



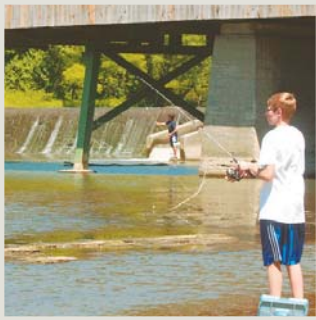
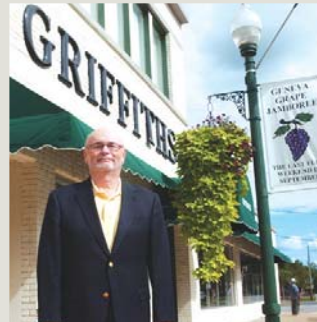
ASHTABULA COUNTY

2012

PROGRESS

STAR  BEACON

TUESDAY,
SEPTEMBER 25, 2012



2012 PROGRESS

ASHTABULA COUNTY

TABLE OF CONTENTS

We are seeing progress in Ashtabula County

They say the recession has bottomed out and things are getting better.

In this third edition of Progress, the Star Beacon editorial staff investigated 11 sectors of Ashtabula County to see just how we are faring in quality of life issues.

The areas the staff examined are: industry, retail, parks and recreation, health, social services, financial, real estate, agriculture, arts and entertainment and education.

While Ashtabula County is made up of many communities, it also is one big community with all these sectors we examined interdependent on each other.

In some areas noticeable progress has been made and there has been some disappointments.

When talk centers around the recession, the most important factors that seem to be considered are employment, retail spending, real estate and industrial growth or lack of it. In all these area — with a note of joy — there has been progress.

For example, employment is up in 2012 over 2011, albeit it is a small gain. For example, in July 2011 the employed labor force of the county stood at 43,100. In July of this year, it rose to 43,400.

Brian Anderson, executive director of Growth Partnership of Ashtabula County said, "Overall, the economy, especially within the manufacturing sector has been pretty significant and steady growth in the last two years or so."

Tourism, which has grown into one of the major industries of the county, continues



NEIL FRIEDER

to grow. Bed tax receipts, which is a primary barometer of tourism activity in Ashtabula County, jumped a whopping 20 percent from November 2011 to May 2012.

Staff Writer Mark Todd, reporting on retail sales in Progress, noted there remains an abundance of empty storefronts and buildings in the county, but also some retail establishments are doing quite well. In fact, through August of this year, sales tax revenues are \$347,000 ahead of last year at the same time.

In a survey conducted by the Ashtabula Downtown Development Association, of the businesses responding, gross sales of more than \$52.7 million were reported. This is an increase over the previous year of \$1.7 million.

Perhaps the real eye opener in Progress is the success occurring in the county's real estate market, mauled in previous years by foreclosures. Realtors are reporting record sales this year, which in turn is causing home prices to increase. The Ashtabula County real estate sales resurgence mirrors what is happening throughout northeast Ohio, which is a 19.6 percent increase in sales from July 2011 to July 2012.

Speaking to Staff Writer Shelley Terry, Carol Stormer Vaux, Realtor and sales agent for Remax Innovations said, "We are back to more buyers

than homes, if the homes are priced correctly."

The average sale price of a home increased 3.9 percent over the year, rising from \$121,074 to \$125,835.

While the economy is picking up, Ashtabula County continues to suffer more than many area from health and negative social behavior issues.

Staff Writer Carl Feather reports in Progress, 19 percent of the county's youth, have considered suicide. That is six percentage points higher than the state average.

He also reported, "Ashtabula County residents downed 5 million doses of opiates last year, that is 51 doses for every man, woman and child."

This year was difficult to assess progress in our schools. The Ohio Department of Education has withheld formal release of district report cards. Overall, our schools are hurting primarily because of a lack of adequate funding which has forced some severe cuts, including teacher layoffs.

Some districts, such as the Ashtabula Area Schools, opened new facilities. This includes the grade school campus on Wade Avenue. Five schools opened on that campus.

While schools are not a factor we normally associate with economic conditions, the quality of a community's schools has a major impact on the health of all the sectors of a community. That is something to keep in mind as we chart the future progress of Ashtabula County.

Frieder is editor of the Star Beacon

INSIDE

INDUSTRY

Economic engines in place for growth

6

RETAIL

Retail numbers show growth in county

11

HEALTH

Sour economy batters residents

16

SOCIAL SERVICES

Social services help in bad economy

23

FINANCIAL

26

REAL ESTATE

Realtors welcome rise in home sales

30

AGRICULTURE

Ashtabula County grows it all

32

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

Variety keeps county entertained, cultured

36

PARKS & RECREATION

Plenty of outdoor fun for all in county

40

EDUCATION

New school building boom winds down

45

2012 PROGRESS

THE YEAR IN REVIEW: OVERVIEW

ASHTABULA COUNTY

By CARL E. FEATHER ■ Staff Writer

The arrows are pointing in one direction, but flight velocity is slow

On the surface, things ought to look and feel better in Ashtabula County than they did a year ago.

Sales tax receipts are up \$347,147 during the first seven months of 2012, which means more money is being spent at retail establishments. Bed tax receipts are running about 20 percent ahead of last year, which means more tourists are selecting Ashtabula County as an over-night destination.

And fewer residents are “unemployed.” According to the Civilian Labor Force Estimates of Ohio Department of Job and Family Services, there were 4,200 residents who wanted to work, but could not find a job. A year ago, there were 5,000 unemployed. Accordingly, the unemployment rate (not seasonally adjusted) fell from 10.4 percent to 8.7 percent.

But the number of residents employed full or part-time has not increased significantly. There were 43,400 employed as of July 2012; 43,100 as of July 2011. Since July 2008, the county’s civilian’s labor force has contracted by 2,100 persons.

That’s a trend that also has been seen in Ohio, where lower unemployment rates don’t necessarily mean more residents are working. From the official end of the recession in June 2009 through November 2011,

Unemployment rate down, but 4,200 residents still out of work

By CARL E. FEATHER
Staff Writer

cfeather@starbeacon.com

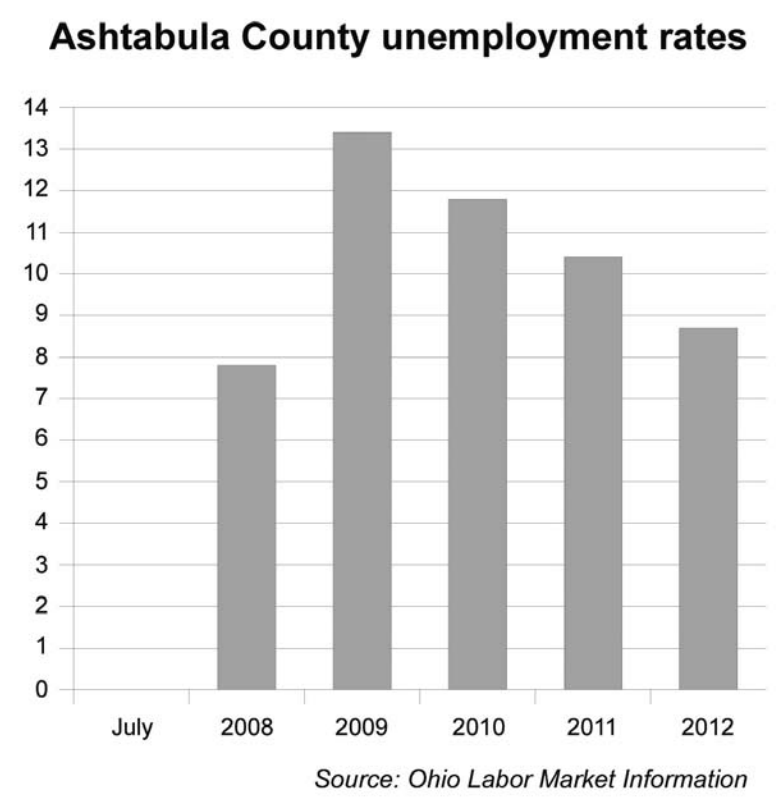
According to the ohiomeansjob.com website, there were 448 openings available within 20 miles of Ashtabula at the end of August.

The postings range from customer service representatives to plant managers; from line cooks to health care professionals. There should be a job for just about everyone, but in July 4,200 county residents were looking for work.

Local economic development officials say that part of the problem is a disconnect between the employers and the labor market, one they are working to close.

“There is a whole list of different types of jobs,” said County Commissioner Daniel Claypool. “We just need to find that person to fill that job.”

Earlier this year, the board of commissioners contracted with Growth Partnership for Ashtabula County to provide business service representative (BSR) services to



employers. A BSR acts as a liaison between employers who are seeking workers with a specific skills

set and the training resources in the county that can prepare those
See RATE, Page 5

the state’s job growth was just 1.2 percent, or 62,600 jobs. And that rate actually slowed in 2011. The decline in the unemployment rate is likely a function of Ohioans dropping out of

the labor market rather than job growth, notes Policy Matters Ohio.
“A shrinking labor force is not good news for Ohio,” said Hannah Halbert of Policy Matters Ohio, when

releasing the dismal labor force statistics late last year. “The data released today suggest that more Ohioans are becoming discouraged, the pace of recovery is simply too slow and the mod-

est gains that are being made are not being felt broadly in our economy.”
Nevertheless, according to Growth Partnership for Ashtabula County’s research, more than two-

thirds of county industries surveyed are in a hiring mode. Hundreds of good-paying industrial jobs in the Lake Road, Ashtabula Township area, are being protected by the Ashtabula County Port Authority’s diligence in obtaining a grant from the Economic Development Administration. The grant, which will pay for vital pump and line repairs at the Plant 2 raw water facility, was approved last year, but has been mired in documentation paperwork. Port Authority officials have been saying, since May, that the funding will come through any day.

Cristal Global is working through the permitting process to expand production at its inorganic chemicals operation in the township and add jobs. Unfortunately, 2012 brought the end of manufacturing at ESAB Welding and Cutting Products. The Ashtabula production line was moved to a new facility in South Carolina and some 120 jobs were lost. Many of the workers, who had been there for decades, were able to take an early retirement.

On the education side, students in the Ashtabula Area and Geneva school districts went back to school in August at several new buildings. Unfortunately, voters have not been very generous to school levies at the polls, and most
See SLOW, Page 4

Slow

From Page 3

districts are cutting programs and teachers. Meanwhile, volunteers did a herculean effort at the new St. John School building in Saybrook Township, where the pre-school through 12th grade parochial school occupies the former Saybrook Elementary. The city school board and parochial school collaborated on the project.

Joint Economic Development Districts in the Geneva and Harpersfield Township areas continue to provide employment, although Geneva City Manager James Pearson said the potential of these districts has not been fully realized.

“That’s one thing we need to be more active with, to encourage the growth out there,” Pearson said. “We know that should be growing.”

In the area of health care, Signature Health has begun construction of its downtown Ashtabula facility at the former Hotel Ashtabula site. The new facility will bring 110 jobs to the downtown area; not all of the jobs are new, however.

Tourism remains the most vibrant and fastest growing industry. It employed 4,622 persons in 2011 and generated \$380 million in sales. That’s an increase of 12.7 percent from 2009.

The statistics show that tourism jobs pay, on average, \$17,950 per year. Even if both a husband and wife were able to work in these jobs full time, the earnings would still fall below the self-sufficiency standard for Ohio. In 2011, that standard was about \$40,000 for a family of four. The standard, calculated by the University of Washington

Shrinking labor force drives down unemployment rate

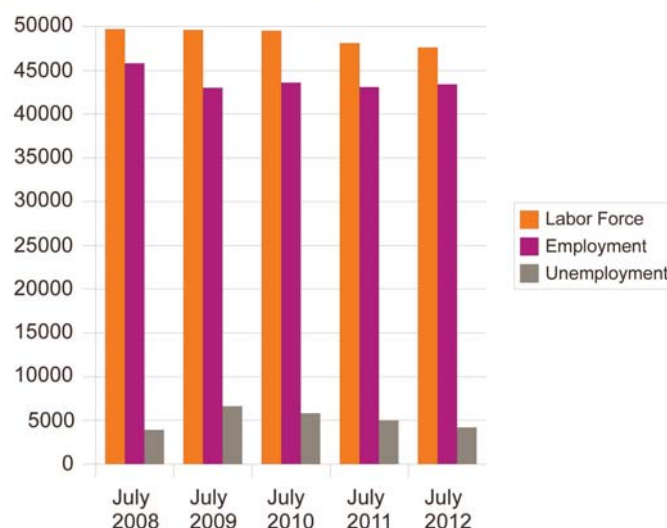
While Ashtabula County’s unemployment rate has dropped by nearly 2 percentage points in the last year, job growth played only a small part in the reduction.

In July 2011, there were 43,100 Ashtabula County residents employed full or part time and the unemployment rate was 10.4 percent. A year later, there were just 300 more persons working, but the unemployment rate had fallen to 8.7 percent. The rates are not adjusted for seasonal factors.

The drop in the rate reflects a 16 percent decrease in the number of residents counted as “unemployed,” that is persons not employed but actively seeking work. In July 2011, there were 5,000 persons in that category; in July 2012, it was 4,200.

The decrease can’t be attributed entirely to increased employment, however. The size of the civilian labor force decreased by 500 workers during that same time, suggesting those people either gave up their search for a job or moved out of the county. The trend is being

Ashtabula County 5-year employment trends



Source: Ohio Labor Market Information

seen throughout most of Ohio.

“To be counted as a member of the labor force, an individual must be actively seeking work,” notes Policy Matters Ohio.

“Many people, particularly during prolonged periods of unemployment, stop seeking work and drop out of the labor force. People

may choose to care for children rather than continue to look for work, avoiding childcare costs. Some individuals may return to school or retrain for a different career. Others may be forced into early retirement after losing a job and being unable to replace it. Some are simply too

discouraged to continue searching, applying and receiving rejections. These individuals are not counted in the labor force or in the unemployment rate.”

Policy Matters’ State of Working Ohio 2012’s report, released earlier this month, notes that while job growth in Ohio was 2 percent in the last 12 months, it will take more than two years just to return the state to the pre-2007 recession levels of employment and even longer to get to year 2000 levels.

The trend toward a shrinking labor force continued. Only 64.1 percent of Ohioans were in the labor force in 2011, the lowest figure since 1985.

Ohioans who are working are making less money than they did 11 years ago. Policy Matters points out that real wage loss over the 2000s was among the highest in the United States, second only to Michigan. Ohio’s median wage fell by \$1.33 between 2000 and 2011.

The state’s new median wage, \$15.20 per hour, ranks 30th in the nation, a tie with Maine.

School of Social Work, determines how much money that family must earn to escape dependency from government assistance.

It’s not just tourism jobs, however, that are failing to keep pace with the cost of surviving. The U.S. Census Bureau earlier this month released its latest findings on poverty and income in the U.S. The report showed that income levels are decreasing; the median income for the nation has decreased 1.5 percent and

income levels dropped a staggering 14.1 percent since 2009 for those in the bottom 10th percentile. The figures show an expanding wealth gap throughout the nation.

LINING UP THE ARROWS

Officials who take the pulse of the community say that the biggest accomplishment in the past year has more to do with alignment, attitude and trust than bricks, mortar, paychecks and spending.

“One of the brightest

spots in Ashtabula County in the past years is the number of people who are aligned in the same direction to move the county forward,” Commissioner Daniel Claypool said. “We’re not able to point to a single event or person who can stand up and say ‘I did it.’”

This re-alignment — getting all the arrows in pointing the same direction, as Robert Taylor of the county’s Economic Development Steering Committee has said — is the result of

building trust, said Board President Peggy Carlo.

“I think people are more comfortable with discussing their projects,” she said. “We are all stakeholders in (each other’s projects).”

“There seems to be that level of trust. We’re not afraid to share and be inclusive,” added Growth Partnership’s Brian Anderson.

The list of planning projects under way or recently completed is impressive. It includes:

■ The Route 534 Corridor Plan was unveiled in 2012

and provides a blueprint for development along the heavily-traveled road between the Grand River and Lake Erie. The \$250,000 project was funded with local money that leveraged a grant from the Ohio Department of Transportation.

“The 534 Corridor Plan will really help us in the future,” said Geneva City Manager Jim Pearson. “That will be huge for us in the next five years.”

■ The plan looks at road
See SLOW, Page 5

Slow

From Page 3

improvements, land use, traffic flow and smart growth issues. “It’s the first one in the State of Ohio,” Pearson said.

■ The Village of Geneva-on-the-Lake is involved in creating a downtown development plan, similar to the one Geneva did several years ago. In Geneva, the fruit of that plan is being seen in sidewalk improvements, the relocation of the Civil War Memorial and the Spencer Monument in front of Western County Court.

■ The Bridge Street, Ashtabula, area’s Tier I Downtown Revitalization plan is completed and will be presented to Ashtabula City Council this month. The plan, among other things, coordinates existing plans (Walnut Beach Master, Cobalt and North Shore Trail) and helps advance the most promising aspects, such as connecting Bridge Street to Walnut Beach, and eventually, Walnut Beach to Gene-

va-on-the-Lake via a bike trail.

Some of the amenities to look for on Bridge Street are the 35 historical plaques on buildings and four new bike racks. The Walnut Beach concession stand and restrooms will get a serious renovation this fall, and the effort to create a Mariners Memorial Park is moving forward.

■ The Conneaut Port Authority continues to work with the Port of Erie on an intermodal port project.

■ There are 4,000 acres planted in the miscanthus energy crop. Commissioners see this as an exciting opportunity for making marginal farm land productive.

■ The county’s Economic Development Steering Committee is working through the list of goals that came out of the countywide economic summit. Among the projects being tackled this year is the creation of a brand for the county. Brian Diehl, who chairs that committee, said the branding is important both internally and externally.

“I general, this county is very hard on itself internal-

ly,” he said. “This is a really great place to live and work. The next step is to advertise that fact, and that is where branding comes in place.”

■ The county has received \$10,000 in services from a marketing firm to assist with the branding. The Civic Development Corporation is also putting money into the project.

■ The goal of a one-stop shop for permitting and planning moved closer to reality this year with a re-arranging of county departments, both physically and administratively. Commissioners folded the planning department into the department of community services. The combined office was moved into large quarters on the first floor of the Old Courthouse. The county’s building department is also on this floor.

■ The next step is a total redesign of the county’s website so it can provide that same one-stop experience for those seeking assistance with permits, grants and planning. The county will be seeking requests for proposals from web designers in the near future, said Peggy Carlo.

■ The Pairings Culinary

Center (pairingsohio.com) continues to move toward reality. Geneva City Manager Jim Pearson said the project has shifted into the fundraising stage this year. The verdict on several key grant applications should be known later this year.

■ The Lake Erie Energy Development Corporation’s (LEEDCo) effort to establish a demonstration wind farm in Lake Erie faces a critical moment this month. The organization, of which Ashtabula County is a part, will learn if it will receive a grant from the U.S. Department of Energy. The success of the demonstration project has significant bearing on the future of offshore wind energy develop off Ashtabula County.

■ Along that line, commissioners during 2012 came closer to inking an agreement that would erect a wind turbine at the Ashtabula County Nursing and Rehabilitation Center in Kingsville Township. The concept was to generate electricity for the nursing home; the county would purchase the power from the turbine investor, hopefully for less than what

FirstEnergy charges.

Claypool said the deal breaker appears to be the utility’s demand charge, which will not go away if the county goes green. The charge the nursing home is about \$4,000 a month, which would wipe out the anticipated savings from wind power. Further, the uncertain future of the federal energy tax credits has made the investor more cautious about the project.

“It’s on hold,” Carlo said. Even if the project does not

end up being built, commissioners said the experience they gained in pursuing the concept gave them a good foundation for future green projects. It’s one more arrow pointing in the right direction.

“I think Ashtabula County is going in the right direction,” said Peggy Carlo. “We have a lot of tools in place. We have a lot of things we’d like to do. We’ll move forward. I do believe Ashtabula County is going in the right direction.”

Rate

From Page 3

workers for jobs that need workers today.

Commissioners committed \$15,000 to the BSR contract this year. Since then, the Geauga, Ashtabula, Portage Partnership (GAPP) that is responsible for allocating training money to county programs received a three-year, \$794,000 grant to further develop the business services network in the three counties. Claypool said Ashtabula County will get a third of that money to invest in these programs that connect employers to trained workers.

Brian Anderson, executive director of Growth Partnership for Ashtabula County, said he and Hattie Grubke Barnard fill the BSR roles. When they learn of a job opening through the personal contact with employers, it is entered into the JobSource database. The job description is matched to applicants who are in the system and emails and phone calls are generated to alert job hopefuls of the opportunity.

“They have a very large base of resumes and potential applicants,” Anderson said of JobSource.

Getting hired comes down to having the right set of skills, both soft and hard.

JobSource works with

applicants who need to upgrade skills, polish their resume or get their GED. Sometimes, it’s a matter of retraining a person for a while new career, other times it is a matter of upgrade software or technical skills with a single college course. The center also can provide assistance with on-the-job training for up to six months.

Sean Ratican, executive director of the Ashtabula County Port Authority, said that employees also need to think about their “soft skills,” such as showing up for work every day and giving 100 percent to the job. The economic development professionals often comment on how difficult it is

to find reliable employees who can pass the drug screening tests and show up on time.

Ratican said it all comes down to self-respect.

“If you respect yourself, you respect your job,” Ratican said.

“The feedback I get from employers is that if you have a good work ethic, employers will train you do what they need you to do,” says Brian Diehl, who chairs the county’s Economic Development Steering Committee.

“If you are willing to invest in yourself, companies in this county will invest in you,” Ratican said. “They need these soft skills to be in place first.”

SIMAK TRUCKING/EXCAVATING

*Serving Ashtabula,
Lake & Geauga Counties*

- Slag • Limestone • Washed Gravel
- Bank Sand & Gravel
- Stone Slinger • Excavating
- Septic Systems • Basements • Driveways
- Mulch • Screened Topsoil
- Landscaping Stone • Large Rocks

3052 E. Center St., P.O. Box 599 • N. Kingsville, Ohio 44068

(440) 224-1992 • Fax (440) 224-1009

2012 PROGRESS

INDUSTRY

ASHTABULA COUNTY

By CARL E. FEATHER ■ Staff Writer

Economic engines in place for growth

Small business is backbone of Ashtabula County's economy

Small business is driving economic recovery in Ashtabula County and will continue to do so for years to come.

"The backbone of this county is our small businesses," said Sean Ratican, executive director of the Ashtabula County Port Authority. "As small business goes and grows, so does Ashtabula County."

Brian Anderson, executive director of Growth Partnership for Ashtabula County, said that while there has not been one large employer who created hundreds of new jobs in the past year, the majority of existing businesses the partnership works with are adding workers. Anderson said that of the 70 Ashtabula County manufacturing businesses he's visited this year, 70 percent of them were hiring. And 85 percent of them said they had seen an increase in sales.

"Overall, the economy, especially within the manufacturing sector, has seen pretty significant and steady growth in the last two years or so," Anderson said.

Pressrite in Jefferson, which expanded its physical plant last year, has continued to add workers to meet the product needs of the gas and oil exploration industry. Ringer Screen Prints and Wholesale Imprints in North Kingsville, has 19 employees and plans to add a few more once its warehouse addition is completed and ready for occupancy. The firm has found a niche doing custom embroidery for collegiate and



CARL E. FEATHER / Star Beacon

CORPORATE JETS, like this one owned by MFG, provide an important revenue source for the Northeast Ohio Regional Airport. The Federal Aviation Administration recently decided in favor of the airport authority and allowed it to retain the C2 classification that jet pilots look for when seeking a place to land. Several area corporations use the airport for executive travel.

corporate clothing.

County economic officials say that it is always more cost-effective to take care of the businesses that are here and assist them with growth than to attract a new employer. The proof of that is in their willingness to extend tax abatement — Pressrite, King Luminaire and Wholesale Imprints in the past year took advantage of that resource to expand their companies.

Whenever industry is discussed in the county, two enterprise operations are frequently cited as being "economic engines." One of those entities is the county-owned airport in Denmark Township.

The airport has long been a drag on the county's general fund, which typically puts in \$95,000 annually to keep the operation in the black. Some

■ **Tourism does well for county, but could be better if ...**
— PAGE 7

aggressive moves by the airport authority in the past two years are aimed at reversing that trend, however.

The Ashtabula County Airport Authority last year hired R.A. Wiedemann & Associates to prepare a marketing plan for the airport. OH Technologies paid the consultant's fee, which was just over \$100,000.

Shortly after receiving the plan, the authority acted to implement one of the suggestions — change the airport's name to the Northeast Ohio Regional Airport and adopt a

See GROWTH, Page 7

SUCCESSFUL PROGRESS



CARL E. FEATHER / Star Beacon

THE COFFEE roaster at Harbor Perk was purchased with loan proceeds from the New Entrepreneurs Opportunity Fund, which helps existing and new Ashtabula County business owners obtain credit to grow their products and services. At left is Shelly Mullen, managing director of the fund, with Kelly Sposito, who owns Harbor Perk with her husband, Jake.

NEO Fund helps new and existing businesses grow

By **CARL E. FEATHER**
Staff Writer

cfeather@starbeacon.com

ASHTABULA — Every time Kelly Sposito roasts five pounds of coffee, she has the New Enterprise Opportunity Fund to thank for the spiffy red roaster.

The NEO Fund provided the \$15,000 that Kelly and her

husband Jake needed to purchase the equipment for their Harbor Perks coffee shop on Bridge Street. She said that banks were not interested in lending money to two young entrepreneurs with grand plans to revive what had been, on paper, a money losing business.

"Regardless of how honest

See NEO, Page 10

Growth

From Page 6

new logo. The airport continues to be operated by the Ashtabula County Airport Authority, a volunteer board with members appointed by commissioners.

The new name better identified the airport as the most northeastern jet-capable facility in Ohio. A new website was rolled out along with the name change.

The marketing plan calls for more aggressive outreach to corporate users, such as Spire Institute visitors and the energy exploration industry. Wiedemann developed videos that target specific industries.

Another goal is to increase hangar occupancy. The authority in August approved two direct mail campaigns toward that end, plus a revamping of rates to make the airport more competitive.

The hangars at the airport are about 60 percent occupied, so there is substantial room for revenue growth from that resource.

Other marketing strategies being implemented this year include increased presence and updates to social media sites, improved signages pointing motorists to the airport and developing a Power Point presentation to promote the airport to civic organizations.

Dwight Bowden, chairman of the airport authority, said these marketing efforts have just begun and therefore no impact has been seen on the bottom line. Indeed, Bowden says the authority will need to request all \$95,000 that county commissioners allocated to the airport in its 2012 general fund budget.

“The situation, as I see it, is that we are going to do everything we can to break

Tourism does well for Ashtabula County, but could be better if ...

By **CARL E. FEATHER**
Staff Writer

cfeather@starbeacon.com

The latest tourism numbers for Ashtabula County show continued strong growth, but business owners say there are things that the state could do to make those numbers even stronger.

