

Findings from the 2022
Lehigh Valley Health Network
Community Health Symposium

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Lehigh Valley Health Network (LVHN) held its inaugural Community Health Symposium on Nov. 16, 2022.

Ninety-five people from over 10 different sectors and 35 primarily Allentown-based organizations convened to deepen relationships and share information, views and ideas about how they could work together to address social determinants of health and improve community well-being.

The Symposium reflected LVHN's ongoing commitment to working with community partners to advance health improvement throughout the Lehigh Valley. It focused on four goals:

1. To learn from local community partners about their insights into factors that influence health
2. To showcase local partners and their innovative work that expands the definition of health improvement
3. To highlight the evolving leadership role of large, complex health care systems in addressing social determinants of health, using LVHN efforts as a demonstrable example
4. To summarize a collective path forward and short-term next steps that allow all partners to contribute to improved community well-being

BACKGROUND AND METHODOLOGY

LVHN's commitment to health improvement and working with community partners can be traced back to groundbreaking initiatives.

Since 1995, LVHN has aimed to measure and enhance the health status of Lehigh Valley residents. In 2014, LVHN's commitment to community health was made explicit in our first vision statement: "We will build our foundation as a premier academic community health system and become an innovative population health leader that creates superior quality and value for the patients and community we serve." LVHN's current vision of "access to superior care" highlights the need for all community members to have access to excellent care.



The planning committee for the Symposium identified by LVHN's President and Chief Executive Officer, Brian Nester, DO, MS, MBA, CPE, FACOEP, included LVHN colleagues from the Leonard Parker Pool Institute for Health, Organizational Development, Population Health, Marketing, Administration and Psychiatry. Throughout the day, Symposium participants engaged in shared learning and open dialogue. Plenary sessions included presentations by Dr. Nester and Allentown Mayor Matt Tuerk.

Participants rotated through four small group forums for deep dive discussions on: (1) Precarious Housing and Food Insecurity, (2) Creating a Cradle to College/Career Education Pipeline, (3) The Use of Neighborhood-level Data, and (4) Community Well-being and Mental Health in a Post-Covid World. Each session included a brief presentation followed by facilitated discussion. Recorders captured the learnings, dialogue and takeaways from each small group discussion. A wrap-up session and an anonymous survey provided additional opportunities for attendees to share their feedback.

Four essential themes emerged from the Symposium



1. The need for deeper collaboration among community partners

Symposium attendees expressed a need for regular, ongoing opportunities to meet in small, local groups to build knowledge and trust among and between service providers and participants. They are committed to communicating across organizations to move community health efforts forward to ensure that all community members have equitable opportunities to achieve positive health outcomes.

2. Non-profits and community participants want to understand the complexities of social determinants of health and have a desire to access and use data more effectively.

Participants are interested in understanding and using their own organization's data as well as publicly available data to maximize the effectiveness of their organization's efforts toward improving equity in health outcomes in our community. Additionally, they see value in gathering stories of community members' experiences to bring attention to the human side of health disparities to achieve positive health outcomes.

3. Deepened community understanding and engagement are crucial to moving forward.

Community understanding and engagement can be achieved if two things are present: a coordinated effort at engagement by institutions in the area and a commitment to prioritize the voice of community members. At the Symposium, service providers expressed a strong desire to authentically engage individuals and families to ensure that the services align with the needs and goals of service participants.

4. There is energy for innovative solutions.

The Symposium discussions were open, dynamic and vibrant. People were energized and expressed a readiness to roll up their sleeves and get to work. Participants shared ideas and built and deepened relationships. The participants are committed to collaborating on solutions that will acknowledge and support the most disenfranchised groups in our community, and they recognize the broad impact this will have for individuals, families and institutions across the community.

NEXT STEPS

The Symposium represents a strong start to fostering collaborative, place-based work to improve social determinants of health and the well-being of the community.

To foster effective, ongoing, place-based collaboration among providers, we will create opportunities to assess readiness for cross-sector work and engage in small group connections.

