

GIVING

THE METROHEALTH FOUNDATION | SPRING 2026

What's Inside?

Meeting Patients Where They Are

Bringing Care to Students at School

Transforming Emergency Care for Every Patient

Opening New Doors to Community Care



Where Compassion Begins: With You

How your generosity empowers MetroHealth caregivers to show up for our community every day.



Your generosity delivers care at 2100 Lakeside.

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DEAR FRIENDS:

Every day at MetroHealth begins the same way – with caregivers showing up for patients who need them. Some moments are quiet. Some are urgent. All are shaped by compassion made possible through your generosity.

In this issue of GIVING, we are honored to share stories that show how your support empowers our caregivers to serve with skill, empathy and resolve every day.

You'll see compassion in motion in many forms:

- outreach that brings healing to individuals experiencing homelessness,
- care delivered to students through our School Health Program,
- a steady presence in the Emergency Department (ED),
- a pharmacy light still on late at night, and
- nutritious food reaching a household through Food as Medicine.

You'll also see how partnerships, especially KeyBank Foundation's investment in our Opportunity Centers, give caregivers the support they need to address financial, housing and social challenges that directly affect health.

Because of you, caregivers across MetroHealth have the tools, spaces and resources they need to meet patients with dignity – wherever care is needed.

Throughout these pages, you'll discover how your generosity is driving meaningful change – expanding access through the new Outpatient Health Center, transforming care in our Main Campus ED, strengthening the Opportunity Centers through the Institute for H.O.P.E.™ and extending care beyond our walls and into the community.

We invite you to celebrate the caregivers who dedicate their lives to caring for others. This issue also celebrates you: the partners whose generosity makes their work possible.

Thank you for all the ways you help MetroHealth care for our community – today and for generations to come.

With deep gratitude,



Jonathan C. Pressnell
Chair, The MetroHealth Foundation
Board of Directors



Kate Brown
President, The MetroHealth Foundation
Chief Development Officer
The MetroHealth System

“

Healthcare works best when it meets people where they are.

Michael Seidman, MD, and Bridget Gill, RN, stand alongside a mobile unit that brings care to the men's shelter at 2100 Lakeside in Cleveland.



Healing Starts with Showing Up

For Michael Seidman, MD, and Bridget Gill, RN, healthcare begins with presence.

Since 2020, MetroHealth's Healthcare for Those Experiencing Homelessness program has provided a lifeline for individuals across Cuyahoga County living without stable housing. What began as an urgent COVID-19 response has evolved into a sustainable primary care model – one that delivers consistent, compassionate healthcare directly to people who often have nowhere else to turn. Since shifting its focus from pandemic response to primary care in 2022, the program's impact has steadily grown.

Decades of Commitment, One Shared Mission

Between them, Dr. Seidman and Bridget represent more than five decades of service to MetroHealth. A Family Medicine Physician and Assistant Professor at Case Western Reserve University School of Medicine, Dr. Seidman has spent 26 years caring for patients across family medicine, express care, correctional medicine and homeless healthcare. Bridget, a Registered Nurse and Director of Quality and Community Health Programs, has dedicated nearly 28 years to shaping how care reaches the community – overseeing mobile clinics, correctional health services and care at high-impact sites throughout the county.

Their shared philosophy is simple: healthcare works best when it meets people where they are.

Reducing Barriers by Meeting People Where They Are

For individuals experiencing homelessness, accessing care is layered with barriers – transportation challenges, lack of insurance, competing daily priorities and deep mistrust built from years of marginalization. MetroHealth's Community Health teams partner with shelters, day centers and supportive housing sites to work daily to reduce these barriers to care.

Mobile teams deploy more than 30 times each month, traveling to 10 to 15 locations across the county to deliver essential services where people already are. Care includes treatment for acute illnesses, management of chronic conditions like diabetes and hypertension, cancer screenings, immunizations, behavioral health support and connections to ongoing primary and specialty care within MetroHealth.

Since 2022, when the program's focus formally shifted from COVID response to primary care, the mobile units alone have provided more than 8,000 patient visits, not including care delivered at MetroHealth's Collinwood Health Center.

