

2 years in a row

Ashtabula County Nursing & Rehabilitation Center gets top rating from the Ohio Department of Health for two years in a row.

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Penmen honored

Board recognizes Michael Sull for his work in promoting the script of Platt R. Spencer.

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Ashtabula County Board of Commissioners
25 West Jefferson St.
Jefferson Ohio 44047



Ashtabula County Insights

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Drug Overdose Awareness Day observed on lawn of Old Courthouse

Kaitie Park of the Ashtabula County Prevention Coalition and Board President Casey Kozlowski hold a proclamation declaring Aug. 31 Drug Overdose Awareness Day in Ashtabula County. A gathering was held on the front lawn of the Old Courthouse in Jefferson to remember those who died and those who survived an accidental drug overdose in 2017. Also in the photo are (from left, back row) Miriam Walton, executive director of the Ashtabula County Mental Health and Recovery Services Board, Joan Billman, Fleming-Billman Funeral Home; Ashtabula County Coroner Dr. Pamela Lancaster, Commissioners Vice President Kathryn Whittington, funeral director Bob Billman and Commissioner J.P. Ducro IV.

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YOUR VOICE

President Kozlowski responds to citizens' questions



Q What is the status of the study being done on the county jail and justice system needs?



Ashtabula County's obsolete jail facility and operational costs associated with it are at the forefront of issues facing Commissioners.

The full-service jail is 39 years old; the expected lifespan for a facility of its kind is 20 years.

The prior Board of Commissioners, in 2016, hired Smolen Engineering to perform a study of the building's structural deficiencies. Cost of making repairs was estimated at \$9.4 million. That did not include costs associated with shutting down the jail for 18 to 24 months while work is performed. The county would have to pay to house the prisoners elsewhere, plus pay transport and other charges. After all that expense and inconvenience, the county would not have any additional cells or inmate housing areas.

In light of these findings, the prior Board charged the Community Corrections Planning Board with the task of drafting a request for

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Do you have a question for Casey Kozlowski?

Call 576-3750 or email

crkzowski@ashtabulacounty.us

Ashtabula County INSIGHTS

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Casey Kozlowski, President
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.

SEPTEMBER 2017 meetings

7 9:30 a.m., Commissioners work session
1:00 p.m., Commissioners agenda

12 10 a.m., Commissioners work session
1 p.m. Commissioners agenda

19 10:30 a.m., Commissioners work session
1:00 p.m., Commissioners agenda

26 10 a.m., Commissioners work session
7 p.m., Commissioners agenda

Dorset Community Center,
2681 Route 193, Dorset
Q&A session at 6:30 p.m.

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

Commissioners Vice-President Kathryn Whittington selected for 2017-18 JoAnn Davidson Ohio Leadership Institute class

Kathryn Whittington, Vice President of the Ashtabula County Board of Commissioners, will be a member of the JoAnn Davidson Ohio Leadership Institute, Class of 2017-2018.

"I am thankful to have been selected to represent Ashtabula County in this intensive eight-month training program. This training will strengthen my leadership skills and allow me to develop statewide partnerships that will benefit Ashtabula County residents as I serve as one of your County Commissioners," Commissioner Whittington said.

The institute's mission is to increase the number of competent women in public office, community service and leadership by providing extensive training and support for class members. The program was created to encourage and train women in business and civic leadership to assume more prominent roles, either elected or appointed, in government.

Only 20 to 25 women from across Ohio and who have an interest in politics and public service are selected to join the eight-month class. The applicants must meet a diverse range of criteria for participation and are required to attend classes monthly, starting in September.

In May 2018, class members will travel to Washington, D.C., for a three-day networking and training program. Class members will have the opportunity to meet with national elected and government leaders and learn from well-regarded women leaders in politics and business.

Mrs. Whittington was elected to the Board of Commissioners in November 2016 and was seated Jan. 3 to begin her four-year term of office.

Upcoming events:

Log Cabin Days

Blakeslee Log Cabin, Plymouth, Township, Sept. 9-10;

Grape Jamboree

Downtown Geneva, Sept. 23-24.



