



State of the County Address

—
The Akron Press Club
John S. Knight Center
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COUNTY OF SUMMIT
THE HIGH POINT OF OHIO
RUSSELL M. PRY, EXECUTIVE



Thank you, Akron Press Club, for hosting us today. Thank you, Bruce, for that wonderful introduction. I would like to especially thank Ron Syroid, Scott Piepho and Jim Nolte for all of their hard work on today's event.

Also, I want to thank Susan Hamo and her exceptional staff here at the John S. Knight Center for their hospitality. This is a beautiful venue and one of our community's greatest assets. We are fortunate to now have Greystone Hall as part of our Convention and Visitors Bureau and congratulations to the staff for merging the two facilities into a first class meeting and events facility.

We are pleased to have our interpreter, Jenn Mangano, with us today. Thank you, Jenn.

I stood before you one year ago and described a future with economic uncertainty. I described programs and budget cuts that we would be implementing over the next year to combat declines in revenue. I was hopeful that we, as an organization, would be able to provide creative, innovative and fair solutions that would cut our budget enough to survive this economic recession. I believe we reached our goal.

As you may recall, the County's first order of business was to design and implement a Voluntary Separation Plan. The VSP was offered to all county employees and provided incentives to those who would voluntarily separate from county employment. The plan was very successful thanks to the two hundred county employees who took advantage of the VSP. Their annual salaries and benefits saved our County \$12.5 million. These savings were instrumental in averting layoffs.

In addition to the VSP, the County of Summit adopted a hiring freeze to reduce spending and non-bargaining employees did not receive a cost of living increase for the second year in a row. Employees were also encouraged to participate in a voluntary 72 hour pay period and the Executive's employees were required to take furlough/cost saving days in both 2009 and 2010. The success in meeting our goal of reduced spending is due in large part to employee participation.

Many of you here today were responsive to our call to share the burden, and I would personally like to thank you and to acknowledge the sacrifices made by you and your families.

Over the past year, our county elected officials worked together, created a cost saving plan and delivered their budgets within the goals set by my Department of Finance and Budget. I want to thank Fiscal Officer John Donofrio, Clerk of Courts

Dan Horrigan, Prosecutor Sherri Bevan Walsh, Sheriff Drew Alexander, Engineer Al Brubaker, and the entire County Council: President Jon Poda, Nick Kostandaras, Ilene Shapiro, John Schmidt, Pete Crossland, Frank Comunale, Gloria Rodgers, Tim Crawford, Jerry Feeman, Cazzell Smith and Paula Prentice. Balancing our budget, making tough decisions, working together to control current and future spending in order to balance our budget would not have happened without the cooperation and trust of these individuals. Let us thank and recognize these leaders.

As of March 15 this year, we remain cautiously optimistic that the worst is over in terms of the economic slide that has occurred here in Summit County. For the first three months of this year, county sales tax receipts are down 1% over the same period a year ago.

In addition we've seen a 4% gain in conveyance taxes from the sale of property in the county.

Another trend we watch is our building permit fees. The County's permit fees remain relatively on par with activity from the first two months of 2009. No decrease is a good thing.

While these revenue changes remain significantly below levels of a few years ago, this trend does follow the same pattern that began to emerge in the fourth quarter of 2009 and provides us with some hope that we may start to turn the corner.

While unemployment continues to be a drag on the economy and on our own county budget, it is the economic activity that is generated from consumer spending that will eventually lead us out of this recession and reduce the unemployment situation.

We must remember that our 2010 budget has 7 million dollars of one time money and that dictates that we will need to be vigilant in monitoring our expenses and revenue as we go into 2010 and beyond. While we will continue to monitor indicators both on a national and local level, we must maintain our cost cutting programs and continue exploring new ways to regionalize and collaborate.

Many times, successful projects come out of having to cut back and doing more with less. Last year, the City of Akron and the County of Summit merged their Divisions of Building Standards. Blending two government entities and two unions is not an easy task, but my staff, along with the Fiscal Office hammered out all the details and made it happen. Our new Division of Building Standards is

working efficiently, creating new services and streamlining the way we do business. Based on internal data, this consolidation reversed a trend of declining revenues and permits issued and saved the County approximately \$400,000 in 2009.

Because of its success, we are reaching out to other communities in Summit County to, hopefully, begin a process that will also consolidate their services with ours. This economy gives us no choice but to join together on projects that not only save dollars, but continue to provide the high quality of service our citizens have come to expect.

