



February 2023 | Jewish Healthcare Foundation news, events, milestones, & more

Contents

Message from Karen Wolk Feinstein.....	2
Regional Autonomous Patient Safety Launch Event Plants a Flag in Pittsburgh as an Innovation Hub.....	2
Dr. Karen Wolk Feinstein Speaks on Patient Safety Panel at National Quality Forum’s Annual Conference.....	5
National Patient Safety Board Full Court Press Team Meeting Discusses Ways to Raise Awareness about Medical Error through Media Coverage	6
Karen Wolk Feinstein’s Viewpoint in the Pittsburgh Business Times: “Regional Solution Needed to Address Workforce Shortages”	7
Dementia Friendly Pennsylvania Webinar Focuses on Recentering Sex and Sexuality for People Living with Dementia.....	7
2023 Teen Mental Health Advocacy Series Begins	8
PA Youth Advocacy News: Youth Wins Leadership Award, Teens Featured on Podcast, and Panelists Discuss Ways to Amplify Youth Voice.....	9
JHF Welcomes Three New Staff Members.....	10
Fellowship Alumni Spotlight: Mike Stancil	11
Daughter of Staffer Job Shadows at JHF.....	11
Serial Entrepreneur Bryan Kaplan Reflects on the Challenges and Promise of Growing the Technology Sector in Pittsburgh	12

Message from Karen Wolk Feinstein

We are in a “perfect storm” as our health systems struggle under the weight of staffing shortages, a spike in patient harm, and a growing mistrust in the system among the public. Challenges bring opportunity: to support those at the frontline with a better environment for safe care. On February 24, PRHI and many of our partners planted a flag for the Pittsburgh region to be an incubator of this innovation. This must be a collaborative effort and I’m grateful for the enthusiasm from so many leaders and stakeholders at a recent Patient Safety Technology Town Hall. We continue to invite your ideas and collaboration, and I look forward to building on our “RAPS” initiative’s first step and sharing more with you soon.

Regional Autonomous Patient Safety Launch Event Plants a Flag in Pittsburgh as an Innovation Hub

The Regional Autonomous Patient Safety (RAPS) initiative launch event was held February 24 at Carnegie Mellon University in partnership with the Pittsburgh Technology Council, convening regional stakeholders across academia, health care, life sciences, technology, and government in an effort to galvanize attention and resources to the opportunity to build an economy around healthcare safety and establish Pittsburgh as a global hub for development autonomous patient safety technologies.

In her introduction, Karen Wolk Feinstein, PhD, relayed that health care is at a tipping point, framing the launch of RAPS as a response. The perfect storm of workforce shortages and burnout, a rise in safety issues, and a growing lack of trust have highlighted the fragility of our health systems and the undue burden we place on our frontline workers.

Audrey Russo, president and CEO, Pittsburgh Technology Council, expanded on the region’s tech assets and ecosystem that position Pittsburgh to become a tech hub for autonomous patient safety solutions, including that PTC is the largest technology trade association in North America.

“There are barriers. But we’re entrepreneurs and scientists. We know those barriers, so with that I say, why not Pittsburgh. We can work on policy; we can work on collaboration; we can work on laws. We have the resources right here,” Russo said. “This is the juice that gets us a tech hub. We cannot miss this opportunity.”



Dr. Karen Wolk Feinstein welcomes over 110 attendees and keynote speaker Joe Kiani to Carnegie Mellon University for the RAPS Launch event.



Audrey Russo, President and CEO, Pittsburgh Technology Council, challenged those present to address what needs to change to enable tech companies to enter the healthcare market and create a safety-focused incubator in the region.

Recognizing that Pittsburgh has the regional assets and investors to be a global hub for developing autonomous patient safety solutions, the Jewish Healthcare Foundation (JHF) and Pittsburgh Regional Health Initiative (PRHI) have launched the RAPS initiative, envisioning the development of new med/tech collaborations, innovations, and solutions. The initiative will build on the region's exceptional resources, such as AI and robotics leadership; the breadth and depth of health services research and education at the region's universities; and the growing regional entrepreneurship and business community.

