



2025 Investor Guide



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to Defiance County Economic Development

Defiance County is pulsing with creative, innovative problem-solving, and ripe with growth opportunities for industries of all kinds. At Defiance County Economic Development, we are striving to build a diverse, sustainable economy. Whether you have a business in Defiance County or you are thinking about siting a company here, please know, you will have the necessary resources to elevate your business.

In addition to offering many different resources, we are consistently striving to add value. Below are just a few ways we aim to do that:

- Market Defiance County to attract business investment and new jobs, emphasizing business sectors that will provide diversity in the Defiance County industrial makeup.
- Become your trusted partner in Workforce Development - from assisting in recruiting techniques to locate training resources.
 - We offer at “no cost” targeted social media campaigns for members
 - We can access local & regional wage & benefit data
 - We can assist in establishing apprenticeships & internships
- Provide financial incentives for growing businesses.
- Protect the existing asset and employment base of Defiance County by continuing a systematic retention and expansion program.
- Facilitate infrastructure development throughout the county.
- And assist communities and businesses with their unique needs.

Again, we thank you and extend the offer to become fully engaged in the work we are doing. Feel free to reach out at 419-784-4471. If you are an existing business in Defiance County, THANK YOU for being a pillar in our County. And if you are a new company, interested in expanding to a new location, Defiance County is the “Perfect Place to do Business”. We encourage all business leaders to reach out today and experience the value we can add for you and your team members.



Erika Willitzer
Executive Director



Erika@DefianceCountyED.com



419-784-4471

Our Team



Erika Willitzer
Executive Director

Before becoming the Executive Director at Defiance County Economic Development, Erika spent over 6 years working at a utility in Economic Development. During her tenure, she was trained and worked with global companies and their business and electrical needs.

Previous to working for the utility, she worked as the Paulding Chamber of Commerce Executive Director where she worked with local businesses and developed a passion for rural revitalization. In total, she has over 12 years of experience working in economic and community development. Erika worked as a news anchor and personality at NewsTalk 1190 WOWO and 97.3 WMEE out of Fort Wayne, Indiana for over 10 years.



Cara Boehm
Director of Business
Development &
Marketing

Cara comes to the Economic Development office with a background in the insurance industry and non-profit arena. She spent over 12 years with the American Cancer Society in a variety of rolls that included fundraising, volunteer, staff, & board management, and community engagement. Cara also has shown her entrepreneurial spirit through launching her own small business in 2021. She is very excited to serve her community through her roll with the Economic Development office.



Board of Directors

Board President



Dave Figley
Premier Bank

Vice President



Mark Klein
State Bank

Treasurer



Michael Wahl
Keller Logistics Group



Mike Barth
Hicksville Mayor



Keith Burmeister
ProMedica Defiance
Regional Hospital



Taylor Klepper
Klepper Building Company



Sonya Selhorst
Mercy Health



Jill Little
Defiance County Auditor



Mike McCann
Defiance Mayor



Mick Pocratsky
Defiance Co. Commissioner



Tiffany Rockhold
Defiance | Paulding OMJ



Beth Sigg
Northwest Real Estate
Services



Dave Weaner
Sherwood Mayor



Kyle Weber
Township Trustee

Other Board Members:

Mathias Grube
Grube Inc.

Ashley Wilhelm
Johns Manville

2024 Year in Review

When I interviewed for the role of Executive Director at Defiance County Economic Development, I was asked a pivotal question by the hiring committee, “What kind of approach would you take as the leader of this organization?” My response, I believe, caught them off guard.

I paused for a moment and asked, “Have any of you seen the movie Moneyball with Brad Pitt?” A few chuckles followed, but then I shared what I meant. I explained an approach dubbed “Money Ball Economic Development” it’s rooted in reinvention—one that challenges the norm, leverages data-driven strategies, and maximizes untapped potential. That same mindset has since helped Defiance County achieve goals we once thought were out of reach.

