



The ART of
AGING

DIRECTION HOME

AKRON CANTON AREA AGENCY ON AGING & DISABILITIES

2021 COMMUNITY BENEFIT REPORT

FOSTERING ACCESS TO QUALITY COMMUNITY SERVICES

Supporting those who support others



We are committed to providing tailored solutions for individuals wishing to remain in the community through our front door to long-term services and supports. We refined our processes and now boast under 3% abandoned calls to our Aging and Disability Resource Center, even after a year of increased calls. Our overall goal is to answer each call live, each time the phone rings. After a long 15 months outside of the homes, our assessment team returned to in-person visits where they could provide older adults with comprehensive supports to meet their needs.

These interventions helped Marcia, the daughter of an 89-year-old man in Wooster who was suffering from dementia. Our assessor met with Marcia and her dad Frank to provide clear options and choices for ongoing support based on their situation. Frank is a veteran and was a proud provider for his three daughters. Frank found himself struggling with his diagnosis and the loneliness it brought. Direction Home Akron Canton referred his family to several community solutions including an Adult Day Service that allowed him to continue socializing, something that had declined as he withdrew due to his forgetfulness. We also helped Frank enroll in the Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP) to provide heating assistance during the winter and learn more about how to best afford his Medicare costs through the Medicare Improvements for Patients and Providers Act (MIPPA). Marcia now participates in our Caregiver Support Program, allowing her the support that lets her continue working and caring for her father.



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Over the past year we have seen the need for an informed community, and the power that accurate and timely information has on an older adult's well-being. To address this, we have taken several approaches to growth and education, starting internally. Our continuing education and professional growth training ensure that the network serving older adults has the best available sessions providing credits towards licensure renewal. We have a 97% satisfaction rating from attendees, despite another year of joining our colleagues primarily from behind screens.

Accessing health care is another area where information is vital. Our Medicare Made Simple Seminars provided the latest information on options in an unbiased format, free of any sales presentations. During open enrollment we hosted attendees in-person and online, with an eye towards providing the guidance people need to make the best financial decision for their health care coverage.

These are just some examples of how Direction Home Akron Canton delivers resources to foster ongoing financial stability to older adults and people with disabilities. Through these interventions, we provide answers and choices that allow for people to live where they want to call home.

THE NEIGHBORHOOD AND PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

Help that makes for better daily living



Home is where health lives. The crushing “fall, hospital, rehabilitation, readmission, nursing home” cycle can begin with a lack of supports and safety in the home. The same cycle can occur due to a lack of personal care, lack of supports, or a chronic disease that isn’t effectively managed. Direction Home Akron Canton assesses physical environments for accessibility, health hazards, the risk for falls, and needed modifications that are important for keeping the house in good condition so that it functions as a home should: comfortably and safely.

This is how we helped Helen and Rodney. This couple has been married for 65 years and lives in the same house in Akron where they raised their son. Although both worked until retirement in their 60’s they still had limited financial resources due to ongoing health care costs. Their home had been immaculately kept for most of their life and was the jewel of the neighborhood. Today it needs repairs to the roof, furnace, and windows. Rodney also struggles to manage his diabetes because their local grocery store closed, taking away easy access to fresh food. Direction Home Akron Canton’s housing specialist linked this couple to assistance in finding funding and professionals to repair their roof and furnace. Because of the aligned efforts of Direction Home Akron Canton programming, they were also linked to our chronic disease self-management program to assist with diabetes management, and access to a local congregate meal site for regular healthy meals.



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Good Neighborhoods are not exclusively dependent on a quality housing stock. Many older adults seek alternative options as they age to meet their health and safety needs, such as assisted living and nursing facilities. Direction Home Akron Canton sponsors the regional Ombudsman program which provides advocates for those using long-term services and supports. Each nursing and assisted living facility has an assigned Ombudsman that works with residents and the administration to address issues, provide advocacy, and manage ongoing cases to ensure the best outcomes for those living in these institutional settings.