The RAPS Initiative has already launched with two key funding partnerships established through grants in 2022 with Carnegie Mellon University's Center for Digital Health Innovation on their Initiative for Patient Safety Research, and the University of Pittsburgh's Department of Biomedical Informatics' Medication Error Avoidance at Region Scale.

CMU's Center for Digital Health Innovation (CDHI) received a grant from the Jewish Healthcare Foundation to launch the CMU Initiative for Patient Safety Research (IPSR). The IPSR is co-managed by Tepper and CDHI. The project's initial focus will be on building and educating a community of patient safety researchers across CMU's schools and centers to work on specific problem definitions related to medication errors; create a benchmark data set with external data partners; and analyze the benchmark data set to refine problem definitions, identify outliers, conduct root-cause analyses, and generate hypotheses and proofs-of-concept methods to detect and prevent medication errors.

JHF is also funding the Medication Error Avoidance at Regional Scale (MEARS) study at the University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine's Department of Biomedical Informatics, which aims to reduce preventable adverse drug events among skilled nursing facility (SNF) patients who transition between the hospital and SNF facilities by developing and pilot testing a clinical decision support (CDS) intervention. The team will collaborate with the CMU team to allow CMU

A recent report by the [Office of the Inspector General](#) and a separate [New England Journal of Medicine](#) study both show high rates of harm prior the pandemic. Adding to this, during COVID-19, the CDC and CMS observed a substantial deterioration in patient safety measures, including a 28% increase in central lines infection, a 17.4% increase in falls in skilled nursing facilities, and a 41.8% increase in pressure ulcers. The increase in medical errors is compounded by COVID-19's impact on workforce

shortages, burnout, and turnover. The state of healthcare safety is simply at all crises levels.

Recognizing that Pittsburgh has the regional assets and investors to be a global hub for



Alan Scheller-Wolf, PhD, a member of the grant team at CMU's IPSR asks Joe Kiani a question.

researchers to develop and test predictive and analytic models focused on patient safety and medication avoidance error.

RAPS Launch Event

During the RAPS launch event, a keynote was provided by Joe Kiani, founder, chairman, and CEO of Masimo Corporation, where he also is the co-inventor of what is now recognized as “modern pulse oximetry.” He grew the business from a “garage start-up” to a successful publicly traded company employing more than 5,000 people around the world and monitoring over 200 million people a year.

In 2012, Kiani founded the non-profit Patient Safety Movement Foundation to end deaths from preventable medical errors in U.S. hospitals and globally. He worked with patient safety experts from around the world to create 18 Actionable Patient Safety Solutions and shared them online without charge. Under his leadership, close to 5,000 hospitals publicly committed to zero preventable deaths. Over 90 healthcare technology companies have signed an Open Data Pledge to share their data so that predictive algorithms that can identify errors before they become fatal can be developed.

During his keynote address “The Promise of Technology in Preventing Medical Errors and the Regional Components to Become a Global Tech Hub,” Kiani reviewed the persistent problem of medical errors and how traditional solutions haven’t moved the needle. Using Masimo’s journey and work as a framework, Kiani underlined the promise of technology in preventing medical errors and the market opportunity. He also provided insight into how to create an innovation hub in Pittsburgh that would realize its goals and mission.



In a breakout room, attendees discuss ideas, opportunities, barriers, funding, and partnerships to creating commercialized patient safety solutions.

Following the keynote, over 110 attendees representing multiple sectors gathered in breakout sessions to discuss: Engineering safety technology breakthroughs with multi-disciplinary teams; commercialized solutions; opportunities for medical specialty breakthroughs; and federal patient safety priorities.