To address attendee's desire for continued learning, we will ensure that data training occurs as well as thought leadership from national-level leaders and speakers. To ensure that we are engaging community members, we need to continue to build welcoming relationships with community members. Continued collaboration will encourage people to think differently about ways to break down systemic barriers to the realization of optimal health. As Dr. Nester noted in his plenary address: **"We, all of us in this room, are the safety net."**

The following report details the Symposium development, activities and outcomes in detail.

SUMMARY

LVHN's 2022 Community Health Symposium reflects the importance and timeliness of community engagement in improving health outcomes.

As the economics of health care shift, and as the evidence becomes clear that non-health care factors impact health outcomes more than health care, LVHN is looking to expand its leadership role in health in concert with its existing leadership role in health care and deepen partnerships with community leaders who are doing the work to improve health.

The Symposium was designed to catalyze and reinvigorate interest in community health efforts by bringing together community leaders committed to improving health. In this report, we review LVHN's efforts to optimize community health over the last two decades. We then describe the processes associated with planning and holding the Symposium and present an analysis of the thoughts and ideas collected from the event. Finally, we propose several immediate next steps that will continue the momentum that was achieved through the Symposium and will enable LVHN to support efforts that improve the social determinants of health in our community.



INTRODUCTION

Brief Background of LVHN's Community Health Efforts

LVHN has been engaged in work to measurably improve health status since 1995. It has initiated efforts to address harmful individual behaviors like smoking, substance use, unprotected sex and sedentary lifestyles. LVHN has engaged with the community through civic association-building and other efforts that brought residents together and partnered with community agencies to address housing issues, maternal-child health, hunger, education and behavioral health. LVHN's use of telehealth and remote monitoring of patients improves access to care and eliminates the burden of unnecessary transportation for patients who may already be grappling with chronic health conditions. Particularly vulnerable groups in our community, including veterans, people experiencing homelessness, infants and children, and those struggling with addiction and mental health issues, have benefited from LVHN's commitment to population health over the last two decades.

LVHN's commitment to community health underscores the need for identifying high-risk individuals before their conditions require more complicated and expensive treatment. Its 2014 vision statement – “We will build our foundation as a premier academic community health system and become an innovative population health leader that creates superior quality and value for the patients and community we serve” – is evidence of its commitment. LVHN's current vision of “access to superior health care” highlights the need for all community members to have access to excellent care.

With the creation of the Leonard Parker Pool Institute for Health and the Pool Center for Health Analytics, LVHN is taking a bolder step in identifying and impacting the vital conditions of health. While continuing its strong efforts to identify and address the social risks and social needs of its patients, LVHN will use these resources to delve deeper into the social determinants that disproportionately affect specific communities and focus on strategies that also prevent disease and illness.

As part of its determination to expand avenues to improve health, better understand the unique, changing needs of our communities, and strengthen community partnerships, LVHN's President and CEO, Dr. Brian Nester, called for an inaugural Community Health Symposium to promote broad-based discussion on new ways to improve overall health and well-being for the communities it serves.



METHODOLOGY

METHODOLOGY

Planning Committee

The planning committee for the Symposium identified by Dr. Nester included LVHN colleagues from the Leonard Parker Pool Institute for Health, Organizational Development, Population Health, Marketing, Administration and Psychiatry.

Approach

The approach to the Symposium was to create a day that was discussion-based and focused on collaborative solutions to improving health. The goal was to create an immersive experience that provided a deep dive into community health in one specific community, the City of Allentown. Trained facilitators engaged the participants in conversations designed to elicit their thoughts and concerns about the health of Allentown residents and their ideas for actionable next steps. The qualitative information collected at the Symposium focused on both the participants' current experiences and on the emerging process of improving social determinants of health.

Symposium Objectives

The planning team identified four main objectives of the Symposium:

1. Learn from local community partners about their insights into factors that influence health
2. Showcase local partners and their innovative work that expands the definition of health improvement
3. Highlight the evolving leadership role of large, complex health care systems in addressing social determinants of health, using LVHN efforts as a demonstrable example
4. Summarize a collective path forward and short-term next steps that allow all partners to contribute to improved community well-being.



