



**Also inside:**

**I4HOPE:** Using data analysis to address disparities

# GIVING

THE METROHEALTH FOUNDATION SUMMER/FALL 2024



## MetroHealth Rehabilitation Institute: Fostering New Beginnings

*"I could tell in that moment my life was changing."*



**MetroHealth** Foundation



## TO OUR SUPPORTERS:

This year, we are celebrating 70 years since The MetroHealth Foundation was established. Thanks to seven decades of generosity from individuals and organizations across the country, MetroHealth has grown exponentially. With international accolades, world-class physicians and groundbreaking research, MetroHealth continues to be a model public health system for the nation.

Yet we know MetroHealth is more than a health system. It is a vibrant community of highly skilled caregivers, volunteers, neighbors and families – those who work in our buildings and neighborhoods, as well as those who receive care and inspire others to heal. The MetroHealth community works tirelessly to transform the lives of individuals in Northeast Ohio.

### **The joy of our fundraising work is sharing this community with all of you.**

Working together with our compassionate and committed donors is a true privilege. Your generosity is more than a donation; it is a testament to your belief in the profound impact that MetroHealth continues to have on the lives of everyone who receives our care.

In this issue of *GIVING*, it is our honor to bring you two stories that demonstrate the transformative power of your support. We are grateful to introduce you to people like Mike Cantu, whose story shows the resilience made possible through state-of-the-art mobility technology, compassionate care from MetroHealth staff and ongoing donor investment in the future of medicine. And because you care about our neighbors and communities, your resources also bolster the work of the MetroHealth Institute for H.O.P.E.™, which is using data analytics to better understand the social factors that affect health long before an individual comes to receive care.

Together, we are not only fulfilling the mission but setting a standard for what is possible in community healthcare.

**Your partnership is a vital part of our success. We deeply appreciate your support – now and into the next 70 years.**

With humility and gratitude,

**Alfred F. Connors, Jr., MD**  
Chair, The MetroHealth Foundation  
Board of Directors

**Kate Brown**  
President, The MetroHealth Foundation

# The MetroHealth Foundation Board and Staff News

## THE METROHEALTH FOUNDATION BOARD OF DIRECTORS WELCOMES TWO NEW MEMBERS:



**Alexander Schauer,**  
Vice President, Employee Benefits,  
Schauer Group, Inc.

**Why I Serve:** In my day job, I get to see how the current health insurance and healthcare environment does not work for everyone. I deal with parents who don't know how they can afford to

care for their child, and that wears on me. Being a part of promoting MetroHealth through the Foundation allows me to support an organization that makes the system work for everyone and promotes true community health.



**Paul Sidhu, CEO,**  
Sidhu Realty Capital

**Why I Serve:** I believe in MetroHealth's mission to provide care to all, regardless of their ability to pay. In addition, I want to give back to MetroHealth in ways that go above and beyond financial motivations, to help connect

industry leaders in my network and bring about awareness of the Foundation on a local and regional level. MetroHealth has done a lot for my family personally, so I also feel compelled to help whichever way possible.

## **Greg Sanders, Vice President, Philanthropy, The MetroHealth Foundation, Office of Strategic Philanthropy and Community Engagement**

This summer, we welcomed Greg Sanders to MetroHealth's Office of Strategic Philanthropy and Community Engagement as Vice President, Philanthropy. Greg began his philanthropy career in 2004 at the Cleveland Clinic, serving first as the Director of Development for South Pointe Hospital and then as the Senior Development Director for the Clinic's regional hospital system. Over the last decade, he has been the Vice President of Institutional Advancement at Lakeland Community College and Executive Director of The Lakeland Foundation, as well as Executive Director of the Lake Health Foundation. Prior to that, Greg was part of the MetroHealth philanthropy team, and his return to the department represents a commitment to the MetroHealth mission that will complement and enhance an already talented team.

## **Chairman's Leadership Award to Board Member Rob Soroka**

Rob, a senior vice president and market manager at Fifth Third Bank, received the prestigious Chairman's Leadership Award from his colleagues on the Board as he ended his nine-year tenure in May. He is committed to keeping board alumni engaged after their service ends, and we are creating the Robert E. Soroka Board Alumni Engagement Fund to support ongoing efforts to keep our fellow board members engaged in the mission of MetroHealth.

## **Board Chair Alfred F. Connor, Jr., MD, celebrates 50 years of MetroHealth service**

Congratulations to Dr. Al Connors, who in June marked 50 years of service and commitment to The MetroHealth System. Known for his signature bow tie, warm smile and sense of humor, Dr. Connors is Chair Emeritus of Medicine and enshrined in MetroHealth's Hall of Honor. He has served the Foundation Board since 2009 and was elected Chair in 2023.



***"Since the day I arrived at MetroHealth in June 1974, I have been proud to serve our mission. It is a challenging mission that requires outstanding care and compassion for each individual who comes to us while also taking responsibility for the health of the community at large. The beauty of MetroHealth is that everyone who works here understands the mission and understands how what they do serves that mission. It is why we work together so well."***

**—Alfred F. Connors, Jr., MD**  
Chair, The MetroHealth Foundation Board of Directors



# Collecting Data for Collaborative Change: The Impact of I4HOPE

Since its creation in 2019, the MetroHealth Institute for H.O.P.E.™ (I4HOPE) has fostered greater understanding of the many factors that can affect individuals' ability to live a healthy life. Known as the social drivers of health, these factors may include housing status, income levels, education, employment, food access, social connections and more.

To better understand the health-related social needs of MetroHealth patients, I4HOPE has screened nearly 160,000 individual patients to assess their risks for 11 needs-related domains.

Now, I4HOPE is regarded as a national model for the advancement of health equity, especially through its use of data to best understand the needs of the community and to develop the most effective ways to help.

## LISTENING TO PATIENTS, CHANGING LIVES

Data collected through patient screenings has been used to develop innovative programs, including the Food as Medicine (FAM) Clinic, which is changing the lives of MetroHealth patients like Rafael Cruz.

Rafael, who has Type 2 Diabetes, screened as at risk for food insecurity. His doctor referred him to the FAM Clinic, where he began receiving three-day supplies of nutritious food for everyone in his household. Before he began attending the clinic in September, Rafael's hemoglobin A1C was a dangerously high 13.3. This persistently high blood glucose led to complications of other serious medical conditions.

"Before, I ate what I could afford, and a lot of times that was food like instant ramen noodles or grilled cheese," said Rafael, who has appointments at the clinic every two weeks. "It wasn't nutritious, but it allowed me to survive."

After eight months of working with the FAM Clinic team, his A1C fell to 6.6.

"The Food as Medicine Clinic assures me that, for the days after I visit, I am eating healthy, quality food. And I am feeling much better than I did before."

## WELCOMING NEW LEADERSHIP

This spring, Srinivas Merugu, MD, FACP, MMM, CPE, joined MetroHealth as President of I4HOPE following the retirements of inaugural President Susan Fuehrer and founding Medical Director James Misak, MD. Upon Dr. Merugu's arrival, he said he felt fortunate to join the staff and looked forward to building on the strong foundation of work to date.

"This team has taken huge strides to make MetroHealth a leader in understanding health-related social needs," Dr. Merugu said. "They are intentional, disciplined and committed to uncovering vital information about patients and their lives outside of the hospital."

## SUPPORTING I4HOPE

For the next few years, the Institute will focus on paths to efficiency and sustainability in the way data is collected and used. The paths will be long, and will require trust from partners, clinical care teams, patients and community members.

"With resources and support from philanthropic funding, we may be able to slowly shift the community's ability to be self-sufficient and find opportunities for health," said Dr. Merugu. "We know we will not be everything to everyone, but we will be able to play a meaningful and constructive role in providing care that addresses social as well as clinical needs."

One example of that care, he said, is the role of community health workers (CHWs) at MetroHealth. CHWs have connections to the neighborhoods where they serve, and they work directly with patients to help address risks and access services and interventions. These highly relational and culturally competent individuals are quickly becoming integral in healthcare organizations. Last year, 11 CHWs worked in various areas across I4HOPE, including school health, trauma recovery, Food as Medicine and the Opportunity Center.

"These community health workers have in-depth conversations with patients, they deliver meals, they make appointments," said Dr. Merugu. "They are exemplary of what is possible when we have the resources to be more collaborative and build a knowledgeable team."

**This year, I4HOPE is seeking \$1.5 million to support its continuing work to address the SDOH including expanding the work of CHWs, Food as Medicine, the School Health Program and other initiatives that provide direct service to members of our community.**

## Looking to Support I4HOPE?

Learn more about the Institute for H.O.P.E. and how you can contribute to this vital work:



Visit [metrohealth.org/foundation](https://metrohealth.org/foundation)

Contact **Greg Sanders**,  
Vice President, Philanthropy  
[gsanders@metrohealth.org](mailto:gsanders@metrohealth.org)  
440-592-1319





"The Food as Medicine Clinic assures me that, for the days after I visit, I am eating healthy, quality food."

- Rafael Cruz, MetroHealth patient

## HOPE AT WORK: SAMPLE RESULTS FROM 2023 SCREENINGS

### Food Insecurity

Patients at Risk

23%

77%



AT RISK



NOT AT RISK

#### What We're Doing to Help:

- MetroHealth provided 50,256 meals through the Food as Medicine Clinic, offering access to on-site food pantries to choose foods that better support health goals.
- The monthly mobile pantry program distributed 113,445 meals' worth of fresh produce in 2023, a 40% increase over 2022.

### Social Isolation

Patients at Risk

51%

40%

9%



AT RISK



NOT AT RISK



SOME RISK

#### What We're Doing to Help:

- Providers at ambulatory sites can now refer patients to group art therapy and music therapy.
- Calls for HOPE connects trained and vetted volunteers to chat with patients and help them explore ways to engage with others.



*"Everything outside the hospital that impacts the health of our communities still affects patients after they leave a MetroHealth facility. We can only pursue positive health outcomes when we look beyond what appears in a clinical chart."*

—Srinivas Merugu, MD, FACP, MMM, CPE  
President, Institute for H.O.P.E.™, Senior Vice President, Population Health

# "I could tell in that moment my life was changing."

## REVOLUTIONARY TECHNOLOGY ENABLES YOUNG PROFESSIONAL WITH SPINAL CORD INJURY TO FIND INDEPENDENCE

This spring, 28-year-old Mike Cantu's hand moved for the first time since he was 15.

"It was surreal," he said. "To see my hand move after 13 years – it was euphoric."

A few days before his sophomore year of high school, Mike, an avid downhill skier, was at an indoor recreation center practicing jumps and flips. Already proficient in several skills and tricks, Mike took precautions seriously, purposely choosing to practice in a safe environment; yet with one wrong landing, his life changed forever.

That day, Mike broke his neck in several places, immediately losing all sensation and movement below his collarbone.

Over the course of the next decade, he focused on regaining some movement in his upper extremities and made incremental progress working with MetroHealth orthopaedic surgeon Michael Keith, MD, and the team at the MetroHealth Rehabilitation Institute. It was here that he learned of experimental surgeries that use Functional Electrical Stimulation (FES) to create movement in paralyzed muscles.



### What is Functional Electrical Stimulation (FES)?

FES works by using electrical currents to mimic the activity of nerves. Specific movements are written into the stimulator's software, and when activated, electrical currents coordinate muscle contraction to make the movement.

Movement disorders resulting from traumatic brain injury have no true cure, but thanks to donor support, MetroHealth and its partners are developing tools to restore some of the body's lost functions. By delivering FES to paralyzed muscles using small, implantable neurostimulators, rehabilitation patients like Mike can regain functional use and control of essential muscle groups, leading to marked improvements in their quality of life. This is the work of engineers and researchers at the FES Center, a research consortium based at the MetroHealth Old Brooklyn Health Center.

Following more than three decades of research, the FES Center is working on its third iteration of neuroprosthesis, the most promising tool for hand and arm movement recovery



so far. Called the Networked Neuroprosthesis (NNP), it allows patients to regain essential everyday movements like grasping, thumb use, wrist flexion and elbow bending – to be able to do everything from picking up a pen to pushing an elevator button, even holding a drinking glass.

"It's easy to take for granted how complex our fine motor skills are," Mike said.

Because the technology is still in experimental stages, it took years of discussion and planning to prepare for the implant surgery. In that time, Mike graduated high school, attended college at Kent State University and graduate school at Miami University and began work as a project manager for a veterinary equipment company. When the surgery was planned for January 2024, Mike said he set his expectations low; he had already persisted through 13 years without hand movement, after all.

"If nothing else, I would be contributing to great research for future generations," he said. But following the surgery and some initial rehabilitation, Mike's hand muscles responded to the NNP, and he watched his fingers move for the first time.

"That gave me real hope again," he said. "I didn't expect it to be such an emotional experience, but I could tell in that moment that my life was changing."

Soon, Mike was able to comb his hair, brush his teeth and feed himself without assistance.

"I have drastically cut down the number of things I ask for help for, which always makes me feel guilty," he said. "It's done incredible things for my mental health and my relationships."

**Because of FES technology, Mike sees a path forward to his ultimate goal: purchasing a home of his own.**





Mike Cantu (front) and some of his MetroHealth care team | Left to right: Kim Walsh, Dan Romano, Dr. Kevin Kilgore, Chris Rexroth, Dr. Anne Bryden, Dr. Greg States, Tina Cantu (Mike's mother), Joris Lambrecht, Ron Hart, Dr. Hunter Peckham, Megan LaFave

## NOW, THE METROHEALTH REHABILITATION INSTITUTE SEEKS SUPPORT TO MOVE THIS TECHNOLOGY PAST THE RESEARCH STAGE AND INTO HEALTHCARE SYSTEMS ACROSS THE COUNTRY.

"We are committed to seeing these neural stimulators become the standard of care for people with paralysis," said P. Hunter Peckham, PhD, co-director of the MetroHealth Rehabilitation Institute and founder of the FES Center. "We work with people every day whose lives would be immeasurably changed by this technology."

In the U.S. alone, there are approximately 17,000 new spinal cord injury cases each year, and an estimated 282,000 individuals are living with spinal cord injuries.

The MetroHealth Rehabilitation Institute seeks to establish a \$2 million fund to support broader patient access to neural stimulators for hand and arm function, and to research ways this technology can address mobility in other parts of the body.

In November 2023, The Fred A. Lennon Charitable Trust made a \$600,000 challenge grant commitment in support of the fund to further the transformational work of the FES Center. **Over the next three years, an additional \$600,000 must be secured to meet the terms of the challenge and contribute \$1.2 million to the fund.**

A philanthropic gift would not only help to secure this year's dollar-for-dollar match but also serve as a catalyst to move devices utilizing FES toward commercialization, while sustaining novel research programs and encouraging other supporters to make meaningful commitments to this work.

## FES Center at a Glance:

# 1991

Founded by P. Hunter Peckham, PhD

# 20 Years

of partnership with MetroHealth Rehabilitation Institute, the primary clinical testing and application site for FES.

Co-located with MetroHealth Rehabilitation Institute at MetroHealth Old Brooklyn Health Center

# \$2M

Total philanthropic goal

# \$600K

Available match from Fred A. Lennon Charitable Trust

## Interested in making a life-changing impact for a cause like this one?

To make a gift that leverages additional support and enables MetroHealth to become a world-renowned resource for rehabilitation:



Visit [metrohealth.org/foundation](https://metrohealth.org/foundation)

Contact **Lynn Iams**,  
Director, Philanthropy  
[liams@metrohealth.org](mailto:liams@metrohealth.org)  
440-592-1398





# Your Gifts at Work: The Impact of Endowments at MetroHealth

In partnership with generous contributors, The MetroHealth System has provided comprehensive healthcare for all since 1837. Thanks to dedicated donors, MetroHealth now has more than 80 endowments across a range of disciplines. These investments provide for the present, while also creating substantial funding for the future. Each endowment's principal is preserved, and the investment earnings are available annually to support a specific MetroHealth program or initiative. Endowments create opportunities for research, education, innovation, experimentation and improved outcomes, and they provide a foundation for our current and future success.

## THE FOLLOWING ARE ACHIEVEMENTS AND HIGHLIGHTS MADE POSSIBLE BY PHILANTHROPIC ENDOWMENT SUPPORT OVER THE LAST YEAR:

**Anesthesiology** – The Alfred Cyril Pinchak Research Endowment is nearing the next milestone of enabling a professorship to be created once the remaining funding is secured. It currently supports an annual competition for anesthesiology residents to showcase their research and quality improvement projects.

**Cancer Institute & Oncology** – MetroHealth launched a Blood and Marrow Transplant program, created for patients who face socioeconomic and other barriers that prevent them from receiving life-saving care elsewhere. Since opening in April 2023, 15 patients have received stem cell transplants. MetroHealth was also approved by the FDA to perform a new, novel sickle cell procedure that allows patients to recover at home after only two days in the hospital, the only such program in Ohio.

**Chester Summer Scholars Program** – In 2023, 12 young scientists spent summer break conducting medical research, much of which focused on infant and maternal

health. One scholar's work was accepted for poster presentations at the Pediatric Academic Societies Meeting in Toronto.

**Dermatology** - MetroHealth opened its Multicultural Dermatology Center to train providers to treat skin and hair conditions that mainly affect people of color or those with darker skin tones. The center, which opened in January 2023, operates two days a week and averages about 200 patient visits a year.

