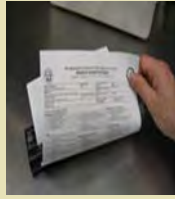


# 2013



## **Hamilton County Public Health Food Program Achievements & Improvements**

## **Samuel J. Crumbine Consumer Protection Award Application**

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**HAMILTON COUNTY  
PUBLIC HEALTH**

PREVENT. PROMOTE. PROTECT.

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## Executive Summary

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*Prevent. Promote. Protect.* This tagline, uniting Hamilton County Public Health (HCPH), remains the basis for the Agency's programming and services, particularly as it relates to the health and safety of the citizens of Hamilton County.

While the Agency's food program grows and becomes more refined, the Environmental Health Divisional mantra of *education over enforcement* continues to drive performance in bringing consumer food protection to the next level. HCPH consistently works with its licensees through programs aimed at bringing education, consistency and permanence to food safety.

As Hamilton County grows and its population diversifies, the Division now reaches licensees with trilingual training (i.e., English, Spanish and Chinese) and employs a full-time inspector who is fluent in Spanish. Outreach includes a complete overhaul of all Agency educational materials, covering a wide variety of topics from safe food handling and cottage foods to church festivals and farmers' markets. In fact, HCPH's work with some of the more "non-traditional" food service outlets has garnered the Agency considerable publicity and news coverage, furthering educational messaging and working to incorporate consumer learning into safe food selection and handling. The food service program has also made considerable use of the Agency's robust social media program. Messaging on a wide range of food safety topics reaches thousands of Agency "followers." This effort not only increases education, but also creates a "push-pull" effect as consumers armed with information help push licensees into safe practices.

Participation in the Agency's *Clean Kitchen Award* program, now in its third year, has skyrocketed. Operators are quickly learning that the award, coupled with readily available inspection information for consumers, can be used as a powerful tool to generate business. A survey of 2012 award winners shows that the overwhelming majority prominently displays award certificates and window clings. An addition to the program incorporates popular Quick Response (QR) Codes to the awards so that consumers can use mobile devices to access up-to-the-minute reports while deciding where to eat. The Agency's inspection report section is easily the most visited area of HCPH's Website. Similar to the above examples, consistent publicity for the *Clean Kitchen Award* program encourages consumers to look for the award when making dining decisions.

Full Agency integration into the food program is also a growing and successful endeavor. As mentioned above, the food program has joined forces with public information to drive the program to greater recognition with both licensees and consumers. The Agency's epidemiology director is a sanitarian who came from the Environmental Health Division. This experience provides the team with a trained eye to identify and catch outbreaks early. The Agency's Outbreak Management Team incorporates key members from all specialties to jump into action with laser-like precision to combat potential health threats while minimizing negative impact to public health.

This year marks the 50th anniversary of HCPH's first Samuel J. Crumbine Consumer Protection Award. The past 50 years have been marked by rapid advancement in the HCPH food program. As referenced in the attached recommendation letter by Theodore E. Wymyslo, M.D., Director of the Ohio Department of Health (ODH), HCPH's "innovative programming is emulated throughout the state."

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## PART I: PROGRAM BASICS

### Demographics

Hamilton County is the third largest county by population in Ohio following Cuyahoga (Cleveland) and Franklin (Columbus) Counties, respectively. Hamilton County is home to Cincinnati, while the metropolitan statistical area includes counties in Northern Kentucky and Southeast Indiana. The region is the 24th largest U.S. metropolitan area, with a total population of 2.2 million.

HCPH serves a population of more than 460,000 (see Table 1), which includes all of the geographic county boundaries, with the exception of the Cities of Cincinnati, Norwood, Sharonville and Springdale, Ohio. The HCPH service area comprises 12 townships, 13 cities and 19 villages – some 58 percent of the total County population.

Table 1: 2010 Census Bureau Data	
<b>*HCPH Jurisdiction</b>	<b>463,804</b> (population served)
	<b>Demographics:</b>
	White 81.8% (379,311)
	Black 14.6% (67,819)
	Asian 2.1% (9,829)
	Hispanic/Latino 1.9% (8,795)
<b>* Median HH Income</b>	<b>\$36,186</b>
	<b>* Education:</b>
	High School 90.7%
	Bachelor's or Higher 49.5%

With 10 Fortune 500 company headquarters, the region ranks in the nation's top 10 markets for number of Fortune 500 headquarters per million residents. A workforce of more than 1.6 million is within 50 miles of the heart of the region.

The region is well-known for its public festivals, many of which occur outside city limits, in the County's jurisdiction. HCPH launched the WeTHRIVE! initiative in 2008. WeTHRIVE! is a county-wide movement of residents working together to make healthy living choices easier and healthy food accessible. The movement has spawned more than 35 community gardens, and subsequently, alternative food distribution and sales paths. In an area already rich with farmers' markets, produce sale locations and a strong cottage food industry, WeTHRIVE! has brought new focus to the region while presenting challenges to the food program, as many of these community-based, healthy food options require education and oversight, often outside of regular business hours.

In 2012, HCPH's Environmental Services Division licensed: 1,735 food service establishments; 537 retail food service operations; 182 vending locations; 362 temporary food service venues; and 179 mobile food operators. In total, the Agency's program includes more than 2,800 facilities and the Division reviewed plans for 99 new facilities.

## Resources

HCPH is governed by a five-member Board of Health comprised of business leaders and stakeholders from within the service area, as well as a physician, as required by state law. Day-to-day oversight is the responsibility of the Health Commissioner. Agency staff, numbering more than 80 employees, include sanitarians, physicians, plumbing inspectors, health educators, nurses, disease prevention specialists, health educators and epidemiologists.

The Environmental Health Division maintains 11 full-time staff, eight of whom are registered sanitarians, with the remainder being sanitarians-in-training. Personnel tenure averages nearly 10 years of professional experience. The Division is tasked with education for, and enforcement of, eight state and local regulations. The food program is the largest of the Division’s responsibilities, as it educates and licenses more than 2,800 facilities annually.

### 2012 Food Program Fees

Licensing fees are established using cost accounting methodology. Licensing fees incorporate facility “risk,” which assigns levels to each licensed facility based on the complexity of the food operation. State regulations govern the rate of fee increases. While cost accounting methodology drives fees, it is important to note that Agency efficiency has enabled fees to remain at or below permitted maximums for the past 10 years. Thanks to efficiencies in the system, in 2011, the Agency was actually able to reduce fees by 25 percent and has maintained its licensing fees ever since. The total 2012 budget for the Environmental Health Division was \$814,250 (see Tables 2 and 3 for revenue sources).

Table 2: Food License Fees				
FACILITY TYPE	BASE FEE	STATE	TOTAL	PLAN REVIEW FEE
Level 1 - Less than 25,000 sq ft	\$144.75	\$28.00	\$172.75	\$100.00
Level 1 - 25,000 sq ft or Greater	\$196.90	\$28.00	\$224.90	\$150.00
Level 2 - Less than 25,000 sq ft	\$159.60	\$28.00	\$187.60	\$150.00
Level 2 - 25,000 sq ft or Greater	\$270.00	\$28.00	\$233.80	\$200.00
Level 3 - Less than 25,000 sq ft	\$279.80	\$28.00	\$307.80	\$300.00
Level 3 - 25,000 sq ft or Greater	\$658.90	\$28.00	\$686.90	\$400.00
Level 4 - Less than 25,000 sq ft	\$347.35	\$28.00	\$375.35	\$400.00
Level 4 - 25,000 sq ft or Greater	\$696.80	\$28.00	\$724.80	\$500.00
Mobile	\$20.55	\$28.00	\$48.55	
Temporary	\$23.60	-----	\$23.60	
Vending	\$6.45	\$6.00	\$12.45	

Table 3: Food Safety Training Fees		
Level 1 Food Safety Training	\$20.00 per person	\$100.00 group course at facility
Level 2 Food Safety Training (ServSafe)	\$150.00 per person	\$50.00 test only

## Vision, Goals and Objectives

### Mission

The purpose of HCPH is to work with the community to protect the public health and environment. By providing education, inspections, health care coordination and data analysis, we strive to ensure that the citizens of Hamilton County are safe from disease, injury and contamination.

