

2023

Community Report



 **BrightBlueFutures**
community · health · resilience

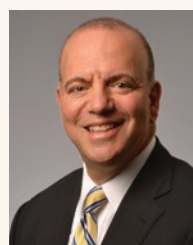
A Year in Review

In 2023, Highmark Health and its affiliates and subsidiaries continued our strong legacy of community support by allocating nearly \$50 million in corporate and foundation giving in Pennsylvania, Delaware, West Virginia, and New York.

We furthered our efforts to improve community health and resilience through our Highmark Bright Blue Futures corporate giving and community involvement program. We were excited to expand this program with the launch of the Highmark Bright Blue Futures Awards Program, made possible by the Highmark Foundation. This inaugural awards program recognized extraordinary organizations across our footprint. We are also proud of the new partnerships we began to establish with nonprofit organizations in the Southeastern Pennsylvania area, as Highmark Health continued to expand.

We have many unique, impactful ways to support our neighbors based on the communities' needs in our different locations. However, we are all laser-focused on improving equitable access to care and quality of life and equally proud to work together to strengthen communities.

Amplifying our region's giving and volunteering efforts throughout our footprint is what makes Highmark Bright Blue Futures special. We are honored to share the impactful stories, insightful highlights, and positive outcomes of this community-focused program in this second chapter of our community report.



Daniel A. Onorato
Executive Vice President
Chief Corporate Affairs Officer
Highmark Health



Kenya T. Boswell
Senior Vice President
Community Affairs
Highmark Health

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Highmark Bright Blue Futures Overview

The goal of Highmark Bright Blue Futures, our charitable giving and community involvement program, is simple – to ensure healthier, brighter, stronger futures for all. We are here to help. We are here to make a difference.

Digging a little deeper, we are collaborating and coordinating with experts, partners, organizations, and volunteers to help millions of people live healthier and happier lives. We are working to improve equitable access to high-quality care, quality of life, and economic resilience. We are striving to address economic instability, connect social and community resources, support access to education, improve neighborhoods, and, most importantly, improve health outcomes.

Active, engaged, and always learning – that is at the forefront of what we do. We are Highmark and we stand with our entire community. Organizations need resources to accomplish their missions and we want to not only support their work, but recognize their accomplishments, increase awareness of what they do, and share their inspiring and life-changing stories.

We have now moved into Southeastern Pennsylvania, expanding our footprint to provide services for even more underserved rural and urban areas, in addition to our preexisting presence throughout Pennsylvania, West Virginia, Western and Northeastern New York, and Delaware.

With defined focus areas, new opportunities on the horizon, and multi-year initiatives already in progress, we are looking forward to the future.



David L. Holmberg
President and CEO
Highmark Health

“Highmark Bright Blue Futures is about improving access to high-quality, affordable care and providing hope for the future. We are honored to stand side by side with key community partners throughout our entire footprint to meet people where they are to improve their health, enabling them to live their best lives and to turn limited possibilities into limitless potential.”

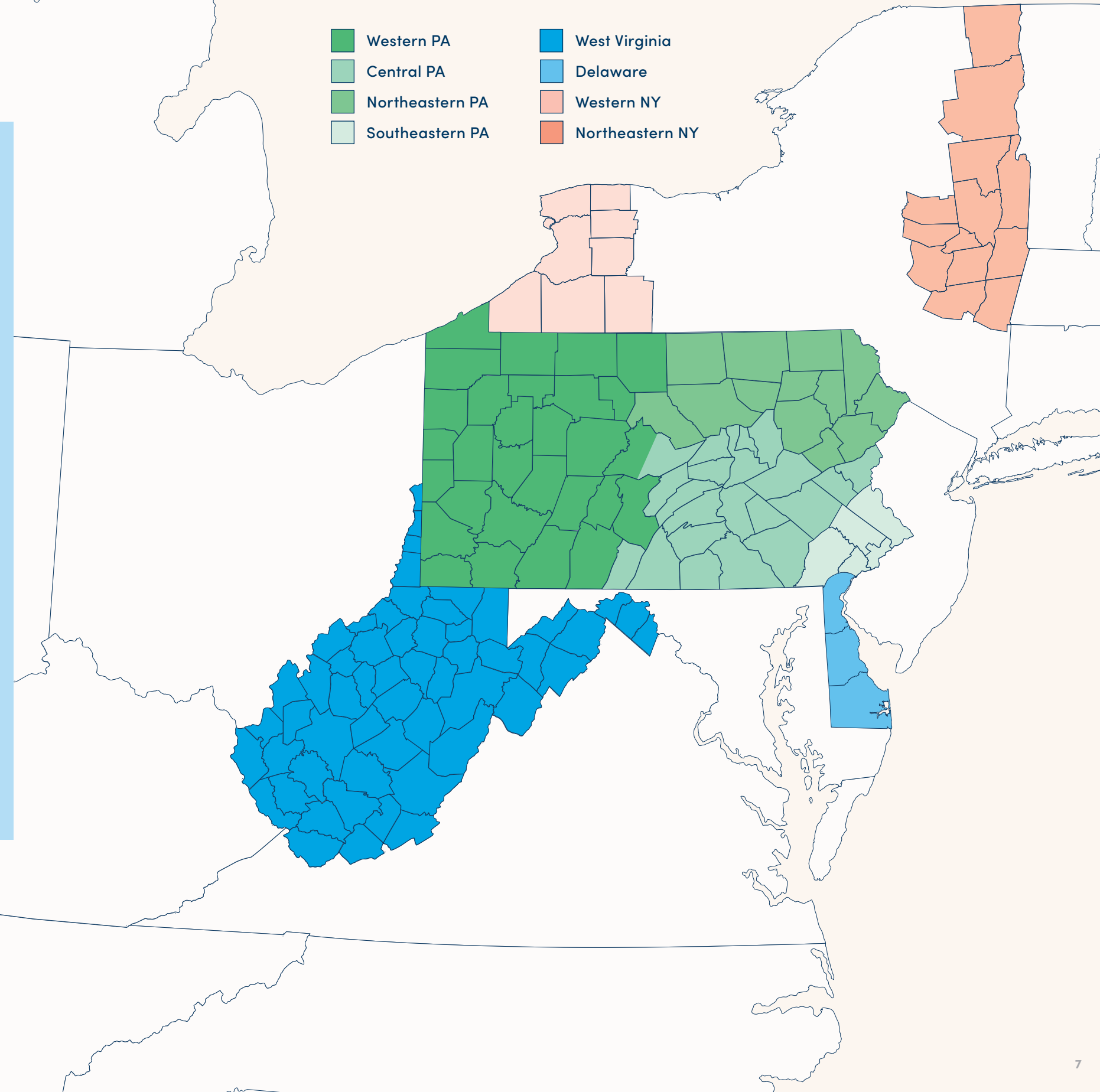
Service Map

- Western PA
- Central PA
- Northeastern PA
- Southeastern PA
- West Virginia
- Delaware
- Western NY
- Northeastern NY

About Highmark

As the fourth-largest Blue Cross Blue Shield affiliated organization, Highmark Inc. and its Blue-branded affiliates proudly cover the insurance needs of approximately 7 million members in Pennsylvania, Delaware, New York, and West Virginia. Its diversified businesses serve group, customer, and individual needs across the United States through dental insurance and other related businesses, offering high-quality, accessible, understandable, and affordable experiences, outcomes, and solutions.

For more information, visit [highmark.com](https://www.highmark.com).



1. Community Health



Community Health

Dedicated support.

All people should have access to care and resources. We continue to work to reduce health inequities and disparities among targeted populations. We are improving health outcomes, in line with our enterprise Living Health strategy.

Strong relationships.

Along with our health care providers, community partners, and volunteers, we support programs that increase the capacity of community organizations providing health services.

Continued commitment.

We are diving deeper into our work and improving health outcomes, one step at a time.

A fulfilled life.

We collaborate with programs looking to reduce unemployment, food insecurity, and housing instability, as well as programs improving neighborhoods and environments to promote health and safety and improve economic well-being and quality of life.

Focus on education and wellness.

We work with our partners to connect individuals to social and community resources to improve their mental and physical health and increase access to educational opportunities.

Advocacy and equitable care.

In her recent op-ed in the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette, Highmark Health's Senior Vice President of Community Affairs, Kenya T. Boswell, reflected on the unequal burden diabetes places on individuals who often lack access to regular care, affordable medications, community support, and self-management practices.

Kenya served as the 2023 executive chair of the American Diabetes Association of Western Pennsylvania's Step Out Walk, which raised money and awareness to address the harmful curve of the diabetes epidemic. Plans are already underway to continue spreading awareness and advocating for equitable wellness resources at next year's walk.

Health Care Access

Lifting Barriers, Changing Lives: Access to Care for All

No obstacle should stand in someone's way of receiving quality health care. Direct access to preventive care, support and education around various diseases, and programs promoting health literacy should be in every community, for all people. Location and income are not factors that should limit people's ability to find the resources and services they need most.

With our 2023 support, our partners anticipate providing more than 20,000 individuals access to much-needed care.



Providing Crucial Care

Oral, Vision, and Hearing Clinics Impacted Thousands in Need

Scheduling an annual physical with a primary care physician. Getting a yearly cleaning from a dentist. Taking children for wellness visits or to fix a cavity. Buying new glasses at the eye doctor. Fitting a hearing aid with an Ear, Nose, and Throat specialist. Getting a vaccination or COVID-19 test.

The tasks above might seem like common practices on anyone's schedule. But for many underserved urban and rural communities, access to these vital appointments and services, for both children and adults, is limited.

We are committed to supporting programs that provide direct access to care and make a lasting impact.

Some of the statistics around oral, vision, and hearing health are alarming.

1 in 4

Adults have cavities

Oral Health.

Oral health is essential to overall health and well-being; however, the CDC states that 1 in 4 adults aged 20 to 64 currently have cavities, and children from low-income families are twice as likely to have untreated cavities as higher-income children.

