

The Auditor's Ledger

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**Count on us to be here
when you need us.**

Duties and Responsibilities:

- View and appraise property
- Determine eligibility for tax reduction programs
- Issue licenses-dogs, vendors and more
- Distribute tax revenues to governmental units.
- Present annual tax budgets to Budget Commission
- Custodian of funds received each year by the county
- Paymaster for nearly 1,400 county employees
- Certify accuracy of all measuring devices

Beth Kilchenman & Kim Fetty Newsletter Editors

DON'T FORGET TO RENEW YOUR CURRENT AGRICULTURAL USE VALUE (CAUV)

Commercial farmers must return their Current Agricultural Use Value (CAUV) renewal forms to the Medina County Auditor's Office by March 6.

Property owners who are not currently enrolled in the program, but may be eligible, need to contact the Auditor's Office to file an application. There is a \$25 filing fee on all new applications.

Sign-up for CAUV began January 2, and the deadline is March 6.

The CAUV program is a state mandated program that values land in commercial agricultural production at a value based upon costs of production rather than market appraisal value. There can be substantial savings to commercial farmers under the program.

If you are interested in applying or have lost the renewal form mailed out in November, please contact the Medina County Auditor's Office for more information at 844-722-3800, extension 9765.



January 2017

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A newsletter by Medina County Auditor, Mike Kovack



Raglow's Top Dog, Dexter, Kicks-Off Dog Licensing Season!



Adrienne Raglow, Dexter the Dog, and Mike Kovack, Medina County Auditor

Adrienne Raglow's dog, Dexter, is the Top Dog in Medina County for the coming year! Adrienne's essay on why her dog is tops bested entries from over 300 other fourth graders, and she was recognized November 30 along with four other children whose essays were the best in the county. This is the 22nd year for Auditor Mike Kovack hosting the contest to kick off

the 2017 dog licensing season. Adrienne, a fourth grader at Crestview Elementary School in Brunswick and the daughter of Michelle and Paul Raglow, brought her pooch for a visit to Auditor Kovack's office to read her winning essay. Adrienne's teacher is Deborah Hopkins. After postponing pet ownership until her dad recovered from cancer, Adrienne was very excited to finally get Dexter. She says that he taught her that if you wait, good things will come. Dexter and Adrienne were rewarded for their victory with Dog Tag Number One in the county, 30 pounds of dog food from Medina County manufacturer Bil-Jac and a Deluxe Party from Amazone Entertainment Center.



The finalists of the 2016 Top Dog Essay Contest pose with Auditor Mike Kovack. They are Adrienne Raglow, first place; Mackenzie Hartman, third place; Carlin Swanson, fourth place; Mya Kosar, fifth place and Adam Goe, second place.

Adrienne and the other authors also received prizes from Kitten Crazy/Quick Fix, Medina AMF Bowling Center, Medina/Seville Dairy Queen and Medina Skateland.

The Top Dog Contest awards ceremony marks the beginning of the dog licensing period in the State of Ohio, which ends on January 31, 2017. During this time, all dog licenses must be renewed or new tags must be purchased. The cost is \$10 for a one-year tag, \$30 for a three-year tag or \$100 for a permanent tag with all proceeds going to fund the Medina County Animal Shelter. Licenses may be purchased online at www.medinacountyauditor.org (Click on Pets), at satellite stations throughout the county or at the auditor's office. Licensing your dog is a state law and fines are levied for untagged dogs. The dog tag is a dog's best chance of being reunited with his family should he get lost.

Four other fourth graders from throughout the county were also honored for their outstanding essays. They received prize packages as well as dog license numbers two through five for their dogs. All the award-winning essays may be read at www.medinacountyauditor.org.

