



Leonard Parker Pool  
INSTITUTE FOR HEALTH

# Annual Report

FISCAL YEAR 2024





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THE DOROTHY RIDER POOL  
HEALTH CARE TRUST 

1975-2021

 Leonard Parker Pool  
INSTITUTE FOR HEALTH

2021-Present

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Most photos in this report are courtesy of Peter Keady/PK3 Photography.

# LPPIH Leadership: Samantha Shaak, PhD, Named Acting Executive Director at Leonard Parker Pool Institute for Health



Effective April 2024, the Leonard Parker Pool Institute for Health (LPPIH) named Samantha Shaak, PhD, as its Acting Executive Director. The transition came following Ed Meehan's retirement after more than 40 years of leadership as the Executive Director of The Rider-Pool Foundation, The Dorothy Rider Pool Health Care Trust and LPPIH.

Meehan was involved in many notable quality-of-life improvements in the Lehigh Valley during his tenure, including sound stewardship of \$160 million in investments in the Lehigh Valley. He spearheaded the Pool Fellowship for Health and development of innovative community resources such as Building 21 in the Allentown School District and Promise Neighborhoods of the Lehigh Valley. He also facilitated the creation of LPPIH's partnership with Lehigh Valley Health Network (LVHN) to continue the legacy of Leonard Pool and the focus on lasting improvements in health.

Dr. Shaak is excited to build on this foundation and has played an integral role as the Director of Community Innovation and Evaluation since LPPIH's inception in 2021. She oversees LPPIH's neighborhood development strategic initiative in Allentown, focusing on housing, education and neighborhood engagement efforts. She also leads the Pool Fellowship for Health, which has created and trained a cohort of almost 100 community leaders over the last 10 years. In addition, she oversees the Community Health Needs Assessment process for LVHN.

Before transitioning to LPPIH, Dr. Shaak led translational research and evaluation efforts to mobilize community change at LVHN's Community Health Department, serving as a Senior Research and Evaluation Scientist and then Manager of Health Systems Research & Evaluation.

Dr. Shaak received her Bachelor of Arts in psychology from Georgetown University, Washington, D.C., in 2008 and earned her Doctor of Philosophy in human development and family studies from the University of Connecticut, Storrs, CT, in 2014. She has focused on promoting family and community resilience and on community-level systems changes to improve quality of life. Dr. Shaak has served on LVHN's Institutional Review Board since 2014. She is also engaged as a leader in national organizations such as the American Evaluation Association Community Development group, serving locally on the Quality Steering Committee of Valley Youth House, Bethlehem, and on the board of Pinebrook Family Answers, Allentown.

# Letter from the Acting Executive Director



It has been another year of transition for the Leonard Parker Pool Institute for Health (LPPIH), but it has also been a transformative year – one that has enabled us to solidify our vision and approach to improving health of communities. The team and I are incredibly grateful for Ed Meehan’s leadership and investment that set us up for success today and for years to come.

This year offered us new opportunities to serve in the role of convener, data leader and dot connector as a means to building comprehensive strategies to health improvement and community development. LPPIH, in partnership with LVHN, has embraced the Vital Conditions framework and Well-Being Portfolio. This framework was first introduced to us by our colleagues at the Rippel Foundation and it has utility and meaning both within the health care system and in the community.

In our holistic neighborhood development in the Franklin Park Neighborhood, year two has been a year of momentum building and more importantly, trust building. The depth of partnerships developing is remarkable, and that’s largely due to the Pool Fellowship for Health and the concentrated effort around developing neighborhood infrastructure and a sense of belonging, which connects to our capacity-building efforts. We recognize the continued need to build the muscles required to work collectively rather than individually and to have the persistence and patience not to settle for the easy answer but for ones that create permanent change. The Pool Speaker Series and the Pool Fellowship for Health both continue to be strong, foundational efforts to building capacity among local leaders. We celebrated 10 years of fellowship this year and have reached nearly 100 fellows in that time!

Importantly, we continue to honor the legacy of Leonard Parker Pool by collaborating with some of the best thought leaders in the country. In June, 15 of our national partners joined the LPPIH team in Allentown, which signified the level of support and investment we have from national leaders for our efforts in the Lehigh Valley. We are and will continue to be a learning organization, deepening our understanding of what it takes to enable true systemic change. We continue to refine our questions, tweak our approaches, pivot in response to the current context, and articulate a vision for the future we are trying to get to.

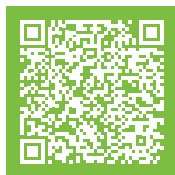
I am proud and honored to share our Annual Report for Fiscal Year ‘24. It demonstrates how we have built on the building blocks started last year and highlights our accomplishments as we outline where we are headed in the future.

*Best regards,*

**Samantha Shaak, PhD**  
**Acting Executive Director**  
**Leonard Parker Pool Institute for Health**

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*Honoring the  
Pool legacy...  
and striving  
toward a  
healthier future.*

