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THE MAGAZINE OF
THE HEINZ ENDOWMENTS

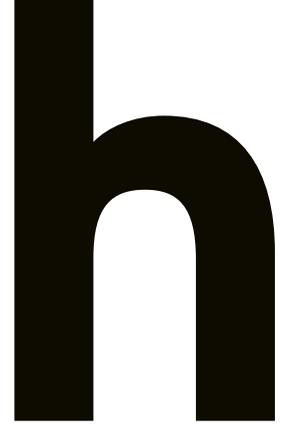
Issue 1 2023

**JOB TRAINING
CHANGES LIVES —
AND IS MORE
CRITICAL TODAY
THAN EVER.**



ISSUE 1 2023

INSIDE



18 On the cover GOOD WORK

As the world tries to move beyond the global pandemic, maintaining a stable workforce has become a priority even as unemployment in the U.S. remains low. In this issue of h magazine, we look at some of the Endowments-supported nonprofits in the Pittsburgh region that have provided effective workforce training for years and are still vital to the local employment landscape.

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The Heinz Endowments was formed from the Howard Heinz Endowment, established in 1941, and the Vira I. Heinz Endowment, established in 1986. It is the product of a deep family commitment to community and the common good that began with H.J. Heinz, and that continues to this day.

The Endowments is based in Pittsburgh, where we use our region as a laboratory for the development of solutions to challenges that are national in scope. Although the majority of our giving is concentrated within southwestern Pennsylvania, we work wherever necessary, including statewide and nationally, to fulfill our mission.

That mission is to help our region become a just and equitable community in which all of its citizens thrive economically, ecologically, educationally, socially and culturally. We also seek to advance knowledge and practice in the field of philanthropy through strategies that focus on our priorities of Creativity, Learning and Sustainability.

In life, Howard Heinz and Vira I. Heinz set high expectations for their philanthropy. Today, the Endowments is committed to doing the same. Our charge is to be diligent, thoughtful and creative in continually working to set new standards of philanthropic excellence. Recognizing that none of our work would be possible without a sound financial base, we also are committed to preserving and enhancing the Endowments' assets through prudent investment management.

h magazine is a publication of The Heinz Endowments. At the Endowments, we are committed to promoting learning in philanthropy and in the specific fields represented by our grantmaking programs. As an expression of that commitment, this publication is intended to share information about significant lessons and insights we are deriving from our work.

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About the cover Quayona Wilson, a student in the culinary arts program at Bidwell Training Center on Pittsburgh's North Side, is shown preparing grilled vegetables for a grilled vegetable and hummus wrap. Bidwell is one of several Heinz Endowments-supported groups that provides workforce development programs preparing people for employment that could give them brighter futures. Photo by Elan Mizrahi



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Efforts by nonprofit organizations and government agencies to reduce persistent racial health disparities among mothers and children in the Pittsburgh region look promising.

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Increased food insecurity during and after the COVID-19 pandemic has increased the importance of urban farms and gardens in southwestern Pennsylvania and reshaped the approaches of some of the groups that run them.

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Born in May, little Zyaire Embry-Buckner is benefiting from the participation of his mother, Jaelynn Embry, in Healthy Start's programs to improve the health of mothers and their young children and to reduce poor birth outcomes.



The Heinz Endowments, other foundations and local government agencies in the Pittsburgh region are working on ways to decrease racial health disparities among mothers and their children that have persisted across decades – and the efforts offer hope. By Joyce Gannon

BRIDGING THE gap



While recent statistics from the Allegheny County Health Department revealed that infant mortality rates in the county have declined overall in recent years, Black babies in the county are two to three times more likely to die before their first birthdays than white infants.

“It’s a misconception that there has been forward motion or movement related to Black and brown mothers and babies,” said Margaret Larkins-Pettigrew, senior vice president and chief diversity, equity and inclusion officer and clinical strategist for Highmark Health and Allegheny Health Network (AHN). “Even though there’s been some decrease in the death of white babies, that’s not the case for Black babies. It’s just a myth.”

Of Allegheny County’s 1.24 million residents, approximately 13.5 percent are Black, according to the U.S. Census Bureau. In January, county officials issued the 2022 Community Health Assessment report, which found that infant mortality overall fell in the years 2007 to 2019 from 7.5 deaths per 1,000, to 6.4 deaths per 1,000.

But during that period, infant mortality for Black babies was nearly five times as high as for white infants.



13/1000
2/1000

Pittsburgh's Gender Equity Commission issued a 2019 report that found that 13 of every 1,000 Black babies die before they turn 1 year old compared to fewer than two per 1,000 white babies.

97%

Also according to the commission report, the maternal mortality rate among Black women was higher in Pittsburgh than in 97 percent of similar cities.

THE HARD FACTS

Black maternal and child health challenges have reached alarming levels across the country, especially in the Pittsburgh region. Several local studies have presented data to support the need for action and for the programs that are trying to address the problems.

Racial bias — whether deliberate or unconscious — and barriers that prevent Black women and babies from receiving adequate health care are among the reasons high infant mortality rates persist, according to Dr. Larkins-Pettigrew and other experts.

Dannai Wilson, deputy director of community and family health for the Allegheny County Health Department, said disparities between Black and white women’s social determinants of health — such as income inequality, housing instability, chronic disease and life expectancy — create the racial gap.

“It’s all those things, from where we work and where we live to whether our communities are safe,” Ms. Wilson said. “Do women have access to a hospital and do [they] have access to a vehicle versus catching five buses?”

The county’s Community Health Assessment wasn’t the first study to show glaring racial gaps in maternal and child health in Pittsburgh.

A 2019 report from the City of Pittsburgh’s Gender Equity Commission found that 13 of every 1,000 Black babies die before they turn 1 year old compared with fewer than two per 1,000 white babies. That report also said the maternal mortality rate among Black women was higher in Pittsburgh than in 97 percent of similar cities.

“That was very hard to swallow in this community,” said Dr. Larkins-Pettigrew, who still sees patients weekly at her obstetrics-gynecology practice.

Since then, the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated challenges for Black women. Numerous studies showed Black individuals and families took a disproportionate hit from the coronavirus as they experienced higher death rates and hospitalizations and suffered greater economic stresses.



long with the Community Health Assessment data, the county in January published its Plan for a Healthier Allegheny 2023–27, which outlines steps for achieving more equitable outcomes for all county residents.

Among the goals that target maternal and child health are programs that promote breastfeeding for infants, increasing the number of infants who receive preventative health visits, and boosting participation in county programs like Hello Baby that provide resources for babies and families. For decades, The Heinz Endowments has been funding initiatives that support these objectives.

Hello Baby, in particular, connects families to home health visits, early childhood education programs and other services. In 2021, the Endowments granted \$800,000 to the county Department of Human Services for the program.

In addition, the Endowments that year granted \$350,000 to the county Health Department to identify racial inequity in birth outcomes. That grant led to the launch of several initiatives to support parents, including the Healthy Start Doula Program, which provides home visits by doulas — individuals trained to help women through pregnancy, childbirth and postpartum.

The grant to the Health Department also was used to launch a pilot project to integrate doulas into health care systems; fund a Fetal Infant Mortality Review partnership with Healthy Start to interview parents who experience a fetal loss or stillbirth; and provide money through nonprofit Footbridge to Families for parents who experience short-term emergency funding needs.

[The Allegheny County BIRTH Plan for Black Babies and Families]...outlines a comprehensive strategy intended to improve birth outcomes based on four key areas: strengthening the workforce in the maternal and children’s health field, strengthening the systems of care, addressing the social determinants of health, and coordinating and streamlining maternal and children’s health initiatives.



Jada Shirriel, chief executive officer of Healthy Start, a nonprofit in Pittsburgh's Point Breeze community with a mission to improve the health of mothers and young children and to reduce poor birth outcomes, said the reasons Black women and infants experience higher mortality rates are "very, very complex" because they are so closely linked to socioeconomic factors in the Black community.

"I don't have a silver bullet about what we need to do, or an exact solution," Ms. Shirriel said.

But she's confident that for families who receive visits from Healthy Start's doulas and benefit from supports including education about breastfeeding and baby formula, "the outcomes are better than for those not receiving our services."

Healthy Start, which has received more than \$500,000 in grants from the Endowments since 2020, also developed the Allegheny County BIRTH Plan for Black Babies and Families in partnership with the Allegheny County Maternal and Child Health Strategy Team. The plan outlines a comprehensive strategy intended to improve birth outcomes based on four key areas: strengthening the workforce in the maternal and children's health field, strengthening the systems of care, addressing the social determinants of health, and coordinating and streamlining maternal and children's health initiatives.

Denise O'Connor, executive director of Mid-Atlantic Mothers' Milk Bank, a nonprofit in Pittsburgh's Strip District neighborhood, said that breast milk — whether the milk comes directly from the baby's mother or is donated — gives medically fragile infants "the best start possible."

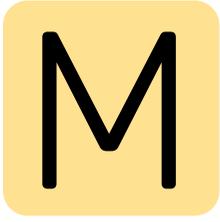
But babies of color "have less access to human milk," she said.

The Milk Bank is working on public policy initiatives that support breastfeeding, including state legislation to provide insurance coverage for medically prescribed donor milk for at-risk infants, and regulations to mandate workplaces to provide space for mothers to pump milk. The Endowments has provided grants totaling \$275,000 to the Milk Bank for staffing and public education programs.

Other funders in the Pittsburgh region also support efforts to find solutions to the range of issues affecting the health of mothers and their young children. Among those who, like the Endowments, have supported different programs and projects focusing on this issue are the Pittsburgh, Hillman Family, Richard King Mellon, Jewish Healthcare, Highmark and Staunton Farm foundations.

The Pittsburgh Foundation's funding to Healthy Start and other organizations that provide doulas and support to mothers of color aligns with its newly enacted strategic plan that includes eliminating health disparities that are "community centered," said Michael Yonas, the foundation's vice president of public health, research and learning.

At the Mid-Atlantic Mothers' Milk Bank, great care is taken to prepare and store donated breast milk for distribution to at-risk infants. In the top left photo, the milk is placed in containers before refrigeration. In the photo above, milk from five mothers is combined in a bucket to help ensure the distributed milk has enough of the proper nutrients.



Much of the Endowments' work to address maternal and infant health is guided by its Prenatal-to-3 initiative, which includes a set of resources and tools that serves as a playbook to achieve equitable support for all families with children — from pregnancy care to age 3. Since 2020, the Endowments has partnered with Child Trends, a nonpartisan research center in Bethesda, Maryland, to develop Prenatal-to-3, which includes input from child care experts and community members, data on state policies, and advocacy efforts for Medicaid coverage and family leave.

In fact, the Endowments' Prenatal-to-3 efforts have specific goals that include:

- Supporting collaboration across health, family support, and early care and education agencies and programs
- Supporting advocates seeking bold policy solutions
- Investing in tools and infrastructure that produce data to guide effective action steps
- Centering equity in programs, policies and advocacy work
- Leveraging federal and state funding
- Identifying and bringing to scale innovative programs

Carmen Anderson, Equity & Research vice president at the Endowments and interim Learning vice president, said Prenatal-to-3 is guiding the Endowments toward more “holistic” solutions for families.

“Yes, the mothers' health and access to high-quality medical care are critical components, but targeting health alone is not enough,” Ms. Anderson explained. “It's important to consider other important contributors to the well-being of mothers and infants, such as environmental factors, safe and secure housing, economic security, access to transportation, the cumulative impact of racism, and affordable, healthy food.”

At AHN, the Endowments is funding First Steps and Beyond, an initiative that attempts to reduce infant mortality and address “unconscious bias” among health care providers, Dr. Larkins-Pettigrew said. By coordinating the efforts of hospitals, federally qualified health centers, community organizations and pediatricians who deal with pregnant women and their families before and after they deliver, First Steps aims to “decrease the deaths of Black babies and all babies,” Dr. Larkins-Pettigrew said.

First Steps also includes education for parents on issues including postpartum depression, food security and infant sleep practices that can result in deaths. The Endowments in 2021 made an initial grant of \$250,000 to the program and in 2022 made a grant of \$600,000 over three years.

Dr. Larkins-Pettigrew was among the speakers on a February webinar organized by the Pittsburgh Business Group on Health (PBGH) to address unconscious bias in health care. PBGH, a nonprofit coalition of local employers, “is trying to figure out ways ... to best advocate for employees to ensure equitable outcomes” in health care, said Mike Stancil, president and chief executive officer of the organization.

Its webinar series is sponsored by the Highmark Foundation, and The Heinz Endowments is funding a PBGH project in which eight large employers in the Pittsburgh region are assessing workers' insurance claims and other information to determine if race makes a difference in access to doctors and medical services.

BOOTED RIGHT OUT

Dionna Rojas-Orta, 49, of Wilkinsburg, a professional life coach and community connections partnership coordinator at the Greater Pittsburgh Community Food Bank, delivered her first child in 1993 when she was 19 years old.

