

Got BQT?

Our county's barn quilt trail has unique features; co-founder's memory honored.
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All about critters

 Did you remember to renew your dog license for 2017? If not, mail is coming your way: **Page 2**

 4-H youth bring their projects to the Old Courthouse for proclamation ceremony: **Page 3**



Hollie Dalton brought her dog, Gunny, to the Old Courthouse 4-H ceremony.

First-half 2016 real estate tax collections set record for the county: **Page 3**
Building department plays role in economic development: **Page 4**



Ashtabula County Board of Commissioners
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Ashtabula County Insights

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Ashtabula County INSIGHTS

is published monthly by the Ashtabula County Board of Commissioners:
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Kathryn Whittington, vice-president
J.P. Ducro IV

To have Insights delivered via email, send an email to cefeather@ashtabulacounty.us to be added to the mailing list.

The current and previous issues are always available for download from the county's website, ashtabulacounty.us, and the Ashtabula Wave, ashtabulawave.org.

April 2017 meetings

- 4** 10 a.m., Commissioners work session
1 p.m., Commissioners agenda meeting
- 11** 10 a.m., Commissioners work session
1 p.m., Commissioners agenda meeting
- 18** 10 a.m., Commissioners work session
1 p.m., Commissioners agenda meeting
- 25** 10 a.m., Commissioners work session

All other meetings held in the commissioner's second-floor meeting room, 25 W. Jefferson Street (old courthouse, Jefferson. Elevator, ramp available.

YOUR VOICE

President Kozlowski responds to citizens' questions



Q What public transportation options are available in Ashtabula County?

Carol Lennon of the Ashtabula County Transportation System (ACTS) answers the question, based upon the rider's age/income.



Medicaid Eligible

Non – Emergency medical transportation is available to Ashtabula County residents who are Medicaid eligible. Residents may contact Ashtabula County Department of Job & Family Service Transportation Unit to schedule rides to their medical appointments. The scheduling number is (440) 994-1220. Due to the high demand for rides a minimum of 2 – 3 working days notice is required for scheduling.

Seniors

The Ashtabula County Senior Services Levy provides both medical appointments and limited non-medical rides for residents over 60 years of age. There is a co-pay for rides which is determined according to mileage. Requests for rides must be made to the Senior Services Levy Coordinator.

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Do you have a question for Casey Kozlowski?
Call 576-3750 or email
ckozlowski@ashtabulacounty.us

Dog license sales lag behind 2016 numbers

If you purchased a dog license for your pooch in 2016 but forgot to renew it before the deadline of Jan. 31, 2017, you got mail coming your way in April.

Charlene Anchor of the Ashtabula County Auditor's Office, says delinquency notices will go out to roughly 1,000 previously registered owners in April. Anchor knows that, in some cases, the animal may have passed on or been transferred to another owner. And if that's the case, dial 576-3794 and let her know so you don't get a notice.

"We have no way of knowing these things unless the owner lets us know," she says.

If you still have the dog but did not renew the license before Jan. 31, you will have to pay a \$12 penalty plus the cost of the tag, \$12.

As of March 10, the county had sold 8,261 one-year dog licenses. That is about 800 shy of the one-year licenses sold by the end of 2016.

Last year, 562 dog owners ended up paying a penalty for purchasing the tag after the deadline.

Ashtabula County Auditor Roger Corlett says he feels that there are many unregistered dogs in Ashtabula County, based upon both



A licensed dog is a contented dog!

statistical and anecdotal evidence. When he first came into the office, there were 12,000 licensed dogs and kennels in the county. At the close of 2016, there were only 10,037. But Corlett says the dog population probably has not declined.

"If you go out in the countryside anywhere in Ashtabula County, chances are you are going to find people who are not buying dog licenses," he says.

This is a hunch that's affirmed by the experience of the county's dog warden, Donna Yan, who also is in charge of enforcing the dog licensing laws. She estimates that only 70 percent of the county's dogs are licensed. Yan works with the Auditor's office on licensing and citations for those who do not obtain a license.

Anchor is in charge of keeping track of the li-

Both the Ashtabula and Jefferson (auto) license bureaus sell the tags, as do Kray Feed in North Kingsville and the Pleasant Animal Hospital. Saybrook Feeds sells the tags, but only during the open registration period. There is an additional fee of 75 cents per application when purchasing through one of these partner sites.

