



Board of Commissioners

PRESS RELEASE

lakecountyohio.gov

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: February 26, 2026

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Lake County Commissioners Declare February 2026 as Black History Month and Recognize 100th Anniversary of National Black History Week

PAINESVILLE, Ohio, February 26, 2026 – At today’s Commissioners’ meeting, the Lake County Board of Commissioners officially declared the month of February 2026 as Black History Month in Lake County, Ohio, and recognized the 100th Anniversary of the First National Black History Week.

Black History Month originated in 1926 when historian Carter G. Woodson established National Black History Week to highlight the heritage and achievements of African Americans in the United States. The year 2026 marks a significant milestone — one hundred years of honoring the profound contributions, resilience, and cultural impact of Black Americans.

Black History Month serves as both a celebration and a powerful reminder that Black history is American history. The stories, struggles, achievements, and aspirations of Black Americans are essential to the ongoing story of our nation. The Lake County Board of Commissioners encourages residents to take time to celebrate the immeasurable contributions of Black Americans and honor the legacies of generations past.

Throughout the month, community organizations across Lake County hosted events recognizing Black heritage and achievement.

On Saturday, February 14, the Lake County NAACP presented a Black History Musical at the Fine Arts Association in Willoughby, celebrating the musical and spiritual history of Black America. Dr. David Moody of Lake Erie College served as emcee. The program featured a powerful performance by Harvey High School senior Symone Bibb, who sang “I’m Here” from *The Color Purple*, bringing the audience to its feet. Rev. Chris Lee also performed an original spoken-word poem titled “Lost, Broken, Torn, Hurt.” The Phelps Family Choral performed traditional spirituals, and Paul Robeson led The Paul Robeson Singers during the evening’s main event.



From the left: Commissioner John T. Plecnik, a member of the NAACP, Bishop Gerard Mirbel, Tina Wilson, Commissioners Morris W. Beverage III, Morgan R. McIntosh.

The Lake County Historical Society presented a Walk-Through History program entitled “The NAACP in Our America 2050.” Additionally, the Willoughby Western Lake County Chamber of Commerce recognized several minority business owners for their positive impact on the community.

“We are proud to recognize the 100th anniversary of National Black History Week and to celebrate the many contributions of Black residents here in Lake County,” said Commission President Morris W. Beverage III. “This observance reminds us not only of the progress that has been made, but of our continued responsibility to foster understanding, opportunity, and unity in our community.”

“I am truly grateful for the leadership, faith, entrepreneurship, and service demonstrated by our African American community here in Lake County. Black History Month provides an important opportunity for reflection and education, and we are thankful for the many individuals and organizations who work year-round to strengthen our county and bring people together,” said Commissioner John T. Plecnik.

“Black History Month provides an important opportunity for reflection and education. We are grateful to the local leaders, organizations, educators, and business owners who help ensure that this history is recognized and celebrated throughout the year,” said Commissioner Morgan R. McIntosh.

Rev. Chris Lee, President of the Lake County NAACP, shared, “As we mark 100 years since the first National Black History Week, we recognize the strength, creativity, and perseverance of our community. My life’s work, whether in ministry, social services, youth arts and theatre, or nonprofit leadership, has been centered on advocacy and empowerment. Black History Month is not only a time to reflect on our past, but to inspire our youth and continue building opportunities for the future.”

The Lake County Board of Commissioners encourages all residents to continue learning from the past and working together toward a more inclusive and prosperous future for all.

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