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Old Washington resident receives Ohio National Road leadership award

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COLUMBUS - Ohio National Road Association President Cyndie Gerken announced the winners of the 2009 Milestone Achievement Awards at the Association's annual meeting held on Nov. 17 at the Ohio Statehouse.

The awards are given annually for outstanding achievement in preservation and leadership along the Historic National Road in Ohio.

A nominee for the Milestone Preservation Award should epitomize the very meaning of the word "preservationist," which, according to Webster is "a person or group who advocates positive measures to preserve historic buildings." This year's winner has gone well beyond "advocating" by demonstrating an appreciation for the potential that might lie beneath the surface of a National Road eyesore, and to "boldly go where no buyer has been willing to go before."

This year's winner is actually two people who set out to save a building from demolition, and ended up restoring the idea of historic preservation to an entire community. Jerry and Jacki Gross of Lewisburg, were the winners of the 2009 Milestone Preservation Award "for their commitment to historic preservation along the Ohio National Road and for the preservation and restoration of the former Toll Road House in the old Euphemia area of Lewisburg."

Ed Wagstaff of Old Washington, Guernsey County, received the 2009 Milestone Leadership Award "for his extensive contributions to the preservation of Guernsey County's history and for his commitment to both the mission and activities of the Ohio National Road Association."

The National Road ranks as one of the nation's most unique roadways, designated as both a National Scenic Byway and an All-American Road by the Federal Highway Department in 2002.

Initiated in 1806, it was America's first interstate highway, paving the way for settlement of the west.

During the early years of the automobile era, it was one of the nation's most heavily traveled east-west arteries.

In the last decade, interest in protecting and preserving the historical richness of the road has led to increased interest and involvement of individuals and grassroots organizations, such as ONRA, in all six National Road states.

For information, ONRA's Web site www.ohionationalroad.org provides all Ohioans, as well as interested individuals across the nation, immediate and in-depth information, facts and data concerning the historic road.

Further questions regarding the Ohio National Road Association should be addressed to Byway Coordinator Louis Agresta, Phone: (937) 521-2134, e-mail address: onra@clarkcountyohio.gov.