



**Ashtabula  
Foundation**  
FOR THE BETTERMENT OF ASHTABULA COUNTY SINCE 1922

**100 Years  
and Growing!**

## The covid collaboration

When the pandemic crisis called for action, the Ashtabula Foundation answered.

“The Foundation Board of Directors acted quickly,” then-Board President Joe Misinec Jr. recalled. “We funneled our resources into human resources for Ashtabula County residents. Our prime concern was to address the need of food, shelter and healthcare.”

“We were facing many unknowns with the onset of the Corona virus,” Foundation Director Cheryle Chiaramonte remembered. “The Foundation paused the normal grant cycles to focus on human service needs.”

In a significant move that has left a positive impact, the Foundation formed the Covid 19 Task Force with the area’s hospitals, the Red Cross, food pantries, service agencies and caregivers. “We were interested in knowing how we could be of assistance by listening to the organizations directly,” Chiaramonte said. “We learned valuable information on ways to support each other and with funding our hospitals, food resources, human services agencies and to connect people to where and how to receive help.”

Chiaramonte chairs the Task Force and facilitated early weekly meetings of Foundation directors and non-profit organization leaders as they shared ideas and updated one another on projected needs. “We continue to meet quarterly to discuss on-going human services concerns and projects,” she said.

“Collaboration soon led to co-operating among many agencies to quickly evolve and make changes to better serve the community,” Misinec explained. “As a result, nearly 50 meetings took place in 2020.

“At the close of 2020 we gifted \$213,000 in Covid-19 Relief Funds to 23 human services, nonprofit organizations in Ashtabula County,” Misinec wrote in the Foundation’s 2020 Annual Report. “Of that, more than \$45,000 was provided to the Country Neighbor program who oversees the 18 food pantries throughout the county. The ‘Farmers to Families’ food program became a great resource for fresh food amid the crisis.”

The Farmers to Families program provided 368,136 pounds of fresh produce, dairy products and meat to 22,600 people, 27 percent of Ashtabula County’s population, the Foundation reported.

The Foundation’s current president, Carolyn Turk, recently said her experience with the organization has had a number of special “moments” and among them has been experiencing, “the ability to collaborate among the social service agencies to provide life necessities to county residents during the pandemic.”

Foundation directors, facilitated by Chiaramonte, and the leaders of major Human Service organizations in the county collaborated to conduct food distributions, to stock food pantries, to prepare and deliver thousands of meals, to pay utilities, to provide holiday meals and gifts to families, and much more, Turk said.

Officials of non-profit organizations serving on the Task Force include Judith Barris and Carmen Kuula of Ashtabula County Community Action Agency, Jill Valentic of Catholic Charities, Barb Klingensmith of Country Neighbor, Kristen Kitchen of United Way, and Denise DiDonato of University Hospitals of Conneaut and Geneva. Early Task Force meetings also included Foundation Director Roger Corlett, officials of Ashtabula County Medical Center and the N.E. Ohio (Ashtabula County) Chapter of the Red Cross.

In addition to Chiaramonte, Misinec and Turk, Foundation Director J.T. Kanicki and Associate Director Kelley Katon serve on the Task Force.