Bed tax receipts for the county, November 2011 to May 2012, were up 20 percent from the prior period. In 2011 tourism sales were \$380.8 million, an increase of 12.7 percent over the 2009 sales figure. Wages paid to tourism workers also increased during that time, from \$73 million to \$83 million.

even,” Bowden said.

The airport is suffering from the same malaise that has stricken general avia-

“Sales have gone up dramatically in that two-year window,” said Mark Winchell, executive director of the Ashtabula County Convention and Visitors Bureau.

The figures come from a study conducted by Tourism Economics and was commissioned by TourismOhio.

OTHER FINDINGS INCLUDE:

■ Tourism sustains 15.3 percent of salaried employment, up from 11 percent in 2009. Winchell points out that those are “full-time equivalent jobs,” not part-time jobs.

■ One out of every seven jobs in the county

See **TOURISM**,
Page 9

tion across the country. “It’s still very much a very depressed industry,” Bow-

See **GROWTH**, Page 8

RE-ELECT

Peggy

CARLO

Your

Commissioner

Committed to making a difference in Ashtabula County

- Ashtabula County Commissioner Since 2008
- 25 Years in Health Care Management
- Saybrook Township Trustee 16 Years

“I am a dedicated and motivated leader. My record shows my success in working together to solve problems in an ethical and professional manner.”
I would appreciate your vote on Tuesday, Nov. 6, 2012.

www.electpeggycarlo.com

Paid for by the committee to Elect Peggy Carlo for County Commissioner.
J. English Treasurer, 7122 N. Depot Rd., Saybrook, OH 44004



in Ashtabula County...

TOURISM is on the RISE!

2011 TOURISM STATISTICS

Sales = \$381 Million
Wages = \$83 Million
Local Taxes = \$50 Million
County Jobs = 4,622

We are home to the...



**Grand River Valley & Lake Erie
Viticulture Districts**



**Longest & Shortest
covered bridges
in the U.S.**

... & 30 miles of beautiful Lake Erie shoreline!

Follow us on...   

Our Lake Awaits



800.3.DROP-IN

1850 Austinburg Rd., Austinburg, OH 44010

www.VisitAshtabulaCounty.com



Scan this code with your smart phone to link to our website

Growth

From Page 7

den said. "Our experience is paralleling the national one. Until the economy gets some traction, we're going to have to ride this out."

They won't be gliding, however.

"We have to do something," Bowden said. "We're not going to stand still."

The Lodge and Conference Center at Geneva-on-the-Lake is another county-owned "economic engine." General Manager Jeannette Petrolia said the lodge is on track to make an operating profit of about \$172,000 in 2012. The profit does not take into account debt payments.

"2012 has been a good year so far," Petrolia told county commissioners last month. "There is no reason to think that is going to change."

One of the factors driving the profit is a strong average daily room rate — the

SCHMIDT EQUIPMENT has been in Geneva more than five decades. The company recently built a 16,000 capacity water tank for a Cleveland-area company. The owners are Phil and Cathie Schmidt (right). Employees are (from left) Greg Chester, Jeff Hennessey (back), Jake Moore and Matt Cross. The company is located on North Ridge West in Geneva.



CARL E. FEATHER / Star Beacon

SUCCESSFUL PROGRESS

Longevity success story for Geneva business

By **CARL E. FEATHER**

Staff Writer

cfeather@starbeacon.com

GENEVA — Sometimes, success is measured not in growth, but perseverance and longevity.

Such is the case with Schmidt Equipment in Geneva, which has been around these parts since 1957. That's when Phillip Schmidt's parents, Fritz and Judy, relocated their auto body shop from Mentor to Geneva's west side. The business evolved into a custom metal fabricating shop reminiscent of days when heavy industry dominated the industrial landscape of this county. The

massive rooms, hidden behind the modest facade on Route 20, are studies in shades of metallic grays, reposes for massive equipment capable of torturing sheets of metal into angular, useful forms.

And what forms they create! This summer, the shop manufactured a custom 16,000-gallon tank commissioned by an east-side Cleveland company. The tank is the fifth such contract Schmidt has won from the company.

Custom metal fabrication work is balanced by the niche roll-off rubbish

See SUCCESS, Page 9

average amount of money guests pay to stay a night in the lodge. Petrolia said the

rate, through July, is \$131.12. Last year, it was \$118.82.

Occupancy also has been very good, with the lodge having at least 100 rooms

occupied every night in August. Petrolia said that is the first time she can recall that happening in any month of the lodge's nine-year history.

In July the lodge marked another milestone, the first month that room rentals surpassed the \$500,000 mark.

As occupancy approaches 100 percent, the lodge can set a higher rate for its rooms. The room revenue totals through July tell the story: in 2011, those revenues were \$1,579,352; this year, they were \$1,762,409. Overall revenue for the lodge, through July, was \$3.1 million. And while the lodge was still \$119,93 in the red at the end of July 2011, this year, it has turned the corner and was \$18,996 in the black (net profit).

Those strong numbers are the result of tweaking the operation on both the revenue and expense sides, as well as constantly making improvements to amenities and operations. Some of the accomplishments for 2012

include:

■ Thirty flat-screen televisions for guest rooms, replacing the "old-fashioned" tube-style sets from 2003 vintage;

Expanded food and beverage options at the outdoor pool. An investment in a new kiosk and additional table and chairs helped generate close to \$10,000 in additional food and beverage sales this summer, Petrolia said.

■ The CRUSH wine club has attracted 1,100 members in its short history.

"That's just amazing," Petrolia said. "The response has been overwhelming."

Marketed largely through social media and email, the club offers members discounts, a monthly newsletter and member's only events — the first one is a Nov. 10 tasting.

See GROWTH, Page 10

Schmidt EQUIPMENT, INC.
6307 North Ridge Rd West, Geneva, OH 44041

**Welding & Repairs,
Custom Fabricating,
Roll-offs, Boxes, Tanks...**

Steel, Stainless, Aluminum

Sheet, Plate and Structural shapes, Expanded metal, Diamond plate, Pipe, Rectangular and Square tube.

- Registered P.E. & AWS-Certified Welding Inspector
- Certified and experienced welders
- Cranes, Shear, Press Brake, etc.

**Stop in or Call Phil & Cathie Schmidt
440-466-2431
45 years an "Inc.",
55 years in business in Geneva!**

Call us for a FREE quote

*Actively expanding our
Commercial & Residential*

- Lawn Mowing • Snow Plowing
- Property Maintenance
- Design & Installation



4220 N. Ridge West (Saybrook) (440)969-1114

Tourism

From Page 7

is tied to tourism. Two years ago, the number was one out of nine. In the state, it is one in every 11.5 jobs.

■ Tourism brings into the county \$50 million taxes.

“Tourists pay taxes so residents don’t have to pay as much,” Winchell observes.

Winchell stresses that the job numbers are full-time and that the wages paid are not necessarily minimum.

Debbie Post, human resources manager of the Lodge and Conference Center at Geneva-on-the-Lake, said most of the lodge’s restaurant waiters are earning at least \$14 per hour with tips. “They are doing very well,” she said. And Winchell points out that tourism is an industry comprised mostly of entrepreneurs and small business owners who earn their entire livelihoods from the industry.

Still, even Winchell, a indefatigable tourism dynamo, says there are things that could be done to improve the

tourism climate here. He and a panel of others involved in the local tourism industry met last month with Ohio Lt. Gov. Mary Taylor to present their wish lists. They include:

■ Start the school year after Labor Day. Tourism businesses lose a week or more of family traffic at the end of August and they have a difficult time staffing those businesses when high school students return to classes. Don Woodward, special projects director for the Geneva-on-the-Lake Visitors Bureau and Chamber of Commerce, said this issue has been at the top of every tourism-business survey conducted in the county or GOTL.

■ Liquor permits for retail alcohol sales in restaurants are subject to a quota, which puts owners without the permits at a disadvantage. Ohio also needs to address its permitting process for special events, which works on a quota system. The current licensing structure makes it virtually impossible to do some types of events, such as a wine tasting at historical homes tour. Other states are more progressive in their

licensing.

“The states that surround us have less red tape,” says Jennifer Brown, project manager for Pairings. Donniella Winchell, executive director of Ohio Wine Producers Association, said a new permit class would have to be created by the state to accommodate Pairings. The permit would have to allow for both production and take-home of wines from vineyards across the state.

■ Access to capital. Most tourism businesses are small by nature, says Pat Barker, interim director for TourismOhio. Accordingly, finding capital can be very challenging.

Fortunately, the Ohio Department of Development is shifting its focus to these smaller business, as a result of Jobs Ohio taking on the challenge of growing larger industries.

Shelly Mullen, who works with the Lift Bridge Community Association and NEO Fund, said microlenders such as the NEO Fund offer one resource. Mark Winchell suggests that banks make foreclosed homes available on a

lease-to-own basis to entrepreneurs who want to start a coffee shop, bed and breakfast or other small business that needs a roof and walls. The bank would benefit because the property would have an occupant who fixes it up and makes it marketable.

■ Cash flow is a huge problem for tourism businesses who are flush with dough in late summer and often bone dry by spring, when they need to purchase inventory, pay for marketing and gear up for the summer season. A line of credit is essential. Mick Prochko, owner of Covered Bridge Gardens, says farmers like himself also face cash flow problems when they need to purchase plants in the spring.

“Trying to budget for something like this is a nightmare, if not impossible,” he observes. Indeed, Prochko said if a young person is not fortunate enough to inherit a family farm, he will have to work a full-time job in order to make his farming dream come true. And even with that, his chances of success will be “slim,” Prochko said.

“That is a no-win situation for the young person and county as a whole,” Prochko observes.

■ Lack of signs that point to public beaches and other attractions easily accessed from Interstate 90 was mentioned several times. But the Ohio Department of Transportation, in an effort to keep signs to a minimum, tightly controls how many signs are

allowed on these four-lane highways.

■ Ken Hlavek, director of sales and marketing for the Lodge and Conference Center, said the Ohio Department of Natural Resources needs to do more programming at Geneva State Park. Programming and activities would encourage guests to stay longer at the lodge, bring the kids for the visit and return more often.

Success

From Page 8

container business. During the recession, that business expanded into renovating damaged, worn containers as customers cut back on spending.

Experience has shown Phillip that during good times, it really is wise to focus on one thing and do it well. But during hard times, the adage to not place all your business eggs in one basket is the wiser approach.

For the Schmidts, who are past the typical retirement age, Schmidt Equipment is the only egg in their basket. They have owned Schmidt Equipment since 2001, when

Phillip’s brother, Kenneth, sold the business to them. Phillip, “an engineer who welds,” said he left a promising career working in shipyard to help continue the family business and be near family in northeast Ohio.

“It’s cost me a lot of money,” Phillip said of his decision, but quickly adds that the intangible benefits of having grandchildren nearby made it worth the sacrifice.

The business is small — five employees, including Phillip, plus several summer employees, hungry college students or A-Tech welding program students who want to put their training to work. Cathie, a former biology teacher, is vice president.

“It’s always been a small business,” he said. “We’ve

had to turn down business, for example, if a customer wanted 50 roll-off units in two months.”

Although small, the company is dedicated to its community and trade. Phillip helped design and fabricate the walkway and rails for downtown Geneva memorials. He is past Cleveland section chairman of the American Welding Society (AWS). The regional, district and national AWS offer scholarships for promising welding students. Cathie Schmidt said welders and welding engineers are very much in demand these days.

Phillip has been a professional welder since the age of 6. That’s when a customer stopped by his parents’ shop with a small job.

Although his assignment was to direct customers to the house whenever his father was on a portable welding job, Phillip was certain he could tackle the simple job.

Five minutes later, he was done.


“I charged a dollar,” Phillip said.

The customer passed Phillip’s father on the way back home and flagged him down. He told him about his son’s welding job and the handsome fee he charged — probably equivalent to \$10 today.

“As far as I know, it stayed together,” Phillip says of his work “I knew how to weld, to put down a solid weld at the age of 6. Today, they would call it child abuse.”

Your
A Partner in Progress

*We're human. So we're all lifelong learners.
But the only place, open to all of us,
free of charge, whose entire mission
is lifelong learning, is the library.*



*September is
National Library Card Sign-up Month.
When you get your library card
— your free library card —
you'll discover what a partner we can be.*

Ashtabula Library
335 West 44th • Ashtabula
(440) 997-9341

Geneva Library & Bookmobile
860 Sherman • Geneva
(440) 466-4521

www.acdl.info

Ashtabula County District Library
What Do You Need to Know?

NEO

From Page 6

and good-looking we are, no banks would touch us,” Kelly Sposito said. “So when you are in your late 20s, do you go ask your parents for \$15,000? That’s not cool.”

The NEO Fund’s loan committee approved the Sposito’s loan application four years ago. The debt is just about retired, and these days Kelly is talking about going back to the fund to purchase an even larger roaster. Kelly says they will apply at a bank first because that gives the business a little more clout, but she has no issue with borrowing from the NEO Fund again.

The fund is heavily invested on Bridge Street, says Shelly Mullen, managing director. Eight of the fund’s 10 outstanding loans are to

harbor business. About \$130,000 is outstanding, and two of the fund’s have been paid off early. There have been no defaults and no late payments.

Make no mistake about it, however, this is high-risk lending. And the interest rates reflect that — 10 to 11 percent, with closing fees of \$700 or more.

Mullen said the fund’s loans typically range between \$5,000 and \$40,000. They can be used to expand, or start a business in Ashtabula County.

Most of those who show up on the fund’s Water Street Warehouse office have been turned down by banks.

“We bank the unbankable,” Mullen said.

They don’t bank the unprepared, however. The applicant must have a good business plan, good forecast and possess the trait of “coachability.” “We are with them

through the entire life cycle of the loan,” Mullen said.

The applicant must agree to attend the fund’s monthly presentations on sound business practices, become part of the NEO Fund community and be accountable to the fund.

“We don’t run their business for them, but we stay with them,” says Mullen, who refers to the borrowers as a community.

The Business of Good Foundation provided the seed money for the fund, which is now seeking funding through the Small Business Administration and hopes to get another round of U.S. Treasury funding in 2013. The fund received \$92,000 from the Treasury this year for technical assistance and capacity building.

With a subtitle of “organic growth,” the NEO Fund is more interested in quality versus quantity in the busi-

nesses it assists. Mullen said the owners focus on doing two or three things extremely well. As a result, the slowest growing of the 10 businesses in the fund still experienced 20 percent growth, and most are seeing growth in the 30 percent range.

Mullen said they have been able to turn around businesses that were facing bankruptcy.

“They were ready to say ‘I’ll do anything at this point,’ and they focus on two or three things,” Mullen says. “In a year, they go from looking at bankruptcy to having \$20,000 in the bank and taking a salary just by following a disciplined approach.”

Success also has to do with the enthusiasm of the owners. Mullen says most are locally born and educated people in their 20s and 30s. They went to college and chose to come back to Ashtabula and make something happen rather than wait for opportunity to come to them. Sposito says three other owners who used the NEO Fund to help launch and run their businesses are

Edgewood alumni from her class.

“We’re getting the best of the best,” Mullen said. “And we want more of them.”

Sposito says that, as a Harbor business owner, she’s not interested in the economic development models that bring in \$10 manufacturing jobs. Those kinds of wage earners won’t be purchasing their coffee in a boutique shop or their gifts from Beaches. She and the other young entrepreneurs see the future of Ashtabula in attracting other young professionals who love to play here and decide to bring their innovations and imaginations here, as well.

The NEO Fund will be there if they need a little assistance getting those big ideas off the ground.

“Our goal is to have \$1 million in loans by 2016, with 35 businesses employing 200 people,” Mullen said.

Mullen can be reached at Shelly@NEOFundAC.org. The fund’s office is on the third floor of the Water Street Warehouse near the Coast Guard Station.

Growth

From Page 8

A strong repeat business figure. For 2012, 38.3 percent of the lodge guests were repeat visitors. Petrolia said that helps the bottom line because the lodge does not have all the marketing expense that goes into attracting a new guest. The key is to make sure the first-time guest has an experience that makes them want to return.

Doing that involves having a fresh look, amenities and great service. This year, the lodge will spend \$60,000 on upgrading guest rooms to king-size beds and flat-screen televisions. Petrolia said they even added a full-time painter to their maintenance staff so the halls and rooms will have a fresh look.

The lodge offers amenities like a weekend artist in residence program that features local artists and craftsmen, an array of spa services through the LakeHouse Inn & Spa and expanded food and beverage options at the outdoor pool. This year all of the guest bathrooms will be upgraded to comply with AAA ratings standards.

Also new this fall is a covered bridge tour option that utilizes the lodge’s wine shuttle buses. The three-hour tours take the guests to some of the county’s most popular covered bridges.

Many tourism business owners and those in the wine industry hail the lodge as being essential to the growth of their businesses.

THE Composites GROUP®

SHAPING THE WORLD WITH COMPOSITES

From Design to Materials to Prototype through Production

**INTEGRATED
COMPOSITES
SOLUTIONS**

PREMIX



HADLOCK



**QUANTUM
COMPOSITES**



www.thecompositesgroup.com



DESIGN BUILD / GENERAL CONTRACTORS
4817 STATE ROAD ASHTABULA OHIO
WWW.HUGHES-ROLLER.COM
440-997-2618



2012 PROGRESS

ASHTABULA COUNTY

RETAIL

MARK TODD ■ Staff Writer

Retail numbers show growth in Ashtabula County

Across Ashtabula County, empty storefronts and buildings stand as testament — or tombstones — to the dreams of retailers large and small.

Restaurants and shops that threw open their doors to promise were ultimately slammed shut by a local economy shackled by higher-than-average unemployment and tight household incomes.

But if numbers are to be believed, retailers are not only eking out an existence but in some cases thriving — despite the area's sour wage situation.

The all-important county sales tax figures so far are tracking steady, month-by-month improvement — not stellar — but growth nonetheless. And a recent survey of downtown Ashtabula merchants show surprising sales figures last month that topped 2010 numbers by more than \$1 million.

The news is surprising, given the high-profile departure of some of the county's retail giants, led by the closing of Sears at the Ashtabula Towne Square in Ashtabula Township. But the data is reason for hope and shows county residents may be discovering that much of what they need or want doesn't require a half-day shopping trip or a tank of gas.

The county sales tax numbers so far this year have been a real eye-opener. The tax is collected as a result of retail purchases, and so are a good barometer of how much people are spending

at local stores.

Through August, the tax has collected \$347,000 more than the comparable period in 2011, according to figures found on the Ashtabula County auditor's website.

In seven of the eight months tracked, tax dollars have surpassed last year's numbers. The biggest jump came in April, when the tax topped 2011 by nearly 15 percent. January was close behind at 13.2 percent, while July wrapped up the double digit increases to date with a 12 percent increase.

Other gains were more modest

between 3.2 and 6 percent (and 0.65 percent in August) — but gains nonetheless.

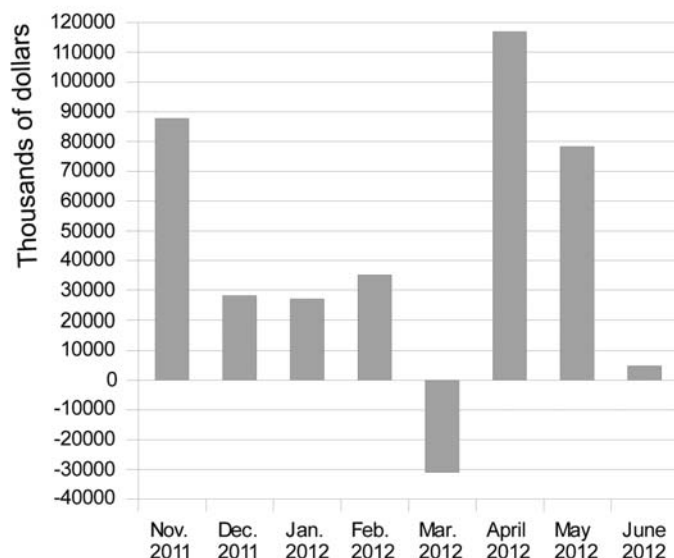
The only reversal came in May, when tax collections dipped nearly 5 percent. Tax dollars, on average are received about two months after they are earned, meaning money received in January and February was the result of sales conducted in late 2011.

County Auditor Roger Corlett was startled by the figures.

"They are pretty strong," he said. "Much better than I expected."

See RETAIL, Page 13

Retail sales tax trends, Ashtabula County



Changes in receipts from same month prior year

Source: Ashtabula County Auditor

SUCCESSFUL PROGRESS



WARREN DILLAWAY / Star Beacon

DICK GRIFFITHS poses in front of the family store on North Broadway in Geneva.

Dick Griffiths has seen ups, downs in local retail

By **MARK TODD**

Staff Writer

mtodd@starbeacon.com

GENEVA — From the ashes of disaster came a new business model for one of Ashtabula County's long-lived retailers.

When Morgan Richard "Dick" Griffiths' parents

opened the doors to their new store in 1950, it sold a wide array of merchandise — even automotive supplies. Two fires in a span of 35 years resulted in the owners' re-evaluation of their product line.

"(Parents) didn't know if they could survive selling

See SEEN, Page 14

Look Who's Making Progress



Orlando Bros.
Golden Dawn

Mon-Sat. 8-9 • Sunday 8-5
Your Hometown Grocery Store
281-285 Main St. • Conneaut
440-593-5039



"Serving the Community Since 1958"

KRAY'S CO. INC.

Quality Pet & Livestock Feed

Snapper • Ariens • Echo
Power Equipment

Mowers • Tillers
Tractors • Rollers

Rts. 20 and 193 • N. Kingsville • 224-2341

GRIFFITHS
FURNITURE, TV & APPLIANCE STORES

**Serving Ashtabula County
for over 62 Years**

GENEVA ASHTABULA
56 N. BROADWAY 3410 N. RIDGE EAST
466-1171 998-5711

8:30-8:00 MON. & FRI.
8:30-5:30 TUES., WED. & THURS.
8:30-5 SAT.

MON.-FRI. 9-8 • SAT. 9-5
SUN 12-5

FREE!
MOST ITEMS
• Delivery!
• Hook-Up
• Removal
of Old!



Bortnick

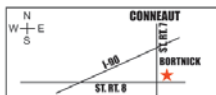
Tractor Sales, Inc.

**Serving You
Since 1954**

5042 Center Rd. • Rt. 7
Conneaut
440-594-3216

or email us at bortnicks1@juno.com

See us on the web at www.bortnicktractorsales.com



Over 51 Years in Business!

CASE



SEWING CENTER



998-1213

860 Center Street
Ashtabula

Monday-Friday 10-5;
Saturday 10-1;
Sunday Closed

Watson's Auto Tech

Serving Ashtabula County for 27 Years

- Factory Maintenance
- Brakes • Alignments • Batteries
- Air Conditioning • Engine Work
- Computer Diagnostics • Tires



224-1297

Corner of Rt. 84E. & State Rd.

**STANLEY
STEEMER®**

1•800•STEEMER®



stanleysteemer.com

ashtabula.crawford@steemer.com

**Jeff & Rachael
Merlene**
Owners

phone 440.593.6771
fax 440.599.2879

734 Harbor Street
Conneaut, OH 44030

**We've been a Leader in
Our Community Since 1888**



Conneaut Savings Bank

Main Office
305 Main St. • Conneaut, OH
440-599-8121
1-888-453-2311

Girard Office
110 Main St. West • Girard, PA
814-774-1110
1-888-955-8121

www.ConneautSavings.com



**Your
Special
Place**

**New
Location**

Uniform Apparel

Monday thru Friday 10-7 Saturday 10-4
2324 Lake Avenue, Ashtabula, Ohio
(440) 998-7580



Serving Our Community for Over 100 Years



STAR BEACON
DELIVERED FRESH DAILY

Call 440-998-2323

FDIC
Insured

We Salute Each of You!

Retail

From Page 11

Corlett was particularly encouraged to see the month-by-month numbers top the preceding year for the past two years. “Last year and this year, both have trended up,” he said.

One reason for the growth is vehicle sales in the county. Sales tax gleaned from car/truck sales is up 22 percent compared to 2011, Corlett said. No other facets of retail are similarly tracked, he said.

Still, other merchants must be enjoying some success to account for the bigger numbers, Corlett said.

“(Auto sales) is just a small piece of the puzzle,” he said. “Somebody's doing well.”

Some of those happier shopkeepers may be found in downtown Ashtabula, based on the results of a confidential, anonymous survey conducted by the Ashtabula Downtown Development Association. Months ago, the ADDA began studying a list of downtown businesses, and discovered 75 within a district bordered by West 58th, Route 20, Collins Boulevard and Elm Avenue.

“That's probably the largest concentration of retail business in Ashtabula County,” said Rick Coblitz, ADDA business representative.

The 75 merchants were sent a survey that asked just two things: Provide your gross sales numbers for 2010 and 2011. “It was a very simple survey,” Coblitz said.

Twenty-two of businesses — about one-third — responded, but their numbers were impressive. In 2011, the businesses posted

SUCCESSFUL PROGRESS



WARREN DILLAWAY / Star Beacon

BERNIE BAKER JR., owner of B.J. Baker Bicycle Sales and Service, displays some of his inventory at his store along Route 20 in Ashtabula.

Baker's bicycle shop is still wheeling through the years

By **MARK TODD**

Staff Writer

mtodd@starbeacon.com

ASHTABULA — For decades, people with the mettle to pedal have been buying their two-wheeled transport at B.J. Baker Bicycle Sales and Service on West Prospect Road in Ashtabula.

The family-run business has been a staple in the Ashtabula economy for more than 63 years, said Bernie Baker Jr., owner.

“My dad bought an existing bike shop that was on Center Street in 1949,” he said. “The shop was moved to Main Avenue in 1960, and then our present

See BAKER'S, Page 15

gross sales of more than \$52.7 million. Better yet, the total marked an increase of more than \$1.7 million over 2010, Coblitz said.

The numbers varied, but

on average the respondents showed 2.4 percent growth between 2010 and 2011, Coblitz said. Others posted numbers that were much higher.

“Some were flat, some declined and some showed 20 percent growth,” Coblitz said.

The ADDA was “encouraged” by the results, believ-

ing they show the downtown district can sustain and grow a business, said Lynda Annick, ADDA president.

“People don't realize what's available (downtown),” she said.

The ADDA undertook the survey in part to prove to doubters that businesses can do well in downtown Ashtabula, Coblitz said. While the ADDA expected good news results, the big numbers proved a jolt, Coblitz said.

“We knew (sales) would be more than people thought, but we were surprised it hit \$50 million,” he said. “Surprised and pleased.”

The survey is proof that businesses can succeed in the city's downtown district, Coblitz said. Success, in turn, generates more customers, he said.

“People do business with people who are successful and do things well,” he said. “(Would-be merchants) want to open a business in an area that's successful.”

The ADDA is not locked in a struggle with other retail sectors in the area, Coblitz said. “We're not trying to compete with Bridge

Street or (Ashtabula Towne Square),” he said.