Last month, I introduced to County Council a resolution to become a state certified Medical Gases Permitting and Inspection entity. I am pleased to say we will be receiving that certification any day. Medical gases are found primarily in medical facilities, dental offices and nursing homes.

Whenever a business builds or remodels space where medical gases are located, they must go through a plans approval and equipment examination. Currently, the process is time consuming and inconvenient. If a hospital were to build a new facility here in Akron, their medical gas system would have to get approval in Reynoldsburg, quite a drive. After the plans approval, one of only 8 state inspectors would be scheduled to come to Akron for an examination of equipment. The process could take days if not weeks.

Our new service in Summit County will provide plans approval and inspection in less than a week and at a 20% reduction in fees. My administration saw an opportunity to make government more efficient and then moved forward to change the way we do business in Summit County. We appreciate and value businesses throughout our county and strive to make it easier, less expensive and smarter to do business right here.

The Department of Economic Development Task Force has been busy over the past year assisting in creating and retaining jobs. In just one year, we show 1,604 jobs were retained and 4,000 new jobs were created. These jobs reflect a total payroll of more than \$110 million.

The Department also administered and facilitated the funding for approximately \$13 million in grants and loans to Summit County communities for 21 infrastructure improvement projects through Issue 1. Also, five Brownfield sites in Summit County received approximately \$8.2 million in Clean Ohio Revitalization Fund Grants for remediation.

When you cut your budget and your staff, there is always the worry that services to citizens may suffer. That has not been the case in fact, we have provided more outreach than ever before.

Last summer, my administration established a temporary employment transition center within the Chrysler Stamping Plant, in Twinsburg, as a way to begin assisting soon to be displaced auto workers in identifying future education, training, and employment opportunities. The Transition Center is now located at the Twinsburg Library on Ravenna Road.

Representatives from the Summit County Department of Job and Family Services, as well as agents from the State of Ohio and a regional collaborative of workforce investment partners, were on hand to individually meet with the employees and link individuals to training, education, and employment opportunities.

This service was funded through a U.S. Department of Labor National Emergency Grant that supports innovative strategies that assist dislocated workers, and the communities in which they live and work, to recover economically from the effects of plant closures and mass layoffs.

Even with the challenges we face, we have worked together and accomplished much. Last September, the County opened the Veterans Service Commission facility on East Waterloo Road in Akron. This modern 16,000 square foot, handicap accessible building provides 25 offices, a multipurpose room, a Veterans Learning Center and a 90 space parking lot. And if I may take a moment to not only thank everyone who made this dream become a reality, but to also thank all of our veterans for their courage and dedication to the United States of America. I was very proud to stand with VSC Executive Director George Baker, Board members, Jack Ryan and Mike Stith, and veterans from across our county to open this much needed and long overdue facility.

The County continues to move forward with the Goodyear Headquarters Project. The County, City, and Port Authority are continuing to meet on a regular basis with Goodyear and IRG with the hope of finalizing the financing of the Goodyear headquarters project. The landscape for commercial real estate projects has changed dramatically over the course of the past year and a half, which has significantly impacted this project. Tighter credit standards and the increase in the cost of capital, coupled with the scarcity of available capital, have all had an effect on the project.

The county continues to stand committed to this project and we are continuing to work with all of the parties involved to bring this project to fruition. Goodyear is important to our County and I am pleased to be part of the team.

The Bridgestone - Firestone Technical Center is also moving forward. Last month, we stood in snow, shovels in hand, celebrating the commitment to break ground on the new facility in April. It is not often that you can play a major role in keeping 1,000 high salaried, high tech jobs in Summit County. We are looking forward to the 260,000 square-foot facility being finished by the end of 2011. I am proud the County of Summit could play a major role in this project.

The Summit County Port Authority has played a major role as well. Chris Burnham, along with his staff, has been our partner on many projects throughout the years and many jobs have been created and retained because of their commitment and dedication.

Job creation is very important, and last year, my Job and Family Services received \$4.5 million in Workforce Investment Act stimulus dollars with over \$1 million allocated to provide summer youth jobs in Summit County. This is a great opportunity for our youth and our community.

