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*Keith L. Smith, Associate Vice President for Ag. Admin. And Director, OSU Extension.*

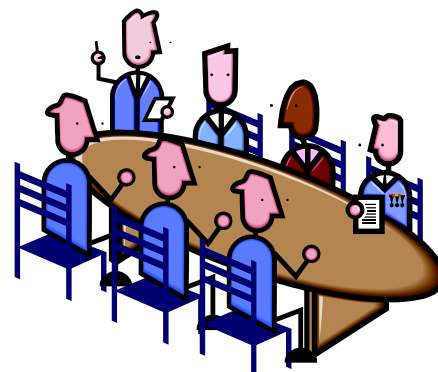
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EDITOR'S RAMBLINGS

Hope that you have had a great summer. One thing that business owners have to be prepared for is conditions other than "normal". A cooler, wetter summer was not the best for air conditioner or ice cream sales, but umbrella makers could rejoice. Making lemonade from lemons remains an important component of the business world.

Best Regards,

Mike Lloyd  
Extension Educator,  
Economic Development



MICRO LOAN UPDATE

Our office is delighted to announce that the county has been awarded a \$60,000 grant from the United States Department of Agriculture/Rural Development office (USDA/RA) from the Rural Business Enterprise Grant program. We are working with the commissioners' office to get all the paperwork completed and expect to have the program up and running later this fall. Check for fliers at local banks and businesses and for announcements in the Journal at the program begins. Of course you can also check with our office at 732-5681

In addition, the commissioners have approved the submission of a \$40,000 Community Development Block Grant Micro Loan application for the county. This application was submitted in early August and if awarded, should be available shortly after the first of the year. This would give existing county businesses and local start-ups two potential sources of funding.

## BUILDING ON A STRONG FOUNDATIONS

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### *Is Noble County ready for a charitable foundation?*

A local committee has been working in the county since spring to explore both the ability and the desirability of Noble County to support a charitable foundation. The seed for the project came from Foundation for Appalachian Ohio in Nelsonville, OH. This group looked at the state of charitable giving in the Appalachian region and found our region to be well behind the state. The 29 counties of Appalachian Ohio are approximately 33% of the state's land area, 13% of the population, 16% of the poverty, and only 2% of the state's charitable assets. Cuyahoga County, with over \$5,000,000,000, has over 20 times the assets of the combined 29 counties of Appalachia.

Even within the region there is wide variation. With over \$11,000,000 the Muskingum County Foundation and with over \$8,000,000 the Marietta Community Foundation dwarf the smaller counties in the region.

With this background the Foundation for Appalachian Ohio has teamed with Extension offices in four counties (Guernsey, Hocking, Meigs, and Noble) to look at possibilities of creating local foundation in these four counties. In late April there was a daylong training session on the use of the *Philanthropy Index*, a system used in the southern US to introduce rural communities to Philanthropy.

### *What does some of the Noble Co. Philanthropy Index data show?*

Nine percent of the 5,375 families in the 9 zip codes serving parts of the county currently make charitable contributions. The contributions average \$2,718 per family and total \$1,264,000. The charitable contributions are most numerous and have the highest dollar amount in the Caldwell zip code area. The highest percentage of donors is in the Seneca Lake area.

Total personal income for Noble Co. increased from \$136M to \$215M from 1990 to 2000. Largest increases were in government, transportation/communications and utilities. Decreases were in resource extraction (mining)

Retirement income in the county nearly tripled in the decade of the 90's increasing from \$5,081,405 to \$14,556,300 an increase of 186.5%

Eighteen percent of county families have incomes in excess of \$50,000. One percent of Noble County households are high income (+\$100,000). Less than .5% of the county's households have incomes in excess of \$200,000.

Copies of the *Philanthropy Index* for Noble County and a brief summary of the *Index* are available from the Extension Office.

The local committee includes Andrea Hurst, Joy Flood, Judy McMullen and Mike Lloyd and is available to answer questions on the ongoing efforts. A meeting is planned in September to begin the development of an oversight board for any local charity and to look at various ways such a charity could be organized and operated.

## FREEBIES

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Our office has recently received several items that might be of interest to the Noble County business community.

First is the publication “Doing Well by Being Well” published by the Healthy Ohioans Business Council”. This publication offers suggestions for businesses to design win-win employee wellness programs that could help to keep escalating health care costs down.

We also have several copies of the “ITAAO Directory of Information Technology (IT) Companies” Prepared by the Information Alliance of Appalachian Ohio, this publication provides information in nine categories of IT firms including web design, Internet Service Providers, e-commerce, and others for each of Ohio’s 29 Appalachian Counties. Seven firms are listed for Noble Co.

For businesses looking for funding opportunities we have several copies of “Financing Sources for Southeast Ohio Businesses” prepared by the Small Business Development Center at Marietta.

Finally, working in conjunction with the various local water companies and Buckeye Hills – Hocking Valley Regional Development District, our office now has 11x17 maps of the various water systems serving Noble County. The map is available in two variations. One shows existing water lines throughout the county and the second one adds line extensions currently being proposed by the various water companies.

For copies of any of the above items contact our office at 732-5681.

## OFFERING A NEW PRODUCT

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If you are in business, you have likely considered offering a new product or service. Here is a series of questions that you will find useful in making the “go-no go” decision.

- What is the likely demand for the product?
- What impact would the new product probably have on total sales, profits, market share, and return on investment?
- How would the introduction of the product affect existing products? Would the new product cannibalize existing products?
- Would current customers benefit from the product?
- Would the product enhance the image of the company’s overall product mix?
- Would the new product affect current employees in any way? Would it lead to hiring more employees or reducing the size of the workforce?
- What new facilities, if any, would be needed?
- How might competitors respond?

What is the risk of failure? Are you willing to accept this risk?

*Adopted from the Small Business Advancement National Center Newsletter, July 13, 2004*

