

ON THE JOB

CRIMINAL JUSTICE UPDATE

COVER STORY

STATE-OF-THE-ART INVESTMENTS

New OPOTA range, BCI evidence building a boost for policing and all Ohioans

Two state-of-the-art construction projects — one just getting underway, the other recently completed — are aimed at modernizing Ohio’s forensic and officer-training infrastructure to bolster crimefighting efforts statewide.

“The daily sacrifice to protect and serve takes real courage,” Ohio Attorney General Dave Yost said in publicly announcing the projects on March 25. “The very least we can do for our law enforcement is give them the best version of the tools and resources they need.”

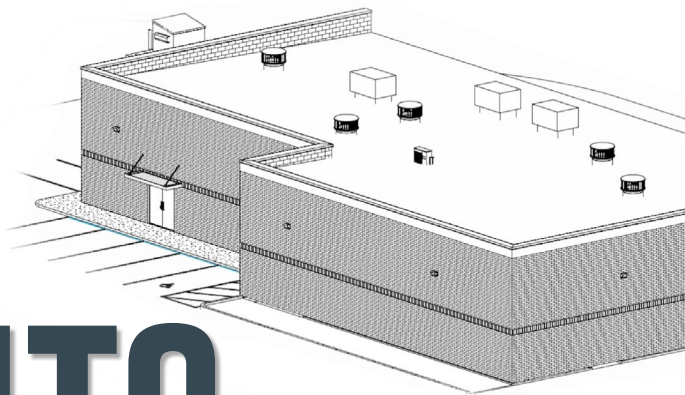
To that end, construction of a free-standing Evidence Collection Building is underway in London at the Ohio Bureau of Criminal Investigation, a division of the Ohio Attorney General’s Office.

The 6,700-square-foot structure, located behind BCI’s main building, will dramatically increase the bureau’s capacity to store evidence long-term, enhance the storage process and provide investigators with much-needed room for all aspects of their work.

“Over the years, the increase in requests for BCI assistance — laboratory and investigatory — has been pretty substantial,” said Josh Durst, Assistant Special Agent in Charge of the bureau’s Technical Investigations Division. “Correspondingly, the amount of evidence we receive — and that we ultimately



OPOTA Director of Academy Operations Robert Graziano takes aim during a demonstration at the new training range.



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A group ground-breaking signals the start of BCI construction

Partnering to prevent Medicaid fraud in Ohio

The state's Medicaid program is an essential safety net for Ohioans, providing healthcare services for our most-needy citizens. Unfortunately, bad actors are always looking to exploit the programs and enrich themselves with the public's money.

My office serves as the state's watchdog to ensure that cheaters and those who scam the system are brought to justice.

Every year, healthcare fraud costs Americans tens of billions of dollars. But when scammers bilk the government for unlawful payments and benefits, they're doing much more than ripping off taxpayers. They're driving up the cost of premiums and health care for everybody.

Even more alarming, the well-being of patients who fall victim to corrupt health-care providers — or to those posing as health-care providers — is put at risk. Examples of fraud are when:

- Necessary services might not be provided even though insurers are billed for them.
- Unnecessary diagnostic tests and invasive treatments might be ordered as a way to pad the bill.
- Prescriptions might be stolen or diverted.
- Unscrupulous medical offices or long-term-care facilities might cut corners by hiring unqualified or abusive staff, further jeopardizing the health of patients.

In short, healthcare fraud is a cancer that undermines the efforts of the nation to care for its people. In Ohio, the dedicated men and women in our Health Care Fraud Section — specifically, the Medicaid Fraud Control Unit (MFCU) — lead the nation in fighting to eradicate this tumor.

But we can't — and don't — do it alone. Our success depends on referrals to initiate the investigations that ultimately allow us to prosecute bad actors. The Ohio Department of Medicaid, other state agencies, managed-care organizations, local prosecutors, private citizens and others collectively serve as a pipeline, reporting cheaters to our MFCU.



TO REPORT:
Call 614-466-0722
or scan the QR code

We are a force multiplier for law enforcement around the state. We know agencies are doing more with less these days. We want law enforcement to know that we're here to help. If you receive a call within your community regarding healthcare fraud or abuse, give us a call. We're happy to assist in these cases to free up resources elsewhere within your department.