1,000 young students were able to work and earn extra money, learn a trade, find a mentor and even get tutoring. The County's Youth Employment for Success received funding for 100 at risk kids. Through the assistance of the Soap Box Derby, East Akron YMCA, Goodwill, Interfaith Hospitality Network, Lawton Street Community Center, Open M, and Western Reserve Outreach Center, these students were employed. They learned the responsibilities of holding a job; they learned respect, job etiquette and the joy of accomplishment.

The YES students created a video about their experience as part of the program. They developed the concept of the video, prepared questions to ask other YES students during the interviews and served as the interviewer. During one interview, one student asked another, "What didn't you like about the program?" Without missing a beat the student replied, "I didn't like the taxes taken out of my pay check." I bet that student never thought about taxes before this program. That is why exposing and preparing our youth for what lies ahead, makes for a better workforce in the future.

We have not heard yet if we will be funding Summer Youth opportunities this year, but if we are lucky enough to receive additional stimulus dollars for this program, I want to ask you all to be a partner, to enlist some of our at risk kids to

work for your companies this summer. The Federal grant pays their salary; we recruit, screen and place the students. Your responsibility is to share your knowledge, experience and skill so that they can move forward using all you have provided as guidance and inspiration.

Health care costs are budget breakers in today's economy. That is why in January of this year, I asked my Department of Insurance to design a program that would allow other government entities to join our health care plan. This program, Summit Health, will provide political subdivisions with the advantage of our purchasing power and claim credibility to create sustainability within their health care programs and other benefits. Highlights of this program include; multiple benefit options, incentive for utilizing the county pharmacy, EAP services and wellness programs. This service is regionalism at its best and we welcome your interest.

Last month, *SCRIPTS* Pharmacy opened in the Ohio Building. *SCRIPTS* is a partnership between the County of Summit and ExpressMed Pharmacy, the County's prescription benefits provider. The Pharmacy is open to County of Summit employees and the general public. The partnership will aide in keeping the County's health care costs as low as possible and help support the health care safety nets in the County. The County will receive rental income as well as 30% of the net profits from *SCRIPTS*. While County employees are not required to use the Pharmacy, it is the Pharmacy's goal to make it as easy as possible for County employees to obtain their prescriptions. There are many benefits to *SCRIPTS*, including over 400 generic medications for \$4, future on-site delivery and 90 day prescription supply for one co-pay. This partnership will benefit employees with reduced prescription costs and the convenience of a pharmacy at work. One of the future programs being discussed may include drug reclamation. This program will be good for our citizens, good for our environment and good for our region.

My Division of Public Safety plays a major role in regionalism and brings in almost \$3 million in grant funds annually. These funds are used to support county and regional emergency management and criminal justice projects involving fire, law enforcement, public safety, emergency medical services, hospitals, health departments and communications.

Public Safety was involved in the Akron Canton Airport full scale exercise last year, a county-wide Crisis Intervention Team training, and a Summit County Criminal Justice and Mental Health Forum. Public Safety, through a State Homeland Security Grant, is also providing emergency notification software to communications personnel free of charge.

This notification software is needed for response activation and information.

Last year, Emergency Management announced that a mix of local municipalities and educational institutions throughout the community would be receiving Federal Emergency Management Agency Public Assistance Reimbursement Funds.

These federal dollars were refunded back to twenty-eight Summit County agencies as a result of the severe wind storm that blew through the community on Sunday, September 14, 2008. EMA worked with local governments and school systems to collect data for reimbursements and coordinated the process of filings. The total amount of reimbursement EMA was able to bring back to Summit County topped one million dollars.

As unlucky as we were in seeing revenue decrease, we were very lucky to capture stimulus dollars to assist with providing other communities and agencies with funding for much needed projects. The stimulus package also provides job creation, job training, assistance and low interest bonds for capital improvements. I would like to thank U.S. Senator Sherrod Brown, Congressman Tim Ryan and Congresswoman Betty Sutton for support of these projects.

In May of 2009, the Ohio Department of Development announced plans to award over \$7 million in American Recovery and Reinvestment Act dollars to Summit County for the purpose of boosting the Home Weatherization Assistance Program HWAP.

HWAP is a weatherization program designed to reduce energy cost for low-income families, particularly the elderly, disabled and families with young children. For those citizens who qualify, the program offers tune-ups and repair of certain appliances, home insulation, sealing of heating ducts and personalized energy management plans. This service is more important today than ever before and my staff works passionately to reach out to our citizens who need this assistance.

