



News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Date: January 10, 2023

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Summit County Recognized as Dementia Friendly Community

SUMMIT COUNTY, OHIO—Summit County is now recognized by Dementia Friendly America® as a Dementia Friendly Community. With a strong coalition of partners, Dementia Friendly Summit County will begin working toward making its 31 communities more accessible, accepting, and livable for residents living with all forms of dementia.

In gaining this recognition, Summit County joins communities across the United States embarking on the Dementia Friendly process set forth by [Dementia Friendly America \(DFA\)](#). Dementia Friendly America is a national network of communities, organizations, and individuals seeking to ensure that communities across the U.S. are equipped to support people living with dementia as well as their care partners. Communities must meet DFA's criteria before being granted this designation. By demonstrating strong cross-sector partnerships, inclusive leadership, a champion organization, and commitments to Dementia-Friendly practices, goals, and progress tracking, Summit County was granted the title "Dementia Friendly."

Led by the Akron-Summit County Public Library, the Dementia Friendly coalition includes Direction Home Akron Canton Area Agency on Aging & Disabilities, Summit County Executive Ilene Shapiro, Summit County Public Health, the Summit County Developmental Disabilities Board, Asian Services in Action (ASIA), the Greater East Ohio Area Chapter of the Alzheimer's Association, and Kim Peterson, Community-Based Care Partner. Summa Health and NEOMED supported this initiative through Ohio's Geriatric Workforce Enhancement Program (GWEP) grant funded by the federal Health Resources & Services Administration. The Ohio Council for Cognitive Health, the Dementia Friendly America state lead, serves as guide and advisor to the coalition.

"We are gratified that Dementia Friendly America has recognized Summit County as a Dementia-Friendly Community. Summit County partners in this initiative have built on the strength of existing partnerships and collaborations to plan for positive change," said Akron-Summit County Public Library Executive Director Pam Hickson-Stevenson, "We look forward to seeing how the work done through these partnerships improves the quality of life for people living with dementia."

In the year ahead, Dementia Friendly Summit County will focus on eliminating the stigma around a dementia diagnosis, amplifying the voices of those living with dementia and their care partners, expanding the reach of Dementia Friends workshops, and exploring programming opportunities that ensure living well with dementia.

“This designation is a crucial step toward eliminating the stigma around dementia and folks living with dementia,” said Summit County Executive Ilene Shapiro, “And it strongly aligns with our all-hands-on-deck approach to supporting people with dementia and older adults in Summit County. Our partners never cease to amaze with their level of commitment and coordination in all that they do for our residents.”

Dementia Friendly Summit County builds on the momentum of the ongoing Age Friendly work led jointly by [Summit County](#) and the [City of Akron](#). Together, these initiatives serve to improve the lives of older residents and residents living with dementia alike and reaffirm the commitment of local governments, agencies, organizations, businesses, leaders, and residents to building an inclusive, healthy, vibrant community that we all can call home.

For more information on Dementia Friendly Summit County see dfamerica.org. To get involved, contact Deputy Director Michelle Alleman at malleman@akronlibrary.org.

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