### Vision

HCPH will revolutionize the way it provides services to a changing community. We will provide a network of information to be used as a tool to improve public health. Communities will develop new and innovative ways to solve problems. Together we will be uniquely equipped to face the challenges of tomorrow and provide an environment in which we will be proud to live and work.

### Core Values

Our service will be prompt, reliable and professional. Our staff will be caring and responsible.

### Objectives

Many organizations develop mission, vision and values statements and then put them on a shelf to be occasionally revisited. At HCPH, we live these statements daily and require that the essence of these objectives be part of the evaluation process for our people. The HCPH model is focused on *education over enforcement*. We would rather educate our licensees and constituents because we have found over many years of service that this approach cements compliance over the long term.

Based on our vision, we are “early adopters” of technology. We are quick to embrace the latest systems available, as long as the cost-benefit relationship is such that it offers improved service for our constituents and allows us to remain vigilant stewards of funding.

### Goals

Using the organization’s directional statements as catalysts, the Environmental Health Division developed the following timeline (Appendix A) and goals for program implementation:

1. Upgrade the inspection program to be fully digital and paperless.
2. Develop and implement new food education for customers and operators.
3. Implement a new auditing and standardization program based on digital data gathered.
4. Ensure staff are trained with cutting edge information through training from regulators.
5. Distribute information to operations that are normally exempt from licensing regulations, including fish fries, church festivals, farmers’ markets and the cottage food industry, to ensure code compliance, further reduce threats from foodborne illnesses and increase education.
6. Work with our Epidemiology and Disease Prevention partners to develop standard operating procedures and training on foodborne illness response.
7. Design and implement criteria to reward facilities that continue to exceed compliance with food safety regulations, sanitation and food safety education – ultimately the *Clean Kitchen Award*.

## **PART II: BASELINE AND PROGRAM ASSESSMENT**

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### **Regulatory Foundation**

The HCPH Food Inspection Program operates under the Ohio Uniform Food Safety Code Chapter 3717-1 of the Ohio Administrative Code. This code was developed in 2001 and revised in 2012 (effective January 1, 2013) by the Ohio Department of Agriculture (ODA) and ODH and is based on the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) Model Food Code that is widely used throughout the United States.

The ODH is the state regulatory entity which oversees all food service operations and the ODA oversees all retail food establishment operations. The authority to inspect retail food establishments and food service operations is given to sanitarians and sanitarians-in-training by Ohio Revised Code, Section 3717.27. Sanitarians are required by Ohio Administrative Code, Sections 901:3-4-06 and 3701-21-02.4 to inspect retail food establishments and food service operations with the frequencies detailed below.

Establishments are required to pay an annual license fee based on the risk or complexity of the food handling and preparation that is occurring within the facility. For traditional retail food establishments and food service operations, there are four risk levels: 1-4.

A Risk Level 1 operates with the lowest level of risk and includes the sale of coffee, self-service fountain drinks, pre-packaged foods that require refrigeration and baby formula. A Risk Level 2 is also seen as low-risk and includes all Risk Level 1 criteria, with the addition of heating and handling individually packaged foods.

Risk Levels 3 and 4 have an increased level of risk because of the handler's interaction with food. These facilities perform increasingly complex tasks including: cutting and grinding raw meat products; handling ready-to-eat meats and cheeses; heating and cooling bulk foods; serving highly susceptible populations; acidifying white rice; and smoking and curing meats.

Risk Level 1 and 2 facilities are inspected on an annual basis and Risk Level 3 and 4 facilities receive a minimum of two inspections per year. Risk Level 4 facilities also receive two additional critical control inspections or process review inspections, which focus on a process that ensures compliance with the Ohio Food Code. For example, staff observe an operation preparing a soup from start to finish, ensuring that they are following proper procedures for complicated food processes.

In addition, Ohio licenses temporary food, mobile and vending operations. These categories are sometimes difficult to track because these facilities are often transient, or in the case of vending, located in areas that HCPH does not normally inspect (e.g. factories and office buildings).

In addition, HCPH conducts two inspections per year at any establishment that has an ODH/ODA-approved variance. Variances are only permitted in Risk Level 4 food service organizations or retail food establishments.



## **Field Staff Management, Development and Training**

Field staff include sanitarians and sanitarians-in-training. To qualify as a sanitarian-in-training in the state of Ohio, each prospective hire must have a science-based education background and meet the requirements of the State Board of Sanitarian Registration. The sanitarian-in-training is required by law to apply for a registered sanitarian license within five years, culminating with a written exam.

All sanitarians are required to complete a minimum of 18 hours of continuing education per year per Ohio Administrative Code. Sanitarians complete these requirements through training with agencies such as the ODA, ODH, and the Ohio Environmental Health Association (OEHA). In addition, HCPH works with sanitarians to complete continuing education focusing on laws and regulations, current food safety issues, technology updates and report documentation. Environmental Health management works with staff during quarterly reviews/audits to verify training and make sure that continuing education requirements are met.

In conjunction with state-mandated training and examination, the Environmental Health Division has developed and implemented a comprehensive program beginning with “on-boarding” new sanitarians and continuing through each team member’s quarterly review. New sanitarians “shadow” senior practitioners in the field for one month to observe the physical inspection process and learn to incorporate digital inspection tools. After the first month of shadowing, the new sanitarian performs inspection services under the direction of a supervisor. The supervisor assesses the readiness of the sanitarian to begin unsupervised routing. If progress is judged to be sufficient, the sanitarian is assigned a geographic inspection area. Since 2007, each step in this developmental program has been formalized, scheduled and consistently reviewed as part of the supervisor’s own review process.

Once territories are assigned, the sanitarian moves into the agency’s formal review and coaching system. This data-driven system drills down to individual, specific violation review, based on violation findings and analysis (Appendix B). Each inspector’s violation data is captured and compared across staff to factually uncover potential areas of development and further ensure standardization across staff.

Quarterly field audit reviews formalize the process through use of an Agency-developed form that standardizes the process and leads the supervisor and sanitarian through a productive discussion of observations and objective review of the inspection. When the field audit form (Appendix B) is coupled with individual violation review, the process completes a powerful, fact-based review from which the inspector comes away with specific and actionable process improvement steps. Thorough review of actual written violations provides supervisory staff the ability to work with individual inspectors on types of violations detected and reported. The system also allows supervisors to make mid-course adjustments to ensure that inspection standardization continues to improve every review period.

Finally, and on a lighter note, the Environmental Health Division is renowned throughout the Agency for its highly-anticipated breakfast meetings. These monthly meetings allow training and reviews to be enjoyable while imparting crucial information. In addition, the process fosters team functionality and cooperation, allowing less-experienced staff to develop skills learned through longer-tenured and/or supervisory staff.