Instead, the survey shows the downtown district is a viable option for future shopkeepers, Coblitz said. “The rent is inexpensive, there is good through traffic and now we know there are a number of already-successful businesses,” he said.

Also, the survey shows the ADDA's efforts to attract shoppers is paying dividends, Annick said. Studies sponsored by the organization have helped it chart a path that seems to be working, she said. ADDA has helped arrange a variety of events — including the Multi-Cultural Festival — that are held downtown, Annick said.

“We're trying to bring people downtown, and we've been successful,” she said.

ADDA has and is working with several entities — including the city of Ashtabula, Chamber of Commerce, Kent State University Ashtabula, the county's Convention and Visitors Bureau and Bridge Street merchants — to spread the word, Annick said. For

See RETAIL, Page 14

C & L LAWN SERVICE INC.

Locally Owned & Operated • Over 30 Years Experience

COMPLETE LAWN PROGRAMS

- Balanced Fertilizer
- Weed, Insect, Disease Control
- Service Calls at NO Extra Charge
- Liquid and/or Dry Programs
- Guaranteed Results

ADDITIONAL SERVICES

- Deep Root Feeding of Trees & Shrubs
- Vegetation Control
- Core Aeration
- Grub Control

FREE ESTIMATES

Residential & Commercial



997-2019 • TOLL FREE 1-800-833-1917

Tropicana Tanning Salon
440-466-6077

One Month only **\$30** Unlimited

Mon.-Fri. 8-8pm Sat. 8-4 Sunday Closed
263 West Main St. • Geneva, OH

Retail

From Page 13

example, the city recently made some enhancements to parking spots on Main Avenue that resulted in a boost in downtown traffic, she said. The city has also helped spruce up the district, while the Ashtabula Police Department prepared a security/safety manual for businesses, Annick said.

Within the past few months, several new stores and businesses have sprouted in the district, Annick said. "And it's good to see work under way at the Hotel Ashtabula," she said, where renovations are planned by owner Signature Health.

National indicators point to shoppers returning to their downtown districts,

Annick said. "That seems to be the trend, and it's a good one," she said.

The ADDA's 85 members include 74 businesses and 11 individuals, Annick said. The group meets at 8 a.m. the second Friday of each month at the Ashtabula Area Chamber of Commerce office on Main Avenue.

While the figures are encouraging, traffic through the door of Roy Bean's office indicates some people are still unwilling — or unable — to take a chance on a retail career. Bean is a business consultant for Ohio's Small Business Development Center, which is affiliated with Youngstown State University. His number of clients so far this year have shrunk by nearly 12 percent compared to the previous 12 months.

"There have been no sig-

nificant changes over the past year," Bean said. "Actually, my business has declined somewhat. June and July have been my slowest two months back-to-back in the past eight or nine years."

August did display some gumption, however, Bean said. "Last month we saw a nice increase," he said.

As before, the bulk of Bean's trade are people who already operate a business.

The problem is an inability to secure financing for business ventures, Bean said. Ashtabula County residents are discovering financial institutions are still leery of loaning money for new enterprises, he said.

"Small business is hurting when it comes to finance," Bean said. "People are more aware that it's more difficult to get financing, especially for start-ups, through the banks. Some people have

given up on the idea."

Banks, in turn, are wary in tossing money at a project that could result in bankruptcy. "If all the ingredients are not there, they will get turned down," Bean said.

There are a few signs that banks may be easing up somewhat, Bean said. Locally, one bank accepted a deal that "six months ago would have turned down," he said.

Bean's office also provides plenty of referral services, hooking interested people up with other agencies who can help them get started or improve an existing operation.

"One of our things is to be a referral point," Bean said. "There are a lot of sources out there."

Timing is everything, Bean said. Recently, a couple of merchants waited too long to ask for help or advice, and consequently their doors are closed. "The damage had been done," he said.

There are success stories, however, including some

where management proved to be "cooperative and worked with us," Bean said. "There are a couple of companies I feel we have saved," he said.

The Small Business Development Center is open 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. on Tuesdays and Thursdays, and Wednesday when needed. Call Bean at 992-6162 to scheduled an appointment.

Retail is a significant employer in Ashtabula County, according to the U.S. Census Bureau's 2009 review of local business patterns. The review at that time showed more than 4,100 people were employed in the retail sector, trailing only manufacturing (6,225 people) and health care and social assistance (5,776).

The 2009 Census Bureau review pinpointed 2,033 possible business "establishments" within the county, and 359 of them fell into the retail category, according to federal data.

Seen

From Page 11

small appliances," he said. "Sometimes out of adversity comes a direction that works out."

Streamlining the store's offerings has paid dividends. Griffiths Furniture and Appliance Co. has done business in the area for more than 60 years. Griffiths began working for the family business in 1968.

The county has been in the grips of an economic downturn for the past several years. The tough times have been tough on many merchants, as witness the empty storefronts that dot the landscape. Griffiths has also felt the pinch, but credits the store's longevity to a stern work ethic.

"My girlfriend tells me you can't worry about what you can't control," he said. "All you can do is work harder, work smarter and be better than the other guy. Shoppers still have a lot of choices out there."

This year has been a roller coaster ride for the flagship store in Geneva, as well as a newer operation in Ashtabula Township. The Geneva store has had a tough first half, while the Ashtabula outlet has fared better, Griffiths said. The Ashtabula store has benefited from the early-summer closing of Sears in the Ashtabula Towne Square and a number of nearby stores that encourage comparison shopping, he said.

The Geneva business, meanwhile, is a "destination" store that requires special effort from the shopper, Griffiths said. Still, many people are

See SEEN, Page 15

RAYMOND

BUILDERS SUPPLY

"Locally Owned and Operated Since 1947"

www.raymondbuilderssupply.com

Whether you're building a new home, remodeling, building landscape walls or installing a new patio...

VISIT OUR INDOOR AND OUTDOOR DISPLAYS FOR

Patio Brick • Retaining Walls
Veneer Stone • Face Brick

Advantages of Concrete Block Basement

- Time Tested
- Over Poured Walls
- Energy Efficient
- Quality
- Dry and Quiet
- Strong

440-466-4470 • Hours: Monday-Friday 7:30-5 • Sat 8-12
4680 North Ridge Road East • Geneva, OH

RE-ELECT



Peggy

CARLO

Your Commissioner

Committed to making a difference in Ashtabula County

- Ashtabula County Commissioner Since 2008
- 25 Years in Health Care Management
- Saybrook Township Trustee 16 Years

"I am a dedicated and motivated leader. My record shows my success in working together to solve problems in an ethical and professional manner." I would appreciate your vote on Tuesday, Nov. 6, 2012.

www.electpeggycarlo.com

Paid for by the committee to Elect Peggy Carlo for County Commissioner.
J. English Treasurer, 7122 N. Depot Rd., Saybrook, OH 44004

Baker's

From Page 13

location in 1970." Baker acquired the business from his father 10 years later. "I had sold cars and drove trucks (until then)," he said. "I bought into the business in 1980, when dad retired." Bicycle sales and repairs are definitely a niche business, one that caters to a pretty select clientele. Still, a fondness for bikes that doesn't seem to fade has propelled the shop through the decades — and through

Ashtabula County's tough economy. A big breakthrough came when people discovered bicycles weren't just for children, Baker said. "In the 1970s there was quite a boom in the cycling industry," Baker said. "I attribute it to adults who were starting to ride bikes. It became acceptable for grown-ups to ride, and things took off." Today, bicycling is viewed by older folks as an effective — but not too stressful — form of valuable exercise, Baker said. "Baby boomers are actually fueling bike sales in gener-

al," he said. "They want to stay in shape, and cycling is a good, low-impact exercise. "Given a choice, do you want to do a gym or do you want to be out in the fresh air?" Baker said. Baker has not always been spared the downturns in the area's economy. The key to staying afloat when sales are flat is to think a little differently than the competition, he said. "Business can be a struggle," he said. "We're not exempt from that. But in those times you have to be creative. You have to try and offer what the big stores can't."

In Baker's case, that's a considerable knowledge about cycling — and the ability to fix bicycles when things go wrong. "We can still repair them, and a lot of people appreciate that," he said. "Not every bicycle is disposable. With a lot of the better-made bikes, people will maintain them." The repair aspect of the business has come in handy for cyclists traveling the Greenway Trail, which has a starting/stopping point just a couple of blocks from Baker's shop. Riders who encounter mechanical problems often make the trek to the store for a quick fix, he

said. "The Trail has brought in some service business and calls," Baker said. "Some of it is money from outside the county. It all helps." The bulk of Baker's sales, still come from within the county. He sees plenty of repeat business from satisfied customers. "There was one fellow who came in because his family had bought a bike from us in 1951," he said. "Now we're into third- and fourth-generations."

A location along a busy highway has proven very helpful, Baker said. "That was a lucky deal," he said. "Route 20 wound up being a main business area. That has helped." People seem to appreciate a business that puts down roots in the community, Baker said. Stability and familiarity is reassuring to shoppers, he said. "We've had a lot of good feedback recently," Baker said. "One lady told me, 'I'm happy you're here.'"

Seen

From Page 14

making that effort, he said. Upwards of 35 percent of the store's business comes from neighboring Lake County, Griffiths said. "They're going east because there's not too many independent (furniture/appliance) stores left," he said. The up-and-down record comes just a few months after the business logged "one of the best years in history for both stores," he said.

Longevity has also enhanced the store's credibility, Griffiths said. The stores also have a roster of employees that have logged years with the business, Griffiths said. "We went from one generation to the next seamlessly," he said. "Continuity conveys stability." Griffiths doesn't envy today's younger people keen on getting a store off the ground, citing tight lending practices and the sweat equity a retailer invests. "It's so hard today for anybody to start a new business," he said. "People don't realize how hard they would

have to work." Griffiths sees some signs that the economic slump may be easing. Credit reports for customers who want to finance big purchases are more encouraging, he said.

"The approval rating for financing debt may be improving," Griffiths said. "People may be working out of their personal debt. I think they're getting a little bit out of debt." Griffiths, at age 70, is

beginning to throttle back on the business' day-to-day operations. He has no regrets. "It's been a good life," he said. "We've worked hard. And I love Ashtabula County. The people are great."



BARBARA SCHAAB DEMOCRAT for Ashtabula County Recorder

12 years, Austinburg Township Fiscal Officer
• Expenditure and Revenue Accounting
• Maintenance of Township Records
Accreditation from Center for Public Investment Management

I am honored and privileged to have the endorsements of these fine organizations.
 - OAPSE / AFSCME Local 419
 - AFL-CIO Ashtabula County Central Labor Council
 - Construction Laborers' Local 245
 - International Union of Operating Engineers Local 18
 - Pipefitters' Local Union 120
 - AFSCME Ohio Council 8

www.schaab4countyrecorder.com
email: electschaabrecorder@yahoo.com
(440) 275-3042

Paid for by the Committee to Elect Barbara Schaab, Michael Schaab, Treasurer - 2035 Rt. 307 Austinburg, OH 44010

Join Our Celebration!

10th Anniversary

Oct. 18-20

2002-2012

HOME IN THE HARBOR

1005 BRIDGE STREET
ASHTABULA HARBOR
440.964.8000

2012 PROGRESS

ASHTABULA COUNTY

CARL E. FEATHER ■ Staff Writer

Sour economy, cultural issues continue to batter residents' spirits, bodies

While there have been some baby steps made toward improving the health of Ashtabula County residents in the past year, the sour economy and cultural issues continue to batter residents' spirits and bodies.

One of the areas where demand for services has shot up significantly since last fall is mental health. Caseloads at Community Counseling Center have more than doubled over the last 12 months, says Vicki Ochoa, chief program officer.

"Looking back over the last 12 months, we averaged 105 new client intakes per month with individuals who are asking for help with issues such as depression, anxiety, medication management, child behavioral and emotional issues, ad quality of life issues such as housing, financial assistance, job skills and parenting skills, just to name a few," said Ochoa in an email interview.

She said the growing trends are individuals suffering with quality of life issues that stem from a history of mental health and family issues. Ochoa points out that a combination of issues are usually at work. Drug and alcohol addiction are often part of the problem.

"We have situations in which families are separated and the adults lose insurance to care for their own needs," she wrote. "We have children in the community that are suffering with cognitive and learning disorders, but because they cannot get to programs during or after school,

Aging population will become big funding issue for county, state

By **CARL E. FEATHER**
Staff Writer

cfeather@starbeacon.com

An aging population is one of the biggest challenges that will face Ashtabula County and the rest of the state and nation in the decades to come.

According to the Profiles and Projections of the 60-plus Population for Ashtabula County, 21.8 percent of the county's population was over

60 in 2010. Fast forward to 2020 and the percentage grows to 28 percent; in 2030, it soars to 32.5 percent and continues to inch upward through 2050, when 34.2 percent of Ashtabula County residents will be more than 60 years old.

The projections were prepared by the Scripps Gerontology Center at Miami Uni-

See AGING, Page 20

they have a more difficult time."

"The issues in our county regarding the drug and alcohol problems are severe and affecting all ages," she added.

"Grandparents and friends are raising children so the parents can get addiction services; however, there is very little assistance an individual receives to pay for these services. Many have no insurance, or insurance does not pay for these types of services. At CCC, we will work with the individual to meet their treatment needs and develop a financial plan that works for both parties."

CCC is a nonprofit organization. Last year it opened its doors to indigent care and the

agency has, to date, distributed more than \$50,000 in uncompensated mental health and drug and alcohol services. A one-time grant through the Mental Health and Recovery Services Board will reimburse up to \$30,000 in uncompensated mental health services.

Kathy Regal, executive director of CCC, said the agency last week received notification of \$73,058 in Title XX (federal) funding for meeting the mental health needs of the county's indigent population. Regal said the money, which is for the 2013 fiscal year, will allow CCC to expand its outreach to county residents who do not have insur-

See HEALTH, Page 19

SUCCESSFUL PROGRESS



CARL E. FEATHER / Star Beacon

ASHTABULA COUNTY has a traumatic loss team that will reach out to survivors of suicides at the scene of the incident. The team came together under the leadership of Miriam Walton (right), executive director of the Ashtabula County Mental Health Recovery Services Board, and Debbie Jordan from the Ashtabula County Coroner's Office. The team should be in place by end of this month. Volunteers are still needed, especially those who have suffered the loss of a loved one to suicide.

LOSS Team formed to address suicide issue

By **CARL E. FEATHER**
Staff Writer

cfeather@starbeacon.com

ASHTABULA TOWNSHIP — Mental health and suicide prevention top the list of health priorities that came out of the county's Health Needs Assessment, the results of

which were released this year.

One of the responses to this growing problem is the Traumatic LOSS (Local Outreach Suicide Survivors) Team, which "went live" — that is became available for response — at 8 a.m. Sept. 17.

The team of two to four per-

See SUICIDE, Page 22

ASHTABULA TOWERS

An Elderly Preference Community. Rent Based on 30% of Income.



All Utilities Included *(Electric, Gas, Water, & Sewer)*

- On-Site Staff Provides Exceptional Customer Service
- Spacious One Bedroom Apartments
- Controlled Access Building
- Craft & Game Room
- Planned Social Activities
- Walking Distance to Senior Center
- 24-Hour Emergency Maintenance
- Bus Stop at Front Entrance
- One Block from Downtown Ashtabula

(440) 998-6661 • TDD: (440) 992-6366

**Applicants Must Meet
Income & Program Guidelines*

325 W. 48th Street • Ashtabula, Ohio 44004

FORESTCITY  

Nationally recognized care, here in our community.

At University Hospitals, we're proud to offer the highest quality patient care in Ashtabula County and eastern Lake County. Because we believe that being part of our community means giving you access to state-of-the-art services – right around the corner. It's a level of care that is delivered across our entire UH system and has attracted local and national recognition:



UH Conneaut Medical Center and UH Geneva Medical Center – Named national top performers for quality medical and surgical care by the Joint Commission – the leading health care accreditor in the U.S.



American Hospital Association – McKesson
Quest for Quality Prize®
Hospitals in Pursuit of Excellence

University Hospitals – Recognized as the #1 national leader in quality by the American Hospital Association – which honors the top hospital in the country for leadership and innovation in quality improvement and safety.

Learn more about our national recognition and commitment to high-quality, patient-focused care at UHhospitals.org/Quality.

At **University Hospitals**, our mission is you.



UH Conneaut Medical Center
158 West Main Road
Conneaut, Ohio 44030
440-593-1131
UHConneaut.org

UH Geneva Medical Center
870 West Main Street
Geneva, Ohio 44041
440-466-1141
UHGeneva.org

UH Ashtabula Health Center
2131 Lake Avenue
Ashtabula, OH 44004
440-466-1141
UHhospitals.org/Ashtabula

UH Madison Health Center
701 North Lake Street
Madison, OH 44057
440-466-1141
UHhospitals.org/Madison

Health

From Page 16

ance or the financial resources to pay for their counseling services.

The growing need for mental services was driven home by the 2011 Ashtabula County Health Needs Assessment, which was released in 2012. The assessment showed that the age-adjusted suicide rate for Ashtabula County from 2006 to 2008 was 17.4 deaths per 100,000 residents. For the state, it was 11.3 deaths.

The assessment also revealed that 19 percent of the county youth (grades nine through 12) said they had considered committing suicide. For the state, the percentage was 13 percent.

Fatal drug overdoses also are on the rise. There were 18 of them in 2011, 16 the prior year. In just a two-month span earlier this year, four suspected drug overdose deaths occurred at an Ashtabula Township location. Kathleen Kinney, Lake Area Recovery Center executive director, said she had never seen a “drug rise” so dramatic and with such deadly consequences.

Opiate addiction is second only to alcohol among diagnosed addictions in the county. Ashtabula County residents downed 5 million doses of opiates last year, that’s 51 doses for every man, woman and child.

These trends made mental health needs and suicide prevention the top objective that the county’s public health community will tackle in the coming months. The actions are to reduce the number of suicides, both intentional and accidental (overdoses, for example).

Professionals in the mental health field who met

SUCCESSFUL PROGRESS



CARL E. FEATHER / Star Beacon

MARK LEATHERMAN and Mary Graves are heading up the effort to bring a free health clinic to Ashtabula. G.O. Ministries on Station Avenue has offered the use of this classroom for the clinic, which the organizers hope to open in early 2013.

Ashtabula’s first free health clinic crawling toward reality

By **CARL E. FEATHER**

Staff Writer

cfeather@starbeacon.com

ASHTABULA — Mark Leatherman and Mary Graves are in it for the long haul.

Leatherman is president of Ashtabula Free Health Clinic, a non-profit group that wants to establish the city’s first free health clinic at G.O. Ministries. Graves is treasurer.

The idea was hatched in early 2012 and has been fostered with fundraisers and the leg work that goes into setting up any nonprofit entity. Leatherman said they are working getting their 501(c)(3) status from the Internal Revenue Service

while putting together a team of volunteers and medical professionals.

The group’s mission statement is “To provide Ashtabula County’s uninsured and low-income residents with free, high quality, medical care from volunteers who want to give back to their community.”

The biggest hurdle to getting the clinic up and running is finding a general practitioner willing to volunteer his or her time. Leatherman said they already have a dentist, physical therapist and podiatrist signed up.

“We probably have at least 20 nurses who are willing to donate their time,” Leatherman said.

See **CLINIC**, Page 22

earlier this month to discuss strategies for reducing suicide and improving mental health said the system is a patchwork that depends heavily upon grants for funding and is comprised of programs riddled with restrictions. Waiting lists are common and long, and some services, such as residential for men, are nonexistent.

“The major barrier, for many, is money,” said Dr. Deborah K. Franley, public health emergency preparedness coordinator for the county health department. “Everything depends on money, and it’s a very patchwork system.”

One of the mental health needs in the county is a drop-in center where consumers of mental health

services can gather for socialization, says Ron Sigley, a consumer and organizer. Sigley, 48, said mental health consumers often avoid socialization out of fear of being misunderstood or embarrassed. Their condition ends up getting worse as they shut themselves out.

Sigley said a drop-in center could be established in a

store front or church and provide a venue for the clients to visit, play games and munch on snacks. An organizational meeting to discuss the center, which does not have a funding source at this time, is 1 p.m. Sept. 27 at Community Counseling Center.

Sigley said the two goals of the center would be to give the consumers a sense of purpose and provide them with “something they can look forward to.” It would be open to any mental health or counseling consumer.

“I won’t ask what kind of mental illness you have. You come to my door and I’ll accept you,” he said.

The Health Needs Assessment also pointed out a disturbing trend in childhood obesity. Eighteen percent of the county’s youth in grades nine through 12 are obese; statewide, it is 12 percent.

Obesity prevention was thus made the second problem area to be tackled by public health in the prevention cycle. Health care and social services professionals

who recently discussed strategies for the action point said that disengaged parents are one of the major barriers to prevention. If the parents don’t value exercise and proper diet, their youngsters are likewise unlikely to embrace them.

The professionals suggested partnering with Spire Institute and the YMCA on fitness programs for youngsters, involve schools in the Fuel up to Play program and make sure there are active wellness committees in all schools. The goal is to reduce the overall BMI for these students by 3 to 5 percentage points by 2015.

The third action point to come out of the assessment is familiar: chronic disease prevention. This includes the top killers in any community: heart disease, cancer, stroke, diabetes and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease.

This is one area where the county did not make any progress when compared to prior assessments. Heart disease and stroke account-

See **HEALTH**, Page 22

RE-ELECT

Peggy

CARLO

Your

Commissioner

Committed to making a difference in Ashtabula County

- Ashtabula County Commissioner Since 2008
- 25 Years in Health Care Management
- Saybrook Township Trustee 16 Years

“I am a dedicated and motivated leader. My record shows my success in working together to solve problems in an ethical and professional manner.”
I would appreciate your vote on Tuesday, Nov. 6, 2012.

www.electpeggycarlo.com

Paid for by the committee to Elect Peggy Carlo for County Commissioner.
J. English Treasurer, 7122 N. Depot Rd., Saybrook, OH 44004

Aging

From Page 16

versity. Key findings of the report, which is part of the Ohio Long Term Care Research Project, are:

- The 2020 projection is for a 43 percent increase in the size of the 60-plus population, compared to 2010;

- Disability increases with age; only 3 percent of those 60 to 69 have a disability, but the percentage soars to 44 percent for those over 90;

- Overall, one in every three individuals over age 60 have at least one disability;

- By 2020, more than 2,000 individuals over 60 with a severe disability will reside in the county;

- Almost 14 percent of the population that is over 60 live in poverty;

- Nearly eight in 10 individuals over 60 have 12 or fewer years of education.

- Of women over 60, 39 percent live alone; for men, it is 21 percent.

“The unprecedented growth in the older population will present the county (and the state) with a number of challenges in the coming years,” concludes the Scripps report’s author. “Among the older population in Ashtabula County, levels of disability and poverty increase with age, with the oldest old experiencing the highest rates of both. Also of concern is the preponderance of older women among the oldest age groups, who comprise a majority of the impoverished, disabled and single populations. These women, who are highly economically vulnerable, and are potentially in need of significant personal care assistance, are frequently living alone; a trend that is expected to become increasingly



WARREN DILLAWAY / Star Beacon

PATRICIA GREEN, nutrition site manager at the Ashtabula Senior Center, prepares to serve lunch in downtown Ashtabula.

common over the next several decades.”

Paul Fuller, who chairs the Senior Services Levy Advisory Committee, concurs with the report’s findings. Unfortunately, the only solution appears to be more money, and the taxpayer is the most likely source of that.

The county’s 1-mill Senior Services Levy generates about \$1.5 million annually, is already falling short of the need. The advisory board requested in July support from the board of commissioners to place a replacement levy before voters in November. The proposed 1-mill replacement would have generated an additional \$300,000 annually because it would be calculated on updated real estate values.

After researching the proposal, commissioners determined that approach would not work, at least not at this point in the current levy’s five-year cycle. As a result, the waiting lists for services continue to swell.

“We need more money to provide more services. The

demand for services is increasing,” says Martha Gillespie of the Ashtabula County Department of Job and Family Services and an advisory board member.

The programs that show the strongest demand — transportation, home delivered meals and home maker and home health services — also are among the most costly. Fuel and food costs are up, as are personnel costs. Inflation will continue to make these services more expensive, and that will in turn force the fixed-income seniors to relinquish the expense of their vehicle and depend more on services that come to their door. It’s a vicious circle that will grow into a cyclone in the decades ahead unless providers, funders and the government can get a handle on it soon. If \$1.5 million can’t provide the necessary services for 21.8 percent of the population today, imagine how much it will require in 10 years when the size of that population grows by 43 percent and inflation works its magic on the numbers.

“The senior population is growing at the same time as our expenses are growing,” Fuller said.

Planning for this gray tsunami is, at this point, on a short-term basis. Fuller said the advisory committee commissioned a needs survey when the levy was first proposed. That survey determined that prescription assistance was the largest need facing seniors more than a decade ago. But Medicare Part D has since come on the scene and reduced the need for prescription assistance. Meanwhile, transportation, home delivered meals and home-based services surged.

This same survey process, with a focus on the end users, was used by the advisory board when it sought renewal of the levy in 2010. Throughout the levy cycle, the board monitors the demand for services as reported by providers.

“Vendors are getting to the point they have to develop these waiting lists because they simply don’t have the resources to pay for all the services that are being

asked for,” Fuller said.

Tina Dales, a staff supervisor with Community Action, also heads up the Senior Care Network, an organization for senior care providers. She said long-term planning to meet future needs is on the group’s agenda. However, it is about to be folded into an even larger effort, the Ashtabula Senior Advocacy and Protective Network. Dales said the Senior Care Network will become a committee within the umbrella group, ASAPN.

The ASAPN organizational meeting is Sept. 26 and will bring together all of the non-profit agencies that touch the lives of the senior population. Ashtabula County Probate Court Judge Charles Hague is moderator and the motivator. Hague has a special interest in the needs of seniors — his court sees many of the cases involving their mistreatment, and Hague himself is in those “golden years.”

Two years ago, he convened a summit on aging that brought together the various service providers

who assist the senior population.

“We learned there were a lot of agencies in Ashtabula County which touch the lives of our senior citizens,” Hague said. “What we also learned was that many of the agencies didn’t know that the others existed, and if they did know they existed, they didn’t know what services they provided.”

Among the players will be the courts, hospitals and law enforcement. Why the latter?

Hague said if a senior motorist is cited for running a stop sign, the officer needs to consider the infraction could be a symptom of a physical problem rather than a lapse in judgment or skills. Or, if the driver gets belligerent with the officer, it could be a sign of beginning dementia. In either case, that driver needs an advocate.

That’s where the new group would come in — every month, a clinical committee would review cases presented by law enforcement, probate court, hospitals and home health. The committee would thus identify the constantly evolving needs of seniors as they are presented. That’s why many other Ohio counties have this type of network in place.

“The advocacy and protective networks are pretty cheap solutions,” Hague said.

Trumbull County’s network, which provided the model for Ashtabula County’s, operates on a budget of just over \$30,000, Hague said. That provides for a part-time director. Hague said that locating funding for the Ashtabula County’s director position and hiring a person to fill it will become the first priority of this new network. He envisions health care being a major funder for the effort.

