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Your state association strives to ensure that all members receive resources and education that is not only engaging and relevant, but accurate. We strive to be members' number one resource for education and events.

We know that for our members to be at their best when serving their communities, there must be comprehensive education and training to keep up with evolving legislation, ethics and records requirements, and township governance. Much of our education can be found in our publications. From the magazine to the website to newsletters like Grassroots Clippings, the OTA strives to educate members in all communications. However, another large piece of our education efforts is OTA member events. The OTA prides itself on not only providing these vital courses for township officials but also offering one-of-a-kind, engaging events for all varieties of members.

You have undoubtedly heard about our annual Winter Conference. While the conference is the association's largest and longest event of the year, there are plenty of other opportunities for you to learn about township roles and rules. The OTA offers in-person learning opportunities throughout the year for township officials. Numerous single-day learning seminars, webinars, and partnership events with outside organizations all provide unique opportunities for township learning.

OTA Winter Conference

The OTA Winter Conference is not only the OTA's largest annual event, but it offers the most optional events and networking opportunities for all members. This yearly, in-person event provides three days of education and networking opportunities with township officials and employees across the state. With over 80 sessions to attend, the

Winter Conference has more township educational opportunities than any other event in Ohio. It also serves as an excellent way for members to get required ethics and public records training. But it doesn't end with learning sessions.

The Winter Conference also brings professional speakers for our special events to help attendees challenge their outlooks. These speakers are often a highlight as attendees of these events leave with unexpected and new perspectives on their roles and their lives. Every other year, the OTA hosts a legislative reception for attendees with legislative representatives from around the state. Members can turn the tables and educate their representatives on issues they face in their townships. The event is an opportunity to grow connections with the state leaders from your area and do some good for your hometown.

Members can visit the trade show, which features over 125 top vendors vying for the opportunity to teach you about their business. With leaders in various industries ranging from insurance to paving to machinery, the trade show has all the options you need to make informed decisions on behalf of your township.

The conference also stands as the annual official meeting for members. Active members are invited to the conference to vote on their preferred board members, constitutional changes, and listen to the State of the Association from the Executive Director. With over 2,000 attendees annually, the conference can't be missed. So save the date for the 2023 Winter Conference on January 25-27

at the Greater Columbus Convention Center. See the image below for a hint at this year's theme.

Leadership Academy

The OTA created the Leadership Academy for OTA members who wish to enhance their leadership and decision-making skills. Leadership Academy 1.0 launched in 2002, and over 400 OTA members have completed the academy. With 10 optional classes, academy students have three years to complete six of them, along with taking part in the General Workshop and a federal component like the National Association of Towns and Townships (NATaT) Fly-In or Federal Day at the OTA offices.

Upon completing this course, graduates can apply for Leadership Academy 2.0, a new program in 2022 with an even more advanced curriculum. The program continues to build on the foundational



skills and has a more intensive year-long program that culminates in a project and presentation in front of your Leadership Academy 2.0 peers.



Webinars

Beginning in 2020, the OTA introduced webinars to members as a way to stay informed at a safe distance. Today, webinars are a monthly offering from the OTA. The virtual courses have allowed OTA Director of Education and Events, Michael Zaky, to provide frequent, more focused events for specific roles in the township like trustees, fiscal officers, administrators, and zoning inspectors.

He said, "Introducing webinars came out of necessity in 2020, but we've found that they not only allow members the flexibility of learning from home but the ability to connect with others in their positions from all over the state. I would encourage members to sign up for a webinar if they haven't already."

The webinars are announced each month, and registration can be found at www.ohiotownships.org.

Single Day Seminars

The OTA hosts in-person, single-day seminars as another option for member learning. Many of these events occur at the OTA office, like Ohio Township Administrators Network (OTAN) forums, Zoning Inspectors seminars, Law Directors continuous education, and Federal Day. Each session offers specialized education for their groups. For example, when groups like OTAN hold single-day meetings, they are given five sessions with different topics and speakers. These sessions also serve as a way for specialized groups to come together to share ideas and brainstorm on best practices. This networking is one of the most critical aspects of all OTA events.

The OTA also partners with its national sister organization, NATaT, to host Federal Day. Occurring each summer, members can learn about national issues townships face and what their representing organizations are doing to fight for them. It also allows attendees to hear from national groups like the USDA and speak with federal representatives.

Networking Through the OTA

One of the most important (and underrated) educational tools that are found at OTA's events and educational seminars is not the speakers or the relevant topics – it's the networking that can be done with other officials around the state that face the same issues and obstacles that you face each day.

So, the OTA offers events for members that may not focus directly on education but allow for plentiful interaction and ways to make connections in and out of their township. We hope you all take advantage of these opportunities through member events or volunteer opportunities throughout your membership with us. Who knows what you will learn or who you will meet while attending.

Golf Outing

Since 2011 the OTA has held a golf outing to raise money for the OTA Scholarship. Not only do golfers hit the course, but they can enjoy a full day of fun with lunch, a reception, and a silent auction, all for a great cause! This event focuses on networking with fellow members and numerous sponsors at the event. The golf outing offers a more intimate setting to meet and bond with the sponsors, whose support is vital to the golf outing's success. Occurring each year in August, the OTA Golf Outing has raised more than \$50,000 for students. (See page 31 for a recap of the 2022 golf outing.)

Ohio State Fair

Your state association is one of the largest donors for the 4-H State Fair awards. From livestock to companion animals to clothing, the OTA is a proud sponsor of the 4-H Youth Awards. Each year, members have the prospect to volunteer to present these

("Educating Townships" continued on p. 30)



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honors to the hardworking young men and women who compete statewide. Not only does this give you a chance to connect with the younger generations about townships, but you can also learn from them. They often have unique insights, and as many are township residents, they may be our future leaders! Check out the feature below for a recap of this year's awards and some of the special honorees and volunteers.

Fall Days on the Farm

New in 2022, the OTA is introducing Fall Days on the Farm. This event makes it easier for you to get to an OTA sponsored activity and includes your family and friends in the fun! Taking place from September through October, we will host one afternoon at a different farm in four regions of the state. Take this day to connect with members from your area. There is no better or more relaxing environment to gather, share, and build relationships. Tickets are required for entry and will give everyone at each farm corn maze entry, a pumpkin, and access to all the other features on the farm

ranging from hayrides to local markets (not available everywhere). See the dates and get tickets at www.ohiotownships.org or scan the QR code for registration on page 59.

Conclusion

As townships, we need to lean on and learn from each other. The OTA wants to continue to help its members learn about their roles as times change. We continue to innovate and create new ways for you to connect, because we understand, as you do, that this is the only way forward. In 2023, the OTA will offer even more specialized programs designed for you to grow in your position. Stay tuned for those announcements in our next issue.

Our hope from events like the Winter Conference, webinars, and Fall Days on the Farm is that they help you understand how to be a better leader and create a sense of unity and pride in Ohio townships. Join us at our next event. Even if you've been a township official for over 30 years, we bet you will learn something new and unexpected. ■

The Ohio State Fair Returns!

After a two year hiatus, the Ohio State Fair returned in 2022 and so did the 4-H Awards! As one of the largest sponsors of the 4-H Awards, we were excited that our volunteers were able to return to the fairgrounds and honor these winners in person. Congratulations to all the hardworking kids who won this year, and thank you to the volunteers who spent time presenting.

Below are a few photos and submissions from this year's fair.



Dear Ohio Township Association,
I would like to thank you for the opportunity to be awarded with the Ohio 4-H OTA Local Government Award. It is an honor that I will continue to cherish.
Sincerely,
Madison Johnson