

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 County Executive Shapiro
ExecutivePress@summitoh.net
330-643-2656

Summit County recognizes Overdose Awareness Day, offers support to residents

SUMMIT COUNTY, OHIO—County Executive Ilene Shapiro, Summit County Public Health (SCPH), Summit Recovery Hub and Summit Artspace are asking residents to join them in recognizing Overdose Awareness Day on Saturday, August 31. Each year, the County and many community partners honor and remember those lost to an overdose and raise awareness about stigma, as well as resources available to those affected by substance use disorders.

“On Overdose Awareness Day, I am asking our entire community to take a moment and remember the family members, friends, neighbors and loved ones lost to this devastating epidemic. Nearly all of us have been touched by this epidemic in one way or another. A simple step each of us can take to help stop overdoses is to push back against stigma. Rather than tear down those who are struggling, let’s recognize all the resources we have available to build people back up,” said County Executive Shapiro.

For the second year, SCPH and Summit Artspace collaborated to host the Overdose Awareness Exhibition. The exhibit features work by local artists exploring a personal experience with overdose and addiction, honoring a loved one who has died, or serving as an ally for those who have struggled. The exhibit opened on July 12 and runs through September 14. On Overdose Awareness Day, Summit Recovery Hub is asking advocates to gather at Summit Artspace at 2:00 p.m. for a moment of silence. All are invited to join. Residents can visit Summit Artspace, located at 140 East Market St in Akron, for free on Fridays from noon to 7:00 p.m. and on Saturdays from 11:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

“Summit Artspace is proud to once again host the Overdose Awareness Exhibition. This is a special opportunity for us to uplift our local artists who have a personal connection to substance use and overdoses, and to provide a venue for their creative works. I urge residents to take an hour or two to view this incredible exhibition,” said Summit Artspace Executive Director Heather Meeker.

According to data from Summit County Public Health, there were at least 357 overdoses in Summit County in 2023. These numbers reflect only those incidents that resulted in an emergency room visit. There were likely far more unreported overdoses. Sadly, 203 Summit County residents lost their lives to an overdose last year.

To prevent overdoses and other associated harms, SCPH provides residents several resources. Syringe exchange, wound care, fentanyl test strips and Narcan distribution are all available at weekly clinics. Clinic locations and hours are available at <https://www.scph.org/counseling/summit-safe-syringe-exchange>. Residents can also receive fentanyl test strips and Narcan through the mail by registering at <https://www.scph.org/counseling/mail-order>.

“SCPH continues to prioritize harm reduction as a key tool in combatting overdoses and substance use. We know recovery is possible, but only if a person survives an overdose and gets into treatment. By working together to raise awareness and reduce stigma, we give those struggling a chance to get better,” said SCPH Commissioner Donna Skoda.

SCPH has also led the charge to install NaloxBoxes throughout Summit County through its Project DAWN program. Currently, 230 boxes are located in various sites, including twenty in County buildings. Like first aid kits and AEDs, NaloxBoxes are mounted on a wall and contain two doses of naloxone, also known by its brand-name Narcan. In the event of an overdose, these boxes can be the difference between life and death. For more information about Project DAWN, please visit <https://www.scph.org/counseling/project-dawn-narcan>.

Summit County residents in need of substance use resources should call the ADM Addiction Helpline at 330-940-1133. Residents in crisis should call 9-8-8.

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