The county also offers online dog tag registration, but a credit card processing fee of \$2 applies. Sales have been robust the first 70 days of 2017: 1,442, including 1,250 one-year licenses and 57 "extra" kennel licenses. Last year there were 1,495 online sales.

Why license?

Corlett says the practice of licensing dogs – as opposed to cats or parakeets – goes back to the days when county commissioners were

'Ashtabula County Dog Warden Donna Yan estimates that only 70 percent of the dogs in Ashtabula County are licensed.'



censes and tags. The tags are purchased already punched with the license number. Because of the three-year licensing option (see sidebar), Anchor has to purchase a three-year supply of tags. She usually buys between 11,000 and 12,000 of the tags for any given year. The county uses a dog-bone shaped tag, a different color for each year. Anchor says dog owners complained about the tag that was shaped like Ohio, it had two sharp points.

Tags are sold at the Auditor's Office as well as the Ashtabula County Protective League. An adopted dog can't leave the shelter without a tag.

"The APL is probably sending us 20 to 30 applications a month," Anchor says.

responsible for reimbursing farmers who livestock was killed by a dog or pack of dogs. Today, the licensing provides a registration/tracking system that is available to the county's dog warden around the clock.

The fees are split between the Auditor's office and Commissioners'. The Auditor's portion goes for the administration of the program, whereas the Commissioners' funds the dog warden position and supports the APL through the fee the county pays the league to house stray animals.

While the dog warden has responsibility for enforcement, her job takes in the welfare of cats, horses and other critters. Further, with

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ACTS, continued from Page 1

through the Ashtabula County Department of Job & Family Services at (440) 994-2032.

General Public

Ashtabula County Transportation System (ACTS) provides rides throughout Ashtabula County for the General Public. ACTS will provide door – to – door service for a fee of \$1.50 each way. Further, ACTS provides 3 service routes throughout Ashtabula City. Residents may contact ACTS at (440) 992-4411 for more details.

Want to bet on puppy living a long life?

Looking to save money on your long-term dog license expenses? You can purchase a lifetime dog license for your puppy, and the \$120 fee will save you \$12 annually for every year the dog lives past the age of 10.

The option is gamble, however. If your puppy decides to play in the street the day after you buy the license and ends up in dog heaven, there's no refund.

Another option is a three-year license, although, frankly, it is more about convenience than saving money. Auditor Roger Corlett says the three-year option was suggested

by the wife of a lawmaker who evidently thought the annual licensing requirement was a bit too burdensome.

The Auditor's office will sell you a three-year license that will cost \$36, however, if your dog dies, there is no pro-rated rebate (as is true for all the dog tags).

The county does have a few gamblers who appreciate convenience. As of March 10, 168 three-year licenses had been sold, up by 40 for all of 2016, the first year the option was offered.

Information: 440-576-3794.

Commissioners proclaim 4-H Week in Ashtabula County



Ashtabula County Commissioners (from left) J.P. Ducro IV, President Casey Kozlowski and Vice-President Kathryn Whittington pose with the proclamation, 4-H youth and their critter projects on the steps of the Old Courthouse March 7. March 5-11 was proclaimed 4-H Week in Ashtabula County. Amy Varkettable, Junior Fair Queen, holds the proclamation with Kozlowski.

Tax year 2016 collections set a new country record at **\$55 million and some change**

Tax Year 2016 real estate tax collection netted slightly over \$55 million, and was the highest collection in the County's history, both proportionately to taxes billed as well as total dollars collected. Treasurer Dawn Cragon attributes this to her efficient staff, their collection efforts and the expansive payment plan program offered to our County homeowners.

Taxes were due February 15, 2017; collection was closed and turned over to Auditor Roger Corlett for settlement and distribution on February 27th. Auditor Corlett and staff quickly balanced the settlement and sent the final real estate tax distributions on March 6th. Auditor Corlett released total disbursements as follows:

The seven school districts and Atech receive the lion's share of the tax proceeds, with over \$29,605,828.55 (53.8%) distributed to the schools; Ashtabula County and county-run agencies such as the Board of Developmental

Disabilities, Children Services and Senior Services, received \$12,014,446.37; Townships received \$5,919,803.37; Cities and villages received \$4,887,905.15; Libraries received \$1,241,263.92; Ambulance districts were distributed \$1,007,050.42; and parks, cemeteries and recreational districts shared \$495,218.03.

