

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
**April 1, 2015**

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**WHY COUNTIES MATTER:  
FRANKLIN COUNTY CELEBRATES NATIONAL COUNTY GOVERNMENT MONTH**

Counties employ more than 3.2 million, own and maintain 45-percent of America's roads, including more than 228,000 bridges, and support about 1,000 of our nation's hospitals. Counties oversee elections, including the operation of more than 114,000 polling places, and they spend more than \$25 billion on economic development and almost \$10 billion on parks and recreation each year.

Each April, the National Association of Counties (NACo) raises public awareness and understanding about the roles and responsibilities of the nation's more than 3,000 county governments and 18,000 elected county officials during National County Government Month (NCGM). This year's designated theme is *Counties Moving America Forward*.

"Whether you rely on the County for safe running water in your home, to afford fresh produce and healthy food for your family, to cast your vote or realize your dream of getting a small business off the ground, County government is present and influential in the lives of nearly every resident," said Board President Marilyn Brown.

"Franklin County has worked mightily, whether in Columbus, Worthington, Obetz or Prairie Township, to build good jobs through regional cooperation, and collaboration," said Commissioner Paula Brooks. "Our county regionalism is underpinned by strong fiscal stewardship, and a caring approach toward both economic development and public safety and security. Through the Darby Accord, we work for both a resilient environment and good jobs. With our county sheriff's office, we confront sexual assault, train women to defend themselves, and fight the spread of heroin."

Brooks continued, "Not least is the work we have done through all of the county's programs touching our most precious asset...our children. Thousands of children are receiving early childhood care that will prepare them for school, allow them to earn and learn in the summer, and have safe, fun, and productive after school! All of this is done by setting policies that match much appreciated tax dollars to appropriate community outcomes. County government has endured in America since our founding."

In Franklin County, Ohio, the Board of County Commissioners, whose statutory duty it is to establish and oversee the County's \$397 million annual operating budget, considers strategic investments aimed at moving forward the county's top priorities including community safety, job creation and economic development and providing supportive health and human services. Delivering a high level of service requires a strong and competent workforce. To that end, the Commissioners employ over 1,400 employees in 14 agencies, everything from the county dog warden, to case managers at Job and Family Services and child support enforcement officers, to an economic development director, budget analysts and a sanitary sewer engineer.

“Tasked with a large and sometimes seemingly daunting job, I applaud the individuals who have chosen to diligently work every day to improve the lives of families and residents through public service and employment,” said Commissioner John O’Grady. “No act of kindness is too small and progress, no matter the pace, is still progress. During the month of April, let us recommit ourselves with a renewed energy to the high calling of public service so that our families, businesses, residents and community continue to move forward.”

More than sixty percent of Franklin County’s General Fund budget, made up primarily of sales and property tax dollars, each year is spent on public safety, security and justice. This includes funding the sheriff, court’s system, prosecutor’s office, the Commissioners’ Homeland Security and Justice Programs department and other initiatives.

In the first three months of 2015, Commissioners already have directed hundreds of thousands of dollars to equip first responders including authorizing HazMat equipment upgrades for the Northwest Area Strike Team. Funding was also approved to aid efforts to reduce juvenile recidivism, truancy and provide constructive and safe afterschool programs for at-risk youth, the Operation Street Smart program in the County Sheriff’s office and to provide victims of domestic violence and sexual assault with access to therapeutic treatment services, assistance with obtaining protection orders, preparing safety plans and provide for critical law enforcement and legal personnel who’s top job it is to arrest and prosecute individuals charged with domestic violence.

Providing for the safety of the community is important as is providing for the financial security of the County. For 2015 alone, the Commissioners have allocated over \$19 million for the department of Economic Development and Planning. Attracting new businesses to Franklin County or helping existing businesses expand is good for the economy and for individuals. New in this year’s budget is the Commissioner’s Infrastructure Works program, which involves low-interest loans of up to \$1 million to local municipalities and townships that will be able to use the funding to build infrastructure designed to lure new businesses or help existing businesses grow.

Also included is the County’s Workforce Innovation Training Grants program. Since 2012, the return on investment for the program has been strong with nearly 1,800 new jobs created at companies like IBM, Quantum Health and Columbus Castings.

In Franklin County, economic development also encompasses investments with Columbus 2020 and individual non-profits and other agencies such as the Economic Community Development Institute and Rev1Ventures (formerly TechColumbus) which help new and growing businesses and expand entrepreneurship. Investments in Experience Columbus and the Greater Columbus Sports Commission help draw millions of visitors each year, supporting 71,000 area jobs and generating \$8.7 billion in visitor spending.

Franklin County’s ‘All Funds Budget’ which includes things like federal grants, permit fees, and voted upon levies, totals \$1.4 billion and the largest portion goes towards social and human services investments in child welfare and the foster care system, home-delivered meals for veterans and seniors, community supported living for adults and specialized education services for children with developmental disabilities, child support enforcement, addiction and dependency treatment, the Franklin County Dog Shelter and wardens, maintenance and construction of county roads, bridges and recreational paths.

As a result, Franklin County is a desirable place to live and has become the fastest growing county in Ohio. Sixty-three college and university campuses with more than 138,000 college students call our region home making central Ohio one of the fastest growing innovation and technology hubs in the nation and our capital, Columbus, a best city for tech job growth. Today, the central Ohio region includes 5 Fortune 500 companies including Cardinal Health and American Electric Power and 15 Fortune 1000 headquarters.

Throughout the month, Franklin County will be sharing innovative ways in which local government works to improve the lives of residents and businesses and move our County forward. A list of Franklin County community events is available [here](#). More information on National County Government Month can be accessed on-line [here](#) and on Twitter @FranklinCoOhio #NCGM.

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