Winners

2nd Place: Adam Goe

Dog: Lucy
Ralph E. Waite Elementary School, Medina
Parents: Heather and Charles Goe
Teacher: Roberta Gangl



3rd Place: Mackenzie Hartman

Dog: Bailey
St. Francis Xavier School, Medina
Parents: Daniel and Jennifer Hartman
Teacher: Stephanie Baker



4th Place: Carlin Swanson

Dog: Daisy
Franklin Elementary School, Wadsworth
Parent: Amy Swanson
Teacher: Mary Linn



5th Place: Mya Kosar

Dog: Nico
H.G. Blake Elementary School, Medina
Parents: Larissa and Jim Kosar
Teacher: Amy Rosenwald

ORMACO Helps Chase Away your Winter Doldrums

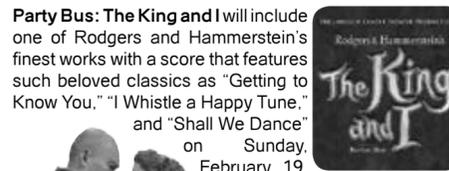
After we sing Auld Lang Syne and tip our champagne glasses to welcome the new year, many of us feel a certain letdown as we face the winter doldrums. But don't dismay – Ohio Regional Music Arts and Cultural Outreach (ORMACO) has come to the rescue.

ORMACO is sponsoring three motor coach trips during the winter months of January, February and March that will have you singing show tunes in the shower and reliving history.

"Our Party Bus program helps bring people together, provides a mechanism for socialization and serves as a fundraiser for our outreach programs for children," said ORMACO founder Tom Sigel.

Party Bus: Into the Woods will feature a trip to see Stephan Sondheim and James Lapine's Tony Award-winning musical "Into the Woods" on Sunday, January 22, at Connor Palace Theater in Cleveland. Watch this acclaimed Fiasco Theater production direct from New York City, including songs like "Children Will Listen" and "No One is Alone."

Party Bus: The King and I will include one of Rodgers and Hammerstein's finest works with a score that features such beloved classics as "Getting to Know You," "I Whistle a Happy Tune," and "Shall We Dance" on Sunday, February 19, at Connor Palace Theater in Cleveland. This Lincoln Center Theater production is directed by Tony Award winner Bartlett Sher, and the show won four 2015 Tony awards including Best Revival of a Musical. You can catch the bus for these two trips at Buehler's River Styx, 3626 Medina Road.



Medina and enjoy lunch, wine, homemade cookies and trivia quizzes on your way to and from your destination.

Philadelphia Red-Eye Party Bus is an adventure to the City of Brotherly Love for an action-packed weekend. You'll board a luxury motor coach at Buehler's River Styx in Medina at 10 am on Friday, March 31. The trip includes wine and snacks as you head East and a walking tour starting at the National Constitution Center.



Sights include the Presidents' House, the Liberty Bell, Independence Hall, Congress Hall, the West Wing, Old City Hall, Second Bank, Franklin Court, First Bank, Welcome Park, Christ Church, Elfreth's Alley, the Franklin Burial Site, the National Constitution Center, Chinatown, Reading Terminal, City Hall, the Philadelphia Museum of Art, Comcast and Mural Mile.

Arrival back in Medina is at 7 am on Sunday, April 2. You can book online at www.ormaco.org or call 330-722-2541.

What is ORMACO? Founded in 2010 by Sigel, the Ohio Regional Music Arts Cultural Outreach is a nonprofit organization focused on spreading the love of music, arts and culture throughout Northeast Ohio. The organization has brought diverse musical genres to the area including West African drumming and dance, Japanese drumming, Central European and gypsy music, gospel, Latin, steel drum and opera.

"We are an all-volunteer organization with a passion for the arts. With schools having decreased funding for the arts, we want to give back to the community," said Sigel. "Just this year alone, we've touched about 3,000 school children in the region by introducing them to our World Tour of Music that goes into the schools and libraries."



MEDINA COUNTY AUDITOR AND UNITED WAY YOUTH TEAM UP FOR HEROIN AWARENESS PROJECT

Nearly 200 high school students from around the county gathered together in November under the banner of United Way's E4 Youth Day of Action to take part in projects to better their county. Four students, along with adult facilitator Steven Shields of MTD Products met with Medina County Auditor Mike Kovack to craft an awareness program about the local heroin epidemic.



Ashely Scheutzow from Brunswick High School, Ashland Damron from Brunswick High School, Ava Jackman from Cloverleaf High School and Mylah Morris from Cloverleaf High School created a Community Awareness Campaign about The Heroin Epidemic in the Medina Community

The students interviewed people affected by the crisis including a sister whose brother suffered from addiction, an actual addict and a father who lost his son to a heroin overdose. Morris noted that one of the linkages between all those affected was that they felt alone. The students' research indicated that was not the case.