Photo courtesy of Peter Keady/PK3 Photography
LVHN's Dr. Edward Norris leads one of four different breakout sessions

Invitation List

Using purposeful sampling, the committee intentionally compiled a list of Symposium invitees who would bring information-rich content to the day. They strategically focused on inviting individuals whose contributions to the day would best align with the goals of the Symposium and who were knowledgeable about and involved in the Allentown community. Over 150 Allentown-based leaders from LVHN and partnering organizations were invited to the Symposium.

Design

The Symposium included two plenary speakers with a high level of knowledge about and passion for the purpose and content of the Symposium. Their remarks were intended to inform and inspire participants and align them with the day's purpose. In addition to hearing the two plenaries, each participant attended four breakout sessions and a wrap-up session. The breakout sessions were organized into the following topics:

1. Precarious Housing and Food Insecurity
2. Creating a Cradle to College/Career Education Pipeline
3. Accessing Neighborhood Level Data Through LVHN
4. Community Well-Being and Mental Health in a Post-COVID Era

Each breakout session was facilitated by one or more LVHN colleagues. Co-facilitators included nonprofit leaders from the community. Facilitators and recorders were provided training prior to the Symposium. At each breakout session, facilitators provided brief presentations on their topic areas to begin interactive discussions. The bulk of each breakout session was dedicated to facilitators engaging in conversation with attendees. Guiding questions were provided to the breakout group facilitators to ensure the conversations stayed focused on community health issues and collaboration. These guiding questions included:

1. What is known or not known on the topic from the perspective of the community?
2. Where are there opportunities for cross-sector collaboration?
3. What are some possible short-term next steps?

Following the afternoon breakout sessions, a facilitated wrap-up session provided the day's final opportunity for attendees to bring forward their thoughts, concerns and ideas.

Evaluation Survey

Symposium attendees were provided with an anonymous survey and invited to provide their feedback.

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE DAY

Ninety-five people attended the Symposium.

Over 10 different sectors were represented, including: health, housing, government, philanthropy, behavioral health, early childhood education, K-12 education, academia, social services, health insurance, business, and faith organizations.

The Symposium generated excitement among participants, solidified their commitment to community health, facilitated new and renewed connections among participants, and helped to define actionable next steps.

The keynote speakers were Brian A. Nester, DO, MBA, President and Chief Executive Officer of Lehigh Valley Health Network, as well as Matt Tuerk, the Mayor of Allentown.

Dr. Nester's remarks outlined the network's challenges in chronic disease management, disease prevention and social determinants of health interventions. When addressing nearly 100 community health leaders and advocates at the Symposium, Dr. Nester succinctly said, "We, all of us in this room, are the safety net for our network." In reviewing federal mandates for value-based care, Dr. Nester emphasized that delivering and being reimbursed for high-quality, low-cost care is "up to us. It is our responsibility." Dr. Nester also noted nationally 80% of all health care costs are accounted for by 20% of the population and the ongoing commitment to providing value-based care.

Notably, Matt Tuerk is the first Latino mayor in Allentown's history. Mayor Tuerk provided background and context into the City of Allentown's structure and resources, as well as an overarching view of how the social determinants of health are complimentary to those resources. "Many things are not our responsibility, but are absolutely our problem," said Tuerk. His address noted a desired synergy with all partners addressing the determinants that impact the neighborhoods in the city. "We can do a better job of, and we're looking for partners in doing these things, building our neighborhoods and building our health care provided through our community organizations."



Photo courtesy of Peter Keady/PK3 Photography
Mayor of Allentown, Matt Tuerk shares thoughts during a luncheon address to Symposium attendees.



Photo courtesy of Peter Keady/PK3 Photography
Dr. Brian Nester shares his remarks at the Community Health Symposium.



WHAT DID WE HEAR?

The following resources were included in the analysis: all notes from the recorders who documented the day's conversations, the results from the 28 responses to the evaluation survey, and thoughts and ideas expressed by Symposium attendees at the wrap-up session. A draft version of this report was also reviewed and edited by the facilitators.

[Key themes that emerged throughout the Symposium are detailed here.](#)

WHAT DID WE HEAR?