Bills for the 2nd half 2016 Real Estate taxes will be mailed out mid-June and payment is due July 19, 2017. If a homeowner is unable to pay their property taxes after the July due date, they can call the delinquency specialist Lynne at (440) 576-3731 to discuss if a payment plan is right for their situation. For those whose taxes are current but would prefer to pay monthly rather than two large payments, they can call escrow specialist Sally at (440) 576-1421. "Many people like our prepay program because it's a good way of budgeting the taxes and helps keep taxpayers on track," Cragon said.



Darron Jones comforts his 4-H goat as he listens to Commissioners talk about the program on the Old Courthouse lawn, March 7.

Commissioners honor memory of barn quilt trail co-founder

Commissioners in March issued a proclamation honoring the memory of Christina “Chris” Angerman of Conneaut, the co-founder of Ashtabula County’s Barn Quilt Trail.

Chris passed away at her home on March 10, at the age of 72.

“Chris” and Kathy McCarty started the trail in 2014 with assistance from the county’s tourism development professionals and the office of the Ashtabula County Board of Commissioners. The office provides website development and support.

“It was a pleasure to work Chris Angerman on the project,” says Carl Feather, lodging tax administrator and steering committee member. “She loved the old barns of our county, a passion I share, and she loved barn quilts. I’ll never forget her enthusiasm the evening we raised our first barn quilt at the Blakeslee Log Cabin Barn in Plymouth Township. Chris was like a child on Christmas morning.”

Chris served on the steering committee that has worked to bring more than 80 barn quilts to our landscape in just three years. She also taught barn quilt painting classes at the Conneaut Community Center. Many homes in the area have 2-by-2-foot barn quilts as a result of Chris’ classes.

“Chris’ enthusiasm for the project was con-



Chris Angerman at a BQT event, May 2016

tagious,” Kathy McCarty says. “We decided to push for a Barn Quilt Trail in Ashtabula County, and together, with many others that appreciated our vision, we have a very successful trail!”

Ashtabula County’s Barn Quilts Trail has become another draw for tourists, and Chris Angerman’s life and legacy will live on through the colorful patterns that visitor’s to our byways.

“From the first time that I met her, Chris has given off a contagious energy for the Barn Quilt Trail,” says Ashtabula County Convention and Visitors Bureau Executive Director Stephanie Siegel. “The idea has come to fruition in a relatively short period of time, and we continue to be in awe of the number of people who purposely plan trips to Ashtabula County because of the barn quilts. I applaud the big vision and Chris’s passion!”

The proclamation was presented to her husband, Douglas.

County’s trail has unique features

Ashtabula County’s Barn Quilt Trail is, according to posts on the [Quilt Gatherings Facebook page](#), the only trail in the United States that has barn quilts on covered bridges!

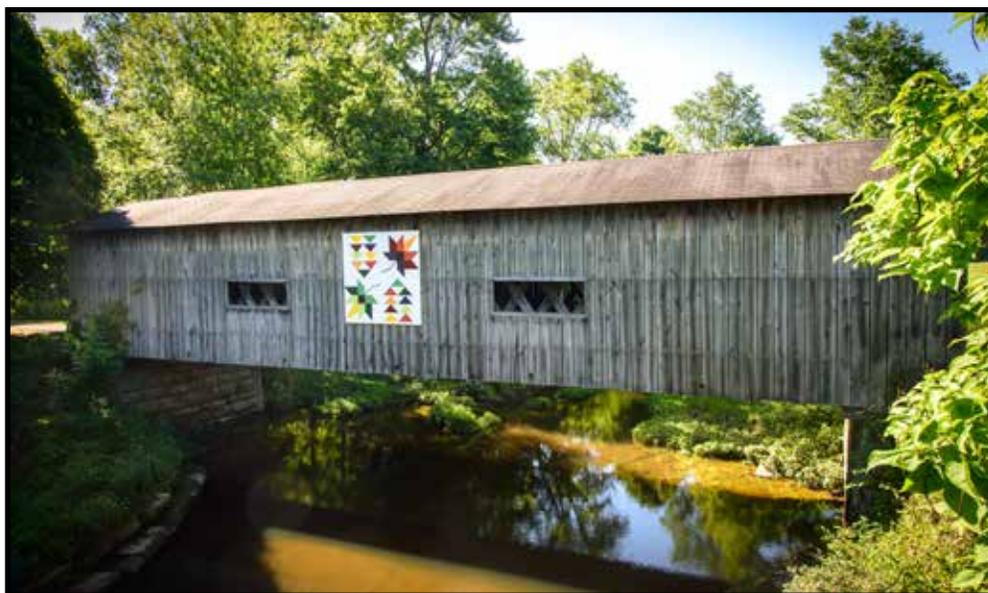
Further, Ashtabula County has the largest barn quilt in the state, measuring 18 foot square.

