



Penn Medicine
Chester County Hospital

Health Empowerment Partnerships

2022

**Chester County Hospital
Community Benefit Report**



vision

To be the leading provider of care in the region and a national model for quality, service excellence and fiscal stewardship.





Chester County Hospital is committed to identifying, prioritizing and serving the health needs of our community. In fulfillment of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, the hospital performs a Community Health Needs Assessment (CHNA) every three years. In 2022, a group of local hospitals and health systems, including Chester County Hospital, convened to develop the Southeastern PA Regional CHNA. From this needs assessment, a corresponding three-year Community Health Implementation Plan (CHIP) specific to Chester County Hospital was written and put into action. The hospital continues to evaluate the health needs of the community and update its CHIP accordingly.

The hospital's many established and long-standing community partnerships inform the work done for the CHIP, with the common goal to help Chester County become a community in which all individuals can be healthy and empowered to manage their health.

Chester County Hospital's Community Benefit Report 2022—Health Empowerment Partnerships—shares a few of the ways we are partnering with these local organizations to create new possibilities for health and wellness among our neighbors of Chester County.

Visit [ChesterCountyHospital.org](https://www.ChesterCountyHospital.org) to learn more about the Community Health Needs Assessment and Implementation Plan.

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Moved to help by a devastating loss

Aidan Silva loved soccer, basketball, baseball, and his younger brother, Devin. On a sunny afternoon over Labor Day weekend in 2010, Aidan collapsed without warning and died. He was seven years old.

The cause was determined to be sudden cardiac arrest, a condition where the heart malfunctions and stops beating abruptly. More than 356,000 Americans of all ages experienced sudden cardiac arrest in 2022, and nearly 90 percent of them died, according to the American Heart Association (AHA).

In the wake of Aidan's death, his mother, Christy Marshall-Silva, co-founded Aidan's Heart Foundation, a Thorndale-based nonprofit that's helping to raise awareness of sudden cardiac arrest by conducting heart screenings and CPR and automated external defibrillator (AED) training throughout the region.

On a Thursday evening last June – which would have been the month Aidan graduated from high school – Chester County Hospital partnered with the foundation to host two free, hands-only CPR and AED training sessions at the Marsh Creek Sixth Grade Center in Downingtown. In all, 118 people attended.



Christy Marshall-Silva, Co-Founder of Aidan's Heart Foundation and Aidan's mother, speaking at the event.

Ahead of the sessions, Michele Francis, MS, RD, CDCES, LDN, Director of Community Health and Wellness for the hospital, said, "This event is to help people be educated and unafraid. Instead, they can be empowered to respond."

With sudden cardiac arrest, seconds matter. According to AHA data, bystanders initiated CPR in nearly 41 percent of cases, and about six percent used an AED.

Last June's training sessions, which took place during National CPR and AED Awareness Week, represented the first time the hospital and Aidan's Heart Foundation collaborated. The sessions were led by CPR-certified youth instructors, with support from other volunteers, including the hospital's staff and other community members. Marshall-Silva contacted three local high school students – Maycie Kulp, Bailey Mullen, and Anna Powers – to ask if they could recruit instructors for the event. Within three days, they'd signed up more than 50 high school students, all certified in CPR and trained in administering an AED.



“We like to teach kids these skills because they’re not afraid to jump in to help their friend survive a cardiac event,”

Marshall-Silva said in promoting the training sessions.

“We empower them with this knowledge because we know they can do it. It’s not rocket science. You just have to be brave enough to take action.”

Most of them were certified (or recertified) at one of the two training sessions held a month earlier, organized and led by Jerry Peters, a director of the Good Fellowship Ambulance & EMS Training Institute in West Chester and a paramedic since 1984. Marshall-Silva said they earned their certification specifically so they could volunteer at the June training sessions.

“Their intention is to pay tribute to their first-grade classmate they lost to sudden cardiac arrest,” said Mary Maurer, a Chester County Hospital Emergency Department nurse who volunteers with Aidan’s Heart Foundation. “This will be a senior capstone event and will honor Aidan’s legacy and Christy’s mission.”

Marshall-Silva is especially focused on equipping kids and teens with the skills necessary to respond in an emergency since sudden cardiac arrest is the leading cause of death among teenage athletes, according to the Foundation, which has trained more than 8,000 children across the region in how to administer CPR and an AED.