AN EXTRAORDINARY COMMUNITY DESERVES EXTRAORDINARY CAREGIVERS.

At The Ashtabula Clinic, we're dedicated to providing only the highest standard of comprehensive, compassionate care.

Each and every day.

Our skillful, trusted physicians are part of a health system that continues to meet the needs of our entire community—from advanced specialty care at Ashtabula County Medical Center to expert in-home medical services at Ashtabula Regional Home Health.

With so many local physicians dedicated to your well-being, you won't find a more qualified, more versatile or more convenient healthcare resource in our entire community.

To learn more, or to schedule an appointment with any of our physicians, call (440) 992-4422 or visit www.acmchealth.org today.

**Ashtabula County
Medical Center**
ACMC Healthcare System

An affiliate of



The Ashtabula Clinic at ACMC.
Your first choice for health.

Cardiology

James Cho, MD
Perry Fleisher, MD
John Stephens, MD

Family Practice

James Chillcott, MD
Suk Choi, MD
Laxman Cingireddi, MD
Richard Krajec, MD
John Lee, DO
David Parker, MD
Archie Wilkinson, MD

Internal Medicine

Robert Dlwgosh, MD
Edward Wiese, MD

Neurology

Preetha Muthusamy, MD
Stephen Selkirk, MD

OB/GYN

Suchada Chaiwechakarn, MD
Dan Lazarescu, MD

Ophthalmology

Alexander Taich, MD

Orthopaedics

John Posch, MD
Mark Verdun, DO

Otolaryngology (ENT)

Michael Papsidero, MD

Pediatrics

Sathish Adigopula, MD
Jude Cauwenbergh, DO
Reham El Gammal, MD
Doris Miller, MD

Podiatry

Michelle Dunbar, DPM

Psychiatry

Archana Brojmohun, MD

Pulmonology

Yisa Sunmonu, MD

Surgery

Evangelos Bibidakis, MD
Timothy O'Brien, MD

Urology

Mark Cabelin, MD

Suicide

From Page 16

sons will respond to suicide and certain other traumatic death scenes, where they will provide support for the family of the victim. The coroner will make the decision as to whether or not to activate a team and have it present at the scene.

Miriam Walton, executive director of the Ashtabula County Mental Health Recovery Services Board, worked with Debbie Jordan

of the Ashtabula County Coroner’s Office to develop the outreach. Discussions began nearly a year ago. The concept got a boost when Ashtabula County was chosen as the site for a regional training session with a LOSS Team member from Champaign/Lucas counties.

“The purpose of it is to be with the families and also give referral information to the families,” Walton said. “To reassure them that the feelings they experience are normal. They may not feel normal, but they really are.”

The team also has a prevention component.

“We know that a family member of a person who was lost to suicide is more likely to commit suicide,” Walton said.

For example, a child who loses a parent to suicide may grow up feeling that it is his or her fate to die in the same manner. For others, the trauma of the loss is so great, the depression so deep, suicide seems the only way out.

“So this is very much a suicide-prevention program,” she said.

Thus far, most of the volunteers on the team are from social services and counseling backgrounds. Jordan says that concerns her because it can be difficult for a professional therapist to set aside all that training and approach the situation as a lay person. Ideally, each team would have at least one member who has survived the suicide of a loved one.

“The family member brings the hope that they have gotten through this,” Jordan said. “We are empathetic, whereas they are

sympathetic.

“That’s what we really need, families who walk the walk,” she added.

Teams will rotate taking turns being on call. The coroner or her investigator, usually after determining that the death appears to be a suicide, will make the call.

Volunteers sit with family members, provide basic needs like water and tissues, and before leaving provide a packet of resource materials, including referrals to services to help them heal.

The team also may be

deployed in situations where there was an unintentional overdose, an increasingly common cause of death in Ashtabula County. In the second quarter of 2012, the coroner handled eight of these cases.

“It is significant,” Jordan said. “It doesn’t sound like a lot, but it is significant.”

Individuals who have survived the suicide of a loved one and are interested in volunteering as a LOSS Team member can get more information from the recovery board office at 992-3121.

Clinic

From Page 19

The large number of uninsured residents inspired Leatherman and the other volunteers to investigate the process of setting up a clinic.

“Right now, according to State Sen. Capri Cafaro, there are 16,000 persons in

Ashtabula County who do not have medical coverage of any kind,” Leatherman said. “No Medicare, no Medicaid.”

According to the 2011 Ashtabula County Health Needs Assessment, 17 percent of the county’s residents do not have insurance. Statewide, it’s 13 percent.

There were 27,528 Ashtabula County residents, or about 27 percent, enrolled in Medicaid in

2009. It is likely that number has grown during the recession.

Leatherman said when he first started investigating the clinic, he assumed the uninsured would be mainly homeless or unemployed people. But he soon discovered the uninsured person is more likely to be a fast food or retail worker, temporary agency employee or seasonal. The Health Needs Assessment determined that in 2011, 22 percent of adults could not see a doc-

tor in the prior year because of cost. When the survey group is narrowed to those with incomes of \$25,000 or less, the percentage soars to 46 percent.

The proposed clinic’s services would include preventive care, management of chronic illnesses and basic physicals. Diagnostic services would not be offered unless a partner can be found who is willing to provide radiology and blood tests without charge.

Baby and toddler care would not be provided. Family planning services, which are available free elsewhere in the community, would not be duplicated at the clinic.

Holistic providers have shown interest in providing their services free of charge, Leatherman said. All practitioners will be covered by liability insurance as a result of the clinic having membership in the Ohio Organization of Free Clin-

ics.

Volunteers don’t have to be doctors or nurses to help. There is a great need for fundraising volunteers. Several events have been held this year and another one is in the planning stages for next month, Graves said.

Leatherman hopes to have the clinic up and running one day a week by late winter. For more information, including ways you can volunteer or donate, go online ashtabulafreehealthclinic.org.



Locally owned and operated since 1928.

- Lift van only 30 minutes notice
- Special Events + Tours even to Canada
- **NO ONE** can beat our price
- Moves- Local and long distance
- 15% Senior discounts
- After school discovery transport
- Open 24/7 including ALL Holidays!

WE NEVER NEVER NEVER CLOSE

440-992-2156
1753 W. Prospect Rd. Ashtabula

Health

From Page 19

ed for 31 percent of all adult deaths in the county from 2006 to 2008, cardiovascular illness the top killer.

Cancer came in second. Many cancers are related to lifestyle, and unfortunately when it comes to smoking, Ashtabula County residents have a long way go. The smoking rate is 22 percent, much higher than the 17 percent U.S. rate. Twenty-four percent of the county’s 17- and 18-year-olds say they smoke.

It comes as no surprise, therefore, that in Ashtabula County lung cancer was the leading cause of cancer deaths in both males and females during the period 2006 to 2008. Colon cancer came in second among males and breast cancer was second among females.

The county’s female breast cancer rate is 31.3 per 100,000 residents. For the state, it is 25.6 per 100,000. The county’s cervical cancer rate, 4.2 cases per 100,000, was also higher than the state’s, 2.7 cases.

In discussing how to address these chronic disease issues, county health care professionals pointed out that while resources

exist in the county, residents don’t take advantage of them because of transportation issues, lack of communication or apathy — some patients simply don’t show up for appointments or both to take their physician’s advice.

The need for more primary care physicians was also listed as a factor. At both the Geneva and Conneaut University Hospitals, a residency program is addressing that need, and ACMC has an ongoing recruitment program for primary care physicians.

For both childhood obesity and chronic diseases issues, the need for more exercise opportunities was

pointed out. While the 27-mile Western Reserve Greenway Trail provides a central north-south path for cycling and walking, most residents must drive a motor vehicle to access it. Those working on the problem say there needs to be more accessibility to paths in every community.

They also noted the need for more food vouchers for local farmer’s markets as a way to encourage lower income residents to eat healthy meals. They said that on the federal level action needs to be taken to restrict the purchase of unhealthier foods with food stamps.

2012 PROGRESS

SOCIAL SERVICES

ASHTABULA COUNTY

MARGIE NETZEL ■ Staff Writer

Social services help out in tough economy

From garage sales to food banks, local services stretching to help all in need

The inside of the former Big Lots store in the Saybrook Plaza is cavernous.

The entire store is empty in stark contrast to the controlled chaos a few months ago, when the place was wall-to-wall full of hundreds of thousands of garage sale items for the annual Garage Sale Bonanza.

For shoppers, the Garage Sale Bonanza is a three-day opportunity to get great deals on gently used items.

But for the volunteers of local charities, it is a lifeline.

Sale director for the Wellness and Total Learning Center Dick Mueller said the charities depend on the revenue the bonanza brings.

“For many of the non-profit organizations who are beneficiaries this year, these funds are critical to their operations,” he said. “Shopping with us is a great way to get great bargains, but it also really supports these 14 charities and gives back to the community, one dollar and one purchase at a time.”

So volunteers spend countless hours cleaning and pricing and organizing everything from blenders to books, toys to tools, furniture to fixtures, crafting supplies to CD's, dishes to decorations and much, much more.

This was the 13th year of the Bonanza, the sale benefited the



MARGIE NETZEL / Star Beacon

SALVATION ARMY STORE employees Brandy Hinton and Gloria Roman (front) organize clothing for sale at the resale store.

Ashtabula County Animal Protective League, Beatitude House, the Conversation Station of Orwell, the Dental Task Force, Faith In Action caregivers, Friends of Children's Services, Girl Scout Troop 80525, Independent Living Services, LIVING! With Cancer support group, Lions Club of Geneva, Signature Health Foundation, Retired and Senior Volunteer Program, Spiderweb of Jefferson and the Wellness and Total Learning Center (WTLC).

The sale is coordinated by WTLC.

APL board president Diane Carr said the sale has grown to be the second biggest fundraiser for the year for the shelter, money desperately needed.

“We can't say it enough — the Bonanza is so important to the shelter,” she said. “The money provides food, repairs to the building, veterinary care for the ani-

See HELP, Page 24

SUCCESSFUL PROGRESS

Job Source has helped 14,000 people so far this year

By **MARGIE NETZEL**

Staff Writer

mnetzel@starbeacon.com

ASHTABULA — Any time is a tough time to be out of work.

Dave Fish, program administrator for the Ashtabula County Job Source said local residents are finding jobs and showing off their skills to employers despite the struggling economy, all with the help of Job Source resources.

“It is a lot of hard work,” he said, “especially with today's economy. The people we are working with have skills and talents and there are jobs out there for them. We are here to help make those connections.”

Fish said skills and talents will get you in the door, but job seekers have to be prepared for that face-to-face, employer-to-potential-employee interview.

“A lot of people haven't had to make a resume in 10 to 15

years,” Fish said, “and now all of the sudden they are thrown back into that world of interviews and resumes and they need help with it.”

Fish and his 18-person partner staff have helped nearly 14,000 people prepare for employment so far this year.

“All our employment efforts are measured by the state and we just got our last year's performance review and we have exceeded every one of them,” he said.

INFO ON EXCEEDING

“Our seminars help people get prepared for the big interview,” he said. “We help them come though full of confidence in themselves and their skills.”

Fish said there are jobs out there.

“The numbers for unemployment for Ashtabula County in July was 8.7 percent, which is decent, because if you look at the last three or four years, that

See 14,000, Page 25

Help

From Page 23

mals, spay and neuter surgeries and staffing for the shelter, which is just so desperately needed. We very much appreciate everyone who donates items, volunteers their time to help with the sale, and everyone who shops and supports the sale."

Mueller said the sale items are priced at less than 10 percent their retail value, and any leftover items are open for the needy to take free after the one-weekend sale is over.

"This is an opportunity for people who are recommended to us by local social service agencies to come in and get household items free," he said.

The rest of the leftover items are donated to local Goodwill and Salvation Army locations.

Other local social service agencies strive to provide food and shelter.

G.O. Ministries on Station Avenue is a multi-faceted center that provides church services, a food pantry, soup kitchen, recreation center, clothing bank and resources for babies and small children. The center moved to the former Thurgood Marshall Elementary this year.

The soup kitchen opens at 4 p.m. and serves dinner until 5:30 p.m., daily, feeding 60 to 75 hungry people each day on average.

To donate, volunteer, or schedule a baby shower, call 997-0040 or 992-9118.

Volunteers at Spiderweb of Jefferson do everything from fold clothes to tutor students.

The goal of the organization is to motivate youth and families. "To inspire and encourage at-risk youth and their families to make healthy choices and gain self confidence to succeed through a support network of caring volunteers," according to the Spiderweb mission statement.

The organization, located at 133 East Jefferson St., works

SUCCESSFUL PROGRESS



MARGIE NETZEL / Star Beacon

G.O. MINISTRIES employee Ida Evans opens cans in preparation for the center's daily soup kitchen meal.

G.O. Ministries, moves, expands, serves more people in 2012

By MARGIE NETZEL

Staff Writer

mnetzel@starbeacon.com

ASHTABULA — Ida Evans is a woman of all trades.

Some days she cooks in the soup kitchen at G.O. Ministries. Other days Evans folds clothes at the in-house clothing bank or packs boxes of food for the food pantry.

Evans, an employee at G.O. Ministries on Station Avenue in Ashtabula sees needs fulfilled on a daily basis — empty stomachs are filled, clothing is handed out, prayers are whispered.

throughout the Jefferson area and other parts of the southern portion of Ashtabula County.

The organization provides free tutoring for students in kindergarten to sixth grades that attend Jefferson Area Local Schools and operates a

"I just do whatever they need me to do here, whenever it needs done," she said.

G.O. Ministries is a multi-faceted center that provides church services, a food pantry, soup kitchen, recreation center, clothing bank and resources for babies and small children.

This year was a banner year for the center, which relocated to the former Thurgood Marshall Elementary School in February.

"This facility is a miracle for us," said the Rev. John Salters, founder of

See G.O., Page 25

free clothes closet that is open five days a week at the Spiderweb center, including "Cinderella's Closet" at Spiderweb which gives away homecoming, special occasion and prom dresses and accessories. Cinderella's Closet is open on Tuesdays

and Thursdays from 3 p.m. until 6 p.m.

The workers at the Salvation Army store on Main Avenue in Ashtabula have never-ending jobs.

The employees "process" 1,500 items of clothing for sale each day, Manager Cheryl Golding said.

"That means we check it in, hang it up, price it, date it, tag it and display it, then sell it. Every single day," she said.

The store offers low-cost, used clothing for men, women and children, fashion accessories, shoes, furniture, toys, books and household goods.

"Our customers really appreciate what we sell here for the prices we sell it," Golding said. "It means something to them when they find what they need at an affordable price when the cost of the same item new just isn't possible for them."

The store accepts donations during business hours daily and is closed on Sundays.

When donations come into the Ashtabula Goodwill store in the Harbor, it is the beginning of a long process and the start of funding for job training and advancement locally, said Goodwill Industries marketing manager Alexandra VanAllen.

"What people see at the retail level is really just the beginning," she said. "The beginning starts with the donation, but then that donated item goes through 15 pairs of hands before it ever reaches the store floor."

Purchases from a local Goodwill Industries store make the broadest impact on the community by way of job training and skills improvement for local residents, VanAllen said.

"The broadest impact of Goodwill on Ashtabula County residents is that we work to improve quality of life for people," she said. "We take 100 percent of the profits from our retail stores and we plug that money back into the community in the way of job training."

"That training helps people get back on their feet," she said.

VanAllen said donations of gently used items are the easiest way to support Goodwill.

"Women's clothing and housewares are our bread and butter," she said. "Goodwill is hyper-local. If an item comes into an Ashtabula store, it either stays in the local store or goes into the area and the money stays right in the Ashtabula County area. I can honestly say we are about the only social service that does that."

The Donahoe Center hosts many services to Ashtabula County residents, starting with the Ashtabula County Department of Job and Family Services.

ACDJFS employs 135 social service workers.

Ohio Works First provides cash assistance to eligible low income families; food stamps to eligible citizens; and a Prevention, Retention and Contingency Program, which provides short term immediate benefits and services to needy families and low-income employed families in need of help.

The Alien Emergency Medical Program provides medical coverage for the treatment of emergency medical conditions of non-citizens. The Healthy Families program, which is part of Medicaid, is for income-qualifying families.

The Healthy Start program, provided through Medicaid, covers the medical needs of children and pregnant women; and the Adult Community Medicaid provides health care coverage for people age 65 and over, or disabled citizens.

The Benefit Recovery and Fraud Program is responsible for the detection and prevention of fraud and the recovery of benefits.

For more information on the ACDJFS departments in the Donahoe Center, call 998-1110.

The Donahoe Center houses more than just ACDJFS.

Located in the campus of offices is the Community Counseling Center. This office of psychologists focuses on the evaluation, prevention, diagnosis, and treatment of mental health issues. A clinical psychologist uses psychotherapy and other counseling skills to improve emotional and mental health.

For more information on the Community Counseling Center at the Donahoe Center, call 998-4210.

The recovery center also hosts group meetings for people who are chemically addicted.

For more information or for a list of Alcoholics Anonymous meetings, call 998-0722.

The Donahoe Center is home to the Lake Area Recovery Center, a private, non-profit corporation that provides treatment and prevention services to addicts and patients with compulsive behaviors.

ACDJFS is also spiderwebbed into local communities in the center's two satellite sites — one on main Avenue next to Huntington Bank and one on Lake Avenue.

The Main Avenue site hosts nursing home Medicaid for health coverage for people in nursing homes. Specialized Medicaid programs provide health coverage for elderly or disabled individuals who meet special conditions, including waivers, hospice and residential state supplement insurance.

Adult Protective Services investigates reports of abuse, neglect and exploitation of adults age 60 and older.

Healthcheck and pregnancy services provides assistance to medical providers and case management and transportation for Medicaid eligible children and pregnant women.

The Ashtabula County Senior Service Levy, which raises tax funds on behalf of the Ashtabula County Commissioners to fund senior centers, senior services and funds

See HELP, Page 25

G.O.

From Page 24

G.O. Ministries. “We needed the space and this is the answer to our prayers.”

The year included the addition of a community garden, harvested weekly for anyone who needs fresh produce. Volunteers work in the garden daily, Salters said.

“This year we actually had a fantastic yield, which is a miracle, really, given the desperate lack of rain.”

The soup kitchen opens at 4 p.m. and serves dinner until

5:30 p.m., daily, Salters said, feeding 60 to 75 hungry people each day on average.

“At the end of the month, just before people get their checks and food stamps, we can get as many as 115 people here every day for the meal,” he said.

Salters said there is no charge for food or clothing at G.O. Ministries.

“I cannot say it enough,” he said. “There is some misinformation out there that we are charging for meals, but that isn’t true. The very last thing we want is for someone who needs food or clothing to stay away because they think they will be charged.

There is absolutely no charge for food or clothing at G.O. Ministries.”

Salters said the center charges a small fee for the use of the recreational facilities, the gymnasium, game room and exercise center.

“That money helps us maintain the equipment and such,” he said.

G.O. Ministries also houses a food pantry. Food distribution is every Thursday from 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. Identification and proof of residence is required. Salters said the center serves 200 to 300 people each week at the food pantry.

Salters said the center sur-

vives for those in need by gracious donations from the community.

“Of course we always need money to pay the bills and make upgrades to the building,” he said. “The cost of utilities and maintenance on the building is a constant stress. We need 150 people to donate \$30 a month to pay for our utilities,” he said.

“The utilities here are astronomical. I mean, you just can’t imagine the cost.”

But there are many ways to give to G.O. Ministries, he said.

Donations of food, especially green beans, tuna, beef stew, tomato sauce, bottled

water and beverages, sugar, milk and eggs are always needed.

Monetary donations can be sent to G.O. Ministries, P.O. Box 1173, Ashtabula 44004 or can be made at the Andover Bank branch in the Ashtabula Harbor. Donations of food, furniture, household goods, clothing and other items can be made at the center from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., daily.

Mae Salters said organizations and churches hold “baby showers” for the ministry to gather donations of baby items such as wipes, diapers, formula, blankets and other goods.

“These events can be a lot of fun and they really, truly help young mothers in Ashtabula,” she said.

To donate, volunteer, or schedule a baby shower, call 997-0040 or 992-9118.

Help

From Page 24

the annual Senior Citizens Conference at Kent State University — Ashtabula Campus.

The Main Avenue site also houses child care.

The Ashtabula County Job Source (ACJS) is located at the Lake Avenue site of ACDJFS.

Area residents looking to get back into the work force can visit the ACJS, which houses representatives many organizations that assist people in finding work.

The program includes a resource room including computers, fax machines and

many other tools to help people in the job hunt.

The ACJS offers seminars to help people understand how to prepare for a job interview or learn how to write a resume.

The Workforce Investment Act (WIA) adult program helps “self-directed” adults find employment, while the dislocated worker program, also funded by the WIA, helps people who have been laid off or fired find new employment.

The WIA youth program includes tutoring and training to enhance study skills, alternative education opportunities, summer work linked to educational or occupational learning, paid and unpaid work experience opportunities, occupational skills train-

ing, leadership development, supportive services as needed, mentoring programs and training and employment career guidance and counseling.

Child support enforcement is a major function of the Main Avenue office. The office oversees the location, establishment, modification and enforcement of child support and the establishment of paternity in necessary cases.

For more information on

these programs, call the ACDJFS Main Avenue office at (994-2050).

The Lake Avenue ACDJFS also houses the county’s public transportation services, including the Ashtabula County Transportation System (ACTS) bus; the senior levy transportation program and Medicaid transportation.

For more information on the services offered at the ACDJFS Lake Avenue site, call (994-1234).

14,000

From Page 23

is lowest since 2008 in that month. In 2009, 2010, and 2011, the unemployment rate was all double figures,” he said.

The Job Source serves Ashtabula, Geauga and Portage counties. The Ashtabula County Job Source is a comprehensive one-stop facility, Fish said.

Fish said the local government social agencies have been losing significant funding, “across the board.”

“So we have more and more people to serve and less and less dollars to serve them with,” he said. “That is our challenge.”

One problem: people don’t know the Job Source is available to them.

“It has been a problem forever,” he said, “getting people to know that we are here and we are here to help.”

Locally owned and operated since 1928.

- Lift van only 30 minutes notice
- Special Events + Tours even to Canada
- **NO ONE** can beat our price
- Moves- Local and long distance
- 15% Senior discounts
- After school discovery transport
- Open 24/7 including ALL Holidays!

WE NEVER NEVER NEVER CLOSE

440-992-2156

1753 W. Prospect Rd. Ashtabula

Congratulations
Mickey Mihalick
25 Years of service with
Ashtabula County Court,
Western Division

Certified Court Manager
through the National
Center for State Courts

“As Clerk of the Western County Court, it has been and will continue to be my pleasure serving the public and legal community of Ashtabula County.”

Mickey Mihalick

2012 PROGRESS FINANCIAL

ASHTABULA COUNTY

ELLEN KOLMAN ■ Staff Writer

Credit unions and county banks focus on their customers

Ashtabula County's credit unions and community banks continue to grow by focusing on their customers and the communities they serve.

"Here for everyone, committed to you," is the slogan of Community First Credit Union, 2043 E. Prospect Road, Ashtabula Township.

Community First has proven their commitment to Ashtabula

County through the many community service projects that garnered the credit union the 2011 Dora Maxwell Social Responsibility Recognition Program award. The award is presented through the Ohio Credit Union League.

"All of the work we have done to help our community is way over and above checking accounts and loans," said Mike

Riesterer, chief executive officer of Community First Credit Union.

The credit union has made significant progress in the last 12 months in new members, total deposits and the popularity of their kid's club.

Community First is member owned with a volunteer seven member board of directors who represent various aspects of the

community. There are no stock holders and the members elect their board members.

"Our total deposits have increased by six percent in the last 12 months and our total assets have increased from \$67 million to 71 million," Riesterer said.

Community First also was recently awarded BauerFinancial's five-star rating for 70 con-

secutive quarters. BauerFinancial Inc. is located in Coral Gables, Fla.

"Your family financial center" is the slogan of the Conneaut Savings Bank. The bank, 309 Main St., Conneaut, has been serving the residents of Conneaut and surrounding communities since 1888.

"The importance of the com-

See BANKS, Page 28



2909 State Road
Ashtabula

(440) 998-2707

345 S. Chestnut Street
Jefferson

(440) 576-4382

583 South Broadway
Geneva

(440) 415-9900

www.LakeviewFCU.com LFCU@LakeviewFCU.com



Lakeview Federal Credit Union is a full-service financial institution for all of Ashtabula County.

We offer competitive loan rates, a variety of savings options and free checking accounts. Plus, take advantage of our convenient electronic services such as Home Banking, Bill Pay and Mobile Money!

*Live Here.
Work Here.
BANK HERE.*

SUCCESSFUL PROGRESS

Andover Bank is 'big on' serving the community



WARREN DILLAWAY / Star Beacon

THE ASHTABULA Harbor branch is just one of many offices of Andover Bank in the area.

By ELLEN KOLMAN
For the Star Beacon

ANDOVER — “We’re big on YOU!” is the slogan for Andover Bank, a local independent privately held community bank, which began more than 125 years ago and serves Andover, Ashtabula Harbor, Conneaut, Geneva, Jefferson, Austinburg and Madison.

Andover Bank has proven its commitment to Ashtabula County through a variety of community service activities, campaigns and activities throughout 2011 and 2012.

Just some of the activities include in July, 2012, the bank promoted “Spirit Week,” and

collected money and goods for the American troops. In June, the bank took on a challenge to assist a local ministry with planting an acre of land to assist with their cause to feed the needy in the area. Also in June, the bank donated money to the Ashtabula Arts Center for its annual Regatta for the Arts fundraiser. In March, Andover Bank received the United Way of Ashtabula’s Community Impact Award because of the generous employee and corporate donations. In April, each bank location selected a place in their community to donate and plant a tree for Arbor Day. Also in April, the bank donated \$5,000 to Beatitude

House, in Ashtabula, which provides housing for homeless women and children. In January, 2012, the Geneva banking office received The City of Geneva’s Economic Development Recognition Award as a Cornerstone Business.

In 2011, Andover Bank made many contributions or helped in some tangible way the Salvation Army, Ashcraft Industries, Andover Public Library, Goodwill Industries, G.O. Ministries, the Animal Protective League, and more.

“We measure our size not only by numbers but by the hearts of our employees. We are big on

See SERVING, Page 29



**we’re big on
small business**

Call Bob, Steve or Tom Today!
888-343-2200

we’re just a small-town community bank, but...

we’re big on YOU™



**Andover
Bank**

www.andoverbankohio.com

Banks

From Page 26

munity bank is local decisions made by local people," said Philip Heffelfinger, who has been the president and chief executive officer for 15 years and 35 years total with the bank.

Conneaut Savings Bank remains stable at \$83 million in total assets, which is about the same as last year, Heffelfinger said.

As of June 30, 2011, the bank's market share in the city of Conneaut is 46.40 percent of savings deposits in banks insured by the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC).

