

OACAA *briefing*

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Recycling supports economy, environment

A tale of two centers: Adams Brown and Lancaster Fairfield

Recycling has existed for centuries around the world for a variety of reasons. Historically, it has allowed families to make the best of use of limited resources.

Ohio's Community Action Agencies started recycling because it was another way to fulfill their mission of helping people become self-sufficient. Gathering cans on the roadside could be done by anyone and became a source of income for many.

Today, those can collecting operations still exist. However, they have grown to include more and more materials and to become a source of jobs for the community as well as a way to conserve energy as the movement to "go green" grows.

Adams Brown Community Action Program (ABCAP) and Lancaster Fairfield Community Action Agency (LFCOA) both began recycling efforts in the late 1970s.

"We started recycling when I was director of summer youth programs," said Al Norris, Executive Director of ABCAP. "It started as a litter pick up program. We would sell aluminum cans and then throw a picnic for the kids who picked them up. We made \$400 our first year."

In 1988, Ohio law established Solid Waste Districts throughout the state to find



The opening of the new Materials Recovery Facility at Lancaster Fairfield Community Action Agency was so highly anticipated the Fairfield County Commissioners hosted their State of the County event in the building, before customers started bringing in materials.

a solution to dwindling landfill capacity. Recycling quickly became a large component of the Solid Waste District programs.

Norris' program and center are subsidized by the Brown County Solid Waste

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Glass reFactory creates one-of-a-kind items

They said it couldn't be done.

A decade later, it's not only being done, it's being marketed nationally.

Adams Brown Community Action Partnership operates The Glass reFactory as part of its recycling facility making suncatchers and similar items from 100 percent recycled glass.

Glass makers said making a product from recycled glass would be chemically impossible. Each type of bottle is chemically different, if the types are mixed, the chemical makeup wouldn't allow the product to set up or would cause cracking. Some new glass would have to be added to counteract that effect. Pure, 100 percent recycled content just wasn't possible, chemists said.

ABCAP's solution: don't mix them.

"We sort our bottles by the bottle," said Recycling Direc-

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Sam Bradford shows a mold used to create custom sun-catchers for the National Ivy Society at the Glass reFactory.

See how it's done! View a video of The Glass reFactory at www.oacaa.org.

Fayette dedicates building to late director

Jack Haggerty's life's work left an indelible mark on Fayette County and now his name will forever mark the agency he helped found.

Haggerty died Nov. 2, 2009 at age 92 after serving as the only Executive Director of the Community Action Commission of Fayette County for 45 years. On May 12, 2010, the new facility he helped acquire before his death was dedicated as "The Jack M. Haggerty Community Action Center."

"We are thrilled that we are able to name this building after Jack to honor his memory and years of service to Community Action," said Finance Director Jenny Hollar-Young. "For those of you who didn't know Jack, you missed knowing a wonderful human being. For those who knew him and especially those who had the privilege to work for him, we are all better people for having known him."

Executive Director Bambi Baughn worked with Haggerty since 1978 and was named to succeed him in December. The move into the new building was the first big change for the agency since his death. Baughn said she misses Haggerty's grounding perspective calling him a "great touchstone."

"He taught me that sometimes you just need to stop and not react to everything," she said. "Bad things have happened before, bad things will happen again and you will get through it. And there's always more than one way to get through it."

Hollar-Young said dedicating the building to Haggerty is meant to remind the staff of what he taught them.



The Community Action Commission of Fayette County now operates out of this facility on U.S. Route 22. The building has been named for Jack Haggerty (inset) who was the only director of the agency for 45 years until his death last November.

"To be kind, to be tolerant, to sometimes just give someone the benefit of the doubt," she said. "To treat the people who come here for services with nothing but respect, and most of all for us to just do our jobs."

The dedication also consolidates most of the agency's services to one campus. The new building, at 1400 U.S. Route 22 Southwest, formerly served as the Board of Education office for Miami Trace Schools. Behind it are three other buildings all used by Community Action: a transportation building, a warehouse and the David Hobson Early Learning Center (named for the former Congressman).

