

# Beyond the Lens



Promoting critical dialogue  
and knowledge about important  
issues in our community.



The Youth Leadership Council of Licking County is an award-winning youth prevention and leadership development project of Pathways of Central Ohio with support from Our Futures in Licking County and funding from Ohio Mental Health & Addiction Services, Mental Health & Recovery for Licking and Knox Counties and the Licking County United Way.

## From the YLC President...

Youth in America are often ignored. We are told by guardians, adults, and peers that our thoughts do not matter, that we cannot accomplish what we aim to do, or that we cannot impact or shape the world around us. We see the world being shaped by adults and want an opportunity to show that we also know this community, we know the places, the people, the issues that we and our peers face. This event sets out to show the community our perspective, to let you see through the eyes of the youth in your community. But this event doesn't stop at just letting you see what we see, it invites you to work alongside us in the community. We hope that this event inspires you to consult youth in the work that you do. Just asking a young person's thoughts on your work could mean a world of difference to them as well as giving you a whole new view of the world that we can change together.

*Vincent O'Neill*

Vincent O'Neill  
President, Youth Leadership Council

## A Photovoice Analysis of Licking County

1

Evaluation method used to engage young people in bettering the community.

10

Young leaders volunteered to take photos in Licking County. Each being asked to capture people, places and things that evoked the feeling of hope or despair.

36

Photos submitted by representatives from the Youth Leadership Council of Licking County. Each telling a story and creating meaningful dialogue among their peers.

54

Young people from across Licking County participating in 14 hours of focus groups full of thought provoking conversation about Licking County.

and over 100

Community partners, leaders, and decision makers, like yourself, investing in youth and seeking their perspective to discuss and create community change in Licking County.

**Photovoice is a participatory action research method** that uses photography to enable people to identify, represent, and enhance their community (Wang, 1999).

Caroline Wang and Mary Ann Burris developed Photovoice based on the notion of gaining a deep understanding of the way the world works and how society, politics, and power relationships affect one's own situation, all to bring about social change.

Photovoice has 3 goals:

- to enable people to record and reflect their community's strengths and concerns through photographs
- promote critical dialogue and knowledge about important issues through discussion of the photographs, and
- to reach policy makers through public forums and showings of the photographs. (Wang & Burris, 1994 Wang 1999).

Students in Licking County followed this research based process from beginning to end and here's how...





## Rebirth

*Alexa Saunders*  
Sophomore, Heath High School

**"The Canal Market District gives a glimpse of hope because this area has held many new events and brought the community together. People come and have a good time with other members of the community."**

### Focus Group

**It's empowering because it shows what a little bit of effort can do to improve the community aesthetic.**



## Christmastime

*Ashley Montagnese*  
Senior, Watkins Memorial High School

**"People should support small businesses in a community because that's where most people gather, connect, and communicate. Small business is important for the growth of the community and the growth of people."**

### Focus Group

**It's an area where once you walk in it doesn't matter who else is in there...when you get in there all barriers are melted.**



## Alone

*Emily Rader*  
Junior, Heath High School

**"Many people struggle with mental health issues and feel so overwhelmed and alone. Feeling like there is no where to go or anyone they feel they can talk to in Licking County. Things do exist, but not enough, not nearly enough."**

### Focus Group

**People don't know where to get help. A simple hello could make them feel better and the support you have to offer can impact their lives.**



## Moving Forward

*Jacob Koch*  
Junior, Newark Catholic High School

**"The crosswalk states Land of Legend; Past and Future. The community keeps past traditions alive while creating new ones. Licking County honors and remembers the past and has a hopeful eye for the future."**

### Focus Group

**The older generation finds comfort in the stability of yesteryear, while the younger generation finds excitement in innovation.**



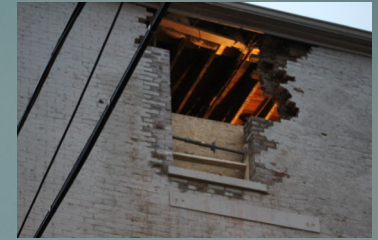
## Words in a Box

*Ashley Montagnese*  
Senior, Watkins Memorial High School

**"This children's book box is completely based on the honor system. It brings me joy when we have the resources to be able to provide children at the park with books."**

### Focus Group

**Today's youth thrive on instant gratification, but with reading and with life, it is more of a prolonged satisfaction. Gifts of joy, giving, and learning is valuable to our community.**



## Whole

*Morgan Pracher*  
Senior, Granville High School

**"When walking downtown I saw this building in need of repair. The contrast of light depicts the contrast of hope and despair in Licking County."**

### Focus Group

**Licking County is quick to respond once a problem is identified. We address important issues with unity and a commitment to create positive change.**





## Paper, Plastic, Purpose

*Rudy Snider  
Senior, Newark Catholic High School*

"This goes to show throughout Licking County even though there may be dirty streets and trash filled parking lots there are always people willing to do the right thing. This instills a sense of hope that even in the tough times the good things will win out."

### Focus Group

Recycling bins are opportunities. If something looks old, it still has a purpose, it can be repurposed and the effect it has on you creates change.



## Food for Thought

*Skyy GreenRiver  
Senior, Heath High School*

"It's amazing how something as simple as chicken can connect a community. Once I knew Canes was coming to Heath so many of my friends were excited and oddly enough people connected over one love...Canes!"

### Focus Group

Canes is a win for development, but a loss for food diversity. Everyone is going to go there, but choices remain unchanged. This is now a chance to talk about change with us.



## Cause for Change

*Alexa Saunders  
Sophomore, Heath High School*

"Licking County is a very supportive community. When someone is sick with cancer or another illness members of the community always make sure the person is well care for and loved."

### Focus Group

It shows our community is supportive...it's something we are focusing on and it says we, the community wants to make a change.



## Forgotten

*Jacob Koch  
Junior, Newark Catholic High School*

"The look of the concrete shows the age of the community's industrialization. The community started out strong in it's early industrial era, but the crumbled concrete shows the brokenness away from that era."

### Focus Group

Improvement is good, but the bridge represents all the things we have created that are now boring and old. We forget them and try to cover them up with new things.



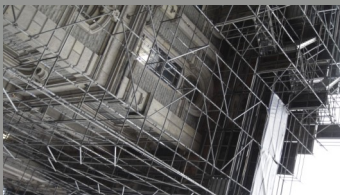
## Cast in the Shadow

*Ashley Montagnese  
Senior, Watkins Memorial High School*

"The cross against the window brings a warm feeling. An appreciation that we live in an area where people are able to express themselves. It is important to encourage people of other religions or ethnicities to express themselves in the same way."

### Focus Group

If you are Christian this community is safe for you. It's accepted to be Christian, but not other religions. Ignorance leads to fear.



## Tradition Under Construction

*Emily Rader  
Junior, Heath High School*

"One of the many parts of Licking County that is currently under construction. It shows those in the community are trying to improve it while still maintaining the history it was built on."

### Focus Group

It was such a waste to watch something beautiful fall apart. It creates happiness to know that an iconic symbol in the community is being improved.





## Bearing Light

*Skyy GreenRiver  
Senior, Heath High  
School*

“When I look at this scene I feel at home and comfortable in my community. Being Native American, it’s really awesome to be able to see my culture so heavily throughout Licking County.”

### Focus Group

Our community is rich with culture, but we have neglected to educate or make the community aware of it. You may have lived here your entire life and still know nothing of our foundation.



## 7 Minutes

*Morgan Pracher  
Senior, Granville High  
School*

“Licking County has an extremely strong safety system. Not every community excels in strong law enforcement and rescue systems. Making sure everyone is safe is extremely important in any community.”

### Focus Group

The Emergency systems work and they are there when you need them. There are more people who are helping than people who aren’t because it’s easier to pick out people who aren’t.



## Economy of Care

*Jacob Koch  
Junior, Newark Catholic  
High School*

“Through the farmers market Licking County is trying to bring business to local producers and give hope that our community is growing and expanding.”

### Focus Group

Supporting local business supports the local economy. A strong local economy connects the community and services that are helpful to them.



## Our Journey

*Skyy GreenRiver  
Senior, Heath High  
School*

“I focus on the light at the end of the bridge, the openness at the top and how the sides lead someone on a certain path. This bridge represents the bright future of Licking County.”

### Focus Group

The people of Licking County are focused on the past, present, and future. Once a destination is reached we look back on where we came from to help us know where we are going.



## History Demolished

*Morgan Pracher  
Senior, Granville High  
School*

“The actual brokenness of the buildings that makes Licking County less beautiful is represented, but also shown are issues that have fallen behind. The girl is looking back not really knowing what’s going on and seeing all that needs fixed and has not gotten the attention it needs.”

### Focus Group

Useless demolition causes despair. Completely destroying part of the past, means we lose more than just a building; the history and importance of the community is lost.



## Vandalized Beauty

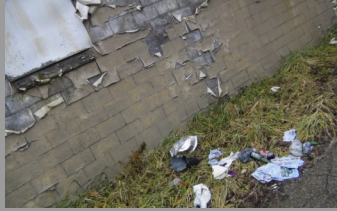
*Jenna Chorpenning  
Junior, Lakewood High  
School*

“You see the beauty the graffiti has made on the structure or you see the vandalism that took place. There is a ladder and other various pieces of litter showing the negative impact on the community.”

### Focus Group

Graffiti is awkward; it is self expression and vandalism. It creates and destroys a community at the same time.





## An Inconvenient Licking County

*Emily Rader  
Junior, Heath High School*

“When I went to the site to take this photo, my heart sunk. This scene is not uncommon for buildings around our community. I see it everyday on my way to school.”

### Focus Group

People don’t like to hold on to stuff too long. Once you’re done with something you want to get rid of it really fast. No one wants to be bothered, and it’s a problem to hold on to your trash.



## Childhood

*Skyy GreenRiver  
Heath H.S.  
Senior*

“As I continued to grow I was able to go further and further on these rings. In order to work together in our community we can’t do everything at once. Together we have to reach for one ring at a time, work together well and be productive.”

### Focus Group

Licking County values children. In education, health, and even play. There are many opportunities to embrace their childhood and have fun. Spaces like this exist because we value them.



## In Yo Face

*Jenna Chorpenning  
Junior, Lakewood High School*

“Many people felt the dam repair would disrupt the beauty of the lake. Even though, people are upset the lake still has a positive impact on our community.”

### Focus Group

People don’t pay attention until it’s in their face. The Buckeye Lake community ignored the dam for too long. Once repairs are completed the community will rally and revive Buckeye Lake.



## No Longer Longing for the Basket

*Rudy Snider  
Senior, Newark Catholic High School*

“Even though this may look like a winter scene, dreary and bland, there is a pop of color called the Longaberger Basket. Some things will always remain and the basket gives the idea of stability and faithfulness.”

### Focus Group

The basket is a landmark in our county. However, the industry did not appeal to younger generations which is what caused it’s demise.



## Art Spaces

*Emily Rader  
Junior, Heath High School*

“I expected to find a whole bunch of graffiti, but instead someone had taken the time and energy to cover all of it up. I know that not all vandalism is being taken care of in Licking County, but this is a good place to start.”

### Focus Group

Graffiti is an art form. Encouraging collaboration between artists and decision makers to designate space in Licking County for creative expression could increase community connectedness.



## Back to the Future

*Jacob Koch  
Newark Catholic H.S.  
Junior*

“Licking County preserves its history in hopes of continuing the community forward.”

### Focus Group

The history of National Road in Licking County inspires us to know more. It enriches and pulls together the community and helps us to determine where we are headed.

# Thank You

*We could not do our work without your support.*

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