



The SHIELD

A quarterly bulletin from the Summit County Sheriff's Office

2026, Volume 1

Popular
'Take Me Home'
Program is
Expanded



Summit County
Adopts the
I.G.N.I.T.E.
Program



NEXT-GEN JUSTICE

MEET THE SHERIFF'S OFFICE DRONE UNIT

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**The Summit County Sheriff's Office
joins our friends at the Summit
County Developmental Disabilities
Board in going orange for
Developmental Disabilities
Awareness Month this March.**

**We value our close partnership with
the DD Board and we're proud to
serve as their investigative agency.
Last year alone we reviewed over
300 cases on their behalf.**

#DDAwarenessMonth
#IncludeMe



From the desk of

Sheriff Kandy Fatheree

Hello readers.

I hope you've been doing well over this long, cold winter we've been having. I know I'm sure ready for it to be over and for warm days to be here again!

As you'll see in this issue of The SHIELD, my team and I have been as busy as ever this winter. You may notice that many of the stories in this issue are about our jail and our inmates. This is because we have been doing so many new things at the jail both to improve health and mental health outcomes with our inmates, and to help them get back on their feet and stop recidivating.

You're going to read about some of the fruits of some of our earlier labors with the programs we rolled out over the summer, as well as the recent introduction of the I.G.N.I.T.E. initiative at the jail, which has proven to be very successful nationwide.

You're also going to meet our newest K-9 Dino, the tenth to join our now-thriving K-9 Unit. With the addition of Dino, it is now the largest K-9 Unit in Summit County.

And you will meet and learn about the Summit County Sheriff's Office Drone Response Unit, which was formed in 2024 and has grown into a thriving and effective force, using some of the newest technology out there to fight crime and keep our communities safe.

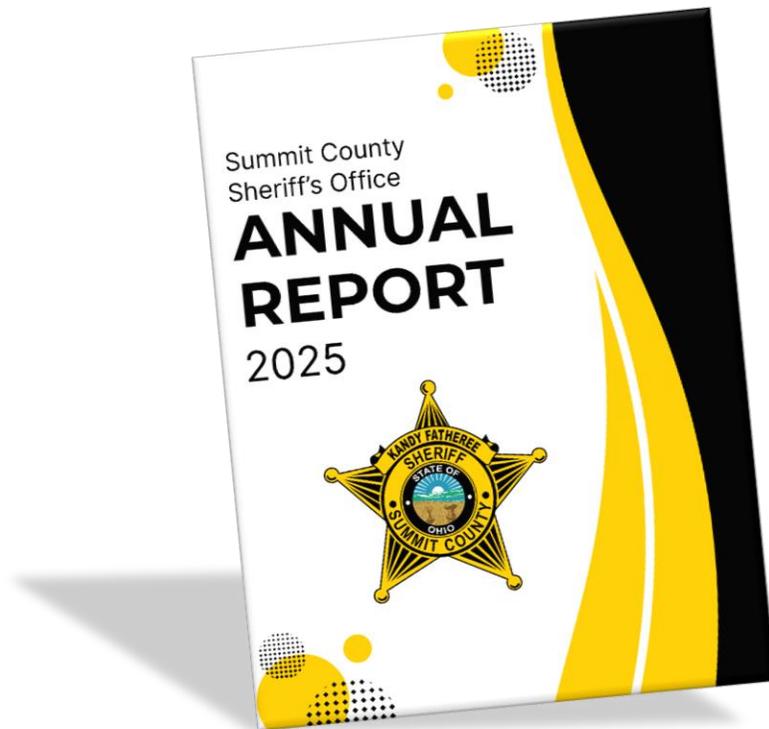
Lastly, I'm excited to announce that we have just opened a new office in the City of Green, located right inside the city's Central Administration Building. This second Green office will help us to better and more effectively serve the residents in this our largest patrol district.

