

**NEWS RELEASE**

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



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**Contact:** Greta Johnson  
Director of Communications & Assistant Chief of Staff  
Office of Executive Shapiro  
[gjohnson@summitoh.net](mailto:gjohnson@summitoh.net)  
330-643-2656

**Summit County celebrates Welcoming Week**

**SUMMIT COUNTY, OHIO**—Summit County, along with communities around the nation, has begun celebrating Welcoming Week, an annual celebration of refugees, new Americans and long-time residents, sponsored by Welcoming America, a national nonprofit promoting inclusive communities. The theme of Welcoming Week 2021 is “Belonging Begins With Us”, which aims to draw attention to the language barriers and cultural differences that impact the feeling of belonging among refugees and new Americans. This week of recognition runs September 10-19.

“We celebrate Welcoming Week as a way of bringing neighbors from different communities of the world together to build relationships and work together on shared goals right here in Summit County,” said County Executive Ilene Shapiro. “The welcoming of new residents is vital to our community, as they bring ideas, start businesses, serve in civic roles, work in critical conditions, and contribute to the spirited diversity in our community.”

Since 2012, Welcoming Week has served as the annual campaign and celebration led by Welcoming America to showcase the growing movement of communities striving to be more welcoming places for all, including immigrants. By fostering mutual respect and cooperation between new and long-time residents, Welcoming Week brings together people across lines of difference toward greater prosperity for all.

In 2015, then County Executive Russ Pry and County Council passed a resolution declaring Summit County a Welcoming Community, with the goal of creating inclusive policies and practices to help refugees and immigrants feel welcome. County Executive Shapiro’s staff has continued to advance this goal wherever possible. In recent weeks, local, national and global attention has been fixed on Afghans seeking refuge in the United States. Residents interested in supporting refugees should review information available on the International Institute of Akron’s website, <https://www.iiakron.org/>,

Welcoming Week is sponsoring hundreds of events, including virtual options, throughout the nation. A full listing of events is at <https://welcomingamerica.org/initiatives/welcoming-week/events>.

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