Improving access to care one screening at a time

Much of what the Community Health and Wellness Department at Chester County Hospital does is geared toward chronic disease prevention. In recent years, this has entailed improving access to healthcare in historically underserved communities.

While this is a hospital-wide undertaking, Michele Francis, MS, RD, CDCES, LDN, Director of the Community Health and Wellness Department, and her modest staff could be considered its vanguard. They collaborate with local groups to stage health screenings within such communities.



Last year, in honor of Juneteenth, Francis and her team, with support from the Abramson Cancer Center at Chester County Hospital, staged a colon cancer screening drive-by at Jubilee Evangelistic Ministries in Coatesville. Free take-home kits were given to 24 people – regardless of their insurance status – and were later collected from a designated drop box at the Coatesville Area Public Library and tested at the hospital. Gift cards were awarded to everyone who returned a test kit. From those results, five people were asked to undergo further diagnostic testing.

Francis and her department rarely do anything outside of the hospital on their own. Instead, they develop relationships with groups that have worked in these communities for years and try to cover the gaps in their

coverage. For example, the W.C. Atkinson Memorial Services Center and Jubilee Evangelistic Ministries helped spread the word about the Juneteenth screening throughout Coatesville and Francis asked the Minority Nurse Educators of Chester County to take blood pressure readings during the event as well. The group and the Atkinson Center are also helping Francis identify churches in Coatesville where the hospital could donate available automated external defibrillators, or AEDs, to. An AED is a device that's used to help those experiencing sudden cardiac arrest.

"We really make the most of our resources by partnering with organizations like the Minority Nurse Educators," Francis says.



**“It’s about showing up
for them again and again
and proving that we
can be helpful,”
Michele Francis says.
“That’s what we’re
trying to do.”**



“These working relationships also help our credibility among the very people we’re trying to help because the groups we’re collaborating with are entrenched in their communities.”

A similar event was held in November at Penn Family Medicine New Garden in Kennett Square, which serves a growing Spanish-speaking population, much of which is under or uninsured. On this occasion, 19 people took a colon cancer screening kit home with them, and one person was asked to undergo further testing.

The screenings all use guidelines from national health organizations to categorize risk and recommend appropriate lifestyle changes and/or medical follow-up. Importantly, they’re all free and open to everyone, regardless of whether they have health insurance or not.

Chad Thomas, MPH, PMP, Community Health Education Coordinator for the Community Health and Wellness Department, holds a variety of

certifications. His ability to speak Spanish is perhaps just as valuable to Francis and the department’s outreach to underserved communities. He receives calls and does follow-up outreach among Spanish-speaking communities. He’s also worked closely with the Iglesia Metodista Unida El Buen Samaritano in West Chester to schedule and help facilitate health screenings for its parishioners. “Chad has really helped us extend our reach,” Francis says.

Thomas says many who registered for the Kennett Square colon cancer screening could not speak English or read in any language. “The written Spanish instructions we provided had to be read out loud to participating patients by the staff at Penn Family Medicine New Garden.”

While registering people and explaining what’s about to happen to them in their native language may seem like a small task, it helps build trust which is lacking in many minority communities. Francis believes that it’s a gradual process that no single screen is going to resolve.

Improving access to breast cancer screenings for minority women

Mammograms are effective in preventing breast cancer from becoming a deadly disease. However, the barriers limiting access to breast cancer screening for many minority and low-income women in the United States worsened during the COVID-19 pandemic, according to a 2021 study.

The news is especially concerning because the study states, **“the significant breast cancer mortality rates experienced in both Hispanic and African American populations are found to be connected to delayed screening.”**

To offset these disparities, Chester County Hospital collaborated with the Pennsylvania Department of Health’s HealthyWoman Program in October 19 to offer free mammograms for women 40 and older at Penn Medicine Southern Chester County.

Organizers selected the location to help make the screening more accessible to the under and uninsured women of the growing Hispanic population in this part of the county. The 10 participants were identified by Penn Family Medicine New Garden, where staff and providers are fluent in English and Spanish.

Jennifer Keith, BSN, RN, OCN, a Breast Oncology Nurse Navigator, has been organizing the CCH-HealthyWoman breast cancer screenings since 2021. The first screening event was held in October 2021 in Fern Hill, a community with a large population of under and uninsured Black women. Eleven women were screened that day.