Breakout room leaders included: Richard Boyce, PhD, Associate Professor, University of Pittsburgh Department of Biomedical Informatics; Ari Lightman, MBA, MSc, Professor, Digital Media and Marketing, Carnegie Mellon University Heinz College; Lindsey Ronnenberg, Senior Director, Global Quality, Products and Services, Omnicell; Sean McDonald, president and CEO, Ocugenix and CMU Entrepreneur in Residence; Jose-Alain Sahel, MD, chairman and distinguished professor of the Department of Ophthalmology at the University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine; Lee Harrison, MD, Associate Chief of Epidemiology and Education, School of Medicine, University of Pittsburgh; Jeanne Iasella, Chief Solutions Officer, TeleTracking; and Paul E. Phrampus, MD, Director of the Winter Institute for Simulation, Education and Research (WISER), Professor in the Departments of Emergency Medicine and Anesthesiology at the

University of Pittsburgh and UPMC, Medical Director of Patient Safety at UPMC Health System, and Medical Director of the Wolff Center at UPMC.

Following the lively discussions and idea sessions, breakout leaders and interested participants reconvened to synthesize ideas from the discussions and to help inform the next steps for RAPS.

Looking to the future

Among those next steps solidified at the RAPS launch event were: The formation of a regional Advisory Committee of academics, government leaders, health system leaders, professional association representatives, potential funders and investors; the commission of an economic analysis on the economic impact of the RAPS initiative; creation of a concept note identifying opportunities to bring additional funding to the region for patient safety R&D; and approaching potential investors/funders.

Following the event, PRHI plans to form a global advisory to create a Concept Note, outlining the Problem, Vision and Objectives, Scope, Methods, Targets, Timeline, and Management Plan. The Concept Note, backed by the Advisory, will be used to bring R&D funding to the Pittsburgh Region to become a global hub for autonomous patient safety solutions.

Read more about the RAPS event in an [article from TribLIVE](#) and [an article from Technical.ly](#).

Dr. Karen Wolk Feinstein Speaks on Patient Safety Panel at National Quality Forum's Annual Conference

The 2023 National Quality Forum Annual Conference "Innovation in Action: Driving Change Through Measurement," held February 20-23 in Washington, DC, convened healthcare leaders to highlight public and private sector innovations that are the leading edge of improving urgent priorities such as maternity outcomes, behavioral health, equity, and affordability. This marked the first NQF Conference to be held in person since before the start of the pandemic.

Dr. Karen Wolk Feinstein, president and CEO of the Jewish Healthcare Foundation sat on the panel "Prioritizing



Dr. Karen Wolk Feinstein and Dr. Hardeep Singh connect at the NQF Annual Conference.

Patient Safety: What Will It Take to Eliminate Avoidable Harm?" with Leah Binder, president and CEO of the Leapfrog Group and member of the JHF Board of Trustees; Kenneth W. Kizer, adjunct professor at Stanford University School of Medicine; Robert Valdez, director, Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality; and Elizabeth Mort, senior vice president, quality and safety and Chief Quality Officer, Massachusetts General Hospital.



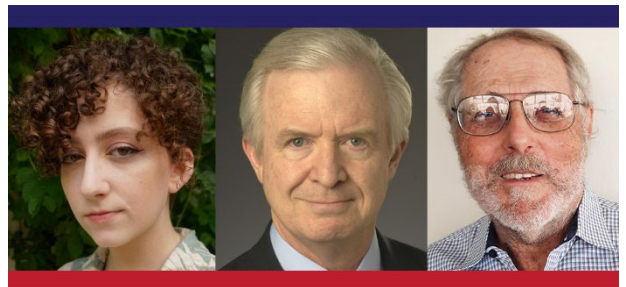
Karen Wolk Feinstein, PhD (right) sits on a panel with (from left to right) Robert Valdez, Kenneth W. Kizer, Elizabeth Mort, and Leah Binder.

Two decades are “To Err is Human,” medical errors remain a leading cause of death in the U.S. Panelists discussed why eliminating avoidable healthcare harm is so intractable and shared what they think it will take to overcome the barriers and create breakthrough results.

At the conference, friend of the Foundation [Jason Adelman, MD, MS](#) received the [Individual Achievement Award](#) in the John M. Eisenberg Patient Safety and Quality Awards in recognition of his achievements to improve patient safety and healthcare quality. [Hardeep Singh, MD, MPH](#), a friend of the Foundation, received the 2021 Eisenberg Lifetime Achievement Award.

National Patient Safety Board Full Court Press Team Meeting Discusses Ways to Raise Awareness about Medical Error through Media Coverage

The National Patient Safety Board (NPSB) Full Court Press team meeting held virtually on February 7 provided a forum for a conversation between Full Court Press members and three national journalists on how to raise public interest and awareness about patient safety and medical error.



Guests included: Mari Devereaux, safety and quality reporter for Modern Healthcare; Andy Pasztor, formerly of the Wall Street Journal, author of the 1995 book *When the Pentagon was For Sale: Inside America's Biggest*

Defense Scandal, and who was featured extensively in the recent Netflix film *Downfall: The Case Against Boeing*; and John J. Nance, an internationally recognized air safety advocate, a key thought leader in American Healthcare, founder of the National Patient Safety Foundation, an aviation analyst for ABC World News and aviation editor for Good Morning America.

Pictured from left to right are: Mari Devereaux, John Nance, and Andy Pasztor.

“This is the conversation we’ve been waiting for. That we’ve all wanted to have. The media have not buried this problem. The issue is getting some really strong action at the federal level. But to get that action you need public awareness,” Dr. Karen Wolk Feinstein, president and CEO of the Jewish Healthcare Foundation said, opening a discussion for how to continue to bring the issue of patient safety to the forefront of media coverage.

In conversation, the three media experts each noted that the last three years of COVID have exhausted the public and inundated them with healthcare news ranging from topics of COVID-19, health equity, environmental issues, nursing shortages, and more.

Devereaux said that while there is no shortage of individuals who have experienced adverse events with stories to tell. What’s missing is extensive data to drive, shape, and inform coverage.

In the conversation, full court press member David Classen, MD, MS, shared data from a recent peer-reviewed article he reviewed which was ultimately removed from the manuscript before being printed. The table in the original manuscript showed the rates of adverse events per 100 admissions in each hospital in the study, with the three largest reporting adverse event rates per 100 admissions at 39-47 percent.

“In the biggest, best funded, most research-oriented hospitals in this study, they’re injuring at least half of the patients admitted,” Classen said. “If we don’t look at field data, we’re never going to know how bad it is.”

Full court press member Sue Sheridan said the issue is there is no collective voice for patients and no significant forum to submit stories, experiences, and data, which the NPSB is working to address.

“When harm happens to your family, the first thing that you want to do is tell somebody so it doesn’t happen again. Right now, we have no meaningful mechanisms to hear and learn from the patient community,” Sheridan said.

Recording of the meeting is available here: <https://youtu.be/s0UY-YVnMJg>

Karen Wolk Feinstein’s Viewpoint in the Pittsburgh Business Times: “Regional Solution Needed to Address Workforce Shortages”

The current nursing shortage, the interconnectedness of workers’ personal safety and patient safety, and the acute decline in the number of nursing assistants in skilled nursing facilities was recently highlighted in an op-ed published February 17 in *The Pittsburgh Business Times*. [“Regional Solutions Needed to Address Workforce Shortages”](#) written by Jewish Healthcare Foundation President and CEO Karen Wolk Feinstein, PhD.



Dementia Friendly Pennsylvania Webinar Focuses on Recentering Sex and Sexuality for People Living with Dementia

Dementia Friendly Pennsylvania kicked off a new webinar series with “Recentering Sex & Sexuality for People Living with Dementia” on February 8. Led by Emily Franke, LSW, MSW, a program associate for the Jewish Healthcare Foundation (JHF), the webinar had 95



attendees from 37 Pennsylvania counties and beyond, including Iowa, Ohio, Massachusetts, Minnesota, North Carolina, Nevada, Texas, and Israel.

Launched in September 2022, Dementia Friendly Pennsylvania is a collaborative effort with Dementia Friends Pennsylvania, a program of JHF and existing Dementia Friendly Pennsylvania communities and is supported by the Pennsylvania Department of Aging. This initiative works to ensure communities across the state are equipped to support people living with dementia and their care partners.