BY THE NUMBERS

2,297

mobile patient visits in 2025

8,000+

mobile unit visits since 2022

30+

mobile deployments per month

10-15

community locations served monthly

320

mobile unit deployments in 2025

4

mobile units equipped for exams and lab testing



Consistency Builds Trust

At the heart of the model is consistency – a principle Bridget is intentional about protecting.

She ensures the same care teams return to the same locations repeatedly: the same physician, the same nurses, the same familiar presence.

“Trust is hard to develop and easy to break,” Dr. Seidman said. “People didn’t think we were coming back. But we did throughout the pandemic and after it.”

Because teams are present and trusted, cancers are detected earlier through onsite prostate cancer screenings and mobile mammography. Patients are more likely to accept follow-up care because relationships already exist.



Showing Up, Again and Again

Dr. Seidman recalls caring for a man living unsheltered who suffered severe third-degree burns to both feet during the winter. He refused hospitalization and clinical settings, but he allowed conversation.

Over seven months, the mobile team returned again and again – providing wound care, preventing infection and slowly building trust. Eventually, he walked again. With help from community partners, he moved into housing.

“This didn’t happen in one visit,” Dr. Seidman said. “It happened because we kept showing up.”



How You Can Help

To sustain and expand this work, The MetroHealth Foundation has set a philanthropic goal of \$300,000. These dollars support the mobile clinics themselves – the vehicles, equipment and care teams that make healthcare possible outside traditional walls.

“It’s the mobile unit that allows MetroHealth to go to people whose circumstances make it challenging to get to us,” Dr. Seidman said. “It’s how we live our mission of care for all.”

YOUR IMPACT

To support Healthcare for Those Experiencing Homelessness, please contact **Greg Sanders**, Vice President of Philanthropy, at **440-592-1319** or **gsanders@metrohealth.org**.



Scan the QR code to make an online gift.

Healthcare in the Heart of the School Day

When Lisa Ramirez, PhD, entered college, she had lofty goals of becoming an engineer or perhaps a diplomat, but by the end of her first semester, her Psychology 101 class had awakened her love for human behavior and solidified her eventual career path.

Dr. Ramirez first came to MetroHealth as a graduate student, returned for a postdoctoral fellowship, and finally settled in as a faculty member. At that time, the School Health Program (SHP) and the psychology residency program were preparing to launch, so Dr. Ramirez eagerly got involved. Fast forward 13 years, and she is now Director of Community and Behavioral Health for the SHP.



Lisa Ramirez, PhD, connects with a student through the School Health Program, delivering care right where learning happens.

“

Health is about the whole person.





Supported by philanthropy, the School Health Program mobile unit brings care directly to students – expanding access where it’s needed most.

With humble beginnings in a classroom-turned-clinic, the SHP gained traction when a donor-funded mobile unit was acquired. Philanthropic support transformed the program’s reach and redefined what access could look like for students.

This clinic-on-wheels allowed MetroHealth to bring pediatric care to students in their school’s parking lot, which has been critical to SHP’s steady growth and success.

During the first year using the mobile unit, numerous youth who had been struggling in silence were diagnosed with anxiety and depression because the vehicle provided caregivers with space to conduct standardized assessments.

“Meeting students where they are, responding and being part of their care plans, then witnessing the difference this makes has completely changed how I practice, and it became the basis for my expertise in childhood toxic stress and adversity,” Dr. Ramirez reflects.

“If our early supporters hadn’t believed in our vision and provided funding for the mobile unit, the SHP wouldn’t have evolved. Proximity and access are key to the SHP’s success.”

The SHP now operates seven in-school clinics, serves students in three school districts via the mobile unit and provides healthcare access through telehealth platforms.

In those early days, when the SHP mobile unit first arrived at a school, it was often athletes seeking physicals to play sports who were the first students to venture onto the large vehicle in the school lot. Soon, other kids would seek care for everything from checking to see if they had strep throat and a brace for a sprain to work permit physicals for upcoming job opportunities.

“*If our early supporters hadn’t believed in our vision and provided funding for the mobile unit, the SHP wouldn’t have evolved. Proximity and access are key to the SHP’s success.*”

— LISA RAMIREZ, PHD,
DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITY AND
BEHAVIORAL HEALTH, SHP

Students often grow to trust and bond with SHP staff around their healthcare needs. Along with teachers, coaches and other school staff, SHP caregivers frequently become part of a student’s trusted school support system. SHP’s accessible, confidential nature provides effective “one-stop shopping” for students and families who have complex situations, and who may otherwise go without healthcare, perhaps due to lack of insurance or knowledge about how to access appropriate care.

One young man who came to Cleveland as part of a refugee resettlement effort sought a work permit physical so he could begin to earn money and contribute to his household. Thanks to standardized screening, SHP caregivers uncovered underlying anxiety and depression from the hopelessness that he felt in trying to navigate all the barriers to getting a paid position.

“Health is about the whole person,” said Dr. Ramirez. “Our SHP team has the joy and privilege of prioritizing our students’ physical and mental health. By living the MetroHealth mission of leading the way for a healthier community, we can impact a young student’s life trajectory and support future generations.”

When Dr. Ramirez entered college, she dreamed of becoming an engineer and a diplomat. Today, through her leadership in the School Health Program – and the philanthropic support behind it – she has helped engineer a model of care that removes barriers and brings healthcare into the heart of the school day, while diplomatically building trust with students and families at their most vulnerable moments.

SUPPORT THE SCHOOL HEALTH PROGRAM

To support the School Health Program, please contact **Greg Sanders, Vice President of Philanthropy**, at **440-592-1319** or **gsanders@metrohealth.org**.



Scan the QR code to make an online gift.



Charles Emerman, MD, and Laura Schmidt, MSN, RN, support teams on the front lines of emergency care, where every moment matters.



Ready for the Next Life Saved

For more than two decades, MetroHealth’s Main Campus Emergency Department (ED) has been where Cleveland turns in a crisis. In 2025, nearly 79,000 patients came through its doors – an average of 215 people every day, with some days reaching 270. Nearly 70% of all hospital inpatients begin their care in the ED, making it quite literally the front door to MetroHealth.

The care delivered inside those walls is among the most advanced in the region. But the physical space – unchanged since opening in 2004 – was designed for a very different era of emergency medicine. As patient volumes grow and care becomes more complex, a long-overdue transformation is underway to ensure the ED remains ready for the next life saved.

“**Twenty-five years ago, emergency medicine focused on rapid evaluation and admission. Today, we’re delivering advanced care for trauma, stroke and heart attack patients right in the ED. That requires modern infrastructure and purpose-built space.**

— CHARLES EMERMAN, MD, FAAEM
CHAIR OF EMERGENCY MEDICINE

Leaders Shaping a Lifesaving Environment

Charles Emerman, MD, Chair of Emergency Medicine, has served MetroHealth for 43 years. Over his career, he has led the ED through waves of change, helped shape quality initiatives across the system and established MetroHealth’s Addiction Medicine Consult Service and Fellowship.

“Twenty-five years ago, emergency medicine focused on rapid evaluation and admission,” Dr. Emerman said. “Today, we’re delivering advanced care for trauma, stroke and heart attack patients right in the ED. That requires modern infrastructure and purpose-built space.”

Since opening, Dr. Emerman estimates more than 2 million people have passed through the Main Campus ED. “If that many people walked through your living room,” he said, “you would remodel.”

Laura Schmidt, MSN, RN, Executive Director of Nursing Services for the Emergency Department, sees the need from the front lines. After beginning her career in cardiothoracic ICU and emergency nursing, she transitioned into leadership following a multiple sclerosis diagnosis. Today, she focuses on building teams and environments where caregivers can do their best work.

“Our patients are older, sicker and more complex,” Laura said. “The space we work in needs to support today’s emergency care, not the model of 20 years ago.”

“

The environment should reflect the excellence, compassion and competence of the people caring for them.

Why This Transformation Matters

The Main Campus ED is Northeast Ohio’s premier Level 1 Adult Trauma Center, verified since 1992. It handles more than 8,100 trauma patients annually, supports 5,400 air and ground transports a year and receives 50 to 70 ambulances daily, including about 25% of Cleveland EMS transports.

Renovations will modernize clinical spaces, improve workflow and patient flow, expand behavioral health care capacity and create more therapeutic, dignified environments for patients and families. Work began early in 2026 and will be phased to ensure uninterrupted access to emergency care.

“Patients come to us on the worst day of their lives,” Laura said. “The environment should reflect the excellence, compassion and competence of the people caring for them.”

YOUR IMPACT

“At MetroHealth, it has always been about the team,” Dr. Emerman said. “Give them the right space, and they’ll continue saving lives – around the clock.”

Your generosity ensures MetroHealth’s ED is ready for whatever comes next – today, tomorrow and for the lives still waiting to be saved.

To support the Emergency Department transformation, please contact **Debbie Rothschild, Director of Principal Gifts**, at 440-592-1399 or drothschild@metrohealth.org. Make an online gift at metrohealth.org/donate.

Scan the QR code to download the Donor Case for Support.



Proposed Patient Waiting and Registration Area



Proposed Fast-Track and Treatment Area

Access Without Exceptions

At 2:00 a.m., when most pharmacy lights are off and doors are locked, illness doesn't wait. A child spikes a fever. A patient is discharged from the Emergency Department. A chronic condition flares unexpectedly. For too many families, those moments end with unanswered questions or delayed care.

MetroHealth is changing that – led by Ryan Mezinger, RPh, CPEL, Senior Vice President and Chief Pharmacy Officer.

This summer, MetroHealth will open a retail pharmacy with a 24/7 drive-through at the new Outpatient Health Center (OPHC) – a state-of-the-art, always-open resource designed to ensure that no patient leaves our care without what they need. Located on the ground floor, just steps from the parking garage and available with drive-through access, the pharmacy is built around a simple promise: access without exceptions.

“This is the last piece of the puzzle,” Ryan said. “It’s opening an access point that most pharmacies are moving away from.”

For Ryan, access has always been the point. With more than 30 years in pharmacy, including two decades in retail, he’s seen firsthand how medication costs, limited hours and transportation barriers can stand between patients and their health.

When he joined MetroHealth 10 years ago, he found an organization aligned with his purpose – ensuring every patient, regardless of circumstance, receives first-class care.

“Pharmacy is a critical part of the care experience,” Ryan said. “If patients can’t get their medications – or afford them – everything else breaks down.”

The OPHC pharmacy brings that philosophy to life. Open around the clock, it will serve patients leaving appointments, procedures or the hospital – day or night. Advanced automation and robotics will allow the team to fill thousands of prescriptions daily with speed, accuracy and safety. Same-day compounding and real-time dispensing mean less waiting and fewer barriers between diagnosis and treatment.

But the impact goes far beyond convenience. As national retail pharmacies close locations, particularly in urban neighborhoods, MetroHealth is stepping forward. The new pharmacy fills a crucial gap on Cleveland’s near west side, expanding access in the Clark-Fulton community and beyond.

It also builds on a system already delivering remarkable results. Under Ryan’s leadership, MetroHealth Pharmacy provides free home delivery, averages copays under \$5 for most prescriptions and delivers more than \$50 million annually in copay assistance. Medications that once felt out of reach are now affordable and available.

During COVID-19, Ryan and his team acted quickly, doubling home delivery services and leading some of Ohio’s earliest vaccination efforts. That same urgency and compassion is built into the new OPHC pharmacy.

“This is about meeting patients where they are,” Ryan said. “At any hour. In any situation.”

Ryan Mezinger and pharmacy colleagues expand access to medications, ensuring care continues beyond the bedside.



“ *This is the last piece of the puzzle. It’s opening an access point that most pharmacies are moving away from.* ”

— RYAN MEZINGER,
RPH, CPEL
SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT AND
CHIEF PHARMACY OFFICER



Why Philanthropy Matters

The pharmacy in the Outpatient Health Center is part of MetroHealth’s investment in access – bringing essential services together in one coordinated, patient-centered space. Philanthropy helps elevate that care, supporting the technology, innovation and workflows that improve medication access, safety and affordability. For patients, donor generosity ensures that when care is needed – day or night – the experience is seamless, dignified and dependable.

Thanks to your generosity, MetroHealth is ensuring that when care is needed most, the lights are always on.