She describes the screenings as “irreplaceable.”

“In southern Chester County, there are so many women who don’t have access to healthcare, so they’re not being screened,” says Keith. “With breast cancer specifically, early detection is key because treatment can begin before the disease has a chance to progress. The longer it goes undiagnosed, the greater the chances it becomes a larger, more aggressive cancer.”

In addition to the mammogram, Keith and her colleague Cindy Brown, BSN, RN, CN-RN, also a Breast Oncology Nurse Navigator at Chester County Hospital – with the assistance of a translator, if needed – were available to coordinate follow-up diagnostic tests for abnormal screening results. Of the 10 women screened, one required a biopsy, which was also provided free of charge, Keith says.

“We provided a simple path for her, where, without this screening, she may not have had any,” Keith says.

“One of the things that I love most about my job is seeing how a relatively small act can have a profound impact on a community,” says Michele Francis, Director of Community Health and Wellness at Chester County Hospital. “This was one of those instances. We were able to help not only these women but also the families and the community who depend on them.”

Response to the mental health crisis unfolds at multiple levels



The 2022 Southeastern Pennsylvania Community Health Needs Assessment only confirmed what had become clear during the COVID-19 pandemic: the Greater Philadelphia area, much like the rest of the country, was in the midst of a mental health crisis.

The assessment, which not-for-profit hospitals and health systems are required to undertake every three years by the Affordable Care Act (ACA), identifies the unmet health needs of local communities. “By better understanding the service needs and gaps in a community,” the report says, “an organization can develop implementation plans – which are also mandated by the ACA – that more effectively respond to high-priority needs.”

“Mental health conditions” were identified in the 2022 Southeastern Pennsylvania assessment as the number one community health need. The pandemic added urgency to the concern, but it wasn’t the lone cause of it. In the prior assessment, published in 2019, “behavioral health diagnosis and treatment” was the second-ranked community health need. “Substance/opioid use and abuse” was the first.

Michele Francis, MS, RD, CDCES, LDN, Director of Community Health and Wellness for Chester County Hospital, and her department began collaborating with the Chester County Suicide Prevention Task Force in the wake of the 2019 assessment. Those efforts increased dramatically in response to the 2022 assessment.

The hospital now sponsors “Youth Mental Health First Aid USA,” a free, in-person, day-long training session presented by the Task Force that helps adults identify, understand, and respond to signs of mental illness and substance use disorders in children and adolescents.

The hospital also offers “QPR (Question, Persuade, Refer): Suicide Prevention Training,” an evidence-based protocol that’s taught by the Community Health

Education Coordinator, Chad Thomas, MPH, PMP, and two other instructors from the hospital, Christina Gamez, MSN, RN-BC, EBPC, and Aneesha Dhargalkar, MD. Upon completing the two-hour class, participants are certified as “Gatekeepers.”

“Many people are touched personally by mental health challenges and suicide,” Thomas says. “Some people in the QPR classes have already lost someone to suicide. I’ve heard them say, ‘I wish I would have had this training back then. I could have saved their life or helped more.’”

Last fall, Thomas also represented the department at a mental health fair hosted by the Coatesville Youth Initiative, a nonprofit committed to “youth-led, transformational community change.”

Chelsea Melrath, a trauma specialist with the Chester County Health Department, leads a free virtual training session, “Promoting Resiliency and Developing Connections,” which is sponsored and hosted by the Community Health and Wellness Department.

Francis says she’s also been in talks with the National Alliance for Mental Illness to cohost some programs with its new Chester County chapter once it opens later this year.

A need of this magnitude called for structural changes, too. Chester County Hospital established a behavioral health service line in February 2020. Initially, the fledgling program was strained by the sudden, overwhelming demands of the pandemic.

“We’ve seen fluctuations in our census because of COVID-19, but for different reasons,” says Kim Joffe, CRNP, PMHNP, a psychiatric nurse practitioner in the CCH Behavioral Health program. “At first, many stayed away from the hospital. Then there was a tremendous uptick in substance and alcohol use, kids with suicidal thoughts, and geriatric individuals in complete isolation who

experienced a loss of drive to live anymore. And then there were complications that we didn’t understand initially.

