

Healthy Communities, Healthy Futures

Focusing on

Health equity

Mental health

Wellness and disease prevention

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Message for our community

Dear Friends,

One of the ways Penn State Health fulfills our mission as a nonprofit health system and demonstrates our values is a deep commitment to making our communities a better place to live.

Our mission is clear – to improve the health and well-being of the people of Pennsylvania and beyond. And we're not doing it alone – we're teaming up with others, particularly Penn State College of Medicine, to make a real difference. We go beyond the traditional role of health care providers to pioneer groundbreaking discoveries that could transform the future of medicine. We're also training the next generation of health professionals and working to remove barriers to health access that some populations experience more than others.



Every three years, we conduct a Community Health Needs Assessment ([Click to read](#)) to identify the most critical needs in our communities and to guide a more thoughtful approach to serving its residents. What did we find? **Mental health, health equity and wellness/disease prevention** are the areas where we can have the more meaningful impact on our communities. With these insights as our guide, we've been actively engaged in bringing vital health care services to underserved communities and helping address the disparities that create health inequities in these populations.

We partner with schools, places of worship, community organizations, shelters, food pantries and others to administer free vaccines and health screenings, as well as provide disease prevention education and physical activity programs. We also create community gardens and donate their food, offer free health screenings to school students and provide behavioral health training to teachers, child therapists and others who work with children. A few of these stories are proudly showcased in this Community Benefit Report, aptly titled "Healthy Communities, Healthy Futures."

In the first year of our current implementation strategy addressing our priorities, we achieved 100% of the objectives we set. Thank you to our community task forces for making this happen. Each of our community outreach endeavors arises from our core "RITE" values of Respect, Integrity, Teamwork and Excellence. Our community services demonstrate our unwavering commitment to improving the health of people throughout central Pennsylvania. To make this vision a reality, Penn State Health provided \$156,730,522 in Total Community Benefit in fiscal year 2022. This encompasses a range of efforts, from effective programs and outreach to compassionate charity care, unreimbursed Medicaid costs and supplemental medical, dental and pharmaceutical services.

We take immense pride in the collaborative spirit we share with our partners in all these activities. Together, we're driving meaningful change, ensuring that everyone has an equal shot at a healthier life.

Thank you to the entire Penn State Health family for your support. There's much work to be done, but together WE ARE making a difference.

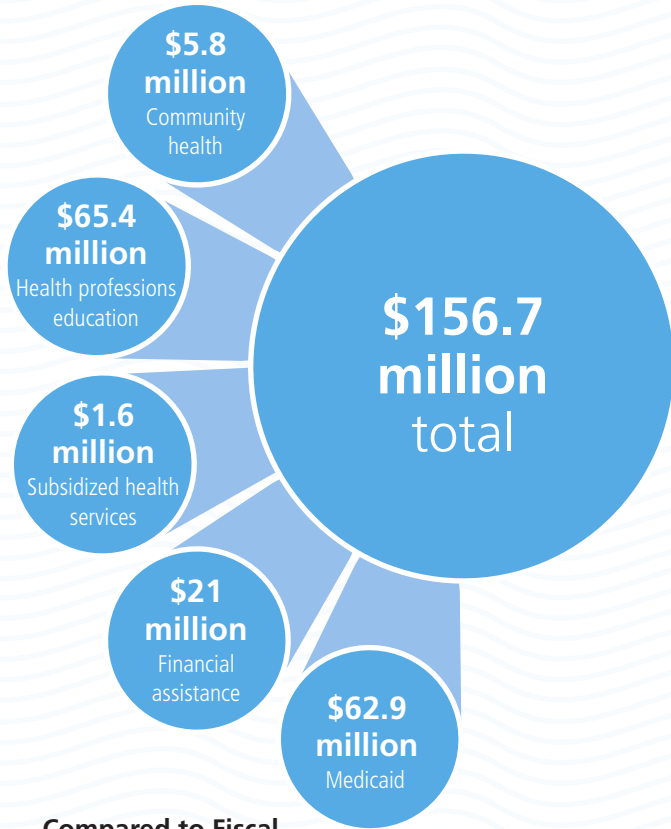
Be well,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Steve Massini". The signature is fluid and cursive, written over a light blue horizontal line.

