



Miami News

Local governance capacity

Written by Heather Johnston, assistant director and information coordinator, office for advancement of research and scholarship

With approximately 75% percent of the state's 11.5 million residents living in smaller cities, villages, and townships [with a population of 1,000 to 49,999], Miami University's Center for Public Management & Regional Affairs (CPMRA) has become an invaluable resource for Ohio's smaller local governments.

"On a daily basis, from when you wake up to when you go to sleep, it's local government that affects you most," says Phil Russo, professor of political science and CPMRA director. "Roads, bridges, police, fire, health – these are all local government services."

The CPMRA provides information, applied research and leadership training to more than 1,300 under-resourced township and local governments represented by the Ohio Township Association (OTA), and officials say they depend on the services to make decisions.



Phil Russo (center) hosts Ohio House of Representatives members Tim Derickson (District 53) and Cliff Rosenberger (District 91) during a visit to the CPMRA.

"When I served as Township Trustee, the CPMRA provided services we couldn't afford," explains now Ohio Representative Timothy S. Derickson (District 53). "The CPMRA did a survey that encouraged me to put a levy on the ballot that I never would have before."

The CPMRA is also committed to developing public service leadership through various programs and initiatives. The Ohio Public Leaders program, exclusively available to the Miami community, gives students complete long-term fellowships in state or local governments or related public or non-profit agencies.

"This fosters our public servants and leaders," notes Belle Everett, Tuscarawas County Commissioner. "These enthusiastic students are Ohio's future champions."

A joint leadership venture between the CPMRA and the OTA is the Ohio Township Association Leadership Academy, which has trained more than 1,200 local officials on various topics including legal responsibilities of elected officials, constituent relations and leadership competencies.

"Thanks to the CPMRA, the Leadership Academy has been offered to everyone from township administrators and employees to firefighters and police officers to zoning inspectors," notes Everett. "I am a graduate of the Academy, and I credit the CPMRA for offering me the tools and knowledge necessary to make me a better public servant."

Other services provided by the CPMRA include legislative consultation and publication of the Ohio Township Sourcebook, which Russo says is employed by more than 75% of Ohio's township government offices.

"In my 28 years as a township trustee, the Ohio Township Sourcebooks have been a great resource," says Ross Township Trustee and OTA President-elect Tom Willsey. "The CPMRA makes them available to townships at a very affordable cost."

For more information, please visit <http://www.cpmra.muohio.edu>.

With contributions from Ritter Hoy, University Media Relations Coordinator



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