In the movie, which was based on a true story, General Manager Billy Beane played by Pitt- turned the 2002 Oakland A’s into a winning team despite the smallest total team salary in major league baseball. He didn’t look at how many homeruns players hit, but rather their on-base averages.

Like Beane, we have the opportunity to rethink how we approach growth. When I began to dig into data and statistics in economic development, I saw myself as a kind of “Billy Beane” for the community. Instead of solely chasing large-scale investments, I started focusing on the untapped potential right in front of us—our existing, family-owned businesses. These generational businesses are the backbone of our local economy. If they thrive, our community thrives. They hold immense, often overlooked value. But the key is data. If we’re not paying attention to the numbers, we’re missing insights and opportunities to strengthen these pillars of our economy.

Beane showed us that real change requires challenging old ways of thinking. It demands a willingness to focus on what others overlook. If we, as leaders, channel that same mindset, we can build unstoppable momentum for our local economies. The data is there. All we need to do is pay attention and act.

And when our local businesses are taken care of, the grand slam opportunities see that our community is a great place to do business, and then they soon follow. Enter the 2024 announcement of Metal X coming to Defiance, Ohio.

At Defiance County Economic Development, we have a metric goal dashboard that tracks everything from median household income, job placements, local business expansions, housing units, and more.

So, how did we stack up in 2024? Below are some of our metrics pulled from our Money Ball Metric Dashboard:

- Our office assisted businesses with over \$370 million in new investment, this doesn’t include those business leaders who made the decision to push forward without assistance/incentives.
 - Since 2021, our team has assisted in bringing over \$980,000,000 in new investment.
- We have 580 new high-paying positions to be created within a 3-year period. These are all confirmed new positions coming to Defiance County.
- We reached out to over 50 housing developers to gain interest in Defiance County.
- We have over 400 new housing units coming to the market beginning in 2025.
- We made over 250 unique business visits locally.
- The Median Income of Defiance County is hovering around \$72,000 to \$68,000. Three years ago, it was \$58,000.
- We placed over 250 individuals into employment opportunities.
- We held 6 successful Educational Bus Tours, where we took students and teachers for tours of our local manufacturing/healthcare systems.
- We assisted our county/region in obtaining over \$19.6 million in grants.

So, to sum up, 2024 was a remarkable year, and 2025 is looking to shape up well, too. Moneyball Economic Development is a universal principle for unlocking full potential in all fields and all aspects of our county’s economics. And it is certain to make Defiance County prosperous for generations to come. All we need to do is continue to pay close attention to the data.

Sincerely,
Erika Willitzer



Why Invest in Defiance County?

Your investment allows us to:

- ◇ Protect the existing asset and employment base of Defiance County by continuing a systematic retention and expansion program.
- ◇ Market Defiance County to attract business investment and new jobs, emphasizing business sectors that will provide diversity in the Defiance County industrial makeup.
- ◇ Facilitate infrastructure development throughout the county.
- ◇ Become your trusted partner in Workforce Development - from assisting in recruiting techniques to locate training resources.
- ◇ Provide financial incentives for growing business.
- ◇ Assist communities and businesses with their unique needs.

Contact us

1300 E. Second St., Ste 201
Defiance, Ohio 43512

(419) 784-4471
www.defiancecountyed.com

Strategic Location



By Road

- The City of Defiance is conveniently located within a 45-minute drive of both Toledo, Ohio, and Fort Wayne, Indiana. Defiance County is centrally located between markets in Cleveland, Cincinnati, Indianapolis, Columbus, Detroit and Chicago.
- The City of Defiance features four interchanges with U.S. Route 24, the major highway connecting Fort Wayne and Toledo. State Routes 18, 15, 66, 111 and 281 also intersect in the city.
- US 127 and State Route 18 intersect in the Village of Sherwood and State Routes 18, 49, and 2 pass through the Village of Hicksville. The Ohio Turnpike (I-80/I-90) spans the state from east to west and is less than twenty miles from the City of Defiance and the Village of Hicksville. Eleven truck lines provide intrastate and interstate shipping.