1. The need for deeper collaboration among community partners

Throughout the sessions, there were multiple discussions about enhancing collaborative efforts. Effective collaboration starts with being heard in a safe space. Symposium participants reported in the follow-up survey that they felt safe and heard at the Symposium, and all who responded to the survey said that they would attend another Symposium.

The Symposium was a positive way to initiate this effort; however, the Symposium is not an end but rather a jumping-off point. Attendees strongly feel a need for follow-up. One attendee suggested “creating regular meetings/ working groups that continue these discussions. Otherwise, we will lose the threads.” Regular, local, small-group connections will allow individuals to build both knowledge and trust. We were reminded that work that occurs in silos can lead to miscommunication, distrust and duplication or inefficiency of service delivery. Community leaders expressed a desire to “agree on shared truths” and reach agreement on a “real community-wide strategy.”

The goal of more coordination, communication and collaboration, both within systems (such as education, health care, and social services) and between systems, was expressed throughout the day. Symposium feedback highlighted the need to establish forums where further collaboration can be nurtured. Capacity-building efforts such as the Pool Fellowship for Health is one example of where this is occurring. Since 2014, the Pool Fellowship for Health (formerly the Collective Impact Fellowship) has brought together executive level leadership from multiple sectors and disciplines to develop skills and create opportunities to jointly address complex social issues within the vulnerable populations living in downtown Allentown. There are opportunities for further cross-sector communication and cross-systems training. Collaboration can help to ensure that

cross-systems work is aligned with the community’s priorities. Such conversations can also help to move us toward the practical and solutions-oriented applications that people see a need for. Symposium discussions shined light on a need for continuing coordination to further collaborative efforts.

Notably, in the evaluation survey, over half of survey respondents reported that their organizations are already collaborating with multiple sectors or partners. Part of future conversations may need to help us unpack this by further defining levels of partnership and identifying areas where collaborations are working well or could be deepened.

Throughout the Symposium, we heard concerns about how we can ensure that the work of community health continually moves forward. Having an organization (or organizations) to provide coordinating “backbone” functions could help ensure that there is ongoing space created for people to engage in cross-sector conversations and think beyond the silo of their own organization or system. As explained in an article in the Stanford Social Innovation Review, successful collective impact initiatives frequently have identified organizations to guide strategy and vision, support aligned activities, establish shared measurement practices, build public will, advance policy, and mobilize funding (Turner et al., 2012).

People are seeking updated, pertinent knowledge and best practices in collaboration. In addition to guiding organizations, it is critical to include the

right sectors, organizations and individuals for collaboration to be effective. In reply to the survey question “what sectors or organizations were missing today that you feel are critical for real progress to be made,” respondents made several suggestions. Among the groups mentioned most frequently were the Allentown School District, youth, and BIPOC-led organizations (led by Black, Indigenous, or People of Color).



Highlights of Precarious Housing and Food Insecurity Conversations

- There is recognition and appreciation for work currently being done by community-based organizations.
- There is a desire for long-term, upstream and integrated solutions to address policies and root causes.
- We collectively need to develop a deeper understanding of the housing options within the identified neighborhoods.
- Increased understanding will allow us to determine which innovative approaches would be most helpful.
- Progress will require shared accountability and collaboration across many systems.
- Change will require partnering with and empowering community members in developing solutions.

WHAT DID WE HEAR?

2. Nonprofits want to understand the complexities of social determinants of health and have a desire to access and use data more effectively.

Symposium participants agreed that the use of data plays a key role in deepening an understanding of social determinants of health and advancing community health initiatives. The attendees also noted challenges in effectively using data, including deciding what to measure and how to best measure, analyze and share it. Specifically, Symposium attendees mentioned a need for data literacy training addressing how and why to collect data, how to use publicly available data, and how to interpret data that addresses key issues at both the macro and micro levels to understand communities within a larger context. Community-level data can help drill down on local-level strengths, needs and disparities and help us to ensure that children and families in our community can prosper.

Along with the systems collaboration mentioned above, people are

interested in collaborating specifically around data. The topics of data sharing and integration were raised multiple times, with participants recognizing that enhanced collaboration around data could help ensure both effectiveness and efficiency in its collection and use. Nonprofits indicated an interest in using data to secure funding, to better understand the complex problems we are trying to solve, and to evaluate the impact and shortcomings of existing services.