If you know of or suspect corrupt or deceptive practices by Medicaid providers, or if you know a patient in a long-term-care facility who is being abused or neglected, please contact our Medicaid Fraud Control Unit at 614-466-0722, or the Attorney General's Help Center at 1-800-282-0515.

We, like you, won't be satisfied until all of the fraudsters are convicted. My office looks forward to partnering with you to root out the fraud.

Yours,

Dave Yost
Dave Yost
Ohio Attorney General

AG continues his push for better tools in fight against healthcare fraud

In recent testimony before a joint meeting of the Ohio House and Senate Medicaid committees, AG Yost spoke about the growth in Medicaid fraud and his office's leading role in investigating and prosecuting offenders.

Ohio's MFCU is widely viewed as a national model; it routinely hosts trainings to show other states how to investigate and prosecute fraud because it does it well.

Also as part of his testimony, AG Yost encouraged the legislators to consider strengthening Ohio's laws to ensure that more bad apples face justice. Among the suggestions:

- Don't treat Medicaid fraud as less serious than theft. The statutory penalties for Medicaid fraud should mirror the theft statutes by allowing sentencing all the way up to first-degree felony instead of capping punishment at third-degree felony.
- Restore the GPS requirement in the Electronic Visit Verification System. Until about a year ago, home-health professionals had to use the system to log in and out to document the times for their services. Since then, the requirement has become optional. The lax oversight has invited exploitation from dishonest providers.
- Require prior authorization for more services. The MFCU shouldn't have to chase down our dollars after they're out the door. It is a preventable exhaustion of precious time and resources.
- Grant subpoena authority to Ohio's MFCU. Civil subpoena authority would untie the unit's hands when gathering evidence for civil cases. Other sections within my office have this power.

These changes would expand the AG's ability to uncover those who exploit the Medicaid system.



11 a.m. May 7

Ohio Peace Officer Training Academy

In remembrance, now and always

Larry R. Henderson Jr.

Deputy | Hamilton County Sheriff's Office | End of Watch: May 2, 2025

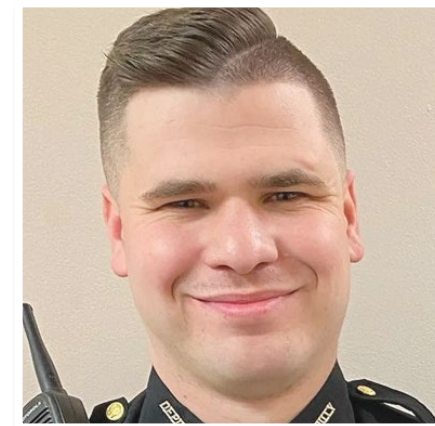
Deputy Henderson was a "Marine through and through" who served his country and his community until his final day. After a four-year stint in the Marine Corps, he spent 33 years with the Hamilton County Sheriff's Office, holding many of the most dangerous jobs in both endeavors. Within days of retiring from the sheriff's office in December 2024, he was back working special duty. "Larry had a calling to this uniform," Sheriff Charmaine McGuffey said. "That's the only reason you continue to stay in this profession after you've retired." Deputy Henderson died on May 2, 2025, after being run down by a motorist while working special detail for the University of Cincinnati's graduation. He was 57, married, the father of five grown children and a budding foster father to two infants.



D. Weston Sherrer

Deputy | Morrow County Sheriff's Office | End of Watch: May 26, 2025

As early as the first grade, Weston Sherrer knew what he wanted to do when he grew up. "My big dream is to be a policeman," he declared in a class assignment 25 years ago. "I want to catch the villains, and I'm willing to risk my life for the people in the United States." Deputy Sherrer, it turned out, had not only the desire to work in law enforcement but also the courage and temperament. His ability to connect with people — to make them feel heard — fueled his success with the Morrow County Sheriff's Office. Deputy Sherrer was fatally shot on Memorial Day last year during a domestic-violence call near Marengo. He was 31 and had just marked his fourth year with the sheriff's office, his only law enforcement job.