Steve Massini
CEO, Penn State Health

Community impact

Penn State Health Fiscal Year 2022 Total Community Benefit



Compared to Fiscal Year 2021 Total Community Benefit: \$110,411,380

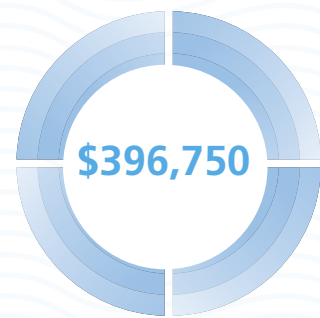
Penn State Health Fiscal Year 2023 Community Benefit Inventory For Social Accountability (CBISA) Totals



In fiscal year 2023, Penn State Health donated **\$904,559** in charitable purpose sponsorships and contributions to nonprofit organizations.

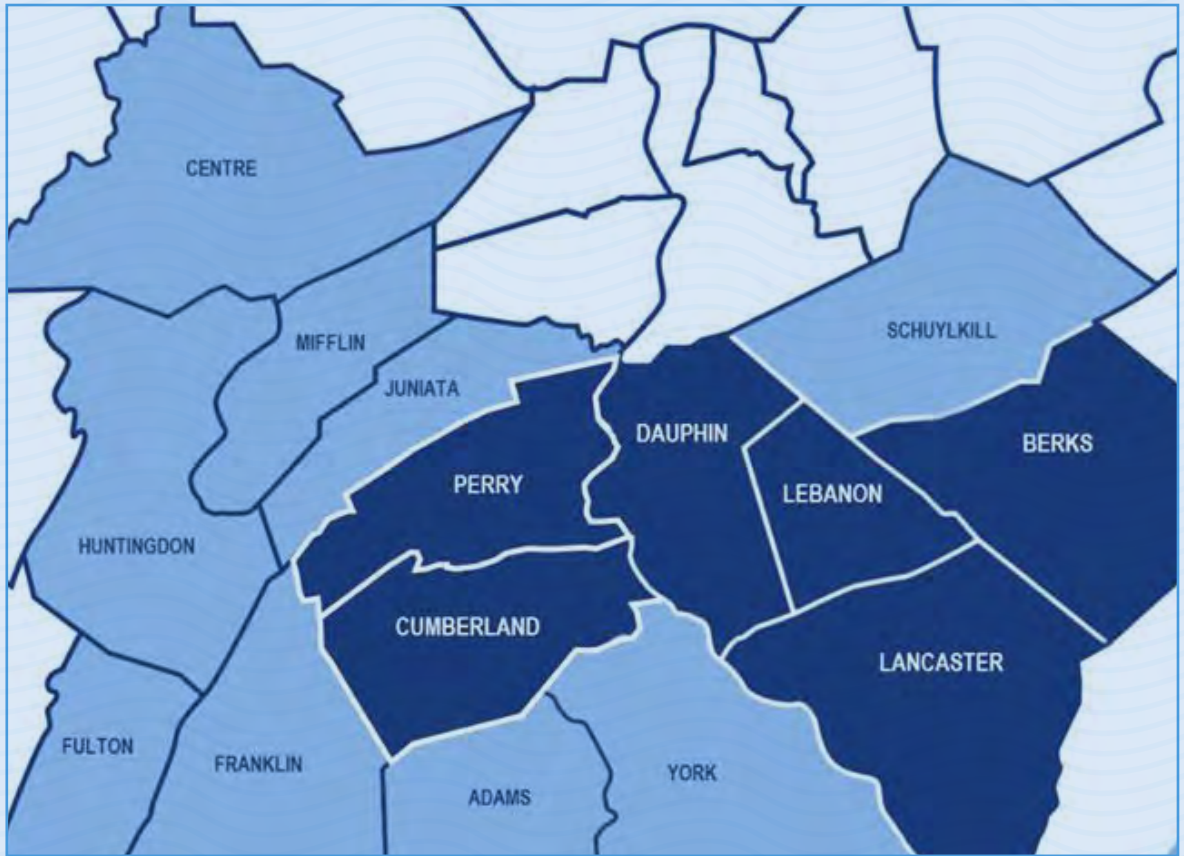


In fiscal year 2023, Penn State Health supported community grants with approximately **\$50,000**.