CSB has a bank in Austinburg Township and in Girard, Pa.

The bank provides primarily all forms of savings, certificates of deposits, specializes in residential loans, new construction and new vehicle loans.

"We are lending money the same as we did before the economic downturn,"

Heffelfinger said. "Our biggest concern is the loss of equity in our homes and people who are seeking home equity loans have been affected as to how much they can borrow against their homes."

Conneaut Savings Bank recently was awarded BauerFinancial's five-star rating for 72 consecutive

See BANKS, Page 29

SUCCESSFUL PROGRESS



**MIKE
RIESTERER**
CEO



**MARK
DEGEORGE**
Assistant manager



**LUCY
CAMPBELL**
Treasurer

Community is first at Community First Credit Union

By **ELLEN KOLMAN**
For the Star Beacon

ASHTABULA TOWNSHIP — Community First Credit Union, 2043 E. Prospect Road, believes community service must be woven through the fabric of its institution.

The reward for that philosophy came in April from the Ohio Credit Union League, Columbus, when the credit union was presented with the Dora Maxwell Social Responsibility Community Service Award.

The award recognized the credit union's fundraising efforts for the American Cancer Society's Relay for Life and the American Heart Association. In addition, the credit union's staff also participated in 21 other fundraisers in Ashtabula County including a blood drive for the American Red Cross Ashtabula Chapter and donations to area food pantries.

"All of the work we have done to help our community is way over and above checking accounts and loans," said Mike Riesterer, chief executive officer of Community First Credit

Union.

The credit union has made significant progress in the last 12 months in new members, total deposits and the popularity of their kid's club.

Community First is member owned with a volunteer seven member board of directors who represent various aspects of the community. There are no stock holders and the members elect their board members.

"Our total deposits have increased by six percent in the last 12 months and our total assets have increased from \$67 million to 71 million," Riesterer said.

The kid's club, Dollar Dog has increased to 106 members as it finishes out its first year.

"Our employees are really having fun with the Dollar Dog program, and the kids love it," said Lucy Campbell, treasurer for the credit union.

The credit union's website (www.schoolcu.com) has lots of educational games where kids can learn about saving money while having fun with Dollar Dog, Campbell said.

The website also has

See FIRST, Page 29

Thank You for Voting Us

**A Best of
ASHTABULA
2012**

**Community First
Credit Union
BEST FINANCIAL
INSTITUTION**

As voted by listeners of



In recognition for exceptional performance in the continual daily effort to serve customers' needs and exceed customer expectations.

**NEW or USED
AUTO
LOANS**

Financing As
Low As
1.99%
APR
(Rates subject
to change)

Apply Today:

On-Line
By Phone
In Person



**Buy a
New or
Used
Vehicle**

440-997-5919

www.HereForEveryoneOnline.com

JOIN THE DOLLAR DOG KIDS CLUBSM



www.HereForEveryoneOnline.com



**2043 East Prospect Rd
Ashtabula, OH 44004
(440)997-5919**

Serving

From Page 27

them and our community,” said Martin Cole, president and chief executive officer of Andover Bank.

Andover Bank’s continued success is indisputable, and according to the numbers, 2011, and so far 2012, have shown record growth. The bank’s assets hit \$320 million at the end of 2011; and as of June 30, their assets are at \$329 million, according to Andover Bank’s 2012 mid-year report.

“We were pleased to see our assets continue to grow by 2.9 percent. The confidence our markets have in us was demonstrated by our deposit growth of \$5,487,700 or 2 percent,” Cole said in his letter to the stock holders in the 2012 mid-year report.

For the second year in a row, Andover Bank ranked in the 100 by the American Bankers Association. Andover ranked 91 in the nation for the bank’s 2011 performance. In addition, Seifried & Brew, LLC, a bank risk management and rating firm, ranked Andover Bank number 120 or in the top 3 percent of banks in the nation with assets between \$100 million and \$10 billion. There are about 4,700 banks that fall in this category, the report said.

“Our accomplishments are possible due to the leadership and commitment of our board of directors and the dedication of our staff,” Cole said.

Banks

From Page 28

quarters. BauerFinancial Inc. is located in Coral Gables, Fla.

Heffelfinger said it is important to him and his staff to remain active, and give back, to the communities they serve.

“We have almost a 100 percent support of the United Way of Ashtabula County among our staff,” he said.

The Conneaut Savings Bank has also over the years adopted families and have made contributions to area food banks.

Community banks and credit unions both have a community mind-set and they are managed by members of the local community. Where the two differ is where the profits go.

According to www.consumersavvytips.org, the investors of a bank are reaping the profits of the institution, while credit unions are non-profit entities. The profits of the

credit unions are being returned to the members of the credit union in the form of lower loan interest rates and higher dividends, the website said.

For 51 years, Lakeview Federal Credit Union has been committed to serving Ashtabula County. The credit union has three locations: Geneva, Jefferson and Ashtabula Township.

Anyone who lives, works or worships in Ashtabula County may open an account and do business at the credit union. Today, LFCU has 8,500 members, up 12 percent from August, 2011.

“We continue to grow because we are local and people trust us. We make all of our own decisions between the board of directors and management while following federal guidelines,” said Sherry Cornell, president and chief executive officer of Lakeview Credit Union, 2909 State Road, Ashtabula Township.

The credit union has also experienced a 10 percent growth in their assets since August, 2011 to August, 2012.

Recently, LFCU was awarded BauerFinancial’s five-star rating for 88 consecutive quarters. BauerFinancial Inc. is located in Coral Gables, Fla.

The credit union has branch offices in Geneva and Jefferson.

LFCU’s is committed to community service, and the staff, board and members work very hard at each event, Cornell said.

Just some of the events LFCU sponsored in the past year included Stuff the Bus which benefits students in Buckeye, Geneva and Jefferson School districts; area food pantries; the Ashtabula County Animal Protective League; Mitten Trees during the holiday season; Red Cross blood drives; the 4-H Small Animal Barn at the Ashtabula County Fairgrounds; and the Beatitude House,

Ashtabula.

“We’re big on YOU!” is the slogan for Andover Bank, a local independent privately held community bank, which began more than 125 years ago and serves Andover, Ashtabula Harbor, Conneaut, Geneva, Jefferson, Austinburg and Madison.

Andover Bank’s continued success is indisputable, and according to the numbers, 2011, and so far 2012, have shown record growth. The bank’s assets hit \$320 million at the end of 2011; and as of June 30, their assets are at \$329 million, according to Andover Bank’s 2012 mid-year report.

“We were pleased to see our assets continue to grow by 2.9 percent. The confidence our markets have in us was demonstrated by our deposit growth of

\$5,487,700 or 2 percent,” said Martin Cole, president and chief executive officer of Andover Bank in his letter to the stock holders in the 2012 mid-year report.

For the second year in a row, Andover Bank ranked in the 100 by the American Bankers Association. Andover ranked 91 in the nation for the bank’s 2011 performance. In addition, Seifried & Brew, LLC, a bank risk management and rating firm, ranked Andover Bank number 120 or in the top 3 percent of banks in the nation with assets between \$100 million and \$10 billion. There are about 4,700 banks that fall in this category.

“Our accomplishments are possible due to the leadership and commitment of our board of directors and the dedication of our staff,” Cole said.

First

From Page 28

the Home and Family Financial Resource Center containing articles for anyone who needs financial education.

Community First also was recently awarded BauerFinancial’s five-star rating for 70 consecutive quarters. BauerFinancial Inc. is located in Coral Gables, Fla.

Community First offers various products and services including basic checking and saving accounts, loans including auto, mortgage

and recreation vehicle loans; and home improvement loans. Other services include regular share account, share certificates, money market accounts, IRA accounts and IRA certificates (Individual Retirement Account).

For the technology savvy, Community First also offers mobile banking members can do right from their phones. A non-technological service, but one steeped in tradition, is the Christmas Club accounts.

“On Oct. 1, we will be mailing out checks totaling up to almost a half million dollars to our members,” Riesterer said.



SNODGRASS
CERTIFIED PUBLIC ACCOUNTANTS
AND CONSULTANTS



Rich Vanek



Larry Johnson



Richard Mole

For 44 years, S.R. Snodgrass has been a part of Ashtabula County. We have established our business, families and lives here. As we think about “PROGRESS,” we would like to recognize all of our clients past and present. We are proud to be a viable business that supports and contributes to the growth of the community. We say thank you to our clients, families and friends for making Ashtabula County a wonderful place to work and live.

4820 State Road, Ashtabula, OH
(440) 993-2142

124 S. Main Street, Andover, OH
(440) 293-5047

2012 PROGRESS REAL ESTATE

ASHTABULA COUNTY

SHELLEY TERRY ■ Staff Writer

Ashtabula County Realtors welcome rise in home sales

Foreclosure sales have fallen considerably in Ashtabula County in the past year, as a lack of viable supply forced buyers to turn to other options.

Couple that news to a boom in vacant land and farm sales as residents discover there might be gas and oil hiding deep in the ground, and you have happy Realtors and happy buyers.

"It's been very, very busy," said Carole Stormer-Vaux, sales agent and Realtor with Remax Innovations. "We are back to more buyers than homes, if the homes are priced correctly."

Stormer-Vaux said she's having a record year, selling land and homes all over the county, as well as in Geauga and Lake counties.

"I'm very optimistic," she said. "I think our home values are going to start crawling up."

Jim Jordan, owner of Chicago Title in Jefferson, said statistics provided by the county's Multiple Listing Services show total sales of new and existing residential homes posted a 2 percent decrease so far this year compared to the same period in 2011.

"It's nearly flat in Ashtabula County," he said. "The good news is the average sale price is up 2 percent from last year."

According to the Ashtabula County Auditor's Office, residential sales are up 3 percent from last year, and sale prices are up 4 percent, Jordan said.

"So, we are seeing sale prices

moving up modestly," he said.

As employment numbers improve and people see the values of their homes rising again, they will work toward buying a home, Stormer-Vaux said.

The Ohio Association of Realtors said statistics provided by the state's Multiple Listing Services show sales of new and existing homes posted a 12.9 percent increase during the first seven months this year compared to the same period in 2011.

The average home sale price also rose to \$125,835 up from \$121,074 for an increase of 3.9 percent, according to the Ohio Association of Realtors, and the average sale price for July increased by 7.9 percent to \$140,512, up from \$130,166 a year ago.

Even better news — Northeast Ohio home sales rose 19.6 percent in July from a year ago, according to the Ohio Association of Realtors and the Northern Ohio Regional Multiple Listings Service Trade groups.

"First time buyers are back," Howard Hanna IV, the Cleveland-based president of Howard Hanna's Ohio Division, was quoted as saying in the Aug. 22 edition of Crain's Cleveland Business. "Last year, first time buyers were almost nonexistent in the marketplace ... With rent increasing, more first-time buyers are putting up their heads now and asking if they are better

See REALTORS, Page 31

SUCCESSFUL PROGRESS



SUBMITTED PHOTO

THE 2012 Ashtabula Foundation board members are (seated from left) Joseph A. Misinec, Jr., Cheryle Chiaramonte, John D. Dolan, Andrew M. McElroy, (standing from left) Roy H. Bean, Vice President, Roger Corlett, Robert G. David, G. Richard Coblitz, President, William W. Hill, Treasurer, Glen W. Warner and Jerome R. Brockway.

Ashtabula Foundation celebrates 90 years of making county a great place

By SHELLEY TERRY

Staff Writer

sterry@starbeacon.com

For 90 years, the Ashtabula Foundation has been led by civic-minded people who volunteer their time to further the philanthropic mission of the Foundation.

The board is responsible for investing money to ensure that there will continue to be money

available in the future for those in need in Ashtabula County. The trustees receive grant requests from non-profit organizations and then review the requests and give out the money to whom they believe are most deserving.

The board boasts 125 years of combined experience, living and working in all parts of the county. They are bankers, educators, business owners, politicians, medical administrators

See GREAT, Page 31

Great

From Page 30

and clergy.

Board members are Joseph A. Misinec, Jr., Cheryle Chiaramonte, John D. Dolan, Andrew M. McElroy, Roy H. Bean, Vice President, Roger Corlett, Robert G. David, G. Richard Coblitz, President, William W. Hill, Treasurer, Glen W. Warner, and Jerome R. Brockway.

The Foundation got its start in 1922 when a prominent Ashtabula entrepreneur and philanthropist, Rudolf Henry Pfaff, had a vision and invested \$5,000. The Pfaff family also contributed money to the foundation while alive and by bequests after their deaths.

Pfaff and his family were supporters of Ashtabula General Hospital. At the time of his death in 1935, Pfaff created a designated account of \$250,000 for the benefit of the hospital. Since that time, the hospital, now known as Ashtab-

ula County Medical Center, has received annual distributions from the income of that account. The value of that account is nearly \$1.3 million.

Thanks to the foresight of many donors throughout the years, the value of the Ashtabula Foundation's assets is \$15.5 million, making Ashtabula County a better place to live, work and play.

"This is a real tribute to those benefactors that have built such a legacy and, as a result, millions of dollars have been granted to many organizations," Bean said, who serves as chairman of the marketing committee, as well as vice president.

Warner, past president and a member of the board since 1987, said the Foundation has represented trust and confidence of those who wish to leave a financial legacy for the betterment of the community.

"They may designate funds for a specific purpose, or specify them as undesignated to meet future changing needs in a chang-

ing society," he said. "Whichever choice, the funds are invested for growth and held with high ethical standards for maximum effectiveness."

Coblitz, who is the current president, said he finds it rewarding to sit on the board.

The Foundation also has several multiple year commitments, such as supporting the work of the Civic Development Corporation, and Kent State University Ashtabula.

Recent contributions have been made to the Ashtabula Arts Center, Ashtabula County District Library, St. Peter's Fine Arts Program, American Red Cross Ashtabula Chapter, Ashtabula Dream Center, Beatitude House, Community Action, HALO, Jefferson United Methodist Church, Salvation Army, United Way, Ashtabula County Agricultural Society, Peoples Baptist Church, and many more.

Realtors

From Page 30

off buying."

Howard Hanna's own statistics show about 20 percent of its closings so far this year were first-time buyers, compared with 9 percent in 2011. Part of the decrease is due to the end of the federal income tax credit for first-time buyers, which stepped up purchases in 2010.

Good news at the banks has helped, too.

On Sept. 11, the 30-year fixed rate mortgages were at 3.50 percent, and 15-year fixed rates at 2.75 per-

cent, according to local banks.

The 30-year refinance fixed rate was 3.54 percent, and the 15-year refinance fixed rate was 2.91 percent, according to local banks.

Local Realtors say they are seeing a more balanced market for sellers and buyers this year. Homes are on the market for a shorter period of time than they were a year ago.

For buyers who "flip" homes (buy and sell houses for a hefty profit), area Realtors say they can do a comparative market analysis for you before and after repairs that will help you see the potential profit.

Ashtabula City Manager

Jim Timonere said communities with higher percentages of home ownership tend to be more stable. He estimated that the city's ratio of ownership is 50/50.

"We want to see more owner-occupied homes," he said.

Timonere said investors that do a good job of rehabbing homes are important to the community.

Anyone selling a home better make sure it is clean, neat and in working condition, Stormer-Vaux said.

She said there is no better time than now to buy or sell a home — Interest rates are low, there's nothing more to wait for!

SUCCESSFUL PROGRESS

Building permits show steady growth in county

By SHELLEY TERRY

Staff Writer

sterry@starbeacon.com

JEFFERSON — Nearly \$17 million in new homes, additions, garages, sheds and patios were built in Ashtabula County during 2011.

David Smith, chief building official for the Ashtabula County Building Department, keeps track of residential and commercial construction.

Overall, last year's numbers are down from 2010, but the department still kept busy, thanks to an agreement with the City of Ashtabula to issue permits and perform residential inspections in the city. Consequently, the data from the county department is now countywide.

However, the Building Department does not inspect agricultural buildings, structures on state-owned property or operated by the federal government.

So far this year, building permits have been pulled for 60 new residential structures, 181 additions/alterations, 32 detached garages, 38 accessory structures, and one industrialized unit, Smith said.

Compare this to the total number of new residential structures in 2011 (88): 64 new homes, 24 new manufactured and industrial units, Smith said.

In addition, there were 233 additions or remodeling projects, 48 garages and 63 accessory structures last year. A total of 1,474 residential permits were issued and the total valuation of all residential jobs was \$16.8 million.

In 2010, the total was \$19 million. Commercial construction remained strong in 2011, with 20 new structures and 95 additions or alterations.

So far this year, 14 buildings have gone up; and 68 additions or alterations.

In 2011, there were 655 commercial permits issued and the total value of all commercial jobs was \$20.3 million. That included two manufacturers in the Jefferson area, he said.

As of Sept. 12, the 2012 projects for commercial, residential and manufactured homes have a total valuation as follows:

THE TOP 10 LARGEST COMMERCIAL PROJECTS IN ASHTABULA COUNTY IN 2012, AS OF SEPT. 12:

1. Clark Hall's \$1.9 million renovation, 1565 Route 167, Jefferson Township, replaced bricks;
2. Andover Bank's \$1.5 million addition, 600 E. Main St., Andover Village, offices;
3. Western Reserve's \$1.2 million grain storage, 225 E. Main St., Andover Village;
4. Glenbeigh's new \$950,000 dorm, 2863 Route 45, Morgan Township;
5. Geneva Energy's \$800,000 facility, 4339B Tuttle Road, Geneva Township;
6. Great Lakes Chevy's \$800,000 storage and service, 310 S. Chestnut St., Jefferson;
7. McDonald's \$460,000 addition, 918 Lake Ave., Ashtabula;
8. AMHA's \$400,000 addition, 3526 Lake Vue Towers, Ashtabula;
9. Coffee Creek's \$350,000 renovations, 1591 Route 45, Austinburg Township, and
10. Dollar General Store, \$350,000, 1511 Lake Ave., Ashtabula.

■ Manufactured homes: \$534,000
■ Residential structures: \$14 million
■ Commercial buildings: \$14 million
Total valuation: \$28.5 million

Commercial numbers were much stronger in 2010, \$51 million, thanks to the SPIRE Institute's \$18 million aquatics building and several other projects on the property. Additionally, numerous new school buildings projects inflated the 2010 numbers.

In 2011, the building department performed 4,448 inspections for commercial and residential projects. The staff traveled more than 37,000 miles performing their duties, Smith said. The department exceeded its revenue projections and brought in \$326,865 into the general fund, spending \$324,591 in the process.

2012 PROGRESS

AGRICULTURE

ASHTABULA COUNTY

SHELLEY TERRY ■ Staff Writer

From apples to grapes to corn and wheat, Ashtabula County grows it all

When people think about Ashtabula County, they can't help but think of grapes, corn, soybeans, oats and hay because agriculture is extremely important in the largest of 88 counties in the state of Ohio.

This year, however, hasn't been the best for crops thanks to a severe drought — possibly the worst drought in 25 years, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Economic Research Service.

U.S. corn growers are forecast to harvest 87.4 million acres this year, down 2 percent from what forecasters estimated in June, according to the *Crop Production* report released Aug. 10 by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's National Agricultural Statistics Service.

The season started on an optimistic note for corn growers, with a quick planting season, said David Marrison, Ohio State University Extension Agent for Ashtabula County.

The optimism waned when the warm spring was followed by a very dry early summer, followed by a drought. Despite planting the largest number of acres of corn in the past 75 years, growers are forecast to produce 10.8 billion bushels in 2012, down 13 percent from 2011. Based on conditions as of Aug. 1, corn yields are expected to average 123.4 bushels per acre, down 23.8 bushels from last year, according to *Crop Production* report released Aug. 10.

Just like corn growers, soybean



WARREN DILLAWAY / Star Beacon

SYLVIA JOHNSON prepares to release her zucchini during the Zucchini 500 this summer at the Jefferson Farmers Market.

growers are affected by this year's drought. The forecast is at 2.69 billion bushels, down 12 percent from 2011. Soybean yield is expected to average 36.1 bushels per acre, down 5.4 bushels from the 2011 crop.

"The rain (in August) helped with the soybeans, especially for the crops planted later, but it was too late for the corn; the corn yield was already set," Marrison said. "In contrast to corn and

soybeans, all wheat production remains unaffected by the drought."

All this is big news to Ashtabula County residents, considering agriculture and food contributes more than \$107 billion dollars to Ohio's economy every year.

Most of the county's farms are south of Interstate 90 where the growing season is shorter, according to the Ohio State Uni-

See GROWS, Page 34

SUCCESSFUL PROGRESS



WARREN DILLAWAY / Star Beacon

GENE SIGEL, co-owner of Red Eagle Distillery on River Road in Harpersfield Township, poses in a section of the bar that was recently renovated.

South River Vineyards & Winery expands to produce county's first legal bourbon

By **SHELLEY TERRY**

Staff Writer

sterry@starbeacon.com

HARPERSFIELD TOWNSHIP — A long and prosperous history, consisting of a close-knit family and prosperous vineyards, has endured the test of time on South River Road.

The home and the vineyards, owned for more than 50 years by the late Joseph and Leora

Gruber, is now the home of Gene and Heather Sigel.

They own South River Vineyard & Winery, 6062 South River Road, one of Ashtabula County's tourist's attractions, and Red Eagle Distillery, adjacent to the winery, where they have a full service liquor license.

"Patrons can sample wines from South River Winery, and a unique bourbon cocktail list **See BOURBON, Page 33**

Bourbon

From Page 32

and bourbon ‘flights’ of some of the world’s finest bourbon,” Heather Sigel said.

Soon, the bar will offer samplings from Red Eagle’s Distillery, as well.

“Right now, we are getting ready for the grape harvest,” Gene Sigel said.

“While most (grape) growers lost 75 to 80 percent of their crop this year due to frost, our site is in the ‘golden mile.’”

In his 50 years of growing grapes, former owner Joseph Gruber never lost a crop to frost because of the perfect location of his vineyards, said Sigel, who started buying the property from Gruber in 1998. Gruber died in 2010, his wife in 2009.

Grapes, as well as many types of fruit, were the Grubers’ livelihood. They reared nine children on the farm while enjoying a long and happy life of working outside, gardening and polka dancing, according to their children.

The Grubers founded the Geneva Grape Jamboree along with Joseph’s older brother, the late Raymond Sr., and his sister-in-law, Fina Gruber, who still resides in Harpersfield Township.

Gene Sigel renovated a former barn on the property into the distillery, where a 250-gallon copper still make bourbons in the basement.

Initially, he plans to produce three types of bourbon, a whiskey that is at least 51-percent corn.

Unlike grape juice, which has the sugar content needed for fermentation, grains contain starch, which first has to be converted to sugar by the enzymatic action of the barley. The barley itself



WARREN DILLAWAY / Star Beacon

GENE SIGEL, co-owner of Red Eagle Distillery on River Road in Harpersfield Township, poses in front of the bar that was recently renovated.

can be flavored with chocolate or caramel flavors to impart a smoky or roasted character to the final product. Yeast converts the sugars created by the barley into alcohol. The concentration is rather low, about 7 percent, when the mash heads to the still.

The spirits are distilled twice, to a concentration of about 150 proof, or 75-percent alcohol. But the liquor is diluted to 120 proof when it goes into the barrel.

“That’s the optimal proof to derive the character from the oak of the barrel,” he said. “The bourbon must age 20 days for every gallon.”

Expediting the process comes at a financial cost, however. One of those 7-gallon barrels costs \$140, versus \$250 for a 53-gallon version. Barrels can’t be reused — law requires the

liquor to age in a new barrel.

“That’s \$20 per gallon plus \$15 federal tax,” Sigel said.

After Sigel pays the \$15 a gallon tax, he must sell it to the state (on paper) and buy it back again. Then and only then can he open the bottle, according to state law.

But it’s not all about making money, Sigel said.

It is about encouraging local agriculture and tourism. He grew the rye on his farm and the corn came from a farm in Orwell.

In June, Sigel discovered he can have his grain processed at Fowler’s Mill in Chagrin Falls. The mill also will be able to provide him with wheat from the region.

“I’m really excited about
See BOURBON,
Page 35



KUBOTA BX SERIES
AMERICA'S TOP-SELLING
SUB-COMPACT TRACTOR
OF THE DECADE

\$0
Down

**0%
A.P.R.**
Financing

0
Payments*

Until April 2013

PLUS
\$500 Instant Kubota Bucks**
OR
Instant Kubota Bucks up to \$1,000**



Bortnick

Tractor Sales, Inc



EVERYTHING YOU VALUE
www.kubota.com
©Kubota Tractor Corporation, 2012

CONNEAUT
5042 Center Rd. (Rt. 7) .
Conneaut, OH 44030
440-594-3216



©Kubota Tractor Corporation, 2012

www.bortnicktractorsales.com

*\$0 down, 0% A.P.R. financing for terms up to 60 months on purchases of select new Kubota ZG, ZD, ZP, BX, B, L, M, and TLB Series from available inventory at participating dealers through October 31, 2012.
No payments until April 2013* does not mean any payments are waived. Contract balance will be spread over the remaining months in the term following the deferral period, and payments will vary depending on contract start date. Example: A 60-month contract term at 0% A.P.R. will require between 54-56 payments ranging from a minimum of \$17.86 to a maximum of \$18.52 per \$1,000 borrowed. 0% A.P.R. interest is available to customers if no dealer documentation preparation fee is charged. Dealer charge for document preparation fee shall be in accordance with state laws. Only select Kubota and select Kubota performance-matched Land Pride equipment is eligible. Inclusion of ineligible equipment may result in a higher blended A.P.R. Not available for Rental, National Accounts or Governmental customers. 0% A.P.R. and low-rate financing may not be available with customer instant rebate (C.I.R.) offers. Financing is available through Kubota Credit Corporation, U.S.A., 3401 Del Amo Blvd., Torrance, CA 90503, subject to credit approval. Some exceptions apply. Offer expires 10/31/2012. See us for details on these and other low-rate options or go to www.kubota.com for more information. *Customer instant rebates (C.I.R.) of \$500 to \$2,500 are available on cash or finance purchases of eligible Kubota equipment through Kubota Tractor Corporation. \$500 Instant Kubota Bucks applies to promotional rate financing. Dealer subtracts rebate from dealer's pre-rebate selling price on qualifying purchases. Subject to dealership inventory. Sales to governmental agencies, independent rental centers, and dealer owned rental fleets do not qualify. Some exceptions apply. Customer instant rebates are not available after completed sale. C.I.R. availability ends 10/31/2012. Optional equipment may be shown.

Grows

From Page 32

versity Extension Service. Grain and dairy farms are important agricultural industries here. Dairy farming is the primary agricultural use, accounting for nearly half of the gross farm income in the county, according to the Ohio Agricultural Statistics Service.

The average size of a local farm is 146 acres, according to statistics from the Ohio State University Extension Office. Ashtabula County added six farms to its numbers, compared to last year's statistics of 140 farms.

About 32 percent of the county's land is used for crops, and 4.3 percent is used for pasture, according to the Ohio Department of Development. Greenhouse and nursery products comprise about 11 percent of Ohio's total agricultural receipts.