We also continue to work with the City of Akron and Summit County on their Age Friendly initiatives, a five-year process that began in 2020. Over the last year, we focused on community engagement and conducted a lengthy review of the needs assessment. We ended the year by finalizing and planning recommendations and next steps. With this planning, we can ensure neighborhoods are safe and accessible, and physical environments welcoming to all ages. We are working with many community partners, such as the Akron Zoo, to identify barriers to use for older adults and create methods and strategies to mitigate these barriers and enhance the older adult experience.

Initiatives that change lives



Direction Home Akron Canton is proud to work with several communities on Age Friendly initiatives. This distinct planning process created by AARP from the World Health Organization uses domains to ensure public planning involves the whole community as a customer. These domains mirror social determinants of health, and ensuring these domains are covered also ensures non-medical interventions are addressed.

- Outdoor Spaces and Buildings
- Transportation
- Housing
- Social Participation
- Respect and Social Inclusion
- Work and Civic Engagement
- Communication and Information
- Community and Health Services

In 2021, Summit County and the City of Akron finalized their recommendations in the second year of the five-year process.

Sadly many who reach out to us do not qualify for Medicaid and have no real option for financial assistance with their ongoing long-term care needs in the community. In a recent needs assessment, we found that 95% of people misunderstand their Medicare benefits to include long-term care services, which is not the case.

Thanks to federal funds from the Older Americans Act, combined with other state-provided resources, we can offer our Care Coordination program. This service pairs a care recipient/consumer with a trained care manager who identifies and addresses needs with formal supports from provider agencies, as well as more informal answers from the community. It is common for a care manager to help not only with supportive programming like home-delivered meals but also to link consumers with other offerings both within Direction Home Akron Canton's menu of services as well as community-based solutions.



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We address the areas of life that impact medical outcomes and overall health beyond treatment. Keeping the whole person healthy and successful is what Direction Home does; through years of experience and community awareness, we leverage all options available to provide a place individuals want to call home.

We can provide this service because Area Agencies on Aging are part of the local community, welcomed into homes, participate in events and planning, and are present in a real way that other organizations are not. Unfortunately, these funds are limited, and there is a much greater demand for services than we can currently meet, which causes a lengthy waiting list. We are hopeful that communities will realize the tremendous worth of these home and community-based services and seek to provide ongoing funding to address the growing need.

Another way Direction Home ensures older adults and people with disabilities have a choice in long-term services and supports is through a range of community-based programs that together combine to encompass the whole person. This menu of services moves beyond basic needs such as food and shelter and strives to provide answers and options that make for a fully realized life.

Linda, a single woman living alone in her late 70's, was able to access one of these programs last year through an online art course we call "Aging is an Art Form." Thanks to funding from Akron Community Foundation, we designed a program that uses the creation of art as stress relief, community-building, and isolation reduction. Linda loved her class so much she then signed up for Tai Ji Quan: Moving for Better Balance which is proven to prevent falls. She now has friends from both classes that she talks with via e-mail and social media.

HEALTH CARE AND OUR INTERVENTIONS

Improving the quality of daily life



2021 was a trying year for healthcare. Struggles revealed a pronounced need for the coordination of care and the sustainability of home and community-based services. Direction Home Akron Canton continues to perfect the application of our 45+ years of expertise in non-medical interventions coupled with our “boots on the ground” approach to being present in the community in a way that produces positive health outcomes. Direction Home bridges the gap between health care and social service needs by addressing social determinants of health. Our interventions improve quality of care and quality of life while reducing the cost of care.

An example of this is Direction Home’s effort to streamline referrals from these healthcare partners and provide feedback to ensure coordinated care between payers, providers, and other organizations with an eye towards improved care. We have rolled out a new closed-loop referral system to better coordinate care between referrers (including physicians) and community members so that all providers of care can stay informed of communication and next steps in the consumer’s care plan. This pilot was made possible in part through Direction Home’s new online referral form. The form provides those wishing to make a referral with all the needed information upfront and is available online 24/7. The online referrals are all-inclusive and save staff time, aligning needed interventions with a trusted partner for accessing solutions through our Aging and Disability Resource Center.



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We have worked with professionals from Summa Health Center, Northeast Ohio College of Medicine (NEOMED), and others to provide education to primary care providers and offices, professionals and direct care workers, inter-professional students, and community members with a goal of improving the care older adults receive. We are able to leverage our real-world experience to round out the clinical training and make a real difference in the medical practice of professionals.