Michael Sull, Master Penman, stands with Commissioners J.P. Ducro and Kathryn Whittington, vice president of the Ashtabula County Board of Commissioners. Commissioners presented a proclamation to Sull to recognize and thank him for his work that perpetuates Spencer's story and script.

Board honors Platt R. Spencer, Master Penman Michael Sull

Next year, if the "political situation does not get any worse," Michael Sull of Kansas will take to Moscow and St. Petersburg, Russia, one of Geneva's greatest gifts to the world.

No, not a bottle of wine.

Rather, Sull, a Master Penman, will teach in Russian cities the fine art of Spencerian Script, a true American original that might have been forgotten had it not been for Sull and the Platt R. Spencer Historical Society.

A fifth anniversary celebration of the dedication of the Platt R. Spencer monument on West Main was held Aug. 11, 2017, in Geneva.

Sull first came to Geneva in 1984 to learn all he could about Platt R. Spencer (1800-1864), who lived in Geneva Township most of his life. Spencer's house still stands on North Meyers Road and recently was donated to the society by the Rood family.

Spencer developed a style of script that was American; prior to Spencer, script handwriting styles were adapted from European styles. Inspired by the waves on Lake Erie and the graceful curves of grapevines, Spencer developed a script that would be used for business correspondence until the typewriter came along. The script and other business training was provided through schools that a son founded after his father's death. During Spencer's adult life, he taught the method at his Jericho cabin on the North Myers property.

Sull worked with the City of Geneva and Platt R. Spencer Historical Society to bring a Spencer monument to the city. It was dedicated Aug. 24, 2012. On Aug. 11, society members held their fifth anniversary gathering at the monument, which is in front of the Western County Court building.

Sull was guest of honor for the event, which was marked by the reading and presentation of proclamations from the Ashtabula County Board of Commissioners. Commissioner J.P. Ducro IV presented a proclamation recognizing the society's efforts for preserving and promoting the Spencerian Saga and Script. And Vice-President Kathryn Whittington presented a proclamation expressing the county's appreciation for Sull's work in researching Spencer's life and contributions, and then being an evangelist and teacher for the method.

"(Spencer) is known around the world," said Sull, who has taught Spencerian Script in 45 states and 10 nations. Most recently, he taught it in five Asian countries.

"Everywhere I go, (Spencer) is almost a common word," Sull said. "And it all started here."

Spencer's life was marked by poverty, trials and a battle with alcohol until his early 30s. Commissioner Ducro stated that Spencer's determination to be more than his addiction shows that each person has something to contribute in spite of personal challenges.

OSU Extension Educator David Marrison honored by Commissioners during 171st Ashtabula County Fair



Commissioners and the staff of the OSU Extension office surprised David Marrison (second from left) during The Board's Aug. 8 agenda meeting, held at the Ashtabula County Fair. Commissioners presented Marrison, OSU County Extension Director/Educator, with a proclamation honoring him for his 20 years of service to the office. He was hired June 13, 1997, and replaced Lanny Anderson. From left are Josh Prest, NE District Representative for Sen. Rob Portman, Ohio; Marrison; Commissioner J.P. Ducro, Vice President Kathryn Whittington and President Casey Kozlowski. Commissioners donated a cake for the celebration.

Black-and-white statistics

Flags illustrate extent of county's drug overdose problem and deaths

On Aug. 31, Commissioners participated in a county-wide Overdose Awareness Day that included a proclamation reading and placement of 30 black flags on the front lawn of the Old Courthouse.

Each black flag represents a death attributed to an accidental drug overdose in Ashtabula County during 2017. At least 296 accidental overdoses have been reported in 2017.

According to statistics gathered and compiled by Dr. Pamela L. Lancaster, Ashtabula County Coroner, 35 drug-related deaths occurred in the county during 2016; the county is on track to exceed last year's record.

Lancaster told those gathered for a ceremony on the front lawn of the Old Courthouse that fentanyl, a powerful synthetic opioid, was involved in most of the deaths.

The Commissioners' proclamation was presented to the Ashtabula County Prevention Coalition. During the presentation, a former heroin user spoke to the crowd and told her story of overdose and recovery. She credited the county's Drug Court for helping her work through the addiction and get herself back on track for a productive life.