The new Dementia Friendly Webinar Series will be held bimonthly, focusing on topics related to dementia that are often not discussed but are necessary to talk about. The series was formed in response to knowledge gaps identified by members of the Dementia Friendly communities in Pennsylvania during conversations about dementia knowledge that is needed across the Commonwealth.

During the February session, participants learned to apply intersectionality to understand the impacts of ageism and ableism on sexual expression; gained an understanding of the benefits of assessing for and acknowledging sexual health needs; learned to use evidence-based assessment tools for discussing difficult topics, such as sexual health and how to implement tools into person-centered care plans; discussed the complexities of consent for persons living with dementia; and explored the implications of the medical model focus of change and loss versus adaptation and pleasure.

The next Dementia Friendly Webinar, “Dementia and Firearm Safety,” will be held on April 4 at noon. The webinar will include a presentation by Joseph Simonetti, MD, MPH, of Rocky Mountain Regional VA Medical Center and Rocky Mountain MIRECC for Suicide Prevention Initiative at the University of Colorado Anschutz Medical Campus, focused on health-related changes that can affect firearm handling and safety among people living with dementia. The event will include a panel discussion with Marissa Marshall, Esq., CELA, partner at Kreisher Marshall & Associates LLC, Lieutenant Timothy E. Janosco, officer of Community Engagement for the Pennsylvania State Police, and Rollin Wright, MD, MPH, MS, associate professor of Medicine at Penn State Health – Hershey Medical Center. [Register now.](#)

Learn more about Dementia Friendly Pennsylvania by visiting www.dementiafriendlypa.org or contacting info@dementiafriendlypa.org.

2023 Teen Mental Health Advocacy Series Begins

The PA Youth Advocacy Network, a program of the Jewish Healthcare Foundation, launched the 2023 Teen Mental Health Advocacy Series on February 1. The second annual series aims to connect Pennsylvania high school students with advocacy skills, such as communicating their cause, using data for



Pictured in the top row, left to right are panelists: Jamal Ford; Jesse Putkoski, and Kelly Davis with youth facilitators (bottom left to right) Mary Zagrocki and Mohammad Shedeed.

advocacy, and coalition-building.

The 22 participants represent 9 counties across the commonwealth including Allegheny, Bucks, Lancaster, Lehigh, Luzerne, Montgomery, Philadelphia, Washington and York. The students range from grades 9-12 and have varied experiences exploring and leading advocacy initiatives in their schools and communities. The Advocacy Series builds on JHF's years of effort to call for change in teen mental health through the PA Youth Advocacy Network.

During the nine virtual sessions through March 29, students will work to create a teen advocacy action guide for other teens and adult to use to learn about an issue and concrete advocacy steps that can be taken around the issue. In the series finale, teens will also have opportunities to work with mental health leaders to focus on concrete actions steps they can take to promote change.

The February Advocacy Series sessions introduced participants to the series plan and connected them with community partners who are experienced in promoting teen mental health. The participants formed relationships with others in their communities, mapped community assets, and established their key interests in teen mental health advocacy topics.

Guest speakers for the February sessions included: Ayala Rosenthal, teen engagement and outreach coordinator at The Friendship Circle, discussing the importance of youth voice in advocacy; Danyelle Borish, project coordinator for Stand Together, on the importance of language around mental health; a youth panel including Gia Cella, Aneedha Kandala, and Mohammad Shedeed spoke about using clubs to address stigma and form partnerships with adults and peers; Brooklyn Williams, who spoke about her advocacy and the Chill Club; Kelly Davis, associate vice president of peer and youth advocacy, Mental Health America; Jamal Ford, youth resource coordinator, PA Care Partnership; and Jesse Putkoski, area director, Western PA Chapter of American Foundation for Suicide Prevention.