Phillip C. Wagner

Officer | Lorain Police Department | End of Watch: July 24, 2025

Officer Wagner was a fierce protector — of his family, first and foremost, but also his country and his community. "Phil's identity was father, husband, SWAT operator, cop," said Lorain Police Officer Richard Fadenholz, a colleague and close friend. "He was a very big family man." Officer Wagner loved God, too, and was increasingly finding "peace and rest through his relationship with Jesus," his pastor said. He died on July 24, 2025, the day after he and another patrolman were ambushed by a gunman as they ate lunch in their cruisers. Officer Wagner was 35, a husband and a father of three. Before entering law enforcement, he served four years in the Marines, including a deployment to Afghanistan. He was the first Lorain officer to die in the line of duty since 1944.



Nicholas P. Cayton

Trooper | Ohio State Highway Patrol | End of Watch: Oct. 16, 2025

Wherever he went, whatever he was doing, Nick Cayton seemed to make a favorable impression. "He had such a knack for making people feel welcome," childhood friend Brent Tharp said. "He was a magnet — that's just who he was." His charisma, intelligence and quick wit served him well throughout life, during a seven-year stint in the Ohio Army National Guard, college at Youngstown State University, training with the State Highway Patrol and beyond. Trooper Cayton, a 13-year veteran of the patrol, was killed on Oct. 16, 2025, when his cruiser was struck by a Mack truck in Canfield while he was helping the driver of a disabled tractor-trailer. He was 40, married to his high-school sweetheart, the father of two children, a devoted family man and a true public servant.



ON THE JOB
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On the Job is typically published four times a year by the Ohio Attorney General's Office.

To offer story ideas, contact Mary Lynn Plageman at MaryLynn.Plageman@OhioAGO.gov.

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SPRING 2026 | Volume 18, Issue 2

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30 E. Broad St., 17th Floor
Columbus, OH 43215

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have to store — has increased.”

On the same day that BCI broke ground on its building, the Ohio Peace Officer Training Academy, also part of Yost's office, celebrated the opening of its dramatically upgraded firing range at OPOTA's Tactical Training Center, also in London.

The sprawling 18,000-square-foot facility allows for dynamic, “move-and-shoot” training during which officers can use cover and make critical decisions as if on the streets — a big improvement over “static” lane shooting.

“The dynamic part makes it unique,” said Robert Graziano, OPOTA's Director of Academy Operations. “It's not just a firing range; it's a training center. In all my travels, I've never seen anything like this.”

Both projects reflect the high priority that Attorney General Yost has placed on properly training and equipping Ohio's peace officers. The combined cost of \$10.88 million was funded by the General Assembly in the state's 2025-26 capital-improvements budget.

Here's a closer look at the projects:

BCI evidence building

It was really only a question of when. With BCI fielding a growing number of requests from law enforcement agencies in need of assistance, the Crime Scene Unit lacking sufficient space for evidence storage and its day-to-day work, and the DNA Lab processing thousands of samples a year, expansion was inevitable.

