



101 North Main Street  
Room 102  
Celina, OH 45822

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## WEST CENTRAL OHIO WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVE

The long term, collaborative goal of the West Central Ohio Workforce Development Initiative is to attract, retain, and educate qualified individuals to meet the current needs of the manufacturing sector for this region. In an effort to better meet the needs of our local companies, the Mercer County Community Development Department is teaming up with the Village of New Bremen and the Southwestern Auglaize County Chamber of Commerce along with Tri Star Career Center, Apollo Career Center, Wright State University – LC, Rhodes State College, and Upper Valley Career Center to increase the skilled workforce “pipeline” available to our regional manufacturers.

Mercer and Auglaize Counties have been at the heart of advanced manufacturing. While other parts of the state have lost this core element of their economy, our region has grown in this sector. Simply put, we still make “stuff”. Our heritage is rooted in both agriculture and industrial manufacturing and maintaining this know how will take some effort. Our County’s ability to weather the economic storm over the past several years (as can be seen in the unemployment and income tax figures) can be credited to the types of businesses we have in the area, the people that work for these businesses, and the knowledge/ability we still possess in make something that others need. Hoping this good fortune continues into the future is simply not a sufficient long-term growth strategy our region needs moving forward. Following the 70+ business surveys this office completed in the spring, it was apparent one of the biggest long-term barriers to continued growth (aside from Health Care and Workers Compensation) is the pool of available skilled workers to chose from as a company grows or simply looks to replace those retiring in the years to come. If we as a region fail to re-supply our companies with enough skilled workers, we risk missing out on true re-investment opportunity for the community as a whole.

generally to people who know how to program computers, robotics and machines. Although this initiative is initially focused on the skills trades, the overall goal of our community should be to make sure everyone is aware of all the jobs and careers (finance, graphic design, management, industrial engineering technology, mechanical/ electrical engineering, computer science, etc.) currently available in our own backyard and then connect them with our existing assets (people). By making our students, parents, teachers, general public more aware of the many great careers and job openings we have in our area, our goal should be to make every opportunity available to those that want to stay in the area (or come back) and connect them with our businesses that are looking for this local talent which will lessen any potential ‘brain drain’ affect. The brain drain does exist in every community, but for this region it shouldn’t be classified as a problem quite yet, rather an issue that we need to keep an eye on. It is an issue that often lies more with perception rather than a true lack of jobs. There are many good paying jobs/careers out there. While some may not be for everyone, there are many that are going unfilled simply due to people not knowing they exist. If everyone had a chance to walk through companies like I get to do, they’d be surprised to see everything these companies offer. These are not just good jobs, but great careers. By working together with local schools, students, parents, teachers and companies, we need to make every community member aware of what we truly have here. There are a plethora of high paying jobs, and if students know about them as they’re graduating from High School, they’ll be more likely to stay or come back to the area. We feel this is a true re-investment strategy, but it will take a community effort between the aforementioned groups to accomplish. It is



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WATCH FOR NEWS AND UPDATES  
ON OUR WEBPAGE:  
[WWW.MERCERCOUNTYCONNECT.COM](http://WWW.MERCERCOUNTYCONNECT.COM)  
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MERCERCONNECT

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*Together, we can...*

### EMPLOYMENT STATISTICS

Unemployment rate for Mercer County for the month of November 2011:

November 2011 .....	4.9%
October 2011 .....	5.8%
November 2010.....	6.5%
Labor Force .....	24,500
Employment .....	23,300
Unemployment .....	1,200