The March sessions will provide participants with opportunities to network with leaders of organizations across Pennsylvania working to promote teen mental health, advance their advocacy projects, and build public will around their causes. Participants will complete the series with greater understanding and confidence in their abilities to promote positive change in their communities and to collaborate with others as well as an advocacy toolkit focused on an issue important to them.

PA Youth Advocacy News: Youth Wins Leadership Award, Teens Featured on Podcast, and Panelists Discuss Ways to Amplify Youth Voice

PA Youth Advocacy Network youth advocate Mohammad Shedeed is the Pennsylvania NAMI 2023 Youth Mental Health Leadership Award essay contest winner. Shedeed, a senior at South Fayette High School, wrote about the mental health stigma he has witnessed, his work as a teen mental health advocate, and his vision for the future. [Read more](#)



Teens discuss why mental health matters and the work they are doing to amplify youth voices in discussions about teen mental health at The Friendship Circle's Teens Talk event.

In a special episode of the Mentor Chat podcast, The Mentoring Partnership staffers Michelle Thomas and Ashley Wineland interview youth advocates Chavi Beck, Aneesha Kandala, and Giavanna Cella, youth advocates in the PA Youth Advocacy Network, to share their thoughts about youth mental health and how adults can offer support by listening and elevating their voice. [Listen here](#)

PA Youth Advocacy partnered with The Friendship Circle for a teen panel on “Why Mental Health Matters” at The Friendship Circle’s Teens Talk community wellness and resource fair February 26. The discussion centered on the importance of mental health, its impact teen mental health has on the community, and ways to advocate for and amplify youth voices. More about the event [in this article from the Jewish Chronicle](#).

JHF Welcomes Three New Staff Members

Lisa Boyd is the administrative associate for the Jewish Healthcare Foundation and its supporting organizations—the Pittsburgh Regional Health Initiative (PRHI), Health Careers Futures (HCF), and the Women’s Health Activist Movement Global (WHAMglobal). This role provides high-level operations and research support to the

executive office. Ms. Boyd has over 20 years of experience providing administrative, program, and research support in the nonprofit sector. Most recently, she was the executive assistant for the Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh, supporting the library’s President and Director and Board of Trustees. Before moving to Pittsburgh in 2016, Ms. Boyd worked as a graduate research assistant in the Department of Sociology and senior administrative assistant in the Office of Strategic Planning and Institutional Research at the University of Notre Dame. Ms. Boyd began her career as a program assistant at the Colorado Foundation for Medical Care and has a BA in Sociology from the Metropolitan State University of Denver.



Pictured from left to right are: Lisa Boyd, Sarah LaVoie, and Kell Wilkinson.

Sarah LaVoie is the HIV Program Associate in a support role to the HIV/AIDS team. In this role, Sarah is responsible for assisting with general administrative functions and team logistics, monthly invoicing, and provider outreach. She will support the rest of the team by organizing technical assistance trainings, event planning, and coordinating meetings. She previously served as a registered dietitian in hospital and long-term care facilities and as a wellness coach for clients across the country. In addition, she worked at a start-up company managing finances for local and national restaurants. In her spare time, Sarah likes to crochet and is an expert in the craft. She hosts monthly meetups and classes around the city teaching the skill.

Kell Wilkinson is the new project manager for AIDS Free Pittsburgh (AFP), a county-wide collaborative to end the HIV epidemic in Allegheny County by 2030. As the AFP Program

Manager, Mx. Wilkinson will serve as the primary contact for the AFP project. This role is responsible for lead logistics of the AFP Advisory Group, subcommittees, and high-level stakeholder meetings; establishing a new community advisory committee; collaborating with the Allegheny County Health Department to develop outcome measures and data reporting on results to the community; and developing and maintaining partnerships with health professionals and community-based organizations. Mx. Wilkinson previously served in roles at the Allegheny County Department of Health and Department of Human Services, at the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania with the Governor's Policy Office, and with various nonprofit advocacy organizations. Mx. Wilkinson currently serves on the Board of Directors at Prevention Point Pittsburgh. Mx. Wilkinson is passionate about harm reduction principles, LGBTQ rights, mental health awareness, and health equity. Mx. Wilkinson earned a Master of Public Administration and a Master of Social Work from the University of Pittsburgh.