That quilt greets Route 20 motorists entering the City of Geneva from the east. Called “Community Sampler,” the quilt was the brainchild of Geneva’s Zoning and Community Development professional, Amanda White. The quilt consists of 16 4-by-4-foot blocks, each one sponsored by a Geneva business or organization. White coordinated painting the quilt blocks. The entire quilt celebrates the city’s sesquicentennial year, 2016.

Ashtabula County has three covered bridges that sport 8-by-8-foot barn quilts. The quilts were placed on the bridges with the blessing of County Engineer Tim Martin.

The Benson’s Bridge quilt can be found on the Graham Road Covered Bridge. The Mechanicsville Road Covered Bridge sports a “Four Winds” quilt. A “Flying Geese and Leaves” is the pattern on the South Denmark Road Covered Bridge.

With spring finally here, why not plan a couple of day trips to discover our quilts? Begin your trip at the website [barnquiltsashtabula-county.com](#).



The South Denmark Road Covered Bridge is adorned with an 8-by-8-foot barn quilt, “Flying Geese and Leaves.” A grant from the Civic Development Corporation of Ashtabula County funded the barn quilt.



Community Sampler, the largest barn quilt in Ohio, celebrates Geneva’s sesquicentennial.



Providing faster service with more convenient hours has been a priority for Chief Building Official Todd Nagy since filling the position a little over a year ago. The department opens at 7 a.m.

Building Department plays role in development

The first check point for economic development in Ashtabula County – The Ashtabula County Building Department – opens early and is getting things done a lot more efficiently and quickly these days.

In May 2016, Chief Building Official Todd Nagy approved opening the office an hour early, 8 a.m., and closing at 3:30 p.m., in order to better serve the public. The change in time was approved by the Ashtabula County Board of Commissioners in its effort to make government more accessible and efficient.

“The contractors and developers requested the change in time,” Nagy says. “A lot of these guys want to get out in the field and working by 8 a.m. They requested it, and we accommodated it.”

“Sometimes we’ll have a line outside the door waiting when we open at 7,” adds Carrie Ellsworth, administrative secretary.

When the door opens, contractors are treated with efficiency and respect for the fact that their livelihoods and cash flows are often in the hands of the department’s administrators and inspectors.

Nagy understands contractors and speaks their language. He was a residential, commercial and industrial architect for 20 years before he shifted into the new career. Although he lived in Ashtabula County, he worked in Cleveland and traveled all over the country.

“When the position opened, I was approached by a bunch of people suggesting I apply,” he says. “It was the right time in my career. I wanted to stay home more and be a part of my daughter’s activities.”

He’s made efficiency and speedy review top priorities for the department. For example, he

is available to do an informal review of plans that can help spot potential problem areas before the plans are officially submitted.

“That little bit of time spent upfront can save you a lot of time and money later on,” he says.

The informal review concept comes from Nagy’s work as an architect. Nagy says he always appreciated those building officials that took the time to informally scan the plans for red flags that could stall the project once it underwent official review.

While Nagy won’t do design work for residential builders, he draws upon his background when reviewing residential plans that have not involved a design professional.

“I am helping them with their design-related stuff,” he says. “I am not the one doing the design, but I can guide them.”