I suppose the unofficial theme of this issue is the word I have repeated the most in this introduction: **NEW!**

Kandy Fatheree

Kandy Fatheree
Summit County Sheriff

64,899 Calls for Service
918 Arrests
4,156 Traffic Stops
2,588 People Assisted on the Portage Lakes
4,729 Warrants Processed
34 Explosives & Ordinances Recovered
27 SWAT Callouts
68 CSI Unit Callouts
168 Drone Unit Operations
29 Human Trafficking Operations
1,195 K-9 Unit Deployments
848 Detective Bureau Investigations
200,000+ Grams of Illegal Drugs Seized
1,244 Sex Offenders Monitored Year-Round
19,927 Inmates Transported
5,166 Students Given DARE Instruction
8,942 Inmates Booked at the Jail
15,069 Medical & Mental Health Visits with Inmates
52,039 Hours of Special Details Worked



See the incredible volume of work our deputies and staff do year-round in our 2025 Annual Report, available now to read in the “About” section of our website at *sheriff.summitoh.net*.

In The News

sheriff.summitoh.net

Your Source for Summit County Sheriff's Office News

- Since 1840

Summit County Sheriff's Office launches I.G.N.I.T.E. program at County Jail

The Summit County Sheriff's Office held a ceremony on Wednesday, January 7th at the Summit County Jail to announce the official launch of the I.G.N.I.T.E. program.

I.G.N.I.T.E. (Inmate Growth Naturally and Intentionally Through Education) was first developed in Genesee County, MI in 2020, and was adopted as a nationwide initiative the following year by the National Sheriff's Association. The program is designed to transform the lives of those incarcerated in jails by providing education and skills, fostering a sense of pride and empowerment in participants, changing societal views, increasing safety within our jails, and reducing recidivism.

I.G.N.I.T.E. offers an array of educational and training programs, job certification, and opportunities for post-incarceration employment. It incentivizes positive behavior and engagement with corrections staff, and it connects participants with resources to assist them after release.

"I.G.N.I.T.E. will not only serve as an umbrella for our existing programs, it will also help us attract new partners and build new relationships with organizations, non-profits, and employers willing to give inmates a second chance," said Sheriff Fatheree.



An N.S.A. representative cited the measurable impact that I.G.N.I.T.E. is having nationwide, noting research from Harvard, Brown, and the University of Michigan that found that just one month in I.G.N.I.T.E. reduced misconduct by 25%, reduced recidivism by 24%, and boosted math and reading scores by a full grade level.

"The goal of I.G.N.I.T.E. – and one of my top goals as Sheriff – is to reduce recidivism, which benefits everyone in our community: the inmates who get their lives back on track, our overburdened criminal justice system, and every resident whose tax dollars pay for those repeated incarcerations," said Sheriff Fatheree.

Other speakers included Sandusky County Sheriff Chris Hilton, the first to adopt I.G.N.I.T.E. in Ohio, and Judge Elinore Marsh Stormer, who praised the program and the Sheriff's efforts to reduce recidivism. Also present were representatives from Stark State College, Career Prep+, Challenge Ministries, and the Carpenters Union, all of whom are existing partners with the Sheriff's Office in offering opportunities, training, and education to inmates.

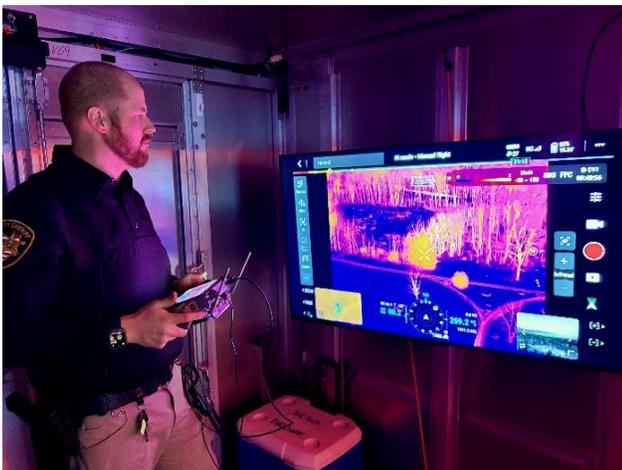
"There's great power in helping someone tap into their own potential and realize what they're capable of," said Sheriff Fatheree, "and I can tell you firsthand that there's so much potential within the walls of this jail."