Fellowship Alumni Spotlight: Mike Stancil

The Jewish Healthcare Foundation is launching a new spotlight series to showcase some of the many incredible alumni of the Feinstein Fellowships. Over the past 17 years, over 1,200 individuals have participated in a Feinstein Fellowship program, including the Death & Dying Fellowship, the Patient Safety Fellowship, the QIT Fellowship, and Salk Health Activist Fellowship. We're excited to share some of their stories, what they're up to now, and how their fellowship experience effected their career.



[In this video](#), 2022 Salk Health Activist Fellowship alumnus Mike Stancil shares about his Fellowship experience and its impact.

Stancil is CEO & President of the Pittsburgh Business Group on Health, Vice President of Bridges 4 Health Equity, and cofounder and CMO of Leaficient. He earned his bachelor degree from Slippery Rock University and master degree from George Washington University. He currently serves on the Executive Service Corp. through the Bayer Center for Nonprofit Management, is a member of the Pittsburgh Business Times Leadership Trust and was selected as one of City & State's Power 100 for 2023. Learn more about his Fellowship experience in this video.

For additional information about how you can participate in the Feinstein Fellowship experience please contact Ashlee Carter at carter@jhf.org or [learn more here](#).

Daughter of Staffer Job Shadows at JHF

Teagan Turcsanyi, a freshman at Hampton High School and daughter of Director of Technology Brian Turcsanyi and former

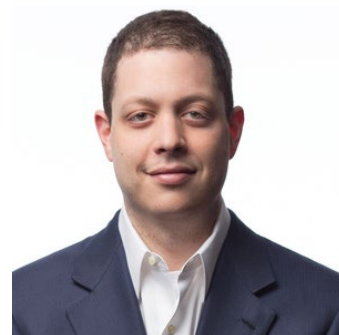


Senior Research Analyst Colleen Vrbín (PRHI 2008 - 2012), visited the Foundation as part of her job shadowing requirement for ninth grade.

Teagan is still undecided on her future college and career plans but got a first-hand look at the technology that supports the many programs and initiatives at JHF. Teagan got a behind-the-scenes look at the newly launched [Dementia Friendly PA](#) website, Tomorrow's HealthCare, and how Google Analytics and HubSpot are used to track engagement and reach stakeholders. She also got "hands-on" experiencing preparing for the RAPS launch event.

Serial Entrepreneur Bryan Kaplan Reflects on the Challenges and Promise of Growing the Technology Sector in Pittsburgh

Bryan Kaplan is a technology executive, serial entrepreneur, and angel investor with more than 27 years of experience in driving business strategy, leading cross-functional teams, and facilitating enterprise change management across the healthcare and SaaS software spaces.



A business leader and self-starter from a young age, Kaplan started his first company at age 11, creating calendar and address book applications. He rolled that venture into Delta New Media, which he founded at age 13 to create web sites and help companies start their first online stores. As a sophomore at Carnegie Mellon University, Kaplan won first place in the school's undergraduate business plan competition, using the business plan for Delta New Media.

In 2021, he co-founded Collaborative Fusion, Inc. with two other CMU students. Providing innovative emergency management solutions for federal, state, and local governments and the private sector, Collaborative Fusion supported clients in preparing for emergencies, coordinating response efforts, and building stronger communities. Kaplan formed the company with Atila Omer and Lawrence Yau. The trio worked tirelessly to connect students across degree programs to bring business and technical expertise together to form the company.

The terrorist attacks on September 11 proved a pivotal moment for the company.

"We were introduced to a gentleman named Dr. Richard Hatchet who was a triage leader at Ground Zero. Dr. Hatchet said one of the problems during the response was that many medical professionals showed up to Ground Zero but none of their credentials could be validated. This experience led to the creation of policy and technology to assemble and pre-register a cadre of volunteer health professionals," Kaplan explained.

