

NEWS RELEASE

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Summit County celebrates Black History Month

SUMMIT COUNTY, OHIO—County Executive Ilene Shapiro and County Council passed legislation on Monday declaring February 2022 Black History Month in Summit County. The resolution, passed unanimously by Council, recognizes the accomplishments made by Black Americans while facing incredible adversity throughout history, and acknowledges the challenges of the present.

“Black History Month continues the conversation around the achievements and challenges of Black Americans, shedding light on how resilience has led to stories of inspiration and hope,” said County Executive Shapiro. “We must all continue to press for the tenets of the Civil Rights Movement, such as equal treatment under the law, and push for increased awareness about black and brown identities, every day, not just during the month of February.”

One of the first Black History Month recognitions was proposed and celebrated by the faculty of the Center of Pan-African Culture and the members of Black United Students at Kent State University in 1970, conferring local significance to what would become a national event in 1976. Today, organizations throughout Summit County and the entire nation recognize the contributions of Black scientists, artists, educators, athletes, politicians, business people, religious and spiritual leaders, and countless others that reflect the greatness of the county and the country.

“It is heartening to see Summit County and the entire nation embrace Black Americans and Black culture each year in February. It is a testament to how far we have come as a nation,” said Council member Veronica Sims. “We still have much work to do, however. Racism – not race – causes disproportionately high rates of homelessness, incarceration, poverty, poor educational outcomes, and poor health outcomes in the Black community. Only by acknowledging these disparities and working together to eliminate them will we see true celebration of Black Americans.”

To help local residents celebrate Black History Month, the Akron-Summit County Library is offering events throughout the month of February at various branch locations. Events include the Black History Month Reading Challenge, a Draw like Jean-Michael Basquiat art class, an Underground Railroad virtual exploration and many more. A complete listing of library events is available at <https://services.akronlibrary.org/events?r=nextmonth>.

The Summit County Historical Society is hosting a Community Talk Back event on February 19 at 12:30 p.m. The virtual event will celebrate the history and accomplishments of African Americans in Akron and Summit County and will feature Lester Carney, 1960 200 Meter Olympic Silver Medalist, Reverend Ronald Fowler of Arlington Church of God, Mike Williams, son of The Honorable Judge James R. Williams and others. Visit <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/community-talk-back-stories-of-african-americans-in-akron-tickets-251467224237> to register for the free event.

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