



MOSES/WEITZMAN  
Health System

Volume III, Spring 2025

# Healthcare in Focus



*The Genoa Pharmacy opened this fall at CHC's Stamford 5th Street location, making prescriptions more accessible to patients.*

## Weitzman Institute Symposium 2025

**Mental Health Matters** was the focus of this year's annual Weitzman Symposium held on May 14th. The free symposium welcomed over 600 healthcare clinicians, practitioners, researchers, policymakers, and entrepreneurs from across the U.S. and globe for a virtual day of engaging presentations and discussions. That is a 23% increase in attendance from last year – and we had registrants from all 50 states, two U.S. territories, and 16 countries!

Through two keynote addresses and two panels, speakers covered topics including prioritizing patients' mental well-being, advances in health tech and innovation including applications for AI, challenges and opportunities in addressing mental health today, and normalizing conversations on mental health. And the reviews are in! Attendees called the program "phenomenal," "thought-provoking," and thanked presenters for shedding light on important issues.

The symposium is a unique event, providing a forum for exploring primary care's current mental health crisis and advocating for a more just healthcare system to better meet the needs of its diverse patients, workforce, and communities. All attendees received up to 4.5 CMEs, which are also available if you register and watch the recordings online at [mwhs1.co/wisymposium25](https://mwhs1.co/wisymposium25). ■

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## Building Healthy Foundations Through Play

Engaging in play is essential to a child's healthy early development. High-quality play promotes optimal executive functioning, social-emotional development, school readiness, language and math skills, and health for children. Play also strengthens the crucial caregiver-child bond to support safe, stable, and nurturing relationships and buffers both caregivers and children against toxic stress – boosting the whole family's ability to withstand adversity.

Initially launched in 2018 by The LEGO® Group, Prescription for Play (P4P) is a free program in which pediatric health care providers speak to caregivers about the importance of play during routine well-child visits for children ages 18-36 months. P4P has evolved into a robust, demonstrably impactful multi-partner program. MWH's Weitzman Institute was brought in as a partner in 2021 to expand the reach of the initiative, specifically to pediatric providers and community health centers in under-resourced communities, and to implement a multi-site, multi-year research study of the program and its impact.

The program has a particular focus on Federally Qualified Health Centers, which primarily provide healthcare to underserved populations. Despite

the known benefits of play for child development, certain populations of children, including those from low-income families, often have less access to play making them more vulnerable to negative developmental outcomes. Play-focused clinical interventions help caregivers better understand the importance of play to their child's well-being and teaches them how to play in ways that are suited to their child's development. And what better way to reach caregivers than through their primary care provider!

Medical providers who participate in P4P distribute one play kit per child containing LEGO® DUPLO® bricks and educational materials for caregivers. The kit materials are not only fun for the children, but they support learning and development including fine motor skills, expressing creativity, and understanding shapes and colors. Providers in the program are encouraged to integrate discussions about play and development into all of their patients' visits. The program not only directly impacts hundreds of thousands of children every year, it also changes the way health care providers and caregivers think about the importance of play,

indirectly benefiting additional children year after year.

Weitzman Institute offers participating health care providers an implementation toolkit that includes a manual, sample workflows, and scripts, as well as ongoing support and technical assistance for all enrolled medical professionals and caregivers via a virtual hub of program resources and trainings.



Over the past 3 years, P4P has distributed over 2.5 million play kits to kids and their caregivers! And 4,700+ medical professionals in over 1,600 organizations

across all 50 of the United States, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands have enrolled in the program.

Thanks to our partners in the P4P program, including The LEGO® Foundation, The LEGO® Group, The Starlight Foundation, and the American Academy of Pediatrics, it has remained free of charge to all participating medical providers and their patients/families. Moving forward, Weitzman Institute will take over full operational oversight for P4P in the U.S., managing all partnerships involved in the ongoing research and dissemination of the program. ■

## Donor Spotlight: Wilmot “Mike” & Sally Harris of the Ruth W. Brown Foundation

Wilmot (Mike) and Sally Harris of Greenwich, CT have been prominent in local philanthropy, supporting community nonprofits for decades. Until his passing in June 2024, Mike and Sally were partners in life, philanthropy, and their other shared love, photography.

Along with their long-standing support of Community Health Center's Child Guidance Center of Southern CT (CGC), both personally and through the Ruth W. Brown Foundation, Mike and Sally have been deeply embedded in the Fairfield County charitable sphere. As Sally recently said, “Mike and I always loved being involved in the community to help organizations thrive. It is energizing for us.”

