO Policy Analyst, and Shawna Florio, CCAO Policy Intern

For many election watchers, election night is a night of anticipation, excitement and occasional anxiety as the results slowly trickle in. The results of countless hours of campaigning begin to come into focus as more and more precincts report their vote totals. With 2020 being a presidential election year, there's even more interest in following election night results.

Like many previous presidential contests, Ohio is once again a battleground state. With polls showing a close contest between President Donald Trump and Vice President Joe Biden, election watchers across the state will scour early election returns to gauge which candidate is most likely to win Ohio's 18 electoral votes. In a statewide contest, every vote counts, no matter in which county it is cast. However, are there counties whose results may indicate which candidate will ultimately win the Buckeye State? In a world where everyone seems to have an opinion about elections, allow these humble election observers to share their insights on which counties they'll be watching on the evening of Nov. 3rd.

Pivot Counties

The term "pivot county" is a popular phrase amongst many 2020 election watchers. The term refers to counties that voted for President Barack Obama in 2008 and 2012 but then voted for President Trump in 2016. There are nine such counties in Ohio: Stark, Portage, Trumbull, Ashtabula, Erie, Sandusky, Ottawa, Wood and Montgomery.

Take Trumbull County, for example. The county voted for President Obama in 2008 by a 60-38% margin over Sen. John McCain. It followed that up in 2012 with a 61-38% margin for Obama over Gov. Mitt Romney. In fact, until 2016, Trumbull County had not gone for a Republican presidential candidate since Richard Nixon in 1972. However, in 2016, President Trump won Trumbull County by a 51-45% margin over Secretary of State Hillary Clinton.

These pivot counties are not just swing counties in presidential election years either. In 2018, eight of the nine counties voted for Ohio Gov. Mike DeWine while seven of the nine simultaneously voted to reelect Sen. Sherrod Brown to the U.S. Senate. You can check out the data for yourself at Ohioelectionresults.com.

The question for 2020 is, will President Trump continue his success with these hotly contested counties? Or will these counties revert to their more traditional voting patterns? As go these counties, likely goes Ohio.

Watch the Suburbs

In addition to pivot counties, there has been increasing attention devoted to suburban voting in 2020. Historically a strong supporter of GOP candidates, the suburbs have trended bluer in recent elections. Will President Trump be able to retain enough suburban support to get him over the hump in Ohio?

To answer those questions, we'll be looking toward Delaware County on election night. Delaware County is a longtime GOP supporting county that hasn't gone Democratic since Woodrow Wilson's 1916 reelection. The county has seen significant growth in recent decades, with large suburban populations in the southern portion of the county. While we do not anticipate Delaware County to go blue in 2020, if the county results trend stronger for Vice President Biden than Secretary Clinton's 2016 performance (a 55-39% Trump victory), it could indicate increasing weakness in suburban areas.

With all this said, if 2020 has proven anything, it's that it is dangerous to make predictions. Which is why we're not making any projections on which direction Ohio may go on election night. Nevertheless, we hope our suggestions for counties to watch adds to the fun and excitement, whichever candidate you support.

FEATURE

LOOKING BACK WHILE MOVING FORWARD - A DISCUSSION WITH RETIRING COMMISSIONERS

by Andrew Johnson, CCAO Communications Coordinator

As 2020 draws to a close, a number of dedicated public servants are wrapping up their time in office. CCAO interviewed three of them - Miami County Commissioner Jack Evans, Union County Commissioner Steve Stolte and Darke County Commissioner Michael Rhoades - about their experiences as county leaders.

How has the role of a commissioner changed since you took office?

Evans: Very much so. The time it takes now compared when I started has increased greatly, and then with COVID-19 and things changing daily in the beginning, it increased even more.

Stolte: I was appointed a Union County Commissioner in January 2011. At that time the commissioners were struggling to balance the 2011 budget. Dealing with falling revenues, cutting budgets, furloughing employees, laying off employees, cutting wages, etc. were on-going and difficult issues. That began to change in the last half of 2012 when revenues began rebounding. Growth began again and continued to increase. Now Union County is consistently the fastest or second fastest growing county in Ohio. Such growth brings with it numerous challenges. We regularly deal with growth and development issues including typical infrastructure challenges such as roads, water and sewer but also fiber and broadband. Of course, we still have budget challenges because of the growth and development, but those challenges are much better to deal with than the budget challenges of 10 years ago.

Rhoades: My role as commissioner hasn't really changed. The only thing that has happened is the finances are better than what they were in 2001 when I came into office.

Why did you choose to dedicate so many years to public office?

Evans: I began with being a Monroe Township trustee for 19 years before being selected to replace a deceased commissioner. Originally I chose to run



Evans with CORSA Managing Director John Brownlee

for trustee because it served my immediate area and because I grew up in Tipp City, Monroe Township. I wanted to get involved and felt I had much to offer as the job of trustee in Monroe had evolved into a more urban area.

Stolte: Having been involved in numerous volunteer roles over the years and assuming leadership positions in those roles, I always enjoyed working cooperatively with others, and public service became a natural and logical next step for me. I spent 24 years as Union County engineer prior to becoming a county commissioner.

Rhoades: I chose to be a commissioner to help the people here in my county have a better place to call home. I feel like I have done my best and that it is time for someone new to come into the office.

Are there any lessons you have learned during your county service?

Evans: Being in the insurance business, I was accustomed to helping people with problems and working to get consensus between the underwriter or adjuster and my insured. So that part of the job came naturally. Being a township trustee required

getting involved in so many different issues, from ditch projects, storm sewer issues, road projects and being the operator of three working cemeteries, along with working on government accounting systems.

Stolte: Listen carefully, ask questions and learn before making decisions. Work collaboratively with other elected officials to benefit your community. You can usually find middle ground.

Rhoades: Lesson learned has been to tell the truth and give correct information whether people like it or not.

What does it take to be a successful commissioner?

Evans: Much of what I learned as an insurance agent: to be available, be empathetic and remember the problems that your constituents and insureds are experiencing aren't things they face every day, though you might. Foremost be honest about what you can or cannot do, and be fair and firm.

Stolte: It takes a willingness to devote whatever time is needed. Remember you are an elected official 24/7. Be willing to listen. Be a team player. Collaborate. Search for middle ground. Give away the credit.

Rhoades: Be a good listener.

Do you have any advice for incoming commissioners?

Evans: Learn as much as you can as fast as you can. Be honest and fair and open with those you deal with. Don't be solicited by your constituents. Work with your fellow commissioners and the other elected officials. If you have a disagreement with your fellow commissioners, and you will, let it go after that issue is decided and move on. You have many other things to deal with, and you will need to work together to get the job done.

Stolte: Listen. Ask questions. Establish relationships with other elected officials and representatives of other units of government. Be involved regionally. Be respectful of others. Use CCAO resources. Participate in CCAO committees and activities. Take advantage of CORSA and CEBCO insurance services. They will provide consistent and unmatched insurance service to your county at very competitive costs.

Rhoades: Listen to your people and their concerns and with a lot of thought give them the best advice you can.



Stolte with Morrow County Commissioner Tom Whiston

How did the role of commissioner differ from what you anticipated? How did you adjust?

Evans: You do not have as much authority as you think you do. All elected officials run their own shops, and other than the budget and approving contracts, you don't have as much authority over them. I learned how to work with them and try to avoid problems by meeting with the official and try to come to a reasonable conclusion.

Rhoades: I wasn't sure what the role was when I came in. I have always been frank with my comments, even if people didn't like what I had to tell them.

