



NEWSLETTER
DECEMBER 2020



OUR PARTNERS: OUR FAVORITE GIFT

COMMUNITY COMMITMENT

'Tis the season to count your blessings, and the first one we count as Strengthening Stark is our partners who come together with only the good of Stark County in mind. Collaboration, while simple in theory, can be complicated for organizations to participate in. The Strengthening Stark movement provides a space for all of our partners to step up and work together towards a common goal: To make Stark County a more vibrant place to to make Stark a great place to start and grow a business, develop one's talent and pursue a career, and live and raise a family.

Each of our partners come to the Strengthening Stark movement puts forth their willingness to change, offer solutions to their fellow Strengthening Stark partners, and band together as a united front to make changes happen. This is our favorite gift to highlight any year, but especially this year. Our partners have not only continued coming to the table, but did so with gusto to help our county get through this tough year while still making Stark a better place. We thank you! For a full list of our community partners, please visit our [WEBSITE](#).

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HOW LOCAL ECONOMIES GROW AND EXPAND: AGRIBUSINESS IS A PRIMARY DRIVER!

BUSINESS GROWTH



In our on-going series on how we accomplish our shared vision for a more vibrant economy, this month, we're taking at agribusiness here in Stark. Agricultural products produced here in Stark County are primarily sold outside of the county so they help to drive our growth like the manufacturers we discussed last month.

Several key agricultural businesses operate here in Stark and each was hit hard by the Corona Virus Pandemic. Closures and limited operations resulted in processing backlogs and led to the need to destroy or dispose of some agricultural products.

The sudden shut down of schools, restaurants and other milk consuming or processing operations was particularly hard on dairy farms. Milk production is a daily operation with each cow milked once or twice per day. A herd of 150 cows produces about 2,000 gallons of milk each day. Unlike grain farmers who can store grain, dairies must process and ship milk on a daily basis. Without an outlet for their product and requirement for daily milking, the only alternative option was to dump milk.

Similar to dairy farmers, the shutdown affected beef, pork and poultry producers. With the closing and subsequent partial opening of restaurants and other consumer operations a processing backlog quickly developed. Processors of meat are now scheduling work into the spring of 2022 due to this big backlog.

Grain growers (our primary crops are corn and soybean) were the least affected by the pandemic since grain can be stored while waiting for the market to open back up and create a demand this product.

Produce is another agricultural business here in Stark. Produce is another agricultural business here in Stark. Produce is another agricultural business here in Stark.

Like dairy and meat producers produce growers experienced unexpected drops in demand as restaurant and other outlet for their products remained closed to slow the spread of COVID-19.

Our farmers and agribusinesses here in Stark are a critical component to our economic growth and we appreciate all they do to manage the very unique challenges the industry faces.

Next month, we'll talk about the Hospitality and Tourism industry, and how they operate as a primary industry, helping to fuel our local economy.

MY STARK STORY: COURTNEY



NAME: Courtney Brown

TITLE & EMPLOYER: Director of Family Partnership/Habitat for Humanity East Central Ohio

HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE YOUR JOB TO A CHILD? At Habitat for Humanity, we help families build good homes that are safe, healthy, and affordable. Families build their homes with help from volunteers and support from others in the community. Families also take many educational classes to help them become the best homeowners they can be. When the houses are finished and families move in, the cost is low enough that moms and dads can afford to do more for their kids—buy healthier food, drive a dependable car to work, even help kids get a better education as they grow up.

WHAT LED YOU TO YOUR CURRENT EMPLOYER? Eight years after joining the team at Habitat for Humanity East Central Ohio, my answer is the same as the day I began: God led me here. I spent a few years after college searching for a job opportunity that helped me feel purposeful and challenged, a place where I could work in service to God and my community. From a young age, I saw Beth Lechner, Habitat’s Executive Director, living her life as I had envisioned mine. I sought out her guidance and we talked about my passion, goals, and skill set. Our conversations led to clarity and as God would have it, there was an opening at Habitat as the Director of Family Partnership. I remember that moment—knowing God heard my prayers and opened a door.

HOW DID YOU GET INVOLVED WITH THE STRENGTHENING STARK MOVEMENT? Hrishue Mahalaha visited Habitat for Humanity East Central Ohio to learn more about the vital work this organization is doing throughout our community. After those conversations, Hrishue reached out to see if I would serve on various committees—not just as a nonprofit and community leader, but as young woman of color who was born and raised in Stark County and is building the deep roots of life and career right here at home.

WHAT DO YOU WISH OTHER PEOPLE KNEW ABOUT STARK COUNTY? In Stark County, people care for one another. Genuinely. That deep care for others is unique and shows itself in the generosity of the people, organizations, faith communities, and businesses that call Stark County home. At Habitat for Humanity East Central Ohio, we have a first-hand perspective of that generosity and see the impact it has on quality of life for families in our community. When the people of Stark County get behind a worthy cause, it’s a blessing to see what can be accomplished!

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO NEW STARK COUNTY RESIDENTS? From the very beginning, be invested in learning and understanding the culture of Stark County. Learn and appreciate the history. See the challenges and discover how you might be a part of the solutions. Lock arms with others who care deeply for the people of this community. Envision the best and brightest days ahead and get to work side-by-side with others who share that vision.

IF YOU WON THE LOTTERY AND COULD PURCHASE ONE THING FOR OUR COMMUNITY, WHAT WOULD IT BE AND WHY? Instead of purchasing something new, I would invest in what exists now—the good things that make us who we are today while we picture even brighter days ahead. Neighborhood landmarks, functional and beautiful spaces for residents, sources of pride in our neighborhoods, people and organizations that are redefining Stark County’s future... this is where I would make the biggest investment.

WHAT STARK COUNTY RESTAURANT SHOULD WE CHECK OUT THIS WEEKEND? How is there any one good answer to this question? There are so many wonderful restaurants in Stark County! But, since I’m forced to pick one, to me there’s nothing like a lunch or dinner at Table Six Kitchen + Bar. While so many businesses are struggling during this pandemic, be sure to support our local restaurants with takeout orders that can bring these great kitchens to your own homes.





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OUR MISSION

Strengthening Stark is a community-wide movement of residents, business, government, nonprofits and philanthropists who share a vision for a vibrant, growing county. Our goal is to make Stark a great place to start and grow a business, develop one's talent and pursue a career, and live and raise a family.

ONE STEP IS ALL IT TAKES TO CHANGE YOUR DIRECTION

Talk to a community navigator today about job opportunities, training options, career paths, college options, and how to overcome the barriers between you and your professional goals. Reach out today and start 2021 with a new journey!



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