**Heart & Vascular** – Endowment funding supported lifesaving research by MetroHealth cardiologists Elizabeth Kaufman, MD, and Kathleen Quealy, MD. Dr. Kaufman's research led to early diagnosis in patients with genetic predisposition for Long QT syndrome, a disorder that typically leads to sudden cardiac death. Dr. Quealy is establishing the Cardiovascular Multicultural Health Equity Center to reduce healthcare disparities in the community with a focus on preventative care for women with pregnancy-induced high blood pressure.



**Medicine** – The inaugural Anita Lang, MD Endowed Lectureship featured two respected leaders in the fields of internal medicine and women’s health who addressed gender disparities in care. The late Dr. Lang was a beloved MetroHealth OB-GYN and internal medicine physician who was dedicated to educating residents and promoting inclusivity within the medical field.

**Nursing** – Thanks to historic generosity from JoAnn and Bob Glick, who established the JoAnn Zlotnick Glick Endowed Fund in Community Health Nursing to recognize the impact of nursing leadership on addressing health disparities and improving the health and well-being of the underserved and vulnerable, Melissa Kline, DNP, RN, NEA-BC, CENP, former Senior Vice President, Chief Nurse Executive at The MetroHealth System, was installed as the inaugural recipient of the accompanying endowed professorship at the Francis Payne Bolton School of Nursing at Case Western Reserve University. This professorship is the first of its kind given to a safety-net hospital.

**Obstetrics & Gynecology** – MetroHealth’s new Midwifery program, which is positioned to diversify and expand the OB-GYN workforce, focuses on helping to eradicate obstetric health disparities that adversely affect women of color.

**Orthopaedics** – The Orthopaedic Research Endowment supported pilot research that could result in an easily wearable and possibly implantable device for measuring blood pressure to alert people of dangerous fluctuations in blood pressure, thereby allowing early treatment.

**Pediatrics** – With generosity from The Clark Family Foundation, planning began for a therapeutic, multi-sensory room on the Pediatric floor where sensory-challenged children can engage with and respond to a variety of sensory experiences such as touch, sound, visual and spatial awareness and motion.

**Physical Medicine & Rehabilitation** – Funding for the P. Hunter Peckham, PhD and George J. Picha, MD, PhD Endowment led to the successful implantation of cutting-edge technology that has allowed patients with spinal cord injury to feed themselves and perform other daily activities.

**Research** – MetroHealth’s Population Health and Equity Research Institute received three five-year grants totaling nearly \$5.6 million from the Centers for Disease Control, the National Institute on Aging and the National Institutes of Health Research Education for research focused on addressing health disparities, increasing access to care and diversifying the scientific workforce.

**Surgery** – Marie L. Crandall, MD, MPH, FACS, joined the staff as the first female Chair of the Department of Surgery. Dr. Crandall comes from the University of Florida College of Medicine in Jacksonville and is an internationally known researcher and clinician in surgical medicine and trauma care.



**Interested in learning more about MetroHealth endowments, including how to establish or support ongoing investments?**



Visit [metrohealth.org/foundation/endowments](https://metrohealth.org/foundation/endowments)

Contact **Greg Sanders**,  
Vice President, Philanthropy  
[gsanders@metrohealth.org](mailto:gsanders@metrohealth.org)  
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## Back to School (Health) Season

The MetroHealth School Health Program, an initiative of the Institute for H.O.P.E.™, opened new and updated clinics earlier this year at three Cleveland Metropolitan School District locations: Mound Elementary School, Glenville High School and Clara E. Westropp Elementary School.

For more than a decade, the School Health Program has increased access to healthcare by bringing services directly to students through in-school clinics, mobile units and telehealth services. The program provides everything from well-checks and urgent care to labs and medication refills, and Community Health Workers are on site to help families with transportation, housing, food access and other social determinants that can affect overall health and well-being.



**Make a gift that supports this vital program.**

Visit [metrohealth.org/foundation](https://metrohealth.org/foundation) today.

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# Major Gifts

## THANK YOU

The MetroHealth Foundation thanks its partners and supporters who have given major gifts in the last several months, including:

**The Cleveland Neighborhood Safety Fund**, established through a partnership between the City of Cleveland and The Cleveland Foundation, awarded \$75,000 in support of the Hospital Responders program at MetroHealth.

