

# News Release



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## **County Partners with Direction Home to Provide Technology, Other Resources to Older Adults**

**SUMMIT COUNTY, OHIO**—Summit County Executive Ilene Shapiro and County Council recently passed legislation to send \$610,000 in federal CARES Act funding to Direction Home Akron-Canton for the purchase of devices and wireless internet hotspots for older adults, the development of nursing facility support resources and for meals and wellness kits. Direction Home will work with local nursing facilities, senior apartment buildings and other community organizations to distribute the resources.

“Our older adults living independently and in congregate facilities are facing unique challenges due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Because this virus is especially dangerous the older an individual is, our older adults, their families and those who advocate for them have had to drastically alter how they interact,” said Executive Shapiro. “Despite these changes in our routines, we need to make sure our older adults are able to socially interact with loved ones and contact advocates as needed.”

More than half the funds will be used to purchase laptops, desktops and tablets as well as personal internet hotspots and other technology devices. Items will be available to individual residents and congregate facilities for shared use. The distribution of technology resources will be targeted to individuals limiting social interaction due to COVID-19 and who are at risk of isolation, depression and anxiety.

“The older adults we serve have encountered serious challenges as a result of COVID-19, from staying in touch with family to accessing critical resources like the Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program,” said Abigail Morgan, COO of Direction Home. “We applaud Executive Shapiro and the County Council members for recognizing this need in our community. These resources will make a difference in the health and wellness of Summit County older adults.”

In response to limited access to family, healthcare professionals and advocates due to COVID-19, a portion of the funds will be used to develop online resources and advocacy portals for nursing

facility residents. Working with the Summit County Nursing Facility Taskforce and other local organizations, Direction Home will create secure online web forms for submitting complaints and requests for advocacy visits. New content on rights and resources will also be added to existing resources like GettingWiser.org and the Direction Home website.

“Despite the many issues posed by the pandemic, we must ensure our older adults in nursing facilities are well cared for and able to access the services and resources they need,” said Summit County Council President and Nursing Home Task Force Chair Jeff Wilhite. “Working with Direction Home and our nursing home facilities to develop needed resources, we will keep residents healthy and safe.”

To help meet basic needs, Direction Home will purchase 20,000 meals and create 1,000 wellness kits for residents over 60. The agency will work with senior meal providers and local restaurants to provide pick-up and delivery options. The wellness kits will include cloth masks, hand sanitizer, activity books, voter resources and community resources directories.

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