The County also received nearly \$274,000 in stimulus dollars for our Community Development Block Grant (CDBG). From that allocation, the City of Tallmadge received \$100,000 for waterline replacement for a low to moderate income neighborhood. The project is complete. The City of Stow also received \$100,000 for waterline replacement and is currently under construction.

The remaining \$76,000 was used as matching funds for the replacement of septic systems for low to moderate income family homes. This money was used in conjunction with the Household Sewage Treatment System Program.

My Department of Environmental Services was the recipient of \$626,000 in loans and \$294,000 in grant Stimulus funding through the Ohio EPA for three projects.

Also included in the Stimulus Bill was Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant allocation for the County in the amount of \$2.7 million.

This grant program had been created prior to the Stimulus Bill, but had never been funded previously. The purpose of the EECBG program is to provide federal grants to local governments to reduce energy use and fossil fuel emissions and improve energy efficiency.

My administration decided to retain a portion of the allocation, \$1.7 million to improve energy efficiency in County buildings, and used the balance to create both a loan and grant fund with emphasis on using these funds to reduce public and private entities' energy consumption by seeing that the funds were used to retrofit and make energy efficiency upgrades to buildings. This will provide a community wide benefit by reducing the amount of fossil fuel energy that is consumed by these buildings.

We are currently in the process of bidding or preparing the bids for these projects. In the event the bids come in at less than these amounts, we will recapture those funds and use them on additional County building projects.

The County set aside \$500,000 of its allocation to make matching grants to local communities and non-profit organizations. All of the entities that requested funds were able to receive funding, and include the City of New Franklin, City of Twinsburg, Akron Summit Library, Copley Township and Goodwill Industries, to name a few.

The County also set aside \$500,000 of its allocation for a loan program for Summit County businesses. Through an application process, the County received loan applications for AA Blueprint in the amount of \$75,000 and Digital Color Imaging in the amount of \$98,000. Both loans have been approved.

My staff has worked hard, and sometimes with very little time, to make sure we distribute and spent federal dollars efficiently and effectively. I was not surprised

when the Department of Energy recently asked for permission to submit a summary of our County's Community and Non-profit Organization Matching Grant Program to the Department of Energy Headquarters to be used as a national model. They believe the program shows innovative thinking, creativity and establishes a clear method to measure results.

You will find on your table, a detailed summary of all stimulus funded programs throughout Summit County.

Last year during my State of the County, I called upon many of you to join a newly created Steering Committee, made up of Juvenile Court Judge Linda Tucci Teodosio, John Saros of Children Services, David Jennings of the Akron Summit Library and myself in an early childhood initiative titled First Things First. This initiative was lead by Tonya Block from the Summit County Health Department and an Advisory Committee made up of Donae Eckert, Akron Community Foundation, David Jennings, Akron-Summit County Library, Donna Skoda, Summit County Health District, Amy Swanson, Voices for Ohio's Children, Kirstin Toth, GAR Foundation and Chris Yuhasz, Akron Metropolitan Housing Authority.

Statistics show us in order to build a strong economy for tomorrow and support families who are struggling today we must invest in our youngest children.

In July 2009, the First Things First strategic planning process began with a host of community stakeholders brought together to develop a comprehensive plan that would enhance the early childhood service-delivery system in Summit County.

The Family and Children First Council coordinated and facilitated several meetings attended by more than 50 agencies. The first step in the process was to conduct an early childhood community assessment to identify assets and barriers to creating a comprehensive early childhood system, and to serve as the foundation for the plan.

Families and Children First Council and the Advisory Committee are in the final stages of refining the plan, which will describe strategic directions for the coming years and initial implementation steps, particularly for the first two years.

The Steering and Advisory Committee will hold a community meeting in late April to report out to the community.

First Things First has been as an amazing accomplishment for our County. In less than one year, the work done on behalf of First Things First, will completely change the landscape of early childhood development in Summit County.

I could probably talk for hours about what this means to our children, our future workforce and the quality of life for all of us and, hopefully, I will get that opportunity to do that in the future. But for now, I will take time to thank the Akron Community Foundation, GAR Foundation, Voices for Ohio's Children, and the 2010 Quality of Life Project for their financial and in-kind support not only to this initiative, but to all the agencies that are part of First Things First team.

I want to thank the Summit County Health Department, especially Tonya Block, who lead this process with a steady, methodical and passionate hand. I know I have left out many individuals, so please, everyone involved with First Things First, stand up and take a bow. Because of each of you, we have gone from good work done in small silos to a cooperative partnership with one mission for the good of our community. Nice job!