## Hazardous Analysis and Critical Control Point (HACCP) Program

The Environmental Health Division's focus on *education over enforcement* is particularly evident in implementing the Hazardous Analysis and Critical Control Point (HACCP) program and Active Management Control principles. Education begins with staff and includes significant training on process standardization, as well as supervisor-specific training covering the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) risk factors and the audit process. The Agency also maintains a team of certified ServSafe instructors who are able to intervene with specific training requirements at any point in the process. Additionally, all staff receive regular training through the ODA, FDA and ODH, focusing on program requirements, additions and updates.

Training programs are based on a model of staff working with operators to develop and implement HACCP plans for inspected facilities. As an example, recent staff training has included plan development for facilities using Reduced Oxygen Packaging (ROP) as well as those using vinegar to eliminate time and temperature controls in sushi rice. As staff learn to manage the program from an operator's perspective, they are better able to work with those operators to develop and implement specific facility plans.

Staff have also participated in extensive training on conducting Critical Control Point Inspections using CDC risk factors and critical violation standards. The HCPH training model focuses on the entire flow of food process. Environmental Health management realized that the inspection process covers only a brief snapshot in time. In these high-risk food scenarios, it is crucial to inspect the entire flow of food to minimize risk. This training and inspection process serves our licensees by providing well-versed inspectors who are able to help them provide an extra level of protection to their customers.

The Environmental Health Division works very closely with operators to formulate and review plans prior to licensure. Facility plans include modules covering personal hygiene, supplier selection and specification, sanitation, pest control, equipment maintenance and facility design. HCPH also requires prospective licensees to attend an ODH Level 1 food safety class.

Efforts to educate prospective licensees include providing them with sample plans developed by the Environmental Health team (Appendix C). Sanitarians work closely with operators and their teams well in advance of the facility opening for business in order to customize plans to their specific operations. Plans are finalized and approved by a sanitarian prior to a facility opening.

During the standard inspection process, sanitarians focus on CDC risk factors and FDA public health interventions. Inspections focus closely on biological, chemical and physical hazards. Facilities falling outside inspection guidelines and posing a threat to public health are immediately closed and quickly moved into an administrative hearing process. This process then requires them to complete additional food safety training and maintain logs covering pertinent aspects of CDC risk factors. In maintaining the Agency's *education over enforcement* model, HCPH also adds a training component for facilities requiring administrative hearings, to ensure that proper sanitation techniques are ingrained with all facility staff.

For 2013, Environmental Health staff will attend FDA training on all HACCP processes. Finally, FDA standardization is part of the Ohio Governor's proposed budget for 2014-15.

## Quality Assurance Program

Prior to 2007, quality assurance for the food program consisted of random auditing of files and inspection verification performed by department supervisors. Inspection reports were handwritten with significant variance across the program. Inspection criteria grading lacked standardization.

Agency management, particularly in the Environmental Health Division, developed and implemented a technology-based system, standardizing criteria, language and reporting systems across all inspectors. March 2007 ushered in a new era of reporting for the Agency. Inspection programs moved to electronic format, implementing a total standardization of the process across the Agency. In addition, HCPH implemented a formal auditing program in 2012 to ensure that sanitarians achieved: inspection effectiveness and efficiency; enhanced customer service; logistical and process efficiency; enhanced knowledge of the regulatory environment; and of course, proper policy and procedure adherence. This new auditing process includes random, paper and coaching audits. Coaching and random audits are required once per quarter.

The initial auditing component of the program remained in effect until 2009. With two years of electronic data available and analyzed, it quickly became apparent that even greater efficiencies and standardization were within reach. Agency and Division management further refined the auditing component with an emphasis on even distribution in violation reporting and further standardization of reporting structure (Appendix B). The new process used CDC risk factors to guide reporting methodology and data collection with the ultimate goal of standardizing the violation and reporting process across all inspections.

Greater use of technology in the inspection and reporting process led to greater program improvements. Based on CDC risk factors, the Division worked to refine the process to a greater degree through:

- Documentation of the compliance status for each risk factor, followed by intervention through observation and inspection;
- Completion of crystal-clear, concise reporting to more accurately capture and reflect findings and observations;
- Standard and efficient interpretation of laws, regulations, policies and procedures;
- Standardized provisions for citing CDC risk factors and food code violations;
- Achieving on-site corrective action, whenever possible;
- Implementation of food safety interventions when required;
- And confirmation that the facility is assigned to the correct risk category and inspection frequency.

Adoption of these processes quickly resulted in even more improvement in auditing and standardization. Supervisors worked in the field a minimum of once per quarter with each inspector. As a result, the Division achieved significant process improvement (Appendix D), reducing inspector variation in critical violation rates by 20 percent.

Finally, the inspection program built-in allowances to conduct inspections for facilities whose peak operations occur outside of regular business hours (Appendix E). Through continuous quality improvement processes, the Division developed a supervisor on-call process to support after-hours inspection work by sanitarians. Expanded-hours inspections have allowed inspectors to reach more than 93 percent of after-hours food service facilities – an increase of nearly 20 percent over those reached prior to implementing the program. An additional benefit is that inspectors are better able to implement the *education over enforcement* theme by distributing educational materials and conducting training sessions for facility personnel working during peak hours.

## **Foodborne Illness Detection, Collection, Investigation and Response**

*Education over enforcement* and excellent customer service are hallmarks at HCPH. In the area of foodborne illness detection and remediation, speed is of the essence in identifying and isolating causes and/or agents. Implied same-day response has always been the norm at HCPH. However, in conjunction with program and process improvements implemented in 2007, standard operating procedures were executed to formalize response to foodborne illness complaints.

Investigation standards (Appendix F) detailed an immediate response to complaints. Cases falling outside of CDC-defined cases of two or more unrelated illnesses are investigated within one day of the complaint being registered. Inspection information is entered into the electronic inspection system portal, where it is analyzed and evaluated against current standards. Electronic information provides sanitarians quick, broad-based reference points to evaluate potential outbreaks across the entire service area. Of note, the same investigation standards are used across all facility classes in food service operation inspections.

Standard operating procedures worked to formalize the Environmental Health Division's relationship with the Disease Prevention and Epidemiology Divisions to coordinate response to suspected outbreaks.

Large outbreaks of shigellosis in daycare settings and cases of cryptosporidium in licensed public swimming pools prompted the creation of the Outbreak Management Team in 2009. This team – which operates like a veritable SWAT team for outbreaks and is designed to achieve the fastest-possible response – includes members of Environmental Health, Disease Prevention and Epidemiology. Environmental Health works as the investigative arm of the team while the Disease Prevention and Epidemiology Divisions work as the information gathering and data interpretation arms. Intensive training for the Outbreak Management Team, as well as creation of standard criteria for the team's implementation, took place at the team's formation. Today, the team drills annually, updates its procedures quarterly and completes local training based on the latest data and learning in the field.

While the Agency's Outbreak Management Team was being implemented, standard operating procedures were put in place to handle intake of complaints from food service facilities (Appendix G). Although regulations require response to food service complaints within five days, HCPH program guidelines dictate response within three. In addition, Agency guidelines call for response to all food illness complaints within 24 hours.

The Agency's Outbreak Management Team has been an overwhelming success since its inception. During the past four years, the team has had several opportunities to activate, remediate and evaluate under a variety of circumstances and disease conditions. Team members are confident in their roles while maintaining a complete understanding of team activation and standard guidelines. Since implementation, we have been praised multiple times for rapid response and evaluation of issues, while being "tested" under wide-ranging outbreak episodes. Electronic recording and sharing of information allows team members immediate access to cross-specialty reports, allowing the Agency to minimize community threats.

