

# NEWS RELEASE

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



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## **Summit County earns national achievement awards for three new initiatives**

**SUMMIT COUNTY, OHIO**—Summit County has been recognized with three Achievement Awards from the National Association of Counties (NACo). The awards honor innovative, effective county government programs that strengthen services for residents. The Summit County Emergency Communications Center (SECC), Summit County’s Age-Friendly business designation, and Summit County Animal Control’s Community Pet Food Party received national achievement awards in the Criminal Justice and Public Safety and Human Services categories respectively.

“Being recognized nationally is a great honor and a testament to our success at building innovative and creative solutions here,” said Executive Shapiro. “Whether it’s loading dog food in the back of a resident’s car, investing in state-of-the-art technology to support our dispatchers and first responders, or facilitating the celebration and inclusion of older adults in our community, these are no small feats.”

The Summit County Emergency Communications Center (SECC) opened in October 2023. It currently serves two out of three county residents. Recognizing the need to consolidate dispatch operations due to rising costs and reduced state funding, the County used its role as a trusted partner to bring together five cities and the Sheriff’s Office in one location. SECC provides faster, more connected, and more precise 9-1-1 services when they are needed most. By combining into one facility, the County and cities are also leveraging their collective purchasing power to provide training, quality assurance, and supervision.

The Age-Friendly Accreditation Program is administered by the Better Business Bureau (BBB) of Akron for businesses and institutions that meet a set of Age-Friendly criteria vetted by BBB staff and older adult volunteers. The pilot launched in May 2023 with the Akron Zoo, making it the first zoo in Ohio to achieve an Age-Friendly designation. Less than a year in, BBB Akron boasts the second largest program in the country across 92 BBBs, with 25 Accredited Businesses, Charities, and Community Partners certified as Age-Friendly. As the population of Summit County – and the United States – ages, it is programs like these that help ensure businesses and community institutions are well-equipped to do business with older adults.

The Community Pet Food Pantry is a monthly drive-thru event held at Summit County Animal Control that provides free pet food and pet supplies to residents in need. Since its inception in November 2022, the pantry event has distributed over 350,000 pounds of pet food and supplies directly into the community. In 2023, the Community Pet Food Pantry served on average 212 households, 698 cats, and 470 dogs each month. All pet food and supplies are donated via the facility's partnership with Greater Good Charities and local nonprofit organizations. The program was borne out of a growing need in the community to afford pet food amidst rising grocery costs. When families cannot afford to care for their pets, these abandoned animals often end up at Animal Control or other shelters. The Community Pet Food Pantry is designed to keep pets healthy and at home with their families, out of Animal Control's custody, and to prevent residents from having to choose between feeding themselves or their pets.

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