Between 2016 and 2023, Penn State Health funded **105** projects with community grants totaling **\$396,750**.

Our community



Legend

Community health outreach core counties

Broader Penn State Health service area



The patients we serve

Fiscal year 2023

Age **44% 50 or older**
27% 18 or younger

Chronic conditions
24% have high blood pressure
21.5% have high cholesterol
10.8% have diabetes
3.7% have heart failure
2.9% had a stroke

Race/ethnicity
69.5% White
8% Hispanic or Latino
5.8% Black or African American

Languages **11%** do not speak English as a primary language
Mental health **29.7%** have a mental health diagnosis

SUD **10.1%** have a substance use disorder (SUD) diagnosis





A seat at the table:
Pantries and Wellness
Support program helps
families find care

Outside a food pantry in Palmyra, Julie Groh, a Penn State Health community nurse, discovered Jose Deleky's blood pressure was alarmingly high.

Our local partnerships help families in need access health care.

Julie Groh, right, a community health nurse with Penn State Health, takes Jose Deleky's blood pressure.

She asked about his blood pressure medicine and insurance card, but he hadn't brought either.

"Tomorrow is going to be a nice day," Groh said as the man gave her a sheepish smile. "We could meet here and go through it together."

"Meet here?"

"Sure," she glanced over her shoulder at the two-story house on Railroad Street where the Caring Cupboard has helped feed families wrestling with food insecurity since 2006. Penn State Health nurses have positioned a table next to the front porch one evening a month – when the line for groceries is longest – for seven years.

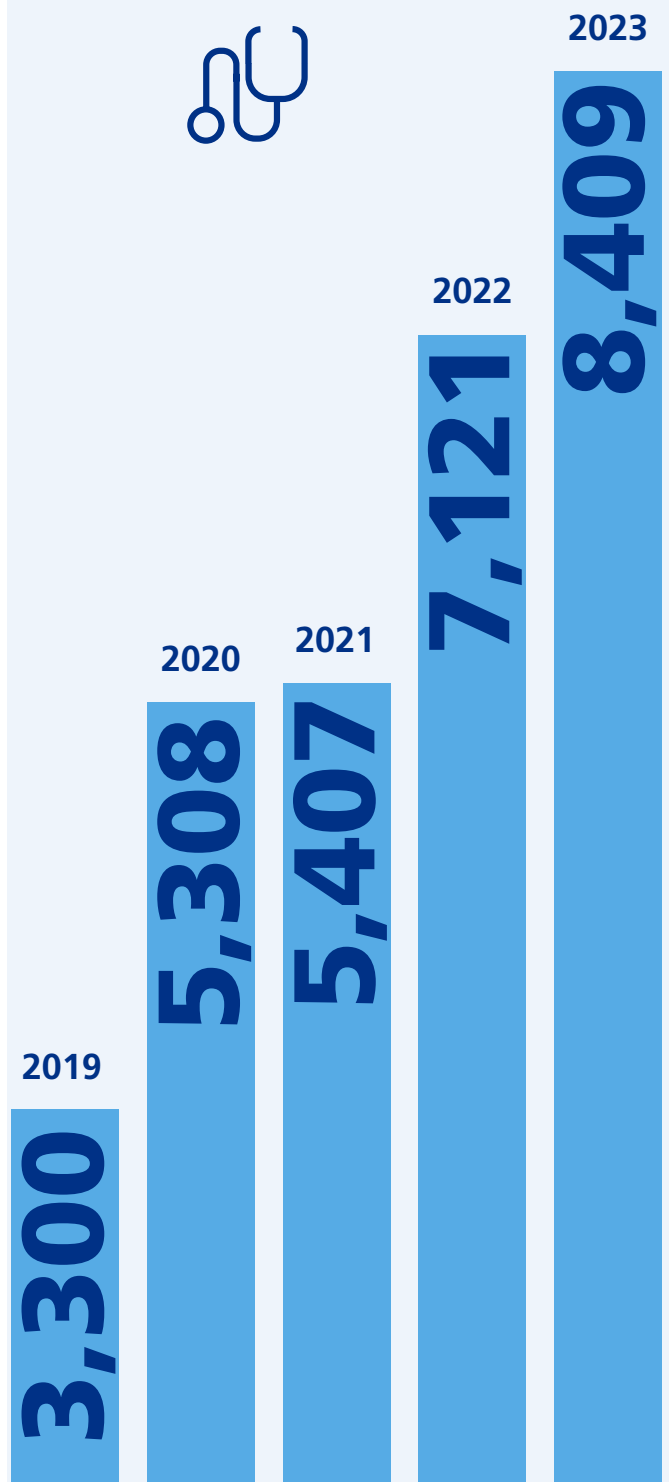
The era of doctors making house calls might have ended more than half a century ago, but for Groh and the nurses who are part of the Penn State Health Pantries and Wellness Support program, consultations after hours, outdoors, on porch steps, on park benches or on curbs come with the territory.

