

GREATER MEDINA CHAMBER WINS GRASSROOTS ADVOCACY AWARD

By Chris Brock, Manager, Grassroots Advocacy

Representing the voice of business, local chambers have an opportunity to help employers create jobs, bring new investment to their region while encouraging lawmakers to create a business friendly environment. But grassroots advocacy can be daunting and overwhelming. That is why the Ohio Chamber created the Chamber Action Alliance (CAA) program in 2007.

Each year, the most active chamber in the CAA program is recognized for its hard work and dedication to the business community. This year, the Greater Medina Chamber of Commerce received the *Leadership in Grassroots Advocacy Award* and was honored during the 2010 Ohio Chamber of Commerce Chamber Day at the Capital program. Ohio State Senator Bob Gibbs (R-Lakeville), House Minority Leader William Batchelder (R-Medina) and State Representative John Hall (R-Killbuck) also presented commendations to this outstanding local chamber.

Led by its President Debra Lynn-Schmitz, the Greater Medina Chamber has tirelessly answered the call of businesses within the community, across the state and the country. They have actively supported those issues that benefit employers, employees and their community, while opposing those that put jobs and our economy in harm's way.

Since being formed in 2007, the CAA program is designed to improve the partnership between local chambers of commerce and the Ohio Chamber. Currently, there are 78 local chambers members in the program. Those chambers represent more than 37,000 employers in Ohio and more than 825,000 employees. Such a strong network of grassroots advocates is having a significant impact on the legislative process.

In fact, in the last 12 months, members of the CAA program helped generate more than 13,000 messages to elected officials regarding a number of issues. On the issue of national health care reform alone, 10,600 messages were sent to Ohio members of Congress. CAA participants have met with lawmakers on a number of issues and traveled to D.C. to lobby members of Congress regarding health care reform. Nearly 100 chambers have taken strong positions on a number of important ballot issues since the fall of 2009. As the CAA continues to grow, employers and employees will have a stronger voice at the table.

With a more active CAA program, we hope more chambers will participate in grassroots efforts in hopes of winning next year's award. But there should be even more motivation than just points to get engaged. In today's economy, employers and employees need to be in the room as decisions are made. Fortunately, participating in the CAA can help get you through the door.