NEXT-GEN JUSTICE

SHERIFF'S OFFICE DRONES TAKE FLIGHT

In an undisclosed location on a frigid evening in February, members of the Summit County Sheriff's Office Drone Response Unit gather for their monthly training. The nine deputies and unit commander Lieutenant Barry Davidson unpack their fleet of drones and pair off into one of two roles that they will perform for each exercise: pilot or visual observer.

"Every operation requires a pilot and observer per FAA rules," explains Lt. Davidson. "The pilot flies and is seeing what the drone sees either on a screen or headset, and the visual observer monitors the flight path for obstructions like trees, power lines, flocks of birds, changes in terrain, etc."



Deputy Joey Salsar demonstrating a drone's thermal imaging capabilities

As deputies trained together, lead instructor, Deputy Joey Salsar, took us outside to see the crown jewel of the fleet: a *DJI Matrice 4T* drone, fully equipped with 4K resolution, 60x zoom, thermal imaging, lidar, night vision, motion tracking, and optional lights and speakers.

"We could hit 40 mph and go as high as 5,000 feet with the 4T, but for safety reasons we're limited to 400 feet by the FAA," explained Salsar as he demonstrated the drone's many functions.

The Drone Unit was established in 2024 and has rapidly grown in terms of both size and scope of capabilities. Today, the unit has its own vehicle, a fleet of 10 drones of varying sizes and capacities stationed throughout the county, and they are responding not only to Sheriff's Office operations but also calls for assistance from agencies across the county.

The unit is called out for a wide range of incidents, including barricaded subjects, missing persons, criminal searches, aerial surveillance, dignitary protection, trafficking operations, and more. Last year they performed 168 operations, a fivefold increase over the previous year, which is indicative of the multifaceted potential of drones in law enforcement.

"It's truly game changing," said Lt. Davidson. "It's probably the most impactful tool in the law enforcement arsenal in decades."

Every member of the Drone Response Unit goes through long hours of intense training before taking their Federal Aviation Administration administered test. They then work within the parameters and methods established by the FAA, such as monitoring air traffic control communications, and alerting the FAA when they will be operating within their airspace.

Then there's the weather. The unit has to monitor current and future weather and atmospheric conditions such as wind speed, wind direction, barometric pressure, precipitation probabilities, dew point, and cloud deck height.

While the team *can* operate in inclement weather, it adds an extra layer of difficulty to their job. Rain or snow can add weight, impact stability, and decrease visibility; winds can create control issues, limit the ability to make precision moves, and make takeoffs and landings more difficult; warm humid air can generate condensation on camera lenses and moisture buildup on sensitive electronic components; and cold air can cause ice crystallization on propellers and important sensors, and batteries to drain faster.



Deputies Crawford and Weathers train as Lt. Barry Davidson looks on



The DJI Matrice 4T with mounted search lights

Just as important as how a drone flies are when and where it is allowed to fly. Like any other member of law enforcement, drone operators must abide by state and federal laws pertaining to privacy, reasonable search, and the collection of evidence. Deputies must obtain a warrant before deploying a drone to search a residence or other private property, and both federal and state law prohibit drones from being weaponized.

It's clear that drone technology is already transforming the field of law enforcement as an invaluable asset in our toolkit that will aid both in crime prevention and in keeping officers safe. We're proud that the Summit County Sheriff's Office is on the cutting edge of this new movement, and that our deputies are literally taking public safety to new heights!



Meet Dino!

If you're at the County Courthouse, Fiscal Office, Pry Building, or any of the many county government buildings in Summit, you may see a couple of new faces patrolling the premises. We're pleased to welcome K-9 Dino to the team!



The 2-year-old German Shepherd is trained in gun detection, building search, article search, tracking, and apprehension. He'll be making the rounds with his handler, Deputy Matt Naelitz, helping to keep our courts and other government offices safe, along with all those who have business there.





In a newly formed partnership between the Summit County Sheriff's Office and Stark State College, representatives from the school will be coming into the jail to speak with inmates about starting or continuing their education, and providing them with contacts and information about enrollment and financial aid to help them jump start the process ahead of their release.

In their first visit to the jail, a total of 68 inmates attended the presentation, a significant portion of whom had already completed some college coursework and were interested in continuing their education and earning their degrees, certifications, CDLs, etc.