By Air

- Toledo Express and Fort Wayne International Airports, served by several national and international airlines, are located within an hour's drive from Defiance County.
- The Defiance County Memorial Airport features a 4,200-foot PLASI lighted runway with instrument approach and provides facilities for corporate and private aircraft.

By Rail

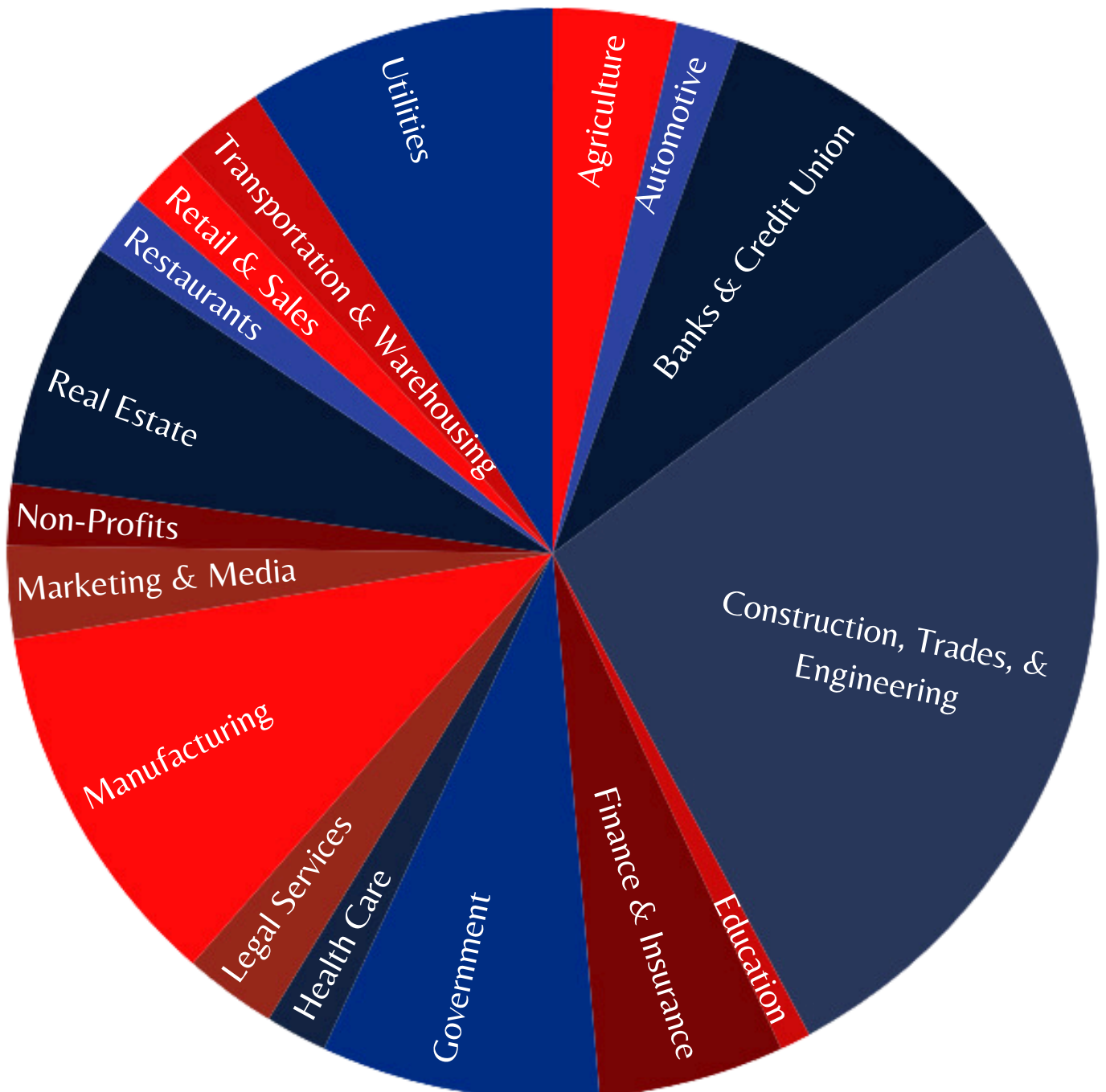
- Patriot Rail and CSX Railroad serve Defiance County's rail needs, with an Amtrak station located in neighboring Williams County.