93m

at high risk of serious vision loss

Vision Health.

More time on the screen for both children and adults increased heavily throughout the past few years and continues to this day with cyber learning and remote work. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) states that an estimated 93 million adults in the United States are at high risk for serious vision loss, but only half visited an eye doctor in the past 12 months.

28.8m

could benefit from hearing aids

Hearing Health.

According to 2021 research from the National Institute for Deafness and Other Communication Disorders, roughly 28.8 million American adults could benefit from hearing aids, but only 16% of people between the ages of 20 and 69 who could benefit from hearing aids use them.

We work with organizations like the ones following to change those statistics.



Mission of Mercy Call to Care

Mission of Mercy – Call to Care is a free two-day dental, eye, and hearing care clinic held at the David L. Lawrence Convention Center in Pittsburgh for the underserved, homeless, and uninsured.

“It’s a special day for me because it shines a light on the generosity and kindness of other people and what they’re willing to do to help people that are less fortunate. I just think this is

a wonderful thing. If I hadn’t come here today, I would probably have ended up losing a lot of my teeth because I have no dental insurance. And not having a toothache, not having pain, and not being afraid to smile — I’m overwhelmed and grateful,” said a patient at the 2023 Mission of Mercy clinic.

During the 2023 clinic, over 1,700 clinical and general volunteers provided health care to 1,702



patients including 1,289 dental exams, 825 eye exams, and 447 hearing exams. Patients also received 752 pairs of free eyeglasses, 274 free hearing aids, and 257 free blood pressure cuffs. Although the exact value of services rendered is not final, the amount should be close to \$2 million.

Keith Young, chairman of A Call to Care, the nonprofit that sponsors Mission of Mercy,

said, “We are becoming an integral part of the western Pennsylvania community with our annual event. The event provides critical health care to our neighbors in need right in our own backyard. Not only do our patients receive quality care, but we also strive to make this a special day where they’re treated with dignity and feel valued.”

1,702

Patients

1,289

Dental
exams

825

Eye
exams

447

Hearing
exams



United Concordia Dental Mobile Dental Clinic

United Concordia Dental partnered with Highmark Wholecare and Highmark Inc. to provide more than 800 children, youth, and seniors across Pennsylvania with free dental care through its mobile dental clinic tours. Additional health services and resources were provided at some locations. Volunteer dentists and dental hygienists from United Concordia's network provided a variety of services, including exams, cleanings, X-rays, and fluoride applications.

"Each year, our mobile dental clinics reach some of the most vulnerable Pennsylvanians — children and seniors — who often have greater challenges in accessing quality and affordable dental care," said Dr. Roosevelt Allen, DDS, MAGD, ABGD, chief dental officer, United Concordia Dental. "Oral health is such an important part of total health, and this is just one of the ways we're invested in giving back to the communities we serve to help people in need be their healthiest."

Mom-n-PA Dental Clinic

The Mom-n-PA Dental Clinic ran for two days and was held in Allentown, Pennsylvania. Over 130 dental chairs and supporting equipment were leased and set up in an arena in the Agriculture Fairgrounds Agri-Plex. More than 870 volunteers served 1,375 people, provided

8,528 procedures, and donated over 1.3 million dollars of free dental care. Services included cleanings, X-rays, fillings, pediatric care, root canals, dentures, extractions, and medical and dental screenings.



Vision to Learn

Vision to Learn (VTL) provides a proven solution that bridges educational achievement and health care access gaps. Their mobile clinics, staffed by licensed doctors, bring eye exams and glasses to children where they are every day — schools and community organizations right in their neighborhood, at no cost to the student or family. VTL served

students throughout Delaware's high-need communities by providing vision screenings, eye exams, and glasses. In its lifetime, VTL has helped connect more than 35,000 children to care and has provided more than 18,000 eye exams and 14,500 glasses to students in need.

CATE Mobile Unit

CATE, which stands for Community-Accessible Testing & Education, was Pennsylvania's first COVID-19 Mobile Vaccination Unit. It provided affordable, accessible, and bilingual COVID-19 education, testing, and vaccinations to vulnerable communities across Pennsylvania.

CATE has reached and helped tens of thousands of Pennsylvanians and continues to expand its footprint and impact. While the unit still provides vaccinations, it is growing its focus and looking into a whole care approach.

"We're already looking at partnerships around obesity and cardiovascular oral health," said Mr. George Fernandez, President and CEO of Latino Connection. "We're even looking at financial health. Financial health is one of the pillars of social determinants of health. We are really looking at the overall whole care approach as we consider ways to reach our communities."

Taking Care of Mothers

Empowered, Supported, Understood

Prenatal. Perinatal. Postnatal. Each stage of maternal health brings its own unique set of experiences, and all women go through a very personal process.

We support maternal health initiatives in a variety of ways, including supporting the Buffalo Urban League's efforts to enhance minority women's sense of empowerment through increased knowledge and advocacy for self and baby, and funding a 30-minute documentary, in partnership with WQED, entitled "You're Not Alone ... Pregnancy, Postpartum, and the Mental Health Crisis."

We are devoted to improving care for mothers and babies everywhere, and one of the ways we furthered that mission this year was through Delaware BluePrints and our funding of Black Mothers in Power (BMIP), a community-

based doula program expansion which seeks to improve outcomes through doula training and advocacy, as well as to address depression, child-parent bonds, self-esteem, and breastfeeding outcomes. BMIP seeks to eradicate maternal health disparities for Black women throughout Delaware, like Marquisha, who shared her story working with her doula, Lovi.

"My pregnancy was high risk, which left me grappling between several conflicting recommendations from my physicians on the do's and don'ts of my pregnancy journey. Not to mention, I was also very anxious and aware

of the hard statistics about the risks of being a pregnant Black woman in my mid-30s."

According to Women's Advancement and Advocacy Delaware, maternal and infant mortality rates are consistently higher for Black women and infants compared to white populations. The research shows more than twice as many Black infants in Delaware die before their first birthday than white infants. And nationally, Black women are three to four times more likely to experience a pregnancy-related death than white women.

"I really wanted to have someone that I personally could trust to be in my corner outside of the hospital setting. I knew I wanted a Black doula and I needed that person to help support me with resources, provide guidance to navigating the physicians and health care systems, support with creating a birth plan, and provide stress management tools and information on holistic approaches to pregnancy and labor. Lovi was highly recommended by a close friend, and I was familiar with Lovi's work as a fellow social worker/therapist. So, I didn't hesitate to call when I was ready. I appreciated her quick and prompt response to initiate services. Lovi was very professional, yet so very personable. She provided my partner and me with the support we were looking for and more. My burning need for resources was also met. Lovi provided tons of evidence-based articles, guiding videos and personal stories, and suggested birthing and parenting tools that I was able to find useful even while I was in labor."

Doulas are non-clinical professionals who emotionally and physically support women during the perinatal period, including birth and postpartum, and research suggests that having a doula during the perinatal period improves health outcomes for mother and baby. National research suggests that doula-assisted mothers

were four times less likely to have a low-birth-weight baby, two times less likely to experience a birth complication involving themselves or their baby, and significantly more likely to initiate breastfeeding.

Community-based doulas provide culturally sensitive pregnancy and childbirth education and early linkage to health care and other services. In this program, women working with a doula will receive two prenatal visits to assess their need to provide them with labor

“My postpartum sessions with Lovi were dear to me. Lovi was one of my biggest cheerleaders.”

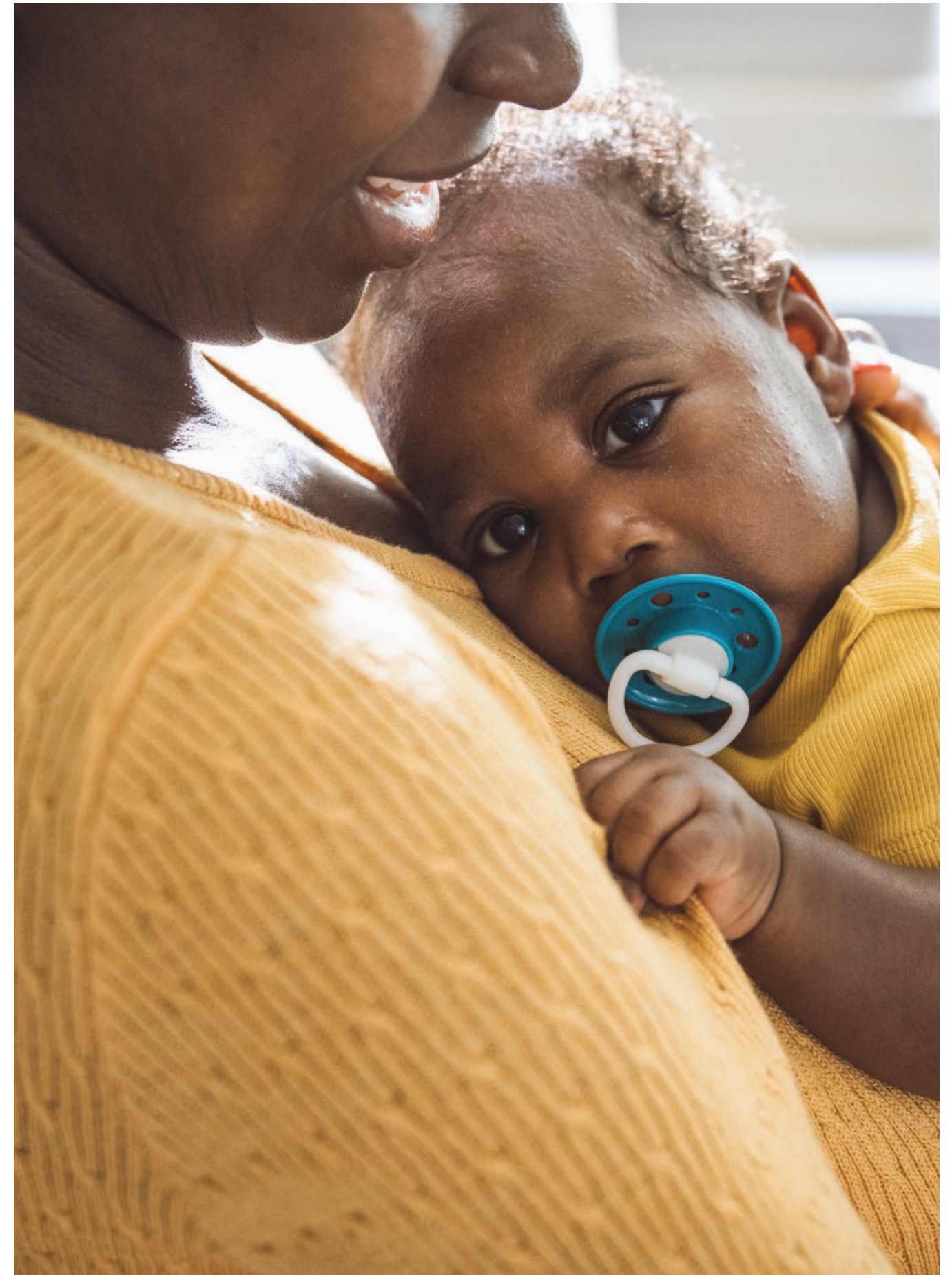
tools; explanations of birth preferences; access to books and videos on pregnancy, birth, and baby care; continuous physical, emotional, and informational support for the duration of labor and birth; initial breastfeeding support; a postpartum visit to celebrate the birth and answer questions; and unlimited phone, text, and email support to answer questions and offer suggestions and support throughout pregnancy and early labor.