This experience helped Martin and Claudia, a couple in Wooster. Martin was caring for Claudia, who was suffering from depression and frequent falls. Claudia was also on a managed care program with care management through Direction Home Akron Canton. Claudia’s care manager was concerned about her situation and presented her case to the Care Management Interdisciplinary Team. Pulling together a group including different professionals allows us to leverage different expertise towards the common goal of wellness for the member. In this case, the pharmacist participating recommended different medications be considered by the physician as well as a check on Vitamin D levels. The doctor participating also made a referral to a local psychiatrist that she knew was seeing new patients and could quickly meet with Claudia. The assessor from Direction Home recommended a referral to our falls prevention courses. Over the next three months, Claudia was seen by a psychiatrist, put on a Vitamin D supplement by her doctor, and attended her first Tai Ji Quan Falls Prevention course.

A MESSAGE FROM OUR PRESIDENT AND CHAIRMAN

The COVID-19 pandemic entered a new phase in 2021. We had access to a vaccine that was effective yet scarce in the first few months. Thanks to this vaccine we were able as a society to reduce limitations and emerge from our homes into more public spaces. Now, as we reflect on the year that was 2021 and look forward to 2022, we see expanded opportunities to return to the community more than before the pandemic. Things are not normal, and with variants of COVID-19 and cases rising as of late December 2021, we continue to keep safety in mind. We cannot hold off. We must build momentum and advocate for the services, choices, and communities all older adults and people with disabilities need to thrive.

This year's annual report is about aging as an art form, that aging is beautiful. We have highlighted how getting older is a positive experience. Direction Home is here to support you, your family, and your goals to live independently.

Health and Wellness is the Bare Minimum

At Direction Home, we pride ourselves on exceeding expectations. Our federal programs provide meals, legal aid, home care, access to information, effective wellness training, and assistance. We work to ensure that basic human needs like housing, health care, food, and heat are met. We have spent the last half-century honing our processes to address the social determinants of health and exploring new avenues to meet challenges borne from these determinants. We must continue to ensure these needs are met, but this should only be where we start, not where we stop.

We must build programs and provide choices for people that address the whole person. We have put tremendous effort into developing partnerships that align with health care and community supports to provide the right interventions at the right time. We are moving beyond health care access and quality (including home-based care) to include Interventions that address;

- economic stability,
- education/information access and quality,
- enhancing neighborhoods and homes, and
- integrating older adults into the social and community context.



Dr. David B. Reynolds
CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD

Gary L. Cook
PRESIDENT & CEO

Creating Age Friendly Livable Communities

For many years Area Agencies on Aging have been known for certain programs. We are the PASSPORT administrative entity, providing older adults on Medicaid with physical needs the option to stay at home instead of a nursing home. We are the front door to long-term care, providing personal assessments that lead to enrollment in programs. Now, we are growing our role and embracing the vision of a livable community for all ages. We are moving forward efforts within Age Friendly holistic frameworks to ensure proper care and attention is paid to eight domains of livability:

- Outdoor Buildings and Spaces
- Transportation
- Communication and Information
- Civic Participation and Employment
- Respect and Social Inclusion
- Health Services and Community Supports
- Social Participation
- Housing

The pandemic brought significant issues into focus. Older adults were disproportionately affected by COVID-19 and were limited in their support options, such as online access to information and providers. Housing protections were put into place to avoid evictions. Outdoor spaces became much more important as one way to safely be in public. The internet became vital as a source of communication and information. Health services were taxed with demand outpacing the supply of health care workers. We now can view these challenges on the other side of 2021 as opportunities to create the community we believe in; a connected community where older adults and people with disabilities thrive.



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We have a vision and a definitive way forward communicated in recommendations developed as part of the City of Akron and Summit County Age Friendly initiatives. These plans consider the lessons learned from the pandemic, the needs which were brought to light, and the people who were most impacted by the lockdown. We believe that ensuring the whole person is cared for at all levels is the best way to age. Access to needs beyond the basics leads to enjoyable pastimes, resulting in fulfilling and engaging participation in our communities.