By Boat

- The Port of Toledo, located on Lake Erie, is less than 50 miles away from the City of Defiance.

Current Investors

Thank you, Defiance County CIC Investors for your unwavering support. **Your contributions** play a vital role in creating jobs and attracting investments in Defiance County. **Your support** enables our existing businesses to thrive in Northwest Ohio. We couldn't provide our business and economic development resources with you!





Workforce & Business Development Benefits

Our office offers a variety of workforce and business development benefits for Defiance County Businesses! These tools, resources, and opportunities are available for FREE to our investors.

- **Workforce Support for Businesses:**
 - Wage & Benefits Analysis Reports
 - Strategic Recruitment Campaigns
 - Support and Implementation of Workforce Events
- **Educational Programs:**
 - Bus Tours- Bringing awareness to work opportunities in Defiance County
 - Summer Manufacturing Camp- Middle School Students
 - Certification Trainings and Leadership Growth Opportunities
 - Apprenticeship/Internship Placements
 - Quarterly Business Advisory Meeting for Defiance County
- **Business Development:**
 - Financial Incentives for Growing Businesses
 - Business Development/Creation Help & Advice
 - Addition to our Community Resource List



Cara Boehm
Director of Business
Development & Marketing



Cara@DefianceCountyED.com



419-784-4471



Marketing Benefits

We have some really great marketing benefits to offer our investors that can help your business gain visibility and connect with the community. Partnering with us not only elevates your brand but also demonstrates your commitment to community growth and development.

- **Sponsorship Opportunities***
 - Annual Meeting
 - Summer Manufacturing Camp
- **Social Media**
 - Short promotional videos
 - Free job postings
 - E-Newsletter advertising
 - Feature blog stories
 - Weekly Q&A giveaways
 - Highlight Defiance County assets
- **Podcast**
 - Business advertising
 - Be our guest

*Learn about our
Sponsorship Opportunities!



Sign up for our
E-Newsletter!



