



August 2006

Clark County, Ohio, was one of three communities awarded a Gold Award by *Healthy Ohioans – Small Step, Big Strides*, a division of the Ohio Department of Health, in August. The *Healthy Ohioans--Small Steps, Big Strides* is a multi-year, statewide health and wellness initiative of Governor Bob Taft and the Ohio Department of Health to increase awareness of the importance of healthy lifestyles and to change unhealthy habits for healthy ones--one small step at a time.

The Clark County Combined Health District applied for the award listing the tremendous cooperation between Springfield City and Clark County governments as well as the Combined Health District and the National Trail Parks and Recreation District. It also mentioned the efforts of the National Trail Parks and Recreation District's 30 miles of trails, 15 baseball/softball fields, 3 football fields, 14 soccer fields, 200 acres of parklands, new 1000 seat baseball stadium and the future nt SpalshZone Water park and ice rink.

Linda Scovern, of the Ohio Department of Health mentioned at a local reception for the agencies that the outstanding item in the Clark County application was not only excellent leaders, facilities, programs, and staff but the fact that Clark County is on the cutting edge of community collaborative efforts. The Clark County Combined Health District and the National Trail Parks and Recreation District are both examples of consolidated city/county agencies. Ms Scovern also noted the inclusion of a "Community Health Action Plan for Springfield and Clark County" as an important part of the application.

Award divisions were determined by population size. Three Ohio communities received the gold award. In addition to Clark County the other two were: City of Westerville and Hiram Village. Silver Awards were given to: City of Norwood, City of Napoleon, Orville and Worthington; while Bronze went to: City of Avon Lake, Butler County, City of Upper Arlington and Zanesville.

The ultimate goal of Healthy Ohioans is to improve Ohio's chronic disease rates related to lifestyles. In fact, the five leading causes of death in Ohio--heart disease, cancer, stroke, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease and diabetes--are directly linked to unhealthy lifestyles. Healthy Ohioans is working to lower Ohio's chronic disease rates by encouraging Ohioans to improve nutrition, increase physical activity, prevent tobacco use and increase tobacco-use cessation. The simple fact is that a healthy lifestyle is one of the most important health prevention tools available.

The Healthy Ohioans initiative is focused on four fronts: schools through the Governor's Buckeye Best Healthy Schools Awards program; businesses through the Governor's Healthy Ohioans Business Council; state employees through the State Agency Wellness Committee and the State Employee Health and Fitness Taskforce; and communities through the community award program, cardiovascular health grants and other community efforts.