How did your experience with CCAO evolve throughout your career?

Stolte: While I was county engineer, I worked with CCAO on engineering and planning related issues—funding, access management, subdivision regulations, etc. Once I became a county commissioner, I was able to work much more closely with CCAO and the extremely capable CCAO staff. I was involved in the Taxation and Finance as well as Justice and Public Safety Committees. I was privileged to chair CCAO's Drainage Task Force through a 7-year effort to make wholesale changes to Ohio's Petition Ditch Laws. I served five years on the CORSA board of directors and as CORSA president during that time.

Rhoades: CCAO has always been there for me when I needed advice, and the CCAO staff has always gone out of their way to give the very best advice to me.

What will you miss the most about your time as a county commissioner?

Evans: Far and away the people. I am a very social person, and I believe that was an asset. I will miss being involved at the local as well as state and national level. Too often it appears, to others, that when you retire, the knowledge and experience you have learned and been asked to contribute seem to have evaporated.

Stolte: I will miss working with people, finding solutions to problems, planning for the future, making decisions for the long-term benefit of Union County.

Rhoades: Talking to the people and being able to give them the information they need.

How did you navigate relationships with new commissioners?

Evans: Remember what it was like when you were in their shoes. Hopefully they have some governmental background, so they have at least a passing familiarity with government and how it works. If they come from business I tried to help them realize that government works much differently than the private sector, and you can't always get things done as rapidly or process-wise that they are used to or expected. Process is one of the hardest things for new commissioners to wrap their hands around.

Rhoades: I have always answered their questions. I have always let them do what they thought was right, and then after that, discussed with them what might have worked better if thoughts didn't work out.

Budgeting is one of the primary responsibility of commissioners. What advice do you have for commissioners working on budgets in difficult economies?

Evans: Remember that you are working with tax payers' money. Having said that, I always tried to ask myself, how would I spend this money if it were mine? If you treat the money as your own and allocate resources where it can do the most good, I believe you are doing what the tax payers are asking of you. Dealing with other elected officials is another story. They may see and realize that assets are tight, but that applies to everyone else's budget. Their budget, as you would expect, is the most important one and so should be funded at their request. That is when the job is to try and discuss the issues and attempt to come to a reachable conclusion. That is

not always possible, but remember you have the final say on the budget.

Stolte: In Union County our goal has been to minimize spikes in expenditures and have dollars set aside to be able to backfill when dips in revenue happen. To that end we adopted a fiscal philosophy and a debt management policy. We also created four special funds—Budget Stabilization Fund, Salary and Benefit Liability Fund, Capital Improvement Fund and Capital Infrastructure Fund. We don't appropriate more than the revenue estimate provided by our county auditor. Since 2012 our actual annual revenues have exceeded our actual expenditures by about 10% each year. And every year we've transferred that excess 10% into the four special funds.

The Budget Stabilization Fund is used to backfill the General Fund when revenues dip. The Salary and Benefit Liability Fund covers the cost to the General Fund of expenditure spikes due to retirement pay-outs and the 27th pay period that happens every 10-12 years. Dollars in the two capital funds are used for capital expenditures to minimize expenditures spikes in the normal General Fund budget.

Now may be an opportune time to implement such budget planning practices. Keep in mind that Union County is a growing county. Our budgeting practices may not work in a county that is not growing or is experiencing minimum growth.

Rhoades: Look and listen to the other elected officials on their budgets to see if they have come close to their projected forecast from the previous year and work from there.



Rhoades

FEATURE

COUNTY BUDGETING IN THE YEAR 2020

by Christopher Nichols, Director of Management and Budget, Stark County

So, it's time to start working on the county budget for 2021, but this is no ordinary year.

Let's go to the CCAO's Commissioner's Handbook and look for the chapter titled "County Budgeting During a Pandemic." Strike 1. OK, maybe look back to see how the Spanish Flu pandemic affected Sale Tax revenues in 1918. Um, Ohio didn't start collecting a Sales Tax until 1935. Strike 2.

We are living in unprecedented times, and just as unprecedented is trying to forecast county revenues and develop a county budget during a pandemic. Working with your County Budget Commission to develop a revenue forecast is always a challenging exercise and this year will be even more so.

While sales tax revenues for many of us have rebounded over the past couple of months, along with strong Recorder and Conveyance Fee revenues, many county revenue streams remain somewhat volatile. In addition, it appears the anticipated "second wave" of the pandemic has begun, and it remains to be seen how that will impact county revenues over the next few months and long term.

The CARES Act has allowed many counties to be reimbursed for unexpected expenses related to the COVID-19 pandemic, in addition to possibly making some purchases and upgrades to county facilities, especially computer infrastructure, that can be somewhat related to the pandemic, social distancing or the state's Responsible Restart Ohio plan.

The recent administrative accommodation from OBM, which allows counties and other political subdivisions to be reimbursed for 100% of first responder salaries and benefits from mid-March through the end of the year, even if already budgeted, is probably as close to "revenue replacement" as we will get, but still can provide a significant one-time influx of money back into the fund from which those expenses were originally paid.

In Stark County over the past 5 years, thanks to stable revenues and adequate carryover balances, we have been able to complete our permanent

appropriation budget in December. This has allowed our elected officials and department heads to begin the year with a clear direction and plan.

As we look forward to next year's budget, we will be taking a much more conservative approach. We will be passing a temporary budget appropriation equal to 50% of each department's 2020 Operational Budget, to get offices started in 2021.

We will take the time to better gauge where revenues are trending and see how close (hopefully) we are to the end of the pandemic and a return to normalcy, before completing our permanent appropriation prior to the statutory deadline at the end of March.

Other strategies we are likely to employ over the upcoming months to build a responsible and sustainable 2021 budget:

- Similar to this year, we will be suspending consideration of our 2021 Capital budget expenditures until later in the year.
- Continuing our hiring freeze, trying to gain some ground through employee attrition and only rehiring for employees who leave from mission critical or public safety positions.
- Pay raises, if it is determined we can afford them next year and moving forward, will be implemented later in the year, to minimize the impact on the 2021 budget.
- Not a pleasant option, but also reviewing the % of the employee's share of their medical insurance.
- Looking at other funds, including enterprise funds with revenues that are more stable, that can be utilized to pay for certain allowable county budget expenses.

Each of Ohio's 88 counties is unique in both its budget revenue streams and expenses, but if we are all diligent in analyzing revenue trends and take conservative steps in developing a 2021 budget that both stays within our anticipated revenues for 2021, but is also sustainable into 2022 and beyond, we can avoid Strike 3. Be safe and be well, everyone.

FEATURE

COUNTIES HONOR WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE MOVEMENT

by Andrew Johnson, CCAO Communications Coordinator

Aug. 16, 2020 marked the 100th anniversary of the 19th Amendment, which guarantees American women the right to vote. The campaign for women's suffrage was long and challenging, as the first women's suffrage amendment was introduced in Congress in 1879 and was continuously proposed for 41 years. Suffrage supporters marched, lobbied, lectured and practiced civil disobedience until an amendment finally passed both houses of Congress in 1919 and was ratified by the states in 1920.

Union County Commissioner Christiane Schmenk thought it was important her county honors that history and the women who came before her.

"In my opinion, voting is the most important way Americans can participate in democracy. And, it has not been that long since

women possessed that right. To put it in perspective, both of my grandmothers were young adults when women were given the right to vote," Schmenk said. "I knew them as strong, independent women, but I never realized until recently that for the first several decades of their lives, their opinions as to governance did not count."

