

THE WINDOW

MAY 2019



JHF news, events, milestones, publications, and more

26th Princeton Conference Posits *Where Next? Twenty Years After To Err is Human*

Karen Wolk Feinstein, PhD again participated as a member of the planning committee and a session moderator at the 26th Annual Princeton Conference, held May 21-23, 2019. JHF has been a long-time sponsor of this important platform for bringing together clinical and policy experts to discuss key health policy issues.

This year attendees focused on topics such as the impact of federalism on U.S. health care, including its impact on Medicaid, issues in the Medicare program, state-level innovations including alternative payment models, and the opioid crisis.

In addition, led by Dr. Feinstein, the conference provided an opportunity to reflect on where we are in the U.S. twenty years after the publication of the ground-breaking *To Err is Human: Building a Safer Health System* estimated that nearly 100,000 American were dying as a result of preventable errors. Given the fact that, nearly two decades later, the devastating toll continues – hundreds of thousands of lives lost each year – Dr. Feinstein posited the question, “*Where do we go from here?*”



Karen Wolk Feinstein, PhD, speaks at the 26th annual Princeton Conference on May 22, 2019.

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Challenging participants to look to other industries for models of how health care should respond to needless deaths, Dr. Feinstein pointed out that following the tragic Boeing 737 MAX 8 plane crashes that took the lives of more than 340 people, serious and significant action was taken. Planes were grounded across the world, an investigation began, whistleblowers came forward, and Boeing corporate leaders was targeted with responsibility for preventable harm. Dr. Feinstein related this example to health care, or rather how health care *should* react to problems. Pilots (the doctors) refuse to fly, and passengers (patients/consumers) refuse to purchase tickets (use faulty healthcare services), and airlines (healthcare purchasers) refuse to buy the planes.

Instead, the healthcare reality is that the equivalent of two full Boeing 737 MAX 8 planes crash every day as a result of medical errors and nobody is held accountable. Progress has been frustrating and slow-moving.

Dr. Feinstein noted that all the critical health stakeholders are bystanders, silent witnesses to harm who don't demand solutions. Blame for errors is a spectator sport and opinions abound: It's the culture, the complexity of medicine and the human body, our fee-for-service payment system, our inadequate measurement or IT systems. Rarely, however, do we assign responsibility to the healthcare systems that are ultimately responsible for healing and not harming.

The panelists who shared their frustrations and also their suggestions included longtime patient safety advocates: Michael Millenson, President of Health Quality Advisors LLC, a former Chicago Tribune journalist, has been writing about health care and patient safety for decades; Carolyn M. Clancy, MD, Deputy Under Secretary for Discovery, Education and Affiliate Networks at the Veterans Health Administration, who previously led the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality whose mission is to produce evidence to make health care safer, and more reliably best-practice. Ken Segel, Managing Director of Value Capture / Value Capture Policy Institute, who has been working to improve patient safety since he became director of the Pittsburgh Regional Health Initiative in 1999.

At the conclusion of the session, Dr. Feinstein reminded the audience that improving patient safety going forward will require that none of us is a bystander. We need to be proud whistleblowers. To emphasize the point, session participants were provided with whistles – a reminder to feel empowered enough to break out of the bystander role.



Panelists at Session III: Twenty Years After 'To Err is Human': Where Next? on May 22 at the Princeton Conference (from left to right): Karen Wolk Feinstein, PhD, President and CEO of Jewish Healthcare Foundation; Michael Millenson, President of Health Quality Advisors LLC; Carolyn M. Clancy, MD, Deputy Under Secretary for Discovery, Education and Affiliate Networks at the Veterans Health Administration; Ken Segel, Managing Director of Value Capture / Value Capture Policy Institute,

Pittsburgh...We Have Liftoff!

[Liftoff PGH 2020](#) is both an event and ongoing process that will bring together key stakeholders to move our region to a new space and position itself strategically as a frontier for healthcare innovation and adaptive to the descriptive forces of innovation. Liftoff PGH 2020 will be held September 15-16 at the David L. Lawrence Convention Center.

