

# BOYS BASKETBALL Bucks reach GLC tourney semifinals **B1**

Today's weather



HIGH: 27  
LOW: 10

Sunrise: 7:26  
Sunset: 5:57

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AIMS TO PREVENT, END HOMELESSNESS

# Housing network approves plan

Jonathan Delozier  
The Gazette

MEDINA — A coordinated community plan to prevent and end homelessness was unanimously approved Thursday by the Medina County Housing Network.

Entities making up the housing network include Medina Metropolitan Housing Authority, the Medina County ADAMH Board, Salvation Army, Love INC, Operation: HOMES, Medina County Job and Family Services and the Veterans Administration as well as a number of faith-based organizations.

Points of emphasis in the newly approved plan are homelessness prevention, access to temporary housing, transportation, rapid rehousing, permanent supportive housing, and

maintenance of local support structures.

"We're going to be doing a lot of work with our nonprofits and faith community," said Medina County Commissioner Steve Hambley just after the plan was approved. "We're going to identify the resources and make sure they're going to the right people, to make sure they're getting the help they need and have the ability to lift themselves up out of these situations."

Efforts will be made to educate landlords and tenants on acceptance of various housing vouchers, fair housing rights, and availability of rent assistance. Organizers will also pursue development of emergency shelter facilities while promoting better coordination with groups like Operation:

HOMES that place individuals in hotels and motels.

The local need for specialized temporary housing for veterans and individuals 24 and younger will also be further explored, the plan states.

Half a million dollars in federal American Rescue Plan funds are being put toward Medina Metropolitan Housing Authority's construction of supportive housing for homeless residents.

Plans call for 10 units on Lafayette Road near Independence Drive that organizers hope to break ground on this year.

"The need for good, affordable housing isn't going to change," Hambley said. "Right now, the average cost for a new home is way up there and there's such a demand in Medina County that

it's driving it even further up, even the rentals.

People who are just starting out or are having issues in their lives need affordable housing options. Someone can become unemployed or have a medical emergency and that can lead to a whole host of other issues.

"At one point in time our (homeless) numbers were where the churches could help provide places for people to go, Operation:HOMES could do it, and that was all we needed. I don't think we're going to get back to that situation where we don't need these new facilities. There's such a high need and high demand for housing, it's just the way it is and it's time for us to take these next steps."

Bill Laehy of Wadsworth's Sacred

Heart of Jesus Catholic Church and St. Vincent de Paul Society illustrated struggles his clients have faced in recent years.

"It takes a lot of people coming together to get a handle on these problems," he said. "We coordinate with Operation: HOMES a lot and see people caught in the cycle of staying in a hotel. They don't have the money for a down payment or a security deposit. They're just staying at a hotel trying to make ends meet. If you spend \$60 a night at a hotel that's \$420 a week, that's a house payment. It's more than a house payment."

Laehy said his organizations spent \$134,000 in 2021 providing aid to individuals in Wadsworth and Rittman.

See **PLAN**, A8

# PLAN

From A1

“We get the people who need emergency aid,” he said. “It can be a mom about to be evicted. It can be a utility shutoff. The phone calls we get are for the emergency aid. We make car payments, rent payments, utilities, and pharmacy bills. We just helped someone with a \$1,500 bill because her septic tank was backing up into her house. Spending that kind of money last year is a big amount in our little community.”

While recent U.S. census data points to Medina County’s poverty rate being at a

20-year low, a United Way study showed roughly one-third of residents were teetering on the brink of desperation even before the coronavirus pandemic.

The ALICE Report for Ohio is conducted by United For ALICE, a grassroots movement of 650 United Ways in 21 states, corporations and foundations all using a uniform method to document financial hardship.

ALICE stands for Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed — categorizing households that earn more than the federal poverty rate but less than the basic cost of living for their particular area. Combining the number of ALICE and poverty-level households amounts

to an area’s total population that’s struggling to afford monthly essentials such as rent, groceries, health care and utilities.

The latest results represent a “snapshot” of economic conditions across Ohio in 2018.

Over that period, the report shows Medina County having a 26 percent ALICE rate. That comes with a 6.8 percent poverty rate at the time, which according to U.S. census data declined to 4.8 percent in 2019.

Contact reporter Jonathan Delozier at (330) 721-4050 or [jdelozier@medina-gazette.com](mailto:jdelozier@medina-gazette.com).