"Lovi's effort to give daily affirmations and words of validation provided an extra layer of reassurance that I needed to embrace the challenges of pregnancy. The process

of creating the birth plan in sessions really encouraged my partner and me to have tough conversations about what we wanted this journey to look like in the present and beyond labor. She mediated those shared differences we had amongst each other, and we were able to compromise. Lovi was very solution-focused during the times we needed it the most, and that was very important to me. No question was left unanswered. Also, my partner was always fully engaged in sessions and he often expressed feelings of satisfaction afterward. I think this speaks to Lovi's ability to support and engage both mothers and fathers equally."

"My postpartum sessions with Lovi were dear to me. Lovi was one of my biggest cheerleaders as I successfully gave birth and helped me recognize that I reached many of my birth plan goals. She also quickly answered the calls to help support me through breastfeeding challenges and provided recommendations/solutions that helped me overcome some tough moments."

This work complements that of The Enterprise Equitable Health Institute (EEHI) within Highmark, an enterprise-wide effort dedicated to advancing a comprehensive internal and external strategy to promote a culture of equity and inclusion.



The Power of Reading

Family Bonds and Lasting Memories

The first time you took a book home from the library that you chose all by yourself. The classic bedtime stories a loved one would read to you as you were snug in your bed. Your favorite teacher holding open a book in class to read the words as you looked at the illustrations. No matter how and where stories were introduced to you as a young person, it made an impact.

The power of reading and the joy of books are gifts all children should experience. Gaining access to books and finding stories with diverse representation, or that are written in different languages, is vital to the success of a child's reading journey.

To support this journey, we invested in multiple health literacy initiatives this year, including donations to Reach Out and Read (ROR) for Rx for Early Literacy in Delaware, through Delaware BluePrints and Rx for Early Literacy in Western New York, and through the Blue Fund in Buffalo, New York. ROR is a national nonprofit that champions the positive effects of reading daily and engaging in other language-rich activities with young children.

At the Community Health Center of Niagara in Niagara Falls, New York, about 400 culturally, linguistically, and age-appropriate books are given to families each year. That is just one provider of this fantastic program.

"I strongly recommend supporting Reach Out and Read to anyone who is committed to improving the lives of young children," said Dr. Robertus Salis, a pediatrician at Community Health Center. "This program is making a real difference in the lives of families and children, and it deserves our recognition."

“This program is making a real difference in the lives of families and children.”

Studies show that reading together promotes healthy brain development, furthers language acquisition, and helps families build meaningful bonds. ROR is the only national pediatric literacy model to be endorsed by the American Academy of Pediatrics and it serves 4.4 million children across the U.S., more than half of whom come from low-income households.

Rx for Early Literacy in Delaware incorporates books into medical sites in Delaware specializing in pediatric care to increase visit completion and patient experience.

In Delaware, 62% of the families served use Medicaid, another public insurance, or are

uninsured and only 35% of children from low-income families are proficient in reading by third grade.

Rx for Early Literacy in Western New York is focused on children in the highest-need communities in Western New York. Only 24% of children from low-income New York households are proficient in reading by fourth grade. ROR improves health outcomes and reading skills in these populations through a research-based model delivered at well-child visits, especially those at Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs.)

"Although we engage children and their families in many wonderful interventions and programs at Wheatfield Pediatrics, there is one that I am especially proud of including in the care that we provide at our office — Reach Out and Read," said Dr. Joseph C. Wittmann. "Thirty percent of our children are from underserved communities. This is more than a book giveaway program. It allows me to make critical observations of a child's development in a way that engages both the child and their parent. During regular pediatric checkups from infancy through age 5, Wheatfield Pediatrics' doctors and ancillary providers give new, developmentally appropriate books to children and advise parents about the importance of reading aloud. As a result, parents learn new ways to stimulate their children's literacy development, have more books in the home, and read to their children more. Parents are supported as their children's first and most important teachers, and children grow up to be readers."

We are proud to be part of the next chapter of improved reading literacy for children in our community.

Economic Stability for Individuals and Families

Meeting People Where They Are by Meeting Basic Needs

So many factors of comfort and health in daily life come back to economic stability and the availability of resources for meeting basic needs. Prioritizing the needs of our most vulnerable community members can look like helping them eat balanced and nutritious meals, providing access to housing and transportation, and encouraging the development of skills needed to pursue education and job opportunities.



Driving Hunger Out of Communities

Improving Food Access and Affordability

Improving community health and economic stability often means starting with the basic, everyday necessities that impact people's ability to succeed and live healthy, meaningful, and productive lives. Many families spend significant time worrying about where their next meal is coming from, and how they will be able to access and afford it.

Food insecurity, defined as the lack of consistent access to adequate food, affects millions of people nationwide every day, as nearly 34 million Americans are estimated to live in food-insecure households. Individuals and families of color, and those affected by poverty and other social factors, experience food insecurity at disproportionate rates.

We have a long history of supporting programs that address the root causes of food insecurity and empowering community partners by investing in community gardens, farmers markets, and grassroots organizations so that underserved communities get the food they

need. We anticipate our 2023 support will provide more than 430,000 individuals across our footprint with access to healthy food.

Our employees take a boots-on-the-ground approach to fighting food insecurity through volunteering at food banks year-round and giving and raising funds through programs like the Highmark Walk for a Healthy Community and the United Way Campaign.

We have funded partner organizations like Bright Spot Farm, Massachusetts Avenue Project, and Soul Fire Farm — three organizations that are deeply entrenched in

the communities they serve and committed to providing equitable and sustainable solutions to economic and food-related challenges.

In 2023, we worked with Philabundance, a Philadelphia-based food bank, as one of the sponsors of its 26th Camp Out for Hunger food drive in Philadelphia.

This annual, week-long event is the nation's largest single-site food drive and an opportunity for community members and individuals from across the region to support Philabundance's

mission of driving hunger out of communities and ending hunger for good by donating nonperishable food or funds.

The 2023 Camp Out for Hunger yielded huge successes for Philabundance and its cause. Participants donated over 1 million dollars and 12 truckloads of food to individuals and families in need.

We look forward to supporting programs that help even more people receive healthy meals and food services in the years to come.



Stabilizing Housing, Strengthening Community Health

Year after year, as our footprint continues to grow and we explore fruitful partnerships with organizations that align with our values and service areas, we remain committed to discovering new ways to tackle one of the biggest Community Health issues: a lack of safe and affordable housing.

Pennsylvania's 2023 Allegheny County Point-In-Time Count for regional homelessness revealed an increase of at least 127 more individuals staying in emergency shelters in 2023 and at least 50 more individuals experiencing unsheltered homelessness than in 2022. There's an ever-growing need for housing stability and support in all our regions, and we actively work to uplift organizations that are addressing this issue head-on.

Last year we focused on one of our projects addressing housing instability, which involved a partnership with Sisters of St. Joseph (SSJ) Neighborhood Network, an organization in Northwestern Pennsylvania that focuses on personal growth and neighborhood

revitalization. One of SSJ's heartwarming community impact stories was its achievement of helping a Bhutanese family of first-time homebuyers purchase a house in Erie, Pennsylvania.

This year, we will talk more about how we are working with the Hilltop Economic Development Corporation (HEDC), another organization focused on providing housing and business revitalization solutions, to strengthen vulnerable communities. HEDC specifically serves Pittsburgh's Knoxville neighborhood and the Borough of Mt. Oliver.

At the beginning of each year, HEDC sets out to accomplish several goals related to



property stabilization and housing through its Neighborhood Partnership Program (NPP) efforts. The results of the organization's on-the-ground, community-focused approach speak volumes about its impact on housing stability and invigorating neighborhoods and local businesses. Last year, HEDC resolved 295 property maintenance issues — far surpassing its goal of 40. HEDC also completed 25 home repair projects, facilitated 10 commercial property renovations, and supported 25 new and existing businesses through grants.

James, a resident of one of HEDC's service neighborhoods, spoke highly of the organization's repair work on his house.

"HEDC provided safe construction on my rugged back porch. There is no way I could have done this financially, and there's no way I could have done this physically. The porch was very unsafe the way it was, and I am very thankful for all their help."

Our support has enabled HEDC to strengthen its impact on the lives of individuals like James, and its imprint on larger communities in need of safe and affordable housing, to effect change in the Knoxville and Mt. Oliver areas for years to come.