The couple were very involved in the Greenwich United Way (GUW), and are the only couple to have each chaired the GUW Board and campaigns. Mike was also a longstanding board member of Fairfield County's Community Foundation, including serving as Board Chair. He was named Outstanding Volunteer of the Year in 2000 by the Volunteer Center of Southwestern Fairfield County and Sally received the Spirit of Greenwich award in 2008. The couple's ongoing commitment to service and advocacy in the community was also recognized when they were named Citizens of the Year by the Greenwich Chapter of Rotary International in 2008.

In his over 50 year career as a trusts and estates attorney with the firm Ivey, Barnum and O'Mara, Mike guided clients to leave a legacy of philanthropy in their communities as well. One such client was Ms. Ruth W. Brown of Stamford, CT who wished to provide ongoing support to organizations addressing health and human services, the arts, education for at-risk individuals, and other worthy causes as part of her estate plan. In 1995 Mike helped her establish the Ruth W. Brown Foundation.

For the past 30 years, the Ruth W. Brown Foundation has been supporting organizations in Connecticut, including CGC since 2008. The Foundation provided 11 grants totaling \$97,000 in its first year of operation and has grown to award over \$7 million to community nonprofits in 2025.

“At some point, we both started focusing on education, particularly early childhood education,” said Sally. “And that carried over to the Brown Foundation. From our perspective we have witnessed and been involved in the collaboration of many organizations – and realized how so much can be accomplished when we all work together. And honestly - sharing this passion (like sharing our passion for photography) just made it so much more fun and rewarding.”



The foundation's 2025 grant to CGC supports early childhood mental health consultation and on-site clinics for preschoolers at Children's Learning Centers of Fairfield County. “It's always been very important to us for an organization to be well-run and work together with other organizations. CGC has been that,” said Sally.

Sally is determined to keep Mike's legacy alive not only through the foundation, but also through his photography. A selection of Mike's photographs is now on display in the waiting room of CGC's primary location on West Broad Street in Stamford, allowing those who benefit from Mike and Sally's support to experience the world through Mike's eyes. ■

## Support Our Work

You can support our programs and help us work toward health equity in Connecticut, the nation, and beyond! There are many ways you can make a difference, whether making a gift online, through stock, or including us in your estate plans.

To learn more about how you can make a difference visit [www.mwhs1.com](http://www.mwhs1.com) or contact our Development Team at [development@mwhs1.com](mailto:development@mwhs1.com)





# Growing Toward a Healthier Future: How Environmental Factors Shape Our Well-being

In recent years, attention on how the environment affects our health has grown. Factors such as pollution and limited green spaces can have a significant impact on physical and mental well-being. Low-income communities often get hit hardest by such issues. The impact of environmental factors on community health is a critical aspect of MWHS's work to holistically care for patients and strengthen the communities we serve.

### Pollution

From the ground up, humans have introduced pollutants to our ecosystems which have resulted in serious health problems. Pesticides, micro-plastics, and other chemicals contaminate the soil. These pollutants then run into our bodies of water when it rains. Combining these with the leading causes of air pollution – vehicle emissions and industrial fumes, and it all leads to a serious public health problem.

Air, water, soil, and even noise pollution exposure can result in health problems including asthma, cancer, neuropathy, cardiovascular diseases, and reproductive issues. The risks are higher for low-income communities, commonly due to geography. Studies have shown that these communities are more frequently adjacent to pollution sources such as waste treatment facilities, power plants, or major transportation routes.

### Access to Greenspace

Having access to quality greenspace is important to physical and mental well-being, particularly in an urban landscape. In the U.S., this access is unequally distributed, often leaving low-income communities with minimal safe outdoor recreation spaces. According to a study by The Trust for Public Lands, parks in low-income neighborhoods are four times smaller than those in affluent areas...and they serve four times as many people!

Having parks within a 10-minutes walking distance can positively impact physical health by mitigating the effects of air and noise pollution and encouraging moderate exercise. Additionally, being in greenspace can be mentally and emotionally restorative by helping reduce stress and creating opportunities for positive social interaction or individual respite.

For over a decade, CHCI has been committed to increasing greenspace in the communities we serve. A green roof was installed at the Middletown office in 2012, combining grassy areas, native plants, green wall features, and a community rooftop garden. The space offers respite for employees and patients as well as an educational platform for the community, with civic groups and schools tending the six vegetable and herb garden plots and learning about healthy foods, gardening, and enjoying being outdoors.

More recently, Phase 1 of the CGC therapeutic garden in Stamford was complete in 2023 with the remaining construction planned for later this year. CHCI has created three other therapeutic gardens at schools in East Haven, Meriden, and New Britain that aid in School-Based Health Center programs.

