

NEWS RELEASE

Ilene Shapiro – Summit County Executive
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE



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Summit County grants \$275,000 to Sojourner Truth Statue Fund

SUMMIT COUNTY, OHIO—County Executive Shapiro and County Council are pleased to announce they are providing a \$275,000 grant to United Way of Summit and Medina Counties to support the Sojourner Truth Statue Fund. The grants funds will aid the completion of a Sojourner Truth statue and the Truth Plaza. The County previously provided \$25,000 to the statue fund.

In 2019, County Executive Shapiro, members of Council, and other community leaders gathered to form the Summit Suffrage Centennial, to plan the celebration of the 100th anniversary of women’s suffrage, to educate the public on the progress made over the last 100 years, and to honor the fight for voting rights for all women, especially those women of color who were excluded from voting until the 1960s.

From this initiative came a renewed effort to erect a statue of Sojourner Truth in downtown Akron. The Sojourner Truth Project – Akron, led by Towanda Mullins, is working to raise funds for Sojourner Truth Memorial Monument, a new national monument that will feature a statue of Sojourner Truth, situated in Truth Plaza, next to the United Way’s Sojourner Truth Building on North High Street. The building is the location of Truth’s famous speech, commonly titled “Ain’t I a Woman?”.

“Sojourner dedicated her life to women’s rights and civil rights, even as she faced insurmountable odds, and the unrelenting racism and sexism of her time. She blazed a trail for us to follow, helping to ensure her vision and commitment to equality would live long after she no longer walked among us,” said County Executive Shapiro. “It is only right that we honor her in the place where her famous speech altered, forever, the lives of women throughout our nation and world.”

The project committee has worked since 2020 to raise funds to erect a statue of Sojourner Truth and construct the Truth Memorial Plaza, garnering support from community organizations that have partnered to make this vision a reality, including the City of Akron, the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation, United Way, the Akron Community Foundation, the GAR Foundation, and numerous other organizations, businesses, families, and individuals.

The statue is designed by Akron native and internationally known artist, Woodrow Nash. Truth Plaza is the design work of Dion Harris, Landscape Architect for Summit Metro Parks. That plaza and statue are expected to be complete this fall. Residents are encouraged to learn more about Sojourner Truth and her

time in Summit County by visiting SummitSuffrageCentennial.com and can learn more about the fundraising efforts at truthstatue.org.

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