She had plenty of support from her mother who accompanied her to medical appointments and helped care for her newborn daughter. But she felt marginalized because she was young and single and possibly because she was Black. Years later, giving birth to her second child, Ms. Rojas-Orta experienced what she felt was racial bias because she was a Black woman married to a Latino man.

Her son was jaundiced at birth, and though Ms. Rojas-Orta didn't feel well after the delivery, she was sent home after one night in the hospital. When she experienced tremors and her family rushed her to the hospital nearly a week later, she was told that her kidneys were failing.

“It hit me that they didn't take good care of me,” she said. “I was booted right out of the hospital.”

Because of her personal experience — and because outcomes for Black mothers in 2023 are not much better than they were in 1993 — Ms. Rojas-Orta is now a member of Brown Mamas, which helps Black women find community resources and support.



Some people may live in care deserts without high-quality hospital care or maternity wards. Or maybe they don't live on a bus route or have a car. So their benefits are going unused. And that can have massive implications.”

Mike Stancil, president and CEO, Pittsburgh Business Group on Health

“Some people may live in care deserts without high-quality hospital care or maternity wards,” Mr. Stancil said. “Or maybe they don't live on a bus route or have a car. So their benefits are going unused. And that can have massive implications.”

The Endowments granted PBGH \$160,000 in 2021 and \$100,000 in 2022 for the health equity study. It has also funded organizations that support Black women and children beyond their medical needs.

One is Brown Mamas, a nonprofit that elevates collective Black mothering and provides positive socialization opportunities. The organization also connects Black women with community resources and provides meet-ups and events to help them feel less isolated. The Endowments granted Brown Mamas \$300,000 over the last two years. Muffy Mendoza founded the group in 2012 in her living room, and it's now based in Downtown Pittsburgh.

Black women are disproportionately affected by economic stresses such as child care costs and low-wage jobs, Ms. Mendoza said. While getting proper medical care is an underlying challenge, “I don't think Black women have time to think about it,” she said.

Group member LaShesia Holliday of Penn Hills delivered her first child at age 17—five weeks before her due date. As a teen and a Black single mother, she “felt like a number” when she arrived at the hospital.

In her last pregnancy nine years ago, Ms. Holliday, now 34, delivered twins, only one of whom survived. At one-and-a-half pounds, Taylor, a baby girl, underwent multiple surgeries and spent more than three months in a neonatal intensive care unit.

Taylor was also bald — a condition that helped motivate Ms. Holliday to launch Naptural Beauty Supply, a business that specializes in hair and skin products for Black women and girls. She's now thriving, said her mother, who this spring appeared at the annual Brown Mamas Monologues showcase in May to share her challenges — like overcoming racial biases in securing education opportunities for her children and fighting for financial support for them as a single Black mother.

She highlighted her entrepreneurial success.

“I told my story,” said Ms. Holliday. “After all the adversity and being a teenage mom and the whole stigma of that, I have a business.” **h**



Maya Guerin, manager of the Gardens of Millvale, waters plants in the raised beds set aside for neighborhood residents interested in growing their own food.



• U R B A N •

GARDEN

VARIETY



URBAN FARMS AND GARDENS HAVE BEEN GAINING INCREASED IMPORTANCE IN RECENT YEARS AS WAYS TO HELP ADDRESS FOOD INSECURITY. THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC ELEVATED THEIR RELEVANCE AND RESHAPED SOME OF THE GROUPS THAT OPERATE THEM. BY DONOVAN HARRELL

Donovan Harrell is a Pittsburgh-based freelance writer. His last story for h magazine was published in Issue 1, 2022, and looked at how nonprofits and government agencies are trying to develop solutions to the affordable housing crisis.

Volunteer gardeners at the Gardens of Millvale, all community residents, meet at least twice a month to perform maintenance and work on other projects throughout the year. Helping to clean up plant beds are Rachel Maggio, top left, along with Trevor Southworth, Holly McDevitt and Gardens manager Maya Guerin, all above right. Root vegetables such as these beets, center, are among the types of food grown at the Gardens of Millvale. Mackenzie Hasley, below left, is another resident volunteer who joined the group that includes on the right, Mr. Southworth, Ms. Maggio, Nicole Ellison, Ms. Guerin, Walden Guerin, Denise Rudar and Leslie Lewandowski.



Millvale residents were fed up with a lack of grocery store options in their neighborhood, so they took matters into their own hands. Making use of two abandoned lots, where demolished homes once stood, residents created the Gardens of Millvale in 2010.

“It’s really a beautiful thing for that to have started with just a group of community members wanting to do some gardening,” said Gardens of Millvale Manager Maya Guerin. “That space as an urban farm area [was] able to give back to the community so much and be a resource for education and teaching people about the importance of growing your own food and healthy cooking and sustainability.”

Since 2016, urban farms in Allegheny County have increased, expanded and evolved to fit county residents’ growing need for new sources of fresh produce. These farms offer critical resources beyond food with their programming, sitting at the intersection of health, wellness, education and activism.

They’ve also been especially vital as neighborhoods already considered to be “food deserts” were forced to cope with the COVID-19 pandemic as it disrupted food supply lines and systems across the country. The U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Economic Research Service defines a “food desert” as a neighborhood or community that lacks access to supermarkets, supercenters, grocery stores, or other sources of healthy and affordable food. Food deserts are a form of “food insecurity,” in which people have limited access to all kinds of foods because of financial difficulties.

Ruth Kittner, executive director of Wilkesburg Community Ministry, said food insecurity is a long-standing issue in Allegheny County that was exacerbated by the pandemic shutdown and increasing food prices.

“Compounding this are other factors: the inflation, albeit modest compared to other countries, that Americans have faced in the past year; the avian flu, which caused the prices of chicken and eggs to skyrocket; the challenges to transportation and production; and the price gouging of food suppliers,” she said.

In Allegheny County, 174,110 people live in food insecure communities, according to the Pittsburgh Food Policy Council (PFPC), a think tank advocating for a more equitable and sustainable food supply system. Millvale is among those communities, according to Ms. Guerin. Other food insecure communities include Wilkesburg, Sharpsburg, Penn Hills and the Monongahela Valley, said Andrew McElwaine,



Garden photos: Nate Guidry | Beet photo: courtesy of Neighborhood Allies

“

IT'S REALLY A BEAUTIFUL THING FOR THAT TO HAVE STARTED WITH JUST A GROUP OF COMMUNITY MEMBERS WANTING TO DO SOME GARDENING.”

Maya Guerin, manager, Gardens of Millvale



vice president of Sustainability for The Heinz Endowments. In Pittsburgh, where the 2020 FeedPGH report found that 1 in 5 residents live with food insecurity, among the most food insecure neighborhoods are Homewood and East Hills.

“Whether it’s the cost of housing or poverty and the people don’t have access to grocery stores other than maybe a dollar store... you’ve really got a crisis on your hands,” Mr. McElwaine said. “The same neighborhoods where we have problems with affordable housing, transportation and access to jobs are going to be the same places that are food insecure.”

Jo Deming, executive director of the PFPC, said the region has struggled with food insecurity and economic decline since the fall of the steel industry in the 1970s and 1980s. Even though the economy is growing, stagnant wages and inflation have left residents unable to afford to buy the food that they need on the wages they earn, she said, adding that this is particularly true for communities of color.

The neighborhoods more susceptible to a lack of accessible grocery stores are often located on hills or hilltops, which only add to food accessibility challenges, Ms. Deming said. “Additionally, Pittsburgh has many communities that are experiencing ‘food apartheid.’ These communities lack access to grocery stores and healthy food markets as a result of redlining and other policies that created disinvestment in these communities.”

For residents in these food deserts, especially residents who don’t own cars, the further they get away from Pittsburgh, fewer public transportation options are available, said Jackie Boggs, director of programs and services for North Hills Community Outreach.

Ms. Guerin, who has experienced poverty in the past, said there’s a general stigma around people seeking fresh food and the organizations that provide fresh food for people in lower-income areas. These people, she said, are seen as not deserving of fresh food — which is typically more expensive than canned or perishable goods — because of their lower income, especially if the food is free.

There’s been a sense for lower-income people of “take what you can get,” Ms. Guerin said. “And that’s usually food that has low nutritional value. Food is for everyone. I mean, no one should ever have to be made to feel guilty about wanting to eat.”

PANDEMIC IMPACT

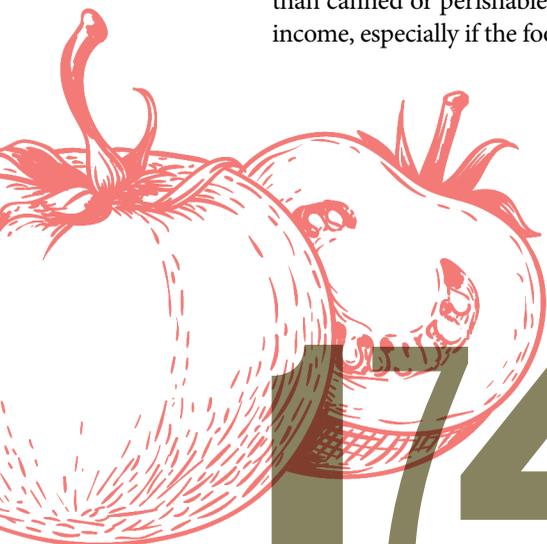
The COVID-19 pandemic had a range of effects on farming operations with some urban farms encouraged to expand and others pushed to reposition their services.

Originally a family farm north of Pittsburgh, the North Hills Community Outreach farm has been around for 12 years and harvests about 5,000 pounds of fresh food each year, according to Executive Director Tom Baker. The organization operates eight food pantries per month at three different locations. The main one is based in Allison Park, while additional offices and food pantries are located in Avalon, at the Greenstone United Methodist Church, and the Millvale Community Center.

The pandemic didn’t have a significant effect on farming operations or the amount of food produced, Mr. Baker said. However, the organization’s food pantry operations had to evolve. Before the pandemic, the farm encouraged customers to shop around and pick the produce they wanted at each food pantry.

During the pandemic, the organization started allowing drive-through pickups, especially at the Allison Park office. Now it uses a hybrid model in which customers can pull up and have pre-packed food and other items handed to them, or they can go into the pantry to look around and shop.

Wilkesburg Community Ministry serves fresh food to about 100 families a day through a storefront pantry open five days a week and a mobile pantry that distributes to five sites each week, Ms. Kittner said. The pantry receives local donations from the Greater Pittsburgh Community Food Bank, Costco, Giant Eagle Market District, Trader Joe’s and Whole Foods Market.



174,110 PEOPLE IN ALLEGHENY COUNTY LIVE IN FOOD INSECURE NEIGHBORHOODS

174,110



1 IN 5

1 IN 5 PITTSBURGH RESIDENTS EXPERIENCES FOOD INSECURITY

The pandemic also pushed that organization to go beyond its usual operations. It started exploring gardening in a small, 1,500-square-foot space that grows kale, chard, green beans, lettuce, tomatoes and more, Ms. Kittner said. Since then, much of the garden has been repurposed to educate children on how food is grown.

Ms. Guerin said the pandemic led the Gardens of Millvale to grow into a more structured, urban farm setup where it has increased food production. The gardens have two lots dedicated to raised beds for neighborhood residents interested in growing their own food. Residents initially weren't charged for this service for the first year because of the pandemic, but they will have to start paying a fee on a sliding scale sometime this year.

Providing the raised beds for residents to garden has helped to offset the economic challenges that some people experienced during the pandemic, during which they struggled with sudden unemployment and rising food prices. This change was also made to encourage residents to become more self-sufficient, Ms. Guerin said.

INCREASED SUPPORT

In fact, as neighborhoods across the Pittsburgh region have increasingly turned to urban farms in recent years to help address food insecurity, they have captured the attention of policymakers, news media and philanthropic organizations.

"There is a growing understanding among funders and the City of Pittsburgh that growers need secured land access in order to justify significant capital and labor investments in urban agricultural sites," Ms. Deming said.

Since 2016, several policies and initiatives have helped expand urban farms in the area, she added. The Urban Agriculture Infrastructure Grant, a component of the PA Farm Bill that went into effect in 2019, has helped to develop infrastructure for urban farms such as hoop houses and greenhouses at the farms run by the Homewood-based Black Urban Gardeners and Farmers of Pittsburgh Co-op, or BUGs, and Grow Pittsburgh's Garden Dreams in Wilkinsburg.

In the summer of 2020, the Pittsburgh City Council passed legislation in support of urban farming. City officials later created the City Farms program to specifically support urban farming. Additionally, there has been an increase in urban agriculture-focused technical assistance positions created at Pennsylvania Association for Sustainable Agriculture (PASA), Pennsylvania State University and the City of Pittsburgh.