The Estate of **Cynthia Reece** contributed \$180,000 for Reach Out and Read.

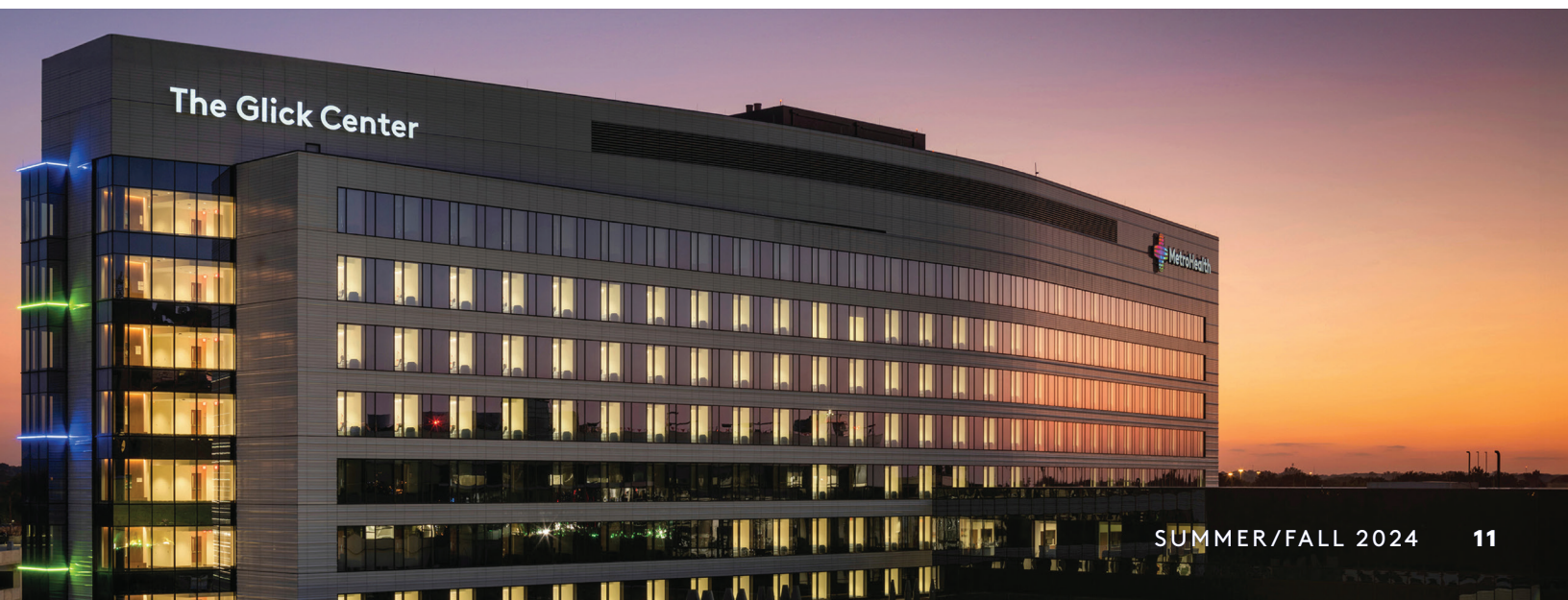
**The Louise H. and David S. Ingalls Foundation, Inc.** awarded a \$50,000 grant to support the School Health Program.

**Turner Construction** has committed a total of \$100,000 to the new Walter B. Jones, Jr. Scholars Endowment, establishing Turner as the lead funder.

**The Abington Foundation** gave a \$50,000 gift in support of the MetroHealth Community Health Centers.

MetroHealth received \$50,000 from the **William Bingham Foundation** in support of Food as Medicine.

**Karen and Chip Chaikin** updated their major gift pledge for continued support of the Anita Chaikin Band Aid Fund.





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## Ways to Give



### **WILLS & TRUSTS**

The MetroHealth Foundation is proud to work with compassionate people like you, whose generosity makes MetroHealth's life-changing work possible.

Consider including The MetroHealth Foundation in your estate plans. A bequest in your will or trust is a simple and effective way to leave a legacy.

When you include MetroHealth in your will, your commitment can transform the lives of others for years to come.

Work with your attorney to make a provision in your will or trust for a percentage or specific amount to support MetroHealth after you're gone.

If you are interested in exploring ways to give to MetroHealth, contact Greg Sanders: [gsanders@metrohealth.org](mailto:gsanders@metrohealth.org) or 440-592-1319