Success in Aging Leads to a Life Fulfilled

Achieving a livable, age-friendly community for all is not without its challenges. Chief among them are the resources needed for change. For many in Ohio, Aging Service Levies provide funding for services meeting basic needs such as meals and personal care for older adults and others with disabilities. Our geographic area does not have access to this resource. Systems such as home health care are taxed with more demand than can be supplied. The pandemic is not gone, and still presents dangers to healthy living.

These challenges can be overcome. We can find ways to invest in the future of a livable community. We can look for ways to not only provide for basic needs but to provide additional choices for people to live the way they wish, regardless of their financial or physical situation. We can work with our many community partner organizations, health care providers, managed care payers, government administrations, and elected officials to make this vision a reality. More people are living longer, and that increase in lifespan should be spent in the best way possible. We will continue to strive for this future, a future where people have choices to live meaningfully in a community they are a vital part of, in a way that fulfills them, in a place they call home.

Mission Moments

January 11, 2021

COVID-19 Resource Guides

Thousands of COVID-19 Resource Guides are delivered to Direction Home for distribution in Portage, Stark, Summit, and Wayne Counties. The booklets cover local and national COVID-19 support programming related to meals, housing, health, and more.

February 1, 2021

Akron-Summit County Public Library Partnership

DHAD and Akron-Summit County Public Library begin a partnership; working together on many initiatives to combat isolation in the community during the COVID-19 pandemic, including distributing Cabin Fever Kits.



March 11, 2021

HCBS Rate Increase

President and CEO Gary Cook testifies before the Ohio House Finance Subcommittee, advocating for rate increases for home and community-based services.

March 26, 2021

Faith Community

Direction Home's Quarterly Faith Community meetings switch to a virtual format, welcoming new guests, partnerships, and speakers from all over the State of Ohio.



May 3, 2021

Vaccine Clinics

Housing and Transportation Administration Specialist Tamara Fillingame, MPH, schedules and facilitates 30 COVID-19 vaccination clinics for Northeast Ohio homeless shelters, adult day centers, nursing and rehab facilities, and more, providing over 850 first doses of the COVID-19 vaccine. Gov. DeWine visited a Summit County clinic to see the successes firsthand.



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Our Mission Moments of 2021 continue to work towards fulfilling our mission— provide older adults, people with disabilities, and their caregivers long-term care choices and consumer protection so they can achieve the highest quality of life.



May 25, 2021
Tai Ji Quan
 DHAD launches its first virtual Tai Ji Quan class with instructor Lori Smith.

May 29-30, 2021
Senior Summit
 Direction Home works with Summit County partners to offer the annual Senior Summit, highlighting the first four domains of an Age Friendly community: housing, transportation/walkability, outdoor spaces & buildings, and community & health services.



June 1, 2021
Ombudsman volunteer bags
 Ombudsman volunteer appreciation bags were delivered to volunteers to show thanks for the work they do with nursing home and assisted living residents in Stark, Summit, Portage, and Wayne counties.



June 21, 2021
ConnectMeDHAD
 Over 600 individuals received an electronic device with Internet access and instructions. ConnectMeDHAD aims to increase connection and information between individuals and their loved ones, and with their communities.

July 15, 2021
Wellness and Cabin Fever Kits
 All remaining wellness and cabin fever kits are distributed to help prevent and reduce feelings of isolation. Portage, Stark, Summit, and Wayne Counties receive over 16,000 wellness kits while Summit County receives an additional 5,000 Cabin Fever Kits.



July 23, 2021
Direction Home Akron Canton Housing Specialist Awarded Accommodation Medal
 Housing and Transportation Administration Specialist Tamara Fillingame, MPH, receives the Ohio Accommodation Medal at the Ohio Department of Aging/National Guard End of Mission Event held Friday, July 23 in Columbus, Ohio.



August 12, 2021
AxessPointe Partnership
 In partnership with AxessPointe Community Health Centers, Direction Home's Community Engagement team visits senior housing to provide free health consultations, games and giveaways, and falls prevention workshops.

August 30, 2021
Caregiver Resource Playbook
 Direction Home produces 10,000 Caregiver Resource Playbooks to support caregivers and those who have caregivers with additional local and national resources, tips and tricks, and stress relief information.



