



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

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Message from Karen Wolk Feinstein

Our hearts ache for Israel and the needless victimization from the attack that took place on October 7 targeting innocent civilians celebrating a religious holiday. It is hard to comprehend the ongoing chaos, pain, and danger of the current situation.

Our thoughts, in particular, are with our friends and colleagues of Israel’s HMO, Clalit Health Services, and all the providers of emergency services, including Magen David Adom, as they struggle to care for injured soldiers and civilians with vastly reduced staff.

We send our deepest sympathies to the people of Israel.

Emergency Grants Approved to Support Medical Needs in Israel

The Jewish Healthcare Foundation (JHF) approved \$150,000 in funding to support the emergency healthcare needs of Israel’s citizens in light of the horrific terrorist attacks by Hamas that took place on October 7 and the continued violence in the Israel-Hamas War. Thanks to many years of collaboration in Israel, JHF was able to move quickly to get funding to two organizations that responded immediately to the medical needs of residents in Israel.



JHF provided \$100,000 to the Israel Health Care Foundation and Clalit Health Services. JHF has a long-time partnership with both the Israel Health Care Foundation and Clalit, which provides health care for more than half of Israel’s population, including many who are older, economically disadvantaged, and who live farther from the center of the country. Emergency funds of \$50,000 were also provided to American Friends of Magen David Adom, a nonprofit organization supporting Israel’s paramedic and Red Cross service.

Both organizations’ work has been magnified in importance during this time, as they treat the many thousands of Israelis who have suffered physically and mentally as a result of the needless and unprecedented attacks. Clalit and American Friends of Magen David Adom are both centers of excellence, and the funding builds on 14 years of partnership efforts between these organizations and JHF to provide for the needs of their patients and families.

Israeli Healthcare Foundation Senior Resource Advisor Perry Davis, PhD reported that as of October 26, 20 days into the war, there have been 5,400 wounded Israelis with countless more suffering mental health challenges from the ongoing rocket attacks and the hostage situation.

“In light of the current war with Hamas and Hezbollah, Israel’s healthcare system is experiencing an unprecedented strain on its human and material resources. The civilian casualties are overwhelming. The number of military casualties in the hostilities ahead of us are still unknown. These wounded soldiers add to the critical challenge Clalit’s 14 hospitals and 1,400 clinics will face in the weeks ahead and for the foreseeable future,” Dr. Davis said. “That is why the very quick emergency grant made by the Jewish Healthcare Foundation was and is so heartening.”

The funds from JHF were directed to Soroka Medical Center in Beer Sheva – the epicenter of the war. On the day of the attacks, Soroka had to treat 680 civilians – many with gunshot wounds needing surgery. That was twice the size of the most pessimistic mass casualty drill ever held. With a continuing influx of patients, Soroka was forced to empty in-patient wards and transform them into surgical theaters.

“Your generous grant is being used to replenish supplies and provide life-saving surgical equipment,” Dr. Davis said. “The Clalit Healthcare Network and the Israel Healthcare Foundation are grateful beyond words.”

JHF has a long commitment to learning from and with Israel, with [nine visits occurring between 2009 and 2013](#) where Israeli and American professionals shared best practices and collaborated around the challenge of advancing safe, high quality and efficient care. Those visits served to inform the U.S. healthcare reform debate, brought important Israeli innovations to the U.S. and vice versa. For JHF, it led to a large grant to develop primary care resource centers in six hospitals in the Pittsburgh region. For Israel, we introduced both a method and aspirations for better infection control. Working with Clalit, JHF produced papers on the value of a single payer system, being asked numerous times to present our work at large global health conferences, covering topics such as introducing behavioral health to primary care, infection control, and women’s health.

This collaboration has continued, most recently with JHF granting the Israel Healthcare Foundation [support in 2022](#) to train 65 experienced nurses to become nurse practitioners to be certified in geriatric pain management treatment and end of life care. Above all, we have made lasting friendships and professional networks.

JHF Recognizes Fifth Anniversary of Oct. 27 Synagogue Shooting

On the five-year anniversary of the attack at Pittsburgh's Tree of Life synagogue, the deadliest antisemitic attack in American history, the Jewish Healthcare Foundation honors the memory of victims of the horrific attacks on the Tree of Life, Dor Hadash, and New Light Congregations and stands resolute in supporting initiatives to address acts of intolerance, bigotry, violence, and hatred.

In September, JHF approved \$200,000, or \$50,000 a year from 2023-2026, to implement Phase II of the Jewish Community Center's [10.27 Healing Partnership](#), supporting the expansion of its programming and services, including alternative healing therapies, to a broader range of communities and individuals affected by trauma. The Healing Partnership is working with the Virtual Senior Academy at AgeWell at JCC to better serve seniors within and beyond Squirrel Hill. In recent months, the Partnership has been called on to serve a wide diversity of people in need. Learn more in [this video](#).



10.27 Healing Partnership Director Maggie Feinstein addresses a large crowd gathered for the 5th Commemoration of October 27, 2018.

Safer Childbirth City Gala Showcases Collaborative Progress Toward Improved Care for Black Mothers

Held October 19 at the Kelly Strayhorn Theater in Pittsburgh's East End, the *Pittsburgh: A Safer Childbirth City* Finale Gala was a culmination and celebration of the collaboration of local nonprofits to make Pittsburgh a safer and more equitable place for mothers and babies.

[Safer Childbirth Cities](#) was launched in 2018 as an initiative of [Merck for Mothers](#). In 2019, Pittsburgh was selected as one of 10 initial cities, due to the strong network of health and human services, with organizations well positioned to fill crucial gaps in services and address social determinants of health. The multi-year effort aims to foster community-led solutions that will help cities become safer, more equitable places to give birth. The *Pittsburgh: A Safer Childbirth City* project was born to confront the disturbing disparities in maternal health outcomes in our region, particularly affecting Black mothers in Pittsburgh. The Jewish Healthcare Foundation



Pictured from left to right are: Muffy Mendoza, Kieashia DeShawn, Syreeta Gordon, Angela Bejarano, Iyanna Bridges, and Amber Edmunds.

(JHF) and Women's Health Activist Movement Global (WHAMglobal) closely partnered with [seven organizations across the region](#) – [Brown Mamas](#), [Elephant Song Doula Services](#), [Healthy Start](#), [Hello Neighbor](#), [Kangaroo Birthing & Maternity Concierge](#), [MAYA Organization](#), and [The Birthing Hut](#), serving Black mothers and families.

One of the key components of the Safer Childbirth Cities project was the year-long Perinatal Health Equity Champions Program designed to build capacity in the birthing workforce to help address racial disparities and improve maternal health care in the Pittsburgh region. The Champions Program established trusted working relationships among community and hospital birth workers to drive holistic solutions, strengthen the continuity of care, and bridge resources across the maternal care continuum. The projects were highlighted during the Finale Gala through posters throughout the theater.



The Gala event drew a large crowd to the Kelly Strayhorn Theater in East Liberty.