Accidental drug overdose deaths: 2007-2016

Source: Ashtabula County Coroner's office



Nursing Home & Rehab Center gets top rating

Ohio Department of Health awards county-owned facility Five-Star rating two years in a row

When North Kingsville native Kacie Herron began her job as administrator of the Ashtabula County Nursing and Rehabilitation Center a year ago, she came in on the heels of a 100-percent deficiency-free annual survey from the Ohio Department of Health.

Herron, who works for Generations Health-care Management under contract with the Ashtabula County Board of Commissioners, told the board in August that the ODH once again found the facility to be 100 percent deficiency free.

"It is a credit and commendation to every person who works here," says Herron of the rare, two-year-in-a-row honor that reflects on the professionalism of the leadership and 140 staff members.

"I'm very pleased that the Ashtabula County Nursing & Rehabilitation Center received a 100 percent deficiency free annual survey from the Ohio Department of Health for the second year in a row," says Casey Kozlowski, President of the Ashtabula County Board of Commissioners. "It's almost unheard of to receive this rating back to back and it truly is an honor to receive this recognition. A great amount of credit goes to the staff for making this possible, I applauded them for all of their efforts."

The ODH licenses and/or certifies approximately 960 nursing homes/facilities. On-site inspections/surveys of the facilities are performed by the Office of Health Assurance and Licensing, Bureau of Long Term Care. The survey looks for compliance with state and federal regulations that ensure the quality of care and quality of life for residents. Each nursing home/facility in Ohio receives at least one inspection/survey in the 9-to-15-month cycle.

Herron says that, in a typical cycle, only 10 to 15 percent of Ohio's nursing homes are found to be deficiency free.

"One very silly little thing and it can cause you to miss (being deficiency free)," Herron says. "So two years in a row, that's very uncommon."



Leadership at Ashtabula County Nursing and Rehabilitation Center is celebrating the second deficiency-free survey in two years. From left are Diana Furman, director of nursing; Administrator Kacie Herron; Leanne Rose, admitting/marketing; Leora Kotnik, unit manager; and Donna Sallee, human resources director.

The ACNRC has a history of scoring well on the surprise survey. The ODH rates facilities with stars that reflect the findings of the survey and other data collected. A five-star rating indicates that the facility was found to be in compliance with all state and federal laws and rules pertaining to care and services.

"Five stars is the gold standard; we stay within that four- to five-star range," Herron says.

The survey team arrives without notice on a Monday or Tuesday morning and pores over data, logs and reports for the next three to four days. Interviews are conducted with staff and residents alike, and the survey team observes how staff performs their jobs within the context of the daily operation.

"This facility did not run any differently because the survey team was in the building," Herron says.

On the team's final day of the survey, a formal meeting is held with the home's administrator and leadership team. During this meeting, deficiencies are pointed out, except the team could not find any during their scrutiny of the nursing home. Herron says the annual survey is the industry's touchstone review in Ohio. The only other reviews/inspections are conducted by the County Health Department (kitchen) and Fire Marshal.

Possessing a strong survey rating provides families with a greater level of confidence when selecting a facility for a loved one. Herron says the five-star rating makes the ACNRC more competitive in a market that has many players.

"(Ashtabula County) is a very nursing home-blessed county, so it is very competitive out there. People have lots of choices," Herron says.

The 130 beds in the facility are more likely to be filled and the nursing home operating without assistance from county funds if it turns in a strong survey rating. The census at the nursing home runs between 110 and 120, says Herron. It provides both rehabilitation care, typically after surgery, and long-term care, for residents unable to live independently.

The county has owned the Kingsville Township facility since its inception as the "infirmary" 176 years ago. Herron says only 14 of Ohio's 88 counties still own a nursing home.

Commissioners seek bids from and then contract with a management company to operate the nursing home. The board holds work sessions with Generations management and the administrator, and listens to feedback from constituents to make sure the operation is meeting the needs and expectations of residents and their loved ones.