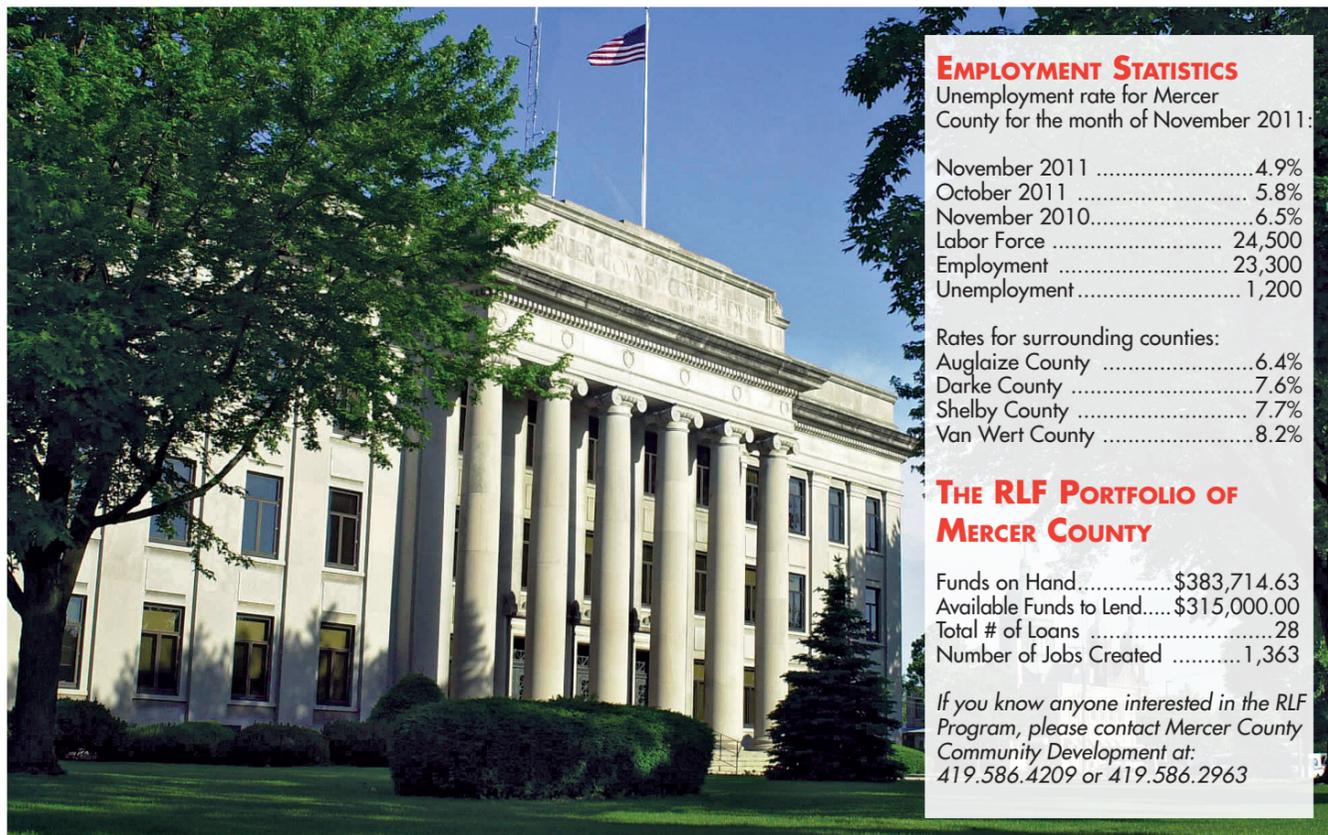
Rates for surrounding counties:

Auglaize County .....	6.4%
Darke County .....	7.6%
Shelby County .....	7.7%
Van Wert County .....	8.2%

### THE RLF PORTFOLIO OF MERCER COUNTY

Funds on Hand.....	\$383,714.63
Available Funds to Lend.....	\$315,000.00
Total # of Loans .....	28
Number of Jobs Created .....	1,363

If you know anyone interested in the RLF Program, please contact Mercer County Community Development at: 419.586.4209 or 419.586.2963



## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CHANGES AT THE STATE OF OHIO