The Finale Gala event provided a venue for community leaders, legislators, JHF Board members, and members of the philanthropic community to hear from these critical community organizations supporting Black mothers and their families, and network with allies and leaders working toward equitable Black maternal outcomes.

In her remarks, JHF and WHAMglobal Board Chair Debra Caplan, MPA highlighted how women's health has always been a part of the programmatic fabric of JHF, which has provided grants and initiated projects since its earliest days. JHF and WHAMglobal began an intense focus on improving maternal health outcomes in 2017 after the Latino Community Center in Pittsburgh won WHAMglobal's inaugural Big Idea Challenge with a project highlighting maternal outcome



Debra Caplan traces the roots of the *Pittsburgh: A Safer Childbirth City* project and its impact.

disparities. The efforts since that time resulted in the creation of the Pennsylvania Perinatal Quality Collaborative and securing the Safer Childbirth City grant from Merck for Mothers. The Heinz Endowments has been a key partner in this work since the work began, providing funding to support components of the *Pittsburgh: A Safer Childbirth City* project.

"The *Pittsburgh: A Safer Childbirth City* project is a testament to what can be achieved when we unite to prioritize equity and partnership, and it serves as a beacon of hope for maternal health care across the nation," Caplan said. "It has shown that when individuals, community, health care systems, and community-based organizations come together with

a shared purpose, extraordinary transformations can occur. The accomplishments over the past

four years have not only preserved lives but have also kindled hope, inspiration, and empowerment among countless mothers and families across Pittsburgh.”

During the Gala, community partners shared and reflected on their work, the support of the program and its impact, as well as the future for Black mothers and birthing people in Pittsburgh. Presenters included Kieshia DeShawn of Elephant Song Doula Services, Amber Edmunds of the MAYA Organization, Muffy Mendoza of Brown Mamas, who presented a clip from the “Brown Mama Monologues,” and Syreeta Gordon of Kangaroo Birthing, who also presented a preview of the documentary film “Her Dreams: A Story of the Future of Black Birth.”

Some presenters, like The Birthing Hut Founder Iyanna Bridges, shared personal experiences that led them to birthwork and advocacy. Bridges was led to this work by the traumatic experience of her fourth birth, during which she learned about doulas and why it is so important for Black birthing people to have nonbiased support to speak on their behalf during pregnancy and birth.

As a result of that experience, she created the Blacktivist Birthkeeper Training, her own curriculum, certification, and training program for Black woman inspired to be birth workers in Pittsburgh to bring Black culture, traditional practices, ancestral wisdom and respect of the Black birthing experience. She recently certified the third cohort of Black birthworkers.

“A Black woman is four-times more likely to die from complications from labor and delivery than other women. Sixty percent of those deaths are preventable and it’s horrific that this maternal health disparity has yet to be solved,” said Bridges, outlining how The Birthing Hut works to combat these statistics with customizable birth services and birth and postpartum planning and support. “We are changing the birth climate within Pittsburgh. We are working to build the Black maternal health profession itself so that we can be side-by-side with our physicians and nurses and midwives and help combat the disparities.”

State Representative La’Tasha D. Mayes, a decades-long advocate for Black maternal health and reproductive justice, highlighted forward legislative movement on maternal health issues with the launch of the [Pennsylvania Black Maternal Caucus](#), introduction of the [Dignity for Incarcerated Women Act](#), and SB 262, which would add “severe maternal morbidity” to the list of reportable events within the Pennsylvania Department of Health.



Iyanna Bridges, a member of the Perinatal Health Equity Champions program shares information about The Birthing Hut.



State Rep. La'Tasha D. Mayes highlights the importance of the work of the organizations present at the event and work being done at the legislative level to support Black mothers.

Rep. Mayes also highlighted the [Black Maternal Health Momnibus Act](#), a bicameral bill with the goal of saving the lives of mothers and addressing every dimension of the maternal health crisis in the United States. The 13 individual bills included in the Act will make investments in the social determinants of health that impact maternal health outcomes, extend WIC eligibility, fund community-based organizations working to improve maternal health and promote equity, increase funding for maternal health care for veterans, grow and diversify the perinatal workforce, improve data collection processes and quality measures, support moms with maternal mental health conditions and substance use disorders, improve care and support for incarcerated moms, invest in digital tools to improve maternal health outcomes in underserved areas, and more.

“This work is your legacy. You’re doing healing work. You’re doing ancestral work. You’re doing reproductive justice work. You are doing blessed work. You are doing powerful work. You are doing transforming, life-changing work. Never doubt the idea or the work that you’re doing. I’m living proof that if you can do it in Pittsburgh, you can do it anywhere,” Rep. Mayes said.

Maternal Health Innovation Grant Advisory Board Awards \$1.3M

Six additional awards have been made under the Jewish Healthcare Foundation’s (JHF) maternal care innovation grant opportunity, bringing the total number of awards for the first round of funding to 10. A total of \$1,324,353 has been committed for this first round of funding out of a total \$4.5 million funding stream for short-term, maternal care innovation projects that will positively impact maternal health in Pennsylvania.



JHF is operating as the fiscal agent for federal Coronavirus State Fiscal Recovery Funds provided through the Pennsylvania Department of Human Services to address maternal health needs. The six recently awarded grants were submitted over the summer and recommendations were made by an external review committee in late August.

New awardees and programs include:

- [MAYA Organization](#): Assessment of current operations to offer equitable programming to better serve BIPOC and marginalized birthing people and birth workers, and to create a replicable model that other birth care organizations can use to provide racially equitable services.
- [Maternal and Family Health Services](#): Implementation of a maternal-child medical home model in Lackawanna County to reduce barriers to care access through the provision of

comprehensive blood glucose assessments, including evaluation and implementation of medical management programs with home blood glucose self-monitoring for prenatal and postpartum clients who present with gestational diabetes and type 1 or type 2 diabetes.

- [UPMC Magee Women's Hospital](#): Provision of maternal health educational opportunities and screenings directly within low-income housing developments in Allegheny County to women who are pregnant or have recently had a child, and providing mentors to pregnant people in the program who will provide support and resources throughout pregnancy and postpartum.
- [Maternity Care Coalition](#): Creation of a Family Support Fund to benefit pregnant people and new families in Southeastern Pennsylvania.
- [National Council of Jewish Women Pittsburgh](#): Expansion of services under existing MomsWork program through the hiring of additional providers as well as increasing staff oversight to support the expanded support group, from childcare providers to additional therapists. NCJW will also secure a larger space to accommodate more participants and purchase additional materials for psychological safety, intimacy, and comfort.
- [The Wright Center for Community Health](#): Implementation of two programs as part of their Healthy MOMS program: Angel Eyes Camera NICU System to support parents with Opioid Use Disorder/Substance Use Disorders and expanding access to doula care and doula education and training.

Maternal care innovation grant awards are reviewed and allocated by the [Maternal Health Innovation Grant Advisory Board](#), a group of 18 experts and practitioners across Pennsylvania working in maternal health, social work, policy, midwifery, public health, minority health, and grantmaking.