Schmenk, having been elected the first female mayor of Marysville in 2008 and the first female commissioner in Union County in 2018, added that the anniversary celebration inspires more women to follow in her footsteps.

"I wanted to do something that might encourage more Union County women to run for elected office," she said.

Although the COVID-19 pandemic canceled some events, Union County was able to honor the centennial in a number of ways. The county's local historian, attorney Bob Parrott, researched and educated the county about the role Ohio and Union County women had played in obtaining women's rights to vote.

The board of commissioners then passed a [resolution](#) on Aug. 18 expressing support for the participation of women in government and in all roles



Union County Women's Suffrage Centennial Event

in Union County. The resolution echoed the words of one of the first women to vote in 1920 in Union County, Helen Gorton, who said, "women are just as capable as men and bring something to politics that we need. Females see things a little differently than men, and that perspective may

be a welcome change in government," and who also said, "every American, male or female, should never fail to exercise their right to vote."

The resolution also ordered that yellow rose bushes, a symbol of suffrage support, be planted to honor the work of those women who struggled for the right of universal suffrage to vote.

Those roses were planted on Aug. 21 at the Union County Women's Suffrage Centennial Event ceremony in front of the county office building. The event featured Dorothy Liggett Pelanda, the first female director of the Ohio Department of Agriculture and the first female State Representative from Union County, as well as State Representative Tracy Richardson.



Schmenk serving as emcee at the event

Those speakers addressed a captive audience of attendees that included women in government positions with the State of Ohio, the City of Dublin, Union County and its other political subdivisions.

Also attending were Union County women currently running for office as well as descendants of several of the first women voters in 1920.

The county will also continue its social media through Election Day, encouraging all female residents to exercise their rights to vote during this important upcoming election.

Elsewhere in Ohio...

Lorain County Commissioners planted yellow rose bushes outside the courthouse building commemorate the anniversary. Commissioners also read a proclamation at their Aug. 19 meeting to recognize the date, and men were invited to wear yellow roses in their lapels.

“If it wasn’t for those courageous women who fought for our right to vote all of those years ago, I and so many other women would not be able to hold office today,” Kokoski said. “It was more than the right to vote. It was a pathway for future women to run for office and make a difference in their communities.”



Lorain County Commissioners Kokoski and Sweda with the yellow rose bushes

GUEST COLUMN

COVID-19'S EFFECT ON OHIO'S WORKFORCE

by John Trott, Executive Director, Greater Ohio Workforce Board & Jennifer Meek Eells, Executive Director, Stark Tuscarawas Workforce Development Board, President, Ohio Workforce Association

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic nationally and in Ohio is reported daily through data and demographics that show the effects of the virus on health – active infections, deaths, virus hot spots, etc. In general, since March of this year, the second set of data that is shared is the impact on the economy – stock market, business challenges, unemployment, etc. As the country worked through spring of this year to “flatten the curve” for the healthcare system, there was no way to flatten the tsunami wave that hit the country’s unemployment benefit system. The US Department of Labor stated at the end of April, “...the seasonally adjusted insured unemployment during the week ending April 18 was 17,992,000, an increase of 2,174,000 from the previous week’s revised level. This marks the highest level of seasonally adjusted insured unemployment in the history of the seasonally adjusted series.”

What has been the impact of COVID-19 on Ohio’s workforce and the systems that support jobseekers and businesses (e.g., OhioMeansJobs Centers, local and regional economic development, and community colleges and training centers)? In short, it’s appropriate to use words like “unprecedented,” “transformative” and “disruptive.”

The unemployment insurance system in Ohio continues to respond to the historic numbers of claims filed in the early months of this year. While the numbers of new weekly initial claims (approximately 17,000 to 18,000) are much lower than in the spring, these numbers are extremely high and indicate a situation that is similar to the Great Recession that began in 2008.

The similarity to the Great Recession begins and ends with the unemployment statistics. Normally, when the economy experiences a major disruption, we see high unemployment and business closures. There’s usually a surplus of workers looking for employment while most businesses hunker down and maintain operations rather than expand. That is not the case in this pandemic. Ohio has more than its share of business closures and furloughs (the restaurant,

airline and hospitality industries are particularly hard hit), but there are industries that are rapidly growing and urgently hiring (for example the logistics industry including online shopping, non-durable goods – think toilet paper, and telecommunications are booming).

While certain industries are seeing unexpected growth, those unemployed workers we normally see applying for work are not materializing in Ohio and nationally as expected. There is speculation for this – higher federal unemployment benefits, uncertainty about health and safety, lack of resources for childcare while schools re-open, etc. – but there are no clear conclusions.

At the county level, OhioMeansJobs Centers are working with the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS) and JobsOhio to implement platforms to engage businesses and jobseekers virtually. While most county workforce job centers are open at least in part, centers realize that connecting virtually is the new norm. Virtual career fairs will be sponsored and supported by local job centers and economic development starting this fall and continuing into the foreseeable future.

Finally, Ohio and the local workforce systems have been able to secure more federal and state funding to address the pandemic’s workforce impact. Generally, the US Dept. of Labor responds to recessions with increased funding to assist unemployed workers with job training and placement services. That is happening in Ohio and these funds are readily available through the OhioMeansJobs Centers to residents needing to upskill to secure the in-demand and critical jobs currently open. Further, ODJFS has permitted local workforce areas to keep unspent workforce funding (WIOA funds) an extra year – a generous and unprecedented decision.

Ohio and the nation continue to address the economic challenges of maintaining, re-opening, and growing the economy. Best practices and solutions are still emerging. Innovation and leadership at the local level will be the key to moving forward.

FEATURE

BEE-AUTIFUL OHIO: WYANDOT COUNTY COMMISSIONER STEVE SEITZ SHARES HIS PASSION FOR BEEKEEPING

by Adam Schwiebert, CCAO Policy Analyst

Wyandot County Commissioner Steve Seitz, along with serving as a county commissioner, is also a well-respected beekeeper. Seitz recently took a moment to share with CCAO his experience in beekeeping and its accompanying challenges and joys.



Seitz

How did you first develop your interest in beekeeping?

Around 2006, I took an Ohio Certified Volunteer Naturalist Class through The Ohio State University Extension in Hancock County. I mainly took this class because of my love of wildlife and nature, especially bald eagles. At this class I met a bee expert (Dwight Wilson) who had been keeping bees for over 30 years. He became my “bee mentor” if you will, and the rest is history.

How many hives do you currently manage and how have you acquired new hives?

We started with two hives and now have over 30. Some we have purchased as “nucs” (a small nucleus of bees) and others we have captured from wild swarms and we also split hives as they grow in size.

Do you harvest and sell the honey and/or honeycomb from your hives?

Yes, we sell wild raw honey and it is delicious! We have not sold honeycomb yet but plan to in the future.

What are the challenges of beekeeping?

I would have to say the biggest challenge to raising bees is an invasive species called the varroa mite. This mite is believed to have come from Asia and arrived in the US in the 1970’s. To describe it, it is like a tick small enough to attach itself to a honey bee. They only live in honey bee hives, and they grow and reproduce on the brood of the bees as they mature. They also attach themselves to the adults. They will literally suck the life out of the bees and



Susan Seitz, Commissioner Seitz’s wife, assisting to capture a wild swarm.

also vector many diseases. Many different methods are being used to try to either cut down the numbers of mites or eradicate them altogether.

You can actually see these mites with the naked eye; however, they are very, very small. We periodically do a mite count on our hives to determine the level of infestation. All bee hives unfortunately have some level of infestation. The challenge is to keep the mites in check so we do not completely lose a hive.