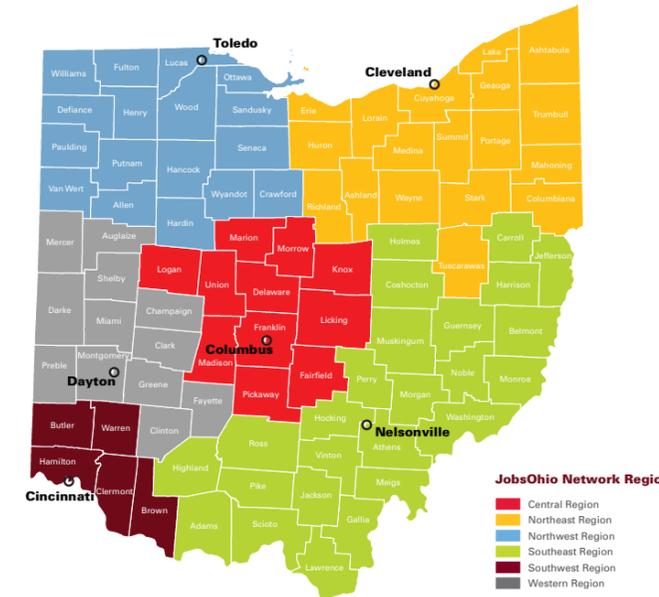
As part of Governor Kasich's initiative to make Ohio a more business-friendly environment, the Ohio Department of Development is transitioning into two entities to streamline its services – JobsOhio and the Ohio Development Services Agency.



Partnering with key leaders in each region of Ohio, JobsOhio is slated to assist businesses and public entities in streamlining the evaluation and incentive approval process and encourage economic growth at a faster pace.

JobsOhio is a private, non-profit corporation created pursuant to Ohio House Bill (HB) 1 to drive economic development and job growth for Ohio. The private entity is one part of the new structure contemplated by Ohio Governor John Kasich that calls for the privatization of a portion of the State's economic development functions.

- JobsOhio has organized its activities around six (6) distinct regions in the State: Cincinnati, Cleveland, Columbus, Dayton, Nelsonville/Appalachia and Toledo. (Mercer is part of the Dayton Region)
- JobsOhio and the REDO's also will be responsible for the development and implementation of economic development strategies, specifically as it relates to retention and expansion, and sales and marketing plans and will perform project management in addition to providing local communities with single points of contact to expedite responsiveness to job-creation opportunities.
- Project Managers with JobsOhio will be industry experts in key target industries, including: aerospace and aviation, automotive, banking and insurance, bio-health, consumer goods, energy, agriculture and food processing, information services and software, and high-tech polymers.
- Referrals and leads relating to possible job creation, retention or expansion activities will be directed to JobsOhio for qualification and development of incentive proposals, which may include recommendations as to tax credits, loan or grant funding and the like.
- Business Loans - Programs from the former Strategic Business Investment Division
- Infrastructure Grants - Programs from the former Strategic Business Investment Division
- "Close the Deal" Funds - Any type of additional funding required to retain or attract businesses



### Business Services Division

- Innovation & Investment
  - (Ohio Third Frontier, Edison Centers, Technology Investment Tax Credit, etc.)
- Small & Minority Business and Export Assistance Office
  - Combination of the former Minority Business Division, Entrepreneurship and Small Business Division, and Global Markets Division
- Tax Credits, Servicing and Workforce Development Office
  - Combination of functions from the former Strategic Business Investment Division and Workforce & Talent Division

### Community Services Division

- Urban and Site Development Office
  - Combination of Urban Development Division and Job Ready Sites Program (formerly under Strategic Business Investment Division)
- Housing and Partnerships Office
  - Part of the former Community Development Division (Community Housing Improvement Program, Homeless Assistance, Downtown Revitalization, etc.)
- Energy Office
- Community Assistance Office
  - Part of the former Community Development Division (Home Weatherization Assistance Program, Home Energy Assistance Program, Percentage of Income Payment Plan, etc.)
- Governor's Office of Appalachia

### Operations Division

- Audit Office, Communication and Marketing Office.
  - Information Technology and Facilities Office, Legislative Office, Policy and Research, Legal Services Office, Human Resources, and Budget and Finance Office

## MERCER COUNTY RECEIVES GRANT

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a community issue in which the needs and opportunities within our community need to be properly connected to one another.