The surge was compounded by the closure of two nearby hospitals in early 2022.

“The impact was immediate and overwhelming,” says Kyle Finucane, MSW, Director of the CCH Behavioral Health Program.

Compared to March 2021, Finucane says the CCH Emergency Department saw a 75 percent increase in behavioral health patients in March 2022. Others, he adds, were admitted medically for “days or weeks” because they couldn’t be placed in an inpatient psychiatric facility.

Finucane says the hospital’s leadership “sensed a significant need for boots on the ground regarding our psychiatric services” at least two years prior. Since then, several new hires and appointments have been added. Today, the CCH Behavioral Health team comprises 12 full-time and four part-time staff members, including 11 social workers and four treating behavioral health clinicians. In addition to Joffe, two additional nurse practitioners were hired in 2022. A licensed behavioral health counselor, Samantha Dawson was also hired last year. She provides brief therapeutic interventions to patients experiencing a behavioral health crisis.

“The hospital’s leadership, right on up to [President and CEO] Michael Duncan, has been a huge advocate for meeting the needs of patients experiencing any form of a behavioral health crisis,” Finucane says. “The executive leadership team provided the necessary services and resources to better meet the needs of those in our community coming to the hospital and seeking our help.”

The addition of a food pantry at the Ob/Gyn Clinic is met with overwhelming gratitude

Early in the pandemic, a nurse at the Chester County Hospital Ob/Gyn Clinic noticed that many patients were struggling to feed themselves and their families.

The clinic offers reduced-rate gynecology care, affordable prenatal care, and for qualifying patients, free childbirth deliveries. Many patients are Spanish-speaking and under- or uninsured.

Lynne Rudderow, MSN, CRNP, WHNP-BC, the nurse practitioner who made the observation, began asking for food donations from several departments around the hospital. All the while, she had an idea for a permanent remedy: a food pantry housed at the clinic. The hospital's administration endorsed the idea. Next, Rudderow approached the Chester County Food Bank. The Ob/Gyn Clinic has collaborated with the food bank at different times since the food bank's inception in 2009. Most recently, in 2017, the food bank provided the clinic with "prenatal grocery boxes" filled with nonperishable food intended for expecting and new moms. "The prenatal grocery boxes were an initial step to serve our patients and their families better," Rudderow says. **"As we increasingly screened patients for food insecurity, it became clear that we needed to do more to provide direct service and food offerings to food-insecure individuals."**



Lynn Rudderow, Clinical Manager of Chester County Hospital's OB/GYN Clinic, handing a bag of food to a patient in the new OB/GYN Clinic Food Pantry.

Last October, the food pantry at the Ob/Gyn Clinic became a reality. The Chester County Food Bank, which stocks the pantry with various nonperishable foods, made its first delivery on Oct. 7.

In its first month of operation, the pantry served 47 households, more than 50 percent of which included children, according to Rudderow. (For each individual who receives a donation from the food pantry, Rudderow asks how many people are in their household and how many are children.) As of February, the food pantry had distributed donations to a total of 238 households.

Rudderow says it's been a mix of new and familiar faces.

"Because we're an Ob/Gyn practice, the patients come back according to their pregnancy age," she says. "An early-pregnancy mom might come once a month. A late-pregnancy mom might come once a week. And we get new patients all the time. So we're seeing repeats, but there are also lots of first-time visitors to the pantry, too."

In both cases, the reaction, she says, is the same.

"When I hand them a bag of food, it's like I've handed them a million dollars," Rudderow says. "They're just overwhelmed with emotion and, of course, that makes me emotional, too."

She continues: "Here I am supplying them with food, a basic need – this is not an above-and-beyond thing. It's just a basic need – and they're overwhelmed by it. Their gratitude makes all the effort that goes into having the food pantry worth it."

Rudderow admits it's "challenging," balancing the supervision of the food pantry with her everyday responsibilities as a nurse practitioner and the manager of the Ob/Gyn Clinic.

"I do a lot in my spare time. I don't know – I just get it done," she says. "I'm a mom of six, so I'm used to juggling a lot. But I'm also buoyed by the support of the administration."

Rudderow is simply compelled to help. This winter, when she saw some of the clinic's patients arriving for their appointments in flip-flops and t-shirts, she organized a winter coat and boot drive at the hospital. She says she received "hundreds" of coats. As that was wrapping up, she was actively seeking another way she could help improve the lives of the clinic's patients.

