



Akron
Children's

2023 Report to the Community





Dear Friends,

We're excited to share this year's Report to the Community with you. Akron Children's has made much progress in the last year on many of our key initiatives as we strive to be the leader in providing high-quality, affordable pediatric health care close to the homes of the families we serve.

Helping kids grow up safe and healthy goes beyond the provision of excellent clinical care and requires teamwork, partnerships and true community engagement. Akron Children's is addressing health in many ways, from looking into food insecurity and lack of transportation for our patient families to conducting groundbreaking research in autism and palliative care.

In the next few pages, you will learn more about those efforts as well as several other significant achievements:

- **We opened two new standalone behavioral health centers, and we developed innovative programs to bring more professionals into this high-demand field.**
- **Our providers introduced groundbreaking new treatments, such as gene therapy for spinal muscular atrophy and the use of cardioneuroablation for patients with pacemakers.**
- **We have built upon our inclusive culture where all feel welcome and safe, and where disparities in health care are eliminated, which continues to frame much of our work. We are seeing progress, but also know we are just starting on our journey to ensure healthy outcomes for all the children and their families throughout our region.**

Thank you for your support of Akron Children's. Whether you are a donor, board member, employee or patient family member, your commitment and support make a difference. We are excited to accelerate our efforts to improve child health in the coming year.

Christopher A. Gessner
President and CEO
Akron Children's

Virginia C. Addicott
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Akron Children's Board of Directors

Our mission to create healthier futures for children

At Akron Children’s, we are steadfast in our commitment to improve children’s health and well-being across the communities we serve. One of the most important ways we demonstrate this impact is through our **community benefit programs, services and additional investments of time and resources**. Many of the stories you’ll find in this report highlight efforts that align at varying levels with the Internal Revenue Service’s community benefit guidelines for nonprofit hospitals. These examples showcase the ways we’re responding to community needs, both directly and through collaborations that build a stronger network of support for children and families.

“While the community benefit dollars we capture and report annually must meet very specific criteria from the IRS, Akron Children’s goes above and beyond these requirements in how we collect and report data,” said **Bernett L. Williams, MPA, CDP**, chief diversity, equity and inclusion officer and vice president for community initiatives. “Our investment in community benefit is significant: over the last decade we’ve captured an increase of more than \$100 million in incurred expenses.”



Bernett L. Williams, MPA, CDP, chief diversity, equity and inclusion officer and vice president for community initiatives

It is important to emphasize that our high-quality care, education, innovation and advocacy would be nowhere near as robust without the generosity of our numerous individual and corporate donors, as well as government and foundation grantors. Collectively, these contributions are helping to improve the lives of all children and families in the communities we serve. Thank you for working alongside us in fulfilling our community mission.

A summary of our investment in community benefit is on page 17.

Our community benefit efforts are highlighted with this graphic:



Valencia Soltys with her daughter Mia







Akron Children's welcomed U.S. Secretary of Health and Human Services Xavier Becerra and Congresswomen Shontel Brown and Emilia Sykes as they visited our Education and Wellness Garden and Food Farmacy. Rep. Sykes was instrumental in securing the funds to create the Food Farmacy.



Maricela Daza (center) relies on the Food Farmacy to help feed her family.

REMOVING BARRIERS TO CARE

Nourishing lives and building futures

Our Food Farmacy goes beyond providing food to patient families in need. It is also building a healthier community where every family thrives. Food is provided by the Akron-Canton Regional Foodbank through an Ohio Department of Medicaid grant. Fresh produce grown and harvested from our Education and Wellness Garden is also distributed during the growing season.

"The Food Farmacy is a shining example of how health care institutions can go beyond treating illnesses to address social determinants of health. By nourishing families and fostering community, we are building a healthier future for all," said Courtney Hudson, community outreach and education manager.

Domingo Daza is under the care of numerous specialists at Akron Children's for complex medical conditions, ranging from autism to serious burns that cover 33% of his body. His mother Maricela is thankful for this care, as well as the Food Farmacy, which provides a valuable safety net.

"It depends on the month, but sometimes we do struggle with having enough money for food," Maricela said through an interpreter. "We are extremely grateful for the food pantry and being able to get food right after Domingo's appointments."

"What we have seen at Akron Children's is a program that actually helps families let their kids grow up healthier," said U.S. Secretary of Health and Human Services Xavier Becerra who visited Akron Children's in July 2023. "Anytime you can prevent obesity, anytime you can prevent diabetes and hypertension, you are going to create a healthier America."

Thanks to a generous \$50,000 donation from attorney Daniel L. Rossi and family, we provided nutritious and delicious food to over 1,900 families facing food insecurity in the Youngstown area.

At left, Occupational Therapist Kristin Zink assists Asher Knapp in the Education and Wellness Garden.



FOOD FARMACY

One Year

of Impact

13,224

INDIVIDUALS SERVED

7,110

CHILDREN (0-17) SERVED

97,913

POUNDS OF FOOD

254

POUNDS OF FRESH PRODUCE FROM OUR EDUCATION AND WELLNESS GARDEN



Community Legal Aid expands access to service

SUPPORTS COMMUNITY BENEFIT



Threatened with eviction over a false claim that she owed her landlord thousands of dollars, Angel Nuyen called Zully Nieves-Ramos in tears. Zully is a social worker at Akron Children’s who coordinates care for Angel’s 7-year-old son Gabriel Hagenbaugh.

