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Commissioner Brooks to Speak at Youth Summit for Refugees, Immigrant Families; Welcome Mandela Washington Fellows Friday

COLUMBUS, Ohio – Franklin County, Ohio, Commissioner [Paula Brooks](#) will address the critical role of community involvement in developing the next generation of Franklin County leaders at the fourth annual “Call to Action” Youth Summit, hosted by Ethiopian Tewahedo Social Services, Friday at Otterbein University. More than 300 youth and their families will be in attendance.

The summit, which gets underway at 9:30 a.m. at Otterbein’s Rike Center, offers a wide array of educational workshops for youth ranging from elementary to high school, as well as a variety of musical and dance performances celebrating culture and heritage. ETSS Executive Director Dr. Seleshi Asfaw and Columbus City Councilwoman Eileen Paley are among the Central Ohio leaders expected join the commissioner in voicing their support for this key community outreach program.

“The word ‘Tewahedo’ means ‘come to unity’ in ancient Ethiopian. As a diverse community, Central Ohio embraces that we are ALL Franklin County!” Commissioner Brooks said. “Dr. Asfaw has asked me to share that message with our next generation of community leaders.”

Following the summit, Commissioner Brooks will welcome two graduate interns from the Mandela Washington Fellowship. The fellowship was named in honor of the former South African President and Nobel Peace Prize winner Nelson Mandela earlier this week. It is a flagship program of President Obama’s Young African Leaders Initiative, with more than 500 participants representing all 49 countries in sub-Saharan Africa.

Commissioner Brooks was instrumental in placing two young women, Marietta Agathe, who will work in her office, and Metta Kongira, who will assist in the Franklin County Public Health Department. The fellows will share their unique insights and experiences as well as gain an in-depth understanding of the functions of U.S. county government over the eight-week program.

Ms. Agathe is the deputy project coordinator for the United Nations Development Programme in her home country of Mauritius, and recently completed the Public Management Institute at Florida International University. Ms. Kongira, who attended the Civic Leadership Institute at the University of California, Berkley, is an intern-scientific officer at the Medical Research Council Unit in her native Gambia and spent four years serving as a public health officer at the Ministry of Health.

“It is a privilege and honor for Franklin County to take part in this groundbreaking Presidential Initiative,” Commissioner Brooks said. “I am so eager to meet both of these talented young women. Their expertise and unique experience will be an incredible resource for Franklin County. We hope to learn as much from them as they do from us.”

For more information about the 2014 Mandela Washington Fellowship for Young African Leaders, visit <https://youngafricanleaders.state.gov/washington-fellowship/>.

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