We look forward to working with Stark State in this new partnership, as well as continuing our partnerships with other nonprofits, trade unions, GED programs, etc. in our ongoing efforts to reduce recidivism and provide new opportunities for rehabilitation and recovery to those currently incarcerated.





Kandy Fatheree
Summit County Sheriff



'Take Me Home' program expanded to include mental, behavioral, and substance abuse disorders

Summit County Prosecutor Elliot Kolkovich and Summit County Sheriff Kandy Fatheree are pleased to announce the expansion of the Take Me Home program to include individuals with mental, behavioral, substance abuse, and other disorders.

Take Me Home is a joint effort between the Prosecutor's Office and Sheriff's Office. It was brought to Summit County in 2007 following an incident in which an autistic child went missing and was unable to communicate his name or address to law enforcement.

The program created a database accessible only to law enforcement, into which information submitted by parents and caretakers of individuals with communications difficulties was uploaded. Should one of these individuals go missing or become separated from their family or caretaker, law enforcement can access the database on their in-car computers to obtain helpful information in assisting the individual, such as addresses, diagnoses, medications, calming techniques, safe words, and names of trusted contacts. Today, there are over 2,000 individuals of all ages registered in the Take Me Home program.

As of February 2026, the Take Me Home program is being expanded beyond those with cognitive disabilities and communications difficulties to also include individuals with mental, behavioral, or substance abuse disorders such as PTSD, traumatic brain injuries, schizophrenia, bipolar, depression, borderline personality disorder, and addictions.

Every law enforcement agency in Summit County is signed-on to the Take Me Home program, and in recent years police departments in communities adjacent to Summit County have also joined, such as Wadsworth and Seville.

"For those of us in law enforcement, having this critical information about an individual in crisis or who may have gotten lost or disoriented can make a huge difference," said Sheriff Fatheree. "It allows for a more beneficial, comfortable, and safe interaction for both the officers and the individual they're assisting, and it gives family members and caretakers greater peace of mind."

Those interested in learning more about Take Me Home or enrolling someone in the program can visit prosecutor.summitoh.net/programs/Take-Me-Home or call (330) 643-8741.

Late last year we had a first at the Summit County Jail, as Demarkus Minter became the first inmate to complete his high school education and receive his diploma while incarcerated.

Mr. Minter renewed his educational journey this summer when we introduced the Career Prep+ program at the jail, a nationally recognized and accredited program that seeks to help incarcerated individuals complete their education, with the goal of helping them obtain employment and reducing recidivism in jails.

Mr. Minter attended weekly classes, completed assignments, and took the state-mandated test to earn his diploma. It was presented to him in December in front of Sheriff Fatheree, Corrections Chief Tim Miller, Major Matamba Kaalima, numerous inmate service workers, and most importantly his mother and girlfriend who were able to watch via Skype.

"When you give inmates a chance at an education or a job after they've served their time, you're giving them more than just the means to turn their lives around, you're giving them a sense of self-worth and pride," said Sheriff Fatheree. "This is the only time I get to say this with a smile: I hope we never see them again!"

While Mr. Minter is not the first inmate to complete his education through the new Career Prep+ partnership, he is the first to do so entirely while still incarcerated, and he has already requested an application to enroll in college courses upon his release through our other newly formed partnership with Stark State College.

We congratulate Mr. Minter and wish him luck in his pursuits!



CONCEALED CARRY WORKSHOP

Presented by
**Sheriff Kandy Fatheree &
County Prosecutor Elliot Kolkovich**



Learn about...

- What changes to Concealed Carry laws mean and how they effect you.
- What gunowners can expect from law enforcement.
- Self-defense, defense of property, castle doctrine, and more.
- Best practices to safely carry and secure your weapon.

Thursday, April 9th
6:00pm-8:00pm

Twinsburg Community Center
10260 Ravenna Road
Twinsburg, OH 44087

FREE & OPEN TO THE PUBLIC!

REGISTRATION REQUIRED



Sign-up by visiting the CCW section on the Sheriff's Office mobile app or at sheriff.summitoh.net, or by scanning:

