



100 YEARS OF TOWNSHIP CONNECTIONS

Nicole Ganim

Bustling crowds are making their way around the hall in the Buckeye Career Center in New Philadelphia, Ohio. After an announcement, everyone makes their way to their tables, but not before a wave of big hugs, welcoming handshakes, and bright "Hellos" to old friends. In attendance are not only countless township trustees and fiscal officers but a former state representative, the Tuscarawas County Engineer's Office, the OTA Executive Director and President, vendors, and township friends. After all, this is the Annual Spring Banquet for the Tuscarawas County Township Association.

The Tuscarawas County Township Association hosts this banquet each spring, and they learned early on that they don't have to do it alone. The association works with the county engineer's office to fund and plan the banquet, and it's a win for everyone. When speaking to the crowd, Tuscarawas County Engineer Joe Bachman said, "This event would cost us over \$2,000 if we put it on alone. But by working with the Tuscarawas County Township Association, we spend \$700 and help put on this great event!" The event also fulfills the county engineer's required meeting for township officials.

The Tuscarawas County Township Association brings vendors to mingle with their members before dinner. The meeting also provides vital information, state updates, and fun prizes. Most importantly, the banquet brings township officials together to learn, share ideas, and make connections with others in their shoes. Of the 22 townships in Tuscarawas County, 18 had at least one representative at the March 21st meeting.

President of the Tuscarawas County Township Association, Don Ackerman, wants those thinking about attending their own county township association (CTA) meeting to know that it's all about making invaluable connections. "When I see an opportunity to make a connection, I jump at it," said Ackerman. "Someone will always have advice. Someone else has already gone through it. It widens the resources to fix issues in your township."

CTA meetings, such as this one, take place in nearly every county throughout Ohio each year.

HISTORY

Did you know that county township associations predate the state association? To find their beginnings, one must go back 100 years to 1922 in Ashland County. Joe R. Thomas, with his fellow Ashland County trustees and clerks (now known as fiscal officers), formed the first county township association. Allen County followed suit in 1924. Three additional counties followed, and by 1928, 41 counties had formed township associations.

Unfortunately, they formed to prepare for a fight. In 1926, a joint committee which had been studying local government in Ohio, issued a report that recommended the elimination of the township form of government. Township leaders knew that they needed to stand together to ensure this did not become a reality.

On June 28, 1928, 240 officials from 51 counties voted on a resolution, officially creating the State Association of Trustees

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Pictured above: Scenes from Tuscarawas County Township Association Spring Banquet on March 21, 2022.

IMPORTANT ROLES OF CTAS:

1. Networking opportunity for township officials - they can share resources, best practices, and work together.
2. Present a strong, united voice on matters in the county that may impact townships, especially local issues.
3. Serve as a connection to state and federal legislators.
4. Act as an outreach network for the OTA.

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and Clerks, known today as the Ohio Township Association.

It was decided at this meeting to pass a constitution, as well as raise dues from 50 cents to \$1.00. An annual meeting of the state association was to be held on the last Thursday of January each year. The effect of this decision can be seen today, as the OTA Winter Conference is held around that time each year.

It's also important to note that the mobilization of township officials worked. A bill to abolish township government was never introduced, and county township associations (along with the OTA) only continued to grow.

Flash forward to today, 87 of Ohio's 88 counties have their own version of a county township association, representing 1,308 townships across the state. Together they work to strengthen their state association that strives to represent and protect them against



threats like this every day.
And it all began in Ashland County.

CTAs TODAY

County township associations continue to play a vital role in the OTA today. For example, membership for the OTA is organized through the CTAs, and, more specifically, county member coordinators. Any township official, Ohio resident, or business that wishes to join the OTA must do so through their local CTA. These coordinators help support the work of their CTAs. Their assistance in membership every year keeps the OTA going.

However, CTAs are so much more than that.

County township associations are an excellent pathway for township officials to network with one another. The meetings allow township trustees, fiscal officers, and other employees to regularly talk and share best practices from their township. During the March trustee webinar, "The Township Trustee in 2022: Your Role in Meeting the Challenges," OTA Director Dan Frederick shared how all the townships in Erie County try to create and follow the same procedures and policies. He explained how this allowed the townships to find the best way of doing things and make it easy for new trustees and fiscal officers to be trained by the more experienced officials in their county. This is a great way for county associations to bond and ensure that no township gets left behind in the case of official turnover.

CTAs are the backbone of the communication network between the OTA and its members. The county township association is an important touchpoint for local members to receive updates and news from Columbus and Washington, DC.

CTAs also serve as a platform for members to discuss the issues they face in their roles. Since many officials face the same issues, CTA meetings give everyone an opportunity to present ideas for legislation that can benefit townships and discuss them with others.

Marisa Myers, Director of Governmental Affairs for the OTA, stated that CTA meetings are where most OTA legislative priorities are born. "Members often bring up issues and ideas at their meetings, which are then sent to our office. We present these ideas to the board, who votes on the top priorities," said Myers. She noted, "CTAs are vital to the legislative process."

CTAs not only help shape the legislative goals of the association, they also help choose the individuals that serve on the OTA Board. Every two years, each county association sends one representative to the annual meeting in January to select who will serve as Directors on the Board to represent the interest of townships across the state.