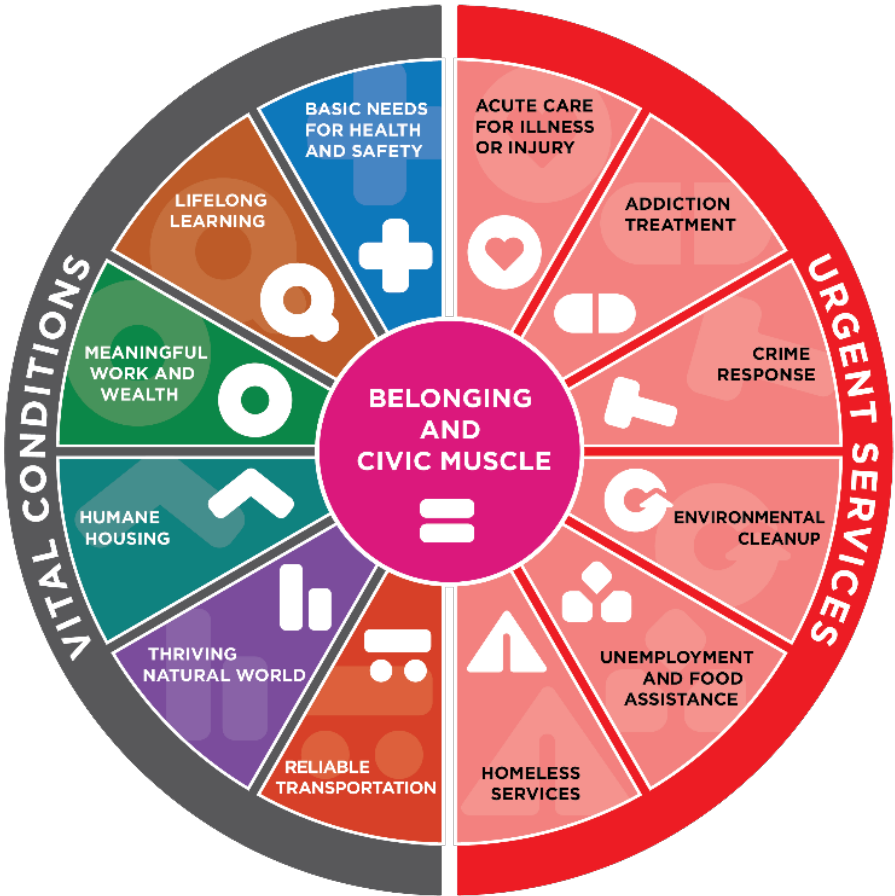


# Community Health & LPPIH: Embracing the Vital Conditions Framework

The Leonard Parker Pool Institute for Health is partnering with LVHN broadly to co-design a cohesive Community Health strategy for the network. A foundational organizing framework for LVHN and LPPIH is the Vital Conditions framework and Well-Being Portfolio (Rippel.org). The Vital Conditions for Health and Well-Being framework were developed by the Rippel Foundation in partnership with Robert Wood Johnson and other national leaders. The framework has been adopted by over 35 federal departments and agencies in the U.S. government. The adoption is part of the Federal Plan for Equitable Long-Term Recovery and Resilience (ELTRR), which provides an outline for

a government approach to improving well-being and resiliency.

Simply put, vital conditions are the properties of places and institutions that we all need to reach our full potential. The seven Vital Conditions are: Basic Needs for Health and Safety, Lifelong Learning, Meaningful Work and Wealth, Humane Housing, Thriving Natural World, Reliable Transportation, and Belonging and Civic Muscle. Investments in these conditions are necessary to create an equitable, thriving future for us and for generations to come (Rippel.org). The Well-Being Portfolio highlights the importance of not only providing urgent services for individuals when they are in crisis but also connecting these





services to proportional investments in vital conditions to holistically increase the opportunity for more people to thrive. LVHN is using the Well-Being Portfolio to inventory and catalog the variety of community health efforts implemented throughout the network. Moreover, LVHN and LPPIH have a shared understanding that making meaningful and sustainable improvements in community health through vital conditions is an important long-term prevention strategy. This Annual Report will highlight the ways in which LPPIH is investing with the community in the vital conditions through a place-based approach.

LVHN has been a longtime partner of the Rippel Foundation and previously served as one

of 17 organizations from across the U.S. in Rippel's FORESIGHT initiative. Today, Rippel partners with stewards across the county to explore innovative thinking and action that can create the conditions for everyone to thrive. The adoption of the Well-Being Portfolio is a continuation and advancement of the exploratory work started with the Rippel Foundation, LVHN and LPPIH in 2021, which included key stakeholder interviews with LVHN senior leaders, an inaugural speaker series event that introduced the Vital Conditions framework, and a follow-up workshop with LVHN and community leaders.