Community Action

Achieving Long-Term Stability and Leading Healthy, Productive Lives

Ending poverty isn't something that can be accomplished through the work of a few experts and individuals; it requires an all-hands-on-deck, community action approach. South Central Community Action Programs (SCCAP), an organization that has served the Gettysburg and Chambersburg regions of Pennsylvania for more than 58 years, brings communities and partners together in its wide-reaching, collaborative efforts to improve the lives of individuals living in poverty.

Highmark Wholecare has provided both financial and volunteer support to SCCAP. SCCAP's mission aligns closely with Highmark's focus on community health, and it is designed to help individuals access their most basic needs — food, shelter, and transportation — to live healthy and productive lives and improve their employment status and financial literacy.

Rather than dictating what services families need, SCCAP works alongside its families to develop effective strategies that will help

them meet their goals in areas of education, employment, bridging capital, health, nutrition, and improvement to their home and living environment. The organization's range of services allows it to respond to the unique needs of each family and individual it serves. Whether they are developing soft or hard career skills, or accessing a food pantry to pick up nutritious meals for themselves and their children, staff instill hope of a brighter future.

“Ever since I came here (to the pantry and produce stand), since money is short



everywhere, I have had additional access to produce that I wouldn't otherwise. It has helped me keep my weight down. I am grateful for the program.” said Jeffrey, an SCCAP Gleaning Project participant.

SCCAP has left a meaningful and measurable impact on the lives of many vulnerable individuals in its service areas. Through its support of struggling populations like low-wage earners and seniors on a fixed income, the organization touches the lives of more than

17,000 individuals annually and contributes to a growing social infrastructure that enables individuals and families to not only survive, but thrive. As Rochelle, another program participant, said, “My family did the hard work to overcome poverty, but the support I received was invaluable — it was priceless!”

Social and Community Context

Nurturing Mental and Physical Health Through Exercise, Connection, and Peer Support

From a young age, children are exposed to factors in their home, school, and community environments that shape their understanding of their health, their relationships with others, and their personal growth and development in the world. We know that community efforts play a large role in the development and care of young people and their families, which is why our support of social and community organizations in 2023 provided an estimated 380,000 individuals with access to healthy activities that benefit their physical and mental health.



Youth Support and Guidance

Raising Generations of Changemakers and Community Advocates

Adolescence is a pivotal time for developing social, emotional, and physical lifestyle habits that are essential to overall health and well-being. Many individual and societal factors, from family life to social programs and access to extracurricular outlets, influence the mental health of young people. For minority and marginalized young people, there are even more risk factors that contribute to mental health difficulties.

As kids develop their own identities in relation to the world around them, forming positive friendships and social connections can play a critical role in their psychological growth, and in developing values of empathy, compassion, and honesty to carry with them through each challenge and stage in life.

The Boys & Girls Club of Parkersburg (BGCP), West Virginia, provides a range of programs that support the needs of young people and their families and encourage youth to meet their full potential as productive, caring, and responsible citizens.

Through its programs centered around the arts, education, sports and recreation, health and wellness, workforce readiness, and character and leadership, BGCP caters to the individual and diverse needs of each member, offering them a tool kit of support and skills to excel in different areas of life.

BGCP's health and wellness programs are designed to nurture young people's well-being and help them set personal goals and grow into self-sufficient adults. More than 350 kids and teens visit BGCP annually to participate in their outcomes-driven prevention and education programs that focus on topics such as drug and alcohol use, premature sexual activity, responsibility, financial literacy, and STEM.

BGCP's youth outcome data speaks volumes about the skills and self-sufficiency the organization instills in its members, and the myriad ways it encourages youth to be active and positive changemakers in their communities. In 2023, 88% of Club youth reported that as a leader, they make sure everyone feels important. Sixty-seven percent of regularly attending members said they volunteered in their community, Club, school, or neighborhood at least once in the past year.

Our support of BGCP has allowed us to continue investing in the health and well-being of new and future generations, and in the opportunities afforded to youth and families in West Virginia.



Finding Hope in Grief

A Healing Place Where Children, Teens, and Adults Are Not Alone

Grief can be an incredibly isolating experience. One in 12 children will experience the death of a parent or sibling before they graduate high school, yet many children feel they have nowhere to go or no one to turn to while processing the loss of a family member or loved one.

When walking the road of grief and loss, it's critical that individuals have a community of support, others who know what they are going through and can accept them where they are in their grief journey.

For over 25 years, the Highmark Caring Place has served grieving children from birth to high school graduation in Central and Western Pennsylvania through facilities in Harrisburg, Erie, Pittsburgh, and Warrendale. Through peer support, children and their families are offered a safe place to connect with others in similar situations after the death of someone important in their lives. Virtual support groups for young adults are also provided.

Since its founding, the Caring Place has served more than 100,000 community and family members. Consultation services, presentations, and resources for schools and other professionals are also provided. Through the support and commitment of Highmark, all services are provided at no charge to those in need from throughout the community.



A New Facility in the Harrisburg Area

The Caring Place in Central Pennsylvania recently announced it has moved to a new home on the Highmark campus in Camp Hill. Formerly located in Lemoyne, the Caring Place in the Capitol Region has served thousands of children and teens since opening its doors 20 years ago.

During a typical evening at the Caring Place, when children and families first arrive, they gather in a large room to eat dinner together and then explore activities in the center's various age-appropriate spaces.

Aside from a small team of staff, the organization is primarily volunteer driven, with around 140 volunteers who receive 30 hours of training so they can offer the best support and guidance to the children and their families.

Nancy, whose husband died when her children were 5, 7, and 10 years old, brought her children to the Caring Place for help and support in their grief.

"It really helped them to be with other kids their own age," said Nancy. "It's just being able to connect with people who have been through similar loss."

We celebrate the many thousands of families, like Nancy's, who have found hope and healing through the programs of the Highmark Caring Place over more than a quarter-century of serving our communities throughout Western and Central Pennsylvania.

Empowering Girls

Through Exercise, Social Connection, and Life Skills Development

The interaction between mental and physical health is undeniable, and it's imperative that communities have access to programs and resources that honor all aspects of their health and well-being.

Over the years, we have supported many organizations and events that address the interconnectedness of mental and physical health, including the Richard S. Caliguiri City of Pittsburgh Great Race presented by Highmark Blue Cross Blue Shield and the Parkersburg News and Sentinel Half Marathon in West Virginia. Both races hold significance for the regions they represent and give communities an opportunity to prioritize their physical health while finding joy in their community and connections with others.

Girls on the Run (GOTR) is a national nonprofit that has served more than two million girls across North America, introducing them to physical and social outlets that help them build self-confidence and recognize their potential. We support GOTR programs in Delaware, Central Pennsylvania, the Lehigh Valley, and Western and Northeastern New York.

We have been supporting GOTR Buffalo for both the Spring and Fall 5K since 2011. The Buffalo council serves 2,500 girls annually from 120 sites with more than 450 volunteers from the community supporting the young girls from all eight counties of Western New York. We're also the presenting sponsor of the Spring and Fall 5K for GOTR Northeastern New York, which has served 2,900 girls, trained 500 volunteer coaches, and served 60 locations throughout the region.

In Pennsylvania, we have supported GOTR's Lehigh Valley chapter for more than 10 years, building a strong partnership that has provided hundreds of girls in third to eighth grade with financial assistance to participate in the enriching social and physical outlets GOTR offers. GOTR Lehigh Valley has been providing physical, activity-based youth development programming since 2007, and it recently merged with the Pocono area council to serve a

According to a Girls on the Run International Study

85%

increase confidence, competence, caring, character, and connection

40%

increase in physical activity

97%

gained critical life skills

larger territory of families and girls. In addition, we have supported GOTR Delaware since 2006.

A longitudinal study was conducted by GOTR International in 2023 to demonstrate the organization's impact on girls' physical activity, mental and emotional health, and development of life skills. The study revealed an 85% improvement in GOTR members' confidence, competence, caring, character, and connection, and an increase in members' physical activity by more than 40% since the start of the 2023 season. The results also showed that 97% of GOTR participants have gained critical life skills in areas including helping others, decision making, managing emotion, and resolving conflict.

Addyson, a GOTR Capital Region participant, noticed a great change in herself since participating in the program.

"Girls on the Run gave me self-confidence to accomplish things that might be hard in my life and really just taught me to be brave and be strong."

Another participant, Reina, spoke about a key lesson she has taken away from GOTR.

"At Girls on the Run, I learned it is so important to give back to your community."

Although GOTR focuses largely on empowering girls through physical activity, it prides itself on being about so much more than just running. It offers research-based activities and programs to help individuals of all abilities recognize their unique strengths and grow alongside their peers to be the best possible versions of themselves.

Education Access

Inclusive Learning and Work Opportunities

To best serve communities in need, we understand the importance of building a workforce that works for everyone and giving those in underrepresented communities the tools they need to thrive and succeed in school, work, and life. Like in previous years, our work in 2023 involved partnering with and supporting organizations that enhanced opportunity and accessibility for diverse populations. Our support of these organizations in 2023 provided an estimated 180,000 individuals with access to education.



Employment for Everyone

Workforce Development and Training for Individuals With Disabilities

Individuals with intellectual disabilities (ID) often face stigma and discrimination in many school, work, and community settings. When it comes to employment, they are often not given the opportunities, training, or resources they need to develop skills and be successful.

Findings from the National Snapshot of Adults with Intellectual Disabilities in the Labor Force reveal that fewer than one out of every two working age adults with ID is in the labor force, and only 44% of adults with an ID aged 21 – 64 are in the labor force.

Organizations like the Barber National Institute, a family-founded organization that got its start in 1952, are critical for ensuring adults with ID have access to workforce development and training opportunities that will help them advance in career areas, prioritize their personal and professional growth, and become productive members of the workforce.

Barber National Institute in Erie, Pennsylvania, was born out of Dr. Gertrude Barber's idea that there must be a way to meet people with ID where they are and honor their unique needs and skills.

