



## OCATO Spotlight

### Strategic Planning by OCATO Creates Road Map for the Future of Ohio Heartland



Joe Devany, Executive Director, Ohio Heartland

Ohio Heartland Community Action turned to OCATO this fall to help create a five year strategic plan for the agency. This is the second time Ohio Heartland utilized OCATO's services to create their strategic plan and they are quite pleased with the results.

"In the past we've utilized private companies for creating our strategic plan," explained Joe Devany, Executive Director for Ohio Heartland, "and while

money isn't really an issue (OCATO services are free to OACAA members), it's nice to work with someone in community action. They understand community action, whereas others would have to learn about community action first or during the process."

The Strategic Plan training was conducted by Internal Consultant Julia Wise, Executive Director with Highland County Community Action Organization. Mr. Devany commented that both his agency and the agency represented by Ms. Wise are rural organizations, which also gave them common ground. The process started in September, ending with Board approval in November. "Julia did a nice job," Devany said. "She got all of the major folks together and it was done quickly." Mr. Devany also commented that Wise was very accommodating with Ohio Heartland's schedule. "We represent a four county area, which causes logistical issues, but Julia worked with us to accommodate everyone's schedule."

It is a five year plan that was developed with staff and board involvement that will start in 2012.

Mr. Devany explained that he likes to have a strategic plan in place because it is helpful with monitoring programs, especially where there are monitoring requirements such as with Head Start. "There is a plan in place for specific areas, such as Head Start, which is helpful with the tri-annual review. It helps create a road map for the future, which is very important right now with the future being so uncertain," Devany said.

The staff at Ohio Heartland also found the strategic planning useful. "They were able to participate in the process in a non-challenging atmosphere," Devany commented. "There was an opportunity for give and take. There was participation from the staff, board and community. There were lots of positive comments from the community and the staff."

OCATO offers a wide variety of free training programs to OACAA members to help increase the skills and abilities of staff and board members. The training can be tailored to meet your needs, brought on-site to your office and is conducted by people in community action.



Julia Wise, Executive Director, Highland County CAO