County associations are crucial to the various decisions made at the state association. They are liaisons providing a channel of communication and feedback to the state association. But that is far from all they do.

News of County Associations

ASHLAND
Resolutions approving H. B. 99 which provides for counties taking over township roads and H. B. 212 which provides for the state taking over county roads, were unanimously passed at a meeting March 4th. H. E. McClain is president of the association with Elton Huffer, vice-president and L. W. Byerly, secretary-treasurer.

ASHLAND
With an active association led by Harry Aten, president, vice-president, and Elton Huffer, secretary-treasurer, the County Association of Ashland County is holding its annual meeting on Thursday, March 4th, at the Ashland Hotel. The meeting will be held at 2 o'clock p.m. and will feature a luncheon and a presentation of the year's work.

ASHTABULA
Last week representatives of 29 of the 29 townships in the largest county in the state met at the office of Geo. T. Watts and Sec. Harvey Treiber. Criticism of centralization was freely voiced.

1922

TRUSTEES EXHIBIT AT CANFIELD

COSHOCTON
B. P. Mahley, president, called meeting for last week to take action on H. B. 99. The association has a strong membership with six trustees and six clerks. The meeting was held at the Coshocton Hotel and was attended by a large number of township officials.

ALLEN
The county fair season in Ohio is over for another year and, hopefully, our county associations have advanced the cause of the township. The fair season has been a success for the township associations and the county association. The fair season has been a success for the township associations and the county association.

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1924

Allen County Township Association forms

Mercer, Hardin, and Wood County Township Associations form

1926

Ashtabula County Township Association forms

Ohio has a total of 41 CTAs around the state.

1927

State Association of Trustees and Clerks forms

1928



WHAT ARE OTHER CTAs DOING?

County associations around Ohio often meet a few times a year. These meetings provide members with essential information like new funding opportunities and legislative updates. OTA representatives are often in attendance to answer questions and provide detailed updates and educational presentations.

Many counties have been finding creative and innovative ways to engage members and involve the community. Tuscarawas County, like numerous other CTAs around the state, hosts an annual banquet. More elaborate than general meetings, these banquets often feature vendors, educational speakers, auction prizes, and dinner.

Aside from meetings and banquets, other CTAs have found ways to engage their members and communities in special events. For example, the Butler County Township Association hosts a golf outing each summer to help support the Butler County 4-H program. Their website states that they've given over 244 scholarships over the years.

The Wood County Township Association puts on a welcome center rest shelter at their county fair each summer. Local township officials man the shelter during fair week where they auction off special prizes and talk about townships to members of the community.

Have you attended a county township association meeting yet? If not, what are you waiting for? Many CTAs meet to discuss township issues, hear from OTA representatives, and network with other officials. We encourage everyone to attend at least one county township meeting each year. Not only can you learn priceless information while connecting with fellow officials, but you will also be contributing to 100 years of township connections! ■

about the author



Nicole Ganim is the Director of Communications at the Ohio Township Association. She is the primary editor and designer for the OTA magazine, Ohio Township News, as well as coordinates the press and marketing efforts for the association.

DID YOU KNOW?

Every county in Ohio has a county township association except for Cuyahoga. The two townships in Cuyahoga County (Chagrin Falls Twp. and Olmsted Twp.) are split between Geauga and Lorain County Township Associations, respectively!

HOW TO IMPROVE YOUR COUNTY TOWNSHIP ASSOCIATION

- Invite someone new to attend! Personally reaching out to a fellow trustee or FO can make all the difference!
- Ask a legislator to attend! Inviting a state or federal representative to your meeting is a great way to voice township issues, but also make those connections with decision makers.
- Find a meeting sponsor! See if a county office wants to help out with the meeting! Or find a vendor who works with townships to see if they want to help with meeting costs! More resources can make the meeting better for attendees and lead to more turnout!
- Plan ahead! Try to get the word out on your upcoming meeting at least a week in advance.
- Use Social Media to alert your township association about updates like upcoming meetings, important policy changes, and other events.
- Make sure you organize and have a plan of action for your county township association meeting. If it runs smoothly, members are more likely to return.
- Get out in your townships. The more your organization is out in your communities, the better response you will get.

Tuesday, September 1 is
Township Government Day
at The Ohio Statehouse
All Trustees, Clerks, and guests are invited to join us for a day of learning, networking, and celebration. Bring your family, friends, and neighbors. Bring your family, friends, and neighbors. Bring your family, friends, and neighbors.

1930

who died recently. The resolution be framed and presented to Mrs. ... Continued on page 2
PREBLE CO. MEETING
More than 200 members and guests attended the annual meeting and banquet of the Preble County Association on September 25, at National Trail High School near Eaton. Shown at the banquet, from left, are William Bauer, State Association television newsman and the evening guest speaker; and Dale E. Buckingham, Twin Township Trustee.

1983

County Association Meetings
House Bill 652, requested by Ashland Co., becomes law, designating February 1st as Ohio Township Day.

1998

Getting the Most Out of Your County Township Association

County Township Associations celebrate 100 years in Ohio

2022