"All of these changes highlight the way the urban agriculture sector has really grown and is maturing in the region," Ms. Deming said. "We are excited to see how that will translate into more growing spaces, more growers, more locally produced food, etc."

Today, urban farms also have more opportunities to access funds and other resources, particularly Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture infrastructure grants, she added.

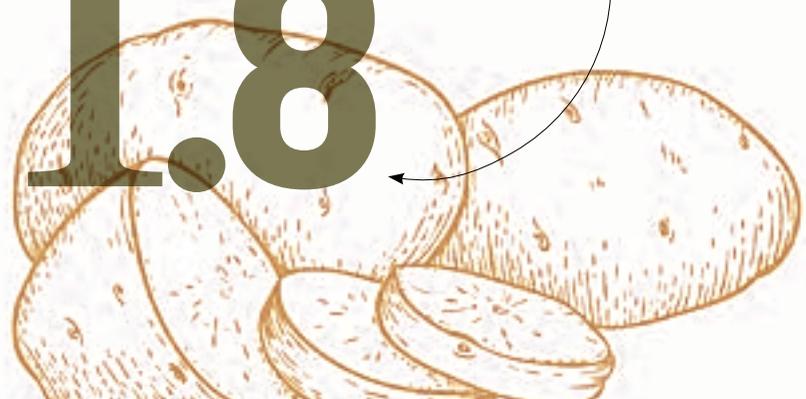
In November 2022, The Heinz Endowments board approved \$267,500 in grants for urban farming and food access projects on top of nearly \$1.5 million awarded to these projects since the previous year, for a total allocation of nearly \$1.8 million during the two years. Mr. McElwaine, who has formed relationships with urban farms across Allegheny County, explained that the pandemic was a major driving force behind the grants.

"The pandemic really showed that the food supply chain was broken and really made the case for more resilience in our food supplies, including more local food and regional food," he said.

Urban farms and their advocates in the county have been able to use the support from the Endowments and other foundations to expand their farms, services and number of employees.

Funding from the Endowments has helped North Hills Community Outreach with planning the construction of a bio shelter to help food grow year-round, even in colder weather, said Lizzy Zimmerman, the organization's director of development and communications. The shelter also will help the farm produce an additional 1,000 pounds of food

THE HEINZ ENDOWMENTS AWARDED GRANTS TOTALING NEARLY \$1.8 MILLION IN 2021 AND 2022 TO URBAN FARMING AND FOOD ACCESS PROJECTS.



1.8

per year for the organization's food pantries and provide additional volunteer opportunities for residents.

Ms. Deming said the Endowments has always been a generous supporter of the PFPC, awarding it with \$190,000 in 2016 in support of its sustainable food systems work. Between 2018 and 2020, PFPC received annual awards of \$190,000 from the foundation in support of the Greater Pittsburgh Food Action Plan project as well as of healthy food access and urban agriculture initiatives.

The Endowments has also given the Wilkinsburg Community Ministry \$50,000 annually for two years and emergency support during the pandemic, Ms. Kittner said. These grants have helped the organization retain employees and hire new workers to manage the pantry and food delivery services.

Further, funding from the Endowments has helped the Gardens of Millvale expand and sustain its infrastructure, Ms. Guerin said. Ms. Raqueeb Bey, the executive director of BUGs, said support from the foundation has helped the organization sustain operations since 2016, a year after BUGs was founded.

"We are grateful for Heinz and what they have done, for not just us but our community in general," Ms. Bey said.

MORE THAN JUST FOOD

In addition to fresh produce, urban farms provide their communities with a variety of resources and services that include K-12 education programs, food pantries and transportation services.

At North Hills Community Outreach, Mr. Baker said he hopes the food is just the start of an ongoing conversation that connects with the organization's 20 other services, which are designed to help meet the basic needs of people who contact them and include financial, utility, rental, transportation, tax and grant-writing assistance programs.

Urban farms can enrich the communities they serve in a variety of ways, Ms. Bey said. With its 31,000-square-foot property, BUGs offers farmers markets and classes to help educate Homewood residents about how to grow food. These services are essential for the neighborhood since it struggles from "food apartheid," and it hasn't had a grocery store since 1994, she added. This summer, the organization hopes to establish a co-op grocery store operation in the neighborhood.

"No one should have to travel outside of their neighborhood to go grocery shopping," Ms. Bey added. "In BUGs, we grow food, minds and leaders because we're farmers. But it's more than just growing food. It's growing communities. It's teaching people how to grow." **h**

BEE SMART

**NEW VACCINE PROTECTS
HONEYBEES FROM DEADLY DISEASE.
BY DONOVAN HARRELL**

Donovan Harrell is a Pittsburgh-based freelance writer.



A beekeeper removes a tray from a hive to harvest honey.



Even on the days he's not beekeeping at the apiary on the farm operated by the Black Urban Gardeners and Farmers of Pittsburgh Co-op, or BUGs, Maurice Wofford loves to observe the honeybees' behavior. He's fascinated by them and their hives, which can have as many as 60,000 honeybees.

"Each one of them has an individual job to do for the greater good," said Mr. Wofford, the lead beekeeper for the farm in Pittsburgh's Homewood neighborhood. "Each individual bee, at any given moment's notice, is willing to sacrifice their own lives for the greater good of the hive."

In January, the first vaccine for honeybees was approved by the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

The vaccine, developed by Dalan Animal Health, which is based in Athens, Georgia, has given hope to farmers and beekeepers who think it can help weaken the impact of one of the serious threats to the nation's steadily declining bee populations.

Bees are part of a group of animals called "pollinators," which spread pollen from plant to plant, helping them reproduce. Pollinators include honeybees, butterflies, birds and bats, according to the USDA. They play a crucial role in the production of the world's agriculture system, pollinating nearly 75 percent of the world's crops that produce fruit and seeds for human consumption, according to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations.

But for years bees have been dying at alarming rates, faced with multiple threats that include pesticides, climate change and pollution. The implications of a society without bees are bleak, particularly concerning the impact on the global food supply chain.

"If we didn't have bees, we'd die," Mr. Wofford said.

In Pennsylvania alone, nearly 75 percent of fruits, vegetables, nuts and other major food crops depend on pollinators like honeybees, contributing more than \$260 million to the state economy, according to Pennsylvania State University analyses.

The bee vaccine aims to alleviate the effects of American foulbrood (AFB), a bacterial disease that can kill a honeybee hive in three weeks, according to Pennsylvania State University reports.

AFB is spread to bee larvae through food contaminated with the bacteria called *Paenibacillus larvae* and its spores. This kills larvae, liquifying them into a brown, foul-smelling mass. The disease not only attacks larvae but also kills a hive's ability to reproduce and spreads when more spores are produced after the bacteria kills the larvae.

The vaccine, according to Dalan Animal Health reports, contains a dead whole cell of the *Paenibacillus larvae* bacteria. It's mixed into queen feed, which worker bees consume and repurpose into royal jelly. The royal jelly is then fed to the queen bee who spreads fragments of the vaccine to her offspring. The larvae will then develop an immunity to the bacteria as they hatch.

Roughly 4,000 species of bees exist in North America, and 300 of those species exist in Pennsylvania, according to researchers at Penn State. These include bumblebees, sweat bees and *Osmia* bees. The European honeybee is not native to the region and is unique from a majority of bee species in multiple ways, according to Carolyn Mahan, a professor of biology and environmental studies at Penn State's Center for Pollinator Research.

Most bees, she explained, like native Pennsylvania bees, don't live in massive hives or produce honey. Instead, they live solitarily. "In fact, honeybees are the exception to the rule about how most bees live," Dr. Mahan said.

Honeybees are necessary for specific places, like urban farms, since native bees have smaller populations, and urban farms are not able to create enough natural habitat to support native bees, Dr. Mahan said.

This is the case for urban farms in Allegheny County, which depend on honeybees and other pollinators to help grow their crops, according to Dr. Mahan.

These farms, like BUGs, provide alternative sources of fresh produce for "food insecure" neighborhoods.

BUGs Executive Director Raqueeb Bey said the farm has 12 beehives, each producing honey, and the bees are essential for the farm and the neighborhood.

"Bees are important, not just for our farm, for everyone," Ms. Bey said. "Without bees, we can't grow anything. So even though we have beehives, we make sure we plant... flowers and plant herbs that the bees love."

John Bixler, executive director of Hilltop Urban Farm in Pittsburgh's St. Clair community, said bees are crucial to the farm's entire

operation, which has 23 acres of its 107 total land acres dedicated specifically to farming. In 2019, the farm started the Farmer Incubation Program, a professional development and entrepreneurship initiative through which people interested in farming are given a quarter-acre plot of land to build their own farm businesses. Randall Hall, one of seven people in the program, runs his beekeeping business, Beeboy Honey, on the farm.

Mr. Hall has 10 honey-producing beehives on the farm. He said there aren't enough wild, feral bees to help pollinate the crops on the farm, so the honeybees he works with fill in, allowing farmers to grow cucumbers and peppers.

"Farmers need bees," Mr. Hall said. "So, if I wasn't there, someone would have to be doing it. ... Whatever the farmers are planting provides a lot of food for the bees, too, and so it is a really cool relationship."

Because of this importance of bees to farming and the food supply, the bee vaccine has been viewed as a hopeful sign in helping to ensure their survival.

Mr. Hall experienced AFB effects firsthand in 2019 when he noticed something strange about his hives. He shared photos with other local beekeepers, who encouraged him to contact Pennsylvania's Apiary Inspection Program. By that summer, an outbreak occurred in the region, forcing beekeepers to burn their hives and destroy or sanitize their equipment to prevent the spread.

Mr. Hall, who assisted the inspectors, said he and other beekeepers aren't sure how AFB was introduced into the city.

"But this was such a rare thing that my mentors had never experienced it themselves," he said. "They'd seen it in labs, but none of us had seen this before. That was tough to go through, but it was good in the sense that it raised the issue."

Mr. Hall hasn't been able to use the vaccine yet, because, in part, of how rare the disease is. He also would like more information about how it affects bees' genetics in the long term.

But he said he finds the idea of a vaccine "interesting" and is cautiously optimistic about its future. **h**



Several nonprofits supported by The Heinz Endowments and other funders have been laboring for years to provide training and growth opportunities for under- and unemployed workers in the Pittsburgh region. In this post-pandemic era, employers' appreciation for these organizations has grown as has the task before them. By Jeffery Fraser

GOOD WORK

It's been called the "Great Resignation," a phenomenon that saddled the U.S. economy with a shrunken workforce in the wake of the COVID-19 outbreak and left businesses desperate for workers long after early pandemic closings and workplace restrictions were lifted.

Southwestern Pennsylvania has not been immune. The region's workforce in April was still nearly 4 percent smaller than it was before COVID arrived in March 2020.

But the region's workforce woes predate the pandemic. The labor force in the seven-county Pittsburgh Metropolitan Statistical Area was nearly 10,000 workers smaller in February 2020 than it was in February 1990, according to U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics data. Such struggles have long inspired efforts to attract and retain working-aged people. The most extraordinarily desperate was Border Guard Bob, the fictional star of an aborted Pittsburgh Regional Alliance 1999 advertising campaign whose idea of retaining young adults who couldn't be persuaded to stay was to attach a bungee cord to the back bumper of their cars and proclaim, "They'll be back."

“The solutions often are about keeping more college graduates or how do we import talent from other places? There is almost never a real platform for enlisting under- and unemployed people already living here,” said Rob Stephany, senior program director for Community & Economic Development at The Heinz Endowments.

Several nonprofits in the region are quietly doing just that. With the support of the Endowments and others, they’re demonstrating the promise of strategies that pair job training with services addressing the barriers that diminish their clients’ chances of landing jobs with career potential.

“Maybe that means only 400 new workers or so a year. Maybe that’s ‘small ball.’ But it’s 400 more than existed a decade ago,” Mr. Stephany said. “Can they scale up? Can they provide the muscle for a real domestic workforce solution? Can the workforce development field learn some lessons? Those are the questions.”

The pandemic has heightened the value of these organizations’ work. Demand for the untapped pool of workers they train has soared. Several

report that employers are more aware of and willing to help address the challenges their clients face. At the same time, some report that the hardships incoming students are dealing with are more severe than in years past.

Here is a glimpse of what five workforce development nonprofits supported by the Endowments are experiencing as they work to help unemployed or marginally employed men and women gain a foothold in the post-pandemic regional economy.

“MAYBE THAT MEANS ONLY 400 NEW WORKERS OR SO A YEAR. MAYBE THAT’S ‘SMALL BALL.’ BUT IT’S 400 MORE THAN EXISTED A DECADE AGO.”

Rob Stephany,
senior program director,
Community & Economic Development,
The Heinz Endowments



COMMUNITY KITCHEN PITTSBURGH



COVID-19 dealt a staggering blow to the food and service industries when businesses, schools, restaurants and other places of public gathering were closed to blunt the spread of the virus in the spring of 2020. Community Kitchen Pittsburgh has been navigating the repercussions ever since.