## Compliance and Enforcement Activities

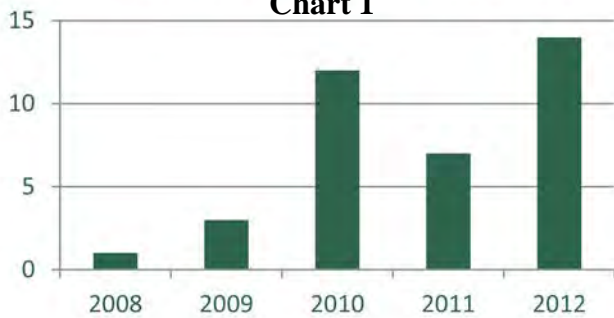
There are times when education efforts are unsuccessful and enforcement is necessary. In these instances, HCPH maintains detailed policies. All Sanitarians follow environmental guidelines (Appendix H) when using enforcement action to achieve compliance in a facility. Developed in 2008 and updated regularly, the guidelines detail: the number of violations a facility can accumulate before a follow-up inspection is required; when immediate facility closure is necessary; procedures for follow-up inspection to achieve compliance; and ultimately, license revocation standards.

The guidelines indicate a failing inspection if: the facility accumulates seven total violations or three or more critical violations; the sanitarian is unable to contact facility senior management (or, if upon contact, that individual does not have the appropriate food service knowledge to operate the facility); and/or the facility shows no improvement from the previous inspection.

The facility also fails an inspection and is asked to close if: necessary utilities (e.g., electric and hot water) are not present; necessary equipment (e.g., refrigeration) is not working; sewage back-up is present; water boil advisory is present; vector infestation is present; the facility is damaged by fire or natural disaster; and/or other threats or danger are observed by the sanitarian and confirmed by a supervisor.

### Pre Administrative Hearings 2008 - Present

Chart 1



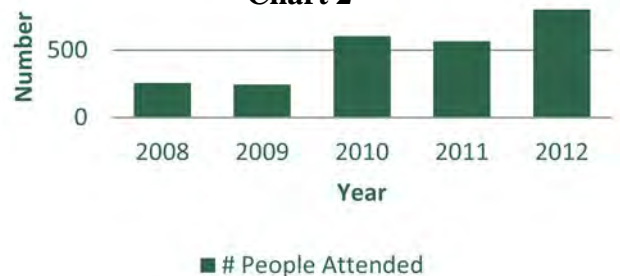
Staff follow a Standard Operating Guideline (SOG) that provides details on when a facility fails an inspection, when management is needed, and what critical violations constitute an immediate public health hazard. When a facility fails to meet minimum facility standards during a supervisory inspection, or is asked to close due to immediate health risks, a pre-administrative hearing (see Chart 1) is conducted to discuss corrective actions that must be taken by the facility. The facility is then put on a six-month probationary period with increased inspection frequency.

The Environmental Health Division develops, and the facility then agrees upon, performance standards through the duration of the probationary period. Additionally, all persons-in-charge must go through ODH Level 1 food safety training (see Chart 2), as defined by Ohio Administrative Code 3701-21-25. If the facility fails an inspection during its probationary period, an administrative hearing is scheduled. In this hearing, the facility's license may be suspended or revoked.

This process maximizes the *education over enforcement* model by providing flexibility to deal with immediate health hazards while facility management increases knowledge of safe practices and implements appropriate steps to address remaining issues (Appendix I). Through the use of the pre-administrative hearing process, the Division was able to reduce total violations by 43 percent and critical violations by 52 percent. While early in data collection and analysis, initial findings indicate that actual administrative hearings further reduce violations.

### Level 1 Food Safety Participants

Chart 2



## Fostering Communication

HCPH maintains a comprehensive, multi-faceted communication program for licensees, operators and the general public. The *education over enforcement* model under which we operate dictates that we use all available means to disseminate information that is easily accessed by constituents.

The Agency maintains a robust Web and social media presence. Users can access the Web for a plethora of information detailing virtually every public health hazard one might face in operating a food facility. File downloads covering individual conditions, threats and safe remediation tactics are available for reproduction and distribution. In addition, our Website has become a very popular stop for the consuming public, as they are able to access individual facility reports. Listing reports carries the dual benefit of providing a valuable public service with yet another component to encourage facility compliance. More than 25,000 inspection reports have been posted since the Agency implemented the system in 2007 and the report section remains the most visited area of the site.

HCPH continues to leverage its social media presence not only in the food service program, but Agency-wide. With more than 18,000 YouTube views in 2012, the Agency added a restaurant inspection video, which was among the most popular on the Agency's channel. Facebook and Twitter are also proving to be popular media. We had nearly 700 fans on Facebook and 4,000 "followers" on Twitter in 2012 and those numbers continue to grow. Both are used to communicate brief, timely and/or seasonal messages concerning food safety, food service safety, hand washing and a myriad of other topics and tips. Traditional media (i.e., print and broadcast) are also strategically implemented to share safe practices and recognize *Clean Kitchen Award* winners, making the award even more desirable among food service facilities.

In the area of direct educational communication, the Agency offers training opportunities for those in the food business. The ODH-approved Level 1 food safety training is a two-and-a-half hour course covering a range of food safety issues with a concentration on CDC risk factors. The course is conveniently offered on-site at food service facilities or in the Agency training center. The course, which has been offered by the Agency for more than 10 years, was approved by the ODH in 2010. Last year over 800 individuals participated. The ODH Level 2 food safety training is the ServSafe course that was implemented in 2010. Last year, 83 individuals from various facilities and counties from across Southwest Ohio completed the course. Courses are now offered in Spanish and Chinese. The Division also hired its first full-time Spanish-speaking inspector, who not only helps teach Spanish language courses, but has also worked to translate Division materials into Spanish. The Environmental Health Division also added free training for schools and special needs programs covering topics such as basic food safety and hand-washing, designed to instill safe habits in children during "teachable moments."

Also under the heading of direct educational communication is the Agency's assortment of printed materials (Appendix J). This avenue proved to be particularly valuable during festival and farmers' market seasons. Sanitarians interact with many unlicensed operations during these seasons, many of which are unaware of potential health risks to the public through these venues. Access to printed materials allows sanitarians to present information directly to operators, most of whom are independent and part-time.

Communication with related agencies is also crucial to Environmental Health service. The Agency maintains formal contact with partners and related service providers through conference calls; a sophisticated, state-wide telephone alert system; Web sharing; and syndication.



## **Resources Provided**

### **People**

Dedicated sanitarians are the core of the food safety inspection program. Armed with the ever-present *education over enforcement* model, the team is given background, opportunities to gain experience and the physical tools necessary to do their jobs. Team members meet the personality profile the Agency searches for – collaboration, facilitation, resourcefulness and a commitment to public health and education.

In addition to the Environmental Health team, human resources include the Disease Prevention and Epidemiology Division teams. These groups join together during large outbreak incidents to form the Outbreak Management Team. The team coordinates efforts to track foodborne illnesses and other environmental diseases. The team makes use of collective Divisional resources including data tracking, field investigation, sample collection, case interviewing and education.

Finally, human resources are provided with ongoing education and training opportunities. All personnel complete continuing education requirements as specified by state law. The Agency also makes available several training, education and career advancement opportunities on an annual basis, in addition to required continuing education.