Knowing how important early childhood is to the entire community, I was honored when Judge Linda Tucci Teodosio invited me to participate in a state wide initiative, Summit on Children. Ohio Summit on Children brings together community leadership teams to collaborate and further facilitate the implementation of local and state action plans for enhancing the safety, well-being and permanent home environments of Ohio children. A report to the Governor and Chief Justice of the Ohio Supreme Court will take place this fall; thank you, Judge, for leading our county in this important endeavor.

The past year, my Department of Human Resources was kept busy developing the cost savings plans I outlined earlier. Their role was both in designing the plans and implementing them. The HR staff was instrumental in allowing our county to control personnel costs. They did not stop there. Recently, NEOGOV, which is a green initiative and much more, became part of our HR protocol. NEOGOV will automate our entire hiring process. NEOGOV stops paper waste and provides staff a faster and more productive HR process, including position requisition approval, automatic minimum qualification screening and EEO reporting.

I have always said that our region is very fortunate to have the type of cooperation, trust and leadership that allows for successful partnership and collaboration. Many of you here are our county's partners, we have joined together to make our services easier for our citizens.

Many of you here have joined in collaboration to create a better business climate and many of you have stood with me and other community leaders to help our less fortunate citizens.

This past year, I was honored to work with Hattie Larlham on several programs. We highlighted members of the Hattie Larlham Creative Arts Programs in our ongoing arts enrichment program called Room with A View. Ten artists displayed 15 wonderful paintings in the Executive's Conference room. The installation was viewed by hundreds of people throughout the 4 month show and I am thrilled to announce that three of the paintings sold due to this effort.

Many of you here today, know that the Humane Society of Greater Akron found a new home in Twinsburg Township. But did you know the Hattie Larlham Doggie Day Care and Boarding is located in the same facility? My administration, through a Community Development Block Grant, was able to assist Hattie Larlham with a \$100,000 grant for a vocational training program. It is a match made in doggie heaven. And thanks to the Summit County Port Authority, who owns the building, all is going well. The partnership between the Humane Society and Hattie Larlham is extremely beneficial to both our pets and our citizens with developmental disabilities. This Doggie Day Care and Boarding is the second such facility; the first is also in Summit County, located in the City of Green. Did I mention 40 new jobs were created and an abandoned building is now full of love.

While on the subject of dogs, The Division of Animal Control is ready for their new facility. The Leeds Certified building is scheduled to open this fall. The \$2.9 million facility is a state of the art, high performance "green" building located on Opportunity Parkway in Akron. We have successfully partnered with the PetSmart Charities Rescue Waggin', the nation's largest pet transportation initiative that moves dogs and puppies from areas of high pet population to shelters in regions where adoptable dogs are in demand. To date, 149 dogs have left our facility for new homes.

Last summer, in collaboration with One-of-a-Kind Pet Rescue, the County co-sponsored "Barkitecture", a special exhibit of whimsical doghouses on the grounds of Stan Hywet Hall & Gardens. This highly successful, family friendly and dog friendly exhibit included dog houses designed by architectural firms from Northeast Ohio and provided our Division of Animal Control with an opportunity to educate our citizens on the joy of pet adoption, the importance of spay and neutering and the value of licensing their pets.

Probably the biggest honor I have serving as the Summit County Executive is having the ability to bring people together for the good of the community. One of the first programs I created when I became Executive was Change for Change. Change for Change is held the last Tuesday of the month at Rockne's Pub on Merriman Road. Chris Hamad, the owner, offered to contribute all the tips or "change" collected during that night's festivities to a local charity. It is a wonderful opportunity for agency staff, local folks and county staff to get to know each other, put a face with a name and just have some fun. The tips aren't bad either. To date, we have collected over \$27,000 for local charities. Our 2010 calendar is full with charities slotted for each month. In fact, if you sign up your charity up today to be part of our Change for Change program, you will have to wait until April of 2011 and I will be there, honored to serve as your host!

Last year was a year of tough decisions, hard work, cutting costs and making sacrifices. Through all this, we have been successful. We are still holding on to a rainy day fund, moving forward on plans to enhance economic development and reaching out to citizens who need our assistance - some for the first time in their lives. We have fewer employees and bigger case loads, but we have still managed to produce award winning projects.