While working for many years as an administrator in the Erie School District, Dr. Barber often had to meet with families and share the harsh reality that their children with disabilities did not have a place to learn or receive specialized services in school. Children either had to learn at home or be sent to far-away institutions, until she took it upon herself to establish the first class for students with ID at the YWCA. From that point on,

Barber National Institute continued to grow into a place that meets the needs of children and adults with autism, ID, or behavioral health challenges, and their families.

“When students leave the program, they stay with us. They slide right into our supportive employment program.”

In addition to Erie, Barber National Institute has locations in Pittsburgh, Philadelphia, Warren, Bedford, and Somerset, and it employs more than 3,000 people to carry out its mission of helping individuals reach their full potential.

One of Barber National Institute's main vocational services for workforce training and development, Project SEARCH, is an international program designed to help individuals with ID access competitive integrated employment opportunities. Barber National Institute works with five partners to operate its Project SEARCH services, including Allegheny Health Network's Saint Vincent Hospital, Barber National Center, Erie School District, Department of Labor & Industry's Office of Vocational Rehabilitation, and Erie County Department of Human Services.

After going through the interview process with Project SEARCH's partner organizations, students are then assigned internships at Allegheny Health Network's Saint Vincent Hospital, where they first learn soft skills and practice working and interacting with others. After these initial activities, they move on to hard skills, or the physical work of the internship. Once the full 10-week period is up, they either get hired at their initial internship site or move on to their next internship at the host organization.

“The internship sites have not only welcomed in the students, but they have given us a lot of resources and support that are very helpful. And the students feel welcome in those programs,” said Barber National Institute Associate Director Michelle Izbicki.

Many students choose to stay involved with Barber National Institute's programs and events in various capacities after they graduate, which goes to show how ingrained a role it has in the lives of students and their families.

“When students leave the program, they stay with us. They slide right into our supportive employment program, or even at Saint Vincent, they stay with us. Barber is always the next service provider that they choose,” said Izbicki.

As a champion for equal access and opportunities for people of all backgrounds, identities, and ability levels, we were pleased to support the Barber Institute's work again in 2023 and uplift its mission and impactful services, which align closely with our own.

“Highmark is a very strong partner here in Northwest Pennsylvania,” said Tammy Roche, Barber National Institute's Strategic Communications Director. “They are right there with us advocating and lifting up all that we're doing in the region.”

Building a Diverse Nursing Workforce

Through Mentorship and Student Empowerment

Often, students of color may feel discouraged from pursuing a nursing career because they don't see a lot of people who look like them represented in medicine or treating them at the doctor's office.

According to a recent National Nursing Workforce Survey, nearly 81% of registered nurses reported being white, leaving 19% of the workforce being made up of minority nurses.

Building a more diverse nursing workforce not only means opening more doors for minority populations to establish a career around healing and making a difference for others, but it also ensures nurses are better equipped to treat diverse patients and provide enhanced quality health care based on their own lived and education-based experiences.

In our commitment to uplifting organizations that create opportunities for people of all backgrounds and identities in health care, we have supported Russell Sage College (RSC) in Northeastern New York during the early stages of funding and implementing its mentor training for I Can Achieve a Nursing Degree (ICAN). The ICAN program is geared toward high school students who are people of color, empowering them to pursue nursing degrees, reducing the nursing shortage, and increasing the diversity of nursing professionals throughout the state.

RSC is a coeducational college best known for its health science and nursing programs and serving undergraduate and graduate students online and on its campuses in Albany and Troy, NY. They are creating a faculty professional nurse mentorship orientation and training program that complements its ICAN program by helping nursing students from minority and underrepresented communities graduate and secure jobs in their field.

Training nurses and mentors to operate from a lens of cultural competency is incredibly important for ensuring the fair and accessible education, hiring, and retention of current and future generations of diverse nurses. RSC's ICAN program, which began in 2023, is expected to be fully implemented throughout 2024 - 2025. Their Communications Director will help coordinate a Health Science ICAN Summit to introduce health care professionals and students to resources and trainings designed to educate about the value

of mentorship and relationship-building, improving staff retention and health care outcomes by creating a welcoming environment for nurses of color, and honoring diverse perspectives and identities in the field.

With support from us and other partners and health care organizations, RSC's ICAN program is projected to serve or impact around 560 students, professionals, and families.

RSC is one of many schools we have worked with over the years to increase accessibility and opportunities for nurses, particularly in communities of color. We also support a nursing scholarship program at Penn State Health. Similarly, we have provided support for the training of health care professionals at ChristianaCare in Delaware, and we are supporting a new health care workforce training program at Trocaire College in Western New York that is focused on licensed practical nurse certification and employment.



Neighborhood and Built Environment

Healthy Spaces

People come together when common spaces in their community feel safe and welcoming and encourage learning and play. Through our work in undeserved neighborhoods, we support organizations building and improving physical spaces for sports, recreation, and wellness activities that are accessible to all. From group training and classes to individual and family support, we continue to work with partners that elevate awareness and access to essential resources.



Playing for the community

Supporting Dek Hockey in Northeastern PA.

We are making a play with our support of the multifunctional Dek hockey rink and community event space in Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania.

The rink, located at the Toyota SportsPlex, is a community project that was funded by us, along with the City of Wilkes-Barre and the Pittsburgh Penguins Foundation. The rink is the first outdoor Dek hockey rink in Eastern Pennsylvania.

About Dek Hockey

Players wear shoes instead of skates, use a ball instead of a puck, and wield plastic hockey sticks in the sport of Dek hockey. It gets its name from the material of the boards in the rink, and it's been around since the 1970s. With much more affordable equipment than traditional hockey gear, and no need to learn how to skate, Dek hockey is welcoming in a new generation of hockey players.

Dek hockey allows players of all ages and experience levels to try out the exciting sport of hockey. In their first season, more than 245 youth and adults played in various divisions and sessions. The rink also hosted Learn to Play clinics and events, reaching 200 - 250 total participants throughout the year.

Competition was fierce, fans were passionate, and the rink team worked to keep everyone updated on their social media feeds.

“One of the main pillars for the Dek is trying to give everyone a chance to play hockey,” said Community Hockey Programming Manager Kyle Hammer.

To that goal, a Special Needs league was created so players of all abilities got an opportunity to play. A big event around this league was free to participants, and players got to play not only on the Dek, but also the ice — and hear a speech from the Wilkes-Barre/Scranton Penguins head coach.

The rink staff are also working to increase awareness about the sport in local schools.

“During the offseason, we adopted a program from the Pittsburgh Penguins,” said Hammer. “It is an in-school gym class curriculum workbook. We bring the workbook to schools, as well as equipment, and we teach kids how to play and get them interested in the sport of hockey.”

This year, we also supported the Highmark Blue Cross Blue Shield Hunt Armory ice rink in Pittsburgh; the East Aurora Classic Rink in East Aurora, New York; and The Ice at Canalside in Buffalo, New York.

The Pittsburgh Penguins received a Stanley award in the social impact and growth category from the National Hockey League for their efforts in advancing equity in youth hockey, in part due to their support of the Highmark Blue Cross Blue Shield Hunt Armory.



Stay Informed, Take Action

Our Commitment to Safety

We are focused on the safety of ALL people. Children, seniors, and all ages in between can benefit from resources, classes, and training to remind them to stay alert and get educated about potential distractions and dangers as they walk, play, and drive in the community.

In 2023, we offered our support to the Injury Prevention Program at Penn State Health Holy Spirit Medical Center, specifically for its Pedestrian Safety Program and Mature Driver Improvement Course.

Holy Spirit Medical Center provides community outreach and trauma prevention programs for a range of safety issues, including fall prevention, violence prevention, gun safety, traumatic blood loss through “Stop the Bleed” training, medication safety, teen driving, mature driving, distracted driving awareness, and pedestrian safety. In 2023, these programs

collectively reached more than 50,000 people across five Pennsylvania counties through one-on-one support and workshops with local community groups, businesses, and at events.

The Pedestrian Safety Program is presented at schools, health fairs, senior centers, and industries. Participants receive information on walking and biking safety, including proper lighting, wearing appropriate clothing, using reflectors, and understanding current laws on walking and biking. In 2023, more than 360 people took part in one of the eight sessions offered.



Adults 50+ can enroll in the Mature Driver Improvement Course to learn about the effects of aging on their bodies, how to navigate roads they often travel, how to adapt to changing car technology, and current traffic laws. While there is no actual driving in the course, participants gain valuable knowledge about how to operate a vehicle safely. They also receive adaptive equipment for driving and reflectors for safer walking.

“In the Mature Driving Course, I’ve educated 110 older adults about the changes in their bodies, cars, and roadways and how to adapt

to these changes to stay safe on the roadways,” said Sunny Goodyear, injury prevention and outreach coordinator and clinical nursing instructor at Holy Spirit Medical Center. “Many older adults feel frustrated with all of the changes, but through group discussion, multimedia presentations, and hands-on practice, I provide education and support. They leave feeling empowered and equipped to navigate the road safely.”

We are proud to help our community — and future generations — feel safe, secure, and able to find resources with ease.

2.

Community and Economic Resilience





We are advancing Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion.

We are celebrating our veterans.

We are boosting arts and culture.

We are contributing to business and economic development.

We found ourselves immersed in the power of unity this year as we sponsored and funded events for a varied and diverse population. We will keep learning, keep listening, and keep leading efforts to ensure a better world. We take our corporate responsibility seriously, as a large employer in the community that wants to see equality for all.

Our communities are made up of millions of people from

diverse backgrounds and cultures. Every idea and perspective is important to ensure we are focused on a better, brighter future for the entirety of our patients, families, and communities.

When we work together, we learn from one another. All our experiences are vastly different, and understanding is the first step in making real change.

This year, we spread compassion, stood as allies, educated ourselves, supported creative endeavors, and celebrated with our community, continuing our promise to be open, inclusive, and supportive to all.

