

# Report to the Community

## July-September 2022



### PROGRAM SPOTLIGHT: SCHOOL HEALTH PROGRAM

Growing up, Marcus Germany, MD, always wanted to be a teacher.

A career as a physician would ultimately be his calling, but it's fitting the Cleveland-area native sees patients steps away from their classrooms at Heights High School. It's a more inviting environment than a typical clinic, Dr. Germany says – one where students are comfortable opening up about their physical and mental health.

"You get to see kids in their natural habitat," says Dr. Germany, one of the caregivers from MetroHealth's School Health Program, part of the Institute for H.O.P.E.™ "It also removes a barrier of access for so many kids. Many of them might not even see a doctor as often as they should if we weren't at their school."

Improving access – that's the goal of the School Health Program, which now serves more than 20 schools in Northeast Ohio. The program also goes well beyond traditional medical care, which is the heart of the work of the Institute for H.O.P.E.™

The School Health Program team regularly connects students and their families with resources that can help with housing needs, utility assistance, food insecurity, transportation access, legal issues and more.

"Healthy students are stronger learners," says Katie Davis, who oversees the School Health Program as Executive Director, Community & Corporate Health. "And so much of a child's health depends on factors beyond traditional medical

care, which is why we have resources embedded within our team to help families address those needs."

One of those resources is Alvernese Ford, a Community Health Worker with the Institute for H.O.P.E.™ who supports the School Health Program in a local Cleveland Metropolitan School District high school and various sites within the Cleveland Heights-University Heights City School District.

Every day, she talks with families who would benefit from additional social supports.

A mother, for example, who lost her job and can't afford her utility bills. A family whose living conditions exacerbate their child's asthma. And so much more.

"If your kids are at home without electricity, heat or food, they're not going to be able to learn at school," Ford says. "Being able to be in a position where I can actually help these families is really important to me."

Others are taking notice of MetroHealth's creative approach.

Last summer, America's Essential Hospitals honored the School Health Program with the prestigious Gage Award. The annual award recognizes "creative and successful programs that improve patient care and serve community needs."

Also, the state of Ohio awarded the School Health Program nearly \$4.5 million to support the expansion of its work. MetroHealth's program was the largest single recipient among the \$25.9 million awarded for 136 new or expanded school-based health Centers throughout Ohio.

## CONNECTING CLEVELAND

A reliable internet connection can open opportunities and lead to healthier lives. Unfortunately, Greater Cleveland has historically ranked as one of the least connected big cities in the United States.

MetroHealth and its partners are working to change that.

To date, the MetroHealth Institute for H.O.P.E.™ and its partners at DigitalC have helped connect **more than 600 households** with high-speed, low-cost internet in the Clark-Fulton neighborhood surrounding MetroHealth's main campus. That means hundreds of additional people can now access online classes, connect with their doctors, apply for jobs, talk with loved ones and so much more.

The first households in Clark-Fulton to receive subsidized internet access did so in April 2020 thanks, in part, to generous support from Dollar Bank. That support provided low-cost access to seniors at Cuyahoga Metropolitan Housing Authority's Scranton Castle complex on Scranton Road and then Riverview Tower on West 25th Street.

A recent \$901,000 award from the Federal Communications Commission combined with Dollar Bank's ongoing support will allow MetroHealth and DigitalC to provide low-cost internet access at six more CMHA properties.

An internet connection, though, is only one piece of the equation. MetroHealth and partners have distributed hundreds of free laptops and other devices to members of the community and providing hundreds of digital literacy training sessions.



## THE POWER OF PARTNERSHIP

It takes all of us together to build a healthier community. MetroHealth harnessed that power of partnership in 2020 when it teamed with Unite Us, an innovative technology company, to launch the Unite Ohio network.



Since then, **Cleveland Clinic, University Hospitals, St. Vincent Charity Medical Center** and hundreds of community organizations joined the platform, allowing participating organizations to connect people with resources they need. To date, over **15,000 referrals** have been made to connect 8,234 residents of Cuyahoga County with fresh food, digital access, utility help, transportation and other critical resources.

To build upon that growth, MetroHealth and other network stakeholders recently formed the Unite Ohio Community Advisory Council. Comprised of leaders from area health systems, nonprofits and other stakeholders, the council is designed to ensure the Unite Ohio network continues to meet the needs of the community.

## EDUCATION AND EVALUATION

We're committed to evaluating our work and sharing what we've learned with others. This quarter we published three manuscripts:

- [Clustering of social determinants of health among patients](#)
- [Food insecurity, social needs, and smoking status among patients in a county hospital system](#)
- [Prevalence of social determinants of health among health system employees](#)



## INSTITUTE FOR H.O.P.E.™ PROGRAM UPDATES

- As part of a regional effort aligned with JobsOhio and Better Health Partnership, MetroHealth received a three-year, **nearly \$3 million grant** to increase the number of community health workers who serve as a key link between health and social services providers in Northeast Ohio. The grant from the Health Resources and Services Administration, a unit of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, is part of a nationwide effort to build the pipeline these critical workers. [CLICK HERE](#) to read the news release.

- MetroHealth recently received **\$350,000 in support** from the Ohio Department of Health's Ohio Health Improvement Zones grant program, which the Institute for H.O.P.E.™ will use to address structural and social drivers of health in Cleveland's Clark-Fulton neighborhood.

- Starting this fall, community health workers and economic opportunity coaches from the Institute for H.O.P.E.™ will be on-site at *Vía Sana*, the new affordable housing complex adjacent to MetroHealth's main campus in Clark-Fulton. The **MetroHealth Opportunity Center - *Vía Sana*** will assist residents and community members with health-related social needs like financial and digital literacy, education access, employment opportunities and more.