**Garden City**

**Hays Elementary School,  
Valley Health Partners, Promise  
Food & Wellness Center**

**Ecumenical Food Bank**

**Pinebrook Family  
Answers**

**LVH - 17th Street**

**Proposed New Ripple  
Community Inc. location**

**Franklin Park**

**Community  
Bike Works**

**Boys and Girls  
Club of Allentown**

**Ripple Church**

**Ripple Community Inc.**

**William Allen  
High School**

**West Park**

**D&M Quality Home  
Furnishings**

**Rite Aid**

**Papa John's**

**Allen Street  
Shopping Center**

**Camody Shoe  
Service**

**Union and West  
End Cemetery**

**Lehigh Valley  
Hospital 17th St**



**Proposed CALV Community Center (Cleveland Elementary School)**

**The Salvation Army**

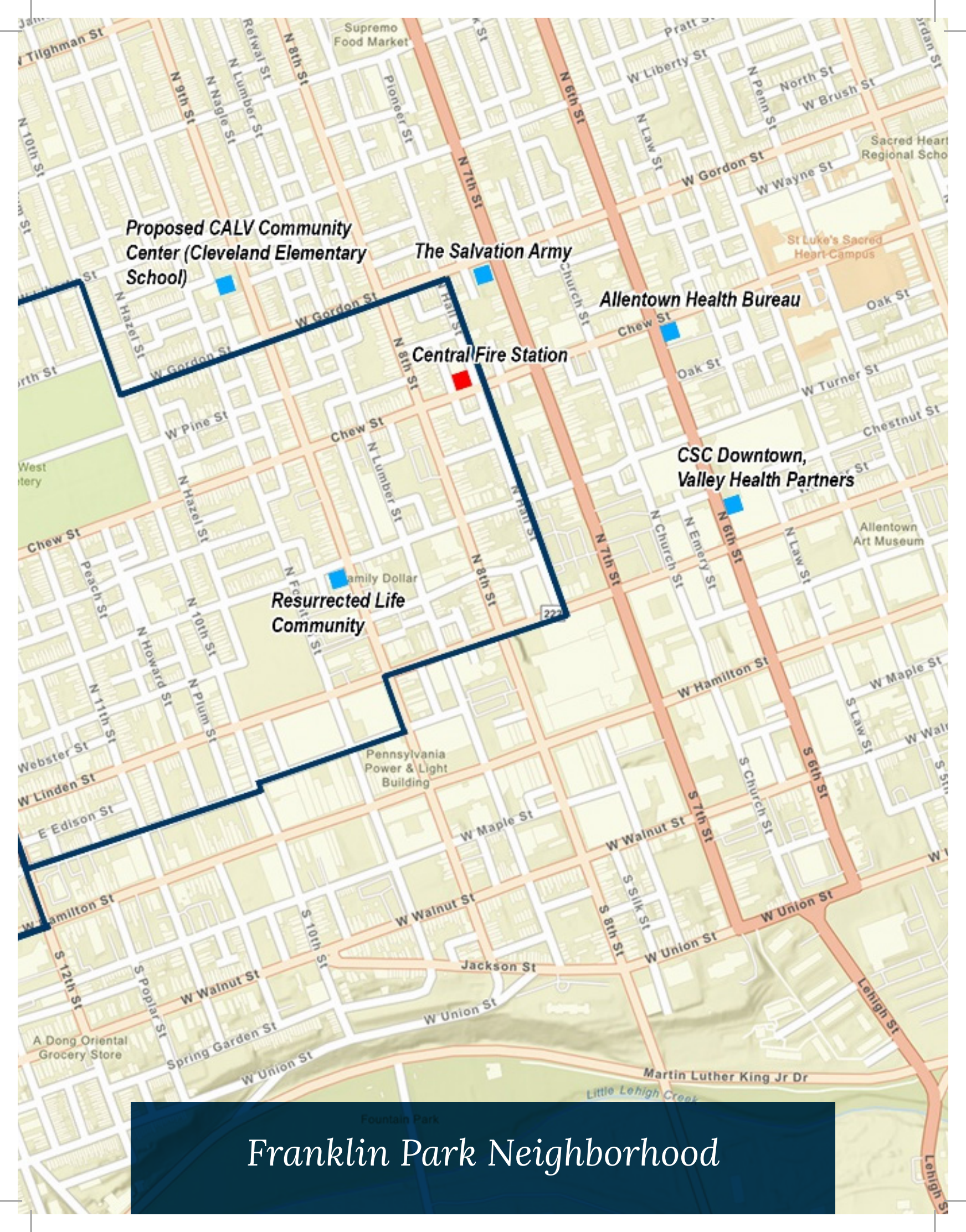
**Allentown Health Bureau**

**Central Fire Station**

**CSC Downtown, Valley Health Partners**

**Resurrected Life Community**

# Franklin Park Neighborhood





# Place-Based, Neighborhood Development Investment to Improve Health: Franklin Park

## Benefits of a Place-based Strategy

The neighborhood in which people live has an important impact on an individual's health outcomes. Research by national leaders like the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) have shown that the average life expectancy of individuals varies by community, and the people living just a few blocks away from one another may have radically different life expectancies, partially based on characteristics of the neighborhood<sup>1</sup>.

In other words, one's ZIP code has more influence on their health than their genetic code. Given the connection between place and health, health improvement efforts will be most impactful when approached from a community-wide population perspective, addressing the drivers of health within a community or neighborhood<sup>2</sup>.

In addition, research suggests<sup>3</sup> that health outcomes take a long time to improve and that individual programs are not going to create long-term sustainable change independently. A place-based approach allows for those root causes of health that are interdependent (e.g., food and housing insecurities) to be addressed together. It provides manageable "space" for larger systems (i.e., education, housing and health) to develop collaborative strategies that address shared goals in response to the local context of that neighborhood.

Residents and other community members have a central role in developing efforts that directly

impact them and their families and allows outside organizations to better understand the place, people, connections, culture and kinship that make up a community. From this perspective, the work to improve health sustainably needs to be grounded in neighborhoods.

## Franklin Park: Identifying the place

Three years ago, LPPIH began exploring publicly available economic and health disparity data for neighborhoods within Allentown, recognizing that many of the neighborhoods have experienced systemic disinvestment that has led to negative health outcomes over time. In addition to the data, LPPIH also sought to identify a place with important community assets and partners. LPPIH envisioned a neighborhood with partnering residents and that could join together to develop a comprehensive strategy for the current residents to remain in the neighborhood and thrive. From this viewpoint, census tracts 18 and 20 – also known as the Franklin Park neighborhood – emerged as a potential neighborhood that we could partner with to develop an approach to health improvement.

These two Census Tracts that make up this neighborhood are home to just over 10,000 Allentown residents in over 3,600 homes. About 35% of the population is living in poverty, about 26% of the population over age 25 does not have a high school degree, and about 65% of the population is Hispanic. Furthermore, life expectancy in these neighborhoods is 74 years of age compared to 84 years a few census tracts over in the more affluent West End of Allentown.

At the same time, there are many important community assets located within these two census tracts, including:

1 Equitable Community Development. (n.d.). RWJF. <https://www.rwjf.org/en/our-vision/focus-areas/healthy-communities-equitable-community-development.html>

2 Diez Roux A. V. (2016). Neighborhoods and Health: What Do We Know? What Should We Do? *American journal of public health*, 106(3), 430–431. <https://doi.org/10.2105/AJPH.2016.303064>

3 Principles for Building Healthy and Prosperous Communities. (n.d.). Retrieved October 14, 2024, from <https://www.buildhealthyplaces.org/content/uploads/2019/12/Principles-for-Building-Healthy-and-Prosperous-Communities-12.19.pdf>



1. A strong Lehigh Valley Health Network presence. These neighborhoods are between LVHN's 17th Street campus and its administrative headquarters at One City Center in downtown Allentown.
2. Valley Health Partners, a Federally Qualified Health Center (FQHC) established in 2020, is providing access to primary care and school-based health services to the residents in and around the Franklin Park neighborhood.
3. Hays Elementary School includes a school-based health center, mental health services, Head Start classes, access to a food pantry, and other social services.
4. Several strong non-profit service organizations, many of which include leaders who are Pool Fellows, work with residents from those neighborhoods and provide local leadership (e.g., Ripple Community Inc., Ripple Church, Community Bike Works, Pinebrook Family Answers, Community Services for Children).
5. Other parallel collaborative activities, such as a Neighborhood Partnership Program, working toward establishing a youth community center and other youth-focused services.
6. The Franklin Park neighborhood is adjacent to the Neighborhood Improvement Zone (NIZ) in downtown Allentown, which has seen \$1.2 billion of redevelopment since 2014.