The nonprofit in Pittsburgh's Hazelwood neighborhood provides culinary training to open careers in the industry for people with barriers to employment, including those recently incarcerated. The job got more difficult after COVID-19 arrived.

Early in the pandemic, the nonprofit created 40 jobs so it could prepare 6,000 meals a day for needy families — three times its typical workload. But the classrooms, catering service and café critical to its students' training and experience were shut down with the rest of the industry.

When COVID-19 restrictions lifted, the food industry had changed. Workers were hard to find.

"One of our employer partners said it was like 2,000 people were sucked up by aliens," said Jennifer Flanagan, founder and executive director of Community Kitchen Pittsburgh. Hiring requirements were relaxed. More people with little or no training were being hired.

"What that has meant for us is that we are seeing people with similar barriers as in the past, but their needs are much greater," Ms. Flanagan said. "Before, someone might have unstable housing. Now they are homeless. They might have a special needs child at home. Now they can't get anyone to watch that child. Typically, we'd see people in addiction recovery. Now we're seeing people who are right on the line of being sober. They haven't been clean that long."

The nonprofit responded by doubling to four the number of staff who help students resolve such issues. It also began paying students after feedback warned that many couldn't afford to invest in unpaid education when jobs were plentiful. That required the nonprofit to limit enrollment. Now, for example, it expects to graduate 50 to 60 students a year from its culinary arts program. "Before, it was probably double that," Ms. Flanagan said.

But working conditions have steadily improved. Community Kitchen places 93 percent of its graduates in jobs within the industry. The average wage graduates can expect after six months has risen from less than \$14 an hour pre-COVID to more than \$16 an hour.

And, employers are more amenable to offering employees benefits, career paths that didn't previously exist, and more flexible scheduling, and to hiring former inmates, Ms. Flanagan said. "I want to see the industry come back, but in a way that feels like this is a legitimate career for people."

Ben Buchanan, far left, a butchery instructor and founder and CEO of Unified Fields, shows Community Kitchen Pittsburgh students how to break down different meats into cuts that will be sold retail while the leftovers will be made into patties and sausages. Unified Fields is a Pittsburgh-based collective of artisan butchers that offers training, consulting, mobile slaughter and meat processing. Community Kitchen Pittsburgh recently launched a butchery program to train the next generation of meat cutters. All students take a 16-hour butchery course to learn about the different equipment used — from knives to bandsaws — and the different cuts of meat.



TRADE INSTITUTE OF PITTSBURGH

Ten years ago, the Trade Institute of Pittsburgh began teaching masonry and carpentry skills to young men whose time behind bars kept them from finding meaningful work even after putting their troubled pasts behind them. Today, demand for the skilled workers it graduates is greater than what the nonprofit can supply, despite having achieved record-setting job placement rates.

“People who show up, show up on time and are teachable are in high demand right now,” said Donta Green, executive director of the Trade Institute of Pittsburgh. “I’m not sure why that’s happening, but we have more jobs available than we have students.”

The nonprofit, whose classrooms are in Pittsburgh’s Homewood neighborhood, has increased the number of students it can train in its 10-week courses from a pre-pandemic high of 18 to 34. Still, the nonprofit has a steady waiting list of 20 to 35 students wanting to enroll.

Last year, 75 of the 77 people who graduated from the nonprofit’s training program were placed in jobs. “That’s the highest we’ve done in the organization’s history,” Mr. Green said.

Graduates are also benefiting from rising wages. The average starting wage of a Trade Institute graduate hit \$19.15 an hour last year, a nearly 8 percent increase from the pay the year before.

In addition, the Trade Institute has seen a shift in the characteristics of students who apply. Since 2020, the share of students with a criminal background has fallen from 85 percent to 65 percent, Mr. Green said.

“Our services are for anyone with a barrier to employment, whether it’s a criminal background, education, transportation, lack of a driver’s license or something else,” he explained. “The numbers of people coming out of high school and of people looking for a career change have increased.”

The nonprofit offers services to help students succeed in addition to job training, including a life coach, case management, drug and alcohol counseling, and classes in anger management and math. That aspect led 47-year-old David Pharr on a soul search when he enrolled in the Trade Institute after serving seven months in federal prison for mail fraud.

“I’d never dealt internally with what my absence would do to my household, my two sons,” said Mr. Pharr, who graduated last year from the carpentry program and rose to foreman at a construction company after less than a year on the job. “That piece about introspection, working on who you are as a person to your family and community is something profound. It changed my life forever. I think this is exactly what the inner cities need to do to instill hope so people stop killing one another.”

The approach and the relationships the Trade Institute has built with employers and trade unions are the chief reasons placing students in jobs with career potential has become an easier sell, Mr. Green said.

“Employers understand the work, resources and time that is put into each student. I think they value that. They’d rather come to us than hire someone off the street because we can tell them a lot about our students, and getting through our program isn’t easy. It’s as if employers know our students, are battle-tested when they come from our program.”

Masonry skills, such as those shown at left, are taught as part of the Trade Institute of Pittsburgh’s 10-week intensive apprentice in training program, which is designed to prepare students for employment that provides a livable wage. Carpentry classes also are available along with support services and programming that includes a life coach, case management, drug and alcohol counseling, and classes in anger management and math.

LAST YEAR, 75 OF THE 77 PEOPLE WHO GRADUATED FROM THE NONPROFIT’S TRAINING PROGRAM WERE PLACED IN JOBS.

Monica Mattis enrolled in the Bidwell Training Center with a resume listing the more than one dozen jobs she's held since joining the workforce to help her widowed mother support a household of five children. It was her recent experience working sales-related jobs at several fragile technology companies that brought her to Bidwell's doorstep, she said.

"I found myself being laid off, whether it was workforce downsizing or company restructuring. I just got tired of that pattern," said Ms. Mattis, 55, of McKeesport, a city about 15 miles southeast of Pittsburgh. "A friend of mine said, 'Do you think this is God's way of telling you to stop what you're doing and look for something else.'"

Ms. Mattis graduated from Bidwell's medical coding and billing program in May, the first step toward a new career in health care.

Enrollment has increased 58 percent to 165 students since the pre-COVID 2018-19 school year at the Bidwell Training Center, a 55-year-old nonprofit in Pittsburgh's Manchester neighborhood that prepares students for jobs in the technology, food service, horticulture and health care fields. Courses in the culinary arts are filled, as are those in horticulture, a program that's so popular that students might spend a full year waiting to get in.

Other courses include training as chemical lab technicians, medical assistants and pharmacy technicians with curricula informed by conversations with regional employers about the skills, values and attitudes they value.

Some programs are being revised to reflect changes in the post-COVID workplace environment.

"Some jobs have transitioned to fully remote positions," said Bidwell Training Center Executive Director Kimberly Rassau. "We've seen that in medical billing and coding. That requires students to have a higher level of technical proficiency so they can work on computers at home."

Training is held five days a week for seven to 12 months, depending on the program. Students are awarded a one-time grant to cover training costs as long as they meet attendance and academic requirements.

Prospects of landing a job are good for those who graduate. The nonprofit's leanest year was 2021, when it placed 75 percent of its graduates in jobs. Last year, Bidwell placed 78 percent of its graduates in jobs. And Ms. Rassau expects the number to rise.

"I've seen an increase in outreach from our employer partners wanting to discuss how we can partner to develop programs," she said. "To me, that's a litmus test for whether they're seeking assistance in developing their talent pool."

"Not enough of these organizations exist," said Stanley Thompson, The Heinz Endowments' former senior program director of education who retired in March.

The Endowments awarded Bidwell a \$1 million grant in 2022 to build out and renovate its kitchen, allowing for more students to enroll in culinary arts training.

Dr. Thompson noted that after seeing what the pandemic has done, more thought will need to go into how to "take advantage of institutions that have a track record of providing for the workforce—that are reaching populations that have traditionally been underserved when it comes to certain career pathways."

Horticulture technology is one of the Bidwell Training Center's most popular programs. Kristina Rettger, 22, right, and Adrian May, 19, far right, are pruning potted flowers in preparation for their campus planting.

BIDWELL TRAINING CENTER



With crews drawn from the ranks of the chronically unemployed, Landforce has cut trails in parks, turned vacant lots that blighted neighborhoods into playgrounds, and created rain gardens to control stormwater for clients ranging from the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy and the Allegheny Land Trust to the Housing Authority of the City of Pittsburgh over its eight-year history.

Three years after COVID-19 arrived in the region, demand for the nonprofit's work remains strong with contracts that total about \$230,000 a year. But recruiting crews is another story.

"Since COVID, it's harder for us to recruit the same numbers we recruited beforehand," said Landforce Executive Director Ilyssa Manspeizer. "People need jobs when they need jobs. They're not able to wait a few months for our training to start."

Landforce recruits up to 25 people a year. Not all complete training, which until recently was held once early in the year to prepare them for the season, which runs from May to November. The nonprofit reports that some 65 percent of recruits over the years have had a criminal record, half have had a mental health diagnosis, 31 percent came with a history of addiction and 27 percent were homeless.

The nonprofit trains them in skills necessary to do paid work for Landforce clients, assists them with overcoming employment barriers they've encountered, and helps them find jobs in fields such as tree care and public works.

"We want to get everyone trained and out working, give them as long of a runway as we can to experience work and dig deeply into figuring out who they are," Ms. Manspeizer said. "The longer the runway we have with them, the more successful they can be."

Recruiting difficulties and higher-than-usual attrition rates led the nonprofit to add a second session in order to fill out its crews. Ms. Manspeizer added that ways to accommodate workers with greater needs are also being explored.

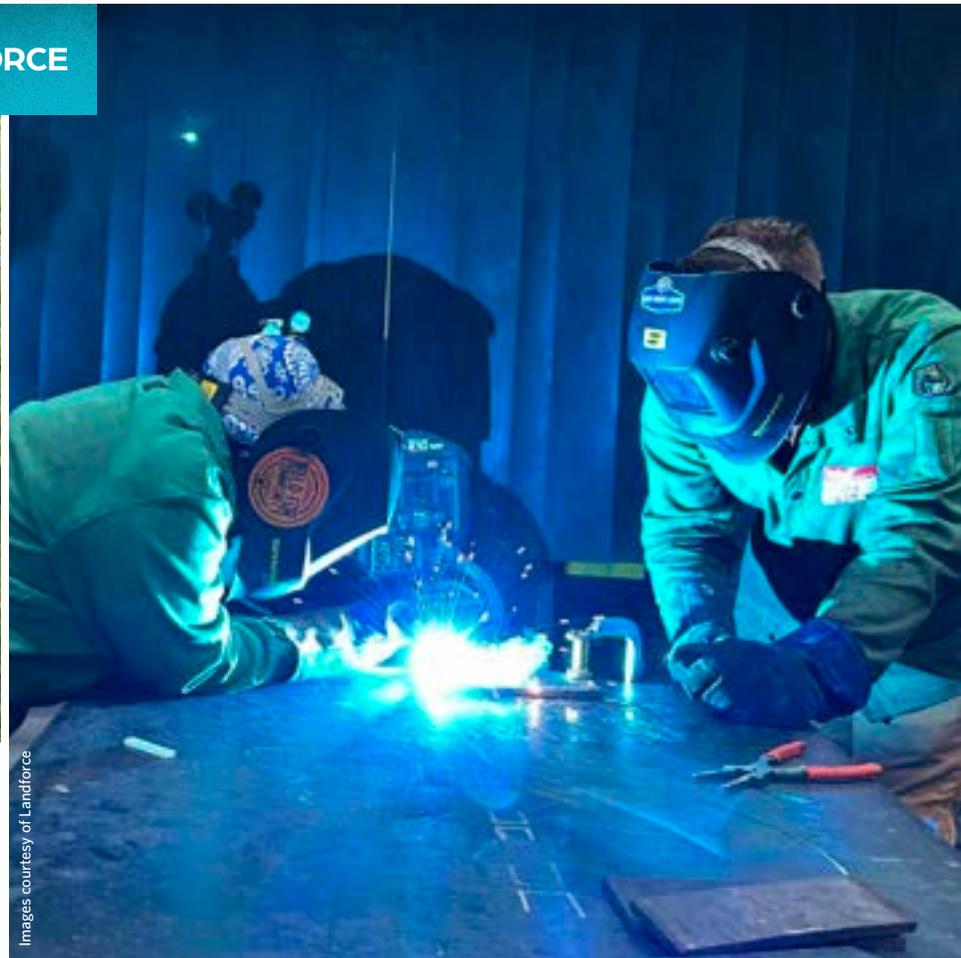
"Our crews work very hard in the face of tremendous odds against their success," she said. "It's always been the case that a lot in their lives is stacked against them. Now it seems the challenges are a little deeper and wider."

The good news is that the nonprofit's high job placement rates have held. Last year, 10 of the 11 workers who completed the season walked into jobs afterward.