During the dedication, Baughn and

Hollar-Young presented a plaque to Haggerty's wife Virginia and son Michael. They also recognized the organizations and individuals who supported the project: Finance Fund (pre-development grant); Office of Head Start (facilities grant); former Congressman Dave Hobson (EDI grant from HUD); USDA Rural Development (community facilities guaranteed loan); Advantage Bank (permanent financing); former State Representative John Schlichter (legislative support); Fayette County Commissioners (general support); Miami Trace Board of Education (former owners of building); and Osteopathic Heritage Foundation (grant support).

Columbiana CAA connects seniors to fresh local produce

Community Action Agency of Columbiana County wants to make sure seniors in the community have access to fresh produce all summer.

The Ohio Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program provides income eligible seniors age 60 and older with locally grown fresh fruits, vegetables, herbs and honey. In its second year, the program is a collaboration with the Area Agency on Aging and funded by a grant from the Ohio Department of Agriculture.

It has been a huge success, according to Persona Grim, Senior Services Coordinator for the agency.

"Last year we got enough phone calls to give out every coupon we had in two days," Grim said. "We didn't even advertise."

Each eligible person receives ten \$5 coupons that can be redeemed for produce

at participating markets around the county. The program kicked off May 6 with coupons already going out through the mail as farmers begin to harvest strawberries next month.

"We're happy to have coupons mailed to them by the first of June so they have them in time for strawberry season," Grim said.

The coupons are good through October 31 so residents can use them for fall apples and even Halloween pumpkins, she added.

Last year, the program received \$30,000 in funding for coupons which covered 600 coupons. Grim said, however, that the agency was able to over-issue because not all the coupons were redeemed. That meant more people were served.

This year, the funding is slightly less at \$27,209 which Grim believes will serve 544 people.

Customers spend the \$5 coupons like cash at the participating markets and farmers often help them to make the most of their coupons.

"That keeps them in produce all summer long," Grim said. "We've got a couple of farmers who have just been phenomenal with our customers."

In the rural community, many farmers buy from each other and having a local market for their crops is important to the entire community, Grim said.

"The farmers loved it. The seniors loved it," she added. "It just was a good thing all around for everybody."

The Farmers Market Nutrition Program is typically administered by the Area Agency on Aging, Grim said. Community Action Agencies interested in partnering with the program should contact their local AOA office.

ARRA funds certification program at Cincy CAA

A stimulus funded program in Cincinnati has already produced almost 60 certified graduates with better employment prospects.

Cincinnati-Hamilton County Community Action Agency used a direct grant from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act to create the Cincinnati Manufacturing Certificates (CMC) program. Four classes totaling 57 people have completed the program with an improved production and technical skill set.

The program targets production workers seeking to sharpen their manufacturing skills, secure employment, or earn promotions, higher pay, and job security. Using the national curriculum developed by the Manufacturing Skills Standards Council (MSSC), CMC students can earn four different certifications: quality, safety, production processes and maintenance awareness. Over four and a half weeks, CMC trainees learn a variety of essential production processes, including hazardous materials procedures; data collection and documentation; reading blueprints; and more.

CMC has seen its graduates outshine their workforce competition. Stephanie, a member of CMC's first graduating class, was in need of employment so that she could support herself and her two children. After Stephanie completed the training course, CMC staff helped her get an in-



Cincinnati-Hamilton County CAA has helped nearly 60 people earn certification in manufacturing skills with an ARRA funded program that enhances their employability.

terview with a local packaging company. Stephanie's extensive manufacturing training and knowledge landed her a lead worker position, managing a product line of six people.

"Very seldom in life is something everything that one hopes it will be, but the MSSC program was just that. I couldn't be more thrilled [with my new job] and I owe it all to you," wrote Brad, another CMC graduate now working for a top auto com-

ponents maker.

Employers who hire CMC's MSSC-certified graduates receive benefit from reduced internal training costs and knowledgeable workers who are able to keep pace with technological changes.

To learn more about the Cincinnati CAA's CMC program, visit www.cincy-caa.org or stay up-to-date with the graduates through CMC's blog at <http://www.cincinnati-mssc.blogspot.com>.