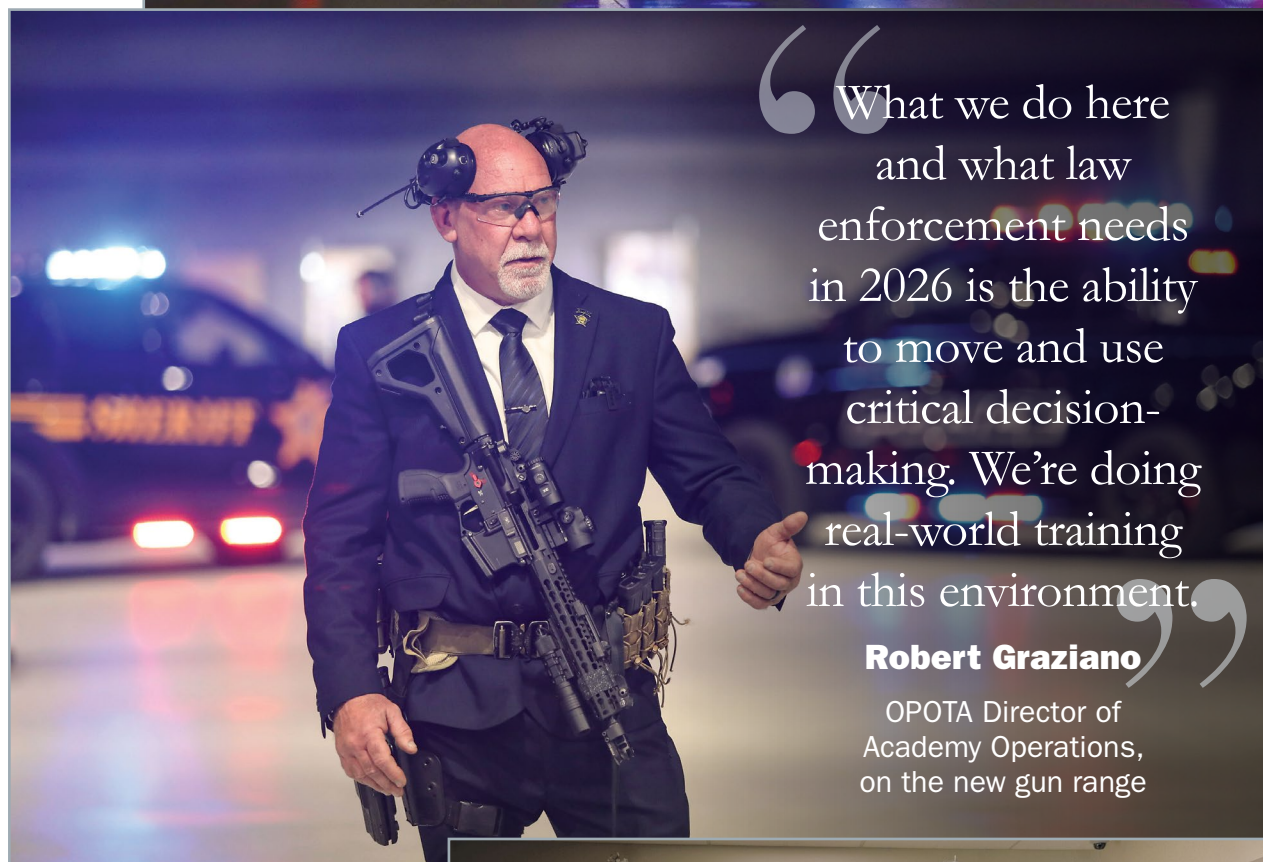
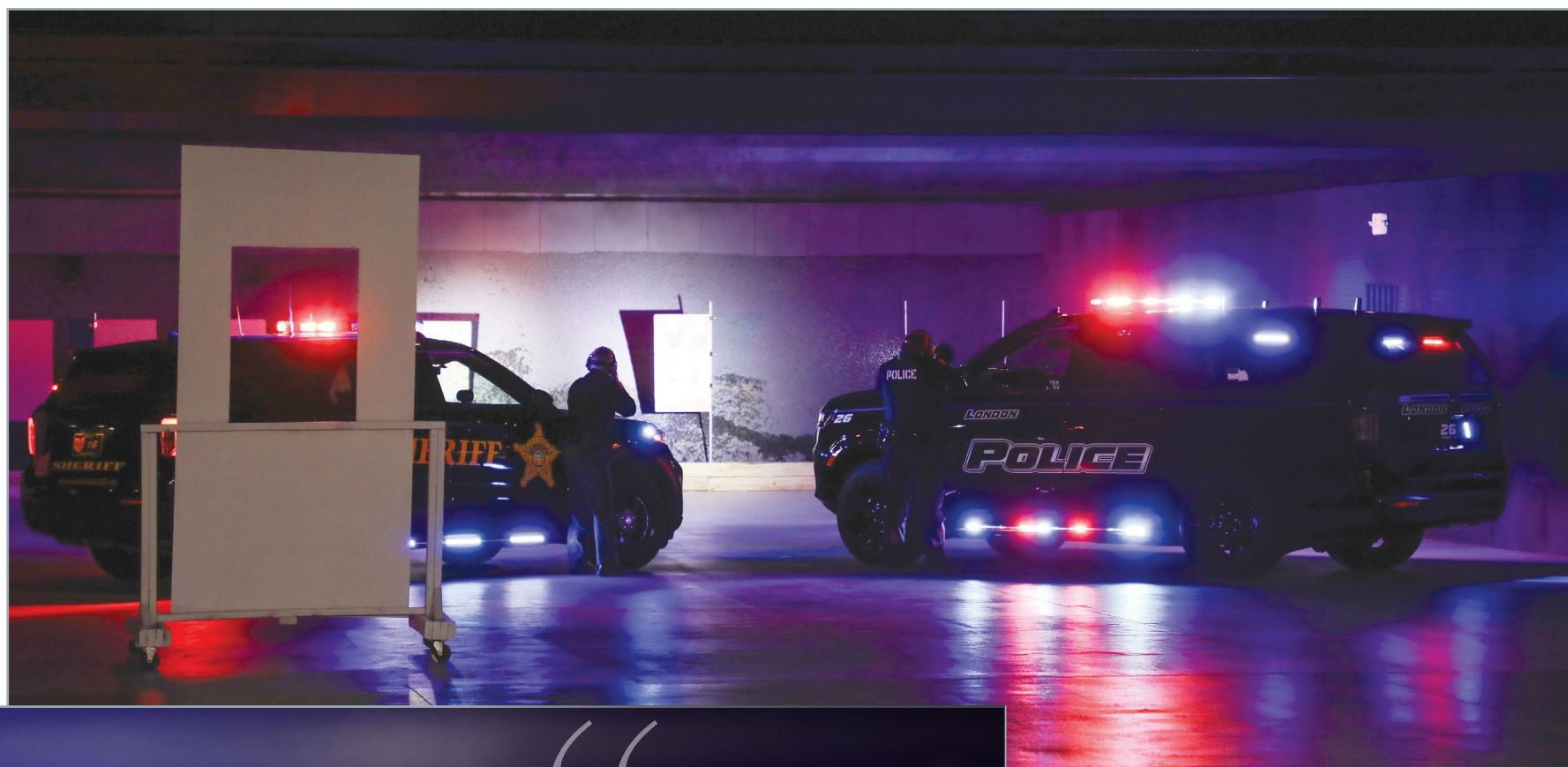
“It was clear about a year after we launched our Cold Case Unit in 2020 that BCI's evidence collection facility was at a breaking point,” Yost said.

