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# Chillicothe Gazette

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ACES OF TRADES

## Couple helps others live their best lives



Husband and wife duo Trish and Alvin Mares started Mares Cares Counseling in 2013 to help counsel families during difficult times. ROBERT MCGRAW/GAZETTE

### Trish and Alvin Mares opened counseling firm for families

**Drew Bracken**  
Special to Chillicothe Gazette  
USA TODAY NETWORK

CHILLICOTHE — She seriously considered a law career and he dabbled in a restaurant-related business. Instead,

today, at their Mares Cares Counseling, Trish and Alvin Mares travel a very different path.

"We exist solely to empower as many as we can to live their best lives," Trish said. "And we feel like we've created a very special and safe environment to

offer support."

"Every day," Alvin added, "I'm privileged to have meaningful conversations with individuals and couples facing challenging transitions and key fork in

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## Ohioans could vote on lawsuit money

Amendment aims to put settlement in 'lockbox'

**Darrel Rowland and Randy Ludlow**  
The Columbus Dispatch

Under a new plan being circulated at the highest levels of state government, Ohioans would vote on a constitutional amendment in the March primary to put money from a possible multimillion-dollar settlement of opioid lawsuits into a "lockbox" to make sure the money is actually spent to combat the drug scourge, The Dispatch has learned.

The biggest immediate hurdle to the proposal of Attorney General Dave Yost: The legislature must OK the proposed amendment by Dec. 18, the filing deadline for the March 17 ballot. Approval is needed from three-fifths of each chamber: 60 of 99 in the House, 20 of 33 in the Senate.

Hurdles No. 2 and 3: Neither the House nor the Senate GOP caucuses, which control the chambers, have even discussed the idea.

And hurdle No. 4: Gov. Mike DeWine opposes the measure.

He told The Dispatch it is "frankly premature" to consider pursuit of a constitutional amendment before the state and local governments pressing claims in court reach agreement on how to handle and divide opioid settlement funds.

"The attorney general raised this with me the other day. I told him I would think about it ... the discussion about that (a constitutional amendment) can't occur until we reach agreement with each other in Ohio.

"We need to finalize an agreement ...

See VOTERS, Page 3A

## DeWine opposes moves to forbid plastic bags bans

**Randy Ludlow**  
The Columbus Dispatch

Gov. Mike DeWine wants lawmakers to bag bills that would further diminish the home-rule authority of Ohio's local governments.

The governor opposes a pair of bills crafted by fellow Republicans to forbid

municipalities and counties from enacting the environmentally friendly step of banning single-use plastic bags by groceries and other stores.

Cuyahoga County (although Cleveland may opt out) and the Columbus suburb of Bexley have joined cities around the nation insisting on the use of reusable or paper bags to limit plastic

pollution and divert the material from the waste stream.

But some lawmakers object, fearing a patchwork of differing regulations across the state would constitute a business-unfriendly slap at Ohio employers.


DeWine, who could potentially veto any bill banning bag bans, said Wednesday it would be a "mistake" for the legis-

lature to override local government decisions.

"I think the state government should allow local communities to do what they think is best," he said. "We ought to allow each community to figure this out."

"There's not a day that goes by there

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## Mares

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the road' life decisions, which is both an amazing and awesome experience."

Alvin grew up in Kent, Ohio and went on to earn a bachelor's in business administration at Kent State, a master's in urban planning at the University of Southern California, and another master's and Ph.D. in social welfare at UCLA.

"I was an only child," he recalled, "and spent most of time alone or working in family businesses."

His mother owned and operated a Dairy Queen. His dad sold restaurant equipment and furnishings. Alvin thought about taking over his dad's business but, instead, opted for grad school. He eventually taught at Southern Connecticut State University, the University of Connecticut, then the Ohio State College of Social Work from 2007 to 2015.

"My favorite part of teaching was academic advising," he said, "which is essentially counseling."

Meanwhile, he and Trish met in 2008. They married in 2010 and started Mares Cares Counseling at the end of 2013. "We're a wonderful complement to each other," Trish said. "He sees adults and couples, I see the most amazing kids, and we join forces to do family work."

Trish (then Patricia or Patty Brown), grew up in Chillicothe and graduated from Chillicothe High School in 1973. She went on to earn a psychology degree at Denison University, then spent a year emphasizing child psychology at the Merrill Palmer Institute of Psychology in Detroit.

