

GREENE COUNTY—

MHRB seeks to renew Issue 22

The Mental Health & Recovery Board (MHRB) of Greene County will bring a Nov. 6 levy renewal, Issue 22, to Greene County voters.

Greene County's existing MHRB 1.5 -mill mental health levy expires in 2013. Greene County Commissioners approved placing a renewal levy on the November ballot. Renewal of the levy would mean County homeowners pay no additional taxes for Greene County mental health and recovery services. Homeowners will continue to pay the same MHRB levy amounts they currently pay.

The existing Greene County 1.5 -mill levy brings in an estimated \$4,000,000 annually for mental health and recovery services and costs the owner of a \$100,000 home \$32.44 a year or about \$2.70 per month.

Over 75 percent of the dollars MHRB has to invest in Greene County services is made up of local levy revenue. Deep statewide budget cuts over the past 10 years have left the system running on fumes. As a result of these reductions and changes at the state-level, the amount available for the MHRB to invest in local services is dramatically reduced.

"It is vital that the community understand that the renewal levy will not make up for these state cuts but will help keep in place the community safety net which thousands of vulnerable Greene County children, seniors and adults rely upon to help lead a better life," said MHRB CEO Dr. Kent Youngman.

MHRB is one of more than 50 mental health and recovery boards in Ohio. The organization is funded by a mix of federal, state and levy dollars. MHRB uses these funds to insure that counseling, case management, housing, medication and hospitalization are available through a provider network of nine organizations in Greene County. Lynn West, CEO of TCN Behavioral Health Services, the most comprehensive of the nine MHRB service providers in Greene County, Chairs the Levy Steering Committee along with Dr. Joe Keferl MHR Board member and Wright State University Associate Dean, College of Education and Human Services. Elaine Mercurio is Treasurer of the Levy Campaign.

These nine agencies provide direct, life-changing support to people facing mental health and addiction problems. They also provide counseling, treatment and education programs for a wide range of related issues including, domestic violence, child abuse, support for wounded military members, suicide prevention programs, sexual assault and the isolation and depression of older adults to name just a few. Across Greene County these nine MHRB contract agencies helped more than 9,000 individuals in 2011.

Local funding, through levies, has become increasingly more important over the last several years as community-based services have replaced state institutions, state funding has been reduced, and the demand for locally accessible services has increased. Continuation of strong Greene County support for mental health and recovery services will mean availability of local services will continue and vital services to friends and neighbors can be counted on.

"I fully expect our levy effort will be successful. Greene County citizens have a great history of responding well to this kind of an issue...and it really helps that this is a renewal levy with no additional taxes for Greene County home owners," said Dr. Youngman. "Failure is not an option here. It would mean many of our most vulnerable citizens would no longer be able to get the help they need. The levy makes up more than 75 percent of our funding; losing it would be devastating for our residents."