



MAY 2017

Debra "Deb" Hladky, MMC
Clerk of Council
Village of Oakwood, Ohio

Deb Hladky has served as Clerk of Council for over a decade, seven years of which she has dedicated to youth.

The Hawthorne Valley Youth Council (HVYC) was born out of a desire to reach area youth in order to create good leaders for tomorrow. After two Council members brought back the idea, Deb ran with it. She made presentations to Council members in the neighboring communities of Bedford, Bedford Heights, and Walton

Hills, in hopes of getting practical and financial support and involvement.

This valuable program teaches youth about local and state government through hands-on experience. While running their own council meetings, youth plan their own activities; create community events and give back to others through service-oriented activities. Students learn communication skills, debating skills, make new friends, and have fun in the process. In HVYC a safe environment is fostered in which students can learn, express their opinions and grow. Over the past seven years Clerk of Council Hladky, along with members of Council, has given many young people opportunities they, most likely, will not find elsewhere during their teenage years.

As part of each year's program, students have a chance to become Ohio State Legislators, Ohio Supreme Court Judges, Lobbyists, Pages or Members of the Press, through the partnership of the Ohio-West Virginia Youth Leadership Association (YLA). YLA organizes a three-day event for hundreds of students who come from all over the state of Ohio to participate. Prior to attending the three-day event each April, at the Ohio State House, in Columbus, Ohio, students spend months preparing their bills or briefs with the assistance of Clerk Hladky and adult volunteers. Student Legislators debate their opinions using facts, case law and State law. They do so in the Ohio Senate and House Committee and on the Ohio Senate floor, while student Supreme Court Justices debate in the Supreme Court.

Deb is an educator at heart. Prior to her employment with the Village, she home educated two of her children to graduation; one of which had special needs. She said, "If I can change one life each year, I have done my job, but I hope to change more than just one. It is a thrill to have a new student come to the program who is shy, soft spoken and timid then after completing the program become confident and full of assurance that they matter."