### **Equipment**

With a total 2012 budget of \$814,250 for the Division, we were able to continue to issue each sanitarian multiple pieces of equipment for inspections, the most important of which are a thermometer and computer. As previously discussed, the Agency's early adoption and commitment to technology has given the sanitarian team an organizational standard that allows them to provide world-class service to customers and the public. The technology program continues to pay dividends in terms of fee reductions to licensees because of efficiency and to the public in annual budget savings from efficient technology. Sanitarians are also provided with standard, daily-use inspection equipment including flashlights, sanitizer test strips, light meters and food sample kits.

### **Customer Resources (Appendix K)**

Resources are available for our "customers," or licensees, as well. Extensive training, both centralized and on-site, is available for food handling personnel in the Agency's service area. Training is provided free for non-profits and schools. The Agency's Website provides a myriad of downloadable food safety sheets, access to online facility reports and extensive information on the regulatory environment. The Agency also maintains a complete library of quick-read materials for distribution to food handlers and preparers, keeping them up-to-date on the latest techniques and safety measures. Detailed mapping technology is available for constituents to hone in on specific community data. HCPH was the first health department in the state to accept online payments for various fees, including food licensing. A relatively new area for the Division is presenting food safety and sanitation techniques to the general public. The team launched a program to reach out to community groups, schools and other organizations interested in learning about food safety and the role of public health in protecting consumers.

## Measurement of Reduction of Foodborne Illness

HCPH's Food Program team members are most proud of the fact that since 2007, fewer than 10 facilities with documented cases of foodborne illness have occurred within our jurisdiction. While one case is too many, comparison to other health departments, both of similar size and outside of our peer group, indicates that our program is highly successful.

The success of the food program at HCPH can be largely attributed to early adoption and continued use of technology. Prior to 2007, the enforcement process was accomplished through pre-administrative hearings brought about by the continued poor inspection results of licensees. Technology has given the Food Program efficient tools to develop a series of inspections and remediation points from which to launch preventive programs. By incorporating the various "trigger" points generated through electronic reporting, teams can quickly respond to re-inspection needs and provide education to a facility before violations become health issues.

All food service facilities are tracked in the digital inspection program. Complaints or suspected foodborne illnesses registered against a facility are tracked through queries built into the digital system. The system collects, collates and disseminates the data by facility, number of people affected, symptomology, date of complaint, onset and recovery times and an unlimited number of additional, secondary criteria. Compilation of data reduces human error by ensuring that appropriate measures are taken with facilities in need of remediation.

The Disease Prevention Division at HCPH investigates reported illnesses through interviews and data collection. The Epidemiology Division compiles and analyzes the data, which is then disseminated to the Environmental Health Division (and the Outbreak Management Team, if necessary, as it relates to possible foodborne illnesses). This information is also tracked through the Agency's electronic inspection database.

Follow-up protocol is also key to reduction of foodborne illness. The epidemiology team follows up with individual cases to track symptom development, length of illness and other potential complications. The outbreak management team led by the EH Division and its inspectors performs consistent follow-up with the facility to ensure all specified remediation is implemented. And finally, Epidemiology issues a comprehensive report on the outbreak to summarize actions and provide a historical resource for future reference. The Outbreak Management team uses the report to de-brief the episode and share experience and learning.

In addition to Agency resources, confirmed, reportable diseases are tracked through the Ohio Disease Reporting System. This system is maintained by the ODH and data is compiled and re-distributed to local health departments. The system also includes data from hospital and lab reports. Data covering a larger area helps the team detect and define outbreaks earlier in the process, allowing for faster and more effective remediation.



## PART III: CHALLENGES, OBJECTIVES, MEASUREMENTS AND ACHIEVEMENTS

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### Challenge #1: Unlicensed/Exempt Food Service Operations

**Objective:** Develop voluntary safe food handling practices in exempt food service operations while implementing licensure procedures for *all* eligible food service operations.

**Situation:** Following a 2010 outbreak of Salmonellosis, ultimately traced back to pork served at a church festival, the HCPH Environmental Health Division began driving its food program deeper into the “festival” food business. Church festivals are largely exempt from food licensing requirements. While the source vendor did, in fact, require a license, the transitory nature of festival and market foods make license implementation and tracking difficult, at best.

Environmental Health launched a three-pronged approach to drive awareness and licensure more deeply into transitory food operations. The Division: created a database of all area festivals, farmers’ markets and fish fries; developed educational programs to deliver to vendors prior to, and at festival events; and, committed to contact all of the operations contained in the database to assess license requirements and status.

Additionally, simple handouts were developed by staff addressing very basic but critical food safety tips (Appendix J). Information includes safe holding temperatures, reheating, hand washing and glove usage. The printed materials explain specific regulations for licensure and public health requirements for operation, in addition to providing contact information for questions, concerns and inspections. The Division’s *education over enforcement* model was especially evident in this class of food service operation, as HCPH teams with the ODA to deliver training programs to potential licensees. The training programs have become a hallmark for reaching unlicensed and/or exempt operators throughout the State and staff are often called upon to teach training methods to other local health departments seeking greater compliance among this group of operators. In 2012, the successful effort by the food service program in reaching this class of operators was featured in an extensive investigative report by the local ABC affiliate. The report recognized the *education over enforcement* model and featured sanitarians working with operators to recognize and remediate issues.

**Measurement/Achievements:** Since the program was implemented, there have been no reported cases of foodborne illness traceable to any transitory food service operation. Licensure has increased 16 percent among temporary operators and 15 percent with mobile operators over a three year period (Appendix L).

In addition, the National Environmental Health Association (NEHA) recognized the Agency for its work in response to, and environmental and epidemiological investigation of, the church Salmonellosis incident. Agency staff presented at a well-attended “poster” session at the association’s national meeting in 2011 (Appendix M). HCPH is adding a formal farmers’ market training seminar beginning in spring 2013, just in time for festival/outdoor market season.

Finally, a Division supervisor’s paper on farmers’ markets food safety and the regulatory environment was accepted and subsequently published in the *Ohio Journal of Environmental Health*, and was ultimately recognized as the Publication of the Year for 2012 by the Southwest OEHA (Appendix N). The team will present its work with ODA and farmers’ markets at the annual OEHA conference in 2013.

## Challenge #2: Develop and Incorporate a Holistic Approach to Food Service

**Objective:** Determine appropriate functions for inclusion and incorporate entirety of Agency learning and experience into the food program.

**Situation:** HCPH maintains a wealth of programmatic and personnel experience across a wide array of public health functions. Agency management and Division directors, recognizing the leading role the food program plays in maintaining population health, organized into cross-functional “teams” to approach food service in a holistic manner.

**Measurements/Achievement:** As an example, food service inspections now include a complete review of the outside of a food service licensee’s facility. Not only do inspectors concentrate on food-related issues, but because of cross-functional cooperation, they are now looking at ways food service affects public health issues including: storm water management; solid waste disposal and recycling; disease prevention; and training and compliance.

A recent case involved food service inspectors collaborating with peers in the Plumbing Division, as well as with the region’s sewer district management, to work with a restaurant with grease trap issues. Cross-functional knowledge and cooperation provided for immediate solutions, followed by extensive training, enabling the restaurant to make the necessary corrections and get back into compliance as quickly as possible. Previous efforts may have caused business closure for a longer period while various agencies inspected and then implemented Agency-specific solutions, versus a holistic approach with all parties cooperating which resulted in safe and fast remediation.

The Agency’s recently-appointed director of epidemiology is a registered sanitarian. As part of the holistic approach to the food service program, the agency initially sought to bring a registered sanitarian to the epidemiology function. This has brought a new dimension of understanding to the Agency’s food service team and subsequent *education over enforcement* opportunities. The epidemiology function adds an invaluable perspective to food service, as the approach allows staff and operators to see the potential reach of health issues into the community and beyond.