Last year, in our first full year of partnering with Franklin Park residents and community partners, we began working in three primary focus areas: housing, cradle-to-college/career pipeline (education) and neighborhood engagement. We continue to nurture these strategic initiatives and have added a few more in FY24, all of which is highlighted below. Using the Vital Conditions framework, we are moving toward having strategies and efforts in all seven areas as we look to FY25 and beyond.

Ongoing relationships with national experts at organizations like BUILD Health, Focused Community Strategies (FCS) Ministries, StriveTogether and Enterprise Community Partners continue to allow LPPIH to learn from and participate in national models as well as promote the innovative work occurring in Allentown. These relationships and opportunities have been critical to our early success because they help us to continually pressure-test our strategies, bring rigor to our work and expand our perspective and mindsets.

In the long term, we envision the efforts in Franklin Park will scale wide and deep for meaningful improvements in more neighborhoods. We know this will be generational change, but we will also know along the way if we are headed in the right direction. We will be diligent in our data and evaluation efforts, both quantitatively and qualitatively, to ensure we can determine if we are creating greater opportunities for health and well-being. It is our intention that we refine the model and approach in Franklin Park and then share and replicate the process in other local communities in the region.

## BASIC NEEDS FOR HEALTH & SAFETY AS A VITAL CONDITION



L PPIH is developing a strategy for increasing access to healthy and affordable food for residents in sustainable ways. The first component of this strategy is in partnership with Kellyn Foundation, a non-profit organization whose mission is to develop, support, facilitate and implement healthy lifestyle programs to prevent and reduce the individual, family, community and national chronic disease burden. Key to their approach is their healthy neighborhood immersion strategy, which we are bringing to Franklin Park. Kellyn builds long-term relationships with neighborhood leaders and works with them to encourage healthier lifestyle choices. They value trusting relationships, inclusivity and collaboration. They aim to make living a healthy lifestyle the cultural norm.

For many years through support from the Lehigh Valley Reilly Children's Hospital, the Kellyn Foundation has been providing in-school education in the Allentown School District to third through fifth graders, including many of the schools serving Franklin Park – Hays Elementary, Ramos Elementary and Central Elementary. This effort began in FY24 and will continue in FY25 and beyond. In FY24, an additional component was added to improve access to healthy, affordable food. In partnership with LPPIH, Kellyn is bringing its mobile market to two sites in the Franklin Park area each week, Pinebrook Family Answers and Resurrected Life Church. The mobile markets provide fresh, often local produce, grocery staples and prepared Lifestyle Medicine Meals. Franklin Park households, who qualify based on income and food security status, can receive weekly \$15 vouchers to use at the market in combination with public assistance benefits. Launched in June 2024, 275 households were served in the neighborhood within the first month.

In summer 2024, LVHN Research Scholar Allia Proctor visited 19 bodegas and other food outlets to check the availability and pricing of 10 staple food products. The various stores carried an average of 6.6 staples from a list of 10, and prices were found to vary widely. Importantly, the corner stores were observed to have an important social and cultural impact on the

community. Along with talking to our Franklin Park neighbors, we also aim to increase our understanding of the food environment there through data sources such as the census and other government data. LPPIH and Pool Center for Health Analytics are collaborating on a food systems dashboard that will allow us to track key metrics related to food access



and security in the Franklin Park neighborhood. The development of this dashboard is being informed by an in-depth landscape scan we conducted to understand the various roles leading hospital systems play in addressing food-related concerns. Through ongoing efforts to learn from Franklin Park residents, track quantitative data and stay informed about best practices related to health care and food security, we are building a foundation of understanding that will inform our future efforts.

## LIFELONG LEARNING AS A VITAL CONDITION



L ifelong Learning efforts in Franklin Park are grounded in developing a Cradle-to-College/Career continuum. Local collaborators involved in the early childhood education collaborative are committed to creating an equitable early learning environment for young children in Allentown and particularly in the Franklin Park neighborhood. The collaborative supports families with young children and develops critical data-sharing relationships among Community Services for Children (CSC), Allentown Health Bureau, Valley Health Partners and Lehigh



Valley Reilly Children’s Hospital.

In 2023, this collaborative was selected as participants in The BUILD Health Challenge national program’s fourth cohort. An acronym for Bold, Upstream, Integrated, Local and Data-Driven, the organization believes that community stakeholders from various sectors have a shared responsibility to improve community health. The BUILD Health Challenge seeks to support communities in their efforts to advance health equity – to ensure no one is disadvantaged from achieving their full health potential because of social position or other socially determined circumstances. Through BUILD Health, our Franklin Park collaborative receives technical assistance from ChangeLab Solutions that helps us to deepen our engagement with community members, better understand the disparities we are uncovering in health and education outcomes and guide our progress. Additionally, BUILD Health provides evaluation support through Equal Measure,



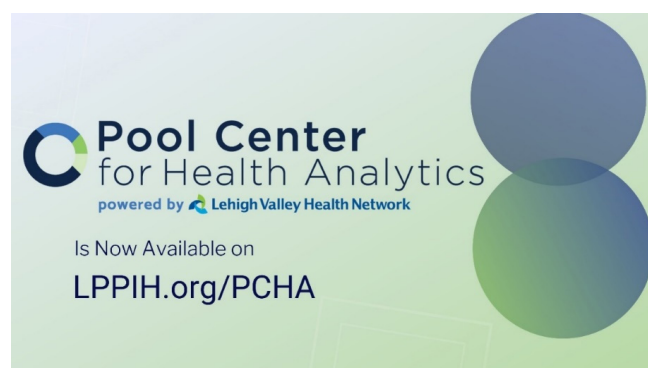
implementing a site-specific evaluation as well as a cross-site evaluation. This evaluation is helping us to celebrate our strengths and strategize around best ways to address opportunities.