In addition to the quantitative data, Symposium attendees also recognize the importance of eliciting qualitative data in the form of stories that can be told by community members about their experiences, and the experiences of their family members and neighbors. This qualitative data can support and create a more comprehensive understanding of quantitative data findings. Participants shared an interest in amplifying the narrative from the communities we work with. Anecdotal data and stories about community members' lived experience need to be collected by trusted individuals and organizations. These are necessary to ensure a full and cohesive understanding of the implications of any quantitative data accessed or collected. Participants expressed a desire to be good stewards of data and to collect and use it in ways that are valid, beneficial and respectful.

Representatives from the Pool Center for Health Analytics (PCHA) showed attendees a platform that collates and presents local data in a visual, intuitive way. The presentation of this platform energized and interested those at the



Highlights of Neighborhood Data Conversations

- Improved analytics can lead to an increased understanding of social determinants of health at the community level.
- There is value in combining data from LVHN's electronic health record with public data to get a fuller picture of community needs.
- There is interest in further leveraging the Pool Center for Health Analytics' platform.
- Training about data use would be helpful.

Symposium, demonstrating people's deep need for data to be made accessible. In reviewing and responding to this dashboard, Symposium attendees discussed possible next steps in making the data more actionable. People also want the opportunity to influence which data are collected and visualized. One challenge is determining which data is most important to most people at the community-wide level. Best practices in community health point toward the importance of establishing a community health measurement framework to capture both short-term and long-term shifts in the health and well-being of the communities we serve. Continued collaboration is needed to ensure that the work going into data collection, analysis, visualization and distribution is targeted in a way that is most beneficial to the communities we serve and the organizations that work there. As one participant noted in the survey, we all work with certain assumptions, but agreement on a "real community-wide strategy" would be compelling.



Photo courtesy of Peter Keady/PK3 Photography
Symposium attendees engage in a presentation on localized data sharing and integration.

WHAT DID WE HEAR?

3. Deepened community understanding and engagement are crucial to moving forward.

Symposium attendees raised two key points regarding the need for authentic community understanding. First, to effectively engage a community served by multiple systems and numerous providers, there must be a coordinated effort around engagement. The participants identified a need for institutions (such as schools, places of worship, parks, community centers, and food access points) to serve as anchors in neighborhoods. Anchor institutions are critical in that they are already in the community, delivering services to where people are and building trust and understanding along the way. These anchor institutions are in addition to the backbone organizations mentioned above.

Participants also validated the importance of a place-based focus. A community can be defined both by geography and by its members. Both are important and were on the minds of Symposium participants. In terms of geography, we can benefit by enhancing our “place-based” understanding. Place-based strategies see neighborhoods as an interplay between people and systems and include social support and interaction among residents along with the environment within which the residents interact. A place-based strategy allows service providers to have a deep understanding of the strengths and needs of a given community. Drilling down on a specific place helps make large, complex problems more manageable and tangible by clearly defining partners and stakeholders and their potential roles in this work. Place-based work also allows for a better understanding of the nuances

of the strengths and needs within a community.

The work being done through LVHN’s Community Health Needs Assessment (CHNA) was highlighted as an example as well as a resource for providers. LVHN’s current CHNA priorities in the Lehigh Valley include a focus on mental and behavioral health. We know from research in community health that a uniform understanding of community members’ social needs is helpful in developing a shared language for community health efforts and in guiding community health decisions and actions. LVHN and our partners would benefit from further clarifying the needs of individuals, families and communities within the larger context of social determinants of health.

