

NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Summit County celebrates Black History Month

SUMMIT COUNTY, OHIO—County Executive Ilene Shapiro and County Council passed legislation declaring February 2023 Black History Month in Summit County. The resolution commemorates the many contributions of Black Americans to this county and country in the face of great challenges. The resolution also passed unanimously under the first Black woman to serve as Council President, Councilwoman Veronica Sims, District 5.

“Black History Month is certainly a time to reflect, learn, and envision a community that is inclusive and equitable all around,” said Executive Shapiro, “But it is also about history in the making. We have an incredible opportunity in our County, with strong leadership and coordination, to continue to advance the tenets of equality and justice for the Black community.”

This year we are reminded of the strides made by Black elected-officials in Summit County. In addition to Council President Sims, U.S. Representative Emilia Sykes was recently elected to Congress to represent District 11, which includes all of Summit County, and Domestic Relations Court Judge Kani Hightower was elected as the first Black woman to serve on the Summit County Common Pleas bench. Additionally, current Akron Council President Margo Sommerville became the first Black woman to serve in her role, and current Akron Municipal Court Judges David Hamilton and Annalisa S. Williams follow in the footsteps of groundbreaking Judges Carla Moore and Joseph D. Roulhac. Judge Carla Moore served as both an Akron Municipal Court Judge and an Appellate Judge for Ohio’s 9th District. In a County where Sojourner Truth spoke before both the Civil War and the Civil Rights Movement about the idea that Black people and Black women deserve liberation, dignity, and equality as much as any person in this country, our leaders are still taking up the call one-hundred-and-seventy-two years later.

“Every February we both celebrate and are reminded of what we have accomplished and what we have yet to do,” said Council President Sims. “Black History Month is a time to recognize achievement, but as long as we continue to see disparities in income, in education, in housing and in health caused by racism, we know that there is still much work to be done. We must remain committed to our work in righting these inequities. I am honored to be in a position of leadership to help facilitate change and look forward to continuing our transformation towards a more equitable Summit County for everyone.”

The origins of Black History Month are tied to Northeast Ohio with one of the first recorded celebrations of Black history being held at Kent State University by the Center of Pan-African Culture and Black United Students. The now Department of Africana Studies and Black United Students continue to celebrate Black history and this year the university is hosting Dr. Bernice A. King, the daughter of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., for an event on February 2, 2023. Members of the public are encouraged to attend.

Other local events include:

The Underground Railroad

Akron-Summit County Public Library, Kenmore Branch

Virtual, Zoom

Monday, February 20 at 6:00pm

Black History Month Community Read

Akron-Summit County Public Library, Nordonias Hills Branch

Saturday, February 25 at 2:00pm

Rethinking Race Keynote: Michelle Alexander, Esq.

The University of Akron

E.J. Thomas Performing Arts Hall, 198 Hill St., Akron, Ohio 44325

Monday, February 27 at 7:00pm

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