SELF prepping for visit from Group Workcamps

Supports to Encourage Low-income Families (SELF) of Butler County will host several hundred youth working with the Colorado-based Group Workcamps Foundation this summer.

The campers typically come as part of church youth groups or other organizations. They will be matched with homes in Hamilton that need a variety of repairs. The campers will be able to work on approximately 20 homes while they are in Hamilton between July 5 and 9. SELF hopes to double that number by rallying local volunteers to work at the same time and for the rest of July.

"We've had a lot of questions from local groups about how they can help," said Kim Weigel, Community Relations Director for SELF. "Anyone can get involved."

City of Hamilton firefighters recently signed up to help.

"We are incredibly excited to have the firefighters join our list of supporters," said David Hastings, SELF's Housing Coordinator. "We are working out the details on even having some of them repair a home or two."

Repairs can include anything from painting to building a wheelchair ramp, Weigel said. Hastings and representatives of Group Workcamps are in the process now of visiting potential sites, taking measurements and talking to homeowners.

In addition to seeking volunteers to extend the program's reach, SELF is looking for donations and volunteers to support the individual campers. Welcome bags are being created and groups are needed to provide refreshments and support at the sites. Large vehicles for collecting trash and ladders of all sizes are also needed.

Weigel said the ramp up process for working with Group Workcamps is lengthy. SELF has already applied to host a camp in Middletown in 2011. Anyone applying now would be doing so for the summer of 2012, she said. More information is available at www.groupworkcamps.com.

Co-sponsorship of the SELF camp is another way to support it. Interested agencies should contact Geoff Frahm, Project Manager at the Group Workcamps Foundation at gfracm@groupworkcamps.com or 1-800-385-4545, ext. 4256.



SELF staff visited a Group Workcamp in Racine, Wisc. to learn more about the program and the types of home repairs campers complete.

Ohio Heartland Rx program wins again

Ohio Heartland Community Action Commission has received another award for its Community Prescription Program.

The program won the Ohio Association of Nonprofit Organizations (OANO) Nonprofit Excellence Award for a large agency in the central region.

“We were thrilled to win,” said Executive Director Joe Devany.

This is the second award the program received this year. In January, it was recognized as a Best Practice by the Ohio Association of Community Action Agencies and the John Glenn School of Public Affairs at The Ohio State University.

The United Community Rx Program was originally established as a pilot in 2001 and recognized as a Best Practice in 2002. It was revised and expanded as the recession impacted Marion County. The goal of the new program was to form a collaboration with expanded community partners improving access to the effective, affordable medications program for a growing number of residents.

The county has a higher than average percentage of seniors without prescription coverage (25 versus the statewide percent-

age of 11.8) and has the highest unemployment rate in the state. Nearly one in five Marion County residents was pushed into poverty last year, primarily due to rising unemployment.

Since modifying the program, client assistance levels have increased 217 percent. During the last 12-month documented period, 765 prescriptions were filled for 500 clients with an estimated customer savings of \$450,000. OHCAC anticipates the need for the program will increase at least 10 percent in the first six months of 2010.

“People in need of medication assistance have saved hundreds and sometimes thousands of dollars on the cost of their prescriptions,” Devany said. “Also, people who would go without received their medications on a regular basis.”

OHCAC worked with the Marion Community Foundation for initial funding and strategically expanded partnerships to serve more people. The program is now co-funded by the Foundation and the Marion County United Way. Additionally, Walgreens, formerly MedCenter Pharmacy, provides the required local match in



OHCAC's Nikki Hamm and Joe Devany accepted the Nonprofit Excellence Award from OANO.

in-kind services by its pharmacy staff. The services of the pharmacy staff amount to approximately \$26,000 annually.

Akron Summit processes record number at VITA site

The Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) Program of Akron completed 1,805 income tax returns during the recent tax season, generating more than \$3 million in refunds for Summit County residents and increasing the number of people served by 24 percent.