The committee convened on October 25 to discuss the next round of proposals. Thirteen proposals have been reviewed by the committee for this round, totaling \$1.8 million in requests. JHF expects to hold at least one more round of funding for proposals received between September and October 2023. Read about previously funded projects [here](#).

Doula Care and Lactation Support Made Available in Two Pennsylvania State Prisons

Two doula projects in Pennsylvania have received funding from the state via the Jewish Healthcare Foundation (JHF) to explore innovative ways to reduce maternal mortality and morbidity.

JHF is operating as the fiscal agent for federal Coronavirus State Fiscal Recovery Funds provided through the Pennsylvania Department of Human Services (DHS) to address maternal health needs. Two funding streams were established by the state legislative sponsors to expand and support doula care in Pennsylvania.



The first funding stream expands a pilot project between the DHS and the Pennsylvania Department of Corrections (DOC). The goal of the project is to provide lactation support and doula care to pregnant inmates at two State Correctional Institutions serving women in Pennsylvania. Genesis Birth Services have been providing doula care to the pregnant population at State Correctional Institution (SCI) Muncy, near Williamsport, since 2022 through a separate funding stream, which will continue to be funded through JHF. Additional support is now being provided to the DOC to establish a lactation room at the facility, and to cover costs for milk shipment.

As the fiscal agent, JHF has worked with DHS and DOC to identify another doula provider to expand services to SCI Cambridge Springs, in the northwestern region of Pennsylvania. BirthRoot Community Doula Alliance, based out of Erie, will work with the pregnant SCI Cambridge Springs population by providing prenatal, birth, and postpartum care to all interested women. A lactation room and milk shipment program will also be established at SCI Cambridge Springs in 2024.

A second funding stream with the overall goal of improving access to doula care for pregnant people and new families in Pennsylvania supports doula training and certification efforts spearheaded by the Pennsylvania Doula Commission (PADC). Funding will enable the PADC to expand access to doulas for families in Pennsylvania. Additionally, PADC will cover the costs of Pennsylvania doulas to receive Pennsylvania state certification and additional training and will provide coverage for doulas for qualifying families residing in Pennsylvania.

Debra Caplan Recognized as a Pennsylvania Distinguished Daughter

Debra Caplan, MPA was among ten women recognized as [Distinguished Daughters of Pennsylvania](#) by Governor and First Lady Shapiro on October 11 at an annual luncheon at the Governor's Residence. The prestigious accolade is given in recognition for leadership, service, and extraordinary achievements.

Ms. Caplan has served on the Jewish Healthcare Foundation's Board of Trustees since 2015, and during that time has served in various leadership roles including as JHF Board vice chair from 2018-2020 and JHF Board chair since 2021. She is also currently Chair of the WHAMglobal Board.



Debra Caplan greets Gov. Josh Shapiro during the annual Distinguished Daughters luncheon.

Currently, Ms. Caplan is an Executive-in-Residence at The Forbes Funds where she advises nonprofits in the areas of governance and leadership. She also serves as Principal of HobartHumphrey LLC, a consultancy in governance and nonprofit executive management. During her longstanding career as a leader in healthcare at Brigham and Women's Hospital, West Penn Allegheny Health System and Allegheny Health Network, and more recently in workforce development, she has been a steadfast advocate for community health, developing a thriving workforce, and advancing women's leadership. This passion continues through her many nonprofit board affiliations including Partner4Work, the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra, and WQED where

she was a past board chair. She is also the Immediate Past President of the Pittsburgh International Women's Forum. In September, Ms. Caplan was appointed by Governor Shapiro to the Commonwealth of PA State Workforce Development Board.

"I am humbled to be recognized alongside so many women of extraordinary accomplishment, and I am fortunate to have a calling that has brought much joy and purpose to my life," said Debra Caplan. "But within these distinctions and leadership opportunities comes a responsibility to stand up against violence and injustice. The recent tragic events in Israel are for me another call to decry acts of hatred and terror and to stand up and speak out for civility, justice, and peace."

The Distinguished Daughters is one of the first statewide organizations of its kind to honor the contributions of Pennsylvania women for their outstanding service and contributions to the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. Since the first group was named in 1949, over 500 women have been recognized as Distinguished Daughters of Pennsylvania.

"For 75 years, the Distinguished Daughters have recognized the achievements of Pennsylvania women — leaders who make a difference in our communities every day," said Governor Josh Shapiro. "This new class of inductees builds upon that long tradition, and Lori and I are pleased to welcome an incredible group of women — leaders in public service, health care, business, and education — into the ranks of Pennsylvania's Distinguished Daughters."

BH Fellows Program Grows with New Cohort of Frontline Workers

The BH Fellows program welcomed its second cohort of behavioral health frontline staff during the October 11th retreat at Phipps Conservatory. This cohort of fellows includes a mix of 22 new and experienced family-based therapists and clinicians, substance use disorder case managers, service coordinators, and crisis clinicians from nine providers across Allegheny County.

The BH Fellows program is a pioneering Allegheny County-sponsored workforce initiative, created and managed in partnership between the Allegheny County Department of Human Services, Community Care Behavioral Health, and Jewish Healthcare Foundation (JHF). BH Fellows aims to make behavioral health jobs in target service areas more sustainable and attractive for new and existing employees. JHF serves as the lead partner for developing and implementing the professional development for the fellows and directing recruitment efforts for the program.

BH Fellows provides educational loan repayments (up to \$25,000 for participants with a bachelor's degree or up to \$45,000 for participants with a master's degree), competitive salaries, and career



BH Fellows gather for a retreat at Phipps Conservatory.



JHF Behavioral Health Project Manager Bridget McNamee, MID welcomes the BH Fellows and provides an overview of the program.

development experiences within a cohort model in exchange for a two-year commitment to work at an approved provider within a specific behavioral health role.

The BH Fellows program's professional development curriculum supports the growth of fellows through skill building, peer-to-peer learning and support opportunities, and networking within and among cohorts and community leaders. During the monthly training sessions, participants will discuss relevant themes to their work, including burnout, safety, cultural humility, trauma, harm reduction, and utilizing supervision. Expert guests and community organizations will provide insight into appropriate topics and expand the fellows' network and known resources for their clients.

This second cohort joins the first cohort of 24 fellows, and both groups will have opportunity to network together as well as sustain parallel training programs that will be tailored based on the expressed needs of the participants and feedback from provider sites. As additional cohorts are launched in the coming months, those new groups of fellows will benefit from networking across the groups and the ongoing refinement and iteration of the leadership and professional development program.



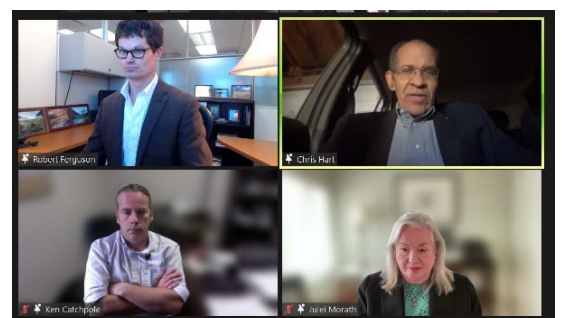
Fellows pot plants as a form of stress relief during the retreat.

