Dear fellow county employees,

At the time that this newsletter was to be published, we were in the midst of responding to an unprecedented COVID-19 pandemic. Although many of us are working and living in a capacity we didn’t anticipate several weeks ago, the communications team made the decision to still publish the newsletter to celebrate the excellent work all of you do every day.

Over the past few weeks, we have all come together to continue to serve each other and the community. I would like to thank our Commissioners and our leadership team for all they have done to ensure that we can serve the community while protecting ourselves and our families.

Across the County, I am humbled and moved by the acts of kindness, generosity, and selflessness I have witnessed from all of you and from our citizens. I’ve heard some fantastic stories about how all of you are adapting and overcoming the challenges you have faced during the pandemic. Please feel free to share your team’s stories and lessons learned for our next quarterly newsletter by contacting me at wootenb@mcohio.org or (937) 224-3831.

Thanks for all you do. We will get through this together.

Sincerely,
Brianna M. Wooten
Director of Communications
Montgomery County, Ohio
Building Regulations Helps Local Business Rebuild

Last May, Keowee Auto Sales was one of several businesses in Harrison Township devastated by tornadoes.

“You never think, as a small business, that something like this is going to happen,” said Casey Skapik, owner of Keowee Auto Sales. Skapik was concerned for his employees and he vowed that none of them would miss a paycheck as the company rebuilt. He wanted to be the first business to reopen on North Dixie Drive. Eight months later, Keowee Auto Sales was back in business at the location they’ve held since 1977.

“One of the things that really helped was the support of the Montgomery County Economic Development (department),” he said. “We had property line issues, and Robert (Martin, Inspection Supervisor) from the department was really good about giving us our permits, subject to the property line issue being taken care of, so we could move forward quickly, because we had to get back in business.”

On February 7, 2020, Keowee Auto Sales held a grand reopening ceremony and ribbon cutting to commemorate their successful rebuild.
Montgomery County Collaborative Newsletter

Montgomery County Unveils New Strategic Plan

In 2019, Montgomery County Commissioners Judy Dodge, Debbie Lieberman and Carolyn Rice, along with County Administrator Michael Colbert, created the Office of Strategic Initiatives, led by Kelly Geers. The mission was to support the planning and implementation of Montgomery County’s strategic and long-term goals, with an emphasis on fostering innovation, strengthening collaboration, and advancing results-based stewardship of resources.

Throughout the past year, County leadership worked closely with staff to develop Montgomery County’s 2020-2024 Strategic Plan. The plan contains five strategic objectives as well as the corresponding strategies that provide a roadmap to how Montgomery County will continue to strengthen the community and create more opportunities for residents to thrive.

The strategies are guided by a newly-refreshed mission statement and values.

- **Our Mission:** We create value by investing in people, the economy, and services for all to lead safe, healthy, and productive lives.
- **Our Values:** Innovation; Inclusion; Collaboration; Stewardship; Professionalism

To support the ongoing implementation of this Strategic Plan and monitor progress over time, Strategic Initiatives will be partnering with departments to collect, analyze, and report on key performance indicator data for each strategy in the plan.

Thank you to everyone who assisted in the development of this Strategic Plan. The Office of Strategic Initiatives looks forward to continuing its work toward a stronger Montgomery County.

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Job Fair Offered for Company’s Laid-off Employees

IMI Precision Engineering announced in October that the company would close its Brookville location. As soon as the notice went out, Montgomery County’s Workforce Development team supported more than 100 employees who would be affected by the closing.

As part of the County’s response, the Workforce Development team organized a job fair for those affected employees. On Dec. 6th, 30 businesses took part to meet those IMI Precision Engineering employees and talk about career opportunities.

Montgomery County’s Workforce Specialists will continue to work with affected employees one-on-one until they’ve found their next employment.
Montgomery County Collaborative Newsletter

Wellness Program Updates

In January, Montgomery County received the 2019 Gold award from the Ohio Department of Health as a Healthy Worksite. Montgomery County remains committed to providing comprehensive wellness programs to facilitate and encourage employee well being while ensuring a healthy work environment.

During the first quarter of this year, the program put mental health wellness and financial wellness in the spotlight. There are several new and exciting programs and opportunities now available which you can find at www.mcbenefits.org.

Mental Wellness

The Montgomery County Alcohol, Drug Addiction and Mental Health Services Board (ADAMHS) hosted quick-learn sessions at various locations throughout Montgomery County. The Mental Health 101 program discussed how to identify and respond to signs of mental illness and provided valuable community resources to anyone needing help.

