

# NEWS RELEASE

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



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## **County celebrates Digital Inclusion Week, promotes digital equity for residents**

**SUMMIT COUNTY, OHIO**—Summit County Executive Ilene Shapiro is observing Digital Inclusion Week from October 7-11, 2024, joining the National Digital Inclusion Alliance (NDIA) to raise awareness on the importance of bridging the digital divide. Digital inclusion encompasses three critical areas: affordable internet, access to suitable devices, and digital skills training.

In Summit County, 12% of households have no access to broadband, with data showing low-income households, older residents, and Black residents have the least access to broadband. Several projects have been launched to close this gap and to take further steps to increase affordability, quality, and digital skills. Summit Connects, a county-led broadband initiative, creates infrastructure from which local governments, non-profits, and businesses can bridge the digital divide through affordable, high-speed internet and other technology projects that benefit the public.

In our digital world, scams are becoming more sophisticated and frequent. The County continues to be out front in combatting scammers by offering a wide range of Scam Awareness materials. This past year, County Executive Shapiro, Prosecutor Elliot Kolkovich, and Sheriff Kandy Fatheree launched “Outsmart the Scam,” an event series dedicated to educating residents on how to recognize and stop scammers in the act. The next event will be a workshop with breakout sessions based on digital skill levels and hands-on assistance from digital navigators. “Outsmart the Scam Workshop” will be held at Tallmadge High School (140 N Munroe Road, Tallmadge) on Saturday, October 19 from 10:00am-12:00pm. Residents can also access scam safety information at <https://co.summitoh.net/ScamSafety>.

The County is also leading a Digital Equity Steering Committee dedicated to pursuing digital equity and inclusion. The group is moving forward with plans to create a digital asset map for residents to look up digital resources nearby, such as public Wi-Fi, devices, and digital literacy training.

Taking the next step in this process, the County recently applied for a \$12 million federal grant to fund digital navigators throughout the County and in Akron Metropolitan Housing Association facilities. This grant would increase the County’s capacity to reach residents currently disconnected from family, friends, and necessary resources like banking, education, or job training.

“Our digital world has exploded in a very short period of time, and it’s our mission to try and keep our residents informed on how to navigate that world and access everything they need to accomplish their goals,” said Executive Shapiro. “By educating our residents about common scams they may encounter, connecting them to devices, and providing judgment-free instruction to utilize those devices safely and successfully, we can help ensure everyone has opportunities to work, learn, and connect in our digital age.”

For more information about the National Digital Inclusion Alliance and Digital Inclusion Week nationwide, visit: [digitalinclusion.org](https://digitalinclusion.org). For more information on Summit Connects, visit: [co.summitoh.net/pages/Summit-Connects](https://co.summitoh.net/pages/Summit-Connects)

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