Another efficiency is the online design-packet for residential work. Builders or do-it-yourselfers can download the material and walk through the process before setting foot inside the courthouse.

“It’s a step-by-step, playbook, if you will, of what you need,” he says. “In the near future, I hope to get it out to all zoning departments in the county.”

Nagy says residential plans are, on average, taking about one week to clear the department. He hopes to reduce that time even further by eventually using an online plan-submission process. That could be two or three years down the road, but Nagy says having the documents in electronic format would expedite the turn-around time.

“We’ve spent a lot of time working on how to expedite plan reviews,” Nagy says of his prior-

Medicare tax is

Phasing Out

Imagine going to work one day and discovering that your wages have been cut 10.5 percent, even as your expenses at home are growing.

That is the challenge facing Ashtabula County Commissioners, indeed all county commissioners in Ohio, this year, although the percent of the cut varies.

Ashtabula County Auditor Roger Corlett says the revenue drop will show up in the county’s sales tax receipts, which mysteriously began rising in 2009.

“It took (county auditors) a year to figure out what was going on, but we finally traced it to a Medicare tax,” Corlett says.

The tax was applied to services provided under Medicaid reimbursement, and brought about \$1.2 million annually into the county’s coffers. But the Federal Government ordered to stop the tax because it was illegal. The deadline given to the state was July 1, 2017.

Corlett estimates that the county will lose \$400,000 of tax this year, and \$1.2 million in 2018.

“We can kind of absorb \$400,000,” he says.

“But next year, we lose it all and that’s too much to absorb. The commissioners will have to work with whatever they get.”

Ashtabula County Board of Commissioners President Casey Kozlowski says there is an effort at the state level to compensate counties for the loss in revenue during the current year.

“As part of the state budget they are proposing a one-time payment to counties,” Kozlowski says. “They are proposing a fourth quarter payment for the final quarter of 2017 in the amount of \$281,165 and they are looking to provide transitional aid of \$1,672,540 to help wean counties off this revenue. This would be one check that counties would receive later this year. The Board of Commissioners, however, is advocating for a long-term solution, not short term.”

The push from Columbus is to increase the sales tax on the local level. Ashtabula County’s sales tax is 6.75 percent.

Corlett says the Medicare sales tax has accounted for about 10.5 percent of the county’s total sales tax revenue. That percentage is about mid-point for the state.

Some counties, like Lake and Geauga, which have a smaller senior population and/or more robust retail economy, are less affected by the loss. More rural counties, where there are more seniors and services purchased, will suffer an even greater percentage of loss.

On the same page with Shara Parkomaki

Researching a legal topic is like climbing a tree, says Ashtabula County Law Library Director/Librarian Shara H. Parkomaki. If you randomly scamper onto branches without knowing which one to follow, you could end up stranded or suffer a nasty fall.

As a paralegal for 24 years, Parkomaki shimmed up legal trees all the time. Since December 2015, she's been in charge of the orchard, a somewhat obscure research room on the first floor of the Courthouse.

The law library is available to the public as well as attorneys, paralegals and judges. It is open during courthouse hours, 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday. And you will need to go through security.

Parkomaki also administers three remote computer sites – Western County Courthouse in Geneva and the Ashtabula County District Library and Conneaut Public Library – that give users the same access to the Thomson Reuters WestlawNext online subscription.

And, at this point, it is important to insert what Parkomaki does not do.

"I do not provide legal advice or information on court proceedings," she says.

In other words, please don't ask.

So what does a law librarian do all day?

- Maintains current legal resources materials for users;
- Assists patrons with legal research projects by providing guidance in locating cases, code sections, forms and historical code sections;
- Manages the library's budget and performs other managerial duties;
- Creates/coordinates educational programs.

It is that last bullet point that makes Ashtabula County's Law Library a gem among its genre.

"When I came aboard, my whole thing was about expanding the education in our county," says Parkomaki. "The board and I are trying to expand these opportunities so attorneys who need to get their continuing education hours don't have to travel outside the county.

To that end, Parkomaki holds both lunch-hour and extended legal education training for attorneys and judges. Presentations scheduled

in 2017 include a recap of 2016 opinions from the 11th District Court of Appeals and how to use Adobe Acrobat, with an emphasis on applications for lawyers. That class is noon to 1 p.m. April 26, and is open to county employees, attorneys and legal support staff only (reservation required).

