



**MONTGOMERY COUNTY  
ADMINISTRATION BUILDING**

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **7<sup>th</sup> Annual Montgomery County Food Summit Outlines Progress and Continuing Community Needs**

Dayton, Ohio (November 17, 2017) – Innovative solutions to hunger in Montgomery County took center stage at the 7<sup>th</sup> Montgomery County Food Summit. 200 community leaders, volunteers and students gathered at the main library in downtown Dayton earlier this week to discuss a wide range of responses to food insecurity, including community gardens, church pantries and food banks.



“Through collaboration, Montgomery County has made progress in developing solutions to food insecurity in our neighborhoods, but we know much more work needs to be done,” said County Commissioner Judy Dodge. “We must continue to work together to ensure that no child or adult goes hungry in our community.”

Ambassador Tony Hall focused on the health value of eating the proper food. He shared stories about visiting Guatemala and seeing underdeveloped children suffering from lack of adequate nutrition. He stressed the connection between good health and nutrition, especially in children.



That concern was amplified by keynote speaker Lisa Hamler-Fugitt, Executive Director of the Ohio Association of Foodbanks, as she pointed out the connection between poverty and poor health due to inadequate nutrition. According to her research, 64% of low income households have at least one member with high blood pressure and 35% have a member with diabetes. In addition, Hamler-Fugitt discussed how federally funded programs such as SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) have helped to lift Ohio families out of poverty, but that cuts and new budget projections are a huge concern. Ohioans have already lost more than 1.1 billion SNAP meals since cuts in 2013. Four out of five SNAP recipients are seniors, children or disabled.

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Several new, local programs including Lincoln Hill Garden Project and West Dayton Food Access Collective Impact Project focus on bringing together neighbors to grow and distribute healthy food.

“These neighborhood-based initiatives not only help to improve nutrition, but also build a sense of community,” added Commissioner Dodge. “Food brings people together and builds strong community connections.”

Participants also heard about the Gem City Market, a large-scale project designed to address health problems caused by living in a food desert. Lela Klein, Executive Director of the Greater Dayton Union Cooperative Initiative, explained that the market takes a novel approach. It will be owned and operated by the community, including the store employees. Gem City Market will emphasize local and organic food, as well as community events such as cooking classes and nutritional education. Organizers have already raised \$800,000 and sold more than 600 individual memberships. The store will be located on lower Salem Avenue and hopefully will be a model for more community owned grocery stores.

The Food Summit also featured several exhibitors of local interest. Keener Farms and Patchwork Gardens explained how they work with stores to encourage more local food. They provided some of the food Table 33 served at the event.

The Kettering Alternative High School demonstrated a unique approach to increasing food. They built a solar-powered aquaponics model using recycled materials and live fish to grow plants in a tiny space with limited water.

To learn more about Montgomery County’s efforts to address food and hunger issues in our communities, visit [mcfoodpolicy.org](http://mcfoodpolicy.org) or contact County Commissioner Judy Dodge’s office at 937-225-6445.

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