September 29-30, 2021
Fall Conference
 Direction Home's annual fall conference features two virtual half-days focusing on livable communities and social determinants of health. Keynote speaker Gil Penalosa, former planning director of the City of Bogota, kicks off the conference before turning the floor over to speakers from KSU College of Public Health, SAGE, Best Buy Health, Long-Term Quality Alliance, and Planning NEXT.

September 30, 2021
Restaurant Initiative
 The Restaurant Initiative, a program created by Direction Home Aging and Disabilities and part of the Ohio Department of Aging's Staying Healthy Program, concludes. 22,864 restaurant vouchers provide nearly \$230,000 worth of meals to recipients in Portage, Stark, Summit, and Wayne Counties.

October 10, 2021
Age Friendly Summit County
 Summit County moves forward in the Age Friendly process, inviting the community to participate in various engagement efforts including surveys, web town halls, and On The Table events.

October 25, 2021
Medicare Made Simple
 The first virtual Medicare seminar of the year, delivered by Direction Home Director of Entitlement Rights, Francine Chuchanis, kicks off the Medicare open enrollment season.

November 18, 2021
Raffle
 The annual Direction Home Akron Canton Foundation Raffle Campaign concludes, revealing 10 big winners and a grand total of \$171,364.10 raised for advocacy efforts geared toward influencing public policy for the betterment of older adults.

November 19, 2021
First Responder
 Quarterly First Responder meetings continue, welcoming a panel of representatives from Adult Protective Services from Portage, Stark, Summit, and Wayne Counties.

December 10, 2021
Awards Ceremony
 The Annual Awards Ceremony honors Representative Thomas West of the 49th District with the Harvey L. Sterns Lifetime Achievement Award, volunteer Ombudsman Jack Kerns with the Ombudsman Award of Distinction, Lauren Wendt with the Joseph L. Ruby Student Scholarship, and inducts four nominees into both the Home Health Aide and Senior Citizen Halls of Fame.

Direction Home Foundation

The Direction Home Akron Canton Foundation believes that all older adults, regardless of income, deserve access to options that allow them to age where they want to call home.

For many, this is not the case as people do not qualify for Medicaid (the only payer of long-term care) but cannot pay out of pocket for services they need. This group of people go without, many times aging in ways that prevent them from living a full life.

The community does not understand the current limitations on long-term services and supports in the community, as 95% of people polled have the incorrect assumption that Medicare would pay for ongoing care like home-delivered meals and home health aides. Donations play a huge role in helping our Foundation achieve its mission and inform the community that they can age well if given the right opportunities.

While we have been working hard to fill in the needs caused by the pandemic with resources to assist older adults, the funds to do so are limited and not ongoing. We know the needs however will be. We must continue to adapt as needs change by identifying where care gaps originated and what filling them will look like in 2022 and beyond.

This is why Foundation support is more critical than ever. We are proud of our past achievements and the work we have done in the community, but we also know that there are so many more people in need.

Foundation support allows us to keep moving forward, to advocate with elected officials to make the right choice and support all older adults in the community. We continue to amplify the voices of older adults, to keep growing partnerships that allow us to better coordinate care, and to keep providing individuals with choices to maintain their independence, dignity, and comfort.

2021 Foundation Campaign raised \$171,364.

Direction Home Akron Canton Foundation holds a raffle campaign to support its mission to enable older adults not eligible for government assistance to remain independent and secure at home through access to a range of supportive services.

2021 Campaign's Top Donors:

Northeast Professional Home Care, Inc.
Simply EZ Home Delivered Meals
NFP

Joseph L. Ruby
Best Buy Health
Family & Community Services
Home Care by Callos

2021 Raffle Winners:

Grand prize: Elissa Barr
1st prize: Suzi Pachmayer
2nd prize: Teresa Atkinson
3rd prize: Missy Sell
4th prize: Home Care by Callos
5th prize: James Masi
6th prize: Linda Gauer
7th prize: Bill McDowell
8th prize: Maria Catrone
9th prize: Shannon Perkins