However, Parkomaki also arranges public educational events. She partnered with Henson Memorial Public Library and The Legal Aid Society on an Income Tax Clinic that was held March 3 at the library. Another public patron program series is "The Law, Legal System & You." And Parkomaki writes a newsletter that announces new books and services, proposed Ohio House and Senate bills, estate planning/probate information, criminal law updates and tidbits of interest to both lawyers and the public. To subscribe, send an email to shparko-





Shara Parkomaki is director and librarian at the Ashtabula County Law Library, housed in the courthouse. The library is open to the public and Parkomaki is happy to point folks to the resources, but cannot provide legal advice.

library retains Ohio law books dating back to the early 1800s in its archive section. Parkomaki says there was a major purge of outdated law books under the prior law librarian, so the shelves have room for expansion. Indeed, thanks to digitization, the library is shrinking in terms of volumes, freeing up space for other uses.

That includes a conference room that can be used by attorneys for depositions, thus saving county residents a trip to the law firm's office in Cleveland or Columbus when the firm is willing to send an attorney to Jefferson.

Likewise, bankruptcy court is held in the conference room, saving debtors the trip to Youngstown. The county's mediation service uses the room, as well.

Because of the electronic services provided by the library at no or nominal cost, an attorney can use the library as a satellite office. The library has a dedicated WiFi service, as well as Microsoft Office software on the public computers. There is a fax machine, printer and copier available, so an attorney's home office could email to an attorney at the courthouse a legal document that needs to be filed there. The attorney could open it in Word and make necessary tweaks, then file with the clerk.

So who pays for all of this? Parkomaki says the county commissioners are required, by Ohio mandate, to provide the space and utilities for the library. Beyond that, her salary, the subscriptions and all the other expenses are paid from a fund that receives specified fees and fines. The Ashtabula County Law Library Resources Board guides Parkomaki in the library's management. Kyle Smith chairs the board, John Lewis (Ashtabula County Prosecutor's Office) is vice-chair. Members are Marie Lane, Peggy Carlo, Richard Dana and Parkomaki.

Education continues to be a priority for the board, and Parkomaki is looking for county attorneys who would be willing to work on future Access to Justice programming.

Parkomaki also serves as president of the Ohio Regional Association of Law Libraries – Special Interest Group, which is a section for ORALL members who are county law librarians. The group is holding its conference at The Lodge and Conference Center at GOTL this month, and Parkomaki is involved in coordinating it. That's why there has been a lapse in educational programming and newsletter publication; she's busy getting ready to host the event.

Regardless of the fruit of her work, it all comes from the same orchard. "My hope is that we can get information out there," she says.

an expensive service, and only the larger law firms have the means to subscribe to it. But the public and those in the legal field have access to it at both the Jefferson and satellite sites at no charge.

"This is still something lawyers come in here to use because the subscription is so expensive," Parkomaki says.

The other major legal database, Lexus/Nexus, is available in print, and Parkomaki is looking into getting the online subscription. Online database provide the most recent information possible, as well as robust search options.

As a librarian, Parkomaki decides what books go on the shelves, and amid the rows of esoteric and mysterious hardcovers are titles that address the legal side of everyday life, from landlord/tenant issues to medicine and marriage.

For those with an interest in very old laws, the

maki@ashtabulacounty.us.

As cases are decided by the Ohio Supreme Court and 11th District Court of Appeals, Parkomaki prints summaries and makes them available to all library patrons. She also facilitates on-demand webinars for the legal community (fees apply and seating limited).

One-on-one education is conducted in the law library every day, from the novice who is looking for domestic relations forms published by the Ohio Supreme Court to an out-of-town attorney who needs to delve deeply into a complex legal topic. Parkomaki is not going to give legal advice, but she will point the seeker in the right direction.