At tables like the one outside the Caring Cupboard, Penn State Health nurses help clients who have had to prioritize putting food on the table every night over health. They find parents struggling so hard to care for their families, they often set their own health care needs aside. And they help men and women caught in often complex systems of health care and against whom the odds sometimes seem unfairly stacked.

Care at Penn State Health doesn't end within the walls of our hospitals and medical offices. The work at the pantries is part of a large, impactful Penn State Health strategy to address health equity, wellness and disease prevention in the communities we serve.

[Click to read full story.](#)

Number of persons served





Ultimate grassroots: Penn State Health community garden program fights food insecurity in central Pennsylvania

Patrons can walk into the Northern Dauphin Public Library on Main Street in Lykens and borrow a tomato.

More precisely, they can check out a packet of seeds. If they follow the instructions that come with one of the little rattling envelopes on a cart near the front entrance or the advice of gardening experts who visit the library regularly to give workshops, the seeds will grow into a tomato plant. Or a cucumber. Or a carrot. Or one of the cornucopia of healthy vegetables the library keeps in circulation.

COMMUNITY GARDENS

Milo Lantini helps his mother pick vegetables at the Chestnut Street Community Center Farmers Market in Lebanon.



The seed library is the brainchild of librarian Lizzy Baldwin and just a small part of a growing Penn State Health community program that's the very definition of the word "grassroots."

Walk through the back doors of the library and you'll see another. Past a courtyard backdropped by rolling central Pennsylvania countryside are what look like nine metal bathtubs arranged in the shape of the star the library uses in the logo near the front door. Each tub is filled with potting soil. After installing them in April, gardeners from the library and Penn State Health filled each planter with lettuce, broccoli, peppers, cucumbers, lavender, mint, basil and other odds and ends that will leaf out by summer.

Picturesque, definitely. Fun, for sure. But the Lykens library garden and 14 others that Penn State Health has helped plant throughout six counties in central Pennsylvania mean so much more.

"It's an expansion of food access," said Ashley Visco, Penn State Health community health director. "There's so much food insecurity in our communities, and it can't be solved with a charitable food network alone."

The health system is aided by a grant from Rite Aid Healthy Futures, a public charity that distributes funds to alleviate health disparities in underserved areas. Penn State Health is using a portion to establish new gardens and expand existing ones in yards behind small town libraries or near Salvation Army campuses in communities like Harrisburg, Steelton and Millersburg.

Objects as small as seeds carry real weight among Penn State Health's efforts to improve lives in its neighborhoods. The gardens are small parcels in a growing landscape dedicated to addressing wellness and disease prevention in the communities we serve.

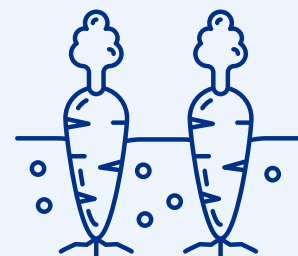
[Click to read more.](#)

15
community gardens

reached

5,395

community
members in fiscal year 2023





Heads, necks,
hearts, minds:
Penn State Health
community nurse
helps others process
effects of trauma

Sometimes, the key to helping a seemingly unreachable child is appealing to the backs of their necks instead of the tops of their heads.