While many of the county's farmers work part-time, 723 farmers list farming as their primary occupation, according to Connect Ohio.

Agriculture brings a total of \$68.6 million into the county, according to the ODO.

Last year, In Ohio, the county ranks No. 1 in grape production, No. 3 in oats and 8th in hay.

This year, Ashtabula County is No. 1 in grape production (again!), No. 11 in milk cows, 18th in hay, 23rd in beef cows, 48th in wheat, 50th in corn, 52nd in soybeans, 48th in wheat, and it fell off the chart in oats.

As for fruit, don't ask, Marrison said.

A perfect storm of bad weather this year has taken a bite out of the county's apple crop.

One of the county's top

growers, Brant's Orchards in Sheffield Township, has reduced its hours this season because of only a few varieties produced any fruit, Roy Brant said.

Brant has been growing

apples for more than 20 years and folks come from miles around to buy his award-winning cider — cider he probably won't be making this year because of the lack of apples.

The same is true at Kiraly's Orchard, near the Harpersfield-Geneva township line and Smith's Fruit Orchard in Geneva.

Steve Kiraly said it's the worst crop he's seen in 50

years.

Gene Sigel, owner of South River Vineyards in Harpersfield Township, said he was one of the few lucky ones — his grapes were spared the devastation of a

hard freeze just when the primary buds were on the vine. Most of the other grape growers lost 75 to 80 percent of this year's crop.

"My vineyards are on
See GROWS, Page 35

SUCCESSFUL PROGRESS



WARREN DILLAWAY / Star Beacon

KELLY HYDE (left), feed and grain division manager for the Western Reserve Farm Cooperative, and **Doug Stiles**, agronomy division manager for WRFC, display new grain elevators in Andover.

New grain storage bins make co-op a one-stop shop for farmers

By **SHELLEY TERRY**

Staff Writer

sterry@starbeacon.com

ANDOVER — Boasting a new storage bin, two "wet" bins and a new grain dryer, Western Reserve Farm Cooperative is expanding its capacity to store and dry grain just in time for

farmers to begin harvesting.

The new bins provide for about 585,000 bushels of storage capacity for locally grown grains.

Kelly Hyde, feed and grain division manager for Western Reserve Farm Co-op, said the new bins at Andover, combined with about 320,000 bushel storage at Jefferson and 120,000

bushels at Middlefield, will provide more than 1 million bushels of storage capacity for area farmers. That will improve profitability for farmers and put more money in their pockets.

"Even with the drought, the majoring of our farmers will have a decent crop," he said. "There will be some fields that won't yield

See BINS, Page 35

Bins

From Page 34

what they're capable of yielding, but we expect an average yield."

On the bright side, the farmers can thank the extra dry conditions for high prices this year.

The 32,000 bushel "wet" bins will take grain that has to be dried, and then hold it until it can go through the 1,800 bushel-an-hour continuous dryer. Then, it can be moved into the larger storage bins to either be stored and held until it is sold for livestock use, to make ethanol or for food

use.

Watching a bin being built is a very interesting process, Hyde said.

Bins are steel constructed in rings. One ring and the top are built, and then hydraulic jacks raise them up evenly and the next ring is built. This process is followed until the planned height is reached, and then the bin is anchored to the eight-foot-high concrete foundation that was poured ahead of time.

"It's neat to watch," Hyde said.

The bottom section or base of the wet bins is a cone-shaped bottom built on a steel framework. It is constructed separately from the rest of the bin. When the

bin is complete, a large crane picks it up and moves it off the concrete foundation. Then another crane picks up the cone-shaped base, moves it over on the foundation, and the bin is lowered back down and the two sections fasten together. It took skilled workers to match the top part with the base and then anchor them to each other.

The addition of the new bins, along with other grain storage capacity in Jefferson and Middlefield, shows how agriculture is changing in northeast Ohio and northwestern Pennsylvania. While dairy farming is still a mainstay in the area, it has been changing to a grain growing area.

"The bins doubled our storage company-wide," said Doug Stiles, agronomy division manager for Western Reserve Farm Cooperative. "Bigger capacity helps you be more competitive."

Fifty years ago, few farmers grew soybeans in Ashtabula County. Today, just about every farm has a field of soybeans and many, many acres of corn.

Western Reserve Farm Cooperative is a boom to the local economy, binding agronomy (seed, fertilizer, herbicides and feed) to grain marketing and storage services. They also sell crop sprayers and many fertilizer and lime spreaders.

"If you are a farmer, you can get everything you need

here," Hyde said. "In the past 10 years, we've added new buildings and a new, spacious driveway."

The Village of Andover has been good to Western Reserve Farm Cooperative, supportive of their expansion and the big, silver grain bins that stand out in the sky.

"We still have to put up the fence to secure the

area," Hyde said. "We should have everything done and ready to go by harvest time."

Other storage facilities and farm suppliers in the area include Yuhasz Brothers in Colebrook and Deerfield Farm Service in Kinsman.

Ohio Farm Bureau member John Parker contributed to some of the facts on the grain bins in this article.

Grows

FromPage 34

what is called 'the golden mile,'" he said. "It's a unique location that protects them from frost."

Mary Jo Ferrante-Leaman of Ferrante Winery in Geneva wasn't so fortunate. She said it devastated her wine grape crop. The grape vines began growth early this year because of extremely warm March temperatures.

Many growers used large wind machines to mix the air and keep the grapes warm, but to no avail once the temps drop below 28 degrees for more than two hours.

Similar stories were reported from Chalet Debonne in Madison and the Gruber family vineyards in Harpersfield, as well.

"It's been a tough year for fruit," Marrison said.

As for the dairy farmers, they are struggling, too, Marrison said.

A poor harvest indicates a significant rise in feed prices is yet to come. Consequently, dairy farmers foresee their profits dwindling.

Marrison said, "The end of 2012 and 2013 will be a tough stretch for dairy farmers."

The largest vegetable crops in the county are cucumbers, potatoes, sweet corn and tomatoes, but let-

tuce, peppers and snap beans do well in northeast Ohio soil, according to the OSU Extension Service.

So well, in fact, that many, many people grow a garden in their backyards in the summer. And, although gardeners had to spend more time watering their plants this year, the drought didn't seem to impact the number or quality of produce and other home-grown exhibits that hundreds of people have entered in the Ashtabula County Fair this past August.

"There was a nice quality of vegetables," said Wynn Wessell, a fair board member. "They looked good."

More and more farmers and local gardeners are sell-

ing produce directly to consumers at 280 farm markets across the state, including several in Ashtabula County.

Fair Board President, Larry Kotnick, said the amount of hay entered in the hay was down, which he attributed to the dry spell. "Most farms got just one cutting of hay," he said.

Rainfall in northeast Ohio was down nearly two inches compared to averages, according to information from the National Weather Service. But, that was before the fair.

Two days into the fair and the deluge began — any fair board member will tell you, "It always rains during the fair."

Bourbon

From Page 33

the fact that Ashtabula County grain is being ground by stone plates in a mill that has been in opera-

tion for better than 150 years here in our region," Sigel said.

Heather Sigel said they also have fine people working with them.

"Jess Hedrick and Jeremy Welker are both young people from Geneva who have gone to Louisville, Ky. to

be trained on running the still," she said.

As for the tourism aspect, Heather Sigel said whiskey tasting is as common in Kentucky as wine tasting is in northeast Ohio. He said the craft distillery industry is seeing tremendous growth — at the national

conference in 2011 there were 150 persons attending; this year, there were 600 in attendance.


For more information, go to www.facebook.com/#!/RedEagleDistillery.

Staff writer Carl Feather contributed to this article.

your

A Partner in Progress

We're human. So we're all lifelong learners. But the only place, open to all of us, free of charge, whose entire mission is lifelong learning, is the library.



September is National Library Card Sign-up Month. When you get your library card — your free library card — you'll discover what a partner we can be.

Ashtabula Library
335 West 44th • Ashtabula
(440) 997-9341

Geneva Library & Bookmobile
860 Sherman • Geneva
(440) 466-4521

www.acdl.info

Ashtabula County District Library

What Do You Need to Know?

2012 PROGRESS

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

ASHTABULA COUNTY

MARGIE NETZEL ■ Staff Writer

Variety keeps Ashtabula County cultured and entertained

Timothy Kalil believes in arts and he believes music and beauty belong in Ashtabula County.

Kalil, who serves as a board member and artistic director of the St. Peter's Episcopal Church Fine Arts Concert Series, strives to bring the very best in classical music to appreciative ears.

Named "Great Music Without Borders," the series hosts seven free concerts each year.

"All of our board members and myself serve as volunteers for the good of our community because we believe in the great effect that the arts make in a person's life," Kalil said.

Kalil said music can buoy the soul, but also boost the local economy.

"The arts are important to the local economy as many people spend money preparing to attend arts events, including buying new clothes, hair cuts, and dinner out," he said.

The music doesn't have to be classical to be beneficial to local merchants, though.

Kalil, who is also chairman of the City of Ashtabula's Summer Concert Series "Big Bands on the Beach" said the summertime beach front concert series gets shoppers "In the Mood" to spend.

"After every concert, restaurant owners in the area tell me that there is a surge in their business," he said.

Kalil said the organization of the arts needs to be cooperative to be more affective locally.

"There should be more cooperation between and among the various arts organizations in the county," he said. "For example,



MARGIE NETZEL / Star Beacon

CAMERON BROWN, of Brown Cab and Rickshaws, chats with Deanna Watkins of Erie, Pa., at the Great Lakes Medieval Faire.

our concerts are Sundays so on Mondays many of our artists return to give lectures or demonstrations to elementary students in the late afternoon. Why not have these same artists perform in high school assemblies early afternoon?"

More marketing for free concerts, shows and exhibits would also boost participation at various venues.

"Arts and events leaders should make some effort to know one another and support one another," Kalil said. "This would help all concerned. We have many talented artists in this county and I ask that people please support them

whenever and wherever possible."

The Great Music Without Borders Concert Series, held at St. Peter's Episcopal Church, 4901 Main Ave., Ashtabula, are held at 2 p.m. and include a free reception after the show.

Pianist Eric Zuber, 2011 Medal Winner in the Cleveland International Piano Competition, will perform Oct. 7.

Violinist Andrew Sords, and pianist Elizabeth DeMio will perform Nov. 11.

The series will celebrate a MoTown Christmas with the

See VARIETY, Page 37

SUCCESSFUL PROGRESS



MARGIE NETZEL / Star Beacon

TIM KOLMAN, 17, is studying to be a professional ballet dancer under the guidance of Ashtabula Arts Center dance coordinator and artistic director of Ballet Theatre Ashtabula Shelagh Dubskey.

Ashtabula Arts Center gives teen opportunities, training, drive to become professional dancer

By MARGIE NETZEL

Staff Writer

mnetzel@starbeacon.com

ASHTABULA — Every leap through the air is a leap toward success for Tim Kolman.

The local high school senior is driven — his parents say he is obsessed — with achieving the highest level of dance possible, becoming a professional dancer.

He won't settle for anything less than personal perfection.

"I have learned so much this year," Kolman, 17, said. "I was fortunate to study this summer at the Pittsburgh Ballet Theater and it just opened my eyes to new ways to dance. It made it more fun, more challenging. I realized that I needed to get better at certain aspects of my dance, and also that I could get better

See DANCER, Page 39

Variety

From Page 36

Light of Day Band at 7 p.m. on Dec. 16. The event will feature pre-concert and post-concert activities. For more information call (992-8100).

LOCAL THEATER IN THE SPOTLIGHT IN ASHTABULA COUNTY

Pop the corn and get a cold drink — the show is about to start.

The spotlight shines on the stage at the Ashtabula Arts Center, highlighting not just a single actor, but the talent and dedication of many local residents.

The arts center, which has a focus on area youth and the development of budding talent, also offers opportunities for adults to learn, grow and project their craft in all reaches of arts and entertainment.

The center will offer five fall and winter shows this season, starting with Willy Wonka Jr. on Oct. 5, 6, 7, 12, 13, and 14.

Based on the book "Charlie and The Chocolate Factory" by Ronald Dahl, the play is all things sweet and naughty.

Directors are also offering a backstage tour and trick-or-treating with the cast after the Oct. 14 show.

Don't try to hide your feelings about Hamlet.

Thespians will perform I Hate Hamlet Oct. 26, 27, and 28 and Nov. 2, 3, 4, 9, and 10.

This ghost and Shakespeare play follows successful television actor Andrew Rally as he struggles with taking on the dream role of Hamlet with help from the ghost of John Barrymore.

Don't go steppin' on his blue suede shoes — somebody is all shook up.

The arts center presents All Shook Up on Jan. 11, 12, 13, 18, 19, 20, 25, and 26.

Inspired by and featuring the songs of Elvis Presley, this play won't be cruel.

SUCCESSFUL PROGRESS

Chamberlains in Training celebrate theater, Shakespeare

By MARGIE NETZEL

Staff Writer

mnetzel@starbeacon.com

ASHTABULA — It's much ado about Shakespeare for the Chamberlains in Training, a group of iambic pentameter-loving kids led by Ashtabula residents Ray and Sara Perts.

The Chamberlains in Training just finished their fifth production, bringing Romeo and Juliet to the Harbor Playhouse stage.

"Every year we do a Shakespeare play and we do it for youth to teach them not just process of putting on a production, but to get them deeper into the literature," Sara Perts said. "Our goal is to give just as much to the literature as we would to the theater aspects of each play."

Perts said 25-30 children ages 5 to 25 partici-

pate in what she calls, "more like a project than a production."

"It is really neat

because the kids love the project so much they come back year after year and we get to see them grow both with their acting and in their interest in the literature," she said.

But how do you teach a group of children about Hamlet or Othello?

"The kids I have worked with in the last five years, well, Shakespeare just is not a hard sell for them," Perts said. "They just love it."

Perts said teaching Shakespeare means thinking outside the box — much like the playwright did himself.

"You have to think outside what you know," she said. "We stress that Shakespeare wasn't a novelist. We emphasize

See THEATER, Page 39

Someone will suffer Crimes of the Heart on Feb. 8, 9, 10, 15, 16, 17, 22, and 23, as

three sisters from Mississippi live their way through this comedic tragedy.

Welcome to Grover's Corners, where playwright Thornton Wilder's three act play comes to life in this average town drama on April 5, 6, 7, 12, 13, and 14.

To boost audience participation and interest in the theater, the arts center offers a Dinner Before the Show special for each play.

Dinner Before the Show will be held prior to select performances. These set menu dinners are held in the arts center gallery. Reservations and prepayment are required no later than noon on the Wednesday prior to the event, though these pre-show dinners are popular and seats often sell out well before the deadline. The menu is available two weeks prior to each event. Dinner seating begins at 6:30 p.m. Cost is \$16 plus the price of a theater ticket.

Plays on Fridays and Saturdays begin at 8 p.m. and Sundays at 2 p.m. Tickets are \$14 for adults, and \$12 for seniors and students. Save \$2 per ticket on tickets purchased in advance. Advance sales must be purchased prior to 4 p.m. on the day of the show or by 4 p.m. Saturday for Sunday performances. For more information or to reach the box office, call (964-3396).

There are several places to enjoy live theater in Ashtabu-

la County:

Noble Art Entertainment is a small group of actors and producers who make each performance count with a show-and-dinner combination at the historic Oak Room in Geneva-on-the-Lake.

"We bring together a lot of fun and suspense and art and a terrific six-course meal with specialty drinks," said director/producer/actor Brook Collin Hall. "Everyone who comes to the shows rave about them."

The merry band of actors produce just three shows a year. Upcoming is the Edgar Allen Poe - inspired An Evening of Classic Horror murder mystery dinner.

"We were inspired by the Master of Macabre for this bone-chilling presentation of 'The Fall of the House of Usher,'" Hall said. "Poe then leads the hunt for a killer in this murder-mystery portion of the evening."

An Evening of Classic Horror will be held Oct. 5, 6, 7, 12, 13, 14, 19, 20, and 21.

Noble Art Entertainment's perennial classic adaptation of "A Christmas Carol" is paired with a six-course feast of plenty amid Charles Dick-

ens' Victorian Christmas classic.

Share the holiday feeling on Dec. 1, 2, 7, 8, 9, 14, 15, 16, 21, 22, and 23.

Regular admission is \$45 per person, which include dinner and the show. Specialty alcoholic drinks are additional. Tickets must be purchased 24 hours in advance.

For more information, call 466-8650 or visit www.genevalanding.com.

Take an old church and add some arts and you get The Harbor Playhouse. Local resident Sara Perts' dream of turning the church into a theater came true several years ago.

Perts said she believes lock students can get a leg up in life and on stage through local theater opportunities, but warns that local arts are not the end-all for troubled youth.

"To participate in the performing arts, you really need to like it, to have a passion for it, and not just do it," she said. "This isn't for kids who just need a place to go, you have to have a love for doing it."

Perts is also the founder of **See VARIETY, Page 38**



Locally owned and operated since 1928.

- Lift van only 30 minutes notice
- Special Events + Tours even to Canada
- **NO ONE** can beat our price
- Moves- Local and long distance
- 15% Senior discounts
- After school discovery transport
- Open 24/7 including ALL Holidays!

WE NEVER NEVER NEVER CLOSE

440-992-2156

1753 W. Prospect Rd. Ashtabula

C & L LAWN SERVICE INC.

Locally Owned & Operated • Over 30 Years Experience

COMPLETE LAWN PROGRAMS

- Balanced Fertilizer
- Weed, Insect, Disease Control
- Service Calls at NO Extra Charge
- Liquid and/or Dry Programs
- Guaranteed Results

ADDITIONAL SERVICES

- Deep Root Feeding of Trees & Shrubs
- Vegetation Control
- Core Aeration
- Grub Control



FREE ESTIMATES

Residential & Commercial

997-2019 • TOLL FREE 1-800-833-1917

Variety

From Page 37

The Chamberlain's In-Training youth Shakespeare company at the Harbor Playhouse. The youth shows are a yearly event, and serve to give young actors an appreciation for both the theater and the works of William Shakespeare.

The Harbor Playhouse will host several events in 2012, including A Man For All Seasons on Sept. 20, 22, 28 and 29 at 7:30 p.m. and Sept. 23 and 30 at 3 p.m. Tickets are \$5.

Open mic nights will be held Oct. 13 and Nov. 10 from 7 p.m. to 9 p.m. Admission is free.

A holiday dance show will be held Dec. 7, 8 and 9, with the times to be announced.

The Harbor Playhouse, located at 341 Lake Ave.,

Ashtabula. For more information call (969-8380) or email hp.theatrical@gmail.com or visit www.harborplayhouse.org.

Never say there is nothing to do in Ashtabula County.

The county is brimming with affordable — or even free — opportunities for recreation from camping and fishing to scenic train rides.

INDOOR AND SUMMER FUN FOR KIDS AND FAMILIES

One place for summer fun is Adventure Zone in Geneva-on-the-Lake. This indoor/outdoor play area includes mini golf, a go-kart track, rock climbing wall and arcade. Children can climb hamster-style in an indoor fun area.

Other arcades include Woody's World Arcade in Geneva-on-the-Lake and Tuxie's Arcade in Jefferson.

Get rolling at the Ashtabula Family Roller Den. The

roller rink on West Avenue features an indoor play area with a "crazy maze" and an "extreme skate park."

Other county attractions include Allison's Mini-Golf on Lake Road in Geneva-on-the-Lake and the Indian Creek Resort Miniature Golf.

Want to get wet and wild? Visit the Wild WaterWorks Waterslide in Geneva-on-the-Lake. This double-slide attraction is a great way to stay cool when the weather is hot.

FESTIVALS

Ashtabula County is famous for its many, many festivals. The biggest and best festival of all is the Ashtabula County Fair, which is much-anticipated. Held in August, the fair is a place for country music, showing off your market project and riding the carnival rides.

Get ready to get stomping — grape stomping that is. The Geneva Grape JAM-

boree, held the last full weekend in September, is one of the most celebrated festivals in the county. Famous for purple cow milkshakes and the Miss Grapette pageant, this festival celebrates all things grape. Participants can join in the grape pie eating or the grape stomping and even the littlest grape lover can be a part of the cutest baby contest.

There is no better way to celebrate history than to be a part of it. The Ashtabula County Historical Society hosts the annual Log Cabin Days in September with pork sandwiches and bean soup cooked over the fire. The weekend is full of information about Ohio's oldest standing log cabin — the Blakeslee Cabin on Seven Hills Road in Plymouth Township.

Fair maidens and dashing knights converge each year for the Great Lakes Medieval Faire in Trumbull Township. Held every weekend in July and August, each weekend has a special theme, including Highland Games, Pirates, Princesses and Fairies and more.

Conneaut celebrates D-Day with a reenactment for the ages in August. The troops "land" on the shores of Lake Erie off Conneaut Township Park for a weekend of encampment.

If wine with walleye is wrong, I don't want to be right.

Every August wine lovers pair a little walleye with their vino at the Ashtabula Wine and Walleye Festival in the Ashtabula Harbor.

The festival includes vendors up and down Bridge Street, music, shopping and more. For more information visit

www.wineandwalleye.net.

Lake Shore Park in Ashtabula County gets all lit up for the holidays with the Lights on the Lake festival every weekend from Thanksgiving to New Years. Cost is just \$5 per vehicle and everyone gets

a candy cane. The rolling hills of the park are decorated with huge holiday light displays. Visit www.ashatbulalightsonthelake.com for more information.

Go jump in the lake.

The Special Olympics Polar Bear Plunge is a time of bone-chilling, teeth chattering fun — all to benefit Special Olympics Ohio.

The plunge, held yearly on the last full weekend in February, has hundreds of people running full-tilt into the freezing lake and then screaming back out of the water. For more information visit

www.polarbearplunge.org.

Go bow-wow at the Ashtabula County Animal Protective Leagues annual Boo Wow Walk. This event, held the third weekend in October, is a time for pooches and their owners to dress up in costume and go "trick-or-treating" through Maple Ridge Golf Course. For more information visit www.acapl.com.

Ashtabula County has 18 covered bridges and if you want to see them all, the Ashtabula County Covered Bridge Festival is the time to do it. Held every year on the second weekend in October, the festival is highlighted with a self-guided tour of the covered bridges and a lot of vendors and fun at the Ashtabula County Fairgrounds. For more information visit www.coveredbridgefestival.org.

Ashtabula County is steeped in history and has plenty of museums to show for it.

If you want some bean soup, you'd better get in line at the Blakeslee Log Cabin in Plymouth Township, where volunteers cook up 75 gallons of the stuff in huge black kettles for Log Cabin Days.

The bean soup and homemade pie have become so popular, 75 gallons is hardly enough to meet the demand event chairperson Barrie Bot-

torf said.

One of Ohio's original log cabins, built in 1810 by John Blakeslee a year after he arrived from Connecticut in 1810, the Blakeslee log cabin has been home to three immigrant families and is now being restored and used as an educational center. It is a member of the National Register of Historic Places.

The log cabin is open to the public 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. on Saturdays and Mondays, and other days by appointment. Admission is free and donations are accepted.

For more information about this or other ACHS properties and museums, visit www.ashtcohns.com.

OTHER ASHTABULA COUNTY MUSEUMS

The Jennie Munger Gregory Museum is situated in a 1823 farmhouse on the Lake Erie shore in Geneva-on-the-Lake and is the headquarters for the Ashtabula County Historical Society. The house features fully furnished rooms and special exhibits. Research facilities are available by appointment. Admission is \$4 for adults and \$2 for children.

The historical society also maintains and operates the 1823 Joshua Giddings Law Office. Famous in the history of the abolitionist movement, this office at one time served both Joshua R. Giddings and his friend and colleague, Benjamin F. Wade. Both were elected to Congress and spent their careers as outspoken opponents of slavery. Giddings' office is still home to his desk, law library, and the first safe brought to Ashtabula County.

There are two museums in Ashtabula's historic harbor district — The Hubbard House and the Ashtabula Maritime Museum.

Hubbard House, located at Walnut Boulevard and Lake Avenue. Built between 1840 and 1841 by William and Catherine Hubbard, this house was a stop on the

See VARIETY, Page 39



BARBARA SCHaab DEMOCRAT for Ashtabula County Recorder

12 years, Austinburg Township Fiscal Officer

- Expenditure and Revenue Accounting
 - Maintenance of Township Records
- Accreditation from Center for Public Investment Management

I am honored and privileged to have the endorsements of these fine organizations.

- OAPSE / AFSCME Local 419
- AFL-CIO Ashtabula County Central Labor Council
- Construction Laborers' Local 245
- International Union of Operating Engineers Local 18
- Pipefitters' Local Union 320
- AFSCME Ohio Council 8

www.schaab4countyrecorder.com

email: electschaabrecorder@yahoo.com

(440) 275-3042

Paid for by the Committee to Elect Barbara Schaab, Michael Schaab, Treasurer - 2035 Rt. 307 Austinburg, OH 44010

Variety

From Page 38

Underground Railroad. Secret passageways and hidden doors provided refuge for slaves fleeing to the freedom and safety of Canada. Also on display are selected items pertaining to the Civil War from the Charles Moses Americana Collection. Group tours are available

all year long by appointment. Admission is \$5 for adults, \$4 for seniors and \$3 for children ages 6 to 16 years old.

For more information call (964-8168). The maritime museum, located on Walnut Boulevard, is the former residence of the Lighthouse Keepers and the Coast Guard Chief, built in 1871. Exhibits include models, paintings, marine artifacts, photos of early Ashtabula Harbor and ore boats and

tugs, miniature hand-made brass tools that actually work, and the world's only working scale model of a Hulett Ore Unloading Machine. The gift shop includes nautical, items and books.

Admission is \$4 for adults and \$3 for children ages 6 to 16 years old.

For more information call (964-6847) or visit www.ashtabulamarinemuseum.org

The Finnish American Cul-

tural Center, located at 1330 W. 8th St. in the Ashtabula harbor is home to a wealth of information about the area's Finnish heritage. Built on the original site of Sovinto Hall 1897-1961, the hall served as a Finnish temperance society and later a recreational and cultural center.

View family photos, artifacts from harbor, include a vintage rug loom, library-archive materials, artwork, and momentos from Ashtabula's historic past.

For more information call (998-2061) or (964-2519) or visit www.faha-ashtabula.org.

The Conneaut Railroad Museum on Depot Street invites people to climb aboard and toot a whistle for railroad history.

"We get people in here ages 4 to 95 years old or even older. People love railroads. So many people around here

have worked on railroads, but there are just a lot of 'railroad buffs' out there who travel to these museums, museum employee Judy Nathay said.

Nathay said it isn't uncommon to meet people from California, New York, Florida and Texas at the museum. Occasionally, she said, people visit from England or Germany.

Theater

From Page 37

that he was first an actor and director, so he wrote his plays to the differences in actors or actresses or directors. He wrote in room for those flexibilities, so don't go by what you are told

about a Shakespearean play — interpret it your own way."

Perts said she gives herself a few months off after each yearly production, so she hasn't even thought about which play the group will perform next year.