"Help is out there for people looking to break their addiction," Scheutzow said. She noted that LCADA Way treatment centers recently opened in Wadsworth and Medina and provide a continuum of services for individuals battling addiction. There is also a 24-hour Heroin Treatment Center Hotline that can be called at any time at 844-882-4771 for assistance.



Students from the Medina United Way E4 Summit worked with Auditor Mike Kovack during the United Way Day of Action.

During the morning the students crafted numerous messages for social media and used the hash tag "#heroinkills" to draw attention to the crisis. With the assistance of Highland High School/Medina Career Center student Miles Howell, the students crafted a 20-minute video to make people aware of their research and the depth of the problem in Medina County. The video is now showing on local cable stations and can be accessed via You Tube by searching for Auditor Mike Kovack United Way. Do your part to help stop heroin addiction in Medina County!

The four students Ashley Scheutzow and Ashland Damron of Brunswick High School and Mylah Morris and Ava Jackman from Cloverleaf High School were all shocked by the magnitude of the problem in Medina County.

There were 21 deaths from opiates in Medina County last year. Jackman's research indicated nearly 6% of the Medina County jail's population was due to heroin offenses and there were over 4.2 million heroin users in the United States last year. Damron, whose mother coordinates the drug court program in Medina County, said, "Heroin is one of the largest problems we've ever seen in this county."

AARP Foundation Tax-Aide Program Provides Free Tax Assistance

For the third consecutive year, the AARP Foundation Tax-Aide Program is offering its services out of the Medina County Auditor's offices, starting February 1. AARP Foundation Tax-Aide is the nation's largest free tax assistance and preparation service, giving special attention to the older population.

Dan Shumaker, local volunteer coordinator for the Medina program, is setting up shop with his six volunteer counselors, six computer operators, two quality reviewers and a greeter on the third floor of the Medina County Administration Building, 144 N. Broadway St., Medina.



By using AARP Foundation Tax-Aide, low-to moderate-income taxpayers also avoid preparation fees and pitches for high-interest tax credit or refund loans. AARP Foundation Tax-Aide is offered in conjunction with the IRS.

To take advantage of the Medina program, call the Office of Older Adults at (330) 723-9514 to set up appointments. Tax preparers will be available on Mondays and Wednesdays until April 11.

All volunteer tax preparers go through an IRS-approved training program. New volunteers have a one-week training program and take a certification test. Experienced volunteers renew their certification annually and take two days of training.

Auditor Kovack Wins Thomson Reuters Public Sector Champion Award



Mike Kovack, Medina County Auditor, recently received the 2016 Thomson Reuters Public Sector International Champion Award for Excellence in Constituent Service, one of only five such awards given out worldwide.

"The winners of the Public Sector Champion Awards have used technology and effective strategies to provide the most comprehensive, and citizen-friendly service," said Joe Jackson of Thomson Reuters. "We are proud to honor these leaders as they continue to achieve the gold standard of public service."

One of the areas for which Kovack was recognized was his exceptional efforts in communicating with his constituents. Kovack and his office communicate weekly with over 14,000 residents through an email with updates on governmental activities, employment opportunities as well as events in the community. "I think communication is paramount," said Kovack. "Citizens cannot understand what they don't know about. I like to encourage interactions between the public and my office, whether it be in the form of the Top Dog Essay Contest to kick off the dog license season or through dialogue and transparency about the county's finances."

Under Kovack's guidance, the Auditor's Office is well-known for its customer service, providing efficient ways for taxpayers to do business in person, on the telephone and through the internet. The Auditor's website receives over 1,000,000 hits annually on its website, which is extensive for a county with a population of only 175,000. Most telling – an 81% approval rating on customer surveys.

Perhaps most importantly, Kovack and his office have been able to use technology and people to provide these exceptional services in a most cost effective way. Since taking office in 1993 personnel have been reduced in the office by 50% and the office is spending the same amount today as they were in 1993. During that same time frame the county population and general county expenditures have nearly doubled. His office had the lowest statewide expenditures for its reappraisals in 2007 and 2013. "What we do here matters to residents of Medina County," Kovack said, "whether people know it or not," he added with a smile.



L to R: Clay Neidig, Dan Robson, Sue Daugherty, Kim Estes, Auditor Mike Kovack, MaryBeth Gunther, Chris Sczleag, Judy Rogers and Erica Grafain.