The Outpatient Health Center retail pharmacy will offer 24/7 drive-through service.



YOUR IMPACT

To support the Outpatient Health Center, contact **Greg Sanders**, Vice President of Philanthropy, at **440-592-1319** or **gsanders@metrohealth.org**. You can make a gift online at metrohealth.org/donate.

Scan the QR code to download the Donor Case for Support.





KeyBank Foundation partners celebrate continued investment in MetroHealth's Opportunity Centers, expanding access and opportunity across the community.

From left: Chiron Jackson, Buckeye Branch Manager; Mattie Jones-Hollowell, Regional Corporate Responsibility Officer; Shanelle Smith Whigham, National Community Engagement Director; and Eric Fiala, Chief Corporate Responsibility Officer, CEO, KeyBank Foundation.

Pathways to Opportunity

On a spring morning at MetroHealth's Buckeye Health Center, community leaders, neighbors and partners gathered to celebrate something powerful. The Pathways to Opportunity Celebration marked the next chapter in a growing partnership between MetroHealth and KeyBank, centered on expanding access, strengthening stability and opening doors to opportunity.

The event honored the impact of MetroHealth's Opportunity Centers, neighborhood-based hubs operated through the Institute for H.O.P.E.™ (Health, Opportunity, Partnership and Empowerment). Located at Buckeye and Via Sana in the Clark-Fulton neighborhood, these centers bring financial coaching, workforce training, digital access and community partnerships together in one welcoming, accessible space — meeting people where they are and helping them move forward.

The celebration also marked an exciting announcement: a \$1.5 million investment from the KeyBank Foundation, building on its original 2021 commitment. This three-year investment will strengthen staffing, deepen community partnerships and enhance programs designed to address the social drivers of health and promote long-term economic stability.



Financial Coach Renee Harris (right) and Linda Hunter.



“
They come in needing someone who listens, understands and helps them take the next right step.”

KeyBank Foundation, MetroHealth leaders and community partners celebrate the ribbon cutting for Pathways to Opportunity, marking a shared investment in access and community health.

For Renee Harris, a Financial Coach with the Institute for H.O.P.E., that investment translates into everyday impact. Renee works one-on-one with neighbors to stabilize income, budget, build credit and navigate systems that can often feel overwhelming. Her work isn't just about numbers. It's about trust, confidence and creating a sense of possibility.

“People don't come in asking for a spreadsheet,” Renee says. “They come in needing someone who listens, understands and helps them take the next right step.”

That approach made all the difference for Linda Hunter.

When Linda first walked into the Buckeye Opportunity Center, she wasn't sure what to expect. Transportation challenges, financial stress and uncertainty about where to begin had made things feel unmanageable. With Renee's support, Linda started small – organizing bills, stabilizing income and learning how to use digital tools to stay connected. Over time, those small steps added up to something bigger: improved credit, renewed confidence and a belief in what was possible.

“What I learned here didn't just change my finances,” Linda shared during the celebration. “It changed how I see myself. Now I tell other people about this place, because it works.”

One message rang clear: health doesn't begin or end in a clinic. It's shaped by stability, access and support — and strengthened by partners willing to invest in people and places.

Through renewed partnership and shared purpose, MetroHealth and the KeyBank Foundation are building pathways that help neighbors move from crisis to confidence — and toward healthier futures that last.

YOUR IMPACT

To support the Institute for H.O.P.E., contact **Greg Sanders, Vice President of Philanthropy**, at 440-592-1319 or gsanders@metrohealth.org.



Scan the QR code to make an online gift.

One Household at a Time

MetroHealth's Food as Medicine (FAM) program tackles one of the most powerful drivers of health: access to nutritious food. For patients living with diabetes, hypertension, heart failure and other chronic conditions, food is not optional — it is essential. FAM provides medically tailored groceries, nutrition education and ongoing support so patients and their families can stabilize their diets, improve health outcomes and regain a sense of control.

But food alone isn't enough. That's where Pat Hardy comes in.

As a Certified Community Health Worker with FAM, Pat often turns groceries into health. She delivers food to patients who can't reach the clinic. Last year alone, more than 260 food packages were delivered directly to patients' homes to ensure continuity of care.