Other cross-functional moves include moving a former health educator into an inspector role. This team approach has quickly paid dividends, both expected and unexpected. For instance, using the inspector’s background in education has resulted in several on-site training opportunities covering a variety of health approaches from facility sanitation to hand washing. Again, *education over enforcement* produces holistic and lasting results, as operators can access Agency expertise for sanitation and potential business-building consultation.

In the area of business-building, Environmental Health teamed up with the public information function to drive messaging about the Agency’s ***Clean Kitchen Award*** program. Public information re-designed award certificates and window-cling pieces to make them more attractive for display in winning facilities. A list of awarded facilities was added to the landing page on the Agency’s Website. This list has quickly become one of the most accessed pages on the Agency’s site. The Agency also issues regular news releases and develops earned media opportunities for award winners. This has quickly made the award much more coveted, as operators see it as a marketing tool (Appendix O). (See Challenge #3, p. 15, for ***Clean Kitchen Award*** growth.)

### Challenge #3: Recognition for Top Performing Facilities

**Objective:** Develop and implement a program to recognize and reward high-performing facilities, create implied competition among other facilities and provide recognized facilities with a valuable marketing tool.

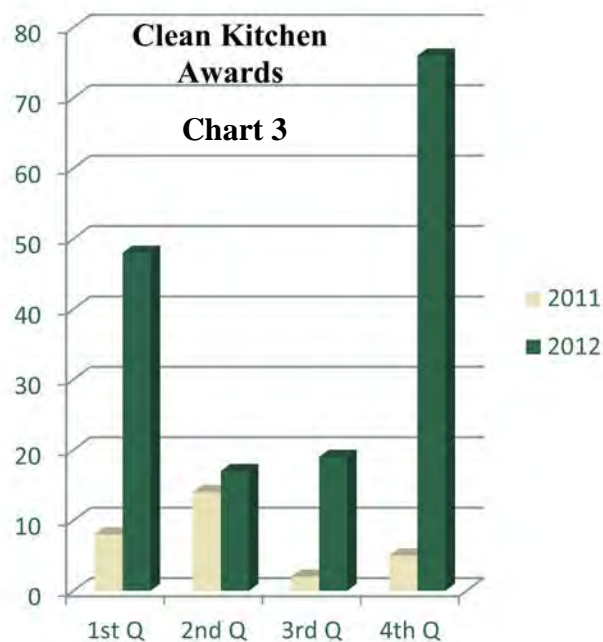
**Situation:** The Ohio Uniform Food Code operates on a pass/fail system with no delineation for levels of inspection performance. In fact, “grading” a facility’s adherence to code is outside Ohio law. While the code provides guidelines for inspection, it leaves facilities without a tool to promote consistent success in complying with code requirements. Operators often asked for implementation of a grading system that they could then use to tell their customers that the facility takes compliance seriously.

The Environmental Health team developed its highly popular and coveted *Clean Kitchen Award* in 2010.

Criteria for the award are:

- No critical violations;
- No repeat non-critical violations;
- Fewer than three non-critical violations upon inspection;
- One staff member with Level 2 food safety training (ServSafe), or two staff members with Level 1 food safety training.

The award is announced and continually promoted during the inspection and license renewal process. Recipients are recognized publicly at monthly Board of Health meetings and throughout the year on the Agency’s Website and social media sites. In addition, awarded facilities receive an attractive certificate that they are able to post and share with customers.



**Measurement/Achievement:** In 2011, the first full year for the *Clean Kitchen Award* program, 41 facilities applied for the award, with 33 of those receiving recognition (see Chart 3). Most of the facilities that applied in year one were nursing homes and schools; however the program is gaining significant momentum. In 2012, the second full year for the program, 196 facilities applied for the award, with 160 receiving recognition. In addition, the majority of applications are now coming from commercial establishments eager to leverage the recognition with their customers.

In addition to the award, each Clean Kitchen facility receives a window cling (Appendix O) that includes a QR code so that the public can quickly view the recognition online using a mobile device with a QR code reader. Facilities are also given a graphic to include on their Website that drives traffic to our Clean Kitchen page and Food Safety pamphlets (Appendix J). Our [Clean Kitchen video](#) and local television coverage of one of our [Clean Kitchen Winners](#) may be found in Appendix P.

We also recognized a facility that, while not a Clean Kitchen winner, did achieve tremendous improvement after completing our ODH Level 1 food safety training, further reinforcing our mantra of *education over enforcement*.

## PART IV: PROGRAM LONGEVITY

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The Hamilton County Health Commissioner consistently reminds staff that “complacency is always our worst enemy.” At any given time, there is a task force operating within the Agency taking a detailed look at various aspects of programming and services. The charge to the task force is to look for ways to eliminate inefficiencies and redundancies while implementing simplicity and cost-savings, where applicable, to facilities served. Areas under constant scrutiny with an eye toward enhancement include the following items.

**Technology:** As early-adopters and implementers of technological advances, HCPH continually looks for ways to incorporate technology into its processes. Technology is evaluated based on increased transparency to constituents and increased efficiency resulting in reduced costs for those we serve. The next horizon is in the area of real-time communication – that is, reports that are “live” and delivered to public vehicles as they are completed. In addition, the Agency is working to further integrate mapping and graphic information technology systems into such areas as post-disaster inspection and territory efficiency initiatives (Appendix Q).

**Recognition Programs:** The Agency’s *Clean Kitchen Award* is becoming increasingly popular. It has quickly become evident that food service facilities use the award as a marketing tool and are willing to compete to receive recognition. The Division’s future plans for the award include increasing public recognition through regional publicity and public relations programs executed through the Agency’s public information function. With increased recognition, the award will become more coveted over time and cause additional facilities to enter the program. The overall benefit to the County and its residents will be evidenced in even more compliance with food service regulations. The Agency is convinced that the program is a “winner” and is exploring ways to drive recognition programs into other service areas.

**Training:** HCPH is committed to providing training for sanitarians and other staff beyond that which is required by law, all under the *education over enforcement* theme. We look for training opportunities in: customer service; software applications; advanced disease control and prevention; regulatory changes; CDC, FDA, USDA and other Agency programs; and management skills for supervisory staff. Online and self-paced learning will be an ongoing initiative. Plans for 2014-15 at the state and regional levels call for FDA certification for sanitarians, which the Agency will implement immediately upon approval.

**Financial Management:** Responsible stewardship of public and fee-based dollars is of primary importance at HCPH. The Agency will continue to explore innovation, efficiency and streamlining of service offerings to provide excellent value to those we serve.

Finally, the HCPH team looks for ways to support the overall public health function. While it may be cliché, there truly are no “sacred cows” in Agency processes. The team is constantly challenged to live up to the Agency’s mission and vision statements and given clear directives to make changes that positively affect customer experience. Management support for customer service through careful stewardship of public and fee dollars is of primary importance and this stance is reflected in the Agency’s consistent evolution and positive results.

## PART V: CONTACT INFORMATION AND PERMISSION

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### Contact

**Health Commissioner:** Tim Ingram, M.S., Health Commissioner  
**Entry Submitted By:** Jeremy Hessel, R.S., Director, Environmental Health  
**Organization:** Hamilton County Public Health  
**Street Address:** 250 William Howard Taft Road  
**City:** Cincinnati  
**State:** Ohio  
**Zip Code:** 45219  
**Country:** United States of America  
**Phone:** (513) 946-7834  
**E-mail:** jeremy.hessel@hamilton-co.org  
**Website:** www.HCPH.org

### Permission

HCPH grants permission to the Foodservice Packaging Institute to use this entry on its Website, located at [www.fpi.org](http://www.fpi.org), should it be selected as a winning entry.