Cara Boehm
Director of Business
Development & Marketing



Cara@DefianceCountyED.com

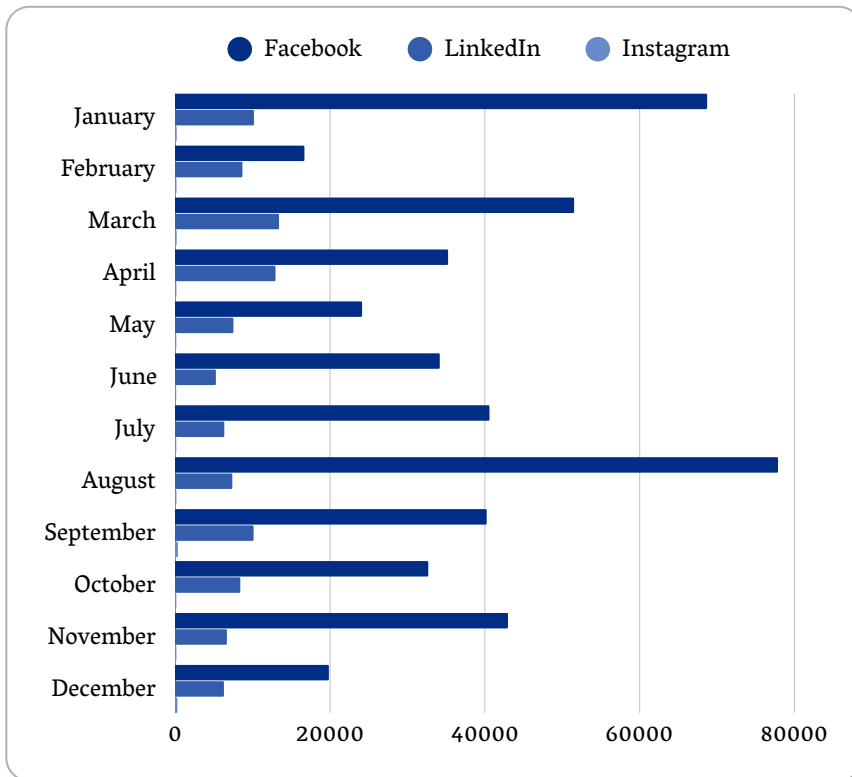


419-784-4471

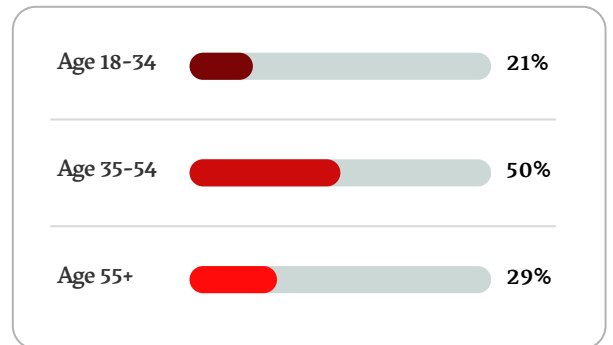
Marketing Statistics



Audience Reach



Audience Demographics



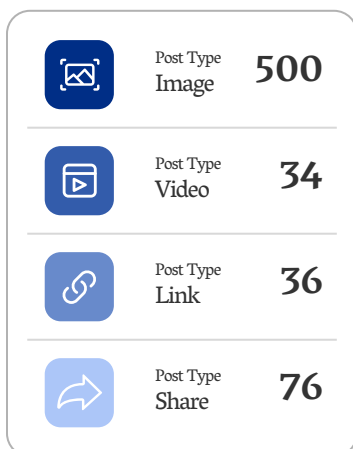
Followers



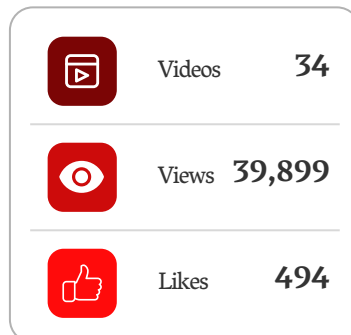
Tuesday Question Analytics



Social Media Posts



Video Analytics



Follow us on Social Media!



Incentive Programs



Tax Increment Financing (TIF)

Redirects real property tax to local government to finance public infrastructure. Defiance County offers up to 75% exemption of real property taxes for up to 10 years; however, the rate and term of TIFs can be extended up to 100% for up to 30 years with approval.



Job Creation Incentive Programs (JCIP)

A local business cash incentive which redirects a portion of local income tax back to companies that create jobs inside the city or village's corporation limits. The amount of the grant returned to the company through JCIP is based on the number of jobs created and the aggregate new annual payroll developed by the firm. The City of Defiance, Village of Sherwood, and Village of Hicksville each have their own JCIP.



Community Reinvestment Areas (CRAs)

The CRA program provides tax exemptions for new construction and remodeling projects in commercial, industrial, and residential areas. Four locations in Defiance have been designated as CRAs with tax exemptions ranging from 5 to 15 years.



