

Delaware County Railroad Crossing Task Force

“Dedicated to Improving the Safety of Railroad Crossings in Delaware County.”

NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Charles Sheets, retiring chairman of the Delaware County Railroad Crossing Task Force, and his wife Betty stand near the Buttermilk Hill Road railroad crossing gates with one of their antique cars, a 1947 Chevrolet.

DELAWARE, Oh., Oct. 23, 2008 – The retiring leader of the Delaware County Railroad Crossing Task Force would like to see more citizens get active to improve rail crossing safety.

Charles Sheets, 82, is stepping down from the task force which he has led since it first elected officers in 1998. During Sheets’ chairmanship, more than \$2 million has been invested in additional gates, warning lights, and other safety improvements at rail crossings in Delaware County.

“Our goal has been to get active warning devices for motorists at every public grade crossing in Delaware County. I hope some younger citizens step up and work with this task force to reach that goal, and also support our Operation Lifesaver driver-education efforts,” Sheets said.

Sheets, a retired farmer and former Oxford Township trustee, is stepping down to spend more time with his family and his collection of antique cars and tractors. He is a Delaware County native, a 1944 graduate of Brown School, and an Army veteran of World War II. He and his wife, Betty, recently celebrated their 57th wedding anniversary.

The Railroad Crossing Task Force was formed in the 1990s to improve safety at local rail crossings, few of which had seen major safety upgrades for years. Tangible safety benefits resulted, starting in 2001 with the installation of lights and gates on the CSX Railroad's Buttermilk Hill Road crossing near Buckeye Valley High School. Sheets helped secure funding from the Angels on Track Foundation for those gates.

Over the next three years, more than \$2 million in safety improvements were made to 10 crossings along the CSX corridor in western Delaware County: ten additional vehicle gates, five new pedestrian gates, and one road realignment to eliminate a crossing. Now every public crossing over those tracks in Delaware County is guarded with gates and warning lights. The Task Force, operating under the auspices of Delaware County Engineer Chris Bauserman, helped to coordinate assistance from the Delaware County Commissioners, the cities of Delaware and Powell, CSX, the Ohio Rail Development Commission, the Public Utilities Commission of Ohio, and the Operation Lifesaver rail safety education program.

Task Force members make frequent Operation Lifesaver safety presentations to school and community groups. They have instructed thousands of Delaware County children on the dangers of railroad tracks and trains, and urge everyone approaching a railroad crossing to always "Look, listen, and live!"

The Railroad Crossing Task Force meets on the third Wednesday of each month at 1:30 p.m. in the County Engineer's Office, 50 Channing St., Delaware. To request an Operation Lifesaver presentation or get more information, phone Co-Chairman Stan Haas at 740-363-9105, Steve Thomas at 740-595-3380, or the engineer's office at 740-833-2400.