“I don’t know where we would be without Zully,” Angel said. “She calmed me down and reassured me that we would fight through this.”

Zully referred Angel to Community Legal Aid for help. For more than 10 years, Akron Children’s has partnered with Community Legal Aid through Medical-Legal Partnerships. Grant funding to Community Legal Aid recently expanded access to services, helping more families address legal issues affecting the health and well-being of their children.

The case was dismissed, but Angel and her family left the home due to black mold and a pest infestation. Zully found them temporary housing in a shelter as she helped Angel and her husband find a new home to raise their son.



Chris Hagenbaugh, Angel Nuyen and their son Gabriel Hagenbaugh

SUPPORTS COMMUNITY BENEFIT



Roundtrip helps Mohammad’s care move forward



Fatema and Mohammad Alhammoud

Roundtrip, a new ride-ordering service, is helping to eliminate a major barrier that prevents our patients from receiving care – lack of transportation. The rides are free thanks to a gift from Ronald McDonald House Charities.

Through Roundtrip, Mohammad Alhammoud is receiving timely, essential care for numerous medical issues including quadriplegic cerebral palsy and epilepsy. He is under the care of several specialties at Akron Children’s, ranging from orthopedics and neurology to surgery and physical therapy.

“Everyone has been so helpful and kind. They haven’t spared any effort to help,” said his mother Fatema, through an interpreter.

Staying on track with his care means Mohammad will finally get a much-needed wheelchair, so his father will no longer have to carry him. Fatema said that in just four months, her son has received more love and care at Akron Children’s than during his first 12 years living in Turkey.



Gabriel Hagenbaugh

Life-saving treatment is rewriting history

Breakthrough treatment for Spinal Muscular Atrophy (SMA) is yielding remarkable results for the first patients at Akron Children's to receive this life-changing gene therapy.

SMA causes the muscles to weaken and waste away. Typically, babies born with this disease do not survive beyond the age of 2, but these children are not only surviving, they are thriving. Without this new treatment, known as Zolgensma®, these children would have had a much different path.

“We are literally watching history being rewritten. These are days we hardly dared to dream of. I feel so privileged to be part of it all.”

– Kathryn Mosher, MD, pediatric physiatrist

Marshall Bowling was one of the children who received this life-saving treatment. Diagnosed through his newborn screening, Marshall received gene therapy at one month. Today he is a happy and healthy toddler who continues to flourish.

“He babbles like crazy and just learned how to shake his head, ‘No,’” said his mother Eve Freeman. “He loves to bounce and loves to smile.”



Marshall Bowling

Cutting-edge procedure offers promise of life without a pacemaker



Gabe and Drew Wherley

Pediatric cardiologist John Clark, MD, recognized the potential of a procedure called cardioneuroablation (CNA) in treating patients with pacemakers. This includes identical twins Gabe and Drew Wherley who have had pacemakers since they were 6 years old.

CNA was initially discovered in the 1990s to treat irregular heart rhythms and it has evolved to treat patients like the Wherleys whose heartbeats are too slow. Dr. Clark added his own expertise, performing most CNA procedures without fluoroscopy to eliminate patients' exposure to radiation.

With the hope of eventually removing their pacemakers, Dr. Clark performed CNA on Gabe and Drew within a week of each other last year. While they still have their pacemakers for now, the plan is to first turn the pacemakers off, and if all goes well, remove them next year.

“The pacemaker is a remarkable device that is very helpful, but it’s still a device that the body is dependent upon. To be able to rid patients of that is a wonderful possibility.”

– John Clark, MD, pediatric cardiologist

New spine OR is ahead of the curve



Mady Sirlouis with Todd Ritzman, MD, surgeon in chief, chair of orthopedics

Gymnast Mady Sirlouis is once again soaring through the air in a perfect back handspring. The 11-year-old has made a full return to cheerleading and gymnastics following scoliosis surgery at Akron Children’s. Because she is so flexible, still growing and her curvature did not respond to bracing, she was the ideal candidate for vertebral body tethering. This type of surgery doesn’t fuse the spine or cause loss of movement.

Mady had the surgery in Akron Children’s new \$3.5 million OR dedicated to pediatric spine surgery, which features the nView s1 navigation system. We were the second children’s hospital in the country and the first in the Midwest to use this system, providing our pediatric spine surgeons with 3D images of the spine in real time during surgery.

“The spine surgery navigation system in our new dedicated pediatric spine OR is brand-new technology that uses ultra-low-dose radiation to generate 3D images and artificial intelligence to help guide implants into the correct location. It is the standard of care for scoliosis surgery at Akron Children’s,” said Lorena Floccari, MD, a pediatric orthopedic surgeon and director of spine research.

Akron Children’s spine surgery outcome data is among the best in the country for patient length of stay, also outperforming the national benchmark for factors such as complication rates and hospital readmissions.

Spine Surgery Outcomes for Idiopathic Scoliosis With No Known Cause

COMPLICATION RATES

Akron Children’s ranked in the top quartile, outperforming the national benchmark for complication rates as follows