



PRESS RELEASE

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HCCBA Hosts 10th Annual Membership Meeting & Awards Presentation *Celebrating Its 10th Anniversary Since its Formation & Honoring Community Leaders & Businesses*

ADA, OH – The Hardin County Chamber & Business Alliance hosted its 10th Annual Membership Meeting and Awards Presentation Thursday evening on the campus of Ohio Northern University to a sold out crowd of members, investors and guests at the university's McIntosh Center.

During the evening award presentation, dinner and business meeting, the Alliance celebrated its 10th anniversary of the merger that took place in 2006. At that time, four separate organizations came together to form a stronger, united group which is now the Hardin County Chamber & Business Alliance and its four divisions: Chamber, Tourism, Economic Development and Community Development.

Outgoing board chairman Tim Street, with Mid-Ohio Energy Cooperative, led the business meeting providing a positive outlook for the organization and spoke about the important changes made within the Alliance during his tenure, as well as the development and implementation of the Alliance's new 5-year strategic plan to guide and grow the organization over the next several years.

"I am very pleased with the progress, growth and sustainability of our membership, our communities and our businesses, with the Alliance playing an important role for the short-term and long-term growth of Hardin County," said Street. "I want to thank the board, staff and membership for allowing me to serve as the chairman for the past two years. I am confident in the decisions, actions and implementations from our leadership team that will allow the new chairman and board the ability to keep the positive momentum moving forward."

Board treasurer Michelle Cole, with Buckeye Machine Fabricators, provided the financial report, providing a healthy outlook on its current funding, membership growth and new investments being generated by the organization.

"Over the past year, the Alliance executive board and staff have expanded our financial reporting efforts and developed detailed budgets that allows us to better forecast our projected income and expenses, said Cole. "The Alliance staff has made tremendous efforts to increase both public and private dollars while making smart spending decisions towards the organizations mission."

Jon Cross, president and CEO of the Alliance and its economic development division provided a report on the staff's involvement, actions and activities throughout 2015. He informed the membership about a year-1 progress report being mailed in the weeks ahead that provides details on the work they have completed or in progress with regards to the 5-year strategic plan.

"I couldn't be more happy with our team and the efforts they have accomplished over the past year with a lot of the behind the scenes work to help increase new business and job growth, develop key relationships and collaborative efforts with our education, community and government leaders, to building a positive vibe throughout the county that we are a great community, we're open for business, and we want people to build, invest, work, live, learn and love it here!

With its growth in membership, the Alliance organization is now over 330 members, which has become the largest, member-driven business and community-focused organization in Hardin County.

Additional highlights noted during the business meeting was the \$34 million of new capital investments due to the various amounts of new construction and business growth happening throughout the county. Adding together the 2014 data, that number increased to over \$200 million of capital investments with over 350 new jobs created.

At the conclusion of the business meeting, the membership voted to approve the 2016 budget, board officers and directors, with chairman-elect Brian Sprang, with Quest Federal Credit Union, taking the helm for a 2-year term.

During the awards presentation the following awards were presented:

- John Hohn was the 2015 Citizen of the Year recipient based on his dedication to improving our county and helping community members. Hohn has worked diligently the last eight years as economic development director bringing economic success to the county along with his longtime involvement in education, coaching and community engagement.
- International Paper Foodservice Business was the 2015 Business of the Year recipient, with its new plant manager, David Mulligan, accepting the award. International Paper expanded its operations with a new 250,000 facility expansion, a \$70 million investment that created 125+ new jobs, making a substantial economic impact to the community and has become Hardin County's largest employer.
- Twirl was the 2015 Small Business of the Year, with owner Laura Wingfield accepting a new award developed to highlight successful small businesses with less than 50 employees. Twirl has created numerous jobs, invested over \$450,000 in their historic building within the downtown Kenton Historic Courthouse District, and developing a one of a kind bridal shop that brings in clients from all over the state.
- Two Community Service Awards were given to 1.) Hardin County Upward Sports for helping local youth develop their basketball and cheerleading talents while building their personal character; and 2.) Brenda Jennings for donating her time and talents as a registered nurse and educator to many area organizations along with her specific efforts in developing the Kenton City Schools Back Pack Program.
- The late Fred & Ruth Haushalter, represented by the Haushalter Family, received the R.E. Allen Lifetime Achievement Award for their business, community and educational legacy efforts that have made the City of Kenton and Hardin County a great place to live, work and prosper. This was the second award given since it was created, given and named in honor of Richard E. Allen, as the highest honor presented by the Hardin County Chamber & Business Alliance.

Patron sponsors for the evening included: International Paper; Liberty National Bank; OhioHealth Hardin Memorial Hospital; Ohio Northern University; Plaza Inn Family Restaurant and Catering; Quest Federal Credit Union; and Thomas & Marker Construction Company.

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