Oftentimes that direction is the WestlawNext service, which the library subscribes to and makes available at four dedicated computers (Jefferson site). Parkomaki says Westlaw is

Geneva Area Chamber Spring Dinner
 Monday, March 20, 2017
 At VFW Post #6846, 76 Depot Street,
 Geneva

Cost is \$25 per person
 Speaker Mike Habowski, President and CEO
 - Ashtabula County Medical Center "Achieving
 Your Full Potential"

The social will begin at 6:30 p.m., and dinner
 will be at 7 p.m. For the 18th year our guests

for the dinner will be the Geneva High School
 National Honor Society seniors, and for
 the 12th year we will have the Grand River
 Academy National Honor Society seniors.
 We encourage you as a business owner to
 help sponsor a student. The cost to sponsor a
 National Honor Society student is \$20.

The dinner will be catered by Meola Cater-
 ing. The menu is the following:
 roasted chicken, roast beef, pasta and

meatballs, scalloped potatoes, green beans,
 tossed salad, rolls, cake, punch, and coffee.
 Also available is a cash bar. For reservations
 or to sponsor a student, call the Chamber at
 440-466-8694. Sue Ellen Foote, info@geneva-
 chamber.org

- 1.
2. Hunter Brashear
3. Rebecca Cybulski

Dogs, continued from Page 2

more than 700 square miles of territory to
 cover, the dog warden usually comes upon
 noncompliance through the neglect/stray cases
 that she investigages.

"One percent of the dogs I pick up are
 licensed," Yan says. "I would say 5 percent are
 microchipped."

To retrieve a companion animal from the
 APL, the owner must show proof of license or
 purchase a license from the APL for \$24.75.
 The owner has only 72 hours in which to
 claim a dog held at the APL if the dog is not
 licensed. A licensed dog can be claimed by
 the owner within a 14-day window; if the
 information on the license application is
 current. The owner is contacted when the dog
 is picked up as a stray, one more reason to
 purchase that dog license and make sure it is
 securely attached to the dog's collar.



Commissioners (from left) Kathryn Whittington, Casey Kozlowski and J.P. Ducro IV talk with 4-H youth during a proclamation reading and presentation at the Old Courthouse, May 7, 2017.

Building, continued from Page 5

ity to make the department more efficient. “It is still a work in progress, but it is happening in much less time than in the past.”

In addition to making things more efficient, Nagy has raised the professionalism of the department. He admits it had a bad public image.

“I’ve created an open-door policy here,” he says. “We’re creating a dialog; we want to be welcoming and available to help people. Unfortunately, this department had a stigma over its head, that we were not easy to deal with. We’re trying to change that attitude.”

Nagy wears a shirt that has the department’s logo on its pocket; the inspectors wear branded shirts, as well. And the two, soon to be three, new Tacoma pickups also display the “A” branding used throughout the county.

“The outfit represents who we are,” Nagy says.

He increased the number of inspectors from two to three; Nagy says a force of two was simply too small for a county of this size. Nagy feels that finding a certified electrical inspector is one of the greatest challenges facing any building department official in Ohio because of the stringent requirements set forth by the state. “Other counties are actually trying to steal inspectors, they are such a rare commodity,” he says.

One of his inspectors, Cory Hubbard, is

preparing for his electrical inspection certification. In the meantime, the county has contracted with Safebuild for that service.

As a department manager, Nagy must balance customer service with revenues. Fortunately, the fees are up because building has received a shot in the arm from the warm winter. Ron Moore, one of the county’s builders, says his phone has been ringing off the hook and he doesn’t advertise. There’s been no thaw to wait for this spring because the ground never froze, so construction has not missed a beat except for a few days here and there.

Nagy says the department has put its stamp on a number of large commercial and industrial projects in the past year. Included was an 18,000-square-foot expansion of the MFG facility on Wade Avenue and a building modification to accommodate new equipment at Cristal Global. While the county building department does not get involved in permit-

ting the installation of industrial equipment, it does have jurisdiction over the physical structures protecting it. Most recently, the department has been working on the second phase of a commercial development at the corner of Route 20 and Cook Road in Ashtabula Township, where a Dollar Tree store opened last year.

“Another retail strip center with tenants already committed is going up there,” he says.

Nagy says he and his administrative staff will continue to listen to the public and tweak their operation to foster continued economic growth in both the residential and commercial sectors of the county.

“After the community, we are like the first line for bringing business to our county,” Nagy says. “We got to make sure we are open, listening and work with everybody who comes through the door.”