

NEWS RELEASE

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Akron Zoo celebrates Akron-Summit Age-Friendly Seal of Approval designation by BBB

SUMMIT COUNTY, OHIO—This morning, Summit County Executive Ilene Shapiro, Akron Mayor Dan Horrigan, and Akron Zoo President & CEO Doug Piekarz joined partners in celebration of the Akron Zoo becoming the first zoo in Ohio to receive an Age-Friendly Seal of Approval from the Better Business Bureau. The Seal of Approval certifies the zoo met criteria in three key areas—physical environment, customer experience, and marketing materials—which ensure accessibility and quality service for older adults.

“We are thrilled to receive the Age-Friendly Seal of Approval,” said CEO Doug Piekarz. “The Akron Zoo is a place where all ages can come and connect their lives to wildlife. In all our plans, we consider accessibility, and it is an honor to be the first zoo in Ohio to receive this certification.”

During the event, the Akron Zoo was recognized in a short ceremony followed by a walking tour demonstrating how the zoo earned the program’s inaugural designation. Akron BBB CEO Shannon Sieferth explained the application process and VANTAGE Aging CEO Kim Ventresca highlighted the role of older adult volunteers in reviewing businesses. Members of the media, chambers of commerce, and other partners were invited to join the tour and learn about the Akron-Summit Age-Friendly Seal of Approval, which is now accepting applications. Businesses and other organizations can apply at bbb.org/akron.

“Once again our community’s unique culture of collaboration has delivered for our residents,” said Executive Shapiro. “Spearheaded by our Akron-Summit Age-Friendly coalition, this program is a true group effort and will go on to encourage our businesses and institutions to be accessible and inclusive for not just older adults, but other residents as well. After all, what is good for an older adult with a mobility aid is good for a parent with stroller.”

The Age-Friendly Seal of Approval was inspired by programs at several other Better Business Bureaus across the country and was developed for Akron and Summit County through a concerted effort of six different organizations. Direction Home Area Agency on Aging played a key role in developing the program, offering expert advice and funding. The Seal of Approval is housed under BBB Akron with volunteers from VANTAGE Aging’s AmeriCorps Seniors Retired and Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) conducting the reviews. It is a program built for older adults and powered by older adults.

"Today's recognition really highlights the power of partnership in our community," said Akron Mayor Dan Horrigan. "I thank all of the community partners who were involved with this special recognition, and I congratulate the Akron Zoo on being the first in Ohio to receive the seal of approval. As our residents evolve and change, our communities and our businesses must evolve with them, and the Age-Friendly Seal of Approval helps encourage us all to do just that."

Summit County and Akron are both enrolled in the AARP Network of Age-Friendly States and Communities. County Executive Shapiro and Mayor Horrigan joined forces in 2022 to create the Akron-Summit Age-Friendly Coalition, a collaborative group of stakeholders working to enhance livability throughout the county and city.

For more information on becoming an Age-Friendly Ambassador or to sign up for other VANTAGE Aging AmeriCorps Seniors Retired and Senior Volunteer Program opportunities, visit [Retired and Senior Volunteer Program | VANTAGE Aging](#)

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