

# News Release



**Ilene Shapiro – Summit County Executive**  
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**Date: February 22, 2021**

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## **County Executive Supports Local Entrepreneurs Looking to Sharpen Skills**

SUMMIT COUNTY, OHIO—Despite the challenges posed by an unprecedented global pandemic and economic downturn in 2020, 30 Summit County entrepreneurs were able to spend 15 weeks last year learning business fundamentals and the nuances of business ownership. The entrepreneurs were members of the first MORTAR at Bounce cohorts. The program, created by a Cincinnati group of the same name, supports disadvantaged entrepreneurs, like women and minorities. Bounce Innovation Hub worked with the County of Summit, City of Akron, GAR Foundation, Burton D. Morgan Foundation and Greater Akron Chamber to bring the program to Summit County with the hopes of replicating success stories seen in Cincinnati.

Recognizing the value of the MORTAR program, Summit County Executive Ilene Shapiro’s Department of Community Development awarded Bounce a \$40,000 Community Development Block Grant in 2020 to support the program. The funds provided free tuition for four entrepreneurs and supported the overall administration of the program.

“The MORTAR program aligns perfectly with our Elevate Greater Akron strategy: we must close the opportunity gap in Akron and Summit County in order to achieve meaningful economic growth for all,” said Executive Shapiro. “The entrepreneurs who completed the program this past year gained practical knowledge, new skills and valuable connections. Equipped with these new tools, they have the chance to fulfill their business dreams and create opportunity in their community.”

“Bounce is proud to be able to serve all entrepreneurs who come through our doors,” said Doug Weintraub, CEO. “MORTAR at Bounce is a key component of that and we would not be able to do it without our partners, and in particular, the County of Summit. We are grateful for their continued support.”

The program provides culturally competent curriculum and materials, a cohort model for driven entrepreneurs to support each other, access to legal support and one-on-one mentorship to offer guidance throughout the course. Bounce also facilitates opportunities to pitch ideas to potential investors and ongoing support following course completion.

“MORTAR has been an amazing program for my business and myself. It has given me insight on areas of my business from all different angles from financial to marketing. I have grown so much throughout my entrepreneurial journey. Because of MORTAR, I have built friendships, partnerships and a support system when needed. I am grateful and honored for the opportunity to have been in the first MORTAR family,” said Tiffany Adjei, owner of Honesty Healthcare LLC.

Daniel Olszewski, owner of Hype Space LLC added, “MORTAR was a great resource for the knowledge and the tools to build a thriving business; it also opened networking doors and provided access to mentors that would be hard to come by without the program. A special thanks to Summit County for supporting small businesses and programs like Bounce and MORTAR. There is no doubt about the positive impact from new, passionate and diverse business owners on the local economy and community.”

The 2021 Winter cohort, featuring 13 new entrepreneurs, is currently underway. Applications for cohort 4 are now open; classes start in May. To apply or to learn more about MORTAR and Bounce Innovation Hub, visit <https://bouncehub.org/mortar/>.

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