Symposium attendees raised a second key point focusing on the need to prioritize hearing from community members. A number of attendees expressed their concern that there was a lack of direct community participation at the Symposium. When asked in our survey “what sectors or organizations were missing today that you feel are critical for real progress to be made,” the most common response from survey respondents was community members. Symposium attendees specifically mentioned that they would have liked to hear from young people and people of color. Participants want to ensure that we are listening to community members and providing what they value as opposed to what service providers think the community needs or wants. Authentic community engagement starts with listening and



Highlights of Community Well-being and Mental Health Conversations

- Mental health and related issues (including stigma and isolation) are central to well-being.
- There is both an awareness of existing cross-sector collaborations and an acknowledgement of a need for more.
- There is a desire to overcome the many barriers to effective collaboration.
- There is a need for more opportunities to make and maintain connections among organizations.
- A focus on place-based efforts will be helpful in engaging individuals, families and communities.

time to develop mutual trust. It was noted in discussions during the Symposium that if we are not intentionally engaging community members, we are not fostering purpose and belonging in disenfranchised individuals. As one attendee noted, we want to ensure that we are working with the community as opposed to doing things to or for community members. Authentic engagement engenders a sense of purpose and belonging among community members.

WHAT DID WE HEAR?

4. There is energy for innovative solutions.

Symposium attendees were energized, engaged and ready to act to positively impact the health of our community members. Throughout the day, there was appreciation expressed for the opportunity to come together with others and spend focused time concentrating on issues related to community health. People clearly want to continue the momentum, and they are looking forward to continued conversation and collaboration. When asked “what is the one thing you’d like to see from LVHN over the next year in terms of our work in the community,” by far, the most frequent request was for more collaboration, partnering, coordination, communication and convening. Participants felt that they were already building new relationships and deepening existing relationships at the Symposium, and they are looking forward to next steps and specific actions. Additionally, attendees recognize that their effectiveness will be optimized if they have access to updated knowledge and relevant best practices. Through attendance at the Symposium, people have already built new relationships and deepened existing relationships.

Over the course of the day, we were able to hear multiple perspectives, desires and ideas as well as reflections on

what is known, what information is missing, what barriers exist, and what might be done in the short, medium and long term to ensure that everyone in our community has equitable opportunities for health. A clear theme that emerged was that community leaders are beginning to look beyond individuals’ social needs and instead consider how the social determinants of health contribute to outcomes for families and neighborhoods. The importance of partnering with and taking care of families was pointed out by attendees. Participants brainstormed ideas about ways to provide mentorship and modeling to young people, about partnerships between the school district and public health, and about ensuring maternal health and early education priorities. Leaders would like to see service providers connecting with families at the very earliest stages of a child’s life. They want to ensure that solutions are in-home, family-centered, and culturally welcoming and appropriate.

The importance of neighborhood connectedness and identity were uplifted at the Symposium. People recognize that community support will be critical to the success of any initiative. Additionally, relationships need to be cultivated so that residents can be encouraged to deepen their roots within their neighborhoods. Partnering with utilities, community-minded property owners, government, legal services and businesses was suggested. Addressing upstream income and affordability issues was also top of mind for Symposium participants. At the Symposium, it was also noted that we all need to take responsibility for our own preconceptions about how people with low incomes prioritize their spending.

Community well-being is a large topic that encompasses safety, mental health and the environment. At the Symposium, discussions on community well-being covered several concerns from service



Highlights of Cradle to College/Career Education Pipeline Conversations

- There is a deep appreciation for efforts that are being made by existing organizations.
- The importance of starting off with a strong foundation in the pre-school years was acknowledged.
- There is a need for greater understanding of cradle-to-career initiatives and how individual organizations fit in.
- It is important to view education within the context of the family and the neighborhood.
- The expectations and beliefs of students, parents, teachers and community members play key roles in moving forward with the development of a pipeline.

gaps and delivery, to the role of the schools, to many concerns about mental health and substance abuse. Participants discussed groups whose needs may warrant special consideration, including isolated individuals, people of color, Latinx, the young, elderly, sick and veterans. Attendees acknowledged that many issues faced by people in disenfranchised groups have been exacerbated by the COVID pandemic. People shared ideas for better leveraging of existing services and institutions. Priority was placed on fostering a sense of belonging and a sense of purpose while ensuring safety in neighborhoods and creating spaces where people would enjoy being outdoors, exercising and engaging with neighbors. People recognize the need for ensuring that services and opportunities align with the stated needs and interests of community members moving forward.



Photo courtesy of Peter Keady/PK3 Photography
Energized and engaged participants shared their thoughts in the afternoon wrap-up session to discuss key takeaways.