While Rudderow handles much of the food pantry's daily operations, she received help from the hospital's administration and the Community Health and Wellness Department in bringing it to fruition. And the hospital's Plant Operations staff constructed the pantry. The Ob/Gyn Clinic's staff helps Rudderow bag food. They also promote the food pantry through their personal social media accounts and collect donations. "Some of us have even placed a bin outside our homes to collect nonperishable food donations from neighbors, which we will then deliver to the hospital," Rudderow says. "All of our staff here is super-committed to our patients."

They solicit donations from within the hospital too to supplement the food pantry's weekly delivery of nonperishable groceries.

Soon after the pantry's opening, the Chester County Food Bank donated \$1,000 in ACME Markets gift cards to the pantry. The ACME Markets Foundation and its parent company's Nourishing Neighbors program awarded the food bank \$10,000 in ACME Markets gift cards for distribution throughout its partner agencies.

"We are fortunate to have Penn Medicine Chester County Hospital, a leader in healthcare, in our community," Andrea Youndt, CEO of the Chester County Food Bank, said at the time of the donation. "Having the hospital screening patients for food insecurity and being able to directly serve them with emergency food assistance with an onsite food pantry not only best serves the client but also helps to alleviate demands placed on community food cupboards. Our partnership with Chester County Hospital is vital to our ability to serve our community and ensure access to real, healthy food."

Rudderow says the food bank asked her to buy groceries for the pantry with the gift cards. In March, she had not yet used them because she wanted to make sure she uses them appropriately.

"My population is largely Hispanic, so I want to get food that I know they will eat," she says. "Right now, the food bank has been wonderful, and I'm supplying those foods, but I'm holding on to these gift cards in case we ever run short of culturally appropriate foods. If that happens, I'll use these cards to make sure we have them."

That's just one way Rudderow has her eye on the future. Seeing how quickly many of the clinic's patients came to depend on the food pantry, she wants to see it evolve beyond its current offerings by stocking it with fresh eggs, meat, and produce. She's even considering starting a garden in service to the pantry. Such a shift would require the addition of a large refrigerator and a slew of logistics.

For now, she'll remain patient – to an extent – and continue to help however she can.





Penn Medicine
Chester County Hospital

ABOUT US

Chester County Hospital provides quality medical and nursing services without discrimination based upon age, sex, race, color, ethnicity, religion, gender, disability, ancestry, national origin, marital status, familial status, genetic information, gender identity or expression, sexual orientation, culture, language, socioeconomic status, domestic or sexual violence victim status, source of income or source of payment. Although reimbursement for services rendered is critical to the operation and stability of Chester County Hospital, it is recognized that not all individuals possess the ability to purchase essential medical services and further that our mission is to serve the community with respect to providing healthcare services and healthcare education.

Therefore, in keeping with this hospital's commitment to serve all members of its community, it provides:

- Free care and/or subsidized care;
- Care at or below costs to persons covered by governmental programs;
- Health activities and programs to support the community are considered where the need and/or an individual's inability to pay co-exist. These activities include wellness programs, community education programs, and special programs for the elderly, handicapped, medically underserved, and a variety of broad community support activities.

EMERGENCY CARE IS PROVIDED 24-HOURS-A-DAY AND IS ACCESSIBLE TO ALL REGARDLESS OF A PERSON'S ABILITY TO PAY. Chester County Hospital provides care to persons covered by governmental programs at or below cost. Recognizing its mission to the community, services are provided to both Medicare and Medicaid patients. To the extent reimbursement is below cost, Chester County Hospital recognizes these amounts as charity care in meeting its mission to the entire community.

2022 FACTS AND FIGURES

Beds: 329

Adult and Pediatric Admissions: 16,654

Outpatient Tests and Procedures: 569,183

Emergency Department Visits: 39,470

Births: 3,118

Employees: 54,198

Physicians: Active Staff-813 / Affiliate Staff-125

CHESTER COUNTY HOSPITAL, WHICH IS PART OF PENN MEDICINE, IS AN ORGANIZATION DEDICATED TO THE HEALTH AND WELLBEING OF THE PEOPLE IN CHESTER COUNTY AND SURROUNDING AREAS.