ADAMHS and Montgomery County also began partnering with myStrength, Inc. to bring a new support tool to employees and family members. The myStrength app is a digital resource to promote mental health and well-being. You can learn techniques to reduce stress, track your mood and sleep patterns online, access and share inspirations, manage depressive or anxious thoughts, and explore hundreds of articles and activities on a broad range of topics to support mind, body, and spirit. The app can be accessed through the Apple Store or on Google Play.

Safe Sleep Ambassador Training

Public Health is launching Safe Sleep Ambassador Training to teach caregivers how to prevent sleep-related deaths. These deaths are preventable by following a few key recommendations from the American Academy of Pediatrics. The primary message for parents and others who care for infants is Remember the ABCs of Safe Sleep. There are three critical measures to follow when it’s time for an infant to sleep.

• “A” is for Alone: Always let the baby sleep alone, never in a bed with another person where the baby could be smothered.

• “B” is for on the baby’s Back: An infant should be placed to sleep on his or her back, not on his or her side or stomach.

• “C” is for Crib: Always put your child to sleep in a crib with only a firm mattress and tight-fitting sheet.

In addition, the training focused on other important measures to keep babies safe. The first class was held Saturday, Feb. 29 at Drew Health Center. More training is planned for the future, so anyone interested can learn more about safe sleep practices. The goal is to train individuals to be ambassadors of safe sleep and to teach others, so more infants are protected.

For more information contact Angela Grayson at (937) 496-6831.
RANGE Funding to Help Sheriff Combat Drug Trafficking

The Regional Agencies Narcotics & Gun Enforcement Task Force (R.A.N.G.E) is excited to announce that it has been awarded $92,640 in grant funding by Governor DeWine’s RecoveryOhio Law Enforcement Fund to help us continue our mission in disrupting & dismantling drug trafficking organizations and other criminal enterprises operating in and around the Miami Valley.

R.A.N.G.E was founded on the belief drug trafficking organizations have no political boundaries; therefore, partnerships with federal, state and local law enforcement agencies were formed to protect and serve the citizens of Montgomery County and the surrounding areas. The R.A.N.G.E. Task Force recognizes it is crucial to continue educating the community on drug prevention efforts while making the concerns of the public a priority.

The R.A.N.G.E. Task Force is made up of the following agencies:

- Montgomery County Sheriff’s Office
- Clayton Police Department
- Dayton Police Department
- Englewood Police Department
- Five Rivers Metro Parks
- Franklin Police Department
- Germantown Police Department
- Homeland Security Investigation
- Jackson Township Police Department
- Miami Township Police Department
- Ohio State Highway Patrol
- Ohio National Guard
Have You Seen or Heard of Us?

ADAMHS has improved its free Get Help Now app to make it easier than ever to find addiction and mental health resources. It now includes additional click buttons for employment and Dayton Heals resources. A new app link is also included for myStrength, a free mental health resource. The app is being publicized on billboards and radio commercials. Get Help Now is available for Apple and Android. Download it today as a tool for you and so you can connect people with resources.

Coroner’s Office Distributing “Understanding and Coping with Suicide” Brochures

Montgomery County Coroner Dr. Kent Harshbarger, expressed the desire to produce an informational brochure to help comfort family members and loved ones who suffered a loss from death by suicide. With the help of Montgomery County Alcohol, Drug Addiction and Mental Health Services (ADAMHS) and Keeping Our Light Support Group, the Coroner’s Office was able to develop a tri-fold pamphlet that gives support and means of coping with the loss, as well as referrals to mental health professionals for help.

“We have had nothing but positive feedback on the brochure,” said Dr. Harshbarger.

Copies are available through the office as well as on our webpage, www.mcohio.org/document_center/Coroner/Suicide%20Brochure-final.pdf. The brochures will also be distributed to the families and friends suffering a loss. We would like to thank Ann Stevens from MCADAMHS and Carol Griesdorn, Keeping Our Light Support Group, for their personal help, advice and support for this brochure.

Call 937-224-3696 for additional details.
Montgomery County Human Services Planning and Development Department, along with ADAMHS, Public Health Dayton-Montgomery County, and United Way of the Greater Dayton, collaborated to offer the inaugural Aligning for Impact Forum on Jan. 30. The day-long event drew more than 300 community leaders, non-profit staff, and staff from the sponsoring agencies.

The purpose was to educate the community on several topics and stress the need to address social determinants of health through collective impact and through a lens of equity in decision making and service delivery. Social determinants of health include such topics as education, employment, food security and access to food, access to healthcare, birth outcomes, social and community context, and more.

Speakers included County Commissioners Judy Dodge, Debbie Lieberman and Carolyn Rice, and Health Commissioner Jeff Cooper. The day included a session by Dr. Kierra Barnett from the Kirwan Institute at The Ohio State University, keynote speaker Dr. Holly Raffle from the Voinovich School of Leadership in Government at Ohio University, and several breakout sessions led by local leaders and service providers.

Please Be Sure to Fill Out Census Forms

The U.S. Census count is nearly upon us, and we want to make sure everyone in all Montgomery County communities are counted. The County has been working with our local Complete Count Committee and subcommittees to communicate the importance of the Census.

Every 10 years, the U.S. Census reaches out to count every person living in the country. That information is used to reapportion seats in the U.S. House of Representatives, allocate federal road funds for our communities, and provide services to seniors, youth and other citizens. The Census influences how more than $21 billion of federal funding is distributed in Ohio, which is why accurate completion is so important.

The 2020 Census kicks off in April. This year marks the first that you’ll be able to respond securely on your mobile device or computer. If you do not have internet access, you can request to receive paper forms, or some local public libraries will help you to complete the online version of the Census.
Judge McCollum Earns Distinguished Service Award

Montgomery County Probate Judge Alice O. McCollum received the Distinguished Service Award by the Ohio Guardianship Association. Judge McCollum accepted the award at the Ohio Guardianship Association’s Annual Conference in Fairborn.

According to Shawnieka Pope, Director of Guardianship Services, “Judge McCollum has a stellar history of being a visionary and trailblazer. She has created programs and services for court-appointed guardians and people under guardianship that are recognized as innovative practices throughout the state of Ohio.”

After Superintendence Rule 66 was passed by the Supreme Court of Ohio, Judge McCollum created a Guardianship Department staffed with a magistrate, social workers and a court investigator. The Guardianship Department develops education and support services to ensure the wellbeing of the guardians and the people under guardianship.

The Guardianship Department, along with Probate Partner’s social work interns, conduct wellness visits with the nearly 1,900 active guardianship cases in Montgomery County. Judge McCollum personally greets guardians during community events, such as the court’s annual Guardian Appreciation Day.

Under Judge McCollum’s guidance, Montgomery County Probate Court served as one of the first pilot sites for an emerging dispute resolution process called Eldercaring Coordination. This process provides the court with a humane approach when high conflict cases could cause undue harm to an elder citizen. Additionally, Judge McCollum created in-house mediation services that are available during moments of high conflict. Mediation at the Montgomery County Probate Court ensures families are fast tracked and have immediate access to services that will support them during challenging moments.

County Administrator Michael Colbert got to join members of BCC IT for their holiday luncheon in December.
Point-In-Time Count Takes A Look at Homeless Population

In the early-morning hours of Jan. 29, volunteers from Montgomery County, as well as other organizations, conducted the annual Point-In-Time (PIT) Count County’s.

The PIT count is a one-night count of those people experiencing homelessness throughout Montgomery County. The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) requires communities to perform the count during the last 10 days of January. HUD then compiles the data from across the country to generate a one-night “snapshot” of the number of people experiencing homelessness in the United States.

The PIT Count happens two ways: first, by counting people in shelters and second, by conducting an early-morning street count of people sleeping unsheltered in the woods, under bridges, in all night eateries, or in abandoned buildings.

In the 2019 PIT Count, 577 people in 475 households were counted in Montgomery County including 49 people sleeping unsheltered. These 2019 totals show a 19% decrease from 2015, which saw a high of 710.

You can read more about the PIT Count on our website at: www.mcohio.org/departments/human_services_planning_and_development/homeless_solutions/local_data.php.

2020 PIT Count data for Montgomery County is expected to be released in March.

Financial Wellness

The Montgomery County Benefits team wanted to focus on financial wellness in the first quarter and make it easier to access the resources that are currently available to employees and family members. A new page titled “Financial Wellness and Calculators” has been created on the benefits website at www.mcbenefits.org dedicated to financial wellness. There, you can access calculators, budget worksheets, information on money management, HSA account management, as well as retirement and deferred compensation plans. Site visits are being scheduled at various locations so employees can speak directly to representatives from RetireMEDiQ, Deferred Compensation and OPERS.

The benefits team is now working with Prudential to bring you even more resources to help you on your financial journey. In late spring, we anticipate launching a full financial resource program from Prudential with classes, workshops, and even other tools to help you manage and grow your finances. Be on the lookout for more information regarding this new program.
Bob Sexton Named “Dog Warden of the Year”

Bob Sexton, Animal Care and Control Officer Supervisor, was named “Dog Warden of the Year” by the Ohio County Dog Wardens Association.