Residents received more than \$1.4 million in EITC dollars alone. Thirty-seven volunteers gave more than 3,842 hours (valued at \$57,630.00) as they worked to complete federal, state and

local tax returns for clients at two sites. The efforts of volunteers saved taxpayers approximately \$361,000 in return preparation fees, or \$200 per return.

In addition, the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) funded two additional jobs to support the EITC program. The two sites opened at the end of January and closed April 15.

The EITC Program also held a Volunteer Appreciation event at Akron Summit Community Action April 23. Volunteers

received words of wisdom and gratitude along with awards from the IRS as well as the offices of Senator Sherrod Brown, Congresswoman Betty Sutton, the City of Akron, the City of Barberton, and Akron Summit Community Action, Inc.

The EITC Program of Akron is guided by a community-based coalition, with Akron Mayor Don Plusquellic as Honorary Chair, and Congressman Sutton and Summit County Executive Russ Pry as Co-Chairs.

Glass reFactory ...

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tor Dan Wickerham. “We don’t just have green glass. We have dark green glass, light green glass.”

Artists said nothing could be made from bottle glass. It was created and chemically designed for machine extrusion. Glass blowers wouldn’t be able to make anything out of it, they said.

ABCAP’s solution: press it instead.

“We found that if we work deliberately and press it instead of blowing it, we can make a product,” Wickerham said.

The sort line at ABCAP’s recycling facility begins that deliberate work. Bottles are sorted by color and transported to

The Glass reFactory. Sam Bradford breaks the bottles into shards and removes any metal pieces, such as bottle caps, that have been mixed in. Paper labels and plastic pieces burn off in the 2,025 degree oven insulated with multiple layers of brick.

Bradford loads the shards into the oven and uses a preheated stainless steel gathering rod to remove the molten glass one ball at a time from the 400 pounds it holds. The glass is pressed using a mold carved from graphite.

Local artists designed some of the molds and others are computer carved based on custom orders with business logos or designs.

“We can do anything,” Bradford said.

The suncatchers are cooled slowly in another oven which is tightly controlled to prevent cracking, Wickerham said.

Bradford said some mixing does occur. To make blue suncatchers, some chemical additives are needed and to make amber, a combination of brown and clear glass is used. Green is pure green bottles, however.

Bradford is the only operator. He retired from Synergy after 30 years and found this new vocation a couple years later. The only other similar facility he knows about is in Eugene, Oregon, Bradford said.

Recycling centers...

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District. The Adams-Clermont County Solid Waste District contracts with ABCAP for some specific services. Curbside recycling is provided in Brown County and drop boxes are located in both counties.

ABCAP's new facility is a 22,000-square-foot, \$2 million center constructed in 2008. It features a two-lane drive through for customer drop off and a raised platform sorting structure approximately three stories high. The center sees anywhere from 60 to 120 customers a day and operates six days a week.

Lancaster Fairfield CAA began recycling in approximately 1980 in an old barn with students from the now defunct CETA program, said Executive Director Kellie Ailes. After operating from a few different buildings in downtown Lancaster, the agency built a new Materials Recovery Facility next to its offices in the former Fairfield County Children's Home. It opened in 2006.

The new facility was so highly anticipated the Fairfield County Commissioners held their State of County event in the MRF in 2006.

LFCAA has placed drop off trailers throughout the county and also provides curbside service in two townships. The 22 drop off locations are emptied by MRF staff at least once a week and some are emptied six days a week, Ailes said. The new MRF doubled the agency's recycling capacity, according to manager Patty Bratton.

LFCAA also has several commercial clients which primarily use its mobile, confidential shredding service. Clients include the Board of Elections and Job and Family Services Department in Fairfield County. On-site shredding is conducted away from the center at least three times a week bringing in 6,000 to 8,000 pounds of paper to recycle. Residents can also bring their documents to the center to be shredded for free, Bratton said.