Although many skills are needed for the advanced manufacturing sector, the consortium has put its initial focus on welding and CNC certification. The strategy includes establishing a 10-week curriculum, acquiring scholarship and sponsorship opportunities, completing course instruction and certification, connecting candidates with employers, and finally hiring those individuals. Recently, an open house was presented at the TriStar Career Center in which several companies, career centers and potential candidates came together to see what each other had to offer. From this event, an initial list of candidates has been assembled with the intent of starting classes the first week of January. Again, the initial goal of this initiative is to give participants the kind of exposure they need to get their foot in the door with a local employer. Mary Dupes, Randall Bearing's (Coldwater) HR manager states "training courses like the ones these schools are proposing will give a sound foundation on which we can build."

The group is seeking additional scholarship and/or sponsorship opportunities in the amount of \$250 for each program (CNC and Welding curriculum) to help move more local people towards increasing their skill sets thus benefiting our local companies. If additional businesses, foundations, organizations, or groups would like to be involved with this initiative, please contact our office. We feel it is a relatively small dollar amount, but the long term investment opportunity in our community's future is great. For manufacturing participants, by offering a CNC scholarship, the participating business will obtain a list of the potential CNC program candidates and their contact information. The same applies for a welding scholarship. With this list, a manufacturer will have the ability to contact the individuals for their own pre-screening needs. If a company finds a candidate to be an appropriate fit for their organization, they may select that individual for sponsorship of their class seat.

Mercer County was awarded a \$500,000 Community Housing Improvement Program (CHIP) grant. The two-year program is designed to assist low to moderate income homeowners eliminate health or safety issues within their home or prevent homelessness. The grant has a pre-determined amount of funds for various activities, including Private Owner Rehabilitation, Home Repair, Down payment Assistance, and Emergency Monthly Housing Payment. The remaining funds are designated for Administrative services and Fair Housing Training. If you or someone you know would like more information or would like to apply for this assistance, please call SOURCES at 419-584-1550. Mercer County has been awarded CHIP funds since 1996.

## WINTERFEST 2011

The Rockford Chamber of Commerce hosted Winterfest 2011 on December 10th at Shane's Park. The community enjoyed horse and carriage rides, a live nativity, children's games, local vendors, delicious food, luminaries, and a Gingerbread Extravaganza. The park was filled with Christmas music, decorations, and entertainment for all ages. With perfect weather and great attendance, Winterfest 2011 was a huge success!



## ROCKFORD CHAMBER AWARDS

### TOM ROGERS ROCKFORD CITIZEN OF THE YEAR 2011

Rockford Chamber of Commerce held its 38th Annual Awards Banquet in October. The Citizen of the Year award (presented by the 2010 winner, Dr. Jerry Sell) went to Tom Rogers. In the presentation, Dr. Sell explained the lifelong farmer, Tom Rogers, is known for selling his sweet corn and raising quality beef cattle. Tom also gives much of his corn and beef to those in need. Recently, the local nursing home residents were the beneficiaries of his generosity. Mr. Rogers received the Citizen of the Year award for years of service and dedication to the Village of Rockford. Tom is an active member of his church, Parkway Athletic Boosters, RADC, the American Legion, and co-owns the Rockford Belle.



TOM ROGERS (LEFT) 2011 CITIZEN OF THE YEAR, PRESENTED BY DR. JERRY SELL (RIGHT)

### BUSINESS OF THE YEAR BURTCHEED SEED COMPANY

Burtch Seed Company was awarded the Business of the Year award. Brothers, Mike and Ed Burtch accepted the award from 2010 award winner, Robby Peel, co-owner of Barry's Family Market. The Burtch Seed Company was started in 1979 by Tom and Dot Burtch, in a small warehouse in Rockford. The Burtches bought the Tama Elevator in 1980 and developed the business from a local grain company into a progressive seed production facility. Today Burtch Seed remains a family-owned business managed by Tom's sons, Mike and Ed Burtch. Over the years Burtch Seed has continued to expand its business in Ohio, Michigan, and Indiana. The Burtch Seed Company was awarded for its positive impact to local agriculture.



(L-R) MIKE AND ED BURTCHEED ACCEPT THE BUSINESS OF THE YEAR AWARD FROM ROBBY PEEL