JHF President and CEO Karen Feinstein, PhD, announced Liftoff PGH 2020 during Pittsburgh Life Sciences Week held in May and sponsored in part by the Jewish Healthcare Foundation. Dr. Feinstein served on a panel with David Finegold, DPhil, president of Chatham University; Nicole Oshurak, director of strategic partnerships at Magee-Womens Research Institute and Foundation; Betty Woo, vice president of scientific collaborations and strategy at Thermo Fischer Scientific; and Vera Krekanova, PhD, chief research officer at the Allegheny Conference on Community Development. The panel, moderated by InnovatePGH Executive Director, Sean Luther, included an active discussion around the steps necessary to position Pittsburgh for life science industry cluster development, a recommendation from the 2017 Brookings Institute report “Capturing the next generation economy: Pittsburgh’s rise as a global innovation city.” The panelists also discussed exploring existing efforts, gaps, opportunities, and recommendations for building and implementing a strategic life science cluster development that will highlight Pittsburgh as a global life science hub.

Currently, Pittsburgh's economy is dominated by a health sector with many dimensions: for example, health professions education, care delivery, medical research, architecture and engineering, communications, and technology invention. Despite these assets, including respected academic institutions, medical systems, industry and start-ups, Pittsburgh is not structured with intentionality – the formal collaborations with bold ambitions – that other regions have assembled to maintain a competitive edge.

Visit www.liftoffpgh.org to watch the promotional video and sign up to receive email updates. Save the dates of September 15-16 and get ready for Liftoff PGH 2020. Stay tuned!



The culminating breakfast panel on May 17th at Life Sciences Week (left to right): David Finegold, DPhil, president of Chatham University; Vera Krekanova, PhD, chief research officer at the Allegheny Conference on Community Development; Betty Woo, vice president of scientific collaborations and strategy at Thermo Fischer Scientific; Nicole Oshurak, director of strategic partnerships at Magee-Womens Research Institute and Foundation; and Karen Wolk Feinstein, PhD, president and CEO at the Jewish Healthcare Foundation.

Youth Advocates Visit Legislators in Harrisburg for Mental Health Awareness Day

On May 6th, 19 youth advocates from southwestern Pennsylvania traveled to Harrisburg for Mental Health Awareness Day. The students represented 13 high schools in Allegheny and Beaver Counties, including; Aliquippa, Baldwin, Beaver, Beaver Falls, Freedom, Gateway, Hopewell, Montour, New Brighton, Quigley, South Side Area, Urban Pathways, Yeshiva Schools, as well as Robert Morris University. They were joined by JHF staff, Sally Jo Snyder, director of advocacy and consumer engagement for Consumer Health Coalition, and student advisors from the Beaver County Youth Ambassador Program, Maureen Hawk and Susan Smith.



Youth mental health advocates speak with Department of Human Services Secretary Teresa Miller in the Capitol Rotunda on May 6.

On arrival to the Capital, youth divided in groups of three or four students to meet with state legislators and their staffs. They met with Senator Pam Iovino, Senator Jay Costa, Representative Anita Astorino Kulik, Representative Dan Miller, and staff for Representatives Robert Matzie and Camera Bartolotta. The youth advocated for increased mental health education for both teachers and students, additional mental health resources in schools including guidance counselors, and promoting awareness and stigma reduction. They urged the policymakers to support policies that create safe and inclusive school environments, and provide equitable resources to all school districts.



Department of Health Secretary Rachel Levine, MD addresses the crowd in the Capitol Rotunda at the Mental Health Awareness Day Celebration.

Rep. Michael Schlossberg, chair of the Mental Health Caucus, met with students and shared his story about dealing with depression and anxiety. He encouraged them to do the same as it is a powerful tool for advocacy and stigma reduction. The students observed a legislative session from the gallery and were recognized by Rep. Schlossberg from the House floor.

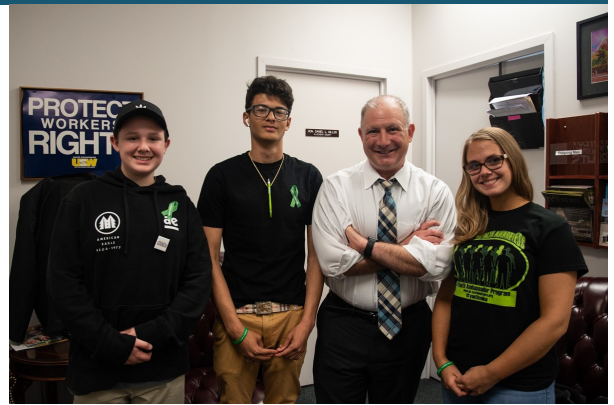
Joined by state representatives, the PA System of Care Partnership, and the youth advocates from JHF's youth advocacy network, Department of Human Services Secretary Teresa Miller and Department of Health Secretary Rachel Levine, MD, held an event in the Capitol Rotunda to raise awareness and promote open

dialogue about mental health. "Be cognizant of others' mental health, not just throughout the month of May but every day. Every day we face different challenges, stressors, and triggers, and some days are more difficult than others. But every day is a new opportunity to be a support and a resource, even if it's something as simple as asking some of if they are okay," said Secretary Miller in her