NEXT STEPS

NEXT STEPS

Using the issues and themes gleaned from Symposium participants, there are some clear, short-term next steps that can build off the momentum generated from the November gathering. These next steps also provide the “safe space,” protected time to discuss innovative approaches, and relationship-building that participants highly value.

Readiness

There were 95 participants representing 35 different agencies and 10 different sectors. Many are involved in one of a dozen or so meaningful cross-sector collaboratives currently in action. We can take time to think about our roles to improve community health and well-being as individuals, agencies, sectors and cross-sector collaborators. What is our responsibility? How do we make a larger impact? What story are we telling ourselves about this work?

Small group activities

To capture the energy and opportunity, we cannot wait till the next annual Symposium to maintain momentum and drive innovation. Nor should we create infrastructure that duplicates existing activities. Active collaborations in Allentown are focusing on housing and food insecurity, cradle to college/career education, community well-being, local data use and community engagement, among other areas. These collaboratives can advance the work outlined above and can be used to drive the agendas for future Community Health Symposia.

Data training

There was an overwhelming request by nonprofit leaders for more data training that drives deeper understanding of the complex issues they seek to impact. Organizations like the Pool Center for Health Analytics and the Lehigh Valley Community Foundation are already planning data trainings and workshops. Efforts can be made to provide a series of coordinated training courses based on the identified needs of local nonprofit organizations.

Speaker series

Symposium participants benefitted from the “big picture” views our plenary speakers conveyed. We can build on this through a speaker series leading up to next year’s Symposium that brings innovative thought leaders to the region.

Community participation

Participants asked for ways to better engage community in health/well-being improvement strategies and want to see community better represented in future symposia. We need to all collectively continue to invest in building relationships with the members of the communities we serve so that they feel welcomed and encouraged to participate in our cross-sector collaborative efforts when asked. This requires intention and consistency over time.

Maintain a place-based focus on community well-being

Place, in this context, refers to the social, economic and environmental conditions that impact health and well-being. To truly improve the health of our community, future convenings should maintain that focus on place with multiple discussion areas, including social connectedness, a healthy and safe environment, access to healthy foods, and active and interactive recreational opportunities within the different communities in our region.

Planning for next year’s Symposium

Based on the achievement of learning objectives and feedback from the participants, there is great support for another Community Health Symposium. There have already been conversations about the size, focus and location of the 2023 Symposium. Planning for this should begin at least six months in advance, have a broader, more community focused planning group and include a nationally renowned keynote speaker. The planners should also include an update on what has happened since this year’s Symposium.

Reference

Turner, S., Merchant, K., Martin, E., & Kania, J. (2012). Understanding the Value of Backbone Organizations in Collective Impact: Part 2. Stanford Social Innovation Review. <https://doi.org/10.48558/HHXO-OV21>

Acknowledgements

Lehigh Valley Health Network gratefully acknowledges the assistance of the following individuals in planning and facilitating the Symposium:

Plenary Speakers

- Dr. Brian Nester, LVHN
- Matthew Tuerk, City of Allentown

Planning Committee

- Dr. Robert Murphy, LVHN
- Dr. Edward Norris, LVHN
- Brian Abel, LVHN
- Ronald Dendas, LVHN
- Jennifer Garcia, LVHN
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- Gianna Melillo, LVHN
- Bridget Rassler, LVHN
- Hilda Rivera, LVHN
- Kristin Ronco, LVHN

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- Sheri Brokopp Binder, Ripple Community Inc.
- Yusuf Dahl, The Century Promise
- Lisa Liddington, LVHN
- Samantha Shaak, LVHN
- Joan Stanford, LVHN
- Deidra Vachier, Community Services for Children
- William Vogler, Pinebrook Family Answers

Recorders

- Brian Abel, LVHN
- Brooke Devers, LVHN
- Hannah McKinney, LVHN
- Megan Messa, LVHN

Suggestion citation

The Leonard Parker Pool Institute for Health. (2023, February 24). Report to the community: Findings from the 2022 Lehigh Valley Health Network community health Symposium.