The auditor's office is responsible for viewing and appraising the 83,000+ parcels of property in the county, determining eligibility for tax reduction programs, issuing dog and vendor licenses, distributing tax revenues to governmental units, presenting annual tax budgets to the Budget Commission, serving as paymaster for nearly 1,400 county employees and certifying the accuracy of all measuring devices.

Although he was unable to be present, Kovack's award was presented in Las Vegas during the annual gathering of Thomson Reuters customers. A video of the presentation is available online. Thomson Reuters is the world's leading source of news and information for professional markets. The business has operated in more than 100 countries for more than 100 years. The Medina County Auditor's Office uses Thomson Reuters software to monitor the county's equipment, land, building, improvements and vehicles and to determine property values for tax purposes.

Auditor's Office Refashions Website to Incorporate New Technologies

The Medina County Auditor's Office will be launching a remodeled version of its website in March. The site aims to provide streamlined navigation, cater to mobile users and provide a better customer experience.



The new look will include the use of drop-down menus, a state-of-the-art visual design and a fresh, modern appearance.

"We want to make it as easy as possible for our constituents to navigate the auditor's processes," said

How to Appeal Your Property Value through the Board of Revision

Think your property is over valued? You have the opportunity to appeal that valuation to the Medina County Board of Revision.

The Board of Revision is a three-member valuation review panel consisting of representatives appointed by the Auditor, Treasurer, and the County Commissioners. The Board's responsibility is to determine the fair market value of your property as of January 1, 2016. That means the board has the power to raise as well as lower your property valuation.

Before you file a complaint, make certain to do your own research on the value of your property. You can get a general idea by using websites such as Zillow or Trulia, but you are going to want to make certain to check local sales too.

The easiest way to do this is by logging onto our website at www.medinacountyauditor.org. Click on "Transfers" near the top of the website. Then check sales on your street for the past three years. Hopefully you'll be able to get a general idea of your property's worth in this manner.

"The changes to our website should provide a better customer experience and have a positive impact."

The new website is the result of months of planning and construction by Deputy Auditor Amy Murray of the IT Department and two student interns, David Russ and Kevin Nist, from the Medina County Career Center. Other staff members in the areas of accounting, real estate and weights and measures were able to view a prototype and make suggestions and changes.

Since the most popular part of the auditor's website is Property Search, that will be the first thing people will see when they log on. Other popular areas of the website include Tax Estimator, Conveyance and Transfer Fees and Pets.

"For years people have told me how helpful our website is for them. Now we hope to make it even better so that those using mobile devices can more easily view our information," said Kovack.

How do you account for differences in square footages between houses? Dividing the sales price by the square footage of the home gives you a broad indicator with which to compare homes. Keep in mind that not to compare ranches to two story homes and vice versa or other dissimilar homes. Remember, the idea is to get an idea of the value of your home by looking at the sales values of similar homes. Confused or have questions? We recommend you contact our appraisal department prior to filing an appeal. They may be reached at 330-725-9758.

To file your formal complaint you will need to complete DTE Form 1 "Complaint Against the Valuation of Real Property," available on our website under "Forms." Remember the form must be notarized and the deadline to file your appeal is Friday, March 31st.



Be the Person Your Dog Thinks You Are

Your dog thinks you're the best thing since chew sticks and biscuits, so don't disappoint him by forgetting to buy his dog license this year. A license tag attached to your dog's collar proves ownership and it's your pet's ticket home if he gets lost.

Why should you license your dog? First, it is Ohio law. Second, if your dog is found unlicensed by the Medina County Dog Warden, you may be fined up to \$100. The standard licensing period runs December 1 to January 31.

One-year licenses are available for \$10; three-year licenses are \$30 and permanent tags are \$100. Licenses are



dog specific and no refunds can be issued for any tag sold. If your pet was registered last year, you should have received a renewal form in the mail. You may purchase or renew your dog license in person at Auditor Kovack's Office in Room 303 at the Medina County

Administration Building, 144 N. Broadway St., Medina or at the Animal Shelter, 6334 Deerview Lane, Medina. For your convenience you can purchase your license for an additional 75 cents at several satellite locations or purchase the license online at www.medinacountyauditor.org.

Remember to be the person your dog thinks you are and protect him with that special tag.

ROBSON NAMED AUDITOR'S OFFICE EMPLOYEE OF YEAR

The Medina County Auditor's Office is very proud to recognize appraisal department employee Dan Robson as their 2016 Employee of the Year!