Throughout the year, Tara Simmons, a community health nurse at Penn State Health, teaches educators, child therapists and others who work with children about how the top and front portions of your brain are the parts that process information like instructions. The section of brain at the base of the skull is what takes over when you need to react quickly to protect yourself. When a child suffers from the effects of trauma, often that's the part of the brain that's in control.

In 2023:

Pennsylvania Psychiatric Institute, a Penn State Health specialty provider of inpatient and outpatient behavioral health services, presented Mental Health First Aid training to

418

people from

6

community, free clinic and law enforcement organizations.

People who have suffered traumas can become loud or aggressive. Sometimes they'll run away or become detached, all in an unconscious effort to protect themselves from what they're conditioned to think are threats. Children find themselves at odds with authority figures over behavior they can't control. But the good news, to which Simmons can attest, is that teachers can break through by appealing directly to that lower portion of the brain.

Armed with a presentation titled "Understanding and Supporting Children with Complex Emotional and Sensory Needs," Simmons and Nikki Toler, an occupational therapist at a Harrisburg-based nonprofit called Samara, travel around central Pennsylvania helping teachers, therapists and others understand how children who have experienced trauma behave – and the best ways to reach them.

The strategies, Simmons says, can help halt the far-reaching effects of trauma, which operate almost like a pathogen, passing from person to person unrecognized, upending families and devastating lives for generations. And while the program is geared to help children, the effects of trauma can be felt by anyone.

"When we think of trauma, we often think of capital 'T' Trauma – physical abuse, combat, etc.," said Ashley Visco, Penn State Health's community health director. "But the entire pandemic was a trauma for everyone. That trauma looked different to different people, but the experience was a trauma and, while the training is directed at how to help kids regulate toward kids, it can be helpful for adults as well."

Helping educators understand trauma is one facet of the Penn State Health Community Needs Assessment's focus on mental health in central Pennsylvania.

[Click to read more.](#)