The space crunch was compounded not only by the Cold Case Unit's creation but also by a significant increase in requests for BCI to investigate officer-involved critical incidents. For the latter, the bureau must maintain possession of all evidence until a case is adjudicated, a process that can take several months or even years.

The new building will have plenty of room for that evidence as well as evidence gathered from rapes, homicides, questioned deaths and other violent crimes.

“It can include ballistic evidence — such as firearms, projectiles and cartridge casings — as well as biological evidence and trace evidence, such as fingerprints and fibers,” Durst said. “Really, the sky's the limit for what types of evidence we may encounter and need to store.”

BCI's ability to preserve DNA long-term will also be greatly expanded in the new building.



“What we do here and what law enforcement needs in 2026 is the ability to move and use critical decision-making. We're doing real-world training in this environment.”

Robert Graziano

OPOTA Director of Academy Operations, on the new gun range



The ribbon-cutting marking the official opening of OPOTA's new training center in London

BCI building highlights

- 6,700 square feet of space
- Five freezers with fixed and movable shelving and built-in expansion for additional freezer space in the future, with space for DNA extracts to meet BCI needs for the next 30 to 50 years
- Dedicated rooms for photos, chemical handling, drying, staging, evidence and general storage
- An indoor station for vehicle processing and Crime Scene Unit truck maintenance
- Workstations for agents to process or package evidence
- A conference room for debriefings and meetings
- A bunk room for agents to rest between crime scenes

Gun range highlights

- 18,000 square feet of open range for training
- Adjustable shooting layouts
- 100% climate-controlled
- Training opportunities 24 hours a day, 365 days a year
- Ability to train in low light or no light
- Dynamic range environment, allowing officers to use critical decision-making while moving, using cover and learning to accurately resolve life or death issues
- Ability to use vehicles to simulate traffic stops and subject encounters
- Upgraded HVAC system, providing the ventilation needed for use of lead ammunition
- Improved sound absorption

To watch a video about BCI's new evidence storage facility, go to www.youtube.com/watch?v=gPADNOW-fko

“What we're talking about storing there is called a DNA extract,” said DNA Lab Manager Hallie Dreyer. “Those extracts are what contain the DNA profiles that we ultimately utilize for our casework interpretation. The extracts need to be stored under ideal conditions to prevent degradation or loss of samples over time.”