Last year, at the Team Northeast Ohio Economic Development Impact Award Ceremony, the County was honored as a co-recipient of two awards.

The County of Summit, Akron Children's Hospital, Akron General Health System, BioEnterprise, City of Akron, The Knight Foundation, NEOUCOM, Summa Health System and The University of Akron received the "Asset Creation Award" for the BioInnovation Institute, a world-class incubator for life-enhancing biomedical discoveries.

The "Business Creation Award" was then presented to those who joined together to retain the Bridgestone Firestone North America Tire Technical Center in the City of Akron. In addition to the County of Summit, the City of Akron, Greater Akron Chamber of Commerce and the Summit County Port Authority were also honored with the award.

I strongly believe all three projects will make a positive impact on the northeast Ohio community for many years to come and it is very gratifying to be recognized by Team NEO.

My Department of Community and Economic Development was honored by the Northeast Ohio Joint Office of Economic Development and presented with the “Excellence in Regionalism Award” for the continued commitment and dedication to the economic growth and vitality of the Northeast Ohio Region.

My Department of Finance and Budget was presented with the “Distinguished Budget Presentation Award” from the Government Finance Officers Association of the United States and Canada.

And my Department of Communications received six national achievement awards from NACIO. One of the awards was for “Serving Our Soldiers” project, a program that identifies relatives of county employees who are currently serving in our military and providing support and communications. Four times a year, packages containing “Summit County Goodies” are sent out to each soldier. Over the past year, our soldiers have received hometown items donated by area companies, fundraisers are held to pay the postage and we always send enough for them to share. The University of Akron has provided Zippy logo baseball hats, Luigi’s Pizza donated T-Shirts, GoJo has provided Purell and the Firestone Country Club graciously gave a gift certificate to each soldier for 18 holes of golf for when they return home! That was a big hit!

The National Association of Counties honored my Department of Job and Family Services along with Communications with a National Achievement Award for “Bridging the Gap“, an outreach program to educate citizens on programming available through county agencies.

As your Executive, I have become more and more aware of the jewels we have within the 46 square miles I call home. Not many counties can boast of three airports. The Cuyahoga Valley National Park was the dream of John Seiberling and wouldn’t he be proud that our own National Park is listed in the top 10 most visited national parks in America. I can’t think of a better place to live if you love parks and trails and the honest beauty of Mother Nature.

Our natural resources are breathtaking, but it is our human resources that preserve and protect that beauty. The county is fortunate to have Francis Seiberling Buchholtzer to advocate for our earth; for Dan Rice whose passion for the Towpath Trail makes us proud to be a partner in a granting program that funds trails throughout our county. Our wonderful Metro Parks, serving Summit County, is a rare example of mixing urban and rural, providing citizens a quiet and relaxing quality of life.

Our quality of life is enhanced by Summit Artspace, now in its 8th year. Summit Artspace is a growing arts center located in a historic, county-owned building on East Market Street. This award-winning partnership between the County and the Akron Area Arts Alliance has recently expanded activities on the building's third floor by providing affordable studio space for artists. In addition to Summit Artspace Gallery, which is dedicated to displaying local art by established and young, emerging artists, the building now houses The Box Gallery – a co-operative showplace for the group Artists of Rubber City. Over 1,000 people enjoyed Summit Artspace activities on New Year's Eve as part of First Night Akron. Summit Artspace has certainly lived up to its goal to provide a welcoming and exciting place where local artists and the public can interact.

We certainly are a unique place in that we have leaders that work together. Dr. Luis Proenza, who is here today, has taken our university, The University of Akron, and made it one of the great universities, not only in Ohio, but nationwide. Dr. Proenza is a constant partner and someone who cares about our community.

Another leader, one that really gets what partnership means in these bad economic times, is Tony Alexander. I would like to take a moment to acknowledge and thank FirstEnergy Corporation and its President and Chief Executive Officer Tony Alexander for their support of economic development projects here in Summit County by awarding The Summit County Port Authority \$2.5 million over the next three years. The Port Authority will use the money for low-interest loans to manufacturing companies and work with The Ohio Manufacturers' Association in identifying the projects in economic and green-energy efforts. This generous grant will help existing Summit County businesses grow and also attract new businesses and grow new jobs for our citizens.