"We are very proud of the work done by the staff at the Ashtabula County Nursing Home. It is a wonderful asset to the community and we are confident they will continue to maintain their high standards of care," says Commissioner J.P. Ducro IV.

"Congratulations to our staff at the Nursing Home for a job well done. We appreciate your dedication to providing a superior level of care to our residents," said Vice-President Kathryn Whittington.

County jail issue under study by Strollo Architects

Continued from page 1

quotes to update the county's corrections plan and perform a jail assessment.

To get a better perspective on the scope of this issue and the study being done, I asked our Insights writer to interview Lt. James Kemmerle, the county's jail administrator and chair of the Community Corrections Planning Board. Our writer provided the following narrative after speaking with Kemmerle:

Of the six firms that responded to the request, Strollo Architects of Youngstown was selected for the project and has been working with all facets of Ashtabula County's criminal justice system to gather data for the study.

Kemmerle says that in order to visualize the kind of jail Ashtabula County needs, you first must determine what drives jail space.

"Once you know what is driving the demand for jail beds ... you can determine what size and type of jail we should have," Kemmerle says.

He already knows that the majority of the space in the existing jail is taken up by people awaiting trial or entry into a drug rehabilitation program. Last year, the average length of stay in the county's jail was 60 days; statewide, the length was 20 to 23 days, Kemmerle says.

"We need to find ways to make this process more efficient," he says. This involves working with the courts and offices of the County Prosecutor, Probation and Public Defender to find alternatives to jail time during that interim.

The issue is not a new one for Ashtabula County, where drug-related offenses, according to Kemmerle's estimate, account for at least 85 percent of the county jail's population.

"At one point this year, we had 21 people taking up jail beds while they were waiting to get into a treatment facility," Kemmerle says.

He points out that building a more efficient criminal-justice system goes beyond the jail; having sufficient treatment facilities, for example, could help shrink the jail size.

"It is much more expensive to house someone in a jail than a treatment facility," he says.

Unfortunately, as the opioid problem continues to grow in the county, so does demand for jail space for offenders of both sexes, which can drive design decisions. One of the current jail facility's floors is dedicated to female inmates only.

"Opioids are hitting the female population hard," Kemmerle says.

In addition to housing inmates, the jail is



Ashtabula County's jail was built to house up to 110 inmates, but the daily average has been 152. The jail is far past its expected lifespan and is in need of nearly \$10 million in repairs, according to a 2016 study.

responsible for the basic needs of inmates such as food, laundry, and medical care. The basement houses the jail's kitchen and laundry facility. Kemmerle says the frugal operation held the average cost per meal/inmate to \$1.52 in 2016. He praises the kitchen staff for holding the line on meal expenses. Likewise, laundry expenses are kept low by using "Inmate Workers" or low-risk, sentenced inmates, to sort and launder inmate bedding and uniforms.

Kemmerle says that a full-time nurse and medical officer assist a contract physician with the majority of inmate medical needs, ranging from everyday illnesses to major medical concerns.

"The medical staff works hard every day to manage these needs within a tight budget. Even the Sheriff's Office isn't immune from rising medical costs that include management of infectious diseases, diabetic care, wound care and the treatment of ongoing medical needs," Kemmerle says.

Additionally, the jail has seen a steady increase in inmate prescription costs, primarily due to a rising population of inmates with mental-health medications.

Food, laundry, and medical are just three of

the many operational costs for a jail. Kemmerle says only 10 percent of the cost is the physical structure. The other 90 percent is operations, and of that, 70 percent is personnel. The county has 18 corrections officers, plus transportation, kitchen, medical, and administrative staff.

A jail design that takes advantage of monitoring and security technologies unavailable 40 years ago can bring down staffing requirements. But the technologies can't be determined until the study reveals the optimal layout, workflow, security measures and size of jail that will best suit the county's needs in the years to come.

Those answers should be in Kemmerle's hands by the end of the year, and both elected officials and the public will be given a chance to learn about them at public meetings.

Kemmerle says the future of the existing jail greatly concerns him.

"I just don't think it is sustainable (as is)," Kemmerle says. "I don't think the building is going to last. I am afraid the current building or operation is not going to be able to meet the expectations that are being placed on it."