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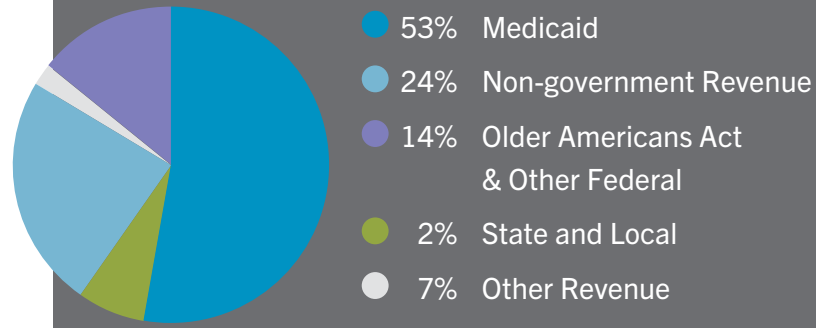
Gary L. Cook
PRESIDENT & CEO

Consolidated Statements Of Financial Position

FY2021

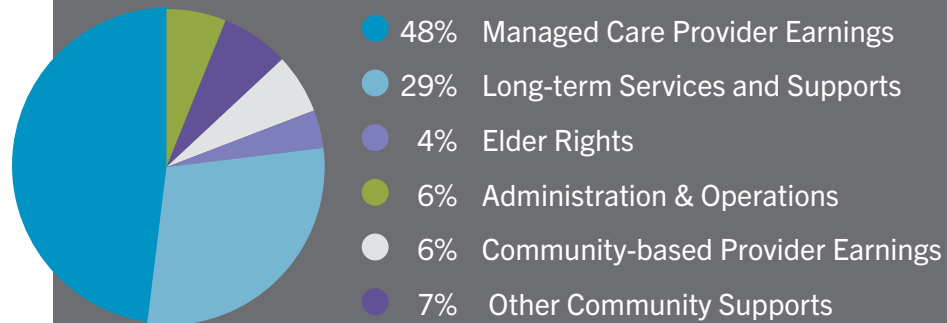
TOTAL REVENUES BY SOURCE

\$62,209,166



TOTAL EXPENDITURES

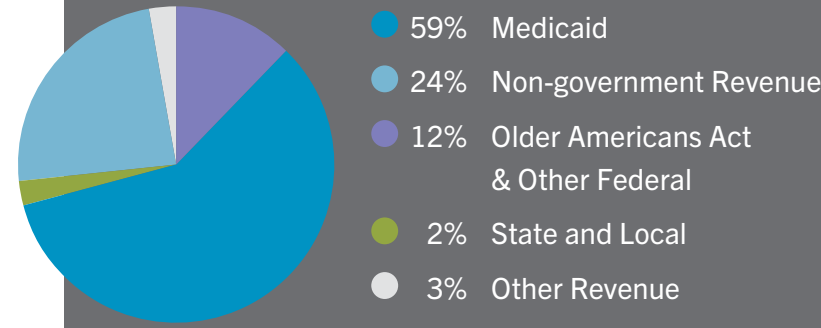
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FY2020