We celebrated Juneteenth across our footprint. Juneteenth (June 19) is a federal holiday in the United States commemorating the end of slavery. The events brought communities together and featured activities such as parades, African American culture education, and performances, speakers, live music, and local vendors. One of the events supported was the Philadelphia Juneteenth Parade and Festival, which is the largest Juneteenth celebration in the nation welcoming more than 25,000 people.

We supported multiple Pride events throughout Pennsylvania, West Virginia, New York, and Delaware, impacting thousands of individuals.



Pride is the recognition of LGBTQ+ identity, affirmation of equal rights, and celebration of visibility, dignity, and diversity. Many events included the chance to engage in dialogue focused on the LGBTQ+ community; gain additional information and resources; utilize health and wellness screenings; and enjoy food booths, live entertainment, speakers, games, vendors, and music. One such event was the Pride Parade and Festival, the second largest pride festival in New York State, which brings together 15,000+ people.

More than a million veterans live in our coverage area, and we worked to focus our efforts on the individuals who have served our country, many of whom face incredible challenges in their civilian life. Some of the

statistics are alarming. The suicide rate for veterans is 57% higher than the national average. The Census Bureau estimates that 7.5% of veterans in 2022 (approximately 1.2 million) reported income below the poverty level. In August 2022, 4.9 million veterans, or 27% of all veterans, had a service-connected disability. We were honored to support more than 15 veteran-related organizations and events this year, including veteran ride share programs, service dogs, and a fundraising event for Stop Soldier Suicide.

In honor of Hispanic Heritage Month, to recognize the contributions, culture, and history of Hispanic Americans, we supported a variety of events including the Pittsburgh Metropolitan Hispanic Chamber of Commerce



Foundation's Hispanic Heritage Festival at the Heinz History Museum.

Many other diversity initiatives were supported, including the YWCA Equity Awards in Pittsburgh, which seeks to honor leaders, especially women of color, who advocate for and advance their mission of eliminating racism and empowering women. We supported individuals with disabilities through our work with organizations like Easter Seals. The Pennsylvania Conference for Women in Philadelphia, PA. was another major event we supported this year, with around 10,000 in attendance.

The communities that we operate in have always been rich in arts and culture, and

we sponsored dozens of organizations and events across our footprint in celebration of the arts, including Highmark Light Up Night and Highmark First Night bringing tens of thousands of people into the City of Pittsburgh. From symphonies to botanic gardens to children's museums, our support of these organizations brought joy to many.

We have also continued to support a variety of organizations that provide a network of direct services to people in need and improve the standards of living in our communities.

Every year we learn. Every year we grow. Every year we find new meaning in our work, and we can't wait to see what the future holds.

3.

Highmark Bright Blue Futures Awards



Recognizing and Supporting Transformative Organizations Across Our Footprint

We hosted our first-ever Highmark Bright Blue Futures Awards ceremony this year in Pittsburgh, where we recognized nonprofit organizations throughout Pennsylvania, Delaware, Western and Northeastern New York, and West Virginia.

Made possible by the Highmark Foundation, the theme for the inaugural event was, “A Look at Health Equity, Social Determinants of Health, and Philanthropy to Advance Community Health.”

The event not only marked the start of an exciting tradition of recognizing organizations across our footprint, but it gave professionals a chance to highlight progress in their respective industries and exchange ideas for achieving more equitable, impactful outcomes for the demographics most in need of their services.

The keynote speaker was Dr. Myron Rolle, a neurosurgeon and former football safety who played for the Tennessee Titans and Pittsburgh Steelers. Rolle discussed how the values instilled in him from a very young age as a Bahamian American immigrant have translated into his passion for education and community service, and his commitment to health equity and improving health care quality and access for underserved populations in Orlando, Florida, where he and his family currently live.

Following are the stories of the five organizations that were awarded Highmark Foundation grant funding in honor of their cutting-edge achievements in various categories, as well as 11 Rising Star organizations also recognized for their impact in our service regions.



THE AWARD FOR Collaboration

A community of passionate changemakers is always greater than the sum of its parts. The Highmark Foundation's collaboration award recognized organizations that work alongside community partners to build collective solutions, improve community health status, and achieve long-lasting results for populations most in need of care.



POISE Foundation

PITTSBURGH, PENNSYLVANIA

The POISE Foundation's Black Equity Coalition (BEC), born during the COVID-19 pandemic, was the recipient of Highmark's Collaboration award, an honor given based on the organization's spirit of partnership and the collective impact it has created so far for the Social Determinants of Health (SDOH) of Black communities in the Pittsburgh region.

POISE was founded 43 years ago, and its mission has always been to help Black communities develop self-sufficient practices through collective asset building and grantmaking, and to serve as a fiscal sponsor for charitable organizations that align with its core mission. As POISE has evolved over the years, its team has continued to grow assets that

support critical projects for creating education and business opportunities for a vibrant, thriving Black community in Pittsburgh and beyond.

The proposal POISE submitted for award funding focused on the collaboration that lies at the heart of POISE and BEC's relationships with other like-minded institutions in the region, and how they bring people and organizations together to create meaningful change.

“For us and the Black Equity Coalition, this award represents the recognition of our efforts to date and lets us know we're on the right path when it comes to generating a healthier community and equity as a whole,” said POISE Foundation President and CEO Mark Lewis.

Lewis and Fred Brown, president & CEO of The Forbes Funds and Co-chair of BEC, came together several years ago on a project to create a large support network for communities of color based on increasing needs and concerns related to COVID-19.

Alongside several University of Pittsburgh epidemiologists, BEC surveyed nearly 400 Black Allegheny County residents about their vaccination status. Among those who hadn't been vaccinated, the primary reasons given were fear of illness, not knowing the long-term effects, and fear of side effects. These results pointed to an overwhelming distrust of medical professionals and a need for better education, resources, and support around vaccination and health care.

The amazing staff of the BEC developed a framework to coach ambassadors to lead various trainings to educate people about vaccination rates and non-traditional approaches to reduce SDOH risk factors.

Three years later, the BEC team has recruited 181 ambassadors across the state, and the BEC network now consists of 120+ organizations that will reach more than 50,000 residents through education and an increase in vaccine uptake.

The Coalition has also reached diverse audiences through a radio partnership with WQED, with a series titled “A Matter of Trust,” highlighting issues of vaccine hesitancy in communities. As a testament to its powerful message and reach, the project was nominated for an Emmy award.

POISE's efforts have evolved into a multi-million-dollar project focused on the holistic impact of education, the built environment, financial stability, and housing on people's health and quality of life, particularly during COVID-19 and times of crisis.

When describing their collaborative efforts, Brown said, “Change moves at the speed of trust.” This is a powerful motto for any organization looking to build relationships and create lasting, collective change in communities, and it certainly sums up POISE's long-standing role as a builder of trust, community support, and new opportunities.

“

For us and the Black Equity Coalition, this award represents the recognition of our efforts to date and lets us know we're on the right path when it comes to generating a healthier community and equity as a whole.

POISE Foundation President and CEO
Mark Lewis

”

THE AWARD FOR

Impactful Programming

The connection between physical, mental, and emotional health is undeniable. This award was given to programs that have made great strides in enhancing the health and well-being of individuals through holistic, hands-on solutions that achieve measurable improvements in people's everyday lives.

The Food Trust

PHILADELPHIA, PENNSYLVANIA

As with many other health and lifestyle factors, the COVID-19 pandemic certainly exacerbated the longstanding issue of food insecurity and lack of access to healthy, affordable foods in Pennsylvania and beyond.

According to data from Feeding America, 108 billion pounds of perfectly healthy food are wasted every year, yet families everywhere still struggle to determine where their next meal is coming from, and if they'll get the nutrients they need to not only survive, but to live long, healthy lives.

The Food Trust, a national organization that has operated out of Pennsylvania, California, and New Jersey for the past 30 years, understands that everyone — from community and state institutions to retailers, farmers, and policymakers — needs to come to the table to ensure the availability of delicious, nutritious food for all.

The Food Trust received Highmark Bright Blue Futures' Impactful Programming award for its continued commitment to food education, access and affordability, and the outcomes its efforts have yielded for improving nutrition and its associated health factors.

“No one should have to choose between eating healthy and eating enough,” said The Food Trust's Associate Director of Nutrition Incentives Julia Koprak.

Since the development of the organization's Food Bucks Rx program, described as a Produce Prescription Program, many fewer people have had to make this choice. A pioneer in the “food as medicine” movement, Food Bucks Rx allows providers to “prescribe” a produce subscription to patients that provides

them with redeemable coupons to use for fruits and vegetables at various retail settings.

In 2022 alone, patients redeemed over \$300,000 in produce through this program, demonstrating the dire, ever-growing need for this support in communities everywhere. The organization has partnered with more than 40 clinical distribution sites and 100+ redemption sites.

\$300,000
in produce redeemed
through The Food Trust

Not only does this program provide patients with autonomy over their health and nutrition practices, but it enables The Food Trust to tie coupon redemptions back to measurable health outcomes, including reduced A1C, blood pressure, and other clinical indicators.

Statistics reflecting the work of The Food Trust and similar organizations over the years show that people working with incentive programs eat more fruits and vegetables overall than those not utilizing programs.

The grant funding awarded to The Food Trust by the Highmark Foundation will not only aid the organization in feeding communities and ensuring the benefits of healthy food, but it will help it expand and develop an even greater charitable reach as the demand for immediate access to affordable produce continues to grow more every day.



The Mon Health Medical Center Foundation

MORGANTOWN, WEST VIRGINIA

The perinatal period is defined as anytime from a pregnancy’s conception to one year postpartum. During that time, major changes occur in every aspect of a mother’s life. One challenge that is faced by many women, up to one in five, is perinatal mood and anxiety disorders (PMADs) including anxiety, depression, OCD, etc. Although this information is most discussed in relation to the postpartum period, it can impact women throughout pregnancy, as well.