Enterprise Zone Agreements

An Enterprise Zone Agreement offers special tax incentives to businesses that invest in capital improvements and create or retain jobs. Defiance County offers up to 100% abatement for 10 years on projects, as measured by their investment and employment numbers. Each contract must be approved by the affected School Districts, Township Trustees, Villages and/or the City of Defiance, and the Defiance Board of Commissioners.



CIC Business Development Loan Fund (BDLF)

The Business Development Loan Fund is controlled by the Community Improvement Corporation. It provides capital in the form of direct loans to businesses looking to create or expand operations within the City of Defiance. The BDLF is not a primary lending source and requires a partnership with other lenders and equity owners to qualify for consideration. Creation or retention of jobs is a program objective.



Defiance County Infrastructure Revolving Loan Fund Program

This program offers low cost loans to assist with needed public infrastructure. It is available for industrial or distribution projects. Public entities are the preferred applicants.



Energy Special Improvement District (ESID)

This program provides owners (private or public) the ability to finance energy efficient enhancements to their property. An eligible project is funded through Property- Assessed Clean Energy (PACE) financing. 100% funded upfront with fixed rates.

Featured Sites

Do you want to be located in the Heart of Northwest Ohio with great access to highways and rail? Defiance County is the perfect spot for your company expansion.

Our organization is happy to help you with all your economic and workforce development needs.



CSX Site Across From GM

Defiance, Ohio

- Site has great access to U.S. 24
- Location: St. Rt. 281
- Site can be split 5, 10, 15 acres, etc.
- Total Acres: 71 acres
- CSX Main Line
- Ample utilities



Harmon Business Park

Defiance, Ohio

- Strategically located off U.S. Route 24, with proposed 6-8 acre lots which can be combined for larger parcels
- Location: East Commerce Dr. in Defiance
- Price Negotiable - Will Build to Suit
- Total Developable Acres: 105 acres



US 24/Stadium/Carpenter Land

Defiance, Ohio

- Site sits off of U.S. Route 24
- Total Acres: 176 acres
- All public utilities are to the site
- Frontage on both Carpenter Road and Stadium Drive



Enterprise Industrial Park

Defiance, Ohio

- Total Acres: 35 acres
- Adjacent to U.S. Route 24
- Served by two railroads, CSX and Patriot Rail
- Location: 1840 Quality Drive
- Aggressive local incentives

Featured Sites



Liska North Property

Defiance, Ohio

- Total Acres: 55 acres
- Location: Domersville Road
- Adjacent to U.S. 24



Liska South Property

Defiance, Ohio

- Total Acres: 27.6 acres
- Location: Domersville Road
- Adjacent to U.S. 24



Sherwood Industrial Park

Sherwood, Ohio

- Park is in a Community Reinvestment Area, which means that all real property improvements are exempt from taxes for a period of 12 to 15 years
- Location: Decker Drive
- Total Acres: 40



Hicksville Site

Hicksville, Ohio

- Location: Industrial Drive
- Total Acres: 65 acres
- Utilities on site
- Price: \$35,000/acre

Homegrown Grant Program



Program Overview:

Our board is looking for passion, as well as business smarts. Eligibility is open to small businesses located in Defiance County, Ohio, with annual revenues not exceeding \$250,000. We have set aside \$10,000 each year for this initiative, and once these funds are distributed, the next round will begin the following calendar year. Award amounts will be \$500, and these will be granted quarterly following a review by the Homegrown Board.

Allocations Rounds:

- March 31, 2025
- June 30, 2025
- September 30, 2025
- December 31, 2025

This Program is Sponsored By:



Requirements:

- **Applicant is required to fill out our online application.**
- Small business must be in Defiance County, Ohio
- Annual revenues not exceeding \$250,000
- Must provide your most recent Balance Sheet and Profit & Loss Financial Documents
- Applicants must have their business registered with the State of Ohio, to be eligible.
- Must meet with Lisa Becher (Nwohiosbdc@gmail.com) with Northwest State's Small Business Development Center
 - The goal of this meeting is to develop a business plan or growth plan. This is a service with no cost and great benefits to make sure you are prepared to start your business or scale up your existing business
- Awardees will be required to provide receipts or invoices for the funds allocated.
- This award can only be applied for once per year.