"There are a lot of people who'd like to work and deserve to work," she said. "But strategies for encouraging and helping them succeed might have to be tweaked by those of us doing this work."



LANDFORCE



Images courtesy of Landforce

Landforce training can take participants outdoors and indoors, depending on the task at hand. Above, Landforce crew member Rakeem Collins is cutting timber that will be used for check steps at a nature preserve, which will help prevent erosion and reduce instability for hikers when the ground is muddy. Check steps are usually made of rock or timber and placed along a trail to divert water or serve as steps for hikers. At the Industrial Arts Workshop in Pittsburgh's Hazelwood neighborhood, student instructor assistant Riley Egger, far right, demonstrates welding techniques with Jasimine Cooper, Landforce's director of workforce development, as part of a welding training exercise for Landforce students during a visit to the IAW.



ENERGY INNOVATION CENTER INSTITUTE

Guiding people who've struggled to find a place in the region's workforce toward stable career paths is a key part of the Energy Innovation Center Institute's mission. The nonprofit has been busy of late.

As with most schools, the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted much of the nonprofit's training program, which prepares students for working in fields ranging from energy to health care. It proved to be only a temporary distraction.

"After about a year, all of the training was back," said Robert Meeder, founding president of the Pittsburgh Gateways Corp. and the Energy Innovation Center. "Now, the companies we serve are more desperate for workers than they've ever been."

EICI is the training arm of the Energy Innovation Center, which opened in 2016 in the renovated home of the former Connelley Trade School in Pittsburgh's Hill District as a place to foster technological innovation, incubate companies, and align workforce development and education in the region. EICI works with company partners to offer under-represented populations job training tailored to workforce trends. Programs include training for jobs as environmental service techs and nursing assistants in the health care fields, bank tellers and other positions.

Demand for workers in certain fields skyrocketed during the pandemic.

"The first thing to emerge was UPMC needed case workers," Mr. Meeder said about the health care network. "They had a more intense need to manage caseloads and patient logistics." And demand for hospital environmental service techs to control infections and mold was greater than the 120 students that EICI graduates with those skills in a year, he said.

The nonprofit also tries to anticipate future labor demands, following the development of new technologies and working with energy companies and government partners to design entry-level training to equip students with the skills that working with those technologies will require.

In its first six years, EICI has trained more than 3,100 people, 89 percent of whom were people of color, and placed 86 percent of the nearly 2,600 students who graduated from its programs in jobs.

"We deploy the model of concentrated, corporate-led training," Mr. Meeder said. "And it has been working for us." **h**

3,100

The Energy Innovation Center Institute has trained more than 3,100 people in its first six years.

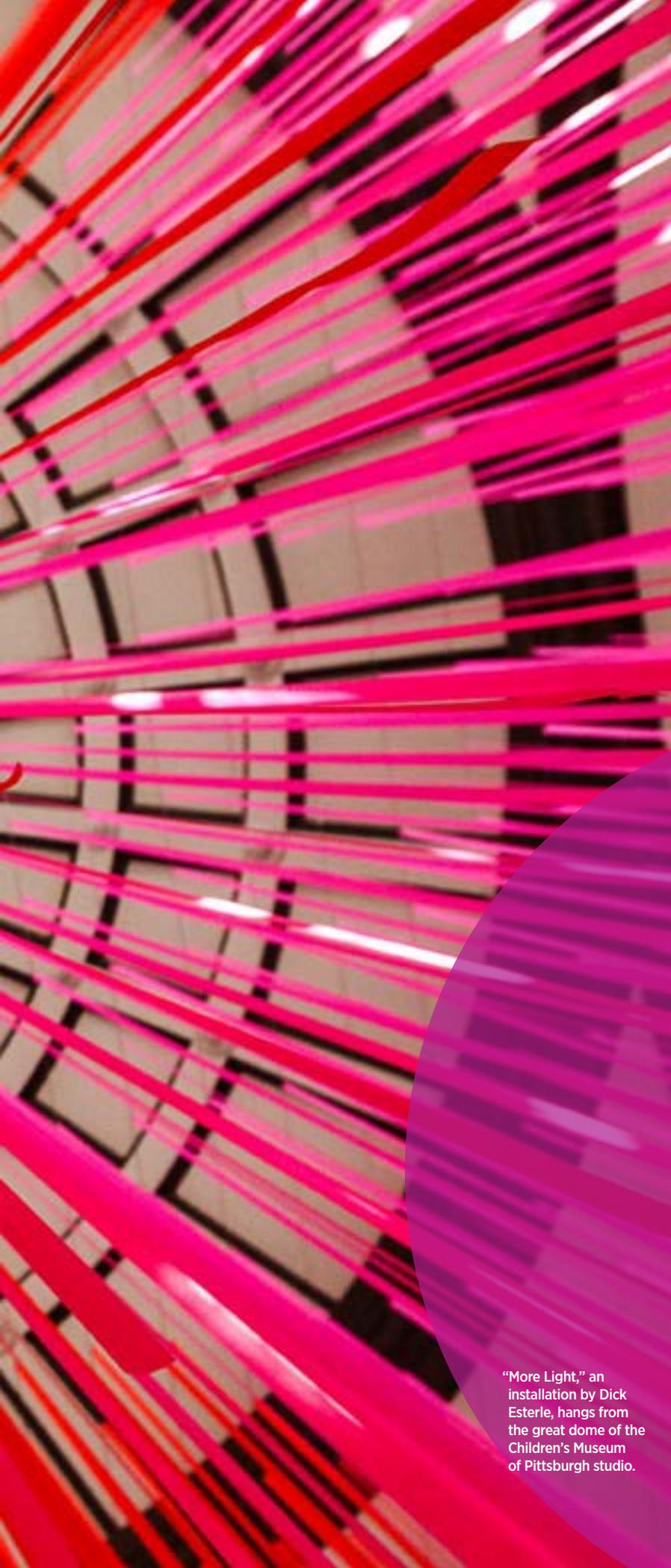
89

89 percent of the people trained at EICI have been people of color.

86

86 percent of the nearly 2,600 students who have graduated from EICI programs have been placed in jobs.

THE ART OF LEARNING



The Heinz Endowments' Creative Learning initiative is helping to connect youth in the Pittsburgh region with arts and cultural organizations while supporting professional development for teaching artists to cultivate future generations of artists and arts audiences.
By Julia Fraser

Pink and orange streamers hang down from the historic domed ceiling that once housed the old Allegheny Post Office.

This installation artwork — “More Light” by artist and architect Dick Esterle — loomed over the Children’s Museum of Pittsburgh’s studio as children worked on projects inspired by neo-expressionist artist Jean-Michel Basquiat and made their own screen prints next to original prints by Pittsburgh native pop artist Andy Warhol that hung at their eye-level.

The future artists played next to masterworks.

“We’re committed to adaptive reuse and using these historic assets not to preserve the past, but to be a place for learning and building the community into the future,” said Danielle Linzer, senior director of education, learning and research at the museum.

“More Light,” an installation by Dick Esterle, hangs from the great dome of the Children’s Museum of Pittsburgh studio.

While popular among the public, access to the arts and arts education has been declining for the past three decades, according to a 2017 report by the National Endowment for the Arts. When public school funding or support for the arts is cut, community organizations, large institutions and an array of teaching artists have had to take up the easel.

Creative learning in Pittsburgh weaves a complex network of arts education programs in and out of schools, fueled by teaching artists who actively practice and teach in their topic area. But the network had been diffuse. Many of these programs have had limited and inconsistent funding and have been staffed by a rotating workforce of underpaid arts educators, leaving pockets of quality arts programming out of reach for many of Pittsburgh's youth, according to a 2019 report by University of Pittsburgh's School of Education funded by The Heinz Endowments.

Connecting those arts and cultural organizations with youth throughout Pittsburgh and creating professional development paths for teaching artists while prioritizing equity form the crux of the Endowments' Creative Learning initiative, launched in early 2020.

It's a youth development strategy that uses Pittsburgh's creative and cultural assets — from large institutions like the Children's Museum to smaller nonprofits like Assemble, a community space for art and technology education in Garfield — to act as levers for learning.

"We made a bet that bringing together discipline-specific arts education with the out-of-school-time space — along with the intention of equitable outcomes for a young person's well-being and a role for themselves in the future — would be the right place to invest," said Mac Howison, program officer for Creative Learning at the Endowments.

Participating in the arts as a kid can be transformative. Studies have shown links between arts education and improved critical thinking outcomes and school attendance, higher standardized test scores and college aspirations, and increased empathy, a 2021 American Academy for the Arts analysis found.

But access to the arts has long been inequitable. Declines in art education have hit Black and brown students the hardest. A 2011 National Endowment for the Arts report noted that since the mid-1980s, Black students have experienced a 49 percent decline in arts education, while white students have seen almost no reduction in access to arts education.

The problem persists in Pittsburgh where University of Pittsburgh researchers determined that 94 percent of arts program directors and 77 percent of educators surveyed

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WHEN YOUNG PEOPLE ARE EXPOSED TO CULTURAL ELEMENTS, IT'S A FORTIFYING EXPERIENCE THAT TEACHES YOU ABOUT YOURSELF.”

Erin Perry, executive director, Legacy Arts Project

Gail Manker





The Legacy Arts Project and the Kelly Strayhorn Theater presented the 10th Dance Africa: Pittsburgh, *Past, Present, Future* last July at the Kelly Strayhorn. Dance Africa member Baba Chuck Davis, foreground, was part of a performance at the event, which featured dances representing Ghana, Guinea, Senegal, Cuba and the United States.



During last year's ACTIVATE Arts Learning Conference, Attack Theatre performed a modern dance piece at the Kelly Strayhorn Theater in Pittsburgh's East Liberty neighborhood using a seesaw made of steel.

Elise Cevallos

believe African American youth have unequal access to creative learning opportunities.

“That ecosystem has not been consistently connected or as collectively powerful as it could be,” Mr. Howison said. “Part of it is due to historical inequities and people being left out of the conversation, part of it has to do with the pressures in the field of out-of-school-time arts and creative learning and a chronically underpaid workforce.”

While the Endowments has long supported the arts, the Creative Learning initiative took a different approach to expanding access to opportunities that already existed for a swath of youth in Pittsburgh. By prioritizing funding that is inclusive of Black and brown arts, the program aims to repair the fragmented and unevenly distributed access to arts in the region and to build the pipeline of the next generation of artists and audiences.

The initiative supports a cohort of 30 provider organizations with \$15 million. At the heart, two anchor institutions — the Legacy Arts Project and the Arts Education Collaborative — work to connect schools, museums, community nonprofits, teaching artists, and youth and their families online and in the community, whether by using a drumbeat or a new social network.

For more than two decades, the Legacy Arts Project has been providing drum and dance classes to link Pittsburgh's youth to arts and culture from Africa and the diaspora.

“When young people are exposed to cultural elements, it's a fortifying experience that teaches you about yourself,” said Erin Perry, executive director of the Legacy Arts Project.

The organization's classes form a thread through time, connecting people with culture, strengthening ties to their communities, and even setting youth on a path to a career in the arts. Ms. Perry started teaching West African dance as a substitute teacher in 2005, and today one of her early students works with the organization.

“As folks from the African diaspora, we're able to bring the culture into the community,” she said. “That's our approach with young people. We share what we've inherited.”

Legacy Arts' impact has rippled through the community through partnerships with Carnegie Mellon University's architecture program and local nonprofits such as Pittsburgh Glass Center, Assemble and Women for a Healthy Environment.

A need for virtual connection across southwestern Pennsylvania's diverse creative learning community spurred the Arts Education Collaborative to build an online hub for schools, arts organizations, teaching artists and families that's free and searchable.

Still in its early stages, artlook® SWPA is an online match-making portal for about 150 schools and 70 arts organizations and independent teaching across 13 counties in southwestern Pennsylvania. Messaging a potential collaborator takes just a click.

Schools share potential in- and out-of-school opportunities while arts organizations and teaching artists share descriptions of their programs and disciplines of practice.

Outside of the few full-time positions in public school districts and universities, most teaching artists work outside

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**THERE'S NOTHING
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KIDS' LIVES.”**

James Brown, director of education at Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy and former project director of the Lighthouse Project

Dallas Chapman, 16, below left, records music in the studio at the Lighthouse Project, a teen center focused on music and media arts that is housed in a state-of-the-art facility at the Homewood-Brushton YMCA in Pittsburgh. Journey Washington, 5, below right, is too young for Lighthouse programming, but she got a taste of the activities during a ribbon-cutting for the opening of the facility's new Verizon digital inclusion center. She is programming an Ozobot that was brought to the event and that uses different color combination codes to perform various movements, such as going in reverse, turning or dancing.