Pat also looks and listens for the barriers that are easy to miss — a broken refrigerator, no transportation or a home where cooking safely isn't possible.

"People think I just deliver food," Pat said. "But it's more than that. I'm looking for what gets in the way of health, and then I help fix it."

When a Spanish-speaking patient quietly shared that her refrigerator had stopped working, Pat helped secure a replacement. The woman wept with relief. For Pat, it wasn't about an appliance. It was about restoring dignity and stability so a household could thrive.

Care That Changes Lives

Henry Harris knows that impact firsthand. Living with diabetes, he once struggled to eat consistently. "Before the program, I might eat once a day," he said. "Now I can spread meals out, make healthier choices, and I feel the difference."

The groceries Henry brings home support his entire household — his sister, her husband and their three children — with fresh produce, pantry staples and ingredients for simple recipes he's learned to prepare. "Food as Medicine is amazing," Henry said. "Pat is a lifesaver."

His experience reflects a broader need. In 2025, MetroHealth screened nearly 75,000 unique patients for social drivers of health and found a 22% rate of food insecurity. FAM focuses on patients with diet-related chronic conditions, offering access to clinic-based, choice-style pantries up to twice a month. Participants receive a three-day supply of healthy groceries for their full household, along with nutrition education.

The care is clinical by design. Encounters are documented, key health markers like blood pressure and A1C are tracked, and outcomes are monitored. Previous evaluation of the FAM program found that participation was associated with a 0.4-point reduction in A1C, fewer inpatient visits and nearly \$27,900 in reduced hospital charges per patient per year.



“

*Food as
Medicine saved
my life.*



Community Health Worker Pat Hardy recently celebrated 25 years at MetroHealth. She is shown here with Henry Harris, a FAM participant.



Why Philanthropy Matters

Food as Medicine is funded entirely through philanthropy. Donor support keeps shelves and refrigerators stocked, enables home delivery, supports education and helps MetroHealth reach families at greatest risk.

When Henry is asked what he would say to a potential supporter, he doesn't mention statistics. He talks about three meals a day, better lab results and the relief of knowing his household is cared for.



One household at a time, generosity turns food into health — and caregivers like Pat into lifelines. Scan the QR code to watch the FAM impact video.



YOUR IMPACT

To support the Food as Medicine program, contact **Greg Sanders, Vice President of Philanthropy**, at 440-592-1319 or gsanders@metrohealth.org.

Scan the QR code to make an online gift.

Ways to Leave a Legacy

You can qualify for membership in the **Generations Society** by naming The MetroHealth Foundation as a beneficiary through:

- A **will or trust**
- A **retirement account** (IRA, 401(k), 403(b))
- A **life insurance policy**
- A **payable on death or transfer on death account**
- A **charitable gift annuity or trust**
- A gift from your **donor-advised fund**
- Or a **cash gift** in support of the Fund for the Future



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Let us know so we can thank you and welcome you to the Generations Society.

Contact **Caleb Sturupp**, Philanthropy Officer, at **440-592-1434** or **csturupp@metrohealth.org**.

For your planning:
Legal Name: *The MetroHealth Foundation, Inc.*
Tax ID: 34-6607695



The Generations Society is a special community of donors who have included The MetroHealth Foundation in their estate or financial plans.

A Legacy That Lives On



For nearly two centuries, MetroHealth has been a constant source of hope and healing for our community – caring for every person, regardless of circumstance. That enduring mission has been made possible not only by caregivers and clinicians, but by supporters who planned ahead to ensure MetroHealth's work would continue long into the future.

Those individuals are honored through the Generations Society, a special community of donors who have included The MetroHealth Foundation in their estate or financial plans. A legacy gift is a promise that compassionate care, medical innovation, education and access will remain available for generations to come.

To make planning easier, The MetroHealth Foundation now offers FreeWill, a secure, donor-facing online tool that allows you to create a legally valid will in as little as 20 minutes, at no cost. Supporters can also choose to include MetroHealth as part of their legacy, using the tool on its own or as a first step before working with an attorney.

