



OAM Volunteers Work at the Mid-Ohio Foodbank

By Magistrate Ann Weatherhead, *Cuyahoga County Domestic Relations Court*

As we begin our third decade, the OAM's volunteer initiatives in the communities where we hold our Spring and Fall Conferences are an important part of our maturation as an organization.

Our Fall Conference volunteer project took place at the Mid-Ohio Foodbank in Grove City, Ohio, just outside of Columbus, where we were on the distribution side rather than the consumption side of food for a change. Forty-three volunteers from across Ohio, consisting of magistrates, spouses and the legislative aide to one of our Fall Conference speakers, joined forces to fight a small battle in the war on hunger. According to the foodbank's website (www.midohiofoodbank.org), "Forty-four percent of the people [they] serve have had to choose between food and utilities. Twenty-nine percent have had to choose between food and shelter."

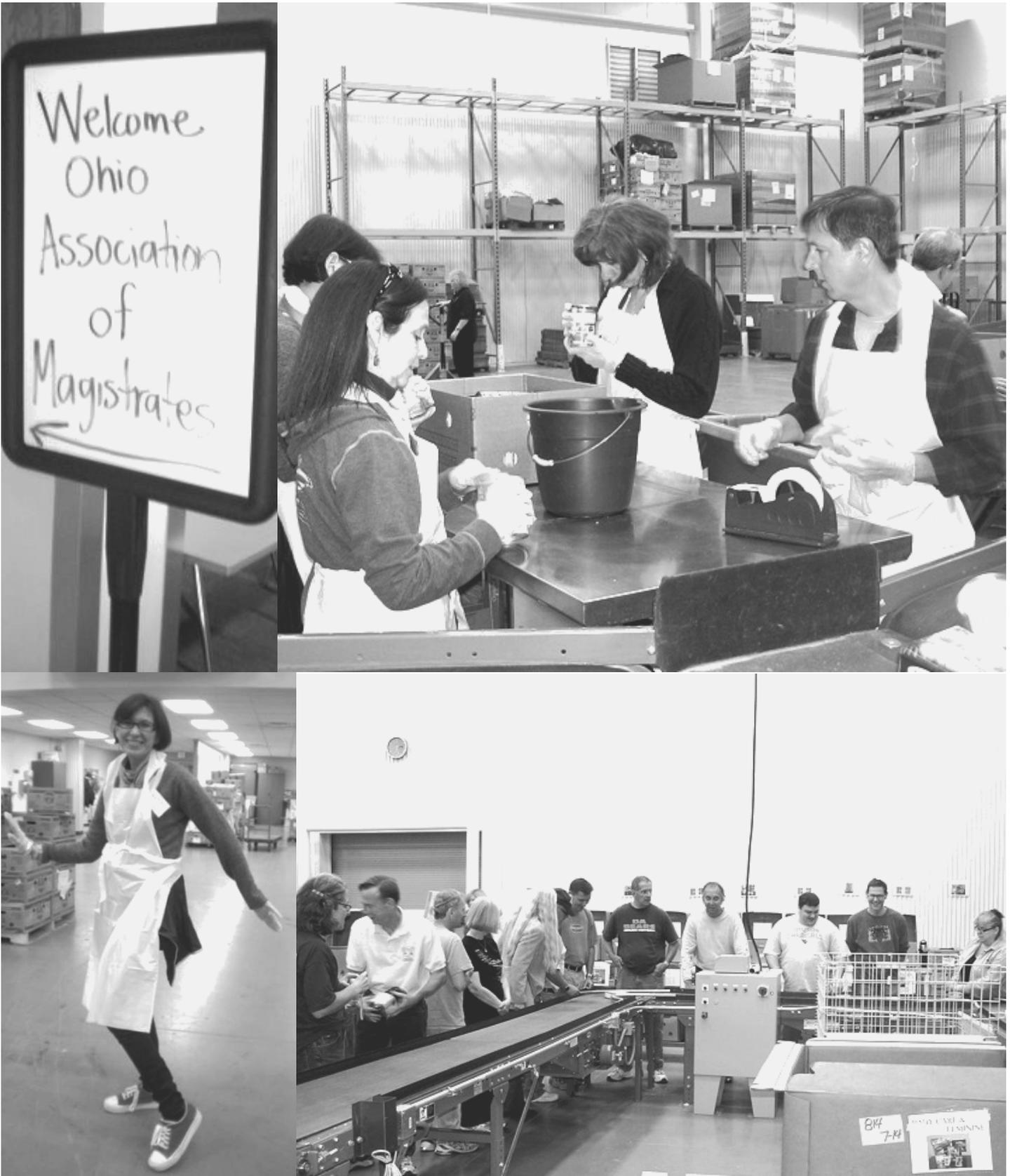
The Mid-Ohio Foodbank has been distributing food for 30 years. For the past year it has been housed in a former mattress factory and warehouse. The new space tripled the foodbank's warehouse and refrigerated space, and provided a training facility and food-sorting area. The building is the first foodbank in the Midwest

to earn Gold certification in the LEED (Leadership in Energy & Environmental Design) program of the U.S. Green Building Council.

As interesting as the story of the foodbank's programs and its "green" building ways is, our group was eager to move from being trained to getting down to work. We arrayed ourselves around a conveyor belt and cleaned, sorted and packaged food that the Mid-Ohio Foodbank will distribute to food pantries, soup kitchens, shelters, after-school programs and senior housing sites across 20 Ohio counties.

It may be unrealistic to think that the food we helped sort and package will provide hope, as well as nutrition, to the people who receive it. It may also be unrealistic to think that some of us will bring new ideas about volunteering and fighting hunger back to our communities, and will act on those ideas. If that is the case, I choose to be unrealistic.

Thanks to everyone for working so hard and so cheerfully. Your willingness to drive to a remote destination and to do work for free that you didn't choose is gratifying but not surprising. It shows once again the generosity of spirit of the OAM. 



Highlights from the Mid-Ohio Foodbank. Opposite page: OAM volunteers; Top left: A warm welcome; Top right: Cleaning and sorting; Bottom right: Working the assembly line; Bottom left: Serpie Ergun, stylin'. Photos taken by Ann Weatherhead.