Heat, light and moisture, among other things, aren't good for DNA, she said.

The building will have five freezers with fixed and movable shelving for DNA storage. There also will be space allocated for freezers to be added in the future, as needs warrant.

“This is important because every case that comes through BCI's door typically has DNA extract developed from samples,” Attorney General Yost said. “The samples are maintained to generate DNA profiles for comparison and stored long-term. As advances in forensics continue, properly preserved DNA extracts allow for advanced testing that previously wasn't developed or otherwise available.”

Most immediately, the new building will provide a permanent home for the Crime Scene Unit, which has been operating out of an 800-square-foot maintenance garage bay.

Among other amenities, the building will have an indoor station for vehicle processing and for maintaining the unit's trucks, workstations for investigators to process or package evidence, and a conference room for debriefings and meetings.

“It will meet both present and future needs,” Yost said at the ground-breaking ceremony. “It's

amazing to think that, by late next year, this plot of dirt will become something that will meet BCI's needs for decades to come.”

OPOTA training range

Five years ago, a state-of-the-art firearms training facility was just an idea — a pipe dream, some even suggested.

“A lot of my guys told me this wasn't going to happen,” AG Yost said. “Well, we have a hard-working team that proved them wrong. They overcame many hurdles to make this facility possible.”

The sprawling complex — which, unlike OPOTA's previous range, is under roof and climate-controlled — makes it possible for officers to train 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

“Policing today demands more than technical skills,” OPOTA Executive Director Tom Quinlan said. “It requires officers who can think clearly under pressure, make sound decisions, and apply tactics that prioritize safety and the sanctity of life. This facility was built with that reality in mind.”

In short, Graziano said, the new facility is much more than a firing range.

“What we do here and what law enforcement needs in 2026 is the ability to move and use critical decision-making,” he said. “We're doing real-world training in this environment. This space doesn't just limit us to firearms training.”

He noted that OPOTA has a portable “shoot house” that can be adjusted to any configuration. Say, for example, that a law enforcement team

is ready to serve a warrant and the layout of the residence is known.

“I can set that up in training so the officers can prepare,” he said. “Or I can set up blind environments, and officers can watch their tactics, making sure they're doing threat identification and using critical decision-making.”

Vehicles can be incorporated onto the shooting range to simulate traffic stops, or the space can be reconfigured for force-on-force training, bringing greater realism into a controlled and safe environment.

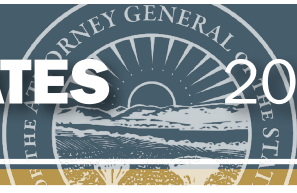
In addition, training conditions can be adjusted to low lighting or no lighting, which reflects 70% of law enforcement shootings in real life.

Another notable change involves the ammunition used in training. The original facility accommodated only frangible-style ammo, which is made with alloys, not lead; costs twice as much as regular ammunition; and, most important, is less accurate for real-world training.

“Our officers needed a space that could handle lead ammunition,” AG Yost said. “They need to know what that bullet does in the scenario in which they may need to pull the trigger. They use lead ammo in the field, so they need to use lead in training.”

In many ways, Graziano said, the facility “sets the standard for others who are developing training areas.”

Or, as AG Yost put it, “There's status quo — and then there's making the leap to become standard-bearing.”



Mark Your Calendar

Upcoming Events

HUMAN TRAFFICKING SUMMIT 2026

JULY 30

The Human Trafficking Summit is an ideal setting for victim advocates and others, including law enforcement officers, to learn, share insights and experiences, and develop new connections.



SEPT. 13-15

The Law Enforcement Training Symposium, held the past two years at Kalahari Resorts in Sandusky, will move to Dayton in 2026.

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DAVE YOST
OHIO ATTORNEY GENERAL