Penn State Health Community Health provided Trauma-Informed Care training to

486

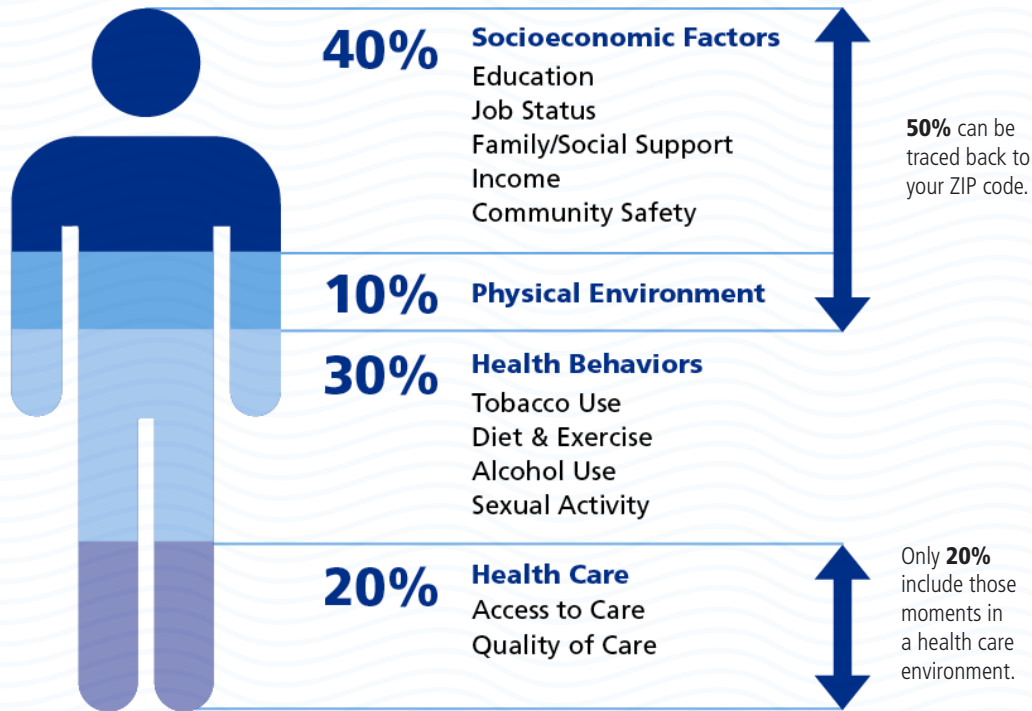
people from

15

community partner organizations.







Improving health outcomes through health equity

Social determinants of health



Adapted from ProMedica National Social Determinants of Health Institute. Source: Institute for Clinical Systems Improvement. Going ClinicalWalls: Solving Complex Problems (October 2014)

Penn State Health’s Health Equity Program works to reduce incidences of health disparities among specific population groups, most often reflected in length and quality of life, rates and severity of disease, presence of other adverse health conditions and access to medical treatment. The Health Equity Program focuses on the following areas, or pillars:

 <p>Community Engagement</p> <p>Develop partnerships and increase visibility in diverse communities to increase the understanding and support of the unique needs of all communities.</p>	 <p>Health Equity Research</p> <p>Strengthen Penn State Health’s infrastructure to optimize and guide scholarly research and quality improvement related to health equity and to increase diversity in clinical trials.</p>	 <p>Data Infrastructure</p> <p>Use quantitative and qualitative patient data to develop, inform and measure health care improvement strategies.</p>	 <p>Culturally Appropriate Patient Care</p> <p>Deliver compassionate, quality and safe health care in both inpatient and outpatient settings to provide consistent, equitable health outcomes and patient experience across all patient populations.</p>	 <p>Leadership and Workforce Diversification and Workplace Climate</p> <p>Cultivate an increasingly diverse leadership team and workforce that is thriving in a respectful, inclusive work environment.</p>	 <p>Organizational Accountability and Governance</p> <p>Effectively use organizational health equity influencers to sustain diversity, equity, inclusion and health equity progress, and advance a commitment to business diversity.</p>
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Penn State Health's progress in addressing health equity

NOV
2022

Penn State Health convened a team of individuals from throughout the health system to advance the systemwide Health Equity Program. These individuals identified the six priority areas (pillars) to be addressed. The team also began developing a written plan as required by The Joint Commission regulations. In addition, the health system began working on the American Hospital Association Health Equity Roadmap.

FEB
2023

The health system's boards were advised of Penn State Health's foundation for implementing its Health Equity Program. Pursuant to requirements of the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, the boards will review the Health Equity Program progress and key performance indicators on an annual basis.

APR
2023

Penn State Health completed the American Hospital Association Health Equity Roadmap/Transformation Assessment for all five of its hospitals.

JULY
2023

The health equity team decided to focus on health disparities related to stroke. The health system approved a new role, program director for health equity, to lead the health system's Health Equity Program with support from the vice president and chief diversity officer and the vice president for value-based care and population health.

OCT
2023

Penn State Health's health equity efforts demonstrate our ongoing commitment to addressing health disparities, specifically stroke health, and our continued efforts to promote community health equity through our monthly hybrid seminar series "Cultivating Health Empowerment: Transforming Diverse Lives for Optimal Health."

Cultivating Health Empowerment: Transforming Diverse Lives for Optimal Health

The Penn State Health Community Health Equity Monthly Series has proven to be a valuable platform for sharing vital information with the community and facilitating dialogue about health equity. Our webinars, workshops and panel discussions have attracted a diverse audience of community members, health care professionals and policymakers.

The Penn State Health Office for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion has been actively engaged in developing a Stroke Health Equity Action Plan that includes reducing incidence rates, providing timely access to care and increasing awareness and prevention among vulnerable populations. Our continued focus will stay on developing comprehensive policy recommendations that address the root causes of health disparities.