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remarks.

On the ride home, youth reflected on the day saying they appreciated the opportunity to take action, travel to the Capitol, and speak with policymakers: “The legislators had a conversation with us – a lot of times you don’t feel listened to when talking to adults – but they gave us feedback, wanted to hear more, and invited us back.” Youth plan to continue fostering relationships with their Representatives and invite them to mental health awareness events and to speak to their classmates at their schools.



Youth mental health advocates meet with Representative Dan Miller on May 6.



Youth mental health advocates meet with Representative Anita Astorino Kulik on May 6.



Youth mental health advocates meet with Senator Pam Iovino on May 6.

A Reimagined PA WIC Program Introduced during “WIC Month”

The Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children, known as the WIC Program, has been a cornerstone in efforts to support healthier pregnancies and improved birth outcomes for qualifying mothers, babies, and young children up to age five. Here in Pennsylvania, Governor Wolf [commemorated its 45th anniversary](#) by declaring May WIC Month. What the Governor did not say is that this critical program is in jeopardy.

WIC has helped increase infant birth weights, reduce infant mortality and increase breastfeeding. It has reduced childhood anemia and improved nutrition, cognitive development and learning in young children. And it has increased the use of health services in families with young children.

Despite the WIC Program’s contributions to the health of women and children, the program has seen declining enrollment across the country. Pennsylvania enrolls only about half of eligible women and children. This has meant the loss of significant federal WIC funding.

The Jewish Healthcare Foundation and WHAMglobal are committed to advocating for a re-envisioned WIC Program and on May 16th published a research paper: [Reinvigorating and Reimagining The Pennsylvania WIC Program](#). The white paper identifies states with high WIC participation rates and explores possible reasons for their success. These states make it easier to enroll – and stay enrolled – in WIC, with walk-in, weekend and evening hours, and the possibility of completing some of the

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required nutrition education online. They make WIC clinics inviting for children and offer programs that are empowering for women. And their clinics have relationships with many other providers who can help address needs beyond nutrition.

With leadership from the highest levels of PA government, WIC can be the front door for vulnerable families at critical times and in critical circumstances. WIC has the potential to prevent maternal and infant deaths, and to help address the needs of families affected by poverty, HIV, the alarming opioid epidemic, family violence, mental health issues or other disabilities – preventing the need for many services down the road.

JHF and WHAMglobal have been getting the word out about how the WIC Program can be revitalized. On May 22, the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette [published an op-ed](#) by Karen Wolk Feinstein, PhD entitled, “Help mothers and babies in Pennsylvania,” that proposes a new vision for the Pennsylvania WIC Program. Also on May 22nd, WHAMglobal staff members Hanifa Nakiryowa, MID, Global Health Associate, and Kate Dickerson, MSc, Women’s Health Specialist, met with a WIC representative in Beaver County to make public comments at a hearing on WIC conducted by the Pennsylvania Department of Health.



The work isn’t done yet. WHAMglobal will continue to raise awareness about the need to transform the PA WIC Program at [Birthing A Movement](#) on June 8th and 9th.

Hanifa Nakiryowa, MID, presents a renewed vision for the WIC Program to a WIC representative in Beaver County.

The Heinz Endowments awards 300k in support of JHF programs for women and seniors

The Heinz Endowments has made a significant grant to the Jewish Healthcare Foundation to help launch two new programs in 2019: \$100,000 for the Grandparent Activist Network (GRAN) to strengthen the connections between the regions seniors and youth, and \$200,000 for the WHAMglobal Community Fund to establish an innovative collaborative for maternal health service providers to ensure that services are coordinated and meeting the needs of all moms and babies. Both programs exemplify JHF’s long-standing efforts to improve the quality of life and impact the overall wellness of seniors and women.