Collaborative Fusion immediately began advocating for standards to verify medical licenses and credentials and build software to ensure medical professionals arriving to the scene of an incident could be rapidly put to use even across state and jurisdictional boundaries.

"Atila had the finance and operations background. I had the technology background, and Lawrence supported design and software architecture. As we added staff, we were fortunate to support

numerous federal initiatives which helped grow the company. ” said Kaplan, adding that that is where they looked to mentors to help bridge the knowledge gaps.

Kaplan noted he Collaborative Fusion had the technical expertise from Dr. Hatchett and the mentoring from George Fechter of the University of Pittsburgh and Jim Goldberg, a Pittsburgh-based corporate law expert. He added there are many others who have helped along the way.

A Los Angeles native, Mr. Kaplan graduated from Carnegie Mellon University in 2002 with a Bachelor of Science in Business Administration with an Entrepreneurship concentration. He considered pursuing his MBA but decided to go into business instead. By 2003, [*The Pittsburgh Business Times*](#) touted him as “someone who is changing the face of Pittsburgh.”

Kaplan is currently the Chief Information and Technology Officer for [*Juware*](#) which is a SaaS software company providing crisis and emergency management solutions to over 600 emergency management agencies, 50 federal agencies, 4,000 hospitals and public health department, and numerous Fortune 500 companies and higher education institutions.

“My work in emergency preparedness and response is a personal calling that has a societal impact. It's very important to me – and I'm very proud of the fact – that our businesses save lives. I can point to scenarios, whether it is shelters we've helped organize, emergency services we've routed more efficiently, or reimbursement funds to citizens in need that our solutions have helped accelerate” Kaplan said. “Some of what we do is a little bit abstract, but it's not hard to take the leap from what we do to the direct impact. And I wouldn't trade that for anything.”

His advice to entrepreneurs, inventors and investors is to not give up.

“Good teams and good operators are able to pivot to respond to what the market is telling them,” Kaplan said. He reflected on his work at Collaborative Fusion that was able to make a sizable pivot from a software product targeted at the university market to one operating volunteer management systems across 30+ states. “A level of flexibility is important, but you also need people who are passionate about the product, the mission, and the type of work that you're doing. People who are passionate and invested end up figuring it out.”

Pittsburgh continues to be a promising, albeit challenging, environment for growth in the technology sector.

“Pittsburgh can be a difficult region to commercialize a good idea There are more people writing checks for early-stage ventures today than there were ten years ago but we still have a ways to go,” Kaplan said.

Kaplan said in the early stages of development he saw Pittsburgh with an advantage for raising angel funds due to its accessible, close-knit network of angel investors. However, a disadvantage is the lack of professional venture capital investment originating in the region.

“Pittsburgh is unique in that it is at the intersection of health care, robotics, AI/ML technology. I would argue that there are few other cities...that have the unique concentration that Pittsburgh has

that makes this very exciting,” Kaplan said. “The accelerators here in Pittsburgh do a good job of helping companies find that product market fit.”

Kaplan’s experience motivates him to help entrepreneurs and their ideas break these barriers by giving back in the same way he was given – in investments of time and funds.

“I’ve really done my best to participate in the startup ecosystem here in Pittsburgh because I’m a firm believer that without mentors and people who help guide process, it doesn’t matter how old you are, how much experience you have or don’t have,” Kaplan said. “It’s hard enough to get company off the ground let alone doing it without anyone around you that can help you.”

A friend of the Jewish Healthcare Foundation, Kaplan sees how JHF is working to bringing these gaps to get forward movement of patient safety innovation in the region and to mark Pittsburgh as a hub for autonomous patient safety technology.

“I really appreciate the Foundation’s interest in wide patient safety and community preparedness initiatives that help us as a community be better consumers of health care and have better access to data and information,” Kaplan said. “Whether it’s policy or advocacy, what the Foundation does is critically important to this region and Karen is an expert voice on a number of topics that draws national level visibility of the assets of this region, which certainly is a catalyst for not only company growth but also improving patient outcomes.”