FirstEnergy Solutions provided Community Grants totaling more than \$3.7 million to communities in Summit County through "Powering Our Communities". This program provides funding that may be used by communities to help pay for essential services such as police and fire protection that have been affected by budget shortfalls.

Also, in 2009, the County became the distributing agent of the Ohio Fuel Fund Grant Program, another program funded by FirstEnergy. As part of this program, my staff went out into the community to assist our citizens with filing documents required by the grant. We were able to assist over 900 families with billing credit grants of over \$200,000. The County is currently distributing the 2010 Ohio Fuel Fund grants, again through neighborhood outreach and we will continue to serve as a grant distribution agent through 2011.

Our County is truly blessed to have such good corporate neighbors.

My next door neighbor at city hall, Mayor Don Plusquellic, is a good friend and someone who loves this community as much as I do and has made partnerships and collaborations his main order of business. Thank you, Mayor, for your leadership and commitment to both the City of Akron and the County of Summit.

Collaboration starts with cooperation and trust, not only at the top but throughout the entire organization. The Greater Akron Chamber is a great example of this. President and CEO Dan Collantone and his entire staff have worked very hard to build the type of relationships needed to grow partnerships. Thank you, Dan and staff.

When I look out into the audience today and see Justin Rogers and Karen Talbott, I am reminded of their wonderful work at Hospice; my Mother was at hospice before her death and the care and love she received was beyond words. I see Pat Simmons of the Akron Zoo and can still remember what the Zoo was like when I was young. I recently took my nieces to Snack with Santa and walked away with such admiration for Pat and her staff. I see Kimberlee McKee here today. Kimberlee, you do such a great job with Downtown Akron Partnership and I feel good that we have such talented young people in leadership roles.

And Rick McQueen, Director of the Akron Canton Airport, is here today. I recently flew in from Washington, DC. I left DC, flew in to Akron Canton and was in my home less than 2 hours later; I love our airport!

I would like to congratulate Tom Armstrong of the County of Summit Board of Developmental Disabilities on the opening of two new facilities. The Board facilities are green buildings located in Cuyahoga Falls and Barberton. The Board of DD is now serving more than 4,000 citizens and their families. And welcome Dennis Allen, Hattie Larlham is moving their corporate offices into our County and we are glad to have you here.

Dan Flowers is here today and I have been inspired by Dan's dedication to feeding our less fortunate citizens for quite awhile. Last year, Dan and the Food Bank provided more than 13.5 million meals. Each year during the Harvest for Hunger campaign, the city and the county have a friendly competition to see who can raise the most funds and food. We lost last year, so this year we decided to step it up by producing an Executive's Office Cook Book. There is one on each table so you can see just how nice it is and then, hopefully, purchase one on your way out

today. Mayor Plusquellic and I are big supporters of the Food Bank and last year, thanks to our generous staffs, the City and County contributed over 80,000 meals for Harvest for Hunger.

Summit County really is an amazing place to live and work...to raise a family...to spend a weekend, and to serve as County Executive. I am hopeful and believe in all of us, our work, our partnerships and our bright future.

I pledge to you today, that I will continue to be fiscally responsible and diligent in watching our revenue and spending trends. I have asked my staff to set up monthly meetings with me to do just that. We discuss everything from transfer and recording fees, local government funding, sales tax returns and monitoring individual budgets. In 2011, I am told that we may need to close a gap of at least \$8.4 million and then in 2012, we may need to cut an additional \$4 million to balance our budgets. These projections are not good, but as long as we remain focused, prepare for the future and hope that revenue increases, we will survive.

Last week I heard someone talk about needing friends in this type of economy, they are right. We all need friends and we need to be friendly.

To take full advantage of this financially bad situation and turn it into a positive and worthwhile opportunity, we must continue to work in the spirit of collaboration and create partnerships that will sustain us all. We must look to one another and find a program, a service or a collaboration that will carry us through this economic crisis. In the end, our community and our citizens will benefit tremendously, and isn't that exactly what we are suppose to do.

I know most every one here today, and I ask each of you to join me over the next year and find a partner. Go out and look for an agency, a government, or a business that you can work with to build a new partnership. Our survival depends on this.

I have seen the work done by you, I have admired the risks you have taken and I have been humbled by tough decisions you have made. I truly believe that together we can continue to move forward while our economy recovers, and celebrate great successes in the near future.

Thank you for all you do for our citizens and community and for making Summit County, truly the Highpoint of Ohio.

Thank you very much.



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