Another problem with bees is lack of habitat. A honey bee needs a vast diversity of trees and plants from early spring to late summer to collect nectar and pollen from in order to survive. Notice I mentioned trees first. Most people think of flowers and bees. They are like milk and cookies. They are a

great match. However, the vast amount of material needed to make honey and raise more bees mostly comes from trees and their blooms. From maple and cherries that bloom in early spring to our later summer bloomers like locust and basswood, trees are the backbone of the honey bee world. Most plants are beneficial, such as vegetable gardens, flower gardens, even soybeans, but trees constitute the biggest source of material for bees! Bees need this vast amount of diverse tree and plant species to provide the nectar and pollen needed to produce honey to survive.

A number of counties employ a county apiary inspector to inspect hives. What is the work of apiarists and why is it important to beekeeping? Most counties in Ohio employ a county apiarist. This person is usually a beekeeper themselves and maybe an entomologist. Their job is to check hives for signs of disease, mite levels, etc. If one hive in an area is infected with foulbrood (a bee disease) it could be spread to other area hives, killing everyone's bees. Honeybees can wander miles from their hive, so it is important to periodically check to see they are healthy. Honeybees face stresses such as mites, disease, chemicals and loss of habitat.



A yearly honey production sold from hives.



A wild swarm captured at night

Without honeybees, we wouldn't have many foods such as strawberries, apples, peaches and almonds. They are very important for man's food supply and our survival.

Are there any other interesting facts about beekeeping that you'd like to share?

Honeybees are a very interesting but also very complicated insect. A female worker honeybee only lives between four to six weeks. The queen bee can live approximately four years, laying up to 2,000 eggs per day. As the female worker bees die, the queen is reproducing new replacements daily. A female worker only makes approximately 1/12 teaspoon of honey in her lifetime.

Can you imagine how many bees it takes to make that single jar of honey in your cupboard? Now think about how many bees it takes to make all the jars of honey we humans consume every year. According to the USDA, 1.47 million pounds of honey are produced in the U.S. The next time you encounter a honey bee, think about the miracle that is taking place right before your eyes. It's a sweet deal!

GUEST COLUMN

MENTAL HEALTH CARE IS VITAL IN RURAL AREAS

by Ohio Farm Bureau Federation

As the COVID-19 crisis continues, there is an even greater need to take care of not only physical but mental health. Agriculture is an essential business, but the extra stress of the pandemic and the added uncertainty of the future can weigh heavily on farmers as it does all Ohioans.

The 2020 harvest brings with it political uncertainties this fall coupled with ongoing day-to-day worries, including generating enough cash flow to keep operations going, falling commodity prices and concerns about personal health as well as the wellbeing of employees and monitoring that they are following appropriate protocols.

All these concerns can pile up, making it imperative for farmers to care for their own mental health and check in on other producers, according to Ohio Farm Bureau State Board Trustee Nathan Brown.

“In order to keep my sanity, I have reached out to many friends across the state and even the country. In every conversation, we each have discussed our own mental health and how we are feeling – yes, feeling,” he said. “I know that at least once a day I will get a call from someone checking on me and I appreciate that, and often we both end up sharing the feelings of that day and that is OK.”

Taking advantage of mental health resources can help farmers do what they do best. Following are links to mental health resources specifically for farmers dealing with anxiety related to their livelihoods and COVID-19:

- American Farm Bureau’s fb.org/land/impact-covid19-on-ag is a hub of agriculture-specific information for farmers.
- American Farm Bureau’s fb.org/programs/rural-resilience provides warning signs of stress, steps to take to combat stress and training to manage stress.
- Go.osu.edu/agcrisis - OSU College of Food, Agricultural, and Environmental Sciences has



updated its ag crisis website with a COVID-19 tab specifically for Ohio farmers and has a substantial amount of information related to farm stress.

- Ohio Department of Agriculture website on farm stress is ofb.ag/gotyourback.

Brown stressed that farmers should reach out, check on people, really ask how they are doing and be sincere.

“If you are struggling, know it’s OK to reach out to friends or even have a telemedicine chat with a mental health professional,” he said.

Southeast Regional Trustee Jenny Cox agrees and said she believes farmers and residents in rural communities are increasingly finding mental health resources helpful.

“Farmers are humble by nature, and asking for help is uncommon in any aspect of their lives,” she said. “However, I believe that asking for mental health help has become a bit easier due to the increased awareness of opportunities to ask for help in a private manner, as well as increased awareness of mental health programs and treatment options that are available in rural areas.”

GUEST COLUMN

VETERANS RE-ENTRY SEARCH SERVICE OVERVIEW

by Evelyn Lundberg Stratton, Retired Justice and Project Director for Stepping Up, with appreciation to Tisha Hardin, Veterans Justice Outreach Coordinator, Chillicothe VA Medical Center

1. THIS SYSTEM HELPS IDENTIFY VETERANS WHO MAY NOT SELF-IDENTIFY EVEN IF YOU HAVE A VETERANS SCREEN ON INTAKE .The VA developed an automated system called Veteran Re-entry Search Service (VRSS) to locate Veterans who are currently incarcerated in federal, state, city and county correctional facilities, or who are represented as defendants on court dockets. VRSS is used to identify Veterans incarcerated or under supervision in the courts.

2. ONCE IDENTIFIED, THE VETERANS JUSTICE OUTREACH CAN CONNECT THE VETERAN TO MANY SERVICES. This is done under a major Initiative: Eliminate Veteran Homelessness (EVH), which aims to eradicate homelessness among Veterans. Information about charged, convicted, and/or incarcerated Veterans provided by VRSS will be used by VHA Veterans Justice Programs' (VJP) Specialists in either the Healthcare for Re-entry Veterans (HCRV) Program or the Veterans Justice Outreach (VJO) Program as part of their outreach activities to prevent Veteran homelessness.

The HCRV Program is designed to address community re-entry needs of charged, convicted, and/or incarcerated Veterans being released from prison, including addressing their housing needs. HCRV works to reduce the impact of medical, psychiatric, and substance abuse problems upon community readjustment and decrease the likelihood of re-incarceration for those leaving prison.

3. THE VJOs CAN FAST TRACK LINKAGES TO FEDERAL AND VA SERVICES. The VJO Program provides outreach and linkage to VA services for Veterans at early stages of the justice system, including Veterans courts, drug courts, and mental health courts. VJO goal is to reduce extended incarceration among Veterans with substance abuse or mental illness. This is done by providing treatment alternatives to incarceration. VRSS will provide automated identification of charged, convicted, and incarcerated Veterans to greatly accelerate Veteran

enrollment and reduce delays in accessing VA services once these individuals are released from custody.

4. IDENTIFYING AND CONNECTING VETERANS EARLY WILL MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN YOUR JAILS AND COMMUNITY. Veteran identification automation will improve data accuracy, reduce cycle times in the provision of VA services, and give the VA a tool to help target the correct programs to the Veterans in need of services.

Currently, Homeless Program Office Justice Programs Specialists use a variety of manual methods to identify incarcerated Veterans including: self-reporting, word of mouth referrals, informational sessions, contact with correctional staff, re-entry and parole staff, chaplains, and mental health and physical health staff in correctional institutions, and with justice professionals in the courts.

