

News Release



Ilene Shapiro – Summit County Executive
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Summit County and Direction Home Collaborating to Serve Older Adults Affected by COVID-19 Pandemic

SUMMIT COUNTY, OHIO—In response to the ongoing COVID-19 crisis, Summit County and Direction Home Akron Canton Area Agency on Aging and Disabilities are working together to offer critical resources and services to older adults in need. In September, County Executive Ilene Shapiro and County Council passed legislation to provide over \$628,000 in federal CARES Act funds to Direction Home for the purchase of devices and wireless internet hotspots, the development of nursing facility support resources and for meals and wellness kits.

Since receiving the grant, Direction Home ordered 550 devices as well as wireless internet hotspots, software and additional accessories. The organization is working with six community partners, Asian Services In Action (ASIA), Inc., Foster Grandparents, House of the Lord, Summa Health, Tri-County Independent Living Center, Inc., and 42 nursing homes to identify individuals most in need of the devices. Currently, 380 devices are reserved for Summit County older adults and delivery will begin in January.

“Summit County has been working with Direction Home for years to improve the lives of older adults. When this crisis hit we knew we could turn to the organization to help us get support and resources to those most in need,” said Executive Shapiro. “Older adults are experiencing unique challenges due to COVID-19. These programs will go a long way in reducing isolation, increasing access to advocates and providing basic needs like meals.”

Direction Home is also working with all the county’s nursing facilities to provide a communal device for residents to make online complaints and request follow-up from an advocate. Due to COVID-19 visitation restrictions, nursing facility residents have faced barriers to these services. With assistance from the Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program and Summit County Probate Court Judge Elinore Marsh Stormer, the devices will soon be in each facility.

Like older adults around the country, Summit County older adults are struggling with hunger because of the pandemic. To help, Direction Home allocated approximately \$140,000 of the

County grant funds to Family & Community Services/Mobile Meals, Vantage Aging/Meals on Wheels, Simply Ez Meals and Mom's Meals. Using the CARES Act funds, these organizations will serve an additional 187 older adults with over 22,000 home delivered meals. Direction Home is also working with local restaurants to provide meal vouchers to older adults in need.

“As the world around them changes, older adults are in need of new and creative resources to maintain health and wellness,” said Abigail Morgan, COO of Direction Home. “With the financial support from Executive Shapiro and County Council, we have adapted our programming to better serve older adults affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.”

Older adults and caregivers in need of meals or other support should call Direction Home's Aging and Disability Resource Center at 1-877-770-5558.

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