To Apply:

Visit <https://www.defiancecountyed.com/homegrown>





We are on a mission to raise funds to help maintain our Four Flags of Freedom Veteran Monument here in Defiance County! Our goal is to raise \$10,000 annually to keep up with maintenance costs of the flags.

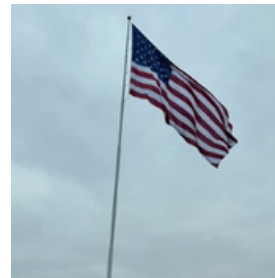
Check out the flags in person at their different locations:



Premier Bank

"A Flag For Those Currently Serving"

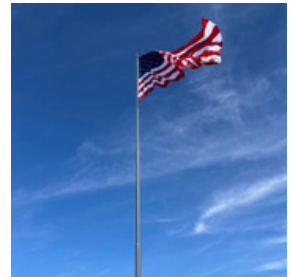
Keller Logistics
"A Flag For Those Who Made it Home"



ProMedica Defiance

"A Flag For Those Who Were Injured"

Werlor Waste Control
"A Flag For Those Who Died at War"



For more information: Check out our website!

If you are interested in supporting, please mail payment to:
Defiance County Economic Development
1300 E. Second Street, Suite 201
Defiance Ohio 43512

Questions? Please call 419-784-4471



Scan this QR code to learn more
about the project

All donations are tax deductible- once received you will receive a receipt of donation.



Investor Levels



DIAMOND \$10,000
500 to 1000+ Employees

- Candidate for seat on Board
- Voting membership
- Investor directory listing
- Home page website recognition
- Committee involvement
- Monthly E-newsletters
- Enhanced recognition on all ED Marketing Materials
- Unlimited E-New Ads (Can include your own content)



PLATINUM \$5,000+
100 to 500+ Employees

- Candidate for seat on Board
- Voting membership
- Investor directory listing
- Home page website recognition
- Committee involvement
- Monthly E-newsletters
- Enhanced recognition on all ED Marketing Materials
- (5) E-News Ads



GOLD \$1000+
50 to 100+ Employees

- Voting Membership
- Investor directory listing
- Monthly E-Newsletter
- Committee involvement
- (3) E-Newsletter Ads



SILVER \$500+
**NonProfits, Start-Ups,
Smaller Companies**

- Voting membership
- Investor directory listing
- Monthly E-Newsletter
- Committee involvement

All E-News ads and Social Media posts will be customized and approved by your company, prior to publishing.

Become an Investor

- ☐ YES! I'D LOVE TO INVEST IN DEFIANCE COUNTY!
- ☐ I WOULD LIKE MORE INFORMATION.
- ☐ NOT AT THIS TIME, BUT KEEP ME IN MIND FOR THE FUTURE.

INVESTOR LEVELS



DIAMOND \$10,000+
500 to 1000+ Employees



PLATINUM \$5,000+
100 to 500+ Employees



GOLD \$1,000+
50 to 100+ Employees



SILVER \$500+
NonProfits, Start-Ups, Smaller Companies

INVESTOR INFORMATION

Please mail form: 1300 E. Second St. Suite 201, Defiance, Ohio 43512 or email:
Cara@DefianceCountyED.com

We choose to invest \$_____ annually to support
Defiance County Economic Development.

Name:_____

Title:_____

Organization:_____

Address:_____

City:_____ State:_____ Zip:_____

Phone:_____ Email:_____

Contact Us



Phone

(419) 784-4471

Website

www.DefianceCountyED.com

Address

**1300 E. Second St., Suite 201
Defiance, Ohio 43512**