But one thing is for sure — the success is in the passion of the little actors who take

on such big roles.

"The kids make this a success," she said. "They are such good kids and they have so embraced the project. They are the success."

Perts said she tries to give each child individual attention to help them maximize their experience with the play.

"We give every single job

a lot of attention, because it is first and foremost an educational project," she said. "We want them to grow into what they are doing and own their roles and their parts in each production."

For more information about the Chamberlains in Training project, email Sara Perts at littleguitars868@gmail.com.

Dancer

From Page 36

at it."

"So I set my goals for the year and here I am," he said.

Kolman's dreams began — and continue — at the Ashtabula Arts Center, where he spends as much as four hours a day practicing.

"I just have this internal drive to be better and better as I dance," he said. "When I started dancing, I had the easiest part in the show and now I have the hardest part and that means something to me."

AAC dance coordinator and artistic director of Ballet Theatre Ashtabula She-lagh Dubsky said Kolman drives himself to the point of exhaustion.

ed," she said, "but we have to literally kick him out. He just pushes himself in a way that is necessary for a professional dancer. This is grueling work for him, but he is willing to do it, he is willing to push through the exhaustion."

Kolman said his success is due in large part to the arts center.

"If it wasn't for the arts center, I wouldn't have had the opportunity to dance," he said. "I wouldn't have ever even started. The arts center has provided me with a place to continue in my goals. Without it, I wouldn't have been able to continue to dance, because other studios are just too far away."

Kolman has studied with other studios and programs, including the Interlochen Center for the Arts in Michigan by scholarship of local arts patron Bruce Loomis.

"When I look at what I am

able to do now, I see that it has a lot to do with the people around me," Kolman said.

Kolman, who is the son of Andy and Ellen Kolman of Ashtabula, said his summer

in Pittsburgh honed his goals to a fine point. Now homeschooled so he can spend even more time at the barre, he plans to graduate and join the Pittsburgh Ballet Theater as a paid intern.

Kelly's Garden 9th Annual
Harvest Festival
fun for the whole family
Held every Saturday and Sunday in October

- Hay Rides • Pumpkin Patch
- Corn Maze • Petting Zoo
- Pony Rides • Games • Food

This fall come for Pumpkins of all sizes, gourds, cornstalks, indian corn, straw bales, mums & perennials and Halloween decorations for your home and yard.

KELLY'S GARDENS Simply Paradise
"Your Hometown Source for Gifts & Landscaping Services"

4220 N. Ridge West (Saybrook) **(440)969-1114**

Your **A Partner in Progress**

*We're human. So we're all lifelong learners.
But the only place, open to all of us,
free of charge, whose entire mission
is lifelong learning, is the library.*



September is
National Library Card Sign-up Month.
When you get your library card
— your free library card —
you'll discover what a partner we can be.

Ashtabula Library
335 West 44th • Ashtabula
(440) 997-9341

Geneva Library & Bookmobile
860 Sherman • Geneva
(440) 466-4521

www.acdl.info

Ashtabula County District Library
What Do You Need to Know?

2012 PROGRESS

PARKS & RECREATION

ASHTABULA COUNTY

MARGIE NETZEL ■ Staff Writer

Plenty of outdoor fun for all in Ashtabula County

Ashtabula County is home to 30 miles of Lake Erie shoreline. With four beaches and nine marinas, 20 wineries, and 19 museums, indoor and outdoor recreation is never more than a few steps away, said Mark Winchell, executive director of the Ashtabula County Convention and Visitors Bureau.

“For us, as we look at the potential for the consumptive and the non-consumptive travelers, we see that our outdoors are doing a lot of benefit for our county,” he said.

Some of the boost in Ashtabula County’s nature tourism can be attributed to some feathered friends, Winchell said.

“Two birds changed the outlook of Ashtabula County,” he said. “The snowy owl and the black-tailed gull were on a lot of bird watcher’s bucket lists. We saw tourists from all over the country that had to see those birds so they came to Ashtabula County.”

FISHING AND MARINAS

What fun is the lake without some boating and fishing? Ashtabula County is ripe with opportunities for both with charters and hot fishing spots.

“Charters offer outings for perch and walleye, and inland charters take to the rivers for steelhead fishing,” Winchell said. “Ashtabula County is rated worldwide as one of the best places to fish steelhead. We are part of the walleye capital of the world.”



MARGIE NETZEL / Star Beacon

GRANDMA SUSAN Sakol of Ashtabula walks dog Abby as grandson Matthew Sakol, 4, clings to her hand at the Harpersfield Covered Bridge Metropark.

Fishing charters operate out of the Ashtabula Harbor, Geneva State Park and other launch sites along the lake with spring summer and fall fishing trips for perch, walleye and steelhead.

The Ashtabula Township Park Commission offers a boat ramp and beach at Lakeshore Park. River fishing is available in the Ashtabula River at points throughout the area and the Grand River at the Harpersfield Covered Bridge Metropark, where there is also a bait shop to serve area fishermen.

Absolute Fishing Charters (www.aabsolutefishingcharters.com);

Burns Charter (www.wall-eye.com); Compensator Fishing Charters (www.compensator-fishingcharters.com); Conneaut Port Authority (www.conneaut-portauthority.com); DB Sport-fishing Charter Fleet (www.dbsportfishing.com); Dfishin Fools Guide Service (www.steelheadschoo.com); Geneva State Park Marina (www.genevamarina.com) Great Lakes Charter (www.greatfishin-gadventures.com); Haines Marine Service, Inc. (www.hainesmarine.com); Hy Noon Charters (www.hynoon.com);

See FUN, Page 41

SUCCESSFUL PROGRESS



MARGIE NETZEL / Star Beacon

GENEVA-ON-THE-LAKE MUNICIPAL GOLF COURSE is one of many successful and award winning courses in Ashtabula County. Golf course manager Todd Bishop (rear left), Village Administrator Jim Hockaday (right) and Mayor Dave Nelson serve to manage and maintain the village-owned course.

GOTL golf course finds success, plans improvements

By MARGIE NETZEL

Staff Writer

mnetzel@starbeacon.com

GENEVA-ON-THE-LAKE — The care and maintenance of the grass at the Geneva-on-the-Lake Municipal Golf Course is a labor of love.

Each blade of green is perfectly manicured, carefully cultivated and lovingly trod upon.

The absolutely never-ending work at the village-owned golf course, from that grass to the continual maintenance of

See GOLF, Page 44

Fun

From Page 40

charters.com); Kister Marina and Campground (440-997-5676); Rampageous Fishing Charters (www.rampageouscharters.com); Rockport Marina (www.rockportmarina.com); Sutherland Marine (440-964-3434); Taylor Made Charters (www.fishlakeerie.com/taylormade); T-n-V Charters (www.tnvcharters.com); Wallhanger Charters (www.wallhangercharters.com).

HUNTING

Rabbit season! Duck season!

Ashtabula County is rife with game big and small for hunting and trapping, the Ohio Division of Wildlife reports, and though deer harvest numbers fell in 2010-2011, the number of hunters age 16 and older in the United States increased 9 percent between 2006 and 2011, reversing a previous downward trend, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and Department of the Interior shows.

Preliminary figures show an increase from 12.5 million hunters in 2006 to 13.7 million in 2011.

"This increase in hunters mirrors what our members are telling us — strong sales to an expanding consumer base," said Steve Sanetti, president of the National Shooting Sports Foundation, the trade association for the firearms, ammunition, hunting and shooting sports industry. "There is increased interest in firearm ownership — from customers new to the market to existing customers looking for the newest products. Purchases are being made for the enjoyment of recreational target shooting sports — such as sporting clays, IDPA and 3-gun com-



MARGIE NETZEL / Star Beacon

KAREN CAMERON, of Madison, prepares border collie Sinch before throwing a Frisbee at the new Smith Field Dog Park.

Ashtabula's new public park has gone to the dogs

By **MARGIE NETZEL**

Staff Writer

mnetzel@starbeacon.com

ASHTABULA — Release the hounds!

A little grass, a little fencing and a whole lot of doggie poop bags, that's what it takes to open a public dog park.

Well, that and a committee of hard-working dog enthusiasts who don't mind getting dirty and sweaty.

Recognizing that city life can be a dog-friendly life, the Lake Erie Dog Park Association stepped up in 2012 to build a canine oasis of fun — a doggy social networking opportunity, if you will.

petitions — as well as for personal protection, and, as these figures show us, for hunting."

The preliminary report also shows that hunters

spent an average of 21 days pursuing wild game in 2011. Additionally, the report shows that hunters spent \$34 billion on trips, firearms and equipment,

licenses and other items to support their hunting activities in 2011.

Winchell said hunting is an untapped tourism opportunity in Ashtabula County.

The Smith Field Dog Park, located at Smith Field on Carpenter Road and West Avenue, is a doggie wonderland for pets and people alike.

"We are so excited to finally get this park up and running officially and welcome the community to this wonderful place for dogs and people," Lake Erie Dog Park Association treasurer Dawn Cragon said.

The 200-foot-by-200 foot space at Smith Field at Carpenter Road and West Avenue at the former midget football field, was proposed by local animal lover Marie Kane. Kane formed the

See DOGS, Page 44

"The hunting opportunities for us have potential, but there would have to be some legislative changes before we can pursue tourism hunting efforts," Winchell said. "We don't promote hunting in our county that much, but I can tell you it definitely is popular."

The proof, Winchell said, is in the license plates.

"Go to Pymatuning or Geneva state parks, go to those public areas and look at the license plates of the cars in the parking lots and very few are from Ashtabula County and just a few from Ohio. People are traveling from other places to visit to hunt and fish and camp in Ashtabula County," he said.

Statistics compiled by the Ohio Division of Wildlife indicate that hunters shot 237,134 animals this past season. Last year the official figure was 261,840 deer. This represents a harvest decline approaching 10 percent.

Ashtabula County hunters killed 5,119 deer, ODW reports, and Lake County hunters bagged 1,289 hides. Cuyahoga hunters brought in just 836 deer, and Geauga hunters killed 2,188. Tuscarawas County hunters killed the most, bringing in 11,102 deer.

Ashtabula County hunters took the trophy in turkey hunting in the spring of 2012, ODNR reports.

Hunters checked 17,647 wild turkeys during Ohio's four-week statewide spring turkey hunting season that ended May 20, according to the Ohio Department of Natural Resources' (ODNR) Division of Wildlife. The preliminary total represents a three percent decrease over last year's harvest number of 18,162.

Ashtabula County again led the state in the number of turkeys killed with 762.

Counties with additional high harvest numbers were: Tuscarawas (531), Guernsey (495), Coshocton (492), and Muskingum (486).

The Division of Wildlife estimates that more than 70,000 people hunted turkeys during the season. Prior to the start of the spring hunting season, state wildlife biologists estimated the wild turkey population in Ohio to be more than 180,000 birds.

WINTER FUN IN ASHTABULA COUNTY

Don't let those Lake Effect winters get you down — there is still plenty to do in Ashtabula County when the ice frosts the lake.

Many snowmobile clubs use county trails and support area businesses in winter. The Stateline Snow-Trackers, a snowmobile club of 40 members who reside in variety of places, including in the county, Warren, Cleveland and Columbus, work the southeastern portion of the county, and the Grand River Trail Riders ride the western part.

Winter cabins are used for events and snowy getaways, and many people are getting excited about snow fishing, said Phil Vichosky, park manager for Pymatuning State Park in Andover Township.

Vichosky said hiking and photography are two of the major draws to the park in winter.

"Bird-watchers also apply their craft during the winter months," Vichosky said.

A new bridge links the Geneva State Park trail system and the Lodge and Conference Center at Geneva-on-the-Lake.

The pedestrian bridge — meant for hikers and snowmobilers — was a project more than six years in the making and was built through a \$117,500 grant by

See FUN, Page 43



MARGIE NETZEL / Star Beacon

JACK HOWE, of Jefferson, gives grandson Seamus Howe, 2, of Cleveland, a spin at Walnut Beach.



MARGIE NETZEL / Star Beacon

NORTH KINGSVILLE resident Bart Minick rides his bicycle on the Western Reserve Greenway Trail. Minick rides four to six miles each day.



WARREN DILLAWAY / Star Beacon

ADAM SCHUTT, of Concord Township, 14, fishes in the Grand River near the Harpersfield Covered Bridge.



WARREN DILLAWAY / Star Beacon

FISHING IS just one of the recreational opportunities on Pymatuning Lake.

Fun

From Page 41

the Ohio Department of Natural Resources through the recreational trail program, ODNR reports.

The park system and volunteers had to put up a 20 percent match for the money in materials and labor.

The bridge, which was built in two sections in November, is 177 feet long, six feet wide, and weighs 24,000 pounds. Workers will put down planks for the walkway today and will reinforce the structure with steel.

Gary Hines, president of the Ohio State Snowmobile Association, said the bridge is a big park improvement for snowmobilers.

“We are very excited about this project,” he said. “It is our goal down the road to link the lodge to the Western Reserve Greenway Trail through private trails. This bridge is for everyone, not just snowmobilers. This is a multi-use bridge for a multi-use trail.”

Ashtabula County is full of parks — big parks, state parks, long and narrow parks, parks with playgrounds and parks on the lake.

WALNUT BEACH

Walnut Beach is the forgotten treasure of Ashtabula County, Timothy Kalil said. The director of the local concert series Big Bands on the Beach, Kalil said Walnut Beach, with its sandy shores, easy lake access, playground and concession stand, deserves to be celebrated.

LAKE SHORE PARK

Sometimes you have to step in a little goose poop to get what you want.

Children clamor to feed the swans and ducks, and the geese by default, at

Lake Shore Park in Ashtabula Township.

Under the direction of the Ashtabula Township Park Commission, which also oversees Indian Trails Park, Lake Shore Park is one of the most popular parks in Ashtabula County.

Located just east of the northern end of Route 11, Lake Shore Park is a place for runners, bikers, motorcycle riders, weddings, sled riding and duck feeding.

The park includes a playground, horseshoe pits and volleyball and bocce courts.

But the big draw is the big access the Lake Erie. Lake Shore park has a large, life-guarded beach that is crowded and busy through most of the summer. Five pavilions are available for rent and use, all with views of the lake.

A public boat launch is accessed right on the shore. A bait shop sells all the goods for a fishing trip.

INDIAN TRAILS PARK

This 405-acre park includes four miles of primitive hiking trails along the scenic Ashtabula River and improved trail where rare plant species and wildlife can be sighted.

Steelhead fishermen love the angling at Indian Trails Park, which also leads to the Smolen Gulf Bridge, which is the longest covered bridge in the nation.

GENEVA TOWNSHIP PARK

Geneva Township Park, located on Lake Road in Geneva-on-the-Lake, includes picnic shelters and tables playground equipment, trails, a sand volleyball court and a baseball field.

Geneva Township Park has a 1,050-foot shore. Depending on water levels, a sand beach is often accessible. Paved paths from the parking lot lead to a handicapped-accessible wooden ramp which zigzags through

natural-growth vegetation down the low bluff to a seawall. Fishing is allowed off the paved seawall. Playground equipment, trails, an upland sand volleyball court and a baseball field are available for use.

HARPERSFIELD COVERED BRIDGE METROPARK

People have a certain emotional attachment to the Harpersfield Covered Bridge Metropark.

The Harpersfield Covered Bridge Metropark is the most recognized park in the Geneva area, Metroparks board president Charlie Kohli said. Located on Harpersfield Road at the Grand River dam, fishermen angle for trout in the spring and fall; and bluegill, crappie, and large and smallmouth bass nearly every day the weather permits.

The park features public picnic areas and pavilions on both sides of the river, recreational fields, and public restrooms. The independently operated Bait Shop by the north parking lot provides hunting and fishing licenses, bait, and refreshments. The park is open to the public every day during from early spring until the Covered Bridge Festival in October.

CONNEAUT TOWNSHIP PARK

Conneaut Township Park is the home of the Conneaut Rib Burn-Off, the annual Multiple Sclerosis bike ride, and many other community events.

The nearly 60-acre Conneaut Township Park is on land north of Rt. 531 from the Fairview Drive intersection east to Wrights Avenue. The park has ample parking lots, including lots off of the Chestnut Street extension.

About half of the park is made of sand from Conneaut Harbor’s west breakwater. The harbor’s south-

ern breakwater marks the east side of the beach, and sand covers all but the northern 600 feet of the breakwater, which is used for fishing access.

There is plenty of beach at Conneaut Township Park — thousands of feet of walkable sand — accented by a series of wooden boardwalks known as the Conneaut Township Park Boardwalk, which connects parking areas to the beach and shore.

Conneaut Township Park includes picnic facilities, playground equipment, a concession stand, athletic fields and courts and a gazebo.

SAYBROOK TOWNSHIP PARK

The 7.6-acre Saybrook Township Park is on Rt. 531, just east of the Russell Road intersection and west of the Mill Run Court intersection in Saybrook Township.

The day-use park has two large picnic shelters, complete with wind guards for those strong off-lake gusts, and a concession stand. The northern part of the park is shaded by trees and has a large playground area — appropriate for most ages — in the center. A line of benches overlooking Lake Erie are plotted along a wooden split-rail fence.

There is no beach access at Saybrook Township Park. The park is open dawn to dusk and year round, weather permitting.

THE ASHTABULA COUNTY METROPARKS

Bulldozers crashed into the old Geneva Water Plant at the Harpersfield Covered Bridge Metropark in April, turning the 1950’s building to rubble.

While some had hoped to renovate and use the building, Ashtabula County Metroparks board member Mike Sords said the fate of

the building came down to two things: Cost of repairing the buildings and limiting liability at the park.

“The old water plant has been vacant for many years and in recent years we have had problems with vandalism and kids breaking in there. There were big pits with water in there and that made it a real safety hazard,” he said.

Now that the water plant is gone, the park board plans to turn the vacant space into overflow parking for park events, Sords said

Friends of the Harpersfield Covered Bridge Metropark are looking at ways to utilize the park for festivals and events and are working to keep up with maintenance and improvements, of the land, riverbanks, pavilions and park areas, as well, chairperson Denise Weinmann said.

Weinmann said the Friends group has some great projects in the works — that need muscle and volunteers.

“These projects are perfect for someone who is looking for a way to earn community service hours for scouting or 4-H,” she said.

Weinmann said projects include fundraising for roofing materials, sprucing up the information kiosk and a sign at the park and several painting projects, including painting over some graffiti on the restroom building.

“Boy Scout Brandon Ball just completed the first phase of a pathway to the pavilions on the south side this past weekend and it is beautiful,” she said. “People can now access the small pavilion with ease. If someone would like to take on the second phase of this project, we can extend the first pathway over to the Ellsworth pavilion and then we will have complete accessibility to both south side pavilions.”

Weinmann said projects at the park keep volunteers busy, but the work is worth it.

“There are many projects that can be done at the park to help beautify our place along the river. The park and the bridge are Ashtabula County icons and they are often the first impression tourists get of our area. It is so important to maintain and improve the park for everyone to enjoy,” she said.

Sords said the public is welcome to attend the park board’s meetings, held at 6:30 p.m. on the second Tuesday of each month at the Ashtabula County Port Authority building in Jefferson.

The Harpersfield Covered Bridge Metropark isn’t the only county property in need of help, President of the Ashtabula County MetroParks Board Charlie Kohli said.

The most popular of those parks is a long ribbon of trail — the Western Reserve Greenway Trail. This 43-mile-long trail (27 miles in Ashtabula County) begins next to West Avenue across from the ODOT garage in Ashtabula and ends south below Orwell. From there, the trail continues to Champion, just north of Warren.

The Western Reserve Greenway is the former PennCentral right-of-way. The Ashtabula County MetroParks has a 15-year lease agreement for the right of way with the state, which owns the land. The lease authorizes construction of the Western Reserve Greenway on the Ashtabula portion of the old railroad tracks.

Because the trail construction is federally funded, motorized vehicles are prohibited except for motorized wheelchairs and maintenance vehicles. However, as

See FUN, Page 44

Fun

From Page 43

a result of the same law, snowmobiles are allowed on the trail when weather conditions permit.

Volunteers for the parks include Ashtabula County Volunteer Bike Patrol, Friends of the Metroparks, Friends of the Harpersfield Covered Bridge Metropark, Ashtabula County Parks Foundation, Ashtabula County Metropark board members and the Grand River Trail Riders.

The metroparks board also oversees the Grand Lakes area south of Dorset, which takes its name from Prince Lake and Queen Lake. Surrounded by 240 acres of undeveloped open, forested land and wetlands, Queen Lake and Prince Lake are located near Mells Road,



WARREN DILLAWAY / Star Beacon

SWIMMERS COOL off at Lake Shore Park in Ashtabula Township.

east of Route 193.

STATE PARKS

Geneva and Pymatuning state parks offer a variety of amenities and fun activities from camping, fishing, boating, canoeing and a guarded swimming beach. In winter, visitors enjoy

snowmobiling, cross-country skiing and ice fishing. A six-lane boat ramp provides access to Lake Erie's central basin. The marina includes a canteen and concession area, which supplies gasoline, boating essentials and bait. The marina includes

383 rental docks.

Visitors to Geneva State Park can choose from camping, lakefront cedar cabins, or rooms at the Lodge and Conference Center at Geneva-on-the-Lake.

The facilities are also available for weddings and

other events.

At Pymatuning State Park, located in Andover, is part old swamp forest and water recreation area. Considered one of the finest walleye and muskellunge lakes in the country, Pymatuning offers camping, swimming

and boating. With 3,512 land acres and 1,407 water acres, Pymatuning State Park is a popular place for fishing, hunting, hiking, picnicking outdoors and in picnic shelters, and swimming on the 350 foot beach. The park includes a nature center with summer nature programs. With five boat launch ramps and 360 rental docks, Pymatuning State Park is a popular place to boat and fish in the summer and in the winter, with ice fishing, ice boating, ice skating and cross country skiing available.

Visitors to Pymatuning State Park can hike on the park's two of well-marked trails. The 350-foot swimming beach is located just south of the causeway. The beach includes a bathhouse, showers, vending machines, and a volleyball court.

Golf

From Page 40

repair of the machines and the cleaning of the clubhouse, is done to boost tourism, encourage local spending and provide the best possible game of golf in the area.

GOTL Municipal Golf Course general management Todd Bishop said the 18-

hole golf course is essential to the identity of the village.

Bishop said he appreciates the golf history in every green and fairway of GOTL's golf course.

"Stanley Thompson was the architect of this course and he was one of the most influential architects in the world," he said. "It was really attractive to me to come into a leadership position at a Thompson course."

Upgrades are necessary to keep people coming back to

the course, village administrator Jim Hockaday

"Visitors limited to where the golf carts can go," he said. "So we need to increase the number of holes assessable by cart."

Efforts are being made to raise money to build a golf cart path for the back nine holes at the golf course.

The asphalt path, which could cost as much as \$180,000, is a long way off, but it is still in the plans.

"It will be really exciting

to be able to use the course in the early spring and late fall when it is wet and access to the course is limited," he said.

Hockaday said running a golf course certainly isn't without its problems, including drainage issues and a very restricted operating budget.

"We are working now to put together a plan to address those wet areas," Bishop said. "This will be an ongoing effort to return

the GOTL Golf Course to its glory days as one of the finest maintained municipal golf courses in the area."

For more information on packages and pricing at the Geneva-on-the-Lake Golf Course, call 466-8797.

OTHER GOLF COURSES IN THE AREA INCLUDE:

■ Chapel Hills Golf Course, 3381 Austinburg Road, Ashtabula. (997-3791) www.chapelhills-golf.com

■ Harbor Golf Club, 4338 Lake Road West, Ashtabula. (964-5824) www.harbor-golfclubashtabula.com

■ Hemlock Springs Golf Club, 4654 Corl Cold Springs Road, Geneva. (800) 436-5625. www.helmlocksprings.com

■ Maple Ridge Golf Course, Route 45, Austinburg Township. (969-1368) www.mapleridgegolf-course.com

Dogs

From Page 41

LEDPA and found funding for the project through the Ashtabula Parks and Recreation Board.

The park features two areas — one for little dogs under 25 pounds and one

for large dogs. A four-foot-tall fence surrounds the park.

The park, which officially opened in June is used by members of the SkyHoundz Frisbee league to practice.

But it takes more than just a love for dogs to make a dog park.

Boy Scout Jon Pendleton built several benches in the park as his Eagle Scout

project. Veterinarian Becky Salinger was also supportive with fencing and sweat equity. Aqua Ohio donated stone for a walkway. The City of Ashtabula has purchased poop bag dispensers for the park. Water will soon be supplied for the park. The Lions Club donated trees to be planted this fall.

Salinger said dogs that are

bored exhibit behavioral problems — problems easily solved with some exercise and activity.

"The majority of dogs surrendered to shelters are surrendered because of behavioral issues and the majority of behavioral issues are caused by boredom," she said. "This park is a solution to some of those problems and will hopefully

help people bond with their pets and in turn create a space for people to solve some of those behavioral problems."

But the development of the dog park is far from finished, Cragon said.

Donations of shade trees, bushes, flowers and monetary donations are still needed.

For more information on

the park or to donate towards park development, or to become a volunteer, email dcragon@windstream.net. Donations can be sent to Lake Erie Dog Park, P.O. Box 250, Austinburg 44010.

For updates and information on SkyHoundz' open Wednesday night practices, "friend" LEDPA on Facebook.

2012 PROGRESS EDUCATION

ASHTABULA COUNTY

MARK TODD ■ Staff Writer

New school building boom winds down across Ashtabula County

Districts anxiously await their 2011-2012 report cards

Just as parents count on report cards to tell them how their little darlings are doing in school, superintendents and principals districts count on a similar score card from Columbus to gauge progress year to year.

But as of mid-September, the only grade we can assess Ashtabula County's public schools in 2011-2012 — through no fault of the districts — is a big, fat "incomplete."

The Ohio Department of Education's annual "report cards," an evaluation guide in use for the past several years, will be tardy in 2012. The cards were to have been released on Aug. 29, but a state investigation into allegations that some districts may have tampered with data to improve their scores have put the official release on hold.

As a result, the report cards that school officials and the public have come to know won't be released until the investigation is complete. In their place will be a bare-bones collection of figures that will be available in an electronic, spread-sheet form, the Columbus Dispatch reported earlier this month. As a result, superintendents — must be content with very preliminary, very tentative report card information sent them earlier this summer.

School officials traditionally are loathe to discuss preliminary report cards for fear of spawning celebration or disappointment when final tabulations could

A-Tech adds pharmacy training to its curriculum

By MARK TODD
Staff Writer

mtodd@starbeacon.com

JEFFERSON — A new career option has been added to the medical-related options at the Ashtabula County Technical and Career Campus (A-Tech).

Beginning this school year, students enrolled in the school's Health Care Academy can choose pharmaceutical technology as a career choice. The curriculum includes both basic and advanced level training necessary to become a pharmaceutical technician.

Upon completion of their A-Tech schooling, students will be cleared to take the Pharmacy Technician Certification Board certification exam and



MARYBETH SANFORD

macy Technician Certification Board certification exam and
See A-TECH, Page 52

change everything. But given the delay of the final report cards, and the public's natural curiosity, some superintendents have shared their early numbers with the Star Beacon.