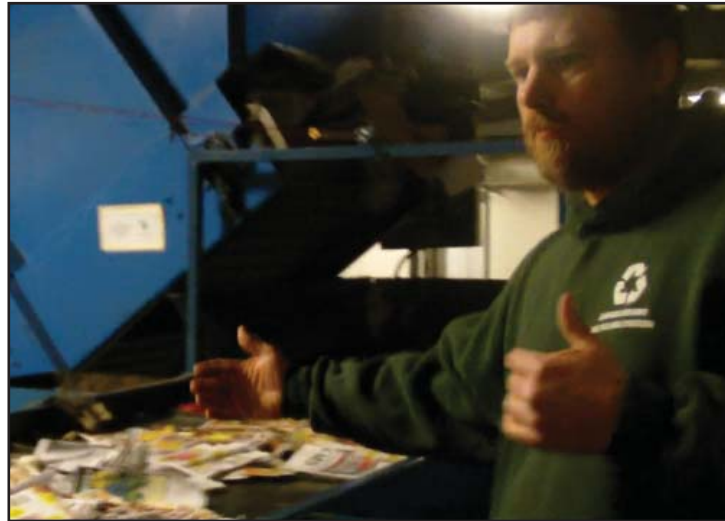
With a combination of grant funds, donations and income from those contracts, Ailes said the building has no mortgage.

"Whatever we didn't get in grants, we raised and paid for," Ailes said. "We're very proud of that."

The Coshocton-Fairfield-Licking-Perry Solid Waste District also supports the MRF.

Ailes is also proud that an unusual idea she had during construction has worked. LFCAA had been collecting used motor oil from residents for years.

"Originally, we had to pay someone to take the oil," she said. "Then they took it for free and then we started selling it."



Adams Brown Community Action Program Recycling Director Dan Wickerham explains how paper and other fibrous materials are sorted at the agency's recycling center which employs 12 to 14 people year-round.

With the new center, Ailes looked for a way to use the oil. It now heats the MRF. Oil is collected and processed into a boiler which operates a radiant heat system in the MRF's concrete floor. Ailes said a forced-air heating system would not work for multiple reasons. First, the waste product of a burning oil is heavy metals which would be a health hazard in the air. With the boiler, that waste is contained. Second, the MRF's doors are always open welcoming customers, so the hot air would not stay in the building. Radiant heat keeps the floor warm and, since heat rises, the building as well.

"We heat for free," Ailes said. "Occasionally we have enough oil to market."

Both centers operate similar sorting lines with storage areas for each type of material. Once enough material is collected and sorted, it can be sold to the highest bidder.

Dan Wickerham, Director of Recycling at ABCAP said their system was strategically designed so "there is a place to put everything" including trash mistakenly put into recycling bins. ABCAP has two sorting lines that split paper materials from comingled containers (cans, bottles, etc.). Both streams of materials ride a conveyor to the top of the three story sort line where trash is pulled off and different types of materials are sorted by hand by the 12 to 14 employees at the center. Sorting of glass is particularly important at ABCAP because it is used in The Glass reFactory (see separate story).

"We haven't automated our system," Wickerham said. "We're not large enough to justify the automation. But what we have done is position everything very strategically to reduce the handling. Our goal is to only have to handle it one time and then use gravity or machines to move the material from then on."

Once the material is sorted, it fills up hoppers. As the hoppers become full enough to make a bale, the material is released onto

a conveyor belt that feeds the baler. For example, aluminum cans are processed into bales weighing 500 to 600 pounds. Then the bales are sold to companies such as Alcoa, Budweiser or brokers who serve similar companies.

Wickerham said ABCAP handles a wide variety of metals and identifying them among the mix of materials brought in by the public is key.

"The more specific you can be in identifying an alloyed material, the more it's worth," he said.

Making that determination is a learned skill, added Glass Manager MaryAnna Volkert. Obvious factors such as weight and color are used but occasionally chemical or heat tests are applied to identify magnesium versus zinc. Most of the time, knowing where it came from is the biggest factor.

"Certain things are made of certain materials," Volkert said. "Certain things are magnesium. Certain things are zinc and the buyer develops a skill in identification of materials."

Both agencies use their centers to educate the public bringing school children on tours and conducting a variety of programs. LFCAA has also partnered with other agencies to dispose of more difficult materials such as prescription drugs.