The nonprofit Assemble blends art and technology in activities that stimulate young people's imagination while they learn. At Girls Maker Night, below from left, Ada Malec, 11; Anna Hirth, 11; Sabrina Anselmo, 11; and Jamayah Martin, 12, enjoy playing Dance Dance Revolution, Makey Makey style. Makey Makey projects help youth learn about coding and other aspects of technology through interactive activities such as exploring electricity through dancing. Zuri Manigault, 10, right, is ready to use an iPad to film her stop-motion animation project as part of an activity in which students also build and photograph dioramas.



Photo courtesy of Assemble



“

WITH ANYTHING WE DO, WE WANT TO HIGHLIGHT THE FOLKS WHO MIGHT HAVE BEEN DIMINISHED OR ERASED FROM OUR HISTORY BOOKS.”

Nina Barbuto, executive director, Assemble

of schools, often part-time, piecing together programs to make a living.

“The caliber of teaching artists in Pittsburgh is what drives creative learning and the relationship between them and the folks on the ground,” said James Brown, director of education at Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy and former project director of the Lighthouse Project at the Homewood-Brushton YMCA. “There’s nothing to invest in if you don’t have great people who do this work and want to get better at it and really believe it transforms kids’ lives.”

Mr. Brown began his career in Pittsburgh as a teaching artist working with after-school programs at Carnegie Mellon University. He went on to develop the Lighthouse Project, a teen center focused on music and media arts, that began as a program inside Westinghouse Academy 6–12 in the city’s Homewood neighborhood.

In 2016, a \$1.5 million project supported by the Endowments helped move the teen center into a new state-of-the-art facility at the Homewood-Brushton YMCA, complete with a recording studio, digital music lab and space to learn

from teaching artists. Empowering the youth to take part in the design of the space was crucial to its growth.

“For the kids to come into the space and see the paint on the wall and say, ‘I picked that color’ or ‘I wanted it to look like that,’ that was the first step in communicating the value of what our youth think and feel,” Mr. Brown said. “It flowed from there, and then we were able to start attracting kids from around the city.”

Filling an artistic niche out of school has been Assemble’s conscious approach.

“I always like to think of us as the crazy aunt who comes in and throws some sparkle but might light the fire and connect you to other things,” said Nina Barbuto, Assemble’s executive director. “With anything we do, we want to highlight the folks who might have been diminished or erased from our history books.”

Assemble does this currently through an Afrofuturism curriculum that explores Black history along with current work by Black artists to help kids “explore the past while also seeing the future.”

Assemble has prioritized professional development and growing its force of teaching artists. What began as an all-volunteer-run organization now has 12 full-time staff members.

The Children’s Museum of Pittsburgh has a parallel focus of supporting professional development and preparing youth and artists for jobs with a future, but within a larger, established institution.

“It’s hard to shift the perception of who we are here for, what we are here for,” Ms. Linzer said concerning the museum’s offerings.

Its MuseumLab, for example, opened in 2019 in the old Carnegie Free Library of Allegheny branch and includes lab space and programming around art and technology from metalworking to fashion design to virtual reality for kids ages 10 and up. It also hosts a free after-school program for middle schoolers that focuses on art, making and social justice, among other work.

An evaluation of the Creative Learning initiative is planned to occur by the end of the year. In the long run, success for Mr. Howison would be a “well-networked creative learning system that improved access to arts learning and creative opportunities for youth,” demonstrated by increased participation, partnerships, and professional development for teaching artists.

And the next generation of artists and audiences is already setting their own direction for the future, according to Ms. Barbuto of Assemble.

“I can’t wait for all the kids to take over,” she said. “I am excited for their more fluid expression and helping folks have a better vocabulary for curiosity and acceptance. Being contextually responsive and culturally relevant is the key for them.” **h**



What are you doing these days?

Well, so I actually decided that college wasn't my route right now. I decided that pretty recently. But I'm working full-time now as an assistant manager at LIDS.

How has the Readiness Institute prepared you for where you are now and where you hope to be?

Support was a huge, huge aspect of it.

How do you feel the Readiness Institute influenced your decisions?

I've always felt like they've had my back as they promised. ... Whenever I decided I didn't want to be in college anymore I talked to [alumni network coordinator Fred Quinn], and he was super helpful through it. So, there's just a support [that] was really nice to have.

Where do you see yourself 10 years from now?

I hope that I find myself able to get back to school. Also, having a house and a family, you know, stuff like that. Being able to have a nice career at that point.

What was your favorite memory at the Readiness Institute?

Going in for the podcasts. I got to do my own podcasts, where I was a co-host ... And we got to [bring] some of our friends and most of the people in the group. I remember being super stressed out about it, because I had to drive to pick someone up on the South Side. ... Just the memory of how irritated I was, [but] it was fantastic. Because that experience, it's like [being] on Spotify. That's super cool.

What message would you give to other students in the Pittsburgh region about the Readiness Institute?

Do it. It's a great program. You get to get paid for stuff that you're literally going to do on your own, and then on top of that, you get to make great connections with people in your cohort and the instructors. I'm going to have lifelong friends from this program. And they were my family for that six weeks, like I was with them more than I was with anybody else throughout that time.

You've got to end up just being yourself through that program, be a little bit vulnerable. Put yourself out there a little bit, and other people will do the same thing. And it'll end up being a great time.

AT THE READY

In its third year, the Readiness Institute at Penn State is steadily advancing its pledge to help prepare high school students for life as well as for college, careers and community service. By TyLisa C. Johnson

Zander Payne entered the Readiness Institute as one person, but left as another.

Six weeks during the summer may seem brief, but for him, there's no doubt in his mind that the 2021 Readiness Institute program changed him for the better, including rocketing his sense of self and giving birth to newfound skills and friendships. His peers noticed, his teachers noticed, and so did he.

"It gave me more confidence. It gave me a sense of being able to love myself more and the person I am and being able to accept who I am," said Mr. Payne, 18. "I've made lifelong friends with most of my cohort and just being able to share that once-in-a-lifetime experience with all of them being my family for that six weeks... was something that I could never forget."

He explained that he left the program ready for his next steps in life, which initially included attending Penn State New

Kensington. But he later determined that the time was not right for college, though completing a degree is still one of his life goals.

Investing in Readiness Institute participants so that they better understand themselves and know how to set goals is a dream realized for the program and for its leaders. But in early 2020, just as plans were ramping up to create a transformative experience for students at the newly created Institute, everything was upended by the COVID-19 pandemic.

In the years since, schooling approaches changed massively while at the same time the pandemic revealed and exacerbated inequities and insufficiencies in education systems. The need for students to be better prepared for careers and adult responsibilities has grown in importance, and communities and organizations have stepped in to fill learning gaps.

The Readiness Institute at Penn State, as it is known today, is among the local and national programs working to boost high

school students' preparations for the future by exposing them to more resources, knowledge and networking connections — and alumni are already seeing the impacts.

Mr. Payne thrived among 44 other students from more than 20 schools across Allegheny County who participated in his 2021 group. At the Institute, students took trips, heard industry leaders speak, used 3D printing pens, created and tested autonomous mini vehicles, learned mental health first aid and more.

"There was so much more that was going on at the Readiness Institute... not just collaboration around projects but who we are as individuals," said Stan Thompson, a founder of the program and former Heinz Endowments senior education program director who retired earlier this year. "We were really able to create something that typically wouldn't have happened in a traditional comprehensive high school."

The COVID-19 pandemic was formative for the program, as it meant readjusting how to approach bringing students together for a common mission and figuring out how to move forward on a limited basis. Over time, students also helped to shape and further enrich future program iterations through surveys and feedback. As it evolves, the Institute has maintained its mission of preparing students for their future, no matter what it looks like, and having helped nearly 100 students with more coming this summer.

OVERCOMING THE UNFORESEEN

On Feb. 5, 2020, The Heinz Endowments announced an initial \$700,000 investment to launch what was then called the Pittsburgh Readiness Institute in collaboration with the Consortium for Public Education, a regional nonprofit with programs to support and engage students, school leadership and community residents. Funds were slated to cover costs such as student stipends, leased space, technology for student projects and transportation to site visits.

The plan was to host a six-week summer program for 45 students who would hear notable speakers, connect with their community, build skills and work together to develop solutions to real-world issues. Then a month later the COVID-19 pandemic hit, schools began to close, and the program vision needed a total overhaul. A pilot program eventually moved forward in the fall, but on a limited basis.

Working with Astrobotic, an aerospace company on Pittsburgh's North Side, the Hope Moonshot was the Institute's first project, in December 2020, and was designed to invigorate a sense of hope in young people during difficult times. Program participants asked thousands of students and educators from countries around the world: What is your hope for your community? They collected thousands of notes and stored them on an SD card that was placed on Astrobotic's Peregrine lander and sent to the moon.

Before Fred Quinn became the Institute's alumni network coordinator, he was an instructor who saw students learn about themselves and the world in real time during visits to places such as Astrobotic.

"It's just very enjoyable to watch that lightbulb go off for them when they see certain things that they're interested in," Mr. Quinn said. "Watching them see that this is achievable for them, you can see their eyes light up."

Early in 2021, Penn State Outreach, a division of Pennsylvania State University, assumed operation of the program, and it became the Readiness Institute at Penn State. By that summer, the Institute had a full contingent of students and a smooth-running session influenced by the advice and thoughts of student alumni.

Original plans for the Institute were coming to pass. Most importantly, program staff heard directly from students about their needs to prepare them for life.

The Institute is physically located in the Energy Innovation Center in Pittsburgh's Hill District neighborhood and is designed to host 10 instructors and 45 students from more than 20 school districts. Across two summer cohorts, the program organized 21

offsite tours, group field trips and numerous industry speakers, including representatives from Google Pittsburgh and the digital education firm EVERFI.

"We're different because our focus is not what you want to be when you grow up," said Justin Aglio, associate vice president of Penn State outreach and executive director of the Institute.

"Our focus is who do you want to be when you grow up."

While the summer program is its bread and butter, the Readiness Institute also offers programming for students and educators throughout the school year. Activities include an array of Regional Readiness workshops on topics such as artificial intelligence, community readiness and entrepreneurship, with the latter involving events having a "Shark Tank" television show theme, Dr. Aglio said.

In April, for example, the Institute co-hosted a STEM summit with more than 300 student and educator participants. Students learned about STEM-related careers and met with businesses, including Google and Microsoft.

The Institute boils down to two types of programming: impact and awareness, Dr. Aglio said. The summer program is the impact program designed to have direct impact on students who in turn impact their communities. Workshops and other programs are often larger-scale collaborative efforts to engage a larger audience in the Institute's programming.

'PUTTING PIECES TOGETHER'

Since 2021, Susie Gurrera, a Highlands High School counselor, has sent students off to the Institute after they finished 11th grade, and when they returned to school in the fall, she said, they're "polished and ready to start their senior year."

"They had a direction, they had support, they had resources to fall back on," Dr. Gurrera said. "It's really like a dream come true for a

FRED QUINN

ALUMNI NETWORK COORDINATOR

How is the Readiness Institute different from other educational programs and approaches?

I feel like it's different because the Readiness Institute, first and foremost, targets [high school] seniors throughout Allegheny County who are unsure of what they want to do.

I think a lot of [colleges] get these summer programs started to recruit students to come to their institution. We're not like that. We understand that every student is not going to want to go to Penn State, and we just want to encourage them to do the best things that they want to do.

Another way is where my position comes in. Most of those college summer programs, once they're done, they're just done. My job is to focus on keeping in contact with the students, making sure they're good, [addressing] anything they need as far as a job, whether they need internships, recommendation letters. We're sticking with them for life. I want to be there to help them succeed.

Share a brief story about when you saw that a student "got it" in terms of benefiting from the program.

We took [the students on] a tour of Penn State Greater Allegheny in McKeesport. I was walking around with this particular student, [and] you see that lightbulb moment. She saw that the campus was not too big and not too small. This is a trans student, seeing how safe she was and seeing how that campus fitted her needs as far as education, as far as the support.

At the end, we had a professor come in, and we did a little round-table discussion with him about different topics. She asked a question about LGBTQ programs on campus. I was able to reassure her that I'm going to be fighting for her, and no matter what [she did] after high school, [she is] going to be secure, going to be safe and going to have people behind her.

And you just kind of saw that reassurance in her face. She was able to feel a little more comfortable, because not only

were we as staff supportive, but her cohort, the students, were as well.

Where do you hope to see students who completed the program 10 years from now?

Prayerfully, I'll still be with the Readiness Institute in the next 10 years, so I want to see our students succeed and thriving. I want to see our students become entrepreneurs. We have students who are into culinary arts—I want to see [them] at the top restaurants in the city.

I want to see our students comfortable in the jobs they do, comfortable in serving the community on top of those jobs. I also just want to see them happy because I feel like in the midst of all this, especially with these students going through a pandemic in high school, the mental health toll that can take on them is absolutely insane. So, I just want to see them happy and thriving in whatever they're doing.

Where do you hope to see the Readiness Institute 10 years from now?