Many women living with PMADs suffer in silence because they’re afraid to ask for help or they don’t know how. But The Mon Health Medical Center Foundation’s Progressing Through Postpartum (P3) Program, another impactful programming award winner, offers a proactive approach to helping moms address the challenges of perinatal mental health.

In 2020, Mon Health Medical Center launched the P3 Program using an integrated health framework to support new mothers

experiencing PMADs. The program follows the American Congress of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG) recommendations for screening for mood changes in pregnancy and postpartum. By universally screening patients, the P3 Program is able to identify and address concerns during pregnancy and give moms a leg up before their babies arrive.

The P3 Program also proactively outreaches within four days of delivery for all patients who deliver at facilities in its obstetrics network, and several times over the first three months postpartum. They offer six online support groups weekly, outpatient lactation services, and care coordination for specialized mental health services via telehealth. The virtual nature of the P3 Program and the telehealth services it offers help curb the geological barriers many families in the region face.

P3 is a free service that falls under the global fee for pregnancy and postpartum care and is supported by charitable contributions. This

program is the first of its kind in West Virginia, and it has offered support and resources to more than 4,000 mothers to date through screening and proactive outreach.

Mon Health’s impact and the positive feedback it has received from patients and families has proven the effectiveness of its care model for helping new mothers prepare for and navigate mental health challenges. In 2023, 1,022 patients were texted through Mon Health’s P3 service, 104 patients were referred to therapy or psychiatry, 207 patients utilized medication for their mood, 112 lactation consultations were conducted, and 81% of contacted moms responded at least once.

“Our ultimate goal is for proactive outreach to become the gold standard for pregnancy and postpartum care,” said Jennifer Bender, a registered nurse and perinatal nurse navigator with Mon Health’s P3 program. “We know that maternal mental health is a huge issue — it’s in everything you read right now, which is a good

thing — and that’s why we talk about coming out of the darkness. Because when these mood changes hit, it’s terrible for families — and no one wants to feel this way.”

Mon Health applied to Highmark’s impactful programming award category based on the organization’s focus on risk factors present in West Virginia moms. Its integrative framework involving early outreach and text messaging to patients has enabled Mon Health to mitigate the barriers many patients in the region face when seeking out mental health care.

“I think we’ve known intuitively that we’re doing really great work, and that we have a unique and beneficial modality. But to have Highmark affirm that the work we’re doing is impactful and beneficial to our patients is really validating and encourages us to keep going and making meaningful changes in the lives of Appalachian families,” said Lora McDonald, a perinatal social worker for Mon Health’s P3 Program.

THE AWARD FOR Organizational Excellence

Improving health equity and social determinants of health lies at the core of Highmark's mission and partnerships. The organizational excellence award was given to organizations focused on improving health in their service communities through this lens of social equity and access.

Mainstay Life Services PITTSBURGH, PENNSYLVANIA

People with intellectual disabilities and autism (ID/A) are sometimes misunderstood, stigmatized, and even ignored in our society — and this treatment has a tremendous impact on mental and physical health and quality of life.

Compared to the general population, people with ID/A have 1.6 – 3.4-fold higher age-adjusted odds of having a diagnosis of obesity or diabetes mellitus.

6.5 million people in the U.S. have an intellectual disability, and it behooves everyone — from health care providers to educators and community organizations — to work harder to understand and prioritize the needs of this population.

Highmark awarded its organizational excellence recognition to Mainstay Life Services, a nonprofit that provides lifelong, high-quality support services and promotes health, wellness, safety, and independence for people with ID/A.

92% medical matters resolved

“Mainstay works with people and families to empower them to be active citizens of their community and be as independent as possible, and take ownership of their overall health and wellness,” said Kim Sonafelt, Mainstay's CEO.

By offering telehealth and virtual coaching to the people they support of all ages, Mainstay has achieved improved health outcomes by helping persons served access preventive care and resources, as well as social outlets, that they

might not otherwise have without modern technology.

“Loneliness really impacts people's mortality,” said Sonafelt. “It's a social determinant of health, and people with disabilities tend to have smaller social circles. Technology is the great equalizer. It allows them to visit with family and friends more easily and maintain those connections.”

Through “techuity,” or tech equity, Mainstay has been able to track measurable, life-changing outcomes for the people and communities it works with, including decreases in loneliness, as well as physical health improvements like lower blood pressure and less frequent ER visits.

“The joy you see on someone's face when they tell you they've met their health goals and they're no longer on as many medications, or they're working at a new job and they just got their first paycheck — you can't replace the joy that comes from that,” said Sonafelt.

Mainstay's partnerships have resulted in positive health outcomes and system savings. Through work with StationMD's ID/A-specialized telemedicine services over the last two years, Mainstay was able to provide 245 telemedicine visits across its residences, resolve medical matters for 92% of individuals served, reduce ER transfer rates by 27%, and decrease hospital and operations costs by an estimated \$98,758.

Highmark's funding and support will help Mainstay continue to reach target communities through remote monitoring and provide competitive employment opportunities, as well as address the health disparities people with ID/A face daily.

THE AWARD FOR Philanthropy

Highmark Foundation reserved this match award for a philanthropic organization whose leadership has paved the way for community-driven health care solutions and made meaningful progress in addressing widespread community health challenges.

Phoenixville Community Health Foundation

PHOENIXVILLE, PENNSYLVANIA

Like every region, residents in Phoenixville, PA, face specific health and wellness concerns and disparities related to geography, demographic makeup, and access to certain resources and health care.

Phoenixville Community Health Foundation's (PCHF) 2022 – 2024 Strategic Plan revealed the top two areas of need for residents in the greater Phoenixville region are access to mental health services and affordable housing. Other areas of need include affordable health insurance, substance abuse programs, and access to primary care providers. Additionally, there is a strong consensus that those whose first language is something other than English is the most underserved population in the area.

PCHF's mission is to improve the health and quality of life of all people in the greater Phoenixville region. The Foundation focuses on social determinants of health and housing as it continues to provide strong safety nets and support to more than 65 nonprofit organizations. They enhance collaboration between nonprofits through establishing relationships, capacity-building programs, and increasing the ability to serve the most vulnerable community members.

"At PCHF, we're building a brighter future for our community by being open and listening to those at the front lines to better understand the needs and adapt and provide for those needs," said Viviann Schorle, PCHF's program officer.

PCHF chose the Phoenixville Free Clinic for the 2023 Highmark Bright Blue Futures Award due to its mission to provide quality health care to the uninsured and underserved with dignity and respect.

The clinic staff is composed of one primary care physician, one nurse practitioner, three nurses, 22 volunteer doctors, and 26 volunteer nurses who provide services in areas ranging from pediatrics to neurology and cardiology in English, Spanish, Portuguese, and other languages.

From the beginning, they aimed to help patients look at their health from a holistic perspective and receive all the services and resources they need to have a successful life. Through its free clinic services, as well as a Behavioral Health program the Phoenixville Free Clinic recently launched, they are keeping their promise to care for the whole person.

Highmark's funding will play a critical role in supporting the Phoenixville Free Clinic's continued expansion and ability to service more people and impact lives throughout the Greater Phoenixville region.

The grant funding is being used to provide 6,200 patient visits to uninsured members of the community, initial and follow-up primary medical care to 1,800 unduplicated patients, perform approximately 5,600 laboratory tests for patient diagnosis and treatment planning, and provide 100 behavioral health care visits per month.

"With Highmark's matching grant, we'll be able to open about 100 slots in the behavioral health realm for the community. With limited funds and access to mental and behavioral health services, that's a huge impact," said Schorle.

Rising Star Awardees

In addition to the awardees above, the Highmark Foundation also recognized 11 Rising Star organizations across our service regions that received mini grants for their unique ideas and advancements impacting community health.



American Red Cross of Western New York

BUFFALO, NEW YORK

The Red Cross of Western New York biomedical blood service project on Sickle Cell Disease involves ongoing efforts to reach a larger, more diverse blood donor base that represents its patient populations and ensures individuals suffering from Sickle Cell Disease have access to healthy and safe blood transfusions. More than 68,000 African American blood donors nationwide donated to the Sickle Cell Initiative between July 2021 and June 2022, and the number of first-time African American blood donors who gave with the

Red Cross increased by 60%. In the second year of the Sickle Cell Initiative, the number of first-time African American blood donors who gave with the Red Cross increased by 31% year over year. The American Red Cross aims to nearly triple the amount of Black blood donors by the end of year 2027. The American Red Cross of Western New York continues to partner with local organizations to gain the visibility and support needed to continue the fight against sickle cell.

Lori's Hands, Inc.

NEWARK, DELAWARE

Founded in 2009 by students at The University of Delaware, Lori's Hands, Inc., is a community health service learning organization that provides instrumental and social support to community members living with chronic illness, while offering educational opportunities for students pursuing careers in the health care

field. A recent internal survey determined that 98% of Lori's Hands clients reported improved quality of life as a result of participation. The program's success has led to the establishment of two new chapters in the past three years.



AIDS Resource Alliance

WILLIAMSPORT, PENNSYLVANIA

AIDS Resource Alliance, Inc., is committed to empowering individuals living with HIV and LGBTQ+ individuals by providing them with high-quality, affirming programs. Through their efforts, they strive to reduce HIV transmission, promote increased awareness and testing, and change the way people experience health care. Their primary care clinic, AR

Health, provides compassionate care in a welcoming environment, ensuring their targeted populations receive the care they deserve. The organization has provided stable housing for all its previously homeless clients and ensured that 97% of its clients living with HIV see a physician at least every six months.

Children's Therapy Clinic, Inc.

CHARLESTON, WEST VIRGINIA

Children's Therapy Clinic provides families in Charleston, West Virginia, with comprehensive therapy that caters to the unique needs and abilities of each child while offering a team approach to help children reach their full potential. Through occupational therapy, physical therapy, speech therapy, music therapy, and social skills services, the team at Children's Therapy Clinic works to improve the functional

abilities of children with a variety of diagnoses. Therapists at Children's Therapy Clinic review children's treatment plans at least every six months, adding and modifying goals according to individual needs and progress, and engage children and their families in new activities to support growth and development over time.