GRAN will empower our city’s oldest citizens to engage and actively participate in creating an open and inclusive society by harnessing the power of these seniors to pass knowledge, lessons of inclusivity, and acceptance to the next generation. The intergenerational programming and civic trainings will combat intolerance in the Pittsburgh area, increase cultural and racial competence among pre-school and early elementary school-aged children, and provide training and skills to empower seniors to become activists in the community.

THE HEINZ
ENDOWMENTS

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While GRAN addresses social disparities and quality of life improvements for seniors, the WHAMglobal Community Fund aims to improve the outcomes of expectant mothers. The Community Fund will be made up of organizations that are committed to maternal health across our region who will collaborate and distribute funds for non-medical purposes to small safety-net organizations that provide maternal health services. A learning collaborative will be established to provide a forum for collaboration and training on topics such as quality improvement, marketing, communications, and strategic planning. The intent of the Fund is to provide support to under-resourced Maternal Child Health organizations who are trusted in their communities and are providing important services and supports to mothers.

2019 Summer Interns Arrive

The Jewish Healthcare Foundation welcomed twelve emerging, multidisciplinary healthcare leaders who are participating in the Foundation's 2019 summer internship program. Over the next ten weeks, the interns will get an introduction to JHF's history and mission; explore the foundational principles of healthcare safety and quality; and advance JHF's current initiatives related to maternal health, adolescent behavioral health, HIV/AIDS, healthcare innovation, and seniors. A few of the interns will also participate in JHF's upcoming Patient Safety Fellowship, which will focus how to successfully merge quality improvement, implementation science, and maternal health.



2019 Summer Interns (from left to right): Sarah Morgan, Andrew Fingeret, Corina Paraschiv, Janelle DeBaldo, Cindy Vincente, Kyle Terrill, Adele Flaherty, Kyla Christensen, Elizabeth Balskus, Kandis Mason, and Diane Smith.

The summer interns include Elizabeth Balskus, a doctoral student in healthcare ethics at Duquesne; Kyla Christensen, an MSW student at Pitt; Janelle DeBaldo, a recent graduate in communication management from the University of Dayton; Andrew Fingeret, who will be pursuing a degree in international affairs at George Washington University; Adele Flaherty, a doctoral student in healthcare ethics at Duquesne; Kandis Mason, MPH from State University of New York; Sarah Morgan, an MPH student at Pitt; Abisola Olaniyan, MD, MPH, a doctoral student in behavioral and community health sciences at Pitt; Corina Paraschiv, studying healthcare policy and management at Carnegie Mellon University; Diane Smith, a recent graduate in communication science and disorders from Ohio University; Kyle Terrill, an MSW student at Pitt; and Cindy Vicente, an MSW student specializing in community, organization, and social action at Pitt. Welcome interns!

Dementia Friendly Communities Growing in Pennsylvania

Currently, there are over 400,000 Pennsylvanians, age 65 and older, living with Alzheimer's disease and other dementias. By 2025, that number will rise to 450,000, impacting approximately 675,000 care partners. That is over one million Pennsylvanians who could benefit from a dementia friendly community that enables individuals, their families, and their caregivers to live well with dementia.

On May 30, 2019, Jewish Healthcare Foundation Senior Quality Improvement Specialists and statewide coordinators of Dementia Friends Pennsylvania, Anneliese Perry, MS, NHA, CECM and Stacie Bonenberger, MOT, OTR/L, were the keynote speakers for the Alzheimer's Association Spring Education Conference, *Dementia Friendly Communities Working Together*, in Wilkes-Barre, PA. The session explored how communities from around the world have become informed, safe, and respectful of individuals living with dementia. Participants worked in teams to visually create their ideal dementia-friendly community. Perry and Bonenberger shared the origins of the Dementia Friendly Movement and its movement across the nation. Teams were introduced to a change model and began to strategize and developed a road map with action steps that will help lead them to their dementia-friendly community vision.

Currently there are three Dementia Friendly Community Initiatives in Pennsylvania: Bucks County, New Oxford/Hanover, and Dementia Friendly Greater Pittsburgh, where Perry and Bonenberger sit on the leadership committee.



Anneliese Perry, MS, NHA, CECM and Stacie Bonenberger, MOT, OTR/L at the Alzheimer's Association Spring Education Conference on May 30.