CHCI works to address health disparities to ensure all communities have access to nutritious foods, safe drinking water, clean air, and green spaces. By improving the efficiency of our facilities, reducing single-use plastics, building community accessible greenspaces, and educating our staff, patients, and communities on sustainable practices, MWHS is raising awareness of the importance of a healthy environment for a healthy community. These initiatives reflect our commitment to addressing pollution and other environmental issues that impact public health and community well-being.



### Environmental Shifts

Increasingly devastating natural disasters and extreme temperatures negatively impact our physical world and impact mental health by increasing anxiety. “Environmental” or “eco” anxiety has been growing in recent decades, particularly among young people who often feel helpless to combat the effects of environmental shifts and grieve for what they feel they’re losing in the future. These youth believe they have minimal power to effect real change on the scale needed and experience frustration due to perceived inaction from prior generations.

This stress can impact daily life and often results in dwelling on negatives, struggling to manage fears, disrupted sleep patterns, and increasing intrusive thoughts. In extreme cases, children can become alienated from friends and family, developing deep distrust and feelings of being overwhelmed.

The behavioral health teams at CHCI and Child Guidance Center of Southern CT (CGC) are ready to help those experiencing any degree of anxiety. Our behavioral health team includes psychologists, social workers, marriage and family therapists, drug and alcohol counselors, psychiatrists, and psychiatric APRNs. While CHCI offers individual and group therapy options for all ages, CGC focuses on helping children and teens with treatment services tailored to their needs.

### Environmental Health for All

The environment is an integral part of our health, and by taking steps to protect and enhance it, we can ensure a healthier future for all.

Take a walk, enjoy time in a park, work in your backyard or community garden (or create one if it doesn't exist!), and advocate for your rights to healthy air, water, and soil at the local and federal levels. Even simply disconnecting from your phone and other devices and spending time outdoors can improve your mental well-being.

At MWHS, we are committed to not only addressing the immediate health needs of the communities we serve but also working to reduce environmental hardships. By focusing on health equity and environmental justice, we are building a future where everyone has the opportunity to thrive in a healthy environment. Together, we can make a difference...

***...one garden,  
one greenhouse,  
one community at a time.***

## A New Greenhouse for Middletown

Construction begins this year on the new state-of-the-art permanent greenhouse at the CHCI Middletown location. Once completed, the greenhouse will serve the community by helping to address food insecurity with hydroponically grown produce, supporting city parks and streets by providing young trees and bushes, and becoming a unique educational outreach tool. Stay tuned for progress updates!





# Prioritizing Maternal Health



In April 2024, CHCI established the Improving Maternal Outcomes Now (IMON) Center to support pregnant patients with a goal of improving maternal and infant health outcomes.

The U.S. has the highest rate of maternal deaths of any high-income nation, particularly Black women and other marginalized populations. According to the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, the maternal mortality rate in the U.S. is unacceptably high, with nearly half of these deaths occurring post-partum and most of them deemed preventable – 80% according to the data!

The IMON Center focuses on all stages of pregnancy, including the critical “fourth trimester” after delivery when new mothers need support physically and emotionally. Through culturally-informed and respectful care, the team at IMON works closely with patients and their families to address social needs and provide support. Their care goes beyond physical health, addressing housing, immigration and a host of other social issues, and ensuring families have access to essential infant supplies.

Maternal mortality is not just an individual tragedy. The surviving family not only experiences grief, but also often economic hardships and long-term psychological and physical effects. Recent increases in these preventable deaths show a clear need for systematic change in how pre- and post-natal care is delivered. All women deserve equitable access to respectful, high-quality, and comprehensive maternal care. The IMON Center is here to help. ■

# The 8th Annual Consortium Conference



*Scan the QR code to learn more about the conference, register, or become a sponsor.*

This year marks the Consortium’s 10th anniversary and the 8th Annual Consortium for Advanced Practice Providers’ (APP) Conference is returning to Denver, CO. This two-day conference, held from July 14th-15th, will include engaging sessions around the overall theme of **Navigating the Future: 20 Years of Sustaining Excellence in APP Postgraduate Training.**

The Consortium is MWHS’s education, advocacy, and accreditation affiliate whose mission is to increase opportunities for fully credentialed, licensed nurse practitioners (NP) and physician associates (PA) to participate in high quality postgraduate APP training program. The annual conference brings together leaders in APP education to discuss innovative strategies and best practices in post-graduate training for NPs and PAs. The conference will feature sessions on topics including curriculum development, faculty training, and innovative collaborations. Whether launching a new program or fine-tuning an existing residency, there’s something for everyone.

