

## **President's Award for Innovative Practices**

This nomination is for **Montgomery County's "Trucks and Tomatoes" Job Training and Urban Garden Enhancement Project** which was funded in part by Montgomery County's Community Development Block Grant (CDBG), with additional leverage from Montgomery County general revenue funds. This truly innovative project was the result of a partnership between Montgomery County, the Dayton Foodbank, Butler Tech, and Central State University (CSU) with support from private sector trucking companies.

### **Overview: The Need**

Transportation and Distribution are priority sectors for Montgomery County, which is home to the I-70 and I-75 interchange-the "Crossroads of America." However, like many communities across the country, Montgomery County faces a shortage of truck drivers with a valid Commercial Driver's License (CDL) credential.

In 2016, Montgomery County began exploring the possibility of a CDL training program with Butler Tech, which provides CDL training at its Middletown campus. The goal was to establish a training program at a central location in Dayton, with easy access to public transportation and close proximity to The Job Center, where County residents access public assistance and other services.

### **Site Identification and Development**

To provide training, Butler Tech required a paved lot (minimum two acres) and classroom space. County staff identified a suitable lot at the Dayton Foodbank; the Foodbank is built on the site of a demolished manufacturing building, and the former facility's four-acre parking lot was left intact. Adding to this site's appeal, the lot sat adjacent to CSU's Dayton Campus, which offered the classroom space required for the CDL credential. However, the site presented some challenges, most notably the Foodbank had used a portion of the lot to create a community garden space.

Working with the Foodbank and Butler Tech, Montgomery County redesigned the site to meet the needs of both organizations.

CDL Pad: Two acres of the site were converted to a driving pad for the CDL program. The existing garden beds were deconstructed, the site was cleared of debris, and the asphalt was repaired.

Improved Urban Garden: To allow space for the pad, the garden was relocated to the remaining two acres of the lot. The existing beds were reconstructed and new beds were added, increasing the total capacity, and new water and electrical infrastructure was installed. For safety and security, a gated fence was erected between the two sides.

### **Results/Benefits**

Butler Tech held its initial CDL training class at the Foodbank site in July 2017. The five-week course typically accommodates 4 students at a time. 17 students have completed the training. Candidates typically have job offers, often with starting wages between \$40,000-\$50,000

Beyond the CDL candidates, the community benefits from the Foodbank's increased capacity. The expanded garden space provides more fresh fruits and vegetables, as well as educational programming for the community. In addition, Butler Tech executed a ground lease with the Foodbank and pays \$6,000 annually for use of the driving pad. This contribution is used to provide 24,000 meals for needy families in the Dayton Region.