This year, the collaborative took on a new name – Families First in Franklin Park. We developed a logo for the initiative to present a united identity in the community. The warm, vibrant colors of the logo demonstrate the commitment to equity in early childhood support for local families. In March 2024, Families First in Franklin Park launched social media pages as well as a web page to keep parents and families engaged and share useful information within Franklin Park. Such information includes a new after-school program called “Uplift Franklin Park,” which began in April 2024. The new after-school program, which extended into the summer, has provided the collaborative an additional opportunity to hold meaningful conversations with families and provided insight into community needs.

In the past year, we also made significant investment to deepen our collective understanding of the complex, compounded problems that Franklin Park residents, particularly families with young children, are facing. Through surveying, outreach events and after-school programming, a better understanding of the neighborhood’s needs is unfolding. Early in FY24 the collaborative completed 233 surveys with families in Franklin Park to better understand their childcare needs. Community members were surveyed at 100 clinics, community events and other local locations including barbershops, beauty salons and the local library. We learned through surveying that 68% of those surveyed use a licensed childcare facility for their children. 60% of survey respondents had indicated their childcare survey situation is OK, and 61% of residents said safety and cleanliness was their top childcare concern. Also, 66% reported that financial stress is the top family challenge they are facing.

Data is at the heart of the Families First in Franklin Park initiative. Gathering, analyzing and sharing data helps to guide the project so that we can discern, and begin to address, inequities in health and education for young children. In addition to the locally collected data shared above, the collaborative made important progress in establishing a data-sharing infrastructure through the technical expertise of the Pool Center for Health Analytics.

In FY24, we developed the necessary legal agreements for data sharing around health and education and developed our data plan for the project, which specifies the data points from each organization that will be brought together. As FY24 closes, we are poised to begin importing and joining data from the partners over the next year and engaging parents in the process. We anticipate gaining a deep understanding of health and education equity in Franklin Park through this work, and we look forward to sharing results with the broader community.



## MEANINGFUL WORK & WEALTH AS A VITAL CONDITION



Another important component of life in Franklin Park is that residents have access and opportunity to earn income that will enable them to live within the neighborhood and support their individual and family's well-being. During FY24, the Franklin Park coalition took some initial steps to supporting workforce development and employment opportunities. LPPIH is investing in residents by supporting and hiring residents in our work in the Community through the Flourishing Neighborhood Index, Integrated Community Therapy and The BUILD Health Challenge. In addition, Families First in Franklin Park and LPPIH were a part of a planning team for the City of Allentown's application for a federal Recompete Grant. If awarded, this effort will support local, meaningful work and wealth efforts with a focus on workforce development to support residents age 25 to 54 get into the workforce and maintain good-paying jobs. The Franklin Park neighborhood (census tracts 18 and 20) is one of three priority neighborhoods in this collaborative plan and the initiative will be in partnership with the Franklin Park coalition. The city will address barriers to employment faced disproportionately by residents in the service area, including skills/education gaps, transportation challenges and a shortage of affordable, high-quality childcare. Families First in Franklin Park understands the first five years of a child's life are critical in early childhood development and school readiness, thus Allentown's involvement in Recompete allows our collaborative to play a helpful role in creating a pipeline to thriving. We hope the city will be awarded this opportunity in FY25 but remain committed to partnering with the City of Allentown and others on workforce development efforts in FY25.

## HUMANE HOUSING AS A VITAL CONDITION



Our Franklin Park Housing Group is committed to supporting humane housing within Franklin Park and thinking about the holistic strategies needed to have a vibrant array of housing options available. The group consists of representatives from Ripple Community Inc., City of Allentown, North Penn Legal Services and The Real Estate Lab. Additional technical assistance is provided by Enterprise Community Partners. Our partnership vision is that all residents in Franklin Park will have housing that supports self-determination (agency) and economic mobility – that is safe, stable, healthy, and affordable.

In the initial Housing x Education Neighborhood Assessment that Enterprise Community Partners completed in 2022, they validated that housing stability is a pressing concern in Franklin Park and the quality of available housing is often substandard. In addition, an inability to afford rent has a significant impact on housing that is not safe to live in. Franklin Park's more severe housing quality issues are not immediately apparent; the prevalent health and safety concerns, such as unauthorized conversions and illegal room rentals that lead to overcrowding, are not well understood within existing data systems. Up to 40% of residents are severely cost burdened, paying 50% or more of their income on housing. Rental inventory is extremely low and rent prices continue to increase without a correlated improvement in property quality. The Franklin Park neighborhood also has one of the highest eviction filing rates in Pennsylvania.

To build on this initial assessment, in FY24 the Franklin Park Housing Group worked with Enterprise Community Partners to put together a Housing Memo, which provided a foundational understanding of the common federal, state and local programs, policies and funding mechanisms that support affordable housing and community development. Based on this initial work, the group is working to address eviction prevention, home renovation and improvement, low-income housing development and pathways to home ownership.