Applications are now open for the next cohort of the BH Fellows program and are due on November 15. Those seeking new positions in behavioral health jobs and existing staff at participating provider sites are welcome to apply. There are options for those without any prior experience in behavioral health. [Visit here](#) for more program details and to apply.

RAPS Salon Highlights the Significance of National Policy Recommendations to Advance Tech Innovations

The October 11 Regional Autonomous Patient Safety (RAPS) Research and Development Salon convened stakeholders from across the Pittsburgh region and beyond to highlight how current policy recommendations at the national level could greatly support the RAPS initiatives' vision of creating innovation hubs to develop patient safety solutions.

Karen Wolk Feinstein, PhD, president and CEO, Jewish Healthcare Foundation and Pittsburgh Regional Health Initiative shared that on September 8, the President's



Robert Ferguson, Chris Hart, Ken Catchpole, and Julie Morath discuss the potential impact of the NPST.

Council of Advisors on Science and Technology (PCAST) released its [Report to the President: A Transformational Effort on Patient Safety](#), the first significant national recommendations on patient safety since the publication of the Institute of Medicine's *To Err is Human* more than 20 years ago.

The first recommendation in the report to President Biden is “to establish and maintain federal leadership for the improvement of patient safety as a national priority,” which includes creating a multidisciplinary National Patient Safety Team (NPST) within the Department of Human Services and the appointment of a patient safety coordinator reporting to the President. This recommendation has some alignment with the National Patient Safety Board (NPSB) Advocacy Coalition's key priority and core legislative goals of creating an interdisciplinary, innovation-focused team at the national level and establishing a federal home for patient safety.

If either an NPST or NPSB is established, there will be increasing demand for patient safety technology solutions. In light of these developments, Dr. Feinstein highlighted the increased need to plant the flag in Pittsburgh as an innovation hub, where university and industries can form partnerships and develop autonomous patient safety solutions to prevent harms before they occur.

The salon featured a panel discussion with Ken Catchpole, PhD, S.C. SmartState Endowed Chair in Clinical Practice and Human Factors, Medical University of South Carolina; Chris Hart, JD, MS, former Chair of the National Transportation Safety Board and member of the PCAST Patient Safety Work Group; and Julie Morath, RN, MS, member of the Institute for Healthcare Improvement (IHI) Lucian Leape Institute and member of the PCAST Patient Safety Work Group.

During the discussion, panelists discussed engineering systems for safety and opening the door for outside experts to play a role in the process; in discussing the challenge and issues with data collection, an opportunity for innovation is to provide transfer of data to reduce burden and increase accuracy and timely flow of information; and the NPST having the opportunity to develop a culture of safety where silence on errors and near misses is harmful to clinicians and patients and opens the space to report, talk about, and collaborate across divisions that have been siloed.

The next RAPS Salon is scheduled to be held from 12-1 p.m. Thursday Nov. 16. [Register now.](#)

Karen Feinstein's Op-Ed in *Pittsburgh Business Times* Highlights Pittsburgh's Safety Innovation History

Read the op-ed [“Wolk Feinstein's Viewpoint: It Is Time to Revolutionize the Last Unsafe Industry”](#) published October 13 by the Pittsburgh Business Times. Dr. Feinstein describes the impressive history of safety innovation across many industries in Pittsburgh, with health care remaining relatively untouched by the innovations in safety tech that transformed other complex, high-risk industries. Dr. Feinstein believes that our potential as an innovation hub for patient safety tech comes from our strong academic centers in both health sciences and technology and our start up culture. She calls for interdisciplinary, inter-institutional collaborations



to advance progress with speed and excellence, highlighting that JHF and PRHI have: Assembled an advisory group of regional leaders to pursue national and federal grants; are funding new innovations through its [RAPS Seed Grant Program](#); and are working toward making the region primed to be a global leader in safety technology.

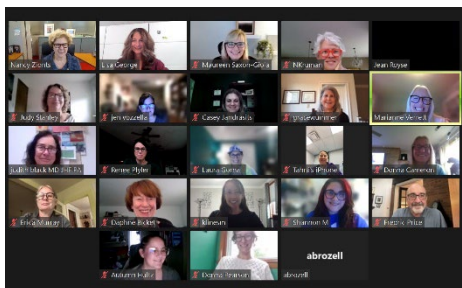
Professionals Enhance Death & Dying Communication Skills in Series Kickoff

Despite the increasing attention being given to the need for quality conversations with patients early in the course of serious illness, these conversations still often occur too late in the illness process, and clinicians often feel ill-equipped to engage in these conversations. As part of its ongoing commitment to supporting quality end-of-life conversations with the goal of ensuring patients' wishes for care are met, the Jewish Healthcare Foundation (JHF) kicked off its second Death and Dying Series for Healthcare Professionals this month. The series is modeled after the popular Death and Dying Fellowship for graduate students but designed to address the specific learning needs of those practicing in the field.



Theresa Brown, RN shared her experience as both a provider and patient.

On October 9, 22 professionals with nearly 400 years of combined experience gathered virtually for the first session. Some are relatively new to their role, while others have decades of experience, but they share the common goal of increasing their comfort and skill with having serious illness conversations with patients and families. Their disciplines include social work, nursing education, primary care physician, emergency medicine, care coordination, palliative care, geriatrics, and hospice.



Twenty-two professionals gathered for the first session of the Death & Dying Series for Healthcare Professionals.

The session commenced with JHF COO and Chief Program Officer Nancy Zions, MBA providing an overview of JHF's long-standing commitment to end-of-life education. JHF Medical Advisor JHF Medical Advisor Dr. Judy Black shared strategies for communicating around serious illness with a focus on advance care planning. Best-selling author, oncology nurse, and former JHF Board member Theresa Brown, RN, shared her experience as both provider and patient to illustrate how clinicians can and must do better in communicating with patients throughout the course of serious illness.

Over the course of the six-week series, participants will hear from experts in serious illness conversation skills, Pennsylvania Orders for Life Sustaining Treatment (POLST), goals-of-care discussions, palliative care, oncology, medical aid in dying, hospice, emergency medicine, and getting to what matters to patients. The series will culminate with an opportunity for participants to practice what they've learned as they role-play serious illness conversations in small groups guided by expert facilitators.

PA Department of Aging Renews Grant for Dementia Friends/Friendly Pennsylvania

The Pennsylvania Department of Aging (PDA) renewed its contract with the Jewish Healthcare Foundation to support the Dementia Friends Pennsylvania and Dementia Friendly Pennsylvania initiatives. PDA has funded Dementia Friends PA since 2020 and Dementia Friendly PA since 2022.

Stacie Bonenberger, MOT, OTR/L and Anneliese Perry, MS, NHA, CECM are the statewide coordinators for both initiatives, which continue to grow as the prevalence of dementia rises across the state.

“Supporting the 400,000+ Pennsylvanians living with dementia and their care partners is our top priority with these programs, and we’re grateful that the Department of Aging continues to recognize the need for this work,” said Bonenberger. “We’re also incredibly thankful for the hundreds of Dementia Friends and Dementia Friendly volunteers across the state who are creating spaces where people living with dementia are understood and included.”

