



Lake Views

VOLUME 6 ISSUE 1 - WINTER 2025

LAKE VIEWS IS THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER FOR THE RESIDENTS OF LAKE COUNTY

Winter Wonders in LAKE COUNTY

As the days grow shorter and temperatures drop, winter brings a new kind of beauty and plenty of reasons to enjoy all that Lake County has to offer. From peaceful hikes through snow-covered parks to cozy nights at our wineries, there's no shortage of seasonal activities. Need ideas for a winter adventure? Then look no further than Tour Lake County!



You can find activities ranging from sledding, cross country skiing, or snowshoeing to participating in Tour Lake

County's "Hot Chocolate Trail", now in its 2nd year (see article below for details). Or if you're looking for a Winter Festival, there are plenty of those, too! Just visit tourlakecounty.com to see everything Lake County has to experience even during winter.

This edition of "Lake Views" also includes important information for planning ahead. Inside, you'll find the 2026 County Office Closings to help you stay informed about office availability throughout the year and don't forget, it's also time to renew your dog license so be sure to



COMMISSIONER / President
RICHARD REGOVICH



COMMISSIONER
JOHN PLECNIK



COMMISSIONER
MORRIS BEVERAGE III

check out the renewal instructions and deadlines outlined on Page 2. Keeping your pets properly licensed helps ensure their safety and supports our Dog Shelter.

We're proud to serve the residents of Lake County and wish you a safe and joyful winter season and a very Happy New Year!

Your Lake County Commissioners ■



HOT CHOCOLATE TRAIL RETURNS!

Based on overwhelming success and positive feedback from its inaugural run, Tour Lake County's "Hot Chocolate Trail" has returned and it's even bigger and better than last year! This flavorful journey, consisting of quaint coffee shops and cafes as well as non-traditional stops, features a unique take on hot chocolate.

This year's trail features locations starting from Wickliffe in the west to Madison in the east and everywhere in between! Several recent additions include Monarca Ice Cream and Coffee in Madison Township and Halcyon Ledges in Perry. Each stop offers a cozy escape into a world of decadent and unique signature hot chocolate offerings ranging from Turkish Hot Chocolate at Blu Bee Café in Painesville to homemade Cold Cocoa ice cream (*continued on p4*)



LAKETRAN EXPANDS SERVICE OPTIONS To Better Connect Lake County



Laketransit is helping residents get where they need to go. Whether it's getting to work, shopping, school, or medical appointments, Laketransit continues to expand transportation options to make life in Lake County more connected than ever. As the agency marks its 50th year of service, it remains focused on what matters most—providing safe, reliable, and affordable transportation. Over the past year, Laketransit has made significant strides to improve mobility and accessibility by introducing new programs and expanding services to better meet the community need by rolling out several initiatives to make getting around easier, more convenient, and more flexible than ever before.

One of the most exciting new services is Rides on Demand; a flexible, same-day service that allows residents to book door-to-door trips countywide using the Rides on Demand app. This convenient option is ideal for last minute errands and appointments by offering rideshare-style convenience at public transit pricing.

Laketransit also expanded its popular Sports Express service, giving hometown fans the opportunity to leave the driving to someone else. In addition to transportation to Cleveland Browns home games, they now provide service

to Guardians and Cavaliers weekend games. Riders can enjoy a comfortable, stress-free trip to and from downtown Cleveland without the hassle of traffic or parking.

In partnership with Lake County Board of Commissioners, Laketransit launched Seniors on the Go, a program designed to help Lake County seniors stay active and independent by providing free transportation to senior centers and grocery stores as well as social and recreational activities. The program not only supports mobility but also helps to reduce isolation and connect residents to community resources.

Weekend service improvements have also been a top priority. Dial-a-Ride is now available on Sundays from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. with expanded Saturday hours for Local Routes and Dial-a-Ride services, giving residents more flexibility for weekend shifts, shopping, or recreational trips. These changes were made in direct response to rider feedback and demonstrate the agency's commitment to keeping customer service responsive to community needs. In 2024, Laketransit's ridership surged with Local Routes up 14%, Dial-a-

Ride trips up 3%, and Park-n-Ride ridership climbing 11%. Overall, total ridership grew by 9%, a sign of renewed confidence in public transportation across Lake County.



“Our goal is to make public transit easier and more accessible for everyone in Lake County,” said Laketransit Board President Brian Falkowski. “These new services reflect what residents have told us they want—more flexibility, more connections, and more freedom to travel on their own schedule.” As Laketransit looks ahead, it remains focused on improving the customer experience with amenities like online booking, real-time signage, and transit waiting areas as well as a new Airport Express service coming in 2026. ■

2026 COUNTY CLOSINGS

New Years - Jan. 1
Martin Luther King Day - Jan. 19
Presidents Day - Feb. 16
Memorial Day - May 25
Juneteenth - June 19
Independence Day - Observed
Friday, July 3
Labor Day - Sept. 7
Columbus Day - Oct. 12
Veterans' Day - Nov. 11
Thanksgiving - Nov. 26 & 27
Christmas - Dec. 24 & 25



2026 Lake County Dog Licenses on sale Dec. 1, 2025 thru Jan. 31, 2026

Licenses purchased after Jan. 31 double in price per Ohio Law. Dog owners who fail to license their dogs are subject to a \$250 fine plus court costs!

Order your Dog License ONLINE

lakecountyohio.docupet.com

Questions? Contact DocuPet @ 1-877-239-6072

Interested in a Designer Tag?