Delaware Regional Dream Center

NEWARK, DELAWARE

The Delaware Regional Dream Center is a nonprofit, volunteer-driven charitable organization that finds the forgotten and helps them build a firm foundation so that they will flourish in life. It aims to provide community outreach to individuals by coordinating services and/or referrals that deliver life's necessities. Thus, motivating those individuals to achieve a more fulfilled standard of living.

They create, develop, and sustain programs to address hunger relief for their community's needs. In 2023, there were more than 17,600 participants in their drive-thru program, 150 home deliveries, and 7,500 Boxes of Hope filled with 25 pounds of nonperishable food provided. With the help of a robust team of volunteers, in total they have distributed 183 tons of food valued at over \$307,000.

Homeless Children's Education Fund

PITTSBURGH, PENNSYLVANIA

Founded in 1999, The Homeless Children's Education Fund's (HCEF) mission is to advance the education of students experiencing homelessness in the Southwestern Pennsylvania region and guide them to be productive, empowered citizens. HCEF's continuum of care model encourages learning, curiosity, and growth for students from birth to 24 years old.

At the intersection of formal, informal, and social-emotional learning, HCEF provided direct service supports to almost 600 students in 2023 and seeks to further expand in the coming years.



MAYA Organization

SWISSVALE, PENNSYLVANIA

MAYA is a Swissvale-based nonprofit organization that empowers, educates, and advocates for marginalized birthing people and incarcerated individuals. The organization's aspiration is to create a city without racial disparities in maternal-infant outcomes — one that provides safe and equitable spaces where all birthing people can carry, deliver, and care

for their babies. MAYA's mentors, doulas, and counselors provide vulnerable expectant and new parents with the tools they need to take on the critical tasks of giving birth and raising new lives. During 2023, 88.2% of MAYA's Black program participants gave birth to full term babies, and 82.4% of those babies were a healthy birth weight.

The Open Door

PITTSBURGH, PENNSYLVANIA

Since its establishment in 2006, The Open Door, Inc., has been dedicated to offering affordable, secure, and supportive housing for individuals with HIV who do not qualify for conventional housing programs. Over the years, The Open Door has assisted more than 300 individuals through its programs, leading to significant enhancements in clinical outcomes and the overall quality of life for its participants.

In 2023, the organization extended its reach by engaging 25 new individuals in Representative Payee services, achieving viral suppression for 90% of participants. The success of The Open Door's model has now been replicated in Youngstown, Ohio; Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; and Birmingham, Alabama.

Seneca Street Community Development Corp.

BUFFALO, NEW YORK

The Seneca Street Warming Center was established after two residents of Seneca Babcock died during the blizzard of 2022. A commercial generator was installed to provide heat and electricity. Blankets, pillows, towels, toiletries, hygiene products, and food are ready if needed. Nearby neighbors are on call to open the building during an emergency, prepare food, shovel snow, and get stranded people to the Warming Center by snowmobile. In

addition, Seneca Street CDC has collaborated with medical organizations to provide needed health care services to the Seneca Babcock community. This has included a mobile medical van that provides physical, behavioral health, and dental exams. Additionally, the Roswell Park Cancer Institute mobile lung cancer screening van provided CT scans to more than 50 people in 2023 and a vaccine clinic.

Stitch Buffalo

BUFFALO, NEW YORK

Art is a powerful form of expression that can bring people together and inspire empowerment, collaboration, and connection. Stitch Buffalo had this in mind when founding its nonprofit in 2014 on the west side of Buffalo, New York. It began as a weekly embroidery workshop for refugee women and has since grown into a textile arts center for people to gather, create, and pursue economic empowerment. Many women return to the

program year after year due to its continued positive impact on their lives. Several artists in the Refugee Women's Workshop are approaching 10 years of participation in Stitch Buffalo's programs, and participants have self-reported that the organization has played a critical role in their community integration, sense of self, and ability to care for themselves and their families.

Focus on Renewal Sto-Rox Neighborhood Corp.

MCKEES ROCKS, PENNSYLVANIA

Focus on Renewal Sto-Rox Neighborhood Corporation's (FOR) was born out of residents' desire to establish an umbrella organization that offers much-needed social services for the Sto-Rox community. The organization operates out of four locations in McKees Rocks, Pennsylvania, providing early childhood education, nutrition resources, mental health support groups, and arts programs to

community members in need of assistance. FOR's Steel Chef program, which was created to address the gap in SDOH equity related to education and access to nutritious foods, has taught nutrition and healthy eating to 30 participants since its inception in 2018 – 2019 and provided warm meals to 110+ homeless and near-homeless individuals through its "Welcome to the Table" initiative.

4.

Community Health and Employee Engagement Programs



We need to be involved to understand and truly help our community.

To us, involvement means getting out into our coverage area to learn about organizations, meet people, provide resources, and volunteer our time and expertise.



Sharing Resources: New Learning Series

Nonprofit agencies change lives. Their work is remarkable, and we want to provide any additional resources we can for the people and organizations working diligently for our community.

This year, through our brand-new Highmark Bright Blue Futures Learning Series, we created four Subject Matter Expert presentations and conducted them for nonprofit agencies across our footprint.

Participants joined session topics including Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Services (CLAS) Standards, Protecting Your Organization Against Fraud, Social Media Tips and Safeguards, and Stress Relief — Ways to Avoid the Holiday Blues.

Walking, Connecting, and Changing Lives

The Highmark Walks for a Healthy Community are annual fundraising walks, and the primary goal is to help participating organizations raise money for their individual missions. One hundred percent of the funds raised through these events went back to the participating organizations.

The United Way Campaign: Raising Funds, Raising Awareness

We hosted an employee-led and driven annual campaign across all regions to support local United Way agencies. This support makes a positive impact on our communities by helping to address social issues affecting vulnerable populations including health, education, and income inequality.



Volunteering Time and Talents

In 2023, our employee volunteering continued to be a powerful force for positive change. Our employees, united by a sense of purpose, contributed significantly to their local communities.

\$18.4m

Raised through
Highmark Walk

Since its inception, health and human service nonprofit organizations have raised more than \$18.4 million through the Highmark Walk.

\$6m

Donated by
employees

Over the past 5 years, more than \$6 million has been donated by employees through our United Way Campaign.

27k

Employee
volunteer hours

Our employees recorded more than 27,000 volunteer hours in 2023.

1.7k

Nonprofit
organizations
across our footprint

The Highmark Bright Blue Futures Learning Series was available to more than 1,700 nonprofit organizations across our footprint.

In Their Words

Jana Morris

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF RECOVERY REVOLUTION

“For over 10 years, Recovery Revolution has benefited from the honor of participating in the Highmark Walk for a Healthy Community. The Highmark Walk provides an upbeat, accessible and family friendly event that people enjoy and look forward to attending year after year. In addition to the Highmark Walk’s family friendly value, local nonprofit agencies benefit from a fundraiser with low administrative costs. This is very important for small agencies because it allows more of the funds raised to go into services. The walk also provides a healthy activity for people in recovery, whether brand new or someone that is long-term sustained recovery. The Highmark Walk also delivers a low-cost method for small nonprofits like ours to network and share the lifesaving services we offer. We have found that it provides a way for extended groups of family and friends to honor the life of loved ones lost to addiction by gathering and walking as a community. The time together, walking, and sharing memories is a healing experience. We look forward to a continued relationship with Highmark and many years of partnering with them in the Highmark Walk for a Healthy Community.”

In Their Words

Susan Rauscher

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF CATHOLIC CHARITIES

“Highmark Health has been a very supportive friend to Catholic Charities, Diocese of Pittsburgh, and by extension to our neighbors in distress throughout southwestern Pennsylvania. Through Highmark’s generous donations, we have been able to welcome any person in distress, prioritize immediate need – especially those at risk of harm – and work to reframe every challenge before us as an invitation to partner with our organization’s self-sustaining, long-term stability. Last fiscal year, that meant providing tangible assistance, free medical and dental care, counseling, shelter, pregnancy and parenting services, and supporting case management to more than 23,000 people. We’re grateful that Catholic Charities and Highmark Health share a vision of health, hope, and compassion for those we serve in the Pittsburgh region.”

James Spadola

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF READ ALOUD DELAWARE

“The Highmark Walk has been a major boom for Read Aloud Delaware as both a friend-raiser and a fundraiser. Not only is it our biggest fundraiser of the year, but it’s also a great opportunity for us to reconnect with our volunteers and supporters throughout the state. We look forward to it every year and are grateful to Highmark for putting it on!”

Brandon Gress, M.A.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF WOOD COUNTY

“Highmark’s generosity through the United Way Alliance of the Mid-Ohio Valley provides deep impact you can see – right here at home. Through philanthropic giving, you provide impact to over 200 individuals with intellectual and developmental differences in our mission at the Artbeat Studio. Wood County Society’s Artbeat Studio is honored to be a trusted source of providing vital respite care, education, and art in the form of therapy through creative upcycled and recycled art with the generosity of organizations such as Highmark.”

Volunteering case studies

Employee Volunteer Challenge — Moving Forward in Innovative Ways

We hosted the first-ever Highmark Bright Blue Futures Employee Volunteer Challenge this past September. Employees pitched their ideas to make an impact on Community Health in our local regions through volunteerism and projects occurring across the enterprise footprint. Winning submissions from each

location were awarded funds to cover supplies and materials, and a donation to the chosen nonprofit organization. Employees in four states and seven physical locations volunteered, providing support to organizations like the American Red Cross in Parkersburg and Sisters Lifting as We Climb in Pittsburgh.

Volunteering at The Buffalo Naval Park

Our employees volunteered at the Buffalo Naval Park: Day of Giving in Buffalo, New York. We partnered with National Grid to co-sponsor the event, and volunteers worked all

day to maintain and repair the three main ships housed in the park. From gardening to chipping away rust on the ships, to painting and cleaning the ships, it was a day filled with productivity.



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