

NEWS RELEASE

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County Executive and Vantage Aging partner to provide free pet food and supplies

SUMMIT COUNTY, OHIO—Summit County Executive Ilene Shapiro and Animal Control recently partnered with Vantage Aging to provide free pet food and supplies to seniors and homebound residents with pets in their homes. In late January, Animal Control donated seven pallets of food to Vantage to distribute through Wheels for Wags, part of the Meals on Wheels of Northeast Ohio program. Vantage operates this program in Summit, Stark, Wayne, Portage, Carroll, Holmes and Tuscarawas counties.

Recognizing the growing costs of many essential consumer products like pet food and supplies, County Executive Shapiro's Division on Animal Control launched a Community Pet Food Pantry in 2022. The program is made possible through a partnership with Greater Goods Charities. For a minimal cost, the charity provides Animal Control with pet supplies, like food and litter, to distribute to local rescues and pantries to help stretch dollars and assist more pets and people.

"We are thrilled to be able to offer these critical items to our residents, especially our seniors and homebound residents who face unique challenges and fixed incomes. As a pet owner myself, I know the importance of caring for our furry companions and want to help ensure both residents and pets are well cared for in our community," said County Executive Shapiro. "We are thankful for Vantage Aging's partnership and look forward to continuing to work together to serve our residents and their pets."

As part of the Meals on Wheels program, Wheels for Wags provides free pet food for all clients with animals. The program originated when volunteers noticed that many seniors were feeding their pets from their own meals. Wheels for Wags ensures that pet food is provided so that the owner doesn't need to worry about how to obtain or afford nutritious food for a pet that may be their only companion. Vantage estimates 165 number of Summit County residents will be served through the partnership with Animal Control.

"We are grateful for this amazing partnership," said Director of Meals On Wheels of Northeast Ohio Jay Varnes. "Our clients are closely connected to their pets, and those connections promote health, independence, and purpose for our community's most vulnerable seniors. Having access to pet food gives peace of mind to so many, and we could not provide this service without the generous efforts of Summit County Executive Ilene Shapiro and Animal Control."

Since launching the Community Pet Food Pantry last year, Animal Control has received 145,475 pounds of food, litter and supplies. It has placed 115,000 pounds back into the community through public events and through donations to local non-profits including, One of Kind Pets, Maggie's Mission, Summit County Humane Society and Vantage's Wheels for Wags program.

Residents interested in signing up for Meals on Wheels and the Wags program can contact Vantage at 330-515-5605 or go to <https://vantageaging.org>. Individuals and corporations can learn about volunteer opportunities with Meals on Wheels by contacting MOWVolunteer@vantageaging.org.

Residents in need of pet supplies can attend Animal Control's monthly pet food giveaways held on the last Tuesday of every month from 4:30-6:30 p.m. at 250 Opportunity Pkwy in Akron.

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