Above all, legacy giving is about values — caring for loved ones, honoring what matters most and extending compassion beyond a lifetime. Through the Generations Society, that impact lives on.

This message is not offered or intended as legal or tax advice. You are urged to seek the advice of your tax advisor, attorney or financial planner to ensure the contemplated gift fits well with your overall circumstances and planning.

CELEBRATIONS & EVENTS



John Chae, MD, MetroHealth Chief Academic Officer, Senior Associate Dean and Professor of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation and Biomedical Engineering at the Case Western Reserve University School of Medicine; Dean Stanton Gerson, Dean and Senior Vice President for Medical Affairs at the Case Western Reserve University School of Medicine; Christine Alexander-Rager, MD, MetroHealth President and CEO; David Stepnick, MD, MetroHealth Executive Vice President, Chief Physician Executive and Clinical Officer; and Meera Kondapaneni, MD (seated).

MetroHealth and the Case Western Reserve University School of Medicine celebrated the investiture of Meera D. Kondapaneni, MD, Division Director of the Heart and Vascular Center and an interventional cardiologist, as chairholder of the Louis Rakita, MD, David S. Rosenbaum, MD, and Maurice Moss, MD Professorship in Cardiology. The ceremony honored her leadership in advancing access-driven cardiovascular care, including the development of MetroHealth's Structural Heart Program and the system's first TAVR procedure.



Alfred F. Connors, Jr., MD, Chair Emeritus and Vice Chair - Finance and Investment; Christine Alexander-Rager, MD, MetroHealth President and CEO; John Chae, MD, MetroHealth Chief Academic Officer, Senior Associate Dean and Professor of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation and Biomedical Engineering at the Case Western Reserve University School of Medicine; Dean Stanton Gerson, Dean and Senior Vice President for Medical Affairs at the Case Western Reserve University School of Medicine; and J. Daryl Thornton, MD (seated).

Colleagues, family and friends gathered to celebrate the investiture of J. Daryl Thornton, MD, MPH, Director of the Division of Pulmonary, Critical Care and Sleep Medicine, as the inaugural Mary Elizabeth Connors Professor in Critical Care Research. Established through the generosity of Dr. Alfred Connors and Dr. Mimi Lam, the professorship honors the legacy of Mary Elizabeth Connors while ensuring enduring support for critical care research at MetroHealth. Over more than two decades, Dr. Thornton has distinguished himself as a compassionate clinician, gifted educator and nationally respected researcher advancing health equity and patient-centered care.



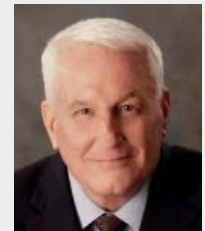
Aaron Witwer

MetroHealth Foundation Board member Aaron B. Witwer hosted a gathering at The Glick Center, focused on MetroHealth's work with neighbors

experiencing homelessness. Dr. Michael Seidman and Bridget Gill, RN, shared powerful stories illustrating how dignity, trust and mobile care save lives. Philanthropy strengthens this work by supporting early detection, sustaining relationships and enabling enhancements such as a mobile EKG unit.



Paul Bodnar



Michael Summers

MetroHealth proudly welcomed Paul Bodnar and Michael Summers to the Foundation Board of Directors in December 2025. Paul is CEO and Chief Investment Officer at CM Wealth Advisors, overseeing more than \$2 billion in assets. A former Senior Equity Analyst, later he cofounded an investment research firm. A Case Western Reserve University graduate, he chairs the Sisters of Humility of Mary Investment Committee and is active in community sports. Michael is a Senior Fellow at Cleveland State University's Levin College of Urban Affairs and served as Mayor of Lakewood from 2009–2019 and 32 years as President and Owner of Summers Rubber Company. He is a Board member at First Federal Lakewood.

At the Foundation Board meeting in May, MetroHealth was pleased to welcome four new members: Ann Aber; Luis Cartagena; Justin Mistovich, MD; and Candy Mori, RN, APRN. We look forward to introducing them in the next issue of GIVING.

A Tradition of Comfort and Compassion

On December 24, 2025, Matt “Ogre” Whaley and his friends from the North Pole arrived at MetroHealth with a delivery that has become a beloved holiday tradition: more than 2,000 stuffed animals for pediatric patients and their families.