Bob has been with the county for more than 30 years and is a valued member of the Animal Resource Center team and a strong leader. Over the past year, he intermittently stepped into the role of our County Dog Warden as the new director got settled. Whether he’s staying late to assist his team with difficult cases or coming in early to attend court cases with his officers, Bob has devoted countless hours to keeping our community and its pets safe.

Congratulations, Bob!

Third Street Bridge Project in Full Swing

The Third Street Bridge has tremendous historical significance and its redevelopment required extensive public input to our County Engineer. Overwhelming and unified public sentiment revealed that the old crossing was a symbol of division between the poor communities on the west side of the Great Miami River and the affluent government and business interest on the east side.

Through multiple public meetings, citizens expressed a desire to use the replacement structure as an opportunity to create a symbol that ties the two sides of Dayton together. They wanted it to record the successes of their past, as well as depict their hopes for the future. To achieve this, citizens chose images of marchers in an annual unity march, as well as images of Paul Lawrence Dunbar and the Wright Brothers to be cast into the concrete of the piers and abutments. A border containing adinkra symbols from the Akan culture of West Africa will span the length of the new bridge. The structure will also feature eight informational tablatures covering different topics from our rich history – from inventions, to funk music, to civil rights leaders.

The Eagle Bridge Company of Sidney, Ohio, is building the $17 million structure. Projected completion for the bridge is October of 2021. Funding for the project came from the Ohio Department of Transportation, along with federal funds through the Miami Valley Regional Planning Commission, the Ohio Public Works Commission, and the Montgomery County Engineer.
Solid Waste District Uses New Equipment to **Increase** Operational Efficiency

Montgomery County Solid Waste District (MCSWD), with assistance from an Ohio Environmental Protection Agency grant, purchased a grinder in June to process yard waste. Where we would previously pay a hauler to take items such as wood pallets and trees off site, MCSWD is now using custom-made equipment to process them on site.

The yard waste shredder has increased the operational efficiency at MCSWD tremendously and exhibits a measurable impact on the recycled material goods market and environment. Since its arrival, the Solid Waste District has diverted nearly 40 tons of wood waste a month from the landfill!

Having the shredder on site at MCSWD has also been extremely helpful when yard waste intake levels increase, both unexpectedly and expectedly. The grinder played an integral part in debris disposal after the Memorial Day tornadoes, and more recently was used to process holiday trees during MCSWD’s annual Live Tree Recycling Drive.

County residents were able to drop off up to three holiday trees per household to the MCSWD for free. The trees then went through a first grind on site, before being hauled off to be mulched by a local contractor.

This innovative program reduces landfill waste, increases the market for recycled goods, and encourages residents to think about the environment during the holidays. It is estimated that MCSWD collects more than 100 trees each year during the recycling promotion.
Director of Ohio Department of Developmental Disabilities Sees Montgomery County Innovations Firsthand

Jeff Davis, the Director of the Ohio Department of Developmental Disabilities and a member of the Governor’s cabinet, paid a visit to Montgomery County Feb. 5th to learn more about how the County approaches services to people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (DD).

“Each county in Ohio offers a baseline of services to people with developmental disabilities through its own County Board agency, but Montgomery County’s Board of DD is a true innovator, offering services and support not found in most other areas of the state,” said Montgomery County Board of DD Superintendent Dr. Pamela Combs.

Combs and her staff showcased a number of these offerings during the Director’s visit, ranging from the Board’s Adult Interim Care Homes, which provides emergency housing to people with DD who are in crisis, to its Mental Health Services and Supports program, which is a pioneer in working with people with a dual diagnosis of intellectual disability and mental illness. They also visited Stillwater Center where they met with staff and residents.

During the visit, Combs highlighted the impact of the county’s recent challenges, from the Memorial Day tornadoes and the Oregon District shooting to the opioid crisis, and how those challenges affect all county citizens, both now and in years to come. She also took the Director to visit an innovative new partnership between MCBDD, Oakmont Schools, the Dayton Urban League and providers of services that are designed to address a shortage of direct support workers for people with developmental disabilities.

“Director Davis’s tour was a wonderful way to pull together state, county and board leadership with stakeholders and clients to discuss our system while collaborating on ways to address challenges and new opportunities,” Combs said. “He was sincerely interested in what we are doing in Montgomery County, and impressed with how we deliver services to all county residents.”