5. THE VRSS WILL FIND VETERANS THAT ARE OFTEN MISSED THROUGH OTHER METHODS. Correctional Facilities and Court Systems will use the VRSS website to upload their current population or census listings. VA will run the data through the VADIR database to search for inmates who have served in the U.S. military. Then an output file will be transmitted back to the originating Correctional Facility or Court System and the VJO and HCRV social worker to facilitate outreach for charged, convicted, or incarcerated Veterans.

IF YOUR COUNTY IS NOT USING THIS SYSTEM, AND MANY ARE NOT, YOU ARE LOSING VALUABLE FEDERAL AND VA DOLLARS AND RESOURCES THAT COULD BE BENEFITING YOUR COMMUNITY AND FREEING UP RESOURCES FOR OTHERS WHO ARE NOT VETERANS. PLEASE CHECK TO SEE IF YOU ARE DOING THIS IN YOUR COUNTY.

Click [here](#) to access VRSS User Guide.

GUEST COLUMN

PSYCHOTROPIC DRUG REIMBURSEMENT TO COUNTY JAILS

by Evelyn Lundberg Stratton, Retired Justice and Program Director of Stepping Up, with assistance from the Attorney General Task Force SubCommittee on Medication Reimbursement

Is your county taking full advantage of reimbursement for the expanded list of medications for the county jail reimbursement program?

1. THE \$2.5 MILLION REIMBURSEMENT PROGRAM IS FOR ALL COUNTIES, EVEN IF NOT PART OF STEPPING UP. The Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (OhioMHAS) provides reimbursement to counties for the cost of certain drugs that are dispensed to inmates of county jails in Ohio. The amount of \$2.5 million has been allotted this fiscal year (SFY 2021). Currently, eligible drugs include anti-psychotic (including all FDA approved long-acting injectable formulations), antidepressant, anti-anxiety, and mood-stabilizing medications that are currently available on the Ohio Medicaid Unified Preferred Drug list. Stimulants prescribed for the treatment of attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) are specifically excluded from the definition of psychotropic drug for the purposes of this program.

2. \$1.25 MILLION AVAILABLE NOW. The total reimbursement amount available for SFY 2021 is \$2.5 million. Of the total amount, \$1.25 million is available semiannually. A county jail will receive reimbursement based on their jail's percentage of the total amount of reimbursement requested across all jails participating in the program. For example, if a county jail accounts for 1% of the total amount requested for the reporting period, the jail would receive \$12,500.

OhioMHAS will notify the jails and the local ADAMHS Board of the amount that each jail will receive for the reporting period. OhioMHAS will reimburse jails after payment information is uploaded in the Grants and Funding Management System. Once processed, the ADAMH Board will receive the funds and then pass them on to the jails. For jails located in multiple ADAMH Board counties, the payment upload will be processed to the Board in the county where the jail is located.

3. LONG-ACTING INJECTABLES ARE NOW REIMBURSABLE AND HAVE LONG TERM BENEFITS. The usage of long-acting injectable (LAI) antipsychotic

medications in county jails was the focus of a recent survey conducted by the Attorney General's Task Force on Mental Illness. LAI antipsychotic medications have been shown to be safe and particularly effective at enhancing medication adherence as well as reducing decompensation, hospitalization, arrest and incarceration. Results of the survey revealed that about 60 percent of county jails routinely utilize LAI antipsychotics and that their usage was associated with various benefits, including increase adherence and better symptom control.

While it is encouraging that over half of county jails use LAI injectables, there remains sizable opportunity for the remaining 40 percent of jails to take advantage of their benefits. Again, LAI antipsychotics alleviate the need for daily medication checks, they are effective at controlling symptoms, and the significantly decrease the likelihood of re-arrest and incarceration, thereby stopping the "revolving door" of severe mental illness and criminal justice involvement. Some thought they were too expensive so are not using them, which shows that they are unaware these costs can be reimbursed.

4. MORE EDUCATION AND A WEBINAR ON THEIR USE IS BEING PLANNED. Utilizing feedback from the survey, the Task Force is exploring opportunities on clinical education as well as best practices for LAI administration, the prescription of other psychotropic medications in jails, and enhancing linkage with community-based treatment. These efforts are expected to enhance knowledge of the benefits and cost-effectiveness of LAI usage in county jails, resulting in positive outcomes for multiple stakeholders.

Please check with your jail and providers to be sure that

- 1) You are not one of the counties not getting any reimbursement, and
- 2) Your jail medical staff are taking advantage of the newer drugs, as well as the LAIs that are now reimbursable.

GUEST COLUMN

THE POSITIVE IMPACT OF HOUSING WITH SERVICES ON PEOPLE WITH MENTAL ILLNESS WHO CYCLE IN & OUT OF INCARCERATION

by Sally Luken, President Luken Solutions and housing consultant to Stepping Up Ohio; Editors include Evelyn Lundberg Stratton, retired Justice and Stepping Up Ohio Director; Michael Daniels, Franklin Co Justice Policy & Programs Director; Katie Kitchin, CSH Director; Terri Power, CSH Senior Program Manager and Kassie Neff, Delaware Co Criminal Justice Program Manager

“The continued incarceration of mentally ill and addicted individuals in county jails places an undue burden of risk and of cost upon these facilities and is clearly outside the purpose for county jails. Jail employees are not trained to manage or treat individuals suffering from mental illness or addiction. This population is at high risk for injuring themselves or others. The health care costs for these individuals are excessive, and the housing of these individuals in a jail threatens public safety by taking up scarce bed space that was designed for and should be used for housing real criminals.” (CCAO Legislative Platform – 134th General Assembly Justice and Public Safety)

HOUSING IS MAJOR BARRIER FOR PERSONS WITH MENTAL ILLNESS INVOLVED IN THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM

Funding is needed to expand HOUSING options for this population. Stepping Up Ohio project counties, focused on reducing the incarceration of this population, have identified HOUSING among the top three barriers counties face in addressing the needs of people with mental health issues in their jails. Yet, we know that:

- HOUSING coupled with behavioral health and tenancy supports reduces jail days and recidivism.
- HOUSING with supportive services is a less costly public investment than having a person cycling among public systems and in and out of homelessness.
- HOUSING and healthcare is the humane response to Ohioans with mental health issues.

RESEARCH AND PEOPLE’S LIVES BEAR THIS OUT
In the County of San Diego pilot, Project 25, housing and services were provided to 28 people

who frequented county jail. Their three-year study concluded that the “total number of arrests across the group plummeted from 82 to 18, or 78%...” (Fermanian Business & Economic Institute at Point Loma Naxarene University 2015). What’s more, jail days for these 28 people was reduced by 63%. But we don’t need a California study to prove the effectiveness of housing and services to incarcerated people with behavioral health issues.

WE HAVE EVIDENCE RIGHT HERE IN OHIO OF THE HIGH COST OF NOT DEALING WITH THE PROBLEM
Your colleagues, Franklin County Commissioners and their Justice Policy & Programs is funding with T-CAP a similar intervention. The Franklin County FUSE initiative is using a randomized trial to place former jail inmates in housing with services. Jail days following release is half, 235 days total, for all those housed compared to the control group of 521 days. (Franklin Co FUSE Initiative, Quarterly Report 6/30/2020)

Cuyahoga County’s Stepping Up Team began a similar project this year called Returning Home Cuyahoga County. Twenty people with mental illness who are frequent users of public systems will be housed with robust service supports.

In Delaware County, your colleagues, with the support of their Stepping Up team led by the Sheriff’s Office, computed the cost of one Delaware County man cycling among jail, state prison, and psychiatric hospitalization. Over an 8-year period, public institutions forked over more than \$445,000 than was necessary before placing him in appropriate housing and with a robust team of support.