What follows is preliminary report card data provided by Geneva, Conneaut, Ashtabula, Jefferson, Grand Valley and Buckeye school districts. Data was not immediately available

from Pymatuning Valley.

Again, what follows are designations for 2011-2012 that are strictly tentative and subject to change. Designations from 2010-2011, where available, are in parenthesis for comparison. In some cases, new buildings that have opened over the past two years make comparisons difficult:

See BOOM, Page 46

SUCCESSFUL PROGRESS



MARK TODD / Star Beacon

SINCE JANUARY, Paula Ghiz has served as executive director of Ashtabula County Continued Education Support Services. ACCESS encourages local high school seniors to continue their education after graduation.

ACCESS tells graduates to continue their education

By MARK TODD
Staff Writer

mtodd@starbeacon.com

JEFFERSON — For more than a dozen years, Ashtabula County Continued Education Support Services (ACCESS) has been telling area students that education shouldn't end with a high school diploma.

With the help of sponsors and collaborators, ACCESS has worked to show students

the benefits of higher education, and that additional schooling brings rewards.

"(Additional education) is worth the time, the effort and the money," said Paul Ghiz, ACCESS director. "We try to give (students) as much information as we can so they can make the best decision possible."

Ghiz and her team of advisers spread that message in

See ACCESS, Page 51

Boom

From Page 45

■ ASHTABULA AREA CITY SCHOOLS

— The district is slated to receive a continuous improvement rating, the same as 2010-2011. Building ratings: Lakeside High School, effective (effective); Lakeside Junior High, continuous improvement (continuous improvement); Erie Intermediate, effective; Superior Intermediate, effective; Huron Primary, effective; Michigan Primary, excellent; Ontario, continuous improvement

■ BUCKEYE LOCAL SCHOOLS

— The district is on track to receive an effective rating for 2011-2012, compared to excellent the previous year. Building ratings: Edgewood High School, excellent (excellent); Wallace H. Braden Junior High, effective (effective); Ridgeview Elementary, excellent (excellent); Kingsville Elementary, effective (effective)

■ CONNEAUT AREA CITY SCHOOLS

— The district is slated to receive an effective rating, identical to the previous year. Building ratings: Conneaut High School, excellent (excellent); Conneaut Middle School, excellent (continuous improvement); Gateway Elementary, effective (effective); Lakeshore Primary, effective (effective)

■ **GENEVA** — The district is slated to receive an effective rating for 2011-12, identical to the previous year. Here are individual building ratings (with the previous year ratings in parenthesis: Geneva High School, excellent (excellent); Geneva Middle School, excellent (excellent); Austinburg Elementary, excellent (excellent with distinction), Cork Ele-



CARL E. FEATHER / Star Beacon

THE NEW St. John School opened in the former Saybrook Elementary School building last month. Volunteers put thousands of hours of work into the building to get it ready for the 300 students who attend there.

St. John School volunteers transform public school building

By **CARL E. FEATHER**

Staff Writer

cfeather@starbeacon.com

SAYBROOK TOWNSHIP — Success is often the result of the right people coming together at the right time to make the most of a divine opportunity.

In the case of St. John School, 350 gallons of paint and thousands of hours of volunteer and paid labor

also went into the success story.

The Depot Road school welcomed 300 students in pre-school through grade 12 when classes resumed last month. The building, formerly Saybrook Elementary, was acquired by Ron Kister with cash and a land swap with the Ashtabula Area City Schools Board of Education. The parochial school took possession June 12, and a team of volunteers quickly descended upon the 46,000-

square-foot structure with mops, tool boxes, power tools and paint brushes.

Larry Laurello, one of the hundreds of volunteers who worked on the massive project, said that, on average, 15 workers came out three evenings a weekend 30 volunteers worked every Saturday for 2 1/2 months to make sure the building would be ready for the start of

See TRANSFORM, Page 47

mentary, effective (effective), Platt Spencer, continuous improvement

■ GRAND VALLEY LOCAL SCHOOLS

The district is tentatively set

to receive an excellent rating for 2011-2012, a jump from effective received the previous year. Building ratings: Grand Valley High, excellent (excellent); Grand

Valley Middle, effective (effective); Grand Valley Elementary, excellent (excellent)

■ JEFFERSON LOCAL SCHOOLS

— The district

is poised to receive an effective rating, just like last year. Building ratings: Jefferson Area High School, excellent (excellent); Jefferson Area Junior High, effec-

tive (continuous improvement); Jefferson Elementary, effective (effective); Rock Creek Elementary, excellent (excellent with distinction)

While report cards may be on hold, new buildings continued to sprout over the past year. Over the past year new schools have welcomed students in Ashtabula and Geneva, while renamed St. John School is doing business in Saybrook Township.

Much of the public school improvements come courtesy the Ohio Schools Facility Commission, which pays the bulk of construction projects if local districts raise a matching share — generally via levies.

Last fall, Ontario, Michigan and Huron primary schools debuted in the Ashtabula district. Late August saw the arrival of Erie and Superior Intermediate schools, which completes Ashtabula's building program. Demolition work, however, is continuing. Crews are now busy disassembling the old Ashtabula High School.

Similar growth came to the Geneva Area City Schools district over the past few months. The start of the 2012-2013 year ushered in new eras for brand-new Cork and Austinburg elementary schools — as well as questions regarding the future of Memorial Field.

The old stadium has become a subject of discussion ever since Geneva schools signed an agreement for the use of athletic facilities at nearby Spire Institute. Talks picked up speed in the spring, after vandals sparked a fire that caused an estimated \$175,000 damage. The city of Geneva has expressed some interest in acquiring the field, officials have said.

See BOOM, Page 52



CARL E. FEATHER / Star Beacon

THE NEW art room at St. John School was refurbished by Cristal Global employees. Student RaeAnn Benedict and teacher Rebecca Ollikainen work on a project together at one of the tables the school purchased from the Ashtabula Area City Schools District.



CARL E. FEATHER / Star Beacon

THE NEW biology lab at St. John School is recycled from Ashtabula High School. The lab is a huge improvement over the one at the former Ss. John & Paul High School, says Patricia Gilpin (left). Maureen Burke, president of the school, is at right.

Transform

From Page 46

school.

“It was a controlled free for all,” Laurello said. “We must have thrown out 30 Dumpsters full of old materials, furniture and garbage.

“A lot of it was just cleaning, painting and fixing,” he added.

About one-third of the floor coverings were replaced, the maple floors refinished, the walls and lockers repainted and restrooms upgraded with new flooring and fixtures. Drop ceilings were added to some rooms, new lighting installed in select areas and the entire brick exterior tuck pointed.

Laurello said their to-do list is about 90 percent complete for the original building. About \$300,000 has been spent thus far; the money is coming from donations and fundraisers. The next one, a reverse raffle, is Oct. 27 at the new school.

A separate project, a new kitchen and cafeteria that will add 4,600 square feet, is under construction.



CARL E. FEATHER / Star Beacon

THE NEW St. John School has two libraries. This one is for the high school students and features new computers.

The \$200,000 project should be ready for use in January 2014, said Maureen Burke, president of the school.

The school consolidates the two

locations of the former Ss. John & Paul Schools. Burke said the Mt. Carmel location is being studied for parish use; the former high school building on Station Avenue

is up for grabs. Laurello said he would like to see a community group get it because it will have the only full-size gymnasium in the city once Ball Gymnasium is

razed.

Burke said the school should realize some operational efficiencies as a result of consolidating the two schools into one building.

Laurello and Burke praise the volunteers for their hard work and the Ashtabula Area City Schools board members for their cooperative spirit in helping the parochial school purchase the building. Laurello said the Saybrook building’s oldest section dates from the 1930s and was originally built as a high school. Additions that came in the 1940s and 1950s added space for the lower-grade classrooms. The building was thus perfect for a consolidation of St. John’s operations.

Saybrook’s physical condition was the best of the three former city schools buildings studied, Laurello said. It has a good roof, newer windows and forced-air heating system, which is less expensive to maintain, Burke said.

Equipment and furniture from the former Ashtabula High were purchased from the district at auction. “We bought about two semi-truck loads of equipment and furniture,” Laurello said.

See TRANSFORM, Page 50



WARREN DILLAWAY / Star Beacon

SUPERIOR INTERMEDIATE School is one of two new schools in the Ashtabula Area City School District.



WARREN DILLAWAY / Star Beacon

CORK GRADE School is one of two new schools in the Geneva Area City School District.



WARREN DILLAWAY / Star Beacon

ERIE INTERMEDIATE School is one of two new schools in the Ashtabula Area City School District.



WARREN DILLAWAY / Star Beacon

AUSTINBURG ELEMENTARY School is one of two new schools in the Geneva Area City School District.

Transform

From Page 47

Some of that went into the new biology and chemistry labs. Patricia Gilpin, one of the school’s science teachers, is thrilled with her new lab.

“It has water, gas and electricity,” she said. “It’s quite the difference (from the old high school lab). The supplies are readily available to the students.”

Burke said the new labs allow the school to offer that experience to the middle-school students, as well, and may allow an increase in science course offerings down the road.

A new art room, which was refurbished by employees of Cristal Global, has teacher Rebecca Ollikainen excited.

“Look at this lighting!” she said. “That was a big deal for me before, adequate light.”



CARL E. FEATHER / Star Beacon

A NEW cafeteria and kitchen are being built onto the back of the former Saybrook Elementary building on Depot Road, Saybrook Township. The expansion should be ready for use at the beginning of 2013.

“I really like this art room,” said RaeAnn Benedict, who was working on a project at one of the drawing tables obtained from AACCS. “The one last year I was in was too small.”

“The kids really seem to enjoy being in here,” Ollikainen added.

Burke said the new school is a model for the diocese to use when showing what can happen when the public and faith communities come together on a project. The public is taking notice, too. Enrollment is up 12 percent this year, and Burke said there is room

for more students.

Laurello said that while getting the building ready for students was itself a success story, he feels the future will hold even more such stories as this resource works with other sectors of the commu-

nity.

“Our community needs to have success stories, and we need to realize it is not us against us, but us against the world,” Laurello said.

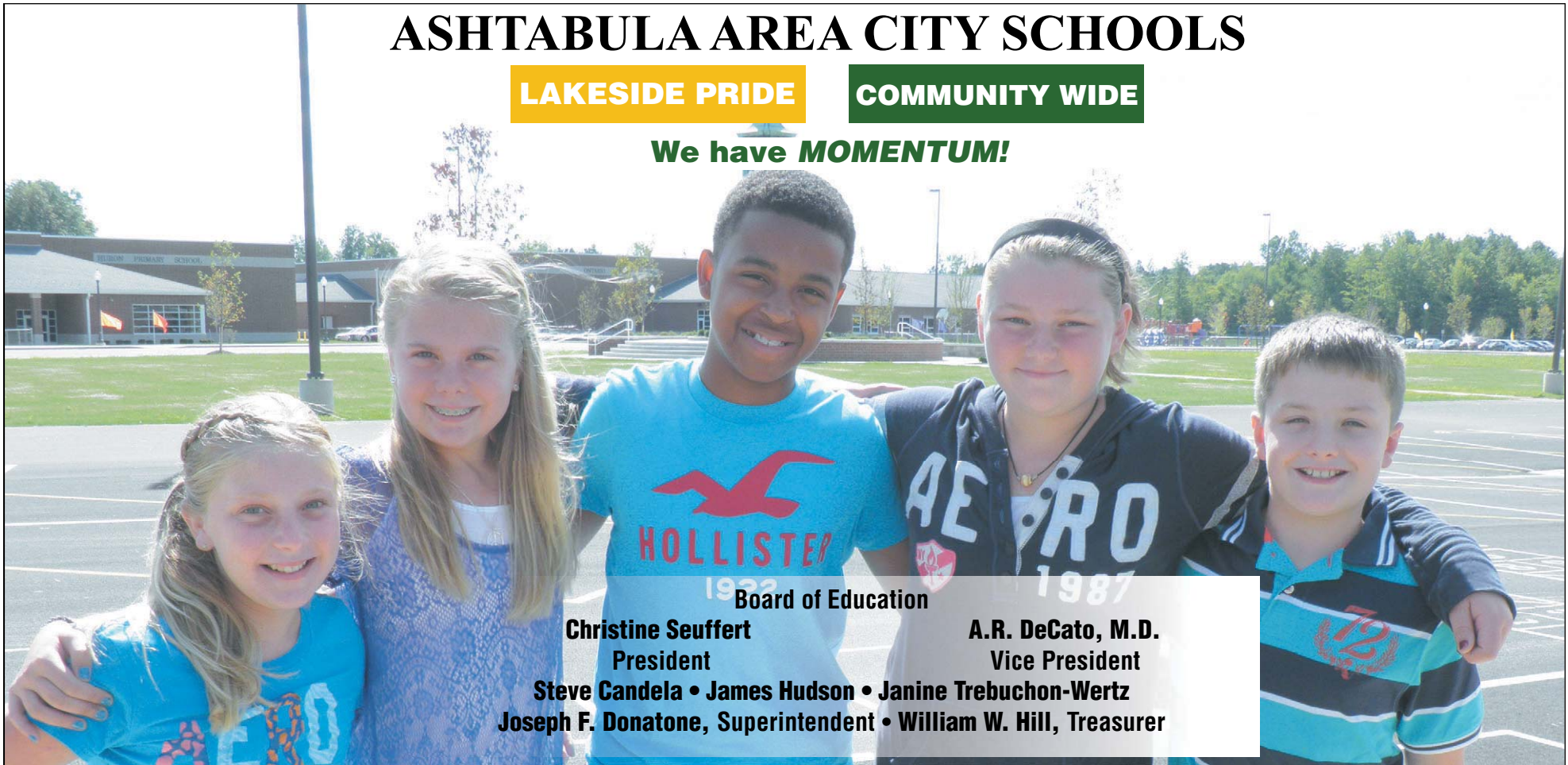
A dedication of the new building is planned for 6:30 p.m. Oct. 2.

ASHTABULA AREA CITY SCHOOLS

LAKESIDE PRIDE

COMMUNITY WIDE

We have **MOMENTUM!**



Board of Education

Christine Seuffert
President

A.R. DeCato, M.D.
Vice President

Steve Candela • James Hudson • Janine Trebuchon-Wertz
Joseph F. Donatone, Superintendent • William W. Hill, Treasurer

Access

From Page 45

high schools and junior/middle schools across the county. During the course of a school year, advisers hold counseling sessions with seniors and junior to find out their post-graduation plans and point out options.

For some kids, a vocation learned at A-Tech may await. Others plan a military career. The majority of students, however, are unsure what the future holds, Ghiz said.

“A lot of them are not quite sure what they want to do,” she said.

That's where ACCESS comes in. Advisers encourage additional training – and that doesn't automatically mean a traditional college or university, Ghiz said. “The focus is on a wider range of education, not just a two-or four-year school,” she said.

Career training institutions, for example, can provide an effective and feasible alternative to traditional college, Ghiz said. “We can expose students to more options,” she said.

At the same time, advisers urge students to keep their career plan realistic, based on their skills and resources. “They can have their dream school, but they also need to have a dream school backup,” Ghiz said.

For the most part, advisers don't dampen a lot of students' hopes. Many have a pretty good idea of their skill set and abilities by the time they first sit down with an ACCESS adviser, Ghiz said.

“We try to honor their wishes, but also make sure they reach for a realistic goal,” she said. “For the most part, the higher-level

College and career fair is ahead at KSUA

By MARK TODD

Staff Writer

mtodd@starbeacon.com

JEFFERSON – Area high school students can ask questions of dozens of college representatives and local employers at the Ashtabula County College Fair and Education-Career Connect Expo, set for Oct. 8 at Kent State University's Ashtabula campus.

The event, to be held 5-6:30 p.m., will feature reps from upwards of 70 colleges in Ohio,

Pennsylvania, New York, Michigan and West Virginia, said Paula Ghiz, director of Ashtabula County Continued Education Support Services (ACCESS). In addition, more than 30 local employers are scheduled to attend to share information about jobs, careers and the education and skills they require.

It's important students hear directly from those doing the hiring what they look for in an applicant, Ghiz said. “They will hear the real-life needs of employers (in the area),” she said.

The college fair will be held in the gymnasium, while the Education-Career expo can be found in the Blue-Gold Room.

The event is free of charge and open to students of any grade level, their parents and adult learners.

Traditionally, the Fair has attracted a good turnout, said Ghiz. “A lot of businesses are willing to open their doors to the students,” she said.

With so many schools under one roof, students should receive plenty of information about post-grad-

uation education options, Ghiz said.

ACCESS strives to “increase the number of Ashtabula County students and citizens continuing their education beyond high school,” according to its mission statement.

“ACCESS will create a greater awareness in all children and parents of the need and opportunity for higher education, will assist in preparing for advanced education and in discovering and obtaining the financial resources necessary to go beyond.

kids have a sense of what they want to do.”

In another bid to provide some real-world insight, ACCESS works with businesspeople willing to speak with students about their employees and the training they require, Ghiz said.

“We want to involve business and manufacturing more than we have in the past,” she said.

ACCESS advisers are making a difference, Ghiz said. Seniors who graduated in 2012 were asked to complete a survey, and nearly 17 percent of them said ACCESS influenced them to pursue higher education.

The advisers themselves got thumbs-up from a vast majority of the seniors. Fifty-six percent said the ACCESS staff was “very helpful,” while 36 percent labeled them “somewhat helpful,” according to the survey.

When students are unsure about higher education, they usually cite the cost of extra schooling as the biggest obstacle, Ghiz said.

“It's a barrier, especially for those middle-of-the-road families that just miss out on grants,” she said.

ACCESS lends a hand there, too, pointing out private and government loan and grant programs. And thanks to sponsors, ACCESS has awarded tens of thousands of dollars in scholarships to county students.

The level of interest in post-graduation studies is fairly consistent among the area's high schools, Ghiz said. On average, upwards of 70 percent of seniors – regardless of the school – say they plan to continue their studies, she said.

For those that don't, ACCESS staff can try to match interests and talents to a possible career, Ghiz said. “We're trying to get them on a time- and cost-efficient pathway to a career destination,” she said.

Ghiz, a former teacher, came to ACCESS in 2006 and became director in January. A 15-member board comprised of people from

all walks of life help steer the program, she said.

The current board has taken a very active, hands-on approach, which has proved invaluable, Ghiz said.

“We're seeing reductions in funding and it's becoming more difficult to acquire grants,” she said. “The board members are willing to go that extra step.”

A new partnership with A-Tech (the former Joint Vocational School) has also proved very helpful, Ghiz said. ACCESS has moved its office from the Growth Partnership for Ashtabula County building in Jefferson to A-Tech, which will greatly reduce rent and utility expenses, she said.

“It has really been nice,” Ghiz said.

ACCESS' success hopefully benefits Ashtabula County, if some of the newly-minted college graduates decide to return home to work. “We want to start retaining the talent we have in the county,” Ghiz said.

ACCESS cites reasons to continue schooling

JEFFERSON – To help convince high school seniors to pursue education after graduation, the Ashtabula County Continuing Education Support Services (ACCESS) has compiled a series of statistics that states their case.

Sources for the data below comes from College Board “Education Pays 2010,” U.S. Census Bureau and the Lumina Foundation, according to ACCESS:

■ College graduates earn an average of \$22,000 more per year than those with only a high school diploma. Skilled labor careers also have higher earning potential.

■ By 2018, new jobs in Ohio requiring higher education and training will grow by 153,000

■ College graduates are more likely to receive employer-provided insurance and pension plans

■ Only 21.7 percent of adults age 25-64 in Ashtabula County hold at least a two-year degree, compared to 35 percent in Ohio and 38 percent across the United States

■ By 2018, 57 percent of jobs in Ohio will require post-secondary education

■ College campus visits rank relatively high on the list of factors determining a student's college choice

■ College graduates are half as likely to be unemployed than those with only a high school diploma

■ College graduates are more likely to have closer families and to help build stronger communities

A-Tech

From Page 45

earn a credential as a pharmacy technician.

The new option joins the already-popular medical dental technician training available at the school, said

Brian Kimmel, instructional coordinator. Upwards of 50 students are enrolled in the medical classes, putting them among the most popular on campus, he said.

For its inaugural year, the pharmaceutical course is offered on a half-year basis, but will expand next school year, Kimmel said.

Instructor for the pharma-

cy technician program is Marybeth Sanford, Kimmel said. She is a 2004 graduate of Conneaut High School and received certification from the Great Lakes Institute of Technology, according to the A-Tech website. She has worked the past six years as a senior certified pharmacy technician at Walgreens, according to the

website.

Juniors who enroll in the medical program will get a general overview of all three medical fields, then in their senior year will zero in on a specialty, Kimmel said.

The pharmaceutical class was created as a result of demand and an on-going study of future job markets, Kimmel said. A-Tech has

two specialists who do "career exploration," he said. They look for job trends, see if the options mesh with local job outlooks and then review their findings with students to gauge interest.


Pharmaceutical training is also a growing trend at other tech schools, an indi-

cation of its growing interest, Kimmel said. "The medical field in general is a huge, huge demand," he said.

The medical curriculum is one of the busiest at the A-Tech campus, Kimmel said. "The culinary arts has good numbers, as does graphics communication," he said.

your
A Partner in Progress

*We're human. So we're all lifelong learners.
But the only place, open to all of us,
free of charge, whose entire mission
is lifelong learning, is the library.*



September is
National Library Card Sign-up Month.
When you get your library card
— your free library card —
you'll discover what a partner we can be.

Ashtabula Library
335 West 44th • Ashtabula
(440) 997-9341

Geneva Library & Bookmobile
860 Sherman • Geneva
(440) 466-4521

www.acdl.info

Ashtabula County District Library
What Do You Need to Know?



WARREN DILLAWAY / Star Beacon

THE DEMOLITION of the former Ashtabula High School has begun. The annex on the north side of the property was the first to go as crews worked in the rain.

Boom

From Page 46

In Jefferson, the district took the wraps off a new, 8,000-square foot administration building that was built in the senior/junior high schools campus. The building opened for business when the district reopened after Christmas break.

The past year also saw the arrival of new superintendents at two districts. Joseph Spiccia, former principal at Mentor High School, replaced Nancy Williams at Buckeye Local Schools. Also, Mike Candela — a former Ashtabula administrator — took the helm at Pymatuning Valley Local Schools. He succeeds Alex Geordan, who stepped down after three years.

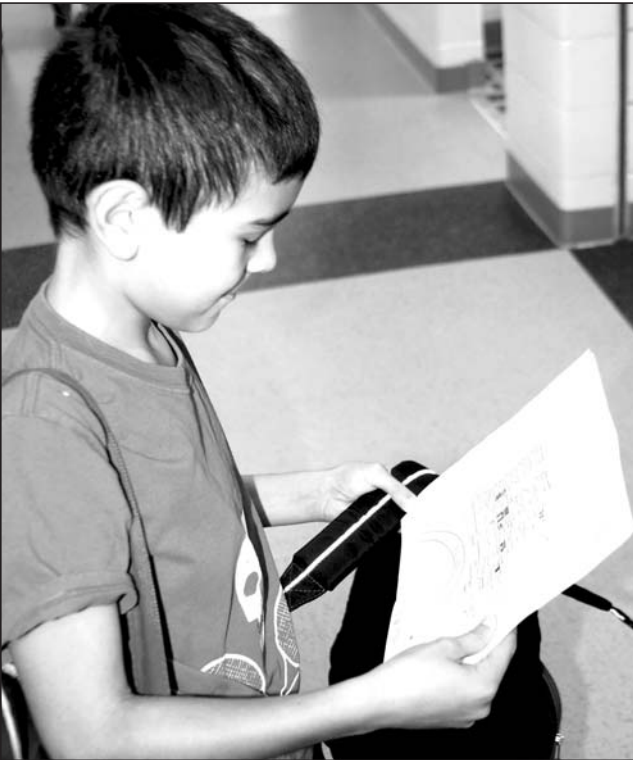
Money remained a huge headache for school districts over the past months. Funding cuts forced some districts to pare back staff and services and turn to voters for financial relief.

Jefferson lead the way, lopping 21 teachers and 17 classified employees to trim \$1.5 million from the budget. Conneaut followed suit, cutting 10 teachers. Retirements and resignations created vacancies that allowed many

of them to stay employed, however.

In March, voters in Ashtabula and Grand Valley districts said no to money issues, while approving a levy in Jefferson. Five months later, voters felt no differently, easily rejecting levies in Geneva, Ashtabula and Jefferson.

School levies return to the ballot this fall, with issues ahead in the Ashtabula, Jefferson, Ledgemont and Grand Valley districts.



MARGIE NETZEL / Star Beacon
FOURTH GRADE Cork Elementary student Nicholas Nappi, 9, reads a map of his new school building.



MARGIE NETZEL / Star Beacon
AUSTINBURG ELEMENTARY first grader Russell Miller raises his hand at the first day of school.



MARGIE NETZEL / Star Beacon
AUSTINBURG ELEMENTARY first grader Hannah Sedmak sticks her tongue out in concentration.



WARREN DILLAWAY / Star Beacon
EAN SUMMERS and fifth grade classmates Elsa Morales (left) and Laia Hull (right) get right to work on the first day of school at Superior Intermediate School in Ashtabula.



WARREN DILLAWAY / Star Beacon

BILL DELPRINCE, a physical education teacher, leads a student into Erie Intermediate School during the opening day of classes at the school.



MARGIE NETZEL / Star Beacon

CORK ELEMENTARY students get off their buses and walk into the new school building on the first day of school.



WARREN DILLAWAY / Star Beacon

HUNTER GNAD (right) greets fifth grade classmate Michael Hamilton Tuesday during the first day of class at Superior Intermediate School in Ashtabula.



WARREN DILLAWAY / Star Beacon

ASHANTI YOUNG (left) and Ulises Zavala get their desks in order during the first day of school at Erie Intermediate School in Ashtabula.



WARREN DILLAWAY / Star Beacon
JUSTIN PHARES works on his trumpet skills during a Braden Junior High band practice.



WARREN DILLAWAY / Star Beacon
STUDENTS AT Jefferson High School work on computers in the school's library.



WARREN DILLAWAY / Star Beacon
KAYLA FARLEY (right) and classmate Ticey Carr work on an art assignment at Lakeshore Primary.



WARREN DILLAWAY / Star Beacon
BRADLEY EATON, a kindergarten student at Lakeshore Primary in Conneaut, works to improve his computer skills.



WARREN DILLAWAY / Star Beacon
SEAN LYNAGH (front right) and classmates prepare for the next portion of class with Spanish teacher Erin Adame leading the class at Jefferson High School..



Did you know

twins make up 2% of the world's population?

Another little-known fact:

The COSE Affiliate Program allows you to join both COSE and the Ashtabula Area Chamber of Commerce for one low price. Double your business-building resources and multiply your presence today.

CALL 216.592.2355 OR VISIT COSE.ORG/AFFILIATE