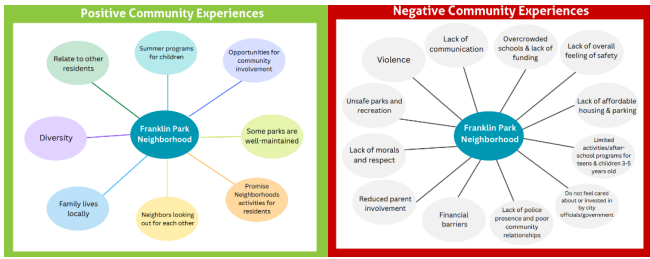
# BELONGING & CIVIC MUSCLE AS A VITAL CONDITION =

The vital conditions framework recognizes belonging and civic muscle as a foundational component to creating a thriving neighborhood. The Franklin Park neighborhood group, led by Cohesion Network and supported by LPPIH, is developing enduring neighborhood infrastructure, and is committed to bringing together, organizing and empowering the authentic voice of the community. In FY24, the monthly neighborhood meetings open to all Franklin Park residents continued and grew. They provide an opportunity for neighbors to connect and develop solutions to the challenges identified in the community. In addition, community partners have come together to host a range of events and gatherings in the neighborhood to develop deeper social connections with residents, including Wednesday night Community Garden gatherings by Ripple Church. These events will continue and double in FY25 starting in the summer.

Additionally, the City of Allentown was awarded a “Love Your Block” grant through Bloomberg Philanthropy in FY24 that will support neighborhood cleanups and community engagement within the Franklin Park neighborhood. The city also submitted a planning grant for a Franklin Park redesign this year and actively solicited community input in its initial renderings.

These are important steps to building neighborhood infrastructure, but we also continue to invest in efforts to get to know more residents and neighbors. In Summer 2023, 14 neighbors were interviewed about neighborhood perception and services in the neighborhood. One finding was that people feel they would benefit from more awareness of available resources. The goods or services that they are least happy with are supermarkets’ food options and parks and recreation.

In fall 2023 and spring 2024, three small focus groups with individuals working within our partner organizations and living in Franklin Park were held to explore the positives and negatives of living in Franklin Park. “Likes” included diversity, sense of belonging, walkability, health care access, and local food vendors.



“Dislikes” included lack of parking, lack of healthy food access, limited events, garbage, crime, safety of drivers and pedestrians, childcare costs and choices, knowledge of resources, and sub-par parks.

With assistance from Focused Community Strategies (FCS), partners within Franklin Park are expanding our reach by implementing the Flourishing Neighborhood Index (FNI) survey for residents in census tract 20. This survey will enable us to further refine or validate our early engagement efforts highlighted above and capture a wider view of the perceptions of the neighborhood from more residents. The process began with a visual parcel assessment of 1,400 properties within the neighborhood in May 2024 with surveying beginning in the summer. The goal is to complete 300 surveys through the collaborative effort of 20 surveyors, including some residents.

Finally, Integrated Community Therapy (ICT) training for local community stakeholders provided additional pathways to support social connection and healing among residents in response to daily stressors. In partnership with Visible Hands Collaborative and LVHN, 35 local leaders became the first cohort trained in ICT, a model that originated in Brazil. The training began in January 2024 and concluded in April 2024. Rounds of ICT are now being conducted in Allentown through members of the first cohort, and LPPIH and LVHN will continue to grow the use and implementation of this important prevention approach.



# Capacity Building





## Langman, Duncan and Symposium Highlight Pool Speaker Series

The Pool Speaker Series continued during the spring of 2024 with two guest lectures. On April 5, 2024, LPPIH welcomed Peter Langman, PhD, national expert on the psychology of school shooters and other perpetrators of mass violence. Dr. Langman authored the book *Warning Signs*. The presentation identified common misconceptions about school shooters, differentiated between the three psychological types of shooters, explained warning signs of impending or potential violence, and discussed barriers to recognizing and reporting warning signs. As LPPIH works to support community well-being, we aim to increase awareness of the warning signs of mass violence so that together we can work toward preventing incidents in our community.



Weeks later, on April 30, 2024, we welcomed Shawn Duncan, PhD, Director of Training and Consulting at Focused Community Strategies (FCS) to Allentown for a guest lecture. Dr. Duncan spoke about holistic neighborhood development and why neighborhoods should serve as the unit of change when trying to create equitable, thriving places. In alignment with FCS, LPPIH believes such an approach is the evidence-based best practice for achieving a cohesive neighborhood where all residents and visitors have equitable opportunities to thrive. Health happens in communities in partnership with the community.

# LVHN and LPPIH Hosted 2nd Annual Community Health Symposium in Schuylkill County

**A**To improve the quality of health for Schuylkill County residents, we must begin today. That was the overarching message of LVHN's second annual Community Health Symposium, held this year in Schuylkill County at Penn State-Schuylkill. The program was offered cooperatively by the Leonard Parker Pool Institute for Health and Lehigh Valley Hospital (LVH)-Schuylkill.

More than 50 community leaders and LVHN clinicians, directors and community health specialists gathered to discuss a broad range of important issues that impact the quality of health and social determinants of health.

Guest speakers included Penn State Schuylkill Chancellor Patrick Jones, PhD; Schuylkill County Commissioner Gary Hess; LVH-Schuylkill President Bill Reppy; Executive Director of Eastcentral Pennsylvania Area Health Education Center (AHEC) Lori Chaplin; and Amanda Taylor, also of AHEC.

"Improving community health improves our quality of life," says Hess. "To make a healthier Schuylkill, we need everyone on the same path to identify our challenges and bring suggestions to resolve them."

The symposium was an opportunity to learn from and support local community partners regarding their insights into factors that influence health. The attendees were charged with identifying solutions on how to improve some of the most pressing issues affecting our community's health.

## The symposium listed four main objectives:

1. Learn from local community partners about their insights into factors that influence health.
2. Identify ways in which local community partners are addressing the factors that impact health over time.
3. Discuss the evolving leadership role of large complex health care systems in addressing social determinants of health.
4. Summarize a collective path forward and short-term next steps that allow all partners to contribute to improving community well-being.

Reppy provided a demographic overview and community health profile of Schuylkill County. Then, a series of three breakout sessions facilitated by both LVHN and community leaders focused on mental health, addiction recovery and health behaviors. Community health data was shared. Discussions were documented and information was gathered during the brainstorming sessions. Symposium organizers summarized a collective path forward and developed short-term next steps that allowed everyone to contribute to improved community well-being.