### Contributors

Christy Cauley, M.Ed., Electronic Communications Specialist  
Jeremy Hessel, R.S., Director, Environmental Health  
Tim Ingram, M.S., Health Commissioner  
Greg Kesterman, R.S., Assistant Health Commissioner  
Scott Puthoff, R.S., Supervisor, Environmental Health  
Mike Samet, Public Information Officer  
Tucker Stone, R.S., Supervisor, Environmental Health

### Acknowledgment

With great appreciation to the Environmental Health staff for their contributions to the Food Safety Program.

Hamilton County Public Health  
Letters of Support



HAMILTON COUNTY  
**PUBLIC HEALTH**



# OHIO DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

246 North High Street  
Columbus, Ohio 43215

614/466-3543  
www.odh.ohio.gov

John R. Kasich / Governor

Theodore E. Wymyslo, M.D. / Director of Health

FEB 05 2013

To whom it may concern:

Please find this letter in support of the Hamilton County Public Health submission for the 2013 Samuel J. Crumbine Consumer Protection Award.

Hamilton County Public Health is a leader in Ohio for efficiency, especially as it relates to cost control. The agency's embrace of technology allows them to serve as a model for other LHDs in the state. Its innovative programming is emulated throughout the state. For example, we are closely following the agency's successful and rapidly-growing *Clean Kitchen Award* program. As operators embrace the award as a marketing tool, we would like to see similar programs activated state-wide. In addition, Hamilton County Public Health has initiated an electronic communications program for the jurisdictions it serves. While it covers a wide-variety of topics in addition to food programming, we have featured this vehicle in state-wide communications as a model for other districts to adopt.

The agency's mantra of *education over enforcement* serves its operators and subsequently, its constituents well. Hamilton County Public Health maintains extensive formal and informal, on-site training programs, often working with operators to troubleshoot and eliminate issues before they become reportable problems. We receive several commendations for Hamilton County's program each year.

The Ohio Department of Health is pleased to recommend Hamilton County Public Health for this prestigious award.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Ted Wymyslo, MD  
Director of Health





# Goodwill

Ohio Valley Goodwill Industries  
EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING CENTER

February 25, 2013

The Crumbine Award  
Foodservice Packaging Institute  
201 Park Washington Court  
Falls Church, VA 22046

To Whom It May Concern:

Please accept this letter as an endorsement of Hamilton County Public Health's application for the Samuel J. Crumbine Award for Excellence in Food Protection at the Local Level.

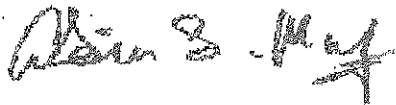
Ohio Valley Goodwill serves the Greater Cincinnati Community by providing training service program to adults with disabilities. The clients we serve have a range of disabilities which include physical limitations, mental health challenges as well as cognitive deficits. The Food Service Training Program endeavors to provide skills, at a variety of levels, to prepare individuals for competitive work in a community setting.

The program offers experiences in a "real world" environment, providing work tryouts and training in a full service cafeteria which provides three hot meals a day to staff, clients and the residents in our dormitory for homeless veterans. Hamilton County Public Health (HCPH) issues our license for operation and of course, conducts routine inspections of the facility. This is to be expected of any public health organization.

However, HCPH has shown a commitment to our mission and programs by providing onsite food handler training for our clients, enabling them to acquire Food Handler certification, prior to entering a job search. With this certification, our clients often have a leg up over their many competitors for jobs in the food service community. Not only is the convenience of the onsite training a boon to our students, ADA accommodations (if required) have been made. Students with hearing impairments have access to interpreters, students with reading difficulties have had the test administered orally, etc. In addition, the sanitarian conducting the training has demonstrated an abundance of patience with our less able clients, answering questions repeatedly, until the concept is grasped. She has also introduced some hands on training to teach proper hand washing techniques, etc.

Based on the example set by HCPH for providing training to ALL who seek it, Ohio Valley Goodwill supports Hamilton County Public Health's candidacy for the Crumbine Award.

Thank you for your consideration,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Alison McElfresh". The signature is written in a cursive, somewhat stylized font.

Alison McElfresh  
Food Service Manager/Chef  
Food Service Training  
Ohio Valley Goodwill

Ohio Valley Goodwill Industries  
10600 Springfield Pike  
Cincinnati, OH 45215  
513-77104800 x 6280



**RAY JOHNSON, Director**  
7550 Forest Road, Cincinnati, Ohio 45255

***Office of Business Operations***  
513-231-3600

February 7, 2013

Hamilton County General Health District  
250 William Howard Taft Road  
2<sup>nd</sup> Floor  
Cincinnati, Ohio 45219

**Re: Recommendation**

To Whom It May Concern:

It is with a great deal of confidence that we offer this letter of recommendation on behalf of the Hamilton County General Health District. We value the partnership we have developed over the years and the positive impact that it has had on the students and staff of the Forest Hills School District. While everyone at the Health District has been a pleasure to work with, I would like to particularly compliment Tucker Stone, Eric Kepf, Craig Davidson, Ted Folger and Kathy Lordo.

We appreciate the time and effort that has gone into the inspections of our schools and the positive impact they have on the learning environment for our students and staff. We also greatly appreciate the partnership we have developed in many other areas;

- Food handling training for our kitchen staff
- Participation in training seminars for our custodial and maintenance staff
- Being a resource as we explore recycling options
- H1N1 vaccinations
- HealthWatch
- Bedbugs
- Pool safety and maintenance
- Food safety and after school programs
- Healthwatch

The above list falls short of listing all of the areas from which we have drawn on the resources and input of the Health District. It simply is to show the wide range of areas we have derived a positive experience.

In closing, I would be glad to provide any input on any specifics as it relates to our outstanding relationship with the district.

Respectfully,

Ray Johnson  
Director of Business Operations

Tia Straus  
Supervisor, Food Service





*Ellenbee Leggett*

RECEIVED

JAN 11 2013

3765 PORT UNION ROAD  
P.O. BOX 8025  
FAIRFIELD, OHIO 45014-8025  
513-874-3200  
800-536-1613  
FAX 513-874-3323

January 8, 2013

The Crumbine Award  
Foodservice Packaging Institute  
Falls Church, Va, 22046

Re: Excellence in Food Protection at the Local Level

Dear Crumbine Award committee:

Hamilton County Public Health has a long history of providing excellent public health at the local level. I have had interactions with Hamilton County Public Health (HCPH) since 2007. More in depth relationships were developed as HCPH began to assist our customers in food safety practices. The health professionals at HCPH developed a strong public advocacy role, one that was further displayed during public speaking events to ensure that local food service providers have a great understanding of sanitation regulations. HCPH put the public first. HCPH is an open, transparent model of food protection at the local level, and is an ideal candidate for the Crumbine Award.

