



## Greene County Public Health

Melissa Howell MS, MBA, MPH, RN, REHS, Health Commissioner  
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# Press Release

For Immediate Release  
January 6, 2025

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## Greene County Public Health 'Drive to Succeed' Scholarship Program Aims to Lower Vehicular Deaths in Ohio

**XENIA, OH**—Teenagers generally look forward to getting their driver's license, and in Greene County, there's a scholarship available that makes one of the requirements more affordable.

Now in its second year, the [Drive to Succeed Scholarship Program](#) aims to get more teenagers into driver's education classes before they get their driver's license. In Ohio, you must take a driver's education course if you get your license as a minor, but it's not required after you've turned 18.

The program aims to expand access to teen driver training to low-income populations by providing funding for localized scholarship programs. "Every year, traffic crashes claim hundreds of lives in Ohio, and educating our youngest drivers is an important step toward preventing crashes," Andy Wilson, director of the Ohio Department of Public Safety, said. "We are proud that these grants will directly support hundreds of young people who otherwise wouldn't have had the means to complete driver education and gain the experience needed to become safer drivers."

Greene County Public Health Community Health Educator Loressa Gonyer said, "This scholarship program is aimed to get those teens through driver's ed who, for a variety of reasons, would otherwise wait until they're 18 to get their license, usually to avoid the cost, which is an average of \$550.00. There are 30 scholarships available in this two-year grant period, and D&D Driving School (Kettering) is partnering with public health to provide the course to our scholarship recipients. The course will include 24 hours of classroom instruction and eight (8) hours of behind-the-wheel experience".

"Providing them with this opportunity will help them be a better driver, minimize distractions while driving, and reinforce the importance of putting their phones down," Gonyer said. "The program assures students are knowledgeable about all the rules and laws of the road."

Greene County Public Health received \$15,600.00 from the Ohio Traffic Safety Office to implement this program and distribute scholarships.

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**Greene County**



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From 2020 to 2022, there were 1,504 teen-related crashes in Greene County, averaging 513 per year. On December 16, 2022, Ohio State Highway Patrol (Xenia Post) responded to a crash where there was a 17-year-old fatality in our county. In 2023, there were 472 teen-related crashes in Greene County. From January 1, 2024, to March 1, 2024, there have been 87 teen-related crashes in our county. This is a 40.3% increase compared to the same time period in 2023 (January 1, 2023 - March 1, 2023).

By reducing the barrier to receiving driver's education in Greene County, we can give students the necessary education to provide a safer driving environment for all, which may ultimately reduce the number of teen-related crashes in our county and Ohio. Fairborn and Xenia are the areas in our county that experience higher poverty levels, with 18.1% of Fairborn's population and 17.4% of Xenia's population living in poverty. By extending support to students in these areas, we can provide an opportunity that may otherwise not be provided.

"Preventing those deaths, getting that education out there, making sure that people are aware of the laws," Gonyer said. "Making sure you know the rules of the road and working with our community partners to do so."

Any student who meets the baseline criteria can apply for a scholarship. "Scholarships will be \$500.00 each, paid directly to the driving school, and students will be required to cover the remaining cost, which is an average of \$50.00," Gonyer said. They will also need to meet the following criteria:

- Provide **at least one** of the following:
  - School reduced/free lunch eligibility
  - WIC/SNAP eligibility
  - Medicaid recipient
  - Financial need proven by the student
- An **affidavit** signed by a parent or guardian to confirm education has not already been received
- A **letter of recommendation** from a teacher, the school resource officer, a coach, or other school employee
- **Submission of an essay**, 500 words or less, "Why is the Drive to Succeed scholarship important to you?"

All submissions will be submitted to a review committee, and students will be notified of their selection. Interested applicants are to apply here: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/DTSucceed>

For questions, please contact Loressa Gonyer at [lgonyer@gcph.info](mailto:lgonyer@gcph.info) or 937-374-5655.

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