## HealthBeat on WDIY Continues with New Voices

L PPIH proudly launched a new season of HealthBeat on Lehigh Valley's local NPR station, WDIY 88.1 FM. Since the show's inception, the co-hosts were LPPIH Executive Director Ed Meehan and WDIY Executive Director Greg Capogna. This year both Meehan and Capogna retired from their respective roles. HealthBeat continued with two new leaders behind the microphone. Since April 2024, HealthBeat has been co-hosted by LPPIH Acting Executive Director Samantha Shaak, PhD, and newcomer Executive Director at WDIY, Margaret McConnell.

In FY24, HealthBeat continued monthly discussions regarding health and well-being.

All HealthBeat episodes are available on demand on Apple Podcast, LPPIH.org and LPPIH's YouTube Channel.



## Amplification: Raising Up the Work

L VHN and LPPIH's Edward Norris, MD, MBA, DFAPA, FACLP, Samantha Shaak, PhD and Cheryl Arndt, PhD shared our investment in Integrated Community Therapy (ICT) and its potential to support mental health in Allentown with evaluation colleagues through the American Evaluation Association AEA365 Blog Post entitled Integrated Community Therapy: Building Community While Supporting Mental Health in Allentown.

At Evaluation 2023, the annual conference of the American Evaluation Association, in Indianapolis, Ind., LPPIH presented Social Determinants of Health: Using Leading, National Frameworks to Construct a Story of Place. The presentation, given in October 2023, highlighted how LPPIH leverages the expertise of our national partners in furthering place-based work.

In May 2024, at the Accelerating

Health Equity Conference, Arndt of the LPPIH team facilitated an interactive workshop alongside Lori Molloy from North Penn Legal Services and The Rippel Foundation's Anna Creegan and Brooke Muya.

In the evolving health care landscape, many hospital systems face the challenge of providing health care services while also partnering in community-wide efforts for equitable health and well-being. To create equitable communities, we need to build structures and partnerships that will help us move complex systems in new directions. The question is: how do we build bridges and move from "business as usual" to a new future, one where everyone is thriving with no exceptions? The presenters helped participants imagine what it takes to create a future of equitable health and well-being in their communities. LVHN, LPPIH and a community

partner, North Penn Legal Services, shared examples of the types of partnerships and frameworks they are using to bring the various components of this work together.

In September 2023, LPPIH and members of the Families First in Franklin Park collaborative attended an in-person convening with the other BUILD Health Challenge Cohort 4 communities in Atlanta, Ga. It was a chance to share the work happening in Allentown and Franklin Park with other communities and to learn from others who are trying to support sustainable improvements in health in their own communities.



# Pool Fellowship for Health





## Pool Fellowship for Health Celebrates 10 Years of Impact

An old saying by Chinese philosopher Confucius notes that the best time to plant a tree is 10 years ago. The next best time to plant a tree is today. Ten years ago, the Rider-Pool Foundation planted a tree by creating the Collective Impact Fellowship, now branded and operated by LPPIH as the Pool Fellowship for Health.

On June 3-4, 2024, our national partners and faculty members of the Pool Fellowship gathered from far and wide to celebrate the Fellowship's 10th anniversary in Allentown. A two-day summit provided an opportunity to reflect on the power of collaborative, cross-sector work and discuss the lessons we are all learning as we work to create communities that allow more people to thrive. In

addition to LPPIH and LVHN leadership, participating organizations were StriveTogether, Rippel Foundation, Visible Hands Collaborative, TCC Group, Focused Communities Strategies, Systems Sanctuary, Frameworks Institute and Enterprise Community Partners.

The two days concluded with a Community of Practice at the Allentown Art Museum to celebrate our fellows, faculty and staff. LPPIH shares an immense thank you to all faculty members, partners and fellows who dedicated time and effort over the past 10 years to create meaningful impact in the Lehigh Valley.



## Meet the Members of Cohort 9

Cohort 9 of the Pool Fellowship ran from September 2023 to June 2024. Members of the cohort were:

**Christine Rivera**, BSN, RN, Vice President and Executive Director, Muhlenberg College Division of Graduate and Continuing Education

**Michael Shaffer**, Vice President of Community Based Services, Pinebrook Family Answers

**David Synnamon**, Director, Allentown Health Bureau

**Carol Andersen**, Chief Executive Officer, Bloom for Women

**Lucinda Wright**, Equity and Inclusion Coordinator, City of Allentown

**Yolanda Colbert**, Director of Operations, Cohesion Network

**Thespina Godshalk**, Program Director, School-based Behavioral Health, Lehigh Valley Health Network

**Christina Graham**, Senior Consultant, Equal Measure

**Blake Henry**, Housing Director and Program Team Lead, Ripple Community Inc.

**Andrene Nowell**, Founder and Executive Director, Fine Feather Foundation Inc.

**Crystal Perez**, Assistant Director of Health Services, Allentown School District

**Blake Ritchey**, Vice President of Human Resources, Community Services for Children

## Highlight of Community of Practice Convenings in Fiscal Year 2024

- **Overcoming Housing Barriers after Incarceration**  
In October, Pool Fellowship for Health alumni Yusuf Dahl led an insightful and engaging Community of Practice discussion at Zoellner Arts Center. Dahl was featured in a Vice Media docustory titled “Backgrounded,” which highlights the housing challenges faced by formerly incarcerated individuals. Once incarcerated and now co-founder of The Real Estate Lab in Allentown and CEO of The Century Promise, Dahl shared his experiences of recently being denied housing 25 years after being released from prison. After a screening of the video, the event also included a panel discussion with representatives from Housing Alliance of PA, HUD Mid-Atlantic Region and the Pennsylvania Residential Homeowners Association.
- **An Overview of Systems Thinking**  
In November, Rachel Sinha, Systems Change Strategist at The Systems Sanctuary, and Fellowship faculty, visited Allentown. As one of the newest faculty members for the Pool Fellowship, Sinha graciously led a Community of Practice to provide a two-hour overview of different frameworks for Systems Change and Systems Mapping with past cohorts of fellows. Sinha previously co-founded The Finance Innovation Lab in London, a collaboration between WWF and the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales in 2008 and spin-off initiatives including the Natural Capital Coalition and Audit Futures. The Systems Sanctuary cultivates the field of systems change practice internationally with partners.
- **Chloe Cole-Wilson Reveals Restoring Petals Exhibition**  
In January 2024, Pool Fellowship Cohort 8 graduate Chloe Cole-Wilson debuted an exhibition at the Allentown Art Museum called Restoring Petals. The transformative community project interwove visual and performing arts, mental health and community well-being initiative created space to explore the profound impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on both our past and future. Shortly after the exhibition opened, Cole-Wilson hosted a Community of Practice to welcome Fellows into the new interactive exhibit.
- **Telling Your Organization’s Story in the Media**  
Roundtable Discussion with Media Professionals. On March 22, 2024, LPPIH’s Community Engagement and Communications Specialist, Matt Trust, MS, hosted a



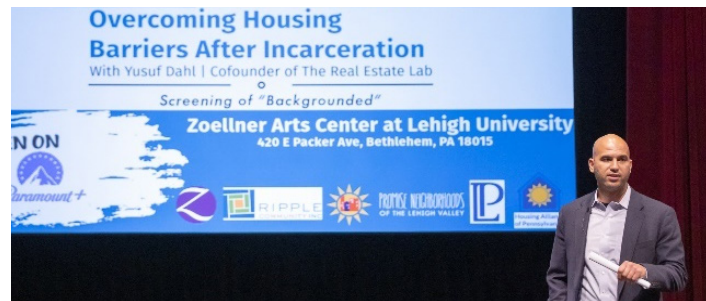
roundtable discussion that highlighted best practices in sharing stories with the media to successfully garner coverage. Roundtable participants were WFMZ Anchor Jaciel Cordoba; The Morning Call Senior Content Editor Crissa Shoemaker DeBree; WDIY Executive Director Margaret McConnell; and Lehigh Valley News Executive Editor Jim Deegan.

- **Ed Meehan Celebrated Upon Retirement**

On March 28, 2024, Pool Fellows gathered to celebrate the remarkable career and retirement for LPPIH Executive Director and one of the Fellowship’s founding fathers, Ed Meehan.

- **PCM and Organizational Climate Refresh**

Since the Fellowship’s genesis, Beth Schermer and Rosemarie Christofolo have been a consistent fellow-favorite in their trainings and executive coaching sessions. Sessions have included the administering and teaching of the Process Communication Model (PCM), which indicates the unique combination of six types of personalities. On April 26, 2024, Schermer and Christofolo visited Allentown one last time before retirement and hosted a two-hour refresh for all Fellows. The Pool Fellowship for Health extends its heartfelt gratitude to Christofolo and Schermer Consulting for their unwavering support and partnership over the past decade.





*Inside the Institute*



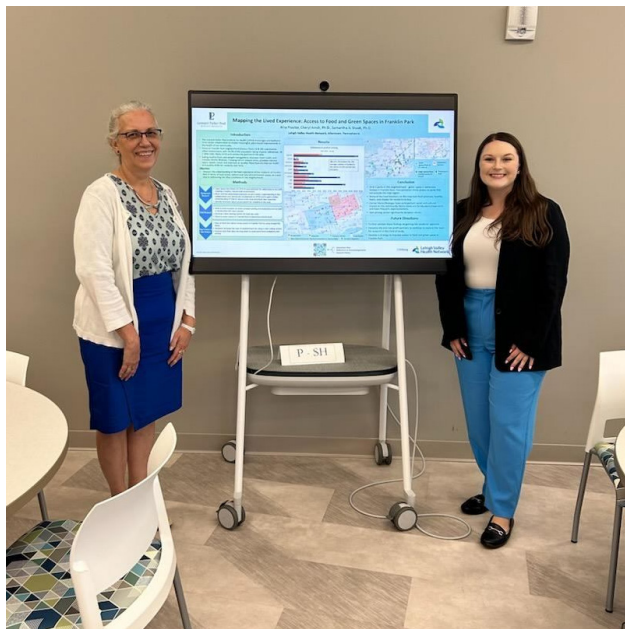


## Meehan Receives Prestigious Donley Award

Edward F. Meehan, in his 40th year serving as the Executive Director of The Pool Health Care Trust, and The Rider-Pool Foundation, and later the Leonard Parker Pool Institute for Health, received the 2023 Inez and Edward Donley Award. The honor was awarded at Community Services for Children's (CSC) annual Gala held on Saturday, October 7, 2023.

Edward Donley was hired as the 22nd employee at Air Products before eventually rising through the ranks to become the company's second CEO, succeeding founder Leonard Parker Pool. He served as a trustee of Lehigh Valley Health Network, The Pool Health Care Trust and The Rider-Pool Foundation. The Lehigh Valley innovator passed away at age 95 in 2017.

Congratulations to Ed Meehan on this well-deserved recognition of his career and personal commitment to children and families in the Lehigh Valley.



## LPPIH's Commitment to Students

LVHN Research Scholar Allia Proctor joined the LPPIH team for the summer of 2024. Proctor is a student at Ursinus College and her project focused on the Social Determinants of Health and mapping the food and physical green space assets within the Franklin Park neighborhood.

Further, Jenna Mondovich worked with the Pool Institute for Health team for both her Applied Practical Experience and Capstone requirements for her Master's in Public Health degree program at Lehigh University. She worked with our Families First in Franklin Park collaborative to conduct focus groups with residents about their lived experience in Franklin Park.



Leonard Parker Pool  
INSTITUTE FOR HEALTH

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