In 10 years, the Readiness Institute is going to be pretty big. We have two alumni classes now. In 10 years, we'll have 12, so I just see a vast network building. I see the first couple alumni classes getting into their careers and coming back and serving. I would really love that.

I want the Readiness Institute to have an internship program where some of our college students who are alumni can come back, intern [with us] and get credit from Penn State. This year we're [going] to central Pennsylvania, so in 10 years, I can definitely see the program opening a Philadelphia [center] and becoming a big statewide program.

I want that big cycle: We give to them, we feed and pour into them. Years later, when they're successful in their careers, we can go visit them on a field trip and [they'll say], "Oh, I was a Readiness alumni, so I understand coming through the program and how important it is."



Joshua Franzos

JUSTIN AGLIO

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

How is the Readiness Institute different from other educational programs and approaches?

The Readiness Institute is unlike any educational opportunity in the world, where we have a lifetime commitment to the students that we serve, to the learners that we serve, through programs like our summer program. We are exploring learning and career pathways that [students] identify through the understanding of themselves, and who they are and where they want to go. And [we're] doing that through enabling education, industry and community partners along the way.

Every day, no matter what we do at the [Institute], we tell the learners and anyone we serve that what we do today will be the best day of their life. And that's the expectation that we put amongst ourselves that their readiness and that what we do is not a job. But it's our duty and honor as an organization, and our mission to make sure they're successful.

How do you think the Readiness Institute is influencing the lives of participating students?

You cannot be future-ready unless you're community-ready. And the Readiness Institute has a deep commitment to the community by preparing the learners that we serve to be impact leaders in their communities first. And by doing that, we're able to give them the skills they need to go out and live a life of excellence through public, private and personal service.

Where do you hope to see students who completed the program 10 years from now?

We want them to be successful, not just in their own personal career pathways, but within their communities, in larger communities, and also giving back to the people around them. They are what we call ripples of hope through communities.

Share a story about when you saw that a student "got it" in terms of benefiting from the Institute.

Recently, we had a learner from our 2021 cohort send me a message and he said:

"Two years ago, when I went through the Readiness Institute summer program, I scoffed at the idea that I could be an agent of change. Two years later as I am applying for internships and summer jobs while on break from college, I'm letting you know that the Readiness Institute is the sole item that stood out on my resume.

"And everything you said, came true in my life. The way we were prepared with the skills to not just get ready for something, but to be ready for anything. It [not only] prepared me to be a leader in my professional life, but also in my public and personal life. And only through the Readiness Institute, because of the RI Alumni Network, I have the resources and network to continue to learn and lead in my own community, inspiring others about everything I learned in the Readiness Institute."

Where do you hope to see the Readiness Institute 10 years from now?

Ten years from now, my hope is that the Readiness Institute continues its original mission of [helping] learners to achieve community and future readiness—no matter what they want to do—because of who they are, and enabling industry and community partners to continue to work together in the best interest of our learners.

Every learner has the skills, attitudes and values they need to design and lead a purposeful life. By doing that, they're also leading within their own communities and helping other people find the purpose of their life. Because readiness isn't just discovering who you are, it's leading [in advancing] readiness for everybody else.



school counselor ... The Institute is oftentimes the missing link that students really need in their lives.”

Dr. Gurrera helps students complete applications for different programs and seeks out good candidates who may benefit from the various resources and information.

“When I heard about this program, I thought, ‘Oh my gosh, I’m so happy someone is coming to help these students kind of put all the pieces together,’” she said. “[The Institute] really fills the gap for a lot of students who are in need of additional exposure, resources, assistance, and really a firm pathway for exploring their own interests, opportunities and themselves as human beings.”

The changes Dr. Gurrera sees in her students represent a goal achieved for the Institute, where the staff works, in part, to help students prepare for their next steps in life by answering five guiding questions: Who am I? Who do I want to become? How do I get there? How will I continue to learn? How will I give back to my community?

Students’ junior and senior years can be intimidating, or even daunting, Dr. Gurrera noted. But the Institute instills confidence by helping students explore a range of options they otherwise may not be exposed to and to see up close what different careers entail. A distinctive part of the Institute, she said, is “looking for students who really need this assistance and help.”

“And they are dedicated to those students,” she said. “As a school counselor, you see kids who are really excited about their future, they’re eager, they have a lot of questions, but they’re sometimes limited in what they have access to in terms of resources and professional networking, and the Readiness Institute really fills that gap for those students.

“It allows the students to build a network of resources so that they can confidently go down the pathway that they choose.”

As a former high school principal, Dr. Thompson recalled talking with students about the need to be college- and career-ready.

“But very seldom do we really ensure that all kids are going to be able to meet that challenge, because we’re not thinking about how to bring something much more holistic for them in terms of the learning experience,” he said. “That really was the focus behind the Readiness Institute.”

THE NEXT CHAPTERS

The Readiness Institute bloomed from a seed of an initiative into an established program, in part due to the connection with Penn State and eventually becoming part of its outreach programming.

Emma Hance, a Readiness Institute program manager, said the partnership with Penn State was a natural fit, directly aligning with the requirement that the land-grant university commit to outreach.

“We want to really work with the students to help make sure that they are finding the post-secondary pathway that best aligns with their goals and their interests,” Ms. Hance said, even if that pathway doesn’t include Penn State or higher education. “We have students who are training to become EMTs ... who are cooks at Federal Galley on the North Side. But we also have students who are at [universities].”

As plans for the Institute’s third summer program are underway, diversity is top of mind — diversity spanning across districts, backgrounds and experiences. Feedback and advice from past attendees will shape and inform the next round.

At the same time, Mr. Quinn spends his days tracking down and calling each Institute alumni one by one. He inquires about their life since leaving the Institute and their goals, helps with recommendation letters, and extends much-needed resources to the students.

With an alumni network nearing 100 members, he is tasked with keeping them connected and bringing them together after they leave.

“[Students are] with us for life,” he said, “and we want to make sure they feel that.” **h**

THE APPALACHIAN REGION WAS RESPONSIBLE FOR 2.7 MILLION TONS OF METHANE EMISSIONS IN 2021.*

2.7

CONSOL ENERGY'S BAILEY MINE IN PENNSYLVANIA'S SOUTHWEST CORNER EMITTED MORE THAN 90,000 TONS OF METHANE GAS IN 2021.**

90K

* Kayrros, international geo-analytics firm
** Environmental Protection Agency
*** Environmental Defense Fund

AIR SUPPORT

The Heinz Endowments and a group of organizational partners invited foundation representatives from across the country to Pittsburgh for a three-day gathering in April to discuss environmental challenges such as the impacts of fossil fuel extraction and strategies for addressing them. By Elwin Green

OVER THE FIRST 20 YEARS IN THE ATMOSPHERE, METHANE GAS IS 80 TIMES MORE HARMFUL TO THE CLIMATE THAN CARBON DIOXIDE.***

80

The Appalachian Basin is a geological formation that encloses the Appalachian Mountains and extends northeast from central Alabama to upper New York state. It is home to the Marcellus Shale, which includes West Virginia, eastern Ohio, and most of Pennsylvania and in two decades has become a leading source of the nation's natural gas.

The U.S. Energy Information Administration observed in its 2021 "Today in Energy" report that if the Appalachian Basin were its own country, it would be the world's third-largest producer, behind Russia and the rest of the United States.

But being one of the largest producers of natural gas in the U.S. brings multiple unintended consequences. For instance, Appalachia is a major emitter of methane, a greenhouse gas that contributes to the warming of the Earth's atmosphere. In 2021, the region was responsible for 2.7 million tons of fossil fuel methane emissions, according to the international geo-analytics firm Kayrros, whose data is referenced by the U.S. Department of Energy.

In response to the risks and dangers of increasing natural gas production in the region, The Heinz Endowments partnered with several other regional and national organizations to host a funder convening on "Fossil Fuel Challenges and Opportunities in the Ohio River Valley and Appalachia."

Elwin Green is a Pittsburgh-based freelance writer. His last story for h ran in Issue 2, 2022, and explained the second phase of Pittsburgh's Cultural Treasures, an initiative jointly funded by the Endowments and The Ford Foundation that provides support for Black-led cultural organizations in Western Pennsylvania.

The gathering, held April 18–20 at the Phipps Conservatory and Botanical Gardens in Pittsburgh's Oakland neighborhood, drew representatives from several foundations along with community leaders and residents who have been actively involved with environmental issues.

“One of the most incredible parts of the day was hearing about neighbors as they told their stories of how they have been impacted,” said Endowments President Chris DeCardy. “To see this on the ground is important, to hear the stories of those being impacted, to see what is happening right beside their homes, was super effective.”

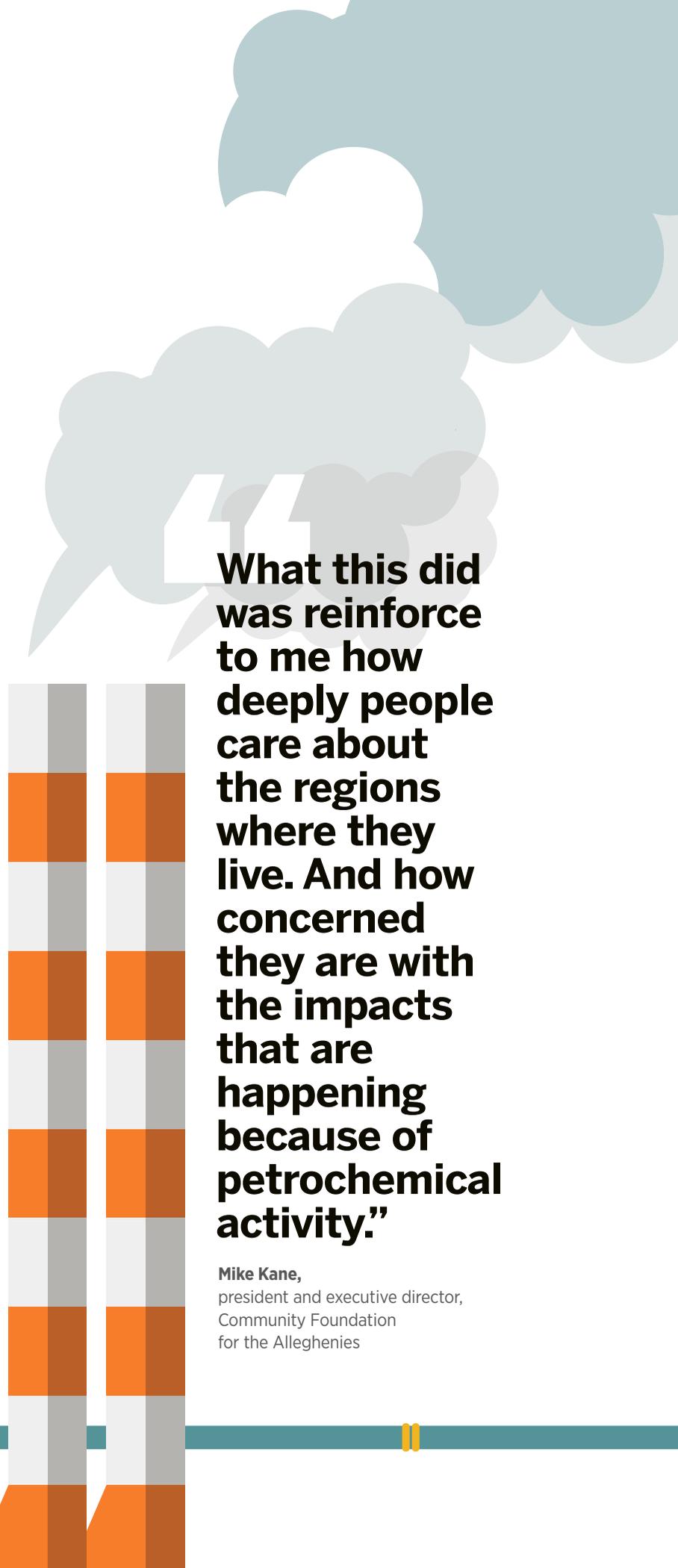
Featured presentations covered a range of topics with community and environmental leaders steering most of the discussions about impacts on communities and environmental systems and ways to develop successful strategies to address the challenges.

“What we hope to accomplish is to raise awareness in the field of philanthropy and also to bring in more resources to support the groups doing the work in the region to reduce these threats,” said Philip Johnson, the Endowments’ senior program director for Environment & Health, speaking before the event.

Later he added, “Over the past 15 years, our region has worked with several foundation partners locally, regionally and nationally. With climate philanthropy increasing substantially in recent years, we wanted to reinforce these partnerships and build on them. The problem’s scale is global; Heinz can’t do this work alone.”

Among the topics covered during the convening were community, health and environmental justice impacts, and the region’s status as a “climate bomb.” Methane emissions are one of the reasons for the “climate bomb” designation.

