



Holmes County College Access Program Receives KnowHow2GO Local Network Expansion Grant

The Ohio College Access Network (OCAN) recently awarded \$20,000 to the Holmes County College Access Program as part of a KnowHow2GO Local Network Expansion Grant. This opportunity enables the program to develop a Holmes County Higher Education Network that will undertake the task of raising awareness of college access in Holmes County. This Network will work with the local community by sharing information and referring its clients that require college access services. Darla Stitzlein, Program Coordinator, states, "This Network will consist of representatives from a number of independent entities who share some form of pre-existing relationship. The Network will meet monthly to share ideas on how to further the college access message and assist students in degree attainment beyond high school." Stitzlein also commented that, "This information sharing will ultimately make more individuals aware of what the program offers, the positive impact it is having on the local community and the need for local sustainable funding."

Funding this initiative was made possible by OCAN through funding from the Lumina Foundation for Education. Lumina Foundation strives to "increase the percentage of Americans with high-quality degrees and credentials to 60 percent by the year 2025." In order to meet the educational needs of a knowledge economy, the Lumina Foundation believes that possessing high-quality postsecondary credentials is essential. Attaining degrees and certificates provides a clear pathway to further education and employment. OCAN hopes to assist Lumina in achieving this goal by expanding the reach of its members' college access programs in the communities they serve.

The Ohio College Access Network (OCAN) was founded in 1999, by Knowledge Works Foundation, in collaboration with the Ohio Board of Regents, the Ohio Department of Education and the Ohio Business Roundtable. OCAN works to establish college access programs across the state and is the first statewide coordinating body for college access programs in the nation. The goal of the organization is to help more Ohio students pursue postsecondary education through the work of local college access programs, which provide financial aid advising, last dollar grants, career guidance, and other services. Currently, 36 college access programs serve nearly 300 of Ohio's 612 school districts, and 17 private/parochial schools in 46 counties touching over 175,000 students annually.

Services of the Holmes County College Access Program are free and include career and college searches, help with applications, and assistance with the FAFSA, the Free Application for Federal Student Aid. Advisor Ann Gastier can be reached at (330) 674-1255 or via e-mail at collegeaccess@hcef.net. The College Access Program is located in the Cary House at 114 North Clay Street in Millersburg.