Through a train-the-trainer model, Dementia Friends Champion Volunteers are equipped to offer live virtual and in-person Dementia Friends sessions where community members learn about dementia and are encouraged to implement practical changes that can support people living with dementia. Today, there are more than 14,000 Dementia Friends in Pennsylvania and nearly 150,000 across the United States.

Dementia Friendly Pennsylvania works closely with eight existing Dementia Friendly communities across the state. Dementia Friendly communities are grassroots, volunteer-led efforts that employ cross-sector partnerships, outreach and education, and other complimentary community programs to help people living with dementia and their care partners navigate and access services, supports, and enjoy meaningful social inclusion. In addition to supporting the communities, Dementia Friendly PA acts as the statewide convener for all things dementia-friendly by providing free resources and webinars, engaging its statewide Community Advisory Committee, and [hosting an events calendar that feature happenings across the state](#).

“Pennsylvania’s dementia friendly communities continue to find creative ways to engage individuals and organizations – from hosting memory cafes to leading dementia friendly trainings for local businesses,” Perry said. “We’re excited to help them strengthen their community impact and to support the growing number of communities across the state who want to become dementia friendly.”

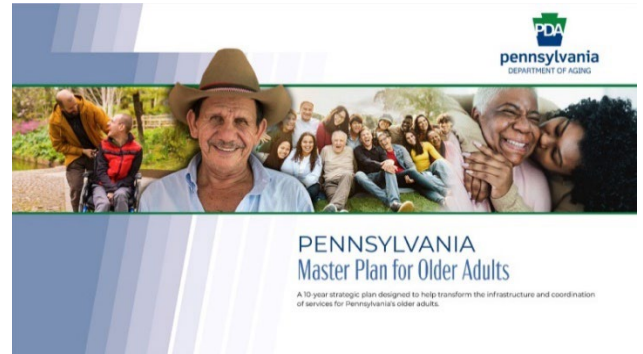
Throughout the next contract year, Dementia Friendly Pennsylvania aims to bring on new communities across the Commonwealth. To become a Dementia Friend, [register for a live virtual or in-person Information Session here](#). To join the Dementia Friendly PA mailing list or start a community, [register here](#).



Girl Scout Troop 70709, located in Clymer, participate in a session and became Dementia Friends on October 11.

JHF Staff Support PA Master Plan for Older Adults

Jewish Healthcare Foundation (JHF) staff Bonenberger and Perry traveled to Harrisburg in mid-October to support the development of the Pennsylvania Department of Aging's Master Plan for Older Adults. The Plan will guide the Department and other state agencies over the next ten years to improve services and programs that support the 3.4 million older Pennsylvanians as well as those living with disabilities. This spring, Governor Josh Shapiro signed an Executive Director directing the Department of Aging to develop the Plan, placing Pennsylvania alongside 16 other states that are also developing and implementing plans for their aging populations. Pennsylvania has the fifth largest older adult population in the country, with 17.8% of residents aged 60 and over.



During the October meeting, the Department of Aging convened the state's Long-Term Care Council to review community needs assessment data as well as community input to inform the plan's priorities. Pennsylvanians had submitted thousands of comments online and during listening sessions held across the state over the past few months. The Plan's structure is designed using AARP's Age-Friendly community framework, which encompasses eight domains of livability: Housing, Outdoor Spaces and Buildings, Transportation, Civic Participation and Employment, Health Services and Community Supports, Communication and Information, Respect and Social Inclusion, and Social Participation.

Bonenberger and Perry led the planning session for the "Social Participation" domain. They met with subject-matter experts, professionals from various state agencies, and Long-Term Care Council members to discuss the data and community feedback. The group addressed various factors that shape older adults' social participation, such as access to quality programs at local libraries and senior centers, accessible and affordable transportation to social events, and how social isolation impacts mental health. Using feedback collected during the session, Bonenberger and Perry will help the Department write the "Social Participation" section that will outline how state agencies can improve older adults' access to and engagement in social activities.

The finalized Master Plan for Older Adults will be published in early 2024, with implementation and progress data expected to hold the Plan accountable in the years to come.

Karen Feinstein Chairs Panel on Healthcare Trends at 30th Annual Princeton Conference

The Jewish Healthcare Foundation (JHF) was among the lead sponsors of the 30th Annual Princeton Conference held in Boston Oct 2-4, continuing its long-time support of the prestigious health policy forum.

Dr. Feinstein chaired the panel “Megatrends on the Horizon,” a discussion on trends in artificial intelligence, technology, and equity investment with Peterson Center on Healthcare Executive Director Caroline Peterson and Harvard Business School Executive Fellow Vivian S. Lee, MD, PhD, MBA. The panel covered technology and systems change in health care, digital health, clinical AI applications, and the perspective of AI and venture capital firms.



Pictured from left to right are: Stephen Shortell, PhD, MPH, MBA, Stuart Altman, PhD, and Karen Feinstein. (Photo by Heratch Photography)

In her comments, Dr. Feinstein highlighted the work of the National Patient Safety Board and of the Regional Autonomous Patient Safety initiative, a project working to establish hubs of regional activity to innovate on healthcare solutions through academic and private partnerships. The initiatives are working to find ways to encourage larger health systems to strive to improve patient safety and put systems in place to increase positive outcomes.

The Council on Health Care Economics and Policy at Brandeis University’s Heller School for Social Policy and Management hosts the conference annually in Princeton, N.J. Without Stuart Altman, PhD and his team at The Heller School for Social Policy and Management at Brandeis University there would be no Princeton Conference. This year’s conference, titled “Reshaping the Health Care System in a Post-Pandemic Era,” served as a national platform for health policy experts to present and debate key issues. It was a joyous reunion for the many regular Princeton Conference attendees who have not gathered in person during the pandemic.

Ferguson Speaks on Medstar’s 2023 Bennathan Patient Safety Lecture Panel

On October 4, Jewish Healthcare Foundation Chief Policy Officer Robert Ferguson, MPH joined a panel at the 2023 Bennathan Patient Safety Lecture to discuss the role of electronic health records (EHRs) in patient safety.

Offered in a hybrid format, the panel titled “The Good, The Bad, and How We Do Better,” was moderated by Raj Ratwani, PhD, Vice President of Scientific Affairs, MedStar Health and Director, MedStar Health National Center for Human Factors in Healthcare, and Judith Nowak, MD, Clinical Professor of Psychiatry, George Washington University School of Medicine and Behavioral Sciences.



Pictured from left to right are: Raj Ratwani, Kate Kellogg, Robert Ferguson, Carole Hemmelgarn, and David Hunt.

Panelists included Kate Kellogg, MD, MPH, Vice President of Patient Safety, MedStar Health; David Hunt, MD, Director of Safety Office of the National Coordinator for Health IT; Carole Hemmelgarn, Senior Director of Education, MedStar Health Institute for Quality and Safety; and Ferguson.