Senior Connections for Recreation and Exercise Continues to Motivate People

The Jewish Healthcare Foundation (JHF) has continued to grow its Senior Connections programs since its 2016 launch. Senior Connections partner Venture Outdoors recently launched its new online application [Venture Outdoors Walks](#). The app provides information on accessible and approachable walking routes for people of all mobility levels. The app, tested extensively with



Fit with a Physician at the Greenfield Senior Center on May 9.

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senior audiences, also contains park and trail maps, points of interest, terrain details, parking and bathroom locations, and more.

Two current programs motivating people to get out and walk —*Fit with a Legislator* and *Fit with a Physician* are wildly popular. *Fit with a Legislator*, co-sponsored by JHF and AARP Pennsylvania and featured in the [AARP State Bulletin](#), provides an opportunity for people to walk with local legislators and chat about anything from their park surroundings, to road conditions, to local policies, or other issues. The upcoming June 19th *Fit with a Legislator* walk will be led by [Councilwoman Deb Gross](#) at Highland Park. Sign up [here](#)!



Park Ambassador Training on May 22 with Venture Outdoors.

Led by JHF Board member Terry Starz, MD, Pittsburgh physicians and medical providers continue to lead walks in local parks for the *Fit with a Physician* program. Participants spend time walking and discussing a variety of health and wellness topics including movement strategies that can help aging bodies move more efficiently. Recent *Fit with a Physician* walks focused on combating arthritis, Nordic and power walking. You can sign up [here](#) through Venture Outdoors.

Want to lead an interactive and inspirational walk through our parks? Venture Outdoors and Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy hosted the third Park Ambassador Training on May 22, co-funded by JHF and AARP. Seniors were trained in trip planning, risk management, and how to incorporate fun activities into planned walks. These individuals will now serve as peer supports in their communities and contribute their favorite routes to the Venture Outdoors Walks online app. Stay tuned for more information on the next Park Ambassador training.

Consumer Technology Association Foundation supports Virtual Senior Academy™ with 50K grant

The CTA Foundation recently approved a \$50,000 grant to the Jewish Healthcare Foundation to increase participation in the Virtual Senior Academy™ and grow its Tech Buddy program. The Consumer Technology Association (CTA) Foundation, headquartered in Arlington, VA, focuses on using technology to improve the quality of life of seniors.

**Consumer Technology
Association™
FOUNDATION**

Launched in 2018 in partnership with local nonprofit Computer Reach, the Tech Buddy program matches older adults with volunteers who help them navigate the platform and take interactive classes. The Virtual Senior Academy™ has partnered with local universities, businesses, and nonprofit organizations to recruit and train Tech Buddies. To date, JHF Program Associate Rachel Goldberger, MPH, MSW, and staff from Computer Reach have led three trainings that focused on navigating the Virtual Senior Academy™, addressing gaps in technology access, and recognizing

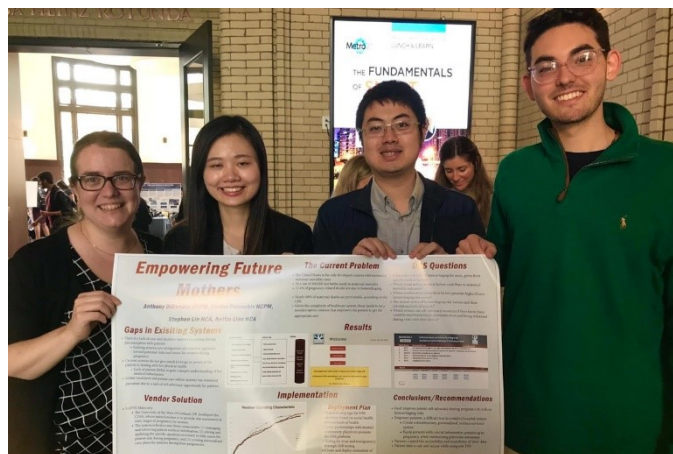
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signs of social isolation in older adults. Computer Reach, a global volunteer organization with a chapter in western PA, works to bridge the digital divide by providing refurbished computer technology and digital literacy training to people in need. Computer Reach is lending computers and mobile hot spots to Virtual Senior Academy™ participants. So far, 35 individuals have been trained and deployed to help local seniors get signed up on the program and take classes. More than 100 individuals have expressed interest becoming a Tech Buddy. The next training will take place in July at the University of Pittsburgh's Graduate School of Public Health.