And people's lives tell the real story of the impact of housing instead of incarceration on their health and well-being. Brent, the Delaware County man whose cycling was calculated above, was known in the county jail for his bizarre behavior. Brent's severe mental illness and development disability went undiagnosed and unmanaged for too long. Delaware County's Multi-Agency Crisis Intervention Team (MACIT) program intervened and wrapped safe housing, intensive case management, guardianship, and mental health treatment/medication around Brent. According to MACIT coordinator, "Brent lives a safe and content life in our community - for over 4 years now, with no arrests, re-hospitalization, drug or alcohol use. We are all so proud of Brent!"

For more information on how Stepping Up Ohio can help your county address the housing needs of

people with mental health issues cycling in and out of jail, contact sally.luken@lukensolutions.com.

For more information on the power and impact of housing and services on reducing incarceration:

Ohio's Community Transitions Program: https://www.csh.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/CTP_Annual-Report-Final-2020.pdf

Returning Ohio Annual Report: https://www.csh.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/CSH-RHO_AnnualPerformaceReport-Final.pdf

Stepping Up Ohio [article](#) on "Governor Allocates \$15MM of TANF for homeless prevention and rapid rehousing from homelessness"

PUBLIC COST COMPARISON

- Cost to Cycling in Public Institutions Over Same Period
- Cost to Provide Housing & Services Over 8 Years



▶ One man, in Delaware Co., Ohio, cost the public systems more than \$445,000 over 8 years, while his health and well-being suffered.

RETIREMENT READINESS

KEEP YOUR CCAO DEFERRED COMPENSATION PLAN INFORMATION CURRENT

by Lori Paulenich, Empower Retirement Senior Communication Strategist

Is your profile information for your CCAO 457(b) Deferred Compensation retirement plan up to date? Are your mailing address, email address and phone number current? Making sure current contact information is on file means you can get updates about your account more timely.

Plus, updating your [communication preference](#) in your profile takes just a few seconds. Click on your name in the upper right of the screen and go to Communication Preference to make your election, to receive future communications, including required notices, electronically to your email of choice.

Benefits of enrolling in Your CCAO Deferred Compensation Plan

Part of financial health involves knowing how much you need in retirement. Your Ohio Public Employees' Retirement System (OPERS) benefit may not be enough, so you may want to consider supplementing your future savings through CCAO's 457(b) Deferred Compensation retirement plan.

Here are 10 reasons to start today:

10) It's automatic and you're in control

You choose the amount you want to save, and contributions are automatically deducted from your paycheck, which makes it easier to plan, save and budget. And you can change, stop or restart your contributions at any time.

9) It probably costs less than you think

You can start saving with as little as \$10 per paycheck. Since your contributions are deducted from your pay before taxes, whatever amount you decided to save may actually affect your take-home pay less than you think.

Your Plan may also offer the Roth after-tax option. Contact your Retirement Plan Advisor to get more information about availability and if it could be a good option for you.

	Contributing before tax	Contributing after tax
Monthly gross pay	\$2,000	\$2,000
Minus before-tax contributions to 457 plan	-\$100	-\$0
Taxable pay	\$1,900	\$2,000
Minus estimated income tax withholding	-\$361	-\$380
Minus after-tax contributions to other savings	-\$0	-\$100
Spendable pay	\$1,539	\$1,520
Before-tax advantage	\$19	\$0

FOR ILLUSTRATIVE PURPOSES ONLY. This hypothetical illustration assumes 19% federal income tax withholding and 4% state and local income tax withholding. It doesn't account for Ohio PERS, Medicare or other taxes.

8) Stay as long as you like

Even after you retire or separate from service, you can keep your account right where it is so you have access to all the CCAO resources, including continued consultations with your CCAO dedicated Retirement Plan Advisor.

7) Starting early makes a difference

Waiting could impact how much you'll have for retirement. Starting early and making a small change in the amount you contribute could make more of a difference at retirement.

6) Lower expenses

When you participate in the CCAO Deferred Compensation Plan, you may have the potential for lower investment management expenses. Lower fees mean more of your contributions can work for you.

5) Investment assistance

CCAO provides a variety of investment choices so you can build the right mix for your future. You can also enroll in My Total Retirement, offered by Advised Assets Group, LLC, a registered investment adviser.

My Total Retirement is an automated managed accounts option (available for an additional fee) if

you'd like someone to choose your investments for you.

There is no guarantee provided by any party that participation in any of the advisory services will result in a profit.

4) Financial education and planning tools

My Financial Path is an educational resource that can help you balance between living for today and planning for tomorrow. Through different features of this interactive tool, you can get an action plan for your personal situation, find a way to approach student loan debt and monitor your progress by taking a simple personalized assessment. You can also access a library of financial education resources, including on-demand videos, articles, tools, calculators and more. Once you've registered for your account, log in and click on My Financial Path at the top of the screen.

3) Information at your fingertips

Download the mobile app to access the same information available on your Plan website from your smartphone or tablet. Simply search for Empower Retirement to access and download the free iPhone® Empower app in the App Store® or the Android™ Empower app on Google Play™. You may also access the ccao457.com website from your smartphone or tablet to take advantage of the mobile-friendly website.

2) Local people to help you plan

CCAO Retirement Plan Advisors are located across the state and are ready to help you plan for your future. They can meet with you individually, over the phone or a web conference, to help you with your retirement strategy. They also host virtual educational group meetings throughout the year. If you aren't sure who your Retirement Plan Advisor is, you can locate them on the [territory map](#) on the CCAO website.

1) A partner for your future

CCAO has carefully selected investment options and a service provider, Empower Retirement, to work directly with you.

Start saving for your future today! You can easily enroll online at ccao457.com.

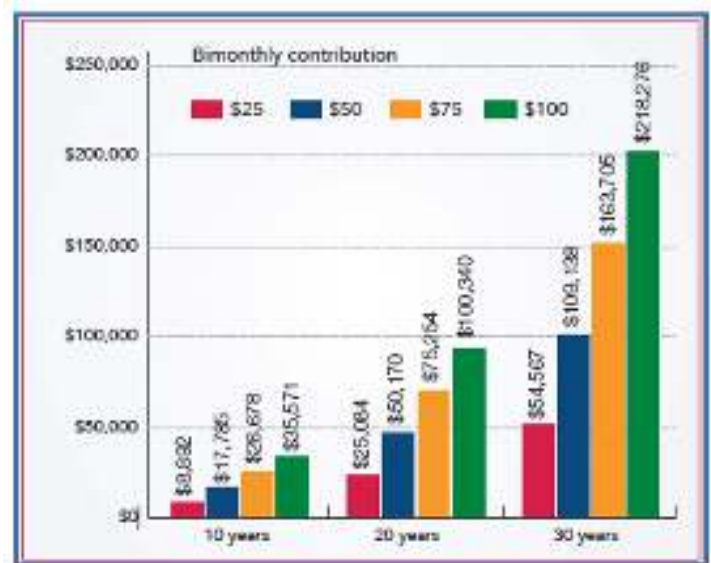
- Prior to enrolling, contact your local CCAO representative to obtain a Plan Enrollment Code

flier, which will include a specific code needed to enroll online.

- Once you have the Plan Enrollment Code flier, visit ccao457.com and click on the REGISTER button.
- Select the tab titled, "I have a plan enrollment code" and follow the prompts on the website.

For more information, visit ccao457.com or call 800-284-0444 today!

The Value of Increasing Contributions



FOR ILLUSTRATIVE PURPOSES ONLY. This is a hypothetical illustration to show the value of an increase in contributions. This hypothetical illustration assumes a 6% average annual rate of return, 26 pay periods and reinvestment of earnings with no withdrawals. Rates of return may vary. This illustration does not include any charges, expenses or fees that may be associated with your Plan. The tax-deferral accumulations shown above would be reduced if these fees had been deducted.

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HEALTH & WELLNESS

FLU SEASON: HEALTH TIPS

by The CCAO Wellness Team



2020 sure has had its fair share of challenges, and now flu season is upon us. As human beings we do not have control over everything going on around us, but there are many ways to increase your chances of staying well. Keeping your mental and physical health in check is easier than you might think!

1) Boost your immune system.

Drink plenty of water throughout the day and eat nutritious foods such as fruits, vegetables, lean protein, whole grains, and healthy fats. In season foods that are great choices include beets, broccoli, cabbage, eggplant, kale, pumpkin, broths, squash, and dark leafy greens. Add these to your meals or to smoothies.

2) Sleep.

This is top of the list. Sleeping at least 7 hours a night where you go to bed at the same time and wake up at the same time is ideal. Sleep has a major impact on your mood, mental health and physical health; do not skip out on sleep.

3) Take time for yourself.

Autumn and winter months are Earth's way of telling us to slow down. Find what truly brings you joy and

take time to focus on that. Maybe that's getting lost in a good book or making sure your house is organized for peace of mind.

4) Get a flu shot and wash your hands as much as possible.

Self-explanatory. No one likes sniffing, aching, sneezing and coughing getting in the way of their life.

5) Stay active!

This does not mean run a marathon; it simply means get up and walk around throughout the day. Raking leaves and shoveling snow counts.

6) Be prepared.

In case of extreme weather conditions, have canned foods on hand, flashlights with working batteries, be sure your heat is working properly, and you have a way to remove snow when needed.

7) Be good to yourself.

Winter months are dry so be sure to moisturize your skin. You should also consider taking Vitamin D with your doctor's approval; intake decreases this time of year. Be sure to wear appropriate attire when outdoors; gloves, hat, coat, and boots.

CEBCO NEWS

CEBCO UPDATE

by Mike Kindell, Managing Director of Health and Wellness

As we move into the fall, CEBCO has faced many challenges this year, but we have successfully navigated them and are moving forward to 2021.



CEBCO 2021 New Counties

We are pleased to announce that Knox County will join the CEBCO family, effective 1/1/21. Knox County will add approximately 360 employees to the CEBCO Pool. With this addition, CEBCO will provide Medical and Rx coverage to 40 counties, covering approximately 12,000 employees and 27,500 members.

CEBCO Renewal Update

CEBCO successfully renewed the Medical/Rx coverage for all of our current 39 counties. The final average renewal increase for our 2021 renewal was 5.5%. Historically, the overall average renewal increase for CEBCO's 17 years is 4.78%, which is well below the national medical trend average for this period.

Annual Membership Meeting

The CEBCO Annual Meeting of Members was held virtually on Friday, Aug. 28. During the meeting, the CEBCO 2019 Financial Audit was presented and minor changes were made to the CEBCO Code of Regulations.

Commissioners Jeff Benton (Delaware County) and J.P. Ducro (Ashtabula County) were re-elected to our Board of Directors and Commissioners Cory Noonan (Allen County) and Ty Pell (Adams County) were newly elected to the Board. Special recognition was given to the two Board Members who did not seek re-election, Commissioners John Bayliss (Logan County) and Marilyn John (Richland County). John Bayliss was an original CEBCO director and we appreciate all of the contributions that he has made to the organization.

At a subsequent board meeting, the CEBCO board elected the following officers for this year: Mike Welch (Ashland County), President; Tony Bornhorst (Shelby County), Vice President; Jeff Benton (Delaware County), Treasurer; and Chris Schmenck (Union County), Secretary.

Wellness Program Update

After conducting an extensive RFP, CEBCO selected HealthWorks as our wellness vendor for the 2020-2021 Wellness Year. HealthWorks is a Cincinnati based company that has several offices located in Ohio. We are currently working on the implementation and expect that their Portal to be operational by Nov. 16. There have already been multiple blood draw events scheduled.

Wellness activities from August 16 will count toward this year's completion of the program. The Wellness Team of Tori Sinclair and Hannah Whiston plan on updating our county wellness champions at the semi-annual wellness forum, which was held virtually on Oct. 23.

Coverage Updates

Effective 1/1/2021, CEBCO will expand our coverage for LiveHealth Online to include Behavioral Health video visits at no member cost share for all PPO members. Previously, only Medical visits were covered at no member cost share for PPO members.



CORSA NEWS

PROPERTY APPRAISALS AND WHAT THEY CAN DO FOR YOU

by Sherry Barbosky, CIC, CRM, CORSA Underwriting Manager

2020 was the final year of CORSA's 4-year appraisal cycle and collectively, the program location values increased 21%. The next 4-year appraisal cycle will begin in 2021 and is just one of the services CORSA provides for its members. Appraisals ensure that buildings have appropriate coverage limits without over-insuring them. They also identify items that may have been missed and not reported to us. Appraisals are especially critical when it comes to the valuation of a historic building.



The National Register of Historic Places have identified over 4000 locations in Ohio, with 73 noted as National Historic Landmarks. Communities love and celebrate their historic buildings and 89% of CORSA counties have them, primarily courthouses. There is value in those historic buildings that may not necessarily be taken into consideration in an insurance claim settlement. Typically, property claims are settled on a replacement cost basis, using materials 'of like kind and quality.' However, 'like kind and quality' does not mean using materials and craftsmanship that is exactly as originally used. Solid stone walls are replaced with stone veneer. Stone and marble columns are replaced with pre-cast concrete. Artwork employed in plaster is replaced with plain plaster or drywall. So, what about the marble floors and railing that were imported from Italy? Or the solid limestone and brick exteriors? The ornate plaster work with murals, not to mention all of the stained glass? The good news is that CORSA offers Reproduction Cost valuation on historic properties.

Instead of 'like kind and quality,' we will settle a claim using materials most compatible to those originally used, including the cost of skilled labor and/or authentic materials necessary to restore the property as nearly as possible to its original condition before the loss.



CORSA appraisals include Fine Arts coverage such as the stained glass at the Clinton County Courthouse

Each time a CORSA member has their on-site appraisal, historic buildings are identified, and the appraiser will provide the valuations at both Replacement Cost and Reproduction Cost. Our members then have a choice as to the valuation method they prefer. Depending on the materials originally used, we have seen some differences as high as 40%! Opting for the Reproduction Cost coverage ensures a beloved historic building will maintain those historic qualities in the event there is a loss.

Another item that may not be taken into consideration is the value of fine arts within those historic buildings. Murals that are painted on the walls, ornate stained glass windows and rotundas, statues and monuments, courthouse Ladies of Justice- how are those replaced if the artist is no longer alive? With the recent reports of statues and monuments being vandalized, you want to make sure coverage includes Fine Arts. The cost to have an item repaired or replicated can be quite expensive. Does insurance coverage pay for that? CORSA members' coverage does! Our program includes \$1,000,000 for Fine Arts. Would you like to know more about this? Please call Sherry Barbosky at 614-220-7995.

CCAO SERVICE CORP NEWS

ROTH SAVINGS OPTION – A POWERFUL RETIREMENT PLANNING TOOL

by John Leutz, Assistant Director

Roth after-tax savings for retirement are an important and valuable tool to improve retirement income.



The CCAO Deferred Compensation Plan has offered a Roth option since 2017. Today 63% of Ohio counties make this choice available to their employees. The State of Ohio has recently added a Roth option to its deferred compensation plan.

With the State now offering a Roth those counties not currently offering a Roth need to take the appropriate action to do so or you leave your plan at a competitive disadvantage to the State plan and hinder your employees’ retirement planning options. The Roth option gives your employees the flexibility to decide whether it makes sense for them to make Roth after-tax contributions or traditional pre-tax contributions where they pay taxes only when they take a distribution. Roth 457 contributions can either replace or complement traditional pre-tax contributions, subject to IRS limits.

A Roth option lets your county employees:

- Pay taxes on their contributions now and contribute after-tax earnings.
- Receive the advantage of tax-deferred growth on any earnings.
- Take tax-free distributions later.

With current tax rates, which are always subject to change, Roth contributions are growing in popularity. Many participants would rather pay taxes now than wait to see what tax rates are in the future when contributions and earnings are distributed from their retirement plans. And, contribution limits for a Roth contribution in the CCAO Deferred Compensation plan are higher than Roth limits in a Roth IRA. In 2020, the contribution limit is \$19,500.

If you are age 50 or over, you can make an additional catch-up contribution of \$6,500. The Roth IRA 2020 limit is \$6,000 (\$7,000 if you are age 50 or older). For those counties who don’t currently offer a Roth option we encourage you to now do so by adopting a resolution authorizing Empower Retirement, recordkeeper for the CCAO Deferred Compensation Plan, to add the Roth 457 option to your employees’ choice of contribution.

To adopt 457 Roth contributions, simply click on the link to this [sample resolution](#) template your county can use to add this benefit option.

There is no cost to the county or to your employees by making the Roth option available. After you have passed your resolution return an executed copy to Mary Cameron, our CCAO Empower Representative at mary.cameron@empower-retirement.com

As always, the Empower Retirement Plan Advisor dedicated to your county is available to meet with your employees. Click [here](#) to access the Territory Map. They are licensed and qualified to provide financial advice on pre-tax or Roth contribution options, as well as investments in the CCAO Deferred Compensation Plan.



COUNSELOR'S CORNER

COVID-19 AND PERFORMANCE EVALUATIONS

Marc A. Fishel, Partner at Fishel Downey Albrecht & Riepenhoff LLP

There is no doubt the COVID-19 pandemic has had a major impact on most aspects of personnel matters and human resources issues.

Employers and their employees have had to adapt to numerous changes including teleworking, COVID-19

testing, the use of PPE and the application of traditional leave policies along with emergency sick leave and extended FMLA for childcare purposes.



At this point in the COVID-19 pandemic, employers are figuring out how to provide necessary services and are even beginning to implement a new normal for employees in the workplace. This article addresses some legal and practical issues relating to performance evaluations for elected officials, supervisors and human resources officials to consider as we near the end of 2020.

Even under ideal circumstances, one of the bigger human resources challenges for employers is conducting accurate and useful performance evaluations of employees. In the past, many employers avoided this subject or merely checked some boxes to say they completed the process. More recently, it seems counties have taken performance evaluations more seriously and tried to implement an approach that addresses employees' strengths and weaknesses with suggestions on how to improve.

The COVID-19 pandemic should not set counties back in this process but there are some important considerations to keep in mind as employers evaluate their employees.

In the best of times, there are many potential pitfalls when conducting performance evaluations. These include ratings bias based on those like or unlike the supervisor, primacy/recency bias, ratings creep, length of service bias and ratings inflation. These all remain potential concerns during the pandemic but

there are some possible twists as the strains and stresses of COVID-19 affect all of us.

When conducting performance evaluations for 2020, employers should not forget an employee's good performance from early 2020 based on how COVID-19 may have impacted them the rest of the year. While the employer should address the difficulties that the employee has faced to find a way to move forward, they should be careful not to forget about achievements early in the year.

Employers should consider how they may inadvertently place a higher value on employees who they have seen working. It is easy to discount what is not observed. This could be an issue if some employees are in the office while others are working remotely or even among employees working remotely if the supervisor interacts more with some than others.

Employers should be mindful of implicit bias relating to employees who have taken leave for COVID-19 purposes. For example, some employees have exercised their rights under the FFCRA and taken extended FMLA leave to care for their children due to the unavailability of school or daycare. Employers should not assume some of these employees could have come to work if they had made greater effort and use that belief in the performance evaluation. An employee's use of leave for these purposes should not be a negative factor on an evaluation. In general, employers should be careful how they rate employees based on COVID-19 related leave.

Counties are cautioned to temper expectations on expected improvement for some employees. While improvement should be noted, employers should try to determine why employees may not have improved during the current review period. Keep in mind the impact of COVID-19 is not limited to our professional lives. Making room in these conversations to understand what staff are experiencing is especially important. Staff are likely to need additional clarity and support under these circumstances, so this is a timely opportunity to explore those needs.

Even if employees have not been asked for a self-evaluation in the past, this may be a good opportunity to add this exercise as part of the evaluation. These assessments can help close the gap between performance and expectations which is especially important during the pandemic. They also provide a way to direct conversations about opportunities, goals, and development. Self-evaluations allow employees to share new skills, communicate what they enjoy about their job, and bring up difficulties. This information could give counties insight on what is and is not working with our modified work practices during the pandemic.

Employers should consider face to face evaluations even if done remotely. Important information should be conveyed during the performance evaluations. Employers can learn things from employees as well. This may never have been truer than during the pandemic when we generally have had less contact with each other in the workplace. Using video, at least periodically, is a good way to connect with employees and pick up on nonverbal cues that are lost when people do not communicate face to face. Seeing the person you are talking to lessens the chance of miscommunication and giving employees undivided attention through a video conference call is a good way to show respect and that you are invested in the conversation.

Some other issues to consider during performance evaluations include:

- Productivity- Has the employee's productivity shifted up/down during the pandemic?
- Quality- Has the quality of the employee's work shifted up/down during the pandemic?
- Communication- Has there been difficulty reaching the employee?
- Technology- Has the employee had any difficulty with new software required for teleworking? Have they been proactive about troubleshooting themselves or sought help from support staff/ IT department? Consider contacting IT to determine problem areas for employees.
- Telework Environment- Has the employee created a home or other off-site work environment free of distractions. Has the

employee created successful habits in that environment?

- Team Interaction- Has the team been strained by telework or other issues during the pandemic? Are there steps that could mend those relationships?

Another aspect of employer evaluation that may be unique in 2020 concerns teleworking. At the beginning of the pandemic, many counties simply wanted to find ways to allow employees to keep working in a safe manner. Counties were driven to maintain services to the public and protect their employees' jobs when possible. For some, teleworking was the answer.

As some employees continue or even return to telework, counties should determine what is working and what changes may be needed. The end of the year is a good opportunity to announce any changes about how employees are expected to get work done and develop ways to evaluate the efficiency and effectiveness of teleworking overall and how individual employees are doing.

Performance evaluations may be more important than ever. The process forces employers to evaluate how employees are doing. This aspect of human resources can be difficult which is why some employers avoid conducting evaluations. There are aspects about the COVID-19 pandemic that require more attention from human resources.

One way to connect with employees is through the evaluation process. This connection can be crucial when employees are teleworking and social distancing. Employers should tailor the process to include assessment of employee needs while they are dealing with the pandemic. It also may provide the means to assist employers in evaluating what changes, if any, are needed in teleworking practices.

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