The Bennathan Patient Safety Lecture discusses the latest developments in patient safety and the role that each of us plays in reducing preventable harm. During this session, panelists focused on the role EHRs play in patient safety errors. In bringing together EHR experts from various stakeholder groups, the discussion focused on ways to address patient safety issues from a policy and practice perspective.

A recording of the session is available [here](#).

Karen Feinstein Speaks at 28th Heinz Award Meeting

On October 25, the [Heinz Awards](#) hosted a networking meeting for past winners of the illustrious award to share their current aspirations and concerns. Established by Teresa Heinz in 1993 to honor the memory of her late husband, U.S. Senator John Heinz, the Heinz Awards celebrate the extraordinary achievements of individuals in the Arts, the Economy and the Environment. There are six recipients this year, two recipients in each of the three categories.

Dr. Feinstein joined a Grantmakers Panel at the Heinz Awards Network Meeting at the Museum Lab in Pittsburgh. Panelists also included Chris DeCardy, CEO, The Heinz Endowments, and Lisa Schroeder, president and CEO, The Pittsburgh Foundation. The session was moderated by Grant Oliphant, CEO, The Conrad Presbys Foundation.

With nearly 100 in attendance, the session allowed participants to get the pulse of our region from the perspective of grantmakers in the community. Overall, the themes of hope, clarity of vision, and creativity permeated the intense conversations among people of monumental achievement sparked during the full-day program. Karen Feinstein commented, “this was a unique and unforgettable experience. Teresa Heinz has given Pittsburgh an invaluable gift over these many years in her efforts to expose us to extraordinary people with extraordinary aspirations that they brought to reality.”



Pictured from left to right are: Grant Oliphant, Karen Feinstein, Lisa Schroeder, and Chris DeCardy. (Photo by Joshua Franzos)

Karen Feinstein Shares Overview of NPSB at the Northwest Patient Safety Conference

Dr. Feinstein was a panelist at the 20th Annual Northwest Patient Safety Conference “Bringing Patient Safety to Life, What’s Worked, What Hasn’t and What To Do About It,” which was held virtually Oct. 17-18.

The breakout panel discussion “The Landmark Federal Legislation That Would Establish a National Patient Safety Board,” was moderated by Karen Brigham, JD, MPH, research coordinator at University of Washington and attended by over 100 conference attendees. The panel also included Marty Hatlie, JD, CEO of Project Patient Care, and founding member of Patients for Patient Safety US; Lisa McGiffert, President of the Patient Safety Action Network; and Helen Haskell, founder of Mothers Against Medical Error and president of Consumers Advancing Patient Safety.

The breakout provided the opportunity for attendees to learn about the ongoing efforts to establish a National Patient Safety Board (NPSB). The discussion centered on important considerations for federal action on creating a home for patient safety at the national level. The proposed NPSB would be focused on preventing and reducing patient safety events in healthcare settings, and it would complement existing agencies in monitoring and anticipating patient safety events with artificial intelligence, provide expertise to study the causes of errors, create recommendations and solutions to prevent future harms, and leverage existing systems to bring key learnings into practice.

Now in its 20th year, the Northwest Patient Safety Conference is the only event of its kind in the Western US, uniting healthcare professionals, providers, patients, families, and caregivers from all care settings for networking and engaging in sessions with industry thought leaders invested in improving the patient experience. This year’s conference was held for the second year in collaboration between the Washington Patient Safety Coalition, the Oregon Patient Safety Commission, and the Health Quality BC.



Violins of Hope Exhibit Underway at Carnegie Mellon University

The *Violins of Hope* exhibit, an effort to bring healing to the region through the power of music and the human spirit, is open through November 21 at Posner Center at Carnegie Mellon University.

The centerpiece of *Violins of Hope* is a collection of more than 85 restored violins, violas, and cellos played by Jewish musicians during the Nazi regime. The efforts to bring *Violins of Hope* to Pittsburgh began in 2018 [under the leadership](#) of project chair Sandy Rosen and co-chairs Linda Simon and Pat Siger, who is a



A group tours the *Violins of Hope* Pittsburgh exhibit.

JHF board member, Chair of Health Careers Futures, and former Chair of JHF. These instruments have survived concentration camps, pogroms, and many long journeys to tell remarkable stories of injustice, suffering, resilience, and survival. Each instrument has a unique and inspiring story that connects listeners to the history of the Holocaust in a deeply emotional way.



Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra musicians performed an intimate concert Oct. 18 giving voice to the treasured collection of instruments and their stories.

This landmark community project *Violins of Hope Greater Pittsburgh's* programming reinforces valuable lessons of diversity, equity, and inclusion. Through educational and cultural exhibits over two months, this unique project is deploying lessons of the Holocaust to demonstrate humanity's amazing ability to rebound from even the darkest depravity. The centerpiece of this event is the *Violins of Hope* exhibit, showcasing violins played by Jewish musicians during the Holocaust. Each instrument has a unique history that tells an emotional story of hope and perseverance.

JHF approved a two-year, [\\$50,000 grant](#) in 2021 to help bring *Violins of Hope* to Pittsburgh. This commitment was part of the \$1 million total budget for the project and intended to aid the *Violins of Hope* Committee with their additional fundraising efforts.

One of the main goals of *Violins of Hope* is to educate both young and old in the community by using stories from the past to shed light on the future. A special emphasis is placed on comprehensive in-school programming for middle- and high-school students. Group tours are available, with time set aside for school group tours.

[Tickets to the exhibit are free](#) but are required to enter. Musical and dance performances, art installations, and lectures across the city continue through the month of November as an extension of the exhibit. The event schedule is [available here](#).



Pat Siger speaks at a *Violins of Hope* event.

Grantmakers in Aging Conference Sessions Highlight JHF's Long-Term Care Work

At the 2023 Grantmakers in Aging Conference, held in Austin, Texas October 17–20, Zionts had the opportunity to share with other funders in the aging space about the exciting work being done to prepare the next generation of nurses for rewarding careers in long-term care and to better meet the needs of nursing home residents.

On October 18, Zionts and Jane Carmody, DNP, MBA, RN, FAAN, senior program officer at The John A. Hartford Foundation, presented “Leveraging Partnerships in Your Community to Enhance the Careforce in Long-Term Care.”

Their session focused on the collaborative effort between the two foundations to launch the Teaching Nursing Home initiative, aimed at improving the care of nursing home residents, assessing and addressing workforce preparedness, and fostering better outcomes for nursing homes across Pennsylvania. They highlighted the work of the Phase I partners to enhance linkages between schools of nursing and nursing homes and the expanded work occurring in Phase II, which is spreading the initiative across Pennsylvania thanks to the partnerships that grew out of the pilot project. Attendees were inspired by stories from project participants and partners about how the model is energizing their work and learned how they can play a vital role in bringing this model to their own communities.



Pictured from left to right: Jane Carmody, Nancy Zionts, and Latrice Williams.