For 36 years, Matt – owner of Visual Graphics and Sign Company in Mentor – has delivered far more than toys. He has delivered comfort, dignity and hope to children facing some of the hardest moments of their lives.

That generosity comes from a deeply personal place. At age 18, Matt survived a grease fire that left him with burns covering 25% of his body. Despite the trauma, Matt went on to become a firefighter and began raising funds for burn survivors by collecting aluminum cans. Eventually, his mission became more personal and more powerful.

The first year, he delivered 220 teddy bears. Today, through his nonprofit Ogre’s Bears for Burns, Matt partners with Wild Republic to provide thousands of realistic animal plushies – arctic foxes, sea turtles, white tiger cubs – to MetroHealth. Each child gets to choose the one that speaks to them.



Matt Whaley (left) has donated more than 70,000 stuffed animals to MetroHealth patients.



That choice matters. “Kids don’t choose to be in the hospital,” said Jessica Chupnick, Manager of Child Life and Pediatric Programs at MetroHealth. “These animals bring comfort, joy and familiarity. We use them for medical play, psychological preparation and grief support. They help children feel less afraid.”

Matt understands that need deeply. He grew up with little stability, and one of the only comforts he had was a stuffed animal named Oscar the Grouch. “Oscar was my comfort,” he said. “I know what it means to have something soft to hold onto when everything else feels hard.”

Over the years, Matt estimates he has donated more than 70,000 stuffed animals, valued at over \$500,000. He has also committed to a legacy gift through The MetroHealth Foundation, ensuring that his mission – and the comfort it brings – will continue for generations.

Through Ogre’s Bears for Burns, and through his legacy, Matt Whaley is turning compassion into lasting impact – one child, one moment and one soft companion at a time.

For more information, contact **Greg Sanders**, Vice President of Philanthropy, at 440-592-1319 or gsanders@metrohealth.org.

Partners in Good Health



Giant Eagle, Inc.

When Giant Eagle, Inc. donated 6,900 reusable grocery bags to MetroHealth's Mobile Pantry Program, it represented a meaningful commitment to dignity and nutrition. Each bag helps patients and neighbors carry fresh, healthy food home through the Mobile Pantry and Food as Medicine initiatives. These resources are already helping turn groceries into health – one bag at a time.

PICTURED: Kristen Matlack, MPH, Manager of Social Care Initiatives, unloads reusable grocery bags for the Mobile Pantry.



Project NICU

Project NICU partnered with MetroHealth and The MetroHealth Foundation to open MetroHealth's NICU Respite Room, adjacent to its NICU area. The calming space allows parents to rest, reflect and gather strength without leaving their baby's side. Designed with warmth, comfort and messages of hope, the room reassures families that they are not alone.

PICTURED: NICU Respite Room ribbon cutting.



Tri Delta Cleveland Alumnae Chapter

For more than 70 years, the Tri Delta Cleveland Alumnae Chapter has supported children and families at MetroHealth. This spring's Mad for Metro Fashion Show & Brunch raised funds for the Child Life & Education Program and the Burn and Trauma Center. With more than \$1 million given over decades, Tri Delta continues to bring comfort, creativity and compassion to young patients.

PICTURED: Members of the Tri Delta Cleveland Alumnae Chapter present a check for the total raised by the chapter in 2025.

Visit The MetroHealth Foundation website for more heartfelt and inspiring stories of community support: metrohealth.org/foundation.

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Elevate Your Brand.**CORPORATE PARTNER PROGRAM**

MetroHealth is Northeast Ohio's home for health and Cuyahoga County's only public safety-net hospital. Our mission is to provide exceptional care while strengthening our community. Join us as a Corporate Partner and help us keep people healthy, address social needs and ensure access to hope and healing for all.

Partnership Benefits

- **Simple Giving:** One request. One annual gift.
- **Brand Visibility:** Recognition across our website, social channels and GIVING.
- **Executive Access:** Exclusive events with MetroHealth leaders.

*Commit early to show your support sooner.*Contact: Abbie Sender at 440-592-1390 | asender1@metrohealth.org