While carbon dioxide, or CO₂, receives most of the attention in discussions about greenhouse gases, methane is worse, said Andrew McElwaine, vice president for Sustainability at the Endowments. Both gases can linger in the atmosphere, trapping the Earth’s heat in a greenhouse effect, but over the first 20 years in the atmosphere, methane



What this did was reinforce to me how deeply people care about the regions where they live. And how concerned they are with the impacts that are happening because of petrochemical activity.”

Mike Kane,
president and executive director,
Community Foundation
for the Alleghenies

is 80 times more harmful to the climate than CO₂, according to the Environmental Defense Fund.

And not all of Appalachia's emissions arise from natural gas production. A large share comes from coal mining. In fact, Consol Energy's Bailey Mine, near the Pennsylvania–West Virginia border in Pennsylvania's southwest corner, emitted more than 90,000 tons of methane in 2021, according to Environmental Protection Agency data.

That was the year that the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change adopted the Global Methane Pledge, which has the goal of cutting human-caused methane emissions at least 30 percent from their 2020 levels by 2030. That reduction is one of the benchmarks of the overall UNFCCC goal of keeping global warming at or below 1.5 degrees Celsius.

According to Kayrros, the world is moving in the wrong direction, with methane emissions from Marcellus and Utica shale sections of the Appalachian Basin leading the way. In a report based on data from the first quarter of 2022, Kayrros noted that those emissions declined in 2020 due to the overall pandemic-related slowdown in economic activity, but rebounded in 2021 and were on pace to surpass pre-pandemic levels in 2022.

At the same time, Appalachia is growing as a producer of natural gas liquids, including ethane, propane and butane. While propane and butane are used primarily as fuels, ethane is used almost exclusively as the primary material for making plastics, which can then take up to 500 years to decompose. Making plastics requires that ethane be separated out from natural gas, or fractionated.

A report from the Ohio River Valley Institute, a regional think tank, cites the U.S. Energy Information Administration in stating that between 2010 and 2016, natural gas processing capacity — which includes fractionation — in Kentucky, Ohio, Pennsylvania and West Virginia increased by over 800 percent,

growing from 1.1 billion cubic feet per day to 10 billion cubic feet per day.

The first day of the April convening was largely devoted to exploring the climate and health impacts of the region's outsized fossil fuel production. The second day focused more on hearing from organizations such as the Ohio River Valley Institute and Reimagine Appalachia, a coalition of organizations and individuals in the four states of the Ohio River Valley: Kentucky, Ohio, Pennsylvania and West Virginia.

While the gathering was not designed or intended to produce a specific plan of action, Reimagine Appalachia had a head start on devising one with a document simply called "The Blueprint," outlining "a New Deal that works for us." The document centers on five priorities: restoring damaged lands and waters, modernizing the electric grid, growing green manufacturing, building a sustainable transportation system, and reviving the Civilian Conservation Corps.

Mr. McElwaine sees further hope in the creation of government incentives to encourage the adoption of renewable energy, in accordance with President Joe Biden's declared goals of 100 percent clean electricity by 2035 and a fully decarbonized economy by 2050.

The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act of 2021, for instance, provides \$73 billion for the nation's power infrastructure to include adapting the electricity grid for renewable energy. At the same time, the Inflation Reduction Act offers tax credits to households that buy energy-efficient appliances, have solar panels installed on their homes, or purchase electric vehicles.

After the convening, Mr. McElwaine deemed the effort to raise awareness and increase support a success.

"The chief thing was to test the hypothesis that there was the prospect of moving the region in a better direction," he said, "and to outline the opportunities to do so."

To that end, attendees agreed to keep talking, with direct follow-up likely to lead to further convenings.

One of the attendees was Mike Kane, the president and executive director of the Community Foundation for the Alleghenies. Based in Johnstown, the foundation works on

the issues and interests that donors want to address in Cambria, Somerset, Bradford and Indiana counties and, in some cases, beyond. Over the years it has provided significant regrants throughout the broader northern Appalachian region, primarily in support of environmental stewardship and restoration efforts. This has been achieved with the support of The Heinz Endowments as well as other interested philanthropies.

"What this did was reinforce to me how deeply people care about the regions where they live," Mr. Kane said. "And how concerned they are with the impacts that are happening because of petrochemical activity."

He added that his biggest takeaway was that "the work is even more than simply important, the work is critical."

"You walk away recognizing this isn't a short-term issue, this is a long-term issue," he said. "We're going to need people who care about the folks in those communities, people who care about the environment, people who care about the air quality. We're going to need to be present. This isn't going away anytime soon."

In his final exhortation to the attendees, Endowments President DeCardy agreed.

"We have experienced how the growth of fracking and expanding production of petrochemicals represents a major threat to climate, to our environment, and to the health and safety of communities. And the promised benefits of natural gas and oil extraction, in terms of jobs and the prosperity this would bring to our communities, are simply not there," he said.

"The drivers of economic change are linked to sustainability factors that will dominate in the years ahead. I have worked in this area for over three decades and I remain optimistic — we can meet our climate goals if we work and act together.

"Don't shy away from what is necessary ... Across the board I believe in the opportunity that is in front of us. You all have come together at this moment to try to seize that opportunity, and I think there's absolutely every opportunity for us to succeed together. I am really excited to see where this goes next." **h**

AFFORDABLE HOUSING FUND

As part of an effort to address rising homebuying and rental costs in the Pittsburgh region, The Heinz Endowments, the Henry L. Hillman Foundation, and the Medicaid managed care plan UPMC for You have partnered to create a private loan fund to help developers acquire existing multifamily units and retain them as affordable housing for neighborhood residents. The initial Preserve Affordability Pittsburgh loan pool is \$11 million with specific loan amounts dependent on the individual developer proposals.



The loan program is working with Cinnaire Lending to preserve 1,200 units of affordable housing in Pittsburgh neighborhoods throughout the next decade by lending capital to developers focused on creating or retaining affordable properties. Based in Lansing, Michigan, Cinnaire has been supporting affordable housing development and homeownership in

disinvested communities throughout the Midwest and mid-Atlantic for 30 years.

Preserve Affordability Pittsburgh is the result of nearly two years of planning. The fund offers loans to developers who include affordable housing in proposed projects at less cost than they would encounter if pursuing loans through traditional lending paths.



MILITARY SERVICE SYMPOSIUM

The University of Chicago's Harris School of Public Policy and Heinz Endowments grantee The War Horse hosted a daylong convening in April during which members of the public discussed the impact of military service with journalists, scholars and government officials. The War Horse Symposium explored the intersection of journalism and public policy and encouraged civic engagement in military and veterans issues.

Among the featured speakers were comedian and talk show host Jon Stewart, Secretary of Veterans Affairs Denis McDonough, and Deputy Secretary of Defense Kathleen Hicks. One of the most attention-grabbing segments of the event was Mr. Stewart's tough questioning of Dr. Hicks about military spending during a wide-ranging interview.

The War Horse is a nonprofit newsroom that reports on the human impact of military service and promotes improved understanding of the cost of military service. A complete recording of the symposium is available on The War Horse News YouTube channel.



Joshua Franzos



ENDOWMENTS WELCOMES NEW LEADER

Chris DeCardy joined The Heinz Endowments as president in April, bringing with him extensive philanthropic and nonprofit leadership experience that included serving as a senior executive for major U.S. foundations, launching and expanding social and environmental change programs, and heading nonprofit organizations.

Prior to joining the Endowments, Mr. DeCardy was acting CEO of the San Francisco-based ClimateWorks Foundation, comprising a team of researchers, strategists, collaborators and grantmakers dedicated to ending the climate crisis. He led ClimateWorks' expansion of its global platform, providing programs, services and support to equip the field of philanthropy with the knowledge and networks needed to advance innovative climate solutions.

His other leadership roles included serving as vice president and director of programs for the David and Lucile Packard Foundation, where he worked for 18 years. One of the largest U.S. grantmaking foundations, Packard has a domestic and international focus on conservation, science, reproductive health and rights, children's health and education, leadership and capacity strengthening, and community programs.

With a background in strategic communications, network advocacy and program development, Mr. DeCardy also helped launch and manage a Washington, D.C.-based environmental communications nonprofit, Environmental Media Services (now called Resource Media). The organization was credited as being indispensable to environmental journalists in their reporting on federal and international environmental news.

Mr. DeCardy succeeded Grant Oliphant, who was president of the Endowments from 2014 to 2022.

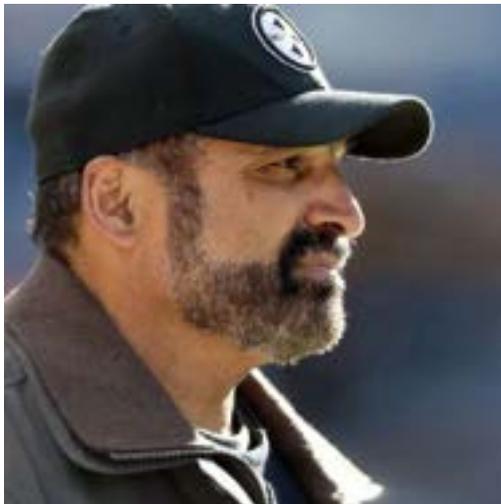
HONORING A CIVIC HERO

Following the untimely death in December of community leader, former Pittsburgh Steelers football star and Heinz Endowments board member Franco Harris, The Pittsburgh Promise scholarship program raised more than \$100,000 in his honor earlier this year. Mr. Harris was the founding board chairman of the organization, which has awarded more than \$169 million in scholarships to send more than 11,314 urban youth to post-secondary institutions.

Among the donations was \$25,000 from The Heinz Endowments, which also was one of the original funders of the Promise when it launched in 2007 and continues to support the organization.

In the Endowments' tribute to Mr. Harris, who was 72 when he passed unexpectedly on Dec. 20, Endowments Board Chairman André Heinz described him as "rightly known as a football legend, but he was also a civic hero who worked diligently and selflessly to lift up our youth and improve our community through his many acts of quiet service, including as board chair of The Pittsburgh Promise."

"Around our board table at the Endowments, where he served for 19 years, he was always a kind but forceful voice for the less fortunate and for those struggling to find their way," Mr. Heinz said. "We will be forever grateful for his generosity of spirit and for the many ways in which he made our work and our community better."



CREDIT UNION EXPANSION

The Hill District Federal Credit Union is expanding its size and financial offerings to provide more capital to low-income borrowers for home and auto purchases, education, and home repairs, plus increase small business loans and lines of credit. The acquisition of an adjacent storefront also will enable the credit union to have classroom space for financial literacy classes and to house four two-bedroom apartments above the organization's offices.

The credit union serves 3,672 members, which represents 20 percent of the population of Pittsburgh's Hill District neighborhood. It is located in a block of Centre Avenue that is undergoing tremendous redevelopment with the construction of dozens of apartments and first-floor retail and the renovation of the New Granada Theater, which once served as both a movie theater and an entertainment center where jazz legends such as Duke Ellington, Ella Fitzgerald, Count Basie and Cab Calloway performed.

The Heinz Endowments is helping to fund this project as part of the foundation's Sustainability program area's objective to build wealth through increasing access to home equity, capital ownership and entrepreneurship opportunities.

SUPPORTING THE ARTS

Two separate Heinz Endowments-funded arts initiatives together provided support to more than 30 artists or organizations earlier this year.

Through the foundation's Creative Development Awards program, 15 recipients received grants totaling \$296,450. The individuals or groups represented a range of disciplines, including filmmaking, photography, theater and 3D-printed sculpture. And they applied their talents to a variety of interests, such as exposing the effects of the war in Ukraine on Russian children and helping youth learn to produce music by arranging and performing orchestral versions of hip-hop and pop songs.

The Endowments launched the annual Creative Development Awards in 2022 to celebrate the region's professional artists, with a special focus on those whose artistic achievements show great promise.

Sixteen arts and culture organizations were selected for the second phase of Pittsburgh's Cultural Treasures, a \$10 million shared initiative of the Endowments, the Ford Foundation and the POISE Foundation that focuses on increasing the organizational capacity of Black-led groups in southwestern Pennsylvania's arts and culture sector. Each participating organization in this phase initially was awarded a one-time unrestricted grant of \$10,000 and may receive additional funding to support critical mission-related work identified during the program.

In addition to grants, Phase II of the initiative, which is administered by the Program to Aid Citizen Enterprise (PACE), includes coaching and learning opportunities for a range of organizations, particularly those that have not traditionally received foundation funding.

The Pittsburgh's Cultural Treasures Initiative (PCTI) is a regional affiliate of America's Cultural Treasures, which the Ford Foundation launched in 2020 in response to both the COVID-19 pandemic and the urgent need to support underfunded arts organizations led by people of color. Ford and the Endowments each contributed \$5 million to the effort, bringing the local initiative's total funding to \$10 million.

To learn more about these awards, go to: www.heinz.org/strategic-areas/creativity.



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