A 2006 graduate of Medina High School, Dan joined the auditor's office in June of 2011 to assist with the 2013 reappraisal as a data collector. He excelled at the position and at the end of the project was offered full time employment in the appraisal department.

Dan has served as the auditor office's Board of Revision representative for several years as well as logging long hours manning informal hearings this year for the 2016 Property Value Update. He sets values on real estate new construction, processes and appraises all split parcels throughout the county and is also responsible for dealing with customers with questions in these areas.

Robson has completed numerous appraisal courses while at the auditor's office and has accumulated over 2,000 apprentice hours in the field.



Employees of the office nominate fellow employees for the honor of Employee of the Year and Dan's workmates had outstanding things to say about him. "I cannot say enough positive things about Dan. He is knowledgeable, accurate, professional, upbeat and dependable. He is the ideal co-worker." "Dan is a true team player. He's great to work with!" "Dan is the most reliable person in this office. If you ask him to do something, it is not only done, but done right the first time." "Dan Robson has outstanding customer service skills."

Robson was recognized at the auditor's Christmas party with his award which included a plaque and a bonus check. "We are tremendously fortunate to have Dan as part of our team here," Auditor Mike Kovack said. "He is part of the future of the auditor's office and that future looks very bright!"

CHOCOLATE LOVERS CELEBRATE 20TH ANNIVERSARY OF POPULAR FESTIVAL WITH MANY CHANGES



Medina County's faithful choco-holics will have lots to celebrate this year when the 20th annual "For the Love of Chocolate" festival is held on a new date, at a new venue and features new attractions.

Faith in Action Medina County Caregivers is moving the festival to a Friday evening, January 20, 6 to 10 pm at the Community Center at the Medina County Fairgrounds.

"This event is a Medina County tradition that helps us raise funds to serve seniors who need assistance with transportation to medical appointments, chores and friendly visits," said Deb Poland, Executive Director of Faith in Action Medina County Caregivers

The event is still perfect for family members of all ages and features chocolate sampling from over 30 chocolatiers, a Children's Candyland area with games and activities, contests on the stage and a new Wine, Cheese and Chocolate area for adults. Chocolatiers also sell scrumptious items that are perfect for Valentine's Day gifts. The Medina County Auditor's Office will also be present, so stop by our table to sample some of our tasty treats!

Ticket prices are \$10. Advance tickets will be available at all Medina County Buehler's stores. Sponsors and chocolatiers are still needed. For more information, contact Donna Theis at (330)952-0342 or dtheis@fiamedina.org.



Medina County Auditor office employees Denise Jocke and Dan Robson distribute Winter Bark samples at the 2016 Chocolate Festival.

Voters Approve All 18 Local Tax Issues

Medina County voters passed all 18 tax issues at the November 8 elections, eight of which were requests for additional money. Nine of these issues won't affect property owners' taxes until Calendar Year 2018 because they were on the ballot early.

Brunswick Hills Township	Additional Police	3067 For; 2257 Against
Canaan Township	Additional Fire/EMS	30 For; 12 Against
Creston Village	Cemetery Renewal	631 For; 586 Against
Chatham Township	Increase Ambulance/EMS	2158 For; 661 Against
Guilford Township	Renewal Fire Station	1751 For; 1389 Against
Lafayette Township	Roads/Bridges Renewal	1100 For; 657 Against
Litchfield Township	Fire/EMS Renewal	2465 For; 672 Against
Liverpool Township	Ambulance/EMS Renewal Increase	3374 For; 1985 Against
Medina Township	Ambulance/EMS Renewal Decrease	4961 For; 1620 Against
Montville Township	Safety Services Additional	4026 For; 2516 Against
Montville Township	Fire Rescue Renewal	1626 For; 546 Against
York Township	Parks Recreation Additional	1114 For; 1036 Against
York Township	Union Cemetery District Additional	1162 For; 826 Against
Harrisville-Lodi	Current Expenses Renewal	728 For; 362 Against
Lodi Village	Renewal	4597 For; 3268 Against
Buckeye Local Schools	Improvements Additional	82 For; 76 Against
Wayne County JVSD	Renewal	56,617 For; 30,596 Against
Medina County Home	Renewal	10,693 For; 3,189 Against
Wadsworth Public Library	Renewal	