On October 17, Zionts also moderated a discussion as part of the Aging and Technology Funders Community preconference session “Tech and Aging: Amplifying Investment in AgeTech to Improve Quality of Life for Older Adults.” The session featured panelists Amy Eisenstein, PhD, senior program officer and director of research & evaluation, RRF Foundation for Aging; Aurelie Cornett, MBA, director, business development, at AARP Innovation Labs; and Rose Li, PhD, MBA, director of the NIA AI and Technology Collaboratories for Aging Research (AITC) Coordinating Center, Rose Li & Associates. The panelists discussed various ways that grantmakers can use their funding as well as their convening and policy strategies to advance innovative technologies to improve the lives of older adults.

JHF was one of the inaugural members of the Aging and Technology Funders Community at Grantmakers in Aging. This group started with about 10 members and has grown to fill a 4-hour preconference session attended by over 150 grantmakers and other conference participants, reflecting the growing role that technology is playing in improving care and quality of life for older adults. Attendees included regional and national funders from both private and public funding communities.

New Patient Safety Technology Winners Announced in October

The Patient Safety Technology Challenge announced the winners of the five sponsored events that took place this fall.

DivHacks provided a \$200 award to MemorAI, winner of the patient safety track established through Pittsburgh Regional Health Initiative's funding. DivHacks was held at Columbia University on September 23-24. MemorAI is a platform where users can scan the prescription bottle label's intake directions to generate and download a .ics (iCalendar) file pre-configured with intake frequency, duration, and time information straight to their device. The goal is to help patients with medication adherence. Read more about the team's innovation in our blog [here](#).

This year's University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB) Biomedical Data Science Hackathon theme was "Intelligent Safety: Pioneering Patient Safety Solution with AI/ML and Data Science." The Patient Safety Technology Challenge awarded three prizes at this year's event. First place went to Team Deep Sepsis, who received a \$2,000 award. Team Deep Sepsis created PhLORENS, an AI-based application for early detection of sepsis in the ICU. Second place went to Sepsis Special Ops (SSO), who was awarded \$1,500. Team "Hold the Line" won the \$1,000 third place by exploring central line-associated blood stream infections (CLABSI) within UAB electronic health records data. Read more about the event and the winning team's idea [here](#).

The 9th annual Columbia Data Science Society Hackathon was held on October 7-8th. A \$500 prize for the top patient safety idea was awarded to the team, Decoding Devices. The team used a dataset to understand the current state and create a solution for reduce errors related to medical devices.

HooHacks was an 8-hour ideathon held at the University of Virginia on October 14. Patient safety was one of the tracks offered to hackers and a workshop was facilitated by Dr. Justin Glasgow. The best patient safety idea – Inferomics - was awarded \$500. Team members created a data insight platform that uses models trained on medical data to improve diagnosis.

The Digital Health Hub Foundation Awards took place on October 9 in Las Vegas, NV on one of the stages of the HLTH conference. Kimberly Street and Elizabeth Drye from NQF and Lance Bailey from HealthySimulation.com served as judges, alongside dozens of other judges, to pick the best patient safety digital health solution from over 1,500 submissions. 8 semi-finalists and 4 finalists competed for the \$10,000 patient safety prize. Medcrypt CEO, Mike Kijewski, took home the "Best in Class" Patient Safety prize. Medcrypt products are optimized for medical device manufacturers to build safe, secure, innovative medical devices faster while meeting FDA cybersecurity requirements.



MedCrypt CEO Mike Kijewski and PRHI Judge Lance Bailey at the Digital Health Hub Foundation Awards.

Congratulations to the winning teams and thank you to the organizers of the events for including the issue of patient safety as an option for innovators and entrepreneurs to address with their solutions.

Read about past competitions involved in the Patient Safety Technology Challenge at the [Patient Safety Technology Challenge](#) website.

Five New Competitions Added to Patient Safety Technology Challenge

Five competitions joined the Patient Safety Technology Challenge this month. Funded by the Jewish Healthcare Foundation and administered by the Pittsburgh Regional Health Initiative, the Patient Safety Technology Challenge is designed to fuel the engagement of students and innovators in creating solutions and envisioning transformational approaches to reduce preventable harm from medical errors.

Ohio State's Biomedical Engineering Society will be hosting its 5th annual Bio-Hack. The theme for this year's Bio-Hack focuses on patient safety. The event will be held at Ohio State University on November 4-5. The team who presents the best technology-enabled patient safety solution will win \$500.



HackRPI X is Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute's 10th annual student-run intercollegiate hackathon. This year's theme is "Change the World" and the hackathon will be spotlighting the opportunity to improve the state of patient safety. HackRPI will be on Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute's campus on November 4-5 and the winning patient safety team will take home \$1,000. Learn more [here](#).

HackNJIT is the New Jersey Institute of Technology's 24-hour hackathon on campus, run by its ACM student chapter in conjunction with the Ying Wu College of Computing. Patient safety will be a new theme this year for students and the incentive to go for this track will be \$400 to the team with the best idea. Learn more [here](#).

Carnegie Mellon University's Hack-a-Startup is a two-week immersive experience for nurturing the beginning stages of CMU students' startups. There will be a special Patient Safety Technology Challenge award for healthcare startups that take on a patient safety issue – with a \$500 prize. The kick-off will take place on campus October 28 and there will be workshops in the evenings from October 30 through November 10. November 11 is the final pitch day and award ceremony. Learn more about the event [here](#).

University of Rochester's School of Medicine and Dentistry student entrepreneurs group [SMD Entrepreneurs](#) is proud to partner with the Pittsburgh Regional Health Initiative to sponsor their first

Patient Safety Technology Challenge. Prizes totaling \$3,500 will be given out to the top three teams for their innovative ideas. Over a 4-week period starting on October 19, student innovators will work and meet with subject matter experts to develop solutions to address the critical areas necessary to improving patient safety in the US healthcare system. The final pitches and presentations will take place on November 16.

AIDS Free Pittsburgh Presents at Trans Pride Pittsburgh Conference

AIDS Free Pittsburgh (AFP) was invited to speak at the Pittsburgh Trans Pride virtual conference October 6 about its programming and available resources.



AFP Community Outreach and Engagement Coordinator Hazell Azzer Carpenter-Saunders presented information about its Sex Education Social Hour (S.E.S.H) and Vogue Education Workshop. Through the 6-week curriculum participants learn about community resources, HIV and STI testing, and pivotal historical moments that helped better medical care for communities affected by HIV. These programs were created to present the most up-to-date information to community members about risks, data, and resources as it relates to HIV.

Throughout the conference, topics centered around inclusion, gender affirming messaging and care, and community engagement and inclusion. AFP along with many other community organizations were able to display new initiatives, opportunities, or programs for community engagement. There were more than 240 attendees at the conference and nearly 75 presenters.

Now Hiring: Program Specialist

The Jewish Healthcare Foundation (JHF) seeks a team player with strong interpersonal skills, the ability to work collaboratively with interdisciplinary teams, and experience in quality improvement to join our team in support of the Pennsylvania Perinatal Quality Collaborative, Patient-Centered Medical Home Learning Network, and Opioid Use Disorder Center of Excellence (COE) Learning Network. [Click here](#) to view the full job description and apply.



Dr. Jackie Dunbar-Jacob Honored as UPMC Senior Champion

Friend of the Jewish Healthcare Foundation (JHF) Jacqueline Dunbar-Jacob, PhD, RN, FAAN, dean emeritus of the University of Pittsburgh School of Nursing and nursing leadership advisor on JHF's Aging Initiatives, was honored as the 2023 Caregiver Champion at the 15th Annual Celebrating Champions Dinner and Auction, hosted by UPMC Senior Services and UPMC Western Behavioral Health. The event was held at the Westin Pittsburgh on October 25th, and members of the JHF Aging Team as well as numerous members of the Teaching Nursing Home Collaborative attended in support of this inspiring nurse leader. The Caregiver Champion award recognizes an individual or organization who demonstrates an extraordinary ability to champion senior causes through their work to set policy, establish programs or advocate for care of seniors and/or caregivers.



Jackie Dunbar-Jacob receives the 2023 Caregiver Champion award.

Dr. Dunbar-Jacob was honored for supporting generations of caregivers and the psychiatric mental health nurse community, in particular. Through her leadership over 21 years of service as dean of the Pitt School of Nursing and 35 years as a faculty member, she has been a steadfast advocate for highest-quality nursing education.

Dr. Dunbar-Jacob is a member of the Health Careers Futures Board and a past JHF board member. She currently contributes her expertise in nursing education as an advisor to the JHF Teaching Nursing Home Collaborative initiative, where she is helping to promote meaningful linkages between schools of nursing and nursing facilities to strengthen the pipeline of new nurses into the skilled nursing workforce. She also is an advisor to the JHF Women's Health Inequity in Older Age initiative.



From left to right: Nancy Zionts, Karen Feinstein, Jackie Dunbar-Jacob, Maureen Saxon-Gioia, Anneliese Perry, Kristen Brennenman, and Stacie Bonenberger.

"I am deeply honored to receive the UPMC Caregiver Champion award this year," said Dr. Dunbar-Jacob. "I am grateful to UPMC, JHF, the NIH, LeadingAge PA, and, of course, the University of Pittsburgh for opportunities to support and advocate for effective care for senior adults. No time is more important than now to address models of care for the older adult as the population grows, impacting nearly every area of life, including health care, housing, transportation, technology, and economics among others. All of us who are championing senior care and caregivers are in the right place at the right time."

Valerie Njie Brings Excellence to Education and Workforce Development

Education has always been a cornerstone of Valerie Njie's path, from her commitment to her own education as a young person to the moment her mother handed her the phone in June 1968 to speak with a University of Pittsburgh representative who wanted to schedule an admittance interview with her, making her a first-generation college student.



Born and raised in Homestead, Njie earned a Bachelor of Science in Education in 1971 from the University of Pittsburgh. She was accepted to Pitt's Project A Program after the assassination of Martin Luther King, in response to students' demand for greater campus diversity. The upperclassmen and staff in the initial Black Studies Program went above and beyond to ensure that the 50 African American students received all the resources and services necessary to navigate university life and successfully graduate. That experience taught her the importance of community and influenced her decision to transform lives and create opportunities for disenfranchised people throughout the United States and West Africa. Fifty years later she has come full circle, as an active Pitt alumna, Immediate Past-President of the Pitt Alumni Association, and current member of the Pitt Board of Trustees.

"Even today people say I run around too much. I need to learn how to say no. But I guess I've been doing that all my life starting as a young person in high school," said Njie, who attributed her work ethic to her father, a TV repairman who expanded and became a successful TV, stereo, appliance, and furniture salesman. Today people remember him as the person who made it possible for them to establish lines of credit during a time when Black people were denied such opportunities. Her mother and grandmother also taught her the importance of spirituality, excellence in all you do, and service to others.

She went on to receive a master's degree in management/human resource development from the University of Utah. Despite feeling isolated in a state that lacked diversity, she learned valuable lessons there about workforce development which she would carry with her through her career in San Francisco, Boston and the Gambia, West Africa.

In 1981, she joined Bill Strickland and Jesse W. Fife Jr. as senior counselor at Bidwell Training Center, Inc. A few years later she became Director of the school's IBM Program, a national initiative where IBM would go into impoverished areas, donate equipment and staff to teach students computer skills to gain employment," said Njie, noting that Bidwell was the 39th school chosen for the program.

She would go on to be promoted to executive director and senior vice president in 1999. She is very proud that during her 37 years at Bidwell she helped spearhead the school's transition from a 60's manpower poverty program to a highly respected nationally accredited adult career school. Under her leadership Bidwell received two consecutive School of Excellence awards from the Accrediting Commission of Career Schools and Colleges (ACCSC) in 2012 and 2017, the highest distinction awarded to schools during a renewal process.

She would become an ACCSC team leader, conducting on-site visits and reviewing almost 100 schools during their renewal or application process.

As a result of her active volunteerism and commitment, in 2013 she won a national election and became the first African American ACCSC School Commissioner in the organization's 50-year history, overseeing over 700 post-secondary, trade, and technical schools that provide education to over 150,000 students. She remembers those times as hectic but fulfilling as she was able to incorporate lessons learned during her visits to improve operations at Bidwell.

In 2018, Val retired as the Executive Director/Vice-President of the Bidwell Training Center, a state licensed, accredited career training institution that has trained and placed thousands of graduates in meaningful jobs throughout the region since 1968.

"My heart is in workforce development because there are jobs out there, and I just wished that high schools would do a better job making that connection. I think we're really doing students disservice," Njie said. "I think we lose so many students early on by making them feel that college is the only barometer for success."

She serves on numerous boards and has received local and national awards and distinctions for her professional and community work. She was awarded the New Pittsburgh Courier's Fifty Women of Distinction Award in 2003 and 2006, the WQED TV/Duquense Light African American Leadership Award for Education in 2009, ACCSC Volunteer of the Year Award, Three Rivers Youth Nellie Leadership Award, Alpha Phi Alpha Black and Gold Award for Scholarship, Pitt African American Distinguished Alumnus Award, Pitt Alumni Association Volunteer of the Year Award and the Alpha Kappa Alpha Mothers of Distinction Award. The City of Pittsburgh proclaimed October 9, 2018, Valerie Njie Day.

She is married to Saihou Njie, an amazing artist and has two adult daughters, Lingaire and Njaimeh and one grandson, Jibril.

A long-time friend of the Foundation, Njie serves on Jewish Healthcare Foundation's Board of Trustees and the Women's Health Activist Network (WHAMglobal) Board, aligning her passion for education and workforce development with the Foundation's.

Njie said she admires the commitment of Dr. Feinstein and Nancy Zionts to look around the world for the best healthcare and workforce practices to bring them back to the United States to make healthcare and careers more sustainable and fulfilling.

"With Karen at the helm, there's always work towards progress. Things aren't stagnant. She's always forward thinking. It's not just about funding, but what is really going to improve healthcare in the community," Njie said. "They could do well having someone like Karen as the Secretary of Health, that might help us because she has endless solutions and a great team."

Happy Halloween from JHF!

