

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

When former Pickaway County Commissioner Ula Jean Metzler recognized that the county's college-attendance rate was much lower than surrounding counties, she wanted to do something about it.



More than 15 years later, her vision is going strong as Pickaway WORKS (World of Real Knowledge and Skills) continues to provide county students with opportunities after high school.

Created in 2006 as Pickaway HELPS, Executive Director Christy Mills said the organization changed its name in 2017 when its scope expanded.

"We grew from a traditional college-access program to a more comprehensive focus on college and career readiness," Christy said, emphasizing the focus on careers.

"There truly is something for everyone," she said. "Today's economy provides so many entry points into well-paying, in-demand careers and we want to make sure Pickaway County students are prepared to take advantage of these opportunities and be successful."

While college-readiness was the initial goal, over the years, other facets have been added. Pickaway WORKS has six initiatives to help better connect students with the world of work: educator business tours; thinking partnerships; business showcase videos; guest speaker events; mock interviews and boot camps; and job shadowing and internships.

The overall goal, Christy said, is to ensure that high school graduates in the county are aware of local career opportunities and have had the opportunity to gain skills and knowledge necessary to be successful in the career path of their choice.

"Specifically, we want to expand and increase experiences for students, such as job shadowing, internships and tours. These real-work connections help better prepare them to be successful in their career," Christy said.

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Christy Mills, executive director of Pickaway WORKS, spoke to members of the Sunrise Rotary club recently about the college- and career-readiness organization.

Christy said an element that has been most successful for the program is building partnerships with businesses and bridging the gap between schools and local businesses.

"We know the more experiences and connections students have with the real world of work, the better prepared they are for success in a career."

It is those partnerships with Pickaway County businesses, organizations, the four county school districts, the ESC and the Pickaway County Board of Commissioners that give Christy the greatest sense of pride.

"Our model of the long term buy-in and support of all Pickaway County school districts and our county commissioners is unique in the state. We also are proud to have developed a growing database of business and community partners and volunteers that make our initiatives possible," she said.

For more information about Pickaway WORKS, go to <https://pickawayworks.org/>.

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