Through health equity programming such as this, Penn State Health remains committed to advancing our mission to improve the health and well-being of the people of Pennsylvania and beyond, reduce health disparities and promote equity in our communities. Our ongoing initiatives in stroke health and community health equity are producing tangible results, and we are excited about the opportunities for growth and impact in the coming months.





Allison Hill's secret gem: Clinic provides care, hope for residents

Vanessa Garcia found the young woman waiting by the door one morning when she arrived to open the Penn State Health Medical Outreach Service clinic in Harrisburg's Allison Hill neighborhood.

Vanessa Garcia, left, director of the Medical Outreach Service in Harrisburg, talks with Juan Romero Martinez about his health history.

The woman said she had a stomach ache. That wasn't unusual. For two decades, the free clinic in the basement of Christ Lutheran Church on the heights overlooking Pennsylvania's state Capitol has helped soothe thousands of stomach aches. Using donated ointments, bandages and antiseptics piled on shelves under the sanctuary, nurses and volunteers at the clinic treat cuts, bruises, headaches, cold sores and gas pains practically every day.

But when Garcia started checking, the woman's stomach pains didn't seem so simple. The woman was pregnant. It was almost definitely ectopic – a fertilized egg had implanted itself inside one of her fallopian tubes. Without medical help from a doctor, the tube would likely rupture, risking her life.

Like some patients at the clinic, the woman wasn't living in the U.S. legally. Not only was getting help from a hospital expensive, some patients worried about exposure and deportation. A community health worker arrived early that afternoon and, working alongside the clinic's team, the woman received the help she needed.

Garcia and the staff might have saved a life that day, but like every one of its successes and tragedies during the past 20 years, the clinic marked it quietly. Don't look for billboards advertising the Medical Outreach Service. You can find the entrance by looking down at the sidewalk in front of the church and following footsteps painted in yellow to a door to the basement. Patients from the tenements that lean over the crumbling walkways of Allison Hill hear of the clinic from friends and neighbors. Are you hurt? Do you need help? Do you have nowhere else to turn? At Medical Outreach Service, there are no steep bills, no threats of deportation and no judgmental stares. There's access to first aid, help when you're ill, screening for high blood pressure and shoulders to cry on when tears are all you have left.

Quietly and without fanfare, Garcia and her staff work on the vanguard of social issues like drug addiction, street violence and immigration. They provide care, help fill out job and college applications, help find apartments and provide people living in the direst of circumstances what they need the most – hope.

The clinic is one of dozens of efforts that demonstrate Penn State Health's commitment to making health care more equitable and helping people fight illness and lead healthy lives.

[Click to read full story.](#)

MEDICAL OUTREACH SERVICE

Number of persons served

9,500

2021

10,981

2022

10,560

2023



Penn State Health's work with school health assessments pays dividends for students, communities

As the day started on Sept. 26, dozens of grade school children marched into the gym at Henry Houck Elementary School in Lebanon for an early fall test.

Volunteers and nurses with clipboards weighed them and measured their heights. They asked them to look through glasses with cartoon birds, horses or tigers on the frames and pick out different shapes drawn on posters, or find the drawing of a house from a page awash with multicolored dots.



Yasmely Rodriguez, a first-grader at Henry Houck School in Lebanon, gets her eyes checked during screenings conducted in partnership with Penn State Health.

Then, the grownups told each of them that they'd done a good job and sent them back to class. The next day, they would come back for a hearing test.

The annual health screenings, a requirement of the Pennsylvania Department of Health, have been performed at the Lebanon School District in partnership with Penn State Health since 2013. Data gleaned from the gym that morning will help some students clear impediments to learning they might not otherwise have found – often because they can't afford or access the regular checkups they need.

According to the 2021 [Community Health Needs Assessment](#), Lebanon County had the lowest median household income for the entire region surveyed – \$60,281. Among children under 18, only 9.5% in the county have health insurance. In a region where less than half say they have regular access to a primary care doctor, these early checks become important. Penn State Health provides health screenings at Logos Academy and Urban Lighthouse in Harrisburg, as well.

School nurses provide a list of children with vision issues considered to be a priority to Penn State Health community nurses. The nurses call the families and invite them to a Penn State Health vision clinic in partnership with the Lebanon Free Clinic if they have difficulty accessing a vision appointment or do not have insurance.

