Posted: 12:00 a.m. Sunday, Aug. 26, 2012 • By Cornelius Frolik

Dayton leads Ohio metros in charitable giving

Metro area residents donated an average $2,198 to charities

Dayton is the most generous major metropolitan area in Ohio, with residents on average donating 4.6 percent of their discretionary incomes to charity, according to a new analysis.

Dayton metropolitan residents overall give less money to charity than people in Akron, Columbus, Cincinnati and Cleveland, but local residents give away a greater share of their discretionary incomes, which is a better measure of generosity, according to an analysis of IRS data released by the Chronicle of Philanthropy.

Dayton-area residents of all income levels donate to charity, but middle-class taxpayers contribute a greater share of their incomes than their affluent counterparts, the analysis shows. Still, high-income earners are more likely to give to charity, and they give away much greater sums of money.

"People care about their communities, regardless of their incomes," said George Espy, president of the Ohio Grantmakers Forum.

Dayton area residents gave $290.5 million to charity in 2008, the fifth largest sum among metros in state, according to the Chronicle of Philanthropy's analysis of itemized contributions reported on 2008 tax returns. The metro area includes Greene, Miami, Montgomery and Preble counties. The Cincinnati metro area had the largest total charitable contributions in Ohio, with $975.6 million, and the Cleveland metro area ranked second, with $738.7 million in contributions.

But Dayton area residents gave a greater share of their incomes to charity than Ohioans from other metro areas, the study found. Local residents on average gave 4.6 percent of their discretionary incomes to charitable groups, compared 4.1 percent in Akron, 4 percent in Cincinnati-Middletown, 3.9 percent in Cleveland and 4.3 percent in Columbus. Discretionary income is the money remaining after residents pay taxes and costs related to housing, food and other basic necessities.

It is not surprising that the Dayton area leads the pack in this respect because the community has a long history of philanthropy, and giving is part of the local culture, said Mike Parks, president of the Dayton Foundation.

"We have an attitude in this community of looking out for and caring for our neighbors," he said. "We've got philanthropic institutions in this community — the United Way, the Culture Works campaign, the community foundation — that give us a strong infrastructure to help people give to their neighbors."

Parks said Dayton is not an enormous metropolis, and its manageable size instills in people the belief that their contributions can make a noticeable difference. He said people continued to give even after the economy tanked and personal wealth nosedived, albeit in lesser amounts.

Trotwood residents give generously

Among regional municipalities, Trotwood residents gave the largest shares of their incomes, 9.1 percent, to charities. The city has had its shares of economic challenges, including high unemployment, plunging home values and rising foreclosures that rank among the highest in Montgomery County. But residents have shown a generous heart to help out others in need.

"One of things that I've been impressed with is that the city of Trotwood is very proactive in addressing the citizens' needs," said Sister Joyce Lehman, president of the Sisters of the Precious Blood Catholic order that has been in the city since 1923. "There are also a number of very active churches in Trotwood that recognize those same needs … Through the city and churches, residents are made aware of the needs and have an avenue to meet them, which is charitable giving."

Lehman said the local churches and city officials work together to respond to the community's needs and "motivate residents to contribute financially."

The chronicle study notes that a large number of charitable gifts are donations to religious organizations such as churches, and officials said the Dayton region has a wide variety of faith-based communities.

People of all faiths give to charity, and so do people of all income levels.

But middle-class residents in the region give a larger share of their discretionary funds to charity than richer residents, the study shows. Local residents earning between $50,000 to $99,999 gave 5.4 percent of their incomes to charity, while taxpayers who earned $100,000 to $199,999 donated 4.6 percent of their money. Residents earning $200,000 or donated 3.9 percent of their discretionary funds.

Across the country, households earning between $50,000 and $75,000 gave 7.6 percent of their discretionary incomes to charity, compared to 4.2 percent for people who earn $100,000 or more. In the Springfield metro area, however, residents earning $50,000 to $99,000 gave 4.7 percent of their incomes to charity, compared to 4.8 percent for people earning $100,000 to $199,999, and 5.6 percent for people earning $200,000 or more.

People with less usually give a larger percentage of their money to charity, and charitable groups rely on gifts from modest-income earners who are only able to afford donating a few dollars, as well as wealthy donors who provide much larger gifts, said Allen Elijah, president and CEO of the United Way of the Greater Dayton Area. Elijah said 75 percent of giving in the country comes from individuals, and charities need the support of people of all incomes.

"This is a very giving and caring community," he said.

But high-income Ohioans on average donate much larger amounts of money than middle-class residents, and they are more likely to report charitable contributions on their tax returns, according to a Dayton Daily News analysis of IRS tax data from 2008. A Nov. 4 story in the Daily News reported that about one-quarter of charitable contributions reported by Dayton-area taxpayers were from people earning $200,000 or more, even though they represented less than 2 percent of area tax filings. High-income earners, however, gave less in the first years of the recession, because their gross-adjusted incomes plummeted.

The Ohio Grantmakers Forum said a lot of charitable contributions are not included in the IRS data, because many people take the standard deduction on their taxes while others donate and simply do not report it to the federal government.

DAYTON LEADS OHIO METROS IN GIVING

Ohioans gave 4.1 percent of their discretionary income to charities, according to data released in a new report by the Chronicle of Philanthropy that analyzed comprehensive data from 2008. This is less than both the U.S. figure of 4.7 percent and the Midwest median of 4.3 percent. Among large Ohio cities, Dayton residents gave the most, donating 4.6 percent of their annual income to charity. The study of 366 major metros also showed that, generally, those with modest income levels donated a higher percentage of their discretionary income to charity than did those at income levels over $200,000.

Metro region	% of income given per household	Median contribtion	Total contributions
Dayton	4.6%	$2,198	$290 million
Canton	4.5%	$2,132	$92 million
Columbus	4.3%	$2,062	$735 million
Springfield	4.2%	$1,977	$34.6 million
Akron	4.1%	$1,922	$340 million
Cincinnati-Middletown	4%	$2,092	$975 million
Cleveland	3.9%	$1,756	$738 million
Youngstown	3.9%	$1,905	$102 million
Toledo	3.9%	$1,838	$191 million
Ohio	4.1%	$1,953	$3.8 billion
US	4.7%	$2,564	$135.8 billion

SOURCE: The Chronicle of Philanthropy

CHARITABLE GIVING BY COUNTIES

Residents of Greene and Montgomery counties gave the largest shares of their incomes to charities, according to data released in a new report by the Chronicle of Philanthropy that analyzed comprehensive data from 2008. The rankings are based on total contributions analyzed in 3,115 counties nationwide.

US rank	County	% of income given per household	Median contribution	Total contributions
161	Montgomery	5.7%	$2,206	$193 million
211	Butler	5.1%	$2,087	$130 million
260	Warren	4.6%	$2,206	$140 million
394	Greene	5.7%	$2,427	$60 million
571	Clark	5.2%	$1,966	$36 million
591	Miami	5.3%	$2,024	$34 million
1330	Champaign	4.6%	$1,662	$8 million

SOURCE: The Chronicle of Philanthropy