



The Union County Foundation

# LEADERSHIP INITIATIVE

Celebrating & Cultivating the Things that Make Union County Great

## THE IMPORTANCE OF QUALITY SCHOOLS

As our children kickoff a new school year, we should pause to consider the question, do our schools really impact our quality of life in Union County?

The answer is a resounding, undeniable 'yes!'

Sure 'Football Friday Nights' bring some heated, friendly banter over coffee many mornings at our local coffee shops. However, the effect of our schools on our communities goes much deeper.

We all feel the impact of what happens in the classroom. High quality schools can mean more highly skilled workers, a stronger business climate with higher wages, and a stronger tax base that can mean higher public services at lower cost for all of us. Good schools mean increased demand for our homes.

Just ask your friends in southern Ohio or in Cleveland. They will likely tell what the lack of great schools has cost them. When kids don't get a quality education, everyone suffers.

We are blessed with exceptional schools. Recently the State of Ohio passed out "grade cards" for school districts. Every school system in Union County got exceptional marks. If there were such a thing as a state Honor Roll, then our schools would be near the top. Our students, teachers, and administrators should be congratulated, but so should the students' parents, neighbors and the community itself.

As Marysville Schools Superintendent Larry Zimmerman wrote last year, "**The research is very clear...parental and community involvement is crucial to the health and well-being of a child.**" He added, "Parental involvement in children's education allows kids to perform better in school, and navigate more easily some of the challenges of growing up."

Decades of research show that when parents, relatives, and adults are involved students have:

- Higher grades, test scores, and graduation rates.
- Better school attendance
- Better self-esteem, and increased motivation
- Lower rates of school discipline
- Decreased drug/alcohol use

Research further shows that the more intensely parents are involved and stay involved at all levels of education, the more beneficial the achievement effect for their children. So the benefit of parental involvement goes much further than the schoolhouse. It impacts the entire community.

We encourage you to talk to the youngsters you see at church, at the store, or in your neighborhood. Consider volunteering at schools and serving as a mentor. Your own kids and the children in your neighborhood are counting on you as they approach an ever-changing, complex world. Plus, it is just plain fun to be involved with them! Go ahead. Give it a try. Together we can impact not only the lives of our children, but also positively influence the quality of life we all share.  
(October 7, 2011)