50% off Code - LAKECOUNTY50
Does not include personalization, discounted tags, add ons or connectors. One use per person





Carl DiFranco: LAKE COUNTY CLERK OF COURTS



This past January, Carl DiFranco began his tenure as Lake County's newly elected Clerk of Courts. He brings a distinguished academic and professional background to this vital role. He holds a Bachelor of Arts degree from Purdue University where he graduated magna cum laude and he holds a Juris Doctor degree from Penn State University's Dickinson School of Law. His extensive experience as a seasoned attorney, mediator, and former municipal judge provides him with a unique and

invaluable perspective on the legal system and the diverse needs of our community. He is deeply committed to enhancing public access and transparency with a primary objective of modernizing the computerized case management system and digitizing all historical and court records to ensure easy access for Lake County residents.

The Lake County Clerk of Courts Legal Division is located on the lower level of the West Annex to the main courthouse at 25 North Park Place on the square in downtown Painesville. It serves as the custodian of records for the General Division, the Domestic Relations Division, and the 11th District Court of Appeals. Additionally,

this division plays a crucial role in processing "bind over" cases originating from all three of Lake County's municipal courts. Some of the duties associated with the General and Domestic Relations Divisions include accepting bonds, summoning jurors, administering oaths, filing judgment liens, and issuing writs to carry to court orders such as summons, subpoenas, warrants to arrest, warrants to convey to penal institutions, and signing death warrants in capital cases. The Clerk is also responsible for the receipt and disbursement of all monies paid into the court system. *(continued on page 4)*

LAKE COUNTY OHIO: VISION 2050

The Lake County Board of Commissioners, along with the Lake County Planning Commission, have requested proposals for a comprehensive plan titled "LAKE COUNTY OHIO: VISION 2050". This plan will help establish a vision for our future through extensive staff, stakeholder, and public input. It is intended to provide tools to help guide growth while also considering challenges through the year 2050 and will replace the previous one which was last updated 65 years ago in 1960! The Commissioners are interested in a guide that will address economic development, agriculture, housing, land use, transportation, parks and recreation, education, and environmental concerns for the next 25 years.

This comprehensive plan will go beyond the standard land use and zoning plan. It must also take into consideration our aging population, new housing, infrastructure upgrades, agricultural protections, and our environmental elements (Lake Erie, Grand River, Chagrin River) that need protection. The Commissioners' objective is a plan that will unite our 23 communities as we are only

as successful as the sum of our parts. Lake County is a unique county. We have areas ranging from post-World War II housing to rural areas with farms and wineries to new developments so this landscape will be a particular challenge in developing a comprehensive plan.

Envision was hired on to act as our Planning Consultant. They have been guiding the process along with the assistance of the Commissioners, our Planning and Community Development Department, the Lake County Development Authority, Lake Metroparks, the Farm Bureau, and local communities and

non-profits as well as utilizing focus groups from the Chambers of Commerce. Envision also engaged with the public through the use of a survey and public interactions at the Willoughby ArtsFest, the Lake County Fair, and at summer concerts in Madison. They have experience in suburban and rural planning, are technically advanced, and very familiar with Lake County.

For more information, you can visit the county website at lakecountyohio.gov and click on "Comprehensive Plan" under the Search Bar. Here you will find a view into our past as well as a more detailed explanation of what a comprehensive plan is. ■





The Lake County
Board of Commissioners
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HOT CHOCOLATE TRAIL *(from page*

at Fairport Harbor Creamery to an entire curated menu of assorted hot chocolate selections at Julbean's Coffee & Crepes.



Elyse Downie, Tour Lake County's Events & Engagement Manager, has worked hard on expanding and improving this year's trail and adds, "There's nothing quite like a warm cup of hot chocolate to capture the spirit of the season. Our Hot Chocolate Trail is sure to stir up some nostalgia and holiday magic! With 17 local coffee shops and businesses to choose from, all serving up festive and unique flavors, you can sip your way through your own chocolatey experience! This time of year, our charming small towns really come to life, offering that beloved Hallmark-style warmth to visitors and locals alike!"

Participation in the Hot Chocolate Trail is free. Simply download the free digital passport onto your mobile phone then begin scanning a unique QR code at each location to earn points ranging from 100 to 120 points per stop. Once you reach 1,000 points, you will earn a FREE Limited Edition TourLakeCOcoa mug in a brand-new design! The trail runs through Valentine's Day, February 14th, 2026 so for more information and to download your pass, visit tourlakecounty.com/hotchocolatetrail now and begin your journey!

Tour Lake County is a 501c6 nonprofit and is the official destination marketing organization for Lake County, Ohio. For the latest on travel and tourism, follow them on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter, call 440-975-1234, or visit tourlakecounty.com. ■

CLERK OF COURTS *(from page 3)*

Beyond the Legal Division, Clerk DiFranco also oversees the Title Division operations of two title offices within Lake County. These convenient locations, one at 8100 Mentor Ave in Mentor and one at 30188 Euclid Ave in Wickliffe, offer a comprehensive suite of services. Residents from any county can access efficient titling services for automobiles, watercrafts, motorcycles, golf carts, all-terrain vehicles, all purpose vehicles, mobile homes, and others. Additionally, each title office proudly serves as a passport acceptance agency, equipped to take passport photographs on-site. They also facilitate watercraft registrations and, as a newer service, provide out-of-state VIN inspections. The title offices process approximately 230,000 titles per year.



A testament of fiscal responsibility, the titling budget operates on a self-sustaining model completely independent of the General Fund which means they do not rely directly on taxpayer dollars for their operational expenses. In fact, revenue generated by the Title Division actively supplements other critical county funds contributing significantly to the support of our court management system and the ongoing process of digitization of records. This approach effectively minimizes the financial burden on taxpayers.



Clerk DiFranco is honored to serve the people of Lake County and is proud of the exceptional dedication and efficiency demonstrated by all 48 employees across both divisions. He also champions proactive collaboration with other county departments,

fostering an environment where clear communication and professionalism are paramount in all aspects of his office's operations. ■