"It's tough for kids to be in class and not be able to see the board or hear what the teacher is saying," said Ashley Visco, Penn State Health community health director. "But by identifying and addressing these concerns early on, we can assist with opening up the classroom for them."

School health assessments are just one of many ways Penn State Health focuses on wellness and disease prevention.

[Click to read the full story.](#)

37,060

students screened between
fiscal year 2013 and fiscal year 2023

252

students in Lebanon received
free eye exams between fiscal
year 2017 and fiscal year 2023

226

students received free glasses
through Lebanon Free Clinic



About Penn State Health

Penn State Health is a multi-hospital health system serving patients and communities across 29 counties in central Pennsylvania. It employs more than 19,700 people systemwide.

The system includes Penn State Health Milton S. Hershey Medical Center, Penn State Health Children's Hospital and Penn State Cancer Institute based in Hershey; Penn State Health Hampden Medical Center in Enola; Penn State Health Holy Spirit Medical Center in Camp Hill; Penn State Health Lancaster Medical Center in Lancaster; Penn State Health St. Joseph Medical Center in Reading; Pennsylvania Psychiatric Institute, a specialty provider of inpatient and outpatient behavioral health services in Harrisburg; and 2,450+ physicians and direct care providers at 225 outpatient practices. Additionally, the system jointly operates various health care providers, including Penn State Health Rehabilitation Hospital, Hershey Outpatient Surgery Center and Hershey Endoscopy Center.

In 2017, Penn State Health partnered with Highmark Health to facilitate the creation of a value-based, community care network in the region.

Penn State Health shares an integrated strategic plan and operations with Penn State College of Medicine, the University's medical school.

Our Mission

- Continually improve the health and well-being of the people of Pennsylvania and beyond
- Provide excellent, compassionate, culturally responsive and equitable care
- Educate and train health care professionals
- Advance evidence-based medical innovation through research and discovery

Our Vision

Our vision is to be Pennsylvania's most trusted health care organization.

Our Values

Penn State Health recognizes its employees for fulfilling the RITE values of the organization:

- Respect
- Integrity
- Teamwork
- Excellence

Penn State Health at a glance



5 adult acute care hospitals



2 specialty hospitals



1 children's hospital



1,405 licensed inpatient beds



225 outpatient locations



2,450+ physicians and advanced practice providers

FISCAL YEAR 2023



198,415

emergency department visits



2M

outpatient visits



47,894

patients admitted to
our hospitals



64,740

telehealth visits



40,145

surgical procedures



3,600

babies delivered



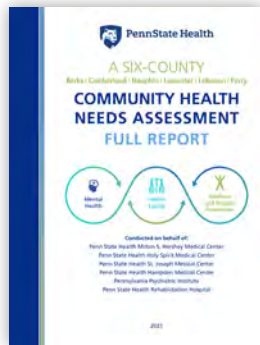
Thank you to our partners

The critical work we do every day in our communities would not be possible without the generous support of many partners who share Penn State Health's mission to continually improve the health and well-being of the people of Pennsylvania and beyond. Together, we are making our communities better places to live and work through addressing the health and wellness needs of the most vulnerable in our region.

The invaluable partnerships of many community-based organizations enable us to make a real difference and have a meaningful impact.

Some of the community initiatives featured in this report reflect the support of key collaborators, including Highmark Blue Cross Blue Shield and the Highmark Foundation, Lebanon School District, Lebanon Free Clinic, Central Pennsylvania Food Bank, The Caring Cupboard, Penn State Health Heart and Vascular, Rite Aid Healthy Futures, Northern Dauphin Branch Library, Samara, PNC and Christ Lutheran Church, Harrisburg. This is just a glimpse into the extensive network of organizations that makes this work possible.

A comprehensive list of supporters and partners can be found in our Community Health Needs Assessment. Please [click here](#).



Share your feedback

We would appreciate your input on Penn State Health's Community Health Needs Assessment and our plans to improve community health.

Share your thoughts [here](#).

pennstatehealth.org

