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## **ACPO PRESS RELEASE**

From: Keller J. Blackburn, Athens County Prosecuting Attorney

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### ***Prosecutor Blackburn Announces Fresh Start Initiative Program to provide for addiction services and other community justice efforts***

Prosecutor Keller Blackburn today announced Fresh Start, a program that will provide for addiction services and other community justice efforts in Athens County. Fresh Start is a key part of Prosecutor Blackburn's Community Justice Initiative. Funding for Fresh Start will come from two sources. First, funds from the Prosecutor's Law Enforcement Trust Fund will be provided through the Prosecutor's Office for Fresh Start initiatives. Second, Prosecutor Blackburn created a fund through the Athens Foundation that is able to collect private donations from concerned citizens and groups who want to help support Fresh Start initiatives.

To date, the Fresh Start initiative has provided \$2,500 to the Clem House in Athens County to provide scholarships to offset the cost for Athens County residents who can't afford to receive recovery services at the facility. More information about Clem House can be found at [www.clemhouse.org/](http://www.clemhouse.org/) Additional awards will be announced in the coming weeks.

"We all know that tough enforcement alone will not solve the problem of drug abuse and addiction," said Prosecutor Blackburn. "Fresh Start gives everyone in the community the opportunity to come together to confront the problem of addiction in Athens County."

"The Athens Foundation is pleased to host the Fresh Start Fund," said Susan Urano, Executive Director of the Athens Foundation. "Too many of our friends and neighbors are losing the battle to addiction. I hope Fresh Start will help to change that."

In addition to Fresh Start, Prosecutor Blackburn's Community Justice Initiative also includes: 1) the Athens County Empowerment Program (ACE) which provides an alternative to prison for certain low level offenders who may benefit from training, treatment and participation in community service; 2) efforts to prevent recidivism by working to help former prisoners successfully reenter their communities; and 3) the Property Crimes Task Force which recognizes that addiction frequently leads to property crimes. The Task Force shares information among law enforcement and educates the public, utilizing former offenders who have been through the system to increase awareness on criminal tactics.

A listing of contributors to the Fresh Start Fund housed at the Athens Foundation follows. Those interested in contributing to Fresh Start should contact Keller Blackburn or the Athens Foundation.

## **Community Contributors to Keller Blackburn's Fresh Start Fund**

- The Athens Area Chamber of Commerce
- Nelsonville Restoration Foundation
- Ohio Realty, John Wharton
- University Off-Campus Housing
- Kathy Hecht
- Judge Alan Goldsberry
- Michael and Susan Nolan
- Wharton Properties
- Charlie Adkins
- Claire Ball
- Herman Carson
- Judge George McCarthy
- Chris Gerig
- Toy Law
- Blackburn Home Furnishings
- Southern Ohio Valley Trading & Exchange Co.
- Demetrios Prokos
- Nickie Blackburn
- Stuart Brooks