Sincerely,

*Cindy Merdinger Yocum, B.S., D.T.R.; CDM*

Cindy Merdinger Yocum, B.S.; D.T.R.; CDM  
Healthcare Specialist  
Ellenbee Leggett Inc



WRIGHT STATE  
UNIVERSITY

February 5, 2013

**Master of Public Health Program**

Boonshoft School of Medicine  
Center for Global Health  
3123 Research Blvd., Suite 200  
Kettering, OH 45420-4006  
(937) 258-5555  
FAX (937) 258-5544  
med.wright.edu/mph

Letter of Recommendation: Samuel J. Crumbine Consumer Protection Award

To Whom It May Concern:

I write to strongly urge you to present the prestigious Samuel J. Crumbine Consumer Protection Award to Hamilton County Public Health (HCPH) for their innovative, modern, and evidence-based food defense systems. As the Workforce Development Director of the Wright State University Master of Public Health Program, I like to emphasize the importance of the translation and integration of public health systems research and associated theory into *real* public health practice. It is the “doing,” not just the “knowing,” that protects the lives of the public every day. The business of public health, specifically food protection, is one of the most noble of activities: I can think of nothing more singularly important to the health of the community. And the Hamilton County Public Health’s Environmental Health Food Safety Program is the best of the best!

*Education over Enforcement!* The HCPH’s food safety mantra has been a philosophical guide as the program has evolved for nearly two decades. From the internally-designed Food Safety Advocate Training Program, to the full service ServSafe Food Safety Educational Programs, HCPH Sanitarians know that when the public becomes empowered with education, the public will be responsible.

The longstanding, Digital Inspection Program, one of the first to be fully functional in the State of Ohio, not only provides a “transparent” mechanism for public observation of inspection activity, but it more importantly affords managers the opportunity to gauge the performance and efficiencies of policy, procedure, and the individual inspector. As CDC risk factors were integrated into the HCPH quality assurance/auditing program, inspector and program standardization (shining goals of all solid food safety programs) were simultaneously realized. I refer to HCPH as a “gold standard” in class and to our students on a regular basis.

As is perhaps best demonstrated by HCPH’s hiring of a WSU MPH Program graduate, I look forward to the continuation of our public health systems involvement long into the future. Therefore, I reiterate my unqualified and enthusiastic support of Hamilton County Public Health for the Samuel J. Crumbine Consumer Protection Award. I welcome any questions that you may have for me.

Sincerely,

Christopher Eddy, M.P.H., REHS, RS  
Director of Placement and Workforce Development



Tom Gregory  
President  
Montgomery Inn  
9440 Montgomery Road,  
Montgomery, OH 45242  
513.791.3482  
TomGregory@montgomeryinn.com

RE: Hamilton County Public Health Department

To whom it may concern,

I just wanted to drop you a note about our Health inspections as well as our inspector.

It just gets better and better. We just had our 62nd year in business in November and I appreciate your team of professionals more each visit. Robert McDaniels was here and did an inspection on 2/21/13. It is a pleasure to watch him work with our Kitchen manager as well as staff. He is a great communicator, teacher and friend to our business.

The Montgomery Inn would not be as successful without a lot of working parts. The Hamilton County Health Department is one of those parts. I commend you and the entire staff at the health department for the tremendous job you do.

We are lucky to have such a tremendous support system.

Tom Gregory  
President



## SOUTHWEST LOCAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

230 South Elm Street Harrison, Ohio 45030 (513) 367-4139 Fax (513) 367-2287

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January 16, 2013

Letter of Recommendation: Samuel J Crumbine Consumer Protection Award

To Whom It May Concern:

Hamilton County Public Health has an impressive history assisting in carrying out public health duties to their local health district. As Food Service Director for two districts (10 schools), I can think of nothing more important & essential than the health of our staff and students by ensuring school food service safety. School inspections, communicable disease prevention/reporting, and sanitation concerns are essential issues to ensure the smooth operation of a school kitchen. I write to recommend you present the Samuel J. Crumbine Consumer Protection Award to Hamilton County Public Health for their innovative technology, communication, & education systems.

HCPH works with us to help protect school health and our surrounding environment. By providing education, inspections, and one-on-one interactions, HCPH assures our schools are safe from disease, injury, and contamination. They provide us with ample information to improve school health and prevent any future issues from arising. They are always willing to answer our questions and make themselves available for in-house free training for our staff.

I appreciate the prompt, reliable, and professional service as well as the caring and responsible staff of HCPH. I look forward to the continuation of my relationship with HCPH and therefore reiterate my recommendation for the Samuel J. Crumbine Consumer Protection Award.

Sincerely,

Bonnie Berkemeyer  
Southwest Local Schools Food Service Director  
230 S Elm  
Harrison, OH 45030  
(513)-367-4139





# NORTHWEST LOCAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

3310 Compton Road, Cincinnati, Ohio 45251-2508 513-522-6700 FAX: 513-385-3769

*Cheryl L. Romans  
Supervisor of Food Services*

January 18, 2013

Hamilton County Public Health  
250 William Howard Taft Road, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor  
Cincinnati, Ohio 45219

Re: Recommendation for The Crumbine Award

I have been the Food Services Supervisor at Northwest Local Schools for twenty one years. Since the district is large, extending into three townships of Hamilton County, I have had contact and worked with numerous HCPH sanitarians. During my tenure, the department has consistently done an outstanding job of monitoring and assuring the health and safety of our 9,500 students in fourteen schools. The sanitarians are extremely thorough and professional in their inspections. They are helpful to my staff in pointing out any questionable issues and demonstrate a thorough knowledge of food safety, but are also very frequently complimentary and supportive of our efforts. Food handling and food safety is critical in all food service entities, but especially in schools, where our customers are so young and vulnerable to disease.

As the supervisor of more than one hundred employees, it is a challenge to assure that each of them is aware of the rules of food safety. The Hamilton County Public Health sanitarians focus strongly on education and prevention and have made this a much easier task for me. As an example, Scott Puthoff always makes himself available to conduct classes and comes to my district annually to provide training to my staff members, and does an outstanding job.

Because of the above mentioned reasons, with pleasure and enthusiasm I highly recommend that Hamilton County Public Health receive the prestigious Crumbine Award, which it so richly deserves. Please feel free to contact me with any questions you might have. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Cheryl L. Romans, M.S., L.D.



# Roger Bacon High School

*Committed to the Mission of Franciscan Education*

---

January 23, 2013

To Whom It May Concern,

My name is Cheryl Schnell and I teach Family and Consumer Science at Roger Bacon High School. During a recent staff meeting another instructor shared she had had a terrific presentation from a Board of Health inspector that taught food handling practices to her students learning about foods and cooking. So I called to see if he could come to my class as well.

I LOVE having the community work with the school to bring real life situations to students that frequently aren't as in touch with reality as they would like to think! I enjoyed having Tucker Stone visit; he was great with the students and offered many pictures and stories of situations in restaurants. He also offered information about the various functions of his job with wonderful insights and explanations. It made students more aware of poor, good and great practices of preparation, handling and storage of foods, as well as proper hygiene practices. It was important they understand their role within a kitchen and when working with food to control illness and unsafe procedures at school, home and in a working restaurant business.

Mr. Stone was very confident and professional in his delivery, engaging students with conversation, questions and encouraging comments from them. I truly believe he has one young man convinced he too should become an inspector because of his astute observations and questions. When the community comes into the classroom to share their expertise, students have everything to gain about possible careers and employment work ethics. They see the power of a great presentation as it is role modeled for them to gain current and future skills.

The presentation concluded with a quick review and an assessment of the information shared. While not all students "Aced" the test, there was a deeper understanding of the material and a reference point from the pictures on the PowerPoint, and in our own classroom conversation. Many young adults have jobs in restaurants and feel small in their role, but with someone from the Board of Health taking their time to share information; it brings their job and importance to a much higher standard. I look forward to a continuing partnership with the Board of Health and so much at stake with students and the community.

Sincerely,

Cheryl Schnell