

# News Release



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

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## **County Executive Touts Accomplishments and Opportunities in State of the County Address**

**SUMMIT COUNTY**—Earlier today, Summit County Executive Ilene Shapiro delivered her third State of the County address at the John S. Knight Center in downtown Akron. The annual event is sponsored by the Akron Press Club and the proceeds directly benefit a scholarship fund for journalism students. In her speech, Executive Shapiro emphasized a number of achievements from the past year and outlined upcoming projects for the next year in Summit County.

The speech began by spotlighting the work of the Department of Job and Family Services, paying special attention to the willingness of the agency and its partners to assist residents during the federal government shutdown, as well as the continued success of the Summer Youth Employment Program. She also shared the County's intent to become an AARP Age-Friendly Community with the support of Direction Home.

Citing three newly announced task forces and committees, Executive Shapiro thanked Summit County Council for their responsiveness to recent reports and events that revealed community issues requiring increased attention. The Nursing Homes and Facilities Task Force, Environmental Sustainability Task Force, and Stormwater Management Committee will soon begin recruiting members and convening to address issues causing concern among residents and businesses.

Alluding to the Summit County Jail Operations Advisory Commission recommendations shared in her 2018 speech, Executive Shapiro updated the audience on the steps that have since been taken to improve jail conditions. In the last year, the County has replaced 107 cameras and installed an additional 261 cameras, creating improved security conditions and transparency when incidents occur. Additionally, the jail reintroduced inmate services such as Narcotics and Alcoholics Anonymous, religious services, and gymnasium time. Most recently, the Sheriff's Office announced the reopening of the jail library. In conjunction with enhanced safety features and inmate services, the jail also increased staffing levels for the benefit of both deputies and inmates. The designation of the Glenwood Jail to a Community Alternative Sentencing Center allowed for

the transfer of 18 deputies back to the jail. The shift reduced overtime costs, sick time and injury leave pay.

Executive Shapiro outlined the need for aggressive Sheriff Deputy recruitment in response to the large number of deputies expected to retire in 2019 and 2020. In anticipation of these retirements, the Sheriff's Office, the Department of Job and Family Services and the University of Akron have partnered to provide scholarships to the University's police academy. Eligible recruits will receive tuition, uniforms and additional resources needed to complete their coursework. Upon passing the police academy exam, the recruits will become a Summit County Sheriff Deputy. Executive Shapiro announced that this collaboration has already supported seven recruits who are currently enrolled at the police academy. Additional recruitment events will be held on September 5 from 3:30 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. and September 7 from 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. Both events will be held at the Summit County OhioMeansJobs Center.

Her law enforcement update also included new details about the jointly operated computer-aided dispatch system currently used by the County and the Cities of Akron, Cuyahoga Falls, Fairlawn, Green and Stow. This new system is expected to save the communities \$7 million over 5 years and will provide first responders and dispatcher 21<sup>st</sup> century tools.

In keeping with her tradition of honoring local veterans, Executive Shapiro announced plans to create the Summit County Veterans Memorial Plaza outside the County Courthouse, the current home of the recently installed World War II plaques and the World War I Doughboy statue. Memorials from other foreign wars will be installed in the future to create the plaza. She also highlighted the success of the Summit County Stand Down for Homeless Veterans partnership with FirstEnergy Foundation. To date, the County and the foundation have donated \$80,000 to this local initiative that provides basic necessities to homeless and displaced veterans. Harking back to her previous address, Executive Shapiro stated the ribbon cutting ceremony for the Summit County Liberty House, the County's first female veterans housing unit, will be held on September 26.

Shifting to economic development, Executive Shapiro shined a light on a range of exciting new development projects throughout the County, from the Amazon distribution center in Akron and BWXT expansion in Barberton to the Stark State CDL training facility in Springfield and the soon-to-open Akron Children's Hospital office in Boston Heights. She attributed many of these recent successes to the Elevate Greater Akron strategy announced in the past year. In partnership with the City of Akron, the Greater Akron Chamber, and the GAR Foundation, the County is working to redesign its economic development system to meet the needs of its diverse businesses and residents. By coupling this strategy with the potential of the County's 13 job hubs and innovative collaboration with Metro RTA, ConxusNEO and others, Executive Shapiro expects even more economic growth in the coming months and years. She also expects the County's new economic development website, Summit4Success.com, to play a role in attracting and retaining business. The website, launched in March, is a one-stop information site for business owners, site selectors and residents, and features a PBS-produced short film detailing the benefits of doing business in Summit County.

In the next year, Executive Shapiro anticipates building on successes of the past year and continuing to move Summit County forward. In a major announcement, she shared that she intends

to introduce legislation at County Council in the coming month to develop the Austen BioInnovation Institute in Akron into a new \$16.9 million world headquarters and research and development facility for The Smithers Group. This new facility will be made possible through a collaboration between The Smithers Group, the County, the City of Akron, the Development Finance Authority, Akron Children's Hospital, FirstEnergy, and the Welty Building Company. Executive Shapiro said the project will continue the transformation of downtown Akron and serve as a gateway welcoming those entering downtown from the North.

She also urged all in attendance to support the Alcohol, Drug Addiction and Mental Health Services Board levy that will appear on the ballot in the 2019 general election to be held on November 5. Citing the community's battle with opioid addiction, Executive Shapiro explained the need to back the agency on the frontlines of the fighting addiction. She assured the community that the County and its legal team are working diligently to prepare for the upcoming opioid litigation case set to begin on October 21.

Executive Shapiro emphasized the importance of the 2020 Census and the effect it will have on Summit County for the next 10 years in terms of federal funding, representation and redistricting. She encouraged the community to educate themselves and to encourage their families and their friends to complete the Census. Keeping a focus on 2020, Executive Shapiro also announced plans to mark the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment. Over the past few months, she has been helping to assemble a task force of local leaders who will work together to plan local events and share information about the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment, with special focus on reminding the public that as monumental as the amendment was at the time, it did not grant all women the right to vote. To aid this effort, the task force launched a website, [SummitSuffrageCentennial.com](http://SummitSuffrageCentennial.com), that will serve as a central location for initiative information.

In closing, Executive Shapiro thanked the community for its contribution to the momentum currently carrying Summit County forward and invited everyone to join the County on an exciting adventure into the future.



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