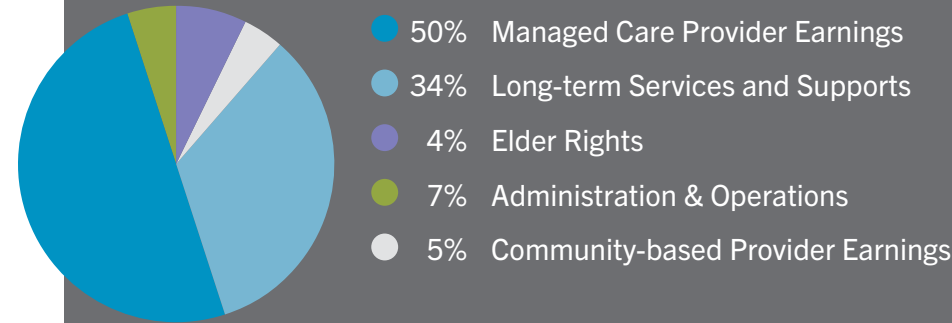
TOTAL REVENUES BY SOURCE

\$57,803,653



TOTAL EXPENDITURES

\$57,392,329



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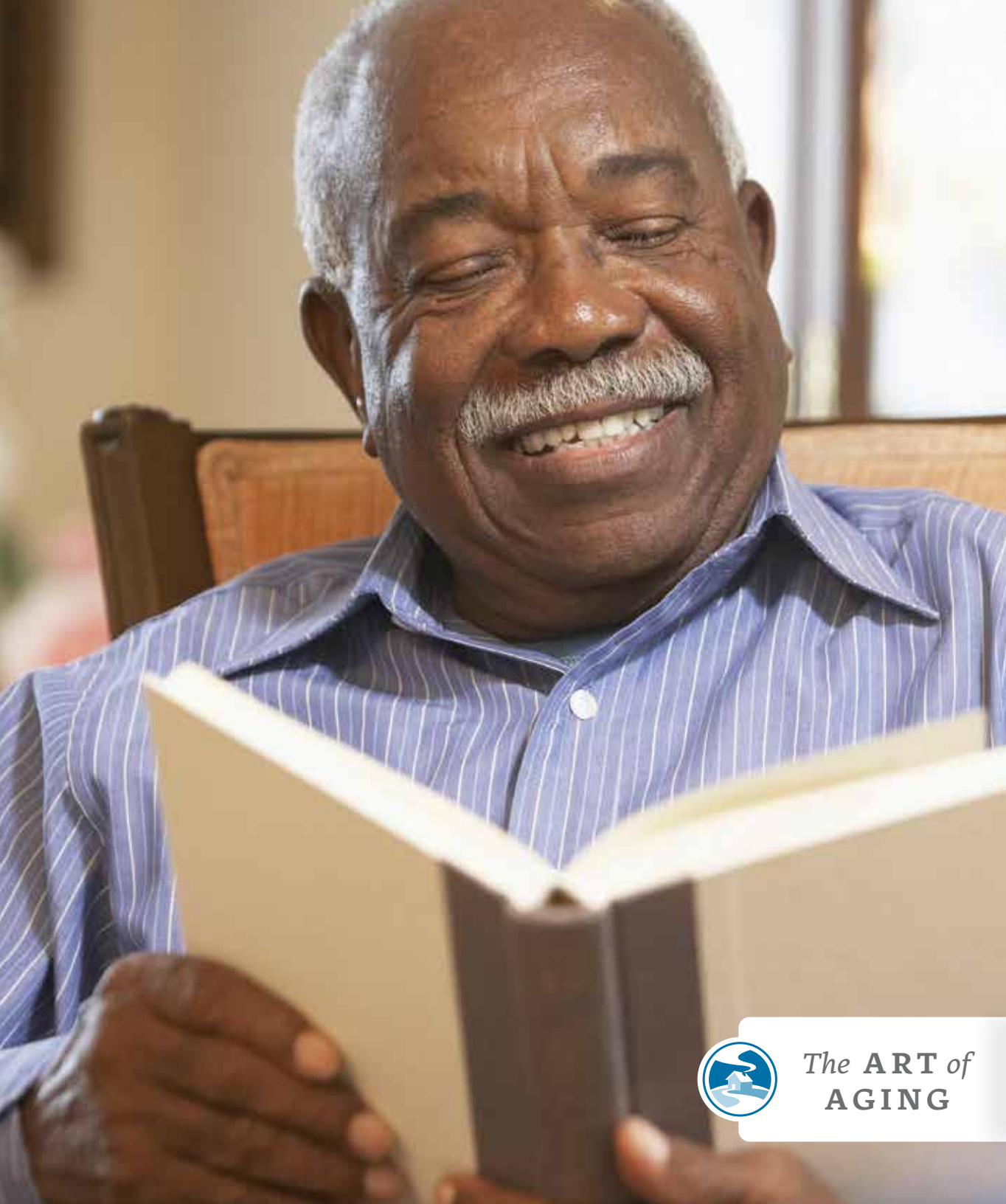
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Chief Medical Officer
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DIRECTOR



Our Mission

Direction Home Akron Canton Area Agency on Aging and Disabilities provides older adults, people with disabilities, and their caregivers long-term care choices and consumer protection so they can achieve the highest quality of life.

Our Vision

Direction Home Akron Canton will be the central access point and the preferred long-term care management organization for all people with disabilities.

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