"I had a wonderful childhood and spent hours at the top of trees reading," she reminisced. "I believed in

## About the series

Aces of Trades is a series focusing on people and their jobs – whether they're unusual jobs, fun jobs or people who take ordinary jobs and make them extraordinary. If you have a suggestion for a future profile, let us know at [games@mcoggannett.com](mailto:games@mcoggannett.com) or 740-349-1110.

fairies and had a well-developed imagination. I babysat more nights than not from the time I was 12, so my passion has always been in working with children. I find them so transparent and funny. I never get tired of talking to them."

"After college," she continued, "I was debating between law and counseling but married and became a stay-at-home mom, raising my three children in Marin County just north of San Francisco. Eventually, after my divorce, we moved back to Chillicothe and my children leaving for college, I decided to go back to Ohio University in 2007 to get my master's in counselor education. It was very daunting to have a 30-year gap between getting my BS and starting my master's. But I'd survived the divorce and cancer, so I figured 'what the heck.'"

Now, she summed, "We're a team. We could not be happier with the way we've grown and been able to touch so many lives in our community."

"Absolutely!" echoed Alvin. "I feel truly blessed to be doing something that is both fulfilling and interesting. Having turned 50 earlier this year, I can't help but wonder what my 50s have in store."

Mares Cares Counseling is located at 628 Comanche Road in Chillicothe. For more information, call 740-804-6800 or log on [www.marescares.com](http://www.marescares.com).



OxyContin maker Purdue Pharma files for bankruptcy as part of settlement  
WOC-T

## Voters

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everyone needs to be united on this," the governor said. "We have made some very good progress in talking with the cities and counties. I think we are getting close. We are not there yet."

DeWine said a "real consensus" has been reached that settlement funds must be spent on addiction treatment programs to lessen opioid's hold on addicted Ohioans.

The governor did not directly respond when asked if he would support a constitutional amendment to lock in the long-term distribution of settlement funds once local government and state officials strike a deal on allocating damages to help combat the crisis, which has eased but remains deadly.

The measure, which would divvy up money from prospective settled lawsuits filed by state and local governments in both state and federal courts, is designed to alleviate local governments' concerns that the state would fritter the money away like it did the state's tobacco lawsuit settlement in 1998.

Two years later, the legislature diverted some of the money from tobacco cessation efforts to school construction, law enforcement, biomedical research and education technology. In 2008, lawmakers diverted more than \$200 million into a "jobs fund." The state's total payments under the tobacco settlement were to total \$10 billion over 25 years.

"Ohio is unlikely to have access to this level of financial resources again," Yost's office has argued in private meetings – including one at the Governor's Residence in Bexley – with representatives of the governor, local governments and the General Assembly. "This is literally a once-in-a-lifetime, do-or-die moment."

The proposed constitutional amendment would split opioid settlement money three ways: to local governments, the state and a new Ohio State and Local Government Opioid Crisis Recovery Foundation. The latter

would get the majority of the cash, and local governments would get around twice as much as the state. The foundation's 12-member board would be chosen by state and local officials.

While some of the money would go to meet immediate needs in the battle against opioids, most would be invested so the fund could grow and meet future needs as well. The amendment – which could only be changed by another constitutional amendment – is designed to ensure "settlement dollars are spent on abatement, not pet projects."

Yost's office says it is working on an "all Ohio" settlement. The state has filed suit in Madison and Ross counties, while Ohio local governments are part of a massive group of lawsuits against opioid manufacturers and distributors and drug chains filed across the country that is now before a federal judge in Cleveland. A trial is set for October 2020 for two of the Ohio plaintiffs, Cuyahoga and Summit counties.

Kent Scarrett, executive director of the Ohio Municipal League, also said the group was unaware of the proposal until it received details Wednesday from Yost's office.

About 70 Ohio local governments have filed federal lawsuits against drug manufacturers and distributors seeking damages stemming from the opioid crisis.

Gov. Mike DeWine is scheduled to discuss the opioid crisis and potential legal settlements with the league's board Friday morning, Scarrett said.

"We don't have a position. This is a new thing that just landed on our radar yesterday," Scarrett said. "We need to look at how this would play out in the ability of local governments to receive relief from this epidemic."

Involving Ohio's tobacco settlement and criticism much of its funding was diverted by lawmakers to other purposes, Scarrett said. "The legislature should have as little influence over the allocation process as possible."

Reporter Anna Staver contributed to this story.  
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