Norris is experimenting with other environmental projects including using solar energy to power the lights in his office. He'd love to expand on that project to take more of ABCAP's facilities off the grid, but that is a huge undertaking.

Norris and Ailes believe recycling and other conservation projects fit neatly into Community Action.

"Environmental conservation fits into the mission of any business," Norris said. "If I can spend less on energy to power the agency facilities, I can spend more on helping clients."

Youths install mural at Lorain CLTC

Community Action's themes of opening doors and minds; celebrating technology and coming together have been skillfully illustrated in a 26-foot mural at the Community Learning and Technology Center of the Lorain County Community Action Agency.

The mural was installed by the Common Ground Mural Arts Project and dedicated before more than 50 people on May 6.

"We knew any mural the project delivered would be a wonderful addition to our Learning Center," said Jackie Boehnlein, Director of Strategic and Organizational Operations for LCCAA. "The mural and the youths far exceeded our expectations. Their interpretation and rendering of what the Community Learning and Technology Center is about not only makes our space more welcoming, its celebration of learning nicely sets the stage for the work done in our adjacent classrooms."

Ten young people aged 15 to 20 worked collaboratively to create the mural over the course of several months. The mural was designed by artist/educator Fred Farshman and the project was supervised by Common Ground executive director Rick Grahovac. Also assisting were Krista Berry, Youth Project Coordinator and Chris Wade with Boys & Girls Clubs of Lorain



Lorain County Community Action Agency's Community Learning and Technology Center was chosen for a Common Ground Mural Arts Project installation.

County.

The youths were: Maileol Burton, Dontae Henry, Malina LeGard, Darius McCall, Tiffany Perkins, Summer Shepherd and Michael Woolfork.

Common Ground's Mural Arts Project began in 2006. Youth participants work in teams of 6 to 10 with two artists or staff

members to create community murals throughout Lorain County. Murals take between 40 and 60 hours to complete and local area artists collaborate in the projects. Youths develop an increased sense of connection to their community as well as project management and problem solving skills and increasingly positive self-identity.

WSOS graduates operators, marine mechanics

WSOS Community Action continues to expand its workforce training efforts and help clients develop new and marketable skills.

Eight participants have graduated from the agency's first "Level 1 Water Operator" training class and will take the State of Ohio's certification exam this month. This certification is recognized and accepted everywhere in the country.

Elyria Water Works Superintendent Sam Jacob, one of the class instructors, congratulated the graduates on their success.

"You were not trained for a job. You were trained for a profession," he said. "This is the first time in all my years of teaching that everyone who took this test has passed it on the first try."

Each graduate was awarded certificates in Basic Water, according to the curriculum as developed by the Operator Training Committee of Ohio, Inc. (OTCO), Water Dis-

tribution Systems, and Water Environment Technician. As part of the program, they also received 12 hours of Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) training, eight hours of training in backflow, 14 hours of electrical training, pump training, basic lab training and the Red Cross CPR/AED and First Aid training.

All participants completed internships at various water plants in Northwest Ohio where they learned first hand what a water operator does.

"This intense class has prepared the students for careers in the water environmental field," said Steve Heimlich, Water Plant Manager of Avon Lake Municipal Utilities. "This has been a great training opportunity for the students."

Graduates of this program may be eligible for jobs as water treatment plant operators, water treatment plant maintenance workers,

water treatment plant lab technicians, water distribution system workers, backflow technicians and meter readers.

The class was conducted by OTCO with instructions from various water treatment facilities.

WSOS also recently graduated its tenth class from the Skills for Life Marine Mechanics training program. Eleven graduated from the program in March and six received scholarships for advance training provided by Volvo Penta, one of the largest manufacturers of marine engines.

"The skills these graduates receive in this program are mobile skills," said Roger Fisher, Employment and Training Services Coordinator at WSOS. "It can go anywhere in the country."

For more information on training programs at WSOS, visit them at www.wsos.org or call 1-800-775-9767.

Don't miss the 2010 Annual Summer Conference at the Kalahari in Sandusky June 16, 17 and 18! Register now at www.oacaa.org.