“[The conference] helps me realize that I’m not creating the wheel by myself, that there are people with lots of resources who have...been in my shoes...or are coming up behind me that I can help in turn.” - 2024 Conference Attendee Kiersten Solis, Program Director of Erie Family Health Centers APRN Residency

Registration is now open through June 30th with pricing information available on the website. There is also an option to register for a pre-conference workshop on July 13th to dive deeper into topics on leadership, recruitment, building relationships, and more. It’s not all work either – there’s a fun social networking evening on July 14th.

The conference also includes great sponsorship and exhibitor opportunities to showcase your organization to national leaders in advanced practice training. The tiered options range from general support to sponsoring the conference luncheon, as well as several advertising options. **Scan the QR code above to learn more about conference details, registration, and sponsorships.** ■

# Driving Change: Expanding Access Through Mobile Medicine

The sun was already high in the sky on a warm August morning when the hum of an engine and the steady buzz of a generator caught the attention of residents at the The McKinney, an 80-bed shelter in a former hotel. Curious, a few residents wandered outside to investigate. In the parking lot, they found a large white and green van bearing the Community Health Center, Inc. (CHCI) logo, with a small team of clinicians and staff preparing to provide residents with primary healthcare services. This visit was more than just a one-time event at the shelter—it was part of a growing initiative, rooted in CHCI’s Mobile Health Unit (MHU) Program, to bring quality healthcare directly to those who might otherwise go without.

The Mobile Health Unit Program was launched in September 2023 to bring high-quality primary care to individuals facing barriers to traditional healthcare access. Each mobile unit is a fully equipped medical clinic on wheels, offering the same essential services as a fixed-site health center. Patients can receive physical exams, vaccinations, HIV and Hepatitis testing, blood pressure screenings, chronic disease management, specialty care referrals, dental referrals, and insurance or eligibility assistance. Cecilia Hackerson, a nurse practitioner who has been serving patients at the McKinney Shelter since the program’s inception, recalls a moment that underscored the program’s impact.

“Our first day here, we had someone whose blood pressure was dangerously high, around 240 over 160,” recalled Hackerson. “We were able to coordinate one of the outreach assistants, getting his meds, bringing his meds, checking in on him every week. It was one of those moments when you think, ‘Wow, if we weren’t there, what could have happened?’ There are a lot of scenarios that can run through your head. So it’s great to know that we were able to be here.”

Since March 2024, the Mobile Health Program has expanded significantly, forging new community partnerships and reaching patients at numerous sites across CT. It now serves organizations such as Brian’s Angels and Agape House that provide support for homeless individuals in Bristol, a street medicine program in Meriden that delivers care directly to those with the greatest difficulty accessing traditional healthcare, and more.

To further its reach, the program recently acquired a second medical van to provide bilingual services in the city of Wallingford and other locations. CHCI is also using a mobile health unit to address maternal healthcare gaps in northeastern CT.



*Hackerson helps a patient in the new MHU.*

Beyond immediate medical care, the mobile health van connects patients with CHCI’s broader network of services, including lab work, behavioral health support, and other critical resources. More than just healthcare, the program fosters dignity and respect, reminding patients that they deserve the same quality of care as everyone else.

“I wanted to get myself checked out,” said a patient at the McKinney Shelter. “It’s very accommodating, given the location that we’re at. They’ve been super, super helpful. I got some blood work done. They’ve given me resources, any questions or any inquiries that I had, they’ve always answered everything.”

Through the Center for Key Populations, another program of CHCI, mobile health units have been used in the Wherever You Are program for years, providing care to individuals experiencing housing instability at multiple shelters throughout CT. Adding to the fleet helps CHCI providers reach more individuals and communities.

However, sustaining and staffing this expanding program comes with financial challenges. Many of the individuals served are uninsured, making the program heavily reliant on grants and private donations. Donor support can help ensure continued access to high-quality comprehensive and respectful care for hundreds of people in our communities each year. ■



# MWHS Publishes First Annual Report

We are proud to announce the publication of the Moses/Weitzman Health System’s inaugural Annual Report (FY2024). It tells the story of our evolution and the incredible work MWHS and our affiliates do to ensure that healthcare is a right, not a privilege.

There was a short-run print distribution in March of the report and it is available in digital format. This publication covers everything from the history of the organization, the achievements of all MWHS affiliates in the most recently closed fiscal year, personal stories from patients and supporters, and more.

We could not do this work without your support, for which we are incredibly grateful. In these challenging times, we remain steadfastly committed to our mission of ensuring access to high-quality healthcare for all.

This report will be published annually to keep the generous donors and community partners of MWHS and its affiliates aware of the impact their support has on the communities we serve. ■



2024 Annual Report

## What's Inside:

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