If you are interested in becoming a Tech Buddy, or would like more information on the July training, contact Rachel (Goldberger@jhf.org) or call 412-594-2579 for more information.

Heinz Healthcare Informatics Students Impress with Maternity Decision Support System Projects

On May 1, Jewish Healthcare Foundation (JHF) and WHAMglobal staff attended the final poster presentations of Heinz College Healthcare Informatics students. Taught by Board of Trustees Member, Rema Padman, PhD, the students engaged in a semester-long project on Healthcare Decision Support Systems (DSS). This year, the theme for all of the students' projects was "Maternal Mortality and Morbidity." In order for the students to learn more about the issue, WHAMglobal staff met with them to describe and help frame the problem, and the Magee-Womens Research Institute shared their data which was used to prototype each DSS. The students then built working predictive models with the intention of receiving hands-on experiences with healthcare DSS applications.



Carnegie Mellon University students present their project, *Machine Learning algorithm for Hemorrhage Risk Classification* (from left to right): Corina Paraschiv, Jiaoying Lian, Dong-Lien Lin and Anthony Didonato.

"When you first hear about healthcare-related issues like maternal mortality, you sometimes have that naiveté about possible solutions," said Corina Paraschiv, CSM, current Heinz College student and JHF summer intern. "By working alongside stakeholders in maternal health and reflecting on a complex system-wide view, this project brought us an empowering perspective that no textbook could have."

The students' projects were very impressive. The Decision Support Systems they created included: designing hospital risk prediction models for maternal morbidities during birth and post-partum; creating systems that generate appropriate self-advocacy materials to promote self-awareness for patients at risk for hemorrhaging; predicting emergency cesarean sections; using social factors to classify risk of hypertensive disorders during pregnancy; scoring social determinants of health; and improving birthing methodology decision making.

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JHF Trustees Profiles: Dick Simon, Life Trustee

“To serve on a charitable board... if you can’t give money, be able to get it.”

Dick Simon, 98 years young, is the longest-serving trustee of the Jewish Healthcare Foundation and Montefiore Hospital, with more than 65 years of combined service between the two organizations. Mr. Simon was present at the creation of the Foundation, and over his years of service, he has guided JHF as a member of its Finance and Distribution Committees as well as heading one of its Grant Assessment Teams. Mr. Simon is also well known for his leadership, generosity, and volunteer work supporting a variety of civic-minded organizations, including the Ladies Hospital Aid Society (where his late wife Nancy had been a member and leader for decades) and Zeta Beta Tau, the world’s first Jewish fraternity. In addition to his community work, Mr. Simon helped develop his family business, Armstrong Kover Kwick, into an international leader in fabrication products for the metal processing industry. Mr. Simon’s late father, Israel “I.A.” Simon, played a vital role in developing the former Jewish Home for the Aged, and he inspired much of Mr. Simon’s philanthropic and community work.



What is one your accomplishments of which you are most proud?

I’ve always been a fundraiser, and one of my favorite moments was early in my days on the Montefiore Board. Sidney Bergman, then the chief operating officer at Montefiore, had just gone to a meeting in San Francisco. He came home and he was all bubbly. He had heard about something that he thought would be wonderful for Montefiore Hospital. There was only one hospital in the country that was doing it at the time. And he thought Montefiore should do it. Unfortunately, the board wanted a very tight budget, and there was no money to do this program. So I got a group of friends together and we decided to go out every month and raise one or two or three thousand dollars to start this program and keep it going. We did that for six or eight months until the board finally put it in the budget. Do you know what program I’m talking about? Home Care. We were the second hospital in the country that had a Home Care program.

When there was talk of starting of the Foundation – what went through your mind?

The main thing that drove us – the Board of Montefiore – at that particular time was getting someone to run the Foundation. That was the primary thing that faced us. We hired Robert Hiller, who had been the executive director of the United Jewish Federation of Pittsburgh before he went to Baltimore, to come and create a search committee. He was the one who brought in Karen. That was really the prime thing that set up the Foundation in the best way.

What makes the Jewish Healthcare Foundation unique?

