

# Ty Ankrom's Here's What I Think ...

I am a proud native and lifetime resident of Pickaway County.



But I'm also proud that my career and civic duties have given me the opportunity to go outside the county to meet people who have had vastly different experiences than I have.

As president-elect for Circleville Rotary, I had the privilege of visiting Australia in 2003 and through Rotary's Global Studies Exchange I've had the pleasure of meeting people from all over the world.

Through these experiences, I've appreciated that regardless of our differences – looks, religions, backgrounds – we all are concerned with wanting the same things.

We all want to have our views be respected, good health for our families and ourselves, and to enjoy a fulfilled life.

Years ago, before the advent of technology that created e-mail, young people were encouraged to have pen pals, which provided them with friends outside of their community.

This allowed them to meet people with different backgrounds, cultures and experiences.

Now, young people can take part in the pen pal experience thanks to that technology that can connect us with the press of a button.

A recent blog by Kate Stoltzfus on Education Week's Web site was about the benefits of online pen pals for students.

Stoltzfus cited PenPal Schools, which provides "online courses about history, civics, environmental issues and politics. Students can explore videos and information on a topic before joining several others for a question-prompted discussion of their perspectives."

The founder and CEO of PenPal Schools said the program — which charges \$25 for a single course — works to promote global citizenship. Young people from different countries are connected during a six-week program. But, he said, connecting students from different parts of the United States is a



Feb. 10, 2017

benefit, too.

With technology, teachers have the choice of pursuing an online pen pal project or going with the paper-and-pencil method.

At ePals.com — a free service — teachers can connect with another teacher in the United States or another country to create a classroom project.

But teachers can create a pen pal project on their own by reaching out to a teacher at a school in a nearby city or state.

There is so much we can learn from each other in so many ways, whether we are meeting in person, on paper or online. It can start by opening a notepad or a Word document.

*Ty Ankrom is the superintendent of the Pickaway County Educational Service Center. He can be reached at [ty.ankrom@pickawayesc.org](mailto:ty.ankrom@pickawayesc.org).*