

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Friday, April 19, 2013

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DURING NATIONAL COUNTY GOVERNMENT MONTH COMMISSIONERS THANK VOLUNTEERS FOR THEIR EFFORTS TO MAINTAIN QUALITY OF LIFE AND KEEP COMMUNITY SAFE

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).

Did you know? Counties employ more than 3.2 million, own and maintain 44-percent of American roadways and 228,026 of America's bridges, and expend more \$470 billion annually.

This year, NACo has designated the theme of NCGM as *Smart Justice*.

Smart investments to ensure safe and secure communities remain a top priority for Franklin County Commissioners. Franklin County's 2013 Approved Budget directed nearly sixty-nine cents of every General Fund dollar expended to support community safety, security and effective justice programs.

In the first four months of 2013, Franklin County has already directed hundreds of thousands of dollars to address domestic violence and sexual assault, operate the County's DUI Taskforce, support the comprehensive Internet Crimes Against Children (ICAC) program, purchase 14 additional emergency warning sirens and updated equipment for the County's Child Identification Kits to assist parents locate a lost or missing child. Commissioners supported a safe crossing for elementary students in Worthington walking to school, and provided support for the certification of Type B home childcare providers so that low-income working parents have access to safe childcare options.

County Commissioners also allocated more than \$5 million in support for local emergency shelter and housing agencies to address homelessness in Franklin County.

"As Commissioners, we're charged with protecting the county's resources, as well as ensuring a safe community for residents," said Commissioner Board President John O'Grady. "There's no question that we've made those a priority, but as our community continues to lead the state in population growth, we continue to call upon the talented men and women in our community who volunteer their time to keep our community safe and seek to preserve the quality of life all Franklin County residents expect."

To that end, the Commissioners' Office of Homeland Security and Justice Programs train's local volunteers to recognize community dangers and report trouble as part of their Volunteers In Police Services (VIPS) program and Explorers program.

To date, four classes of volunteers have been completed with a total of more than 80 individuals graduating.

"Volunteer. Give back. Just as so many are doing to improve the community in which they live," said Commissioner Paula Brooks. "Whether you become a member of your neighborhood block watch, want to support families of children with developmental disabilities, mentor a youth in foster care or sign up to walk dogs at your local dog shelter, volunteer opportunities are endless and your service is needed."

Commissioners noted that volunteers don't just help Franklin County stay safe, they are an important resource for maintaining a community's quality of life. April 21-27 is Volunteer Appreciation Week. The Franklin County Commissioners appoint volunteers to more than forty boards and commissions which impact every facet of government, economic development, and vital social services in the County. These talented individuals serve the community by bringing expertise, diversity, and perspective to these entities.

Earlier this year, the Board of Commissioners made appointments to Franklin Park Conservatory Joint Recreation District Board of Trustees, the Franklin County Board of Developmental Disabilities, and the Franklin County Parks and Recreation Board of Trustees.

Commissioners also worked with Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) to provide qualified and trained volunteers to act as courtroom advocates for abused, neglected, and dependent children budgeting an additional \$50,000 for CASA this year which will provide advocacy to a total of 805 children in 375 abuse and neglect cases.

"Local volunteers give tirelessly of their time, energy and talents to help keep our communities safe and strong and help shape our future," said Commissioner Marilyn Brown. "They also make unparalleled sacrifices – working every day -- to improve the lives of Franklin County's children and the disabled, our seniors and so many other vulnerable individuals. For that, I offer my sincere appreciation not just during County Government Month and Volunteer Appreciation Week but always for the work they do."

Find more information on National County Government Month on-line at <http://www.naco.org/Counties/Pages/Why-Counties-Matter.aspx> and on Twitter @FranklinCoOhio #NCGM.

A new, updated database of the County's representatives on various boards and commissions -- including a description of the members' responsibilities -- can also be found on the Commissioners' website at www.FranklinCountyOhio.gov/Commissioners/boards-and-commissions.

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For more information on the Franklin County Board of Commissioners, log on to: www.franklincountyohio.gov/commissioners