This is the easiest question to answer. Karen is filled with innovative and new ideas on how to make things better. She has Nancy Zionts on the one side to make sure things

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get done and then on the other side she has a board who believes in her. That has been the most important thing. The leadership that the board has been able to maintain is why JHF is so unique. I think one of the real successes in the early days, the linchpin in all of the board's work, was the sterling duty that Alvin Rogal did for the community during his time in leadership on the board.

Over the years, you have had many options for ways to spend your time – why have you stayed involved with the Jewish Healthcare Foundation?

The answer to that question also goes back to Karen. Every board meeting is a delight. There is always something going on and that is because of the leadership of Karen. That is what keeps everyone really interested. The attendance for the board meetings is tremendous because the work and vision is consistently engaging and meaningful.

What passions and interests have driven you over your career?

My father's work in helping to create what is now the Jewish Association on Aging shaped my interest in seniors. From very early on, starting in about 1940, I've also been involved with the first Jewish fraternity. Mainly I've been interested in impacting youth and seniors throughout my career.

You have been able to accomplish a lot but what advice would you give to a younger version of yourself?

I would say to first, find yourself a couple of good mentors, and second, start off at the highest level that you can and work up. My first job in the community was to chair the young adult division and by doing so, it led to a place on the Montefiore Board. That was my first job and that was around 1951.

JHF Staff Profiles: Richard Smith, MSW, Program Director

Richard Smith, MSW, joined JHF in October 2010 as a Program Associate for the HIV/AIDS hospital readmissions reduction project and has served as the HIV/AIDS Program Director since 2012.

Richard earned a dual bachelor's in Psychology and Theater from Lock Haven University, and a master's in Social Work from the University of Pittsburgh. While earning his MSW, Richard interned at Persad Center and the Pittsburgh AIDS Task Force (now Allies for Health & Wellbeing), which inspired him to want to continue working with vulnerable populations. Upon graduating, he was hired by both organizations. Prior to JHF, he was a Quality Manager and Crisis Social Worker for more than four years at the Albert Einstein Medical Center in Philadelphia.

He enjoys the theater, adding, "My theater background has helped with my success in a few ways. It taught me to work collaboratively



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and be willing to compromise.”

Richard is active in his Deutschtown community, serves on the board of the Kelly Strayhorn Theater as the development chair, and on the Butler County Emergency Housing Committee which assists women who are experiencing domestic violence and homelessness.

It is clear that you enjoy helping people. What motivated you to pursue and continue social work?

The road to the service world and social work began with two personal experiences — I have an aunt who lives with Schizophrenia and a brother who is on the Autism spectrum. Add to that my internship at the Pittsburgh AIDS Task Force (now Allies for Health & Wellbeing), which at the time I didn’t think was an ideal placement but looking back on it probably had much to do with solidifying my career path.

When I moved to Philadelphia to work at an outpatient HIV clinic at the Albert Einstein Medical Center, I was responsible for counseling pregnant teenagers who had been recently diagnosed with HIV. That aspect of social work was possibly the most challenging of my career, but I felt I could make a difference.

This path ultimately led me to JHF where I knew my experience could be used for advocacy and policy change.

JHF has been the longtime HIV/AIDS fiscal agent for southwestern PA. Over the past several years, the HIV/AIDS program has expanded. What impact have you seen in the community as a result?

The HIV/AIDS program offers training and enhanced services to help individuals living with HIV/AIDS, including those newly diagnosed, and to reengage HIV-positive individuals who are not receiving care. Barrier-free, expanded community programming provides more opportunities and services for vulnerable populations to thrive when they don’t have the same privilege as others.

The HIV/AIDS team likes to help and wants to pay it forward. When we embraced a basic risk reduction policy on drug use, for example, client buy-in for services improved. In fact, we have a larger client population on antiretrovirals than the national trend, with a majority of them having an undetectable viral load. Additionally, we’ve seen a 40% drop in new HIV infections and a significant drop in new AIDS cases since AIDS Free Pittsburgh was launched in 2015.

What keeps you going?

I feel strongly about helping the community; we are making a difference. It feels good to know that we are helping to make a change and impacting policy. I am also very fortunate to be part of a great team, which has more than doubled in size, with seven full-time employees and 5 part-time employees. We will never stop advocating for expanded community programming for vulnerable populations.



The Alan Guttman Japanese Roof Garden at the QI2T Center in June

Connect with the Jewish Healthcare Foundation:

