

NEWS

Marking 65th anniversary, Licking organization asks how to improve Licking County



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After 65 years of striving to help its community, organizers at Licking County Foundation are asking how they can improve life in Licking County.

Earlier this year, the organization launched a community-wide survey asking: “If you had to choose one thing to improve life for others in Licking County, what would it be?” The survey coincides with the commemoration of their 65th anniversary.

“Licking County Foundation is a learning organization. We count on and invite our community to share with us what impacts them and what would make a difference,” Director Connie Hawk said. “So we wanted every person who participates – whether they live, work, learn or are growing up in Licking County – to focus on what they think really would improve life for others.”

Hawk explained that could mean addressing housing or transportation issues in the county, or something on a more personal level like access to mental health care, learning to garden or speak sign language, volunteering, or enjoying the arts.

The survey was announced at the Licking County Chamber of Commerce Groundhog Breakfast, and Hawk said they’re already beginning to receive responses from community members. The organization anticipates sharing some of those responses throughout the year.

“There’s lots of opportunity in Licking County, and lots of challenges,” she said. “It’s a big county in all corners. (Everyone’s) needs are different. We wanted to be able to hear about that.”

Historically, Hawk said, LCF has relied on community input since 1959 when it conducted a “community needs survey.” In 2016, the organization partook in a community survey to help produce the United Way of Licking County-led community blueprint.

Hawk said their board established a list of priorities based on past surveys and wanted to layer that with what they’re hearing from the broader community.

Looking back over the history of Licking County Foundation, Hawk said many things have changed, but the essence of what the foundation does has not.

"From the beginning, board members wanted to make sure there was a foundation that provided support so the community could continuously grow," Hawk said. She explained the foundation began primarily providing support for scholarships and now provides broad-base support for Licking County.

According to LCF donor services officer Jennie Dawes, the organization wanted to create something involving everyone to celebrate LCF's anniversary.

"With the exponential growth in our community, even before Intel's plans were announced, things have been changing rapidly - new businesses are popping up, there is more focus on local tourism, our cities and towns are experiencing a renaissance," she said. "We felt the best way to get at people's hopes and dreams was to just ask them!"

Officials with Intel Corporation and the state of Ohio recently announced the company will invest \$20 billion to build two computer chip plants in Jersey Township in Licking County. The project is expected to create thousands of direct and indirect jobs in the area during the duration of construction and completion of the project.

More: Leaders explain why Licking County chosen for massive Intel chip factory

To participate in the survey, community members can visit <https://bit.ly/CreateOurFuture> and use the online form. Anyone without Internet access can call Dawes at 740-349-3863 extension 101 with their comments, or drop a note in the mail slot at Licking County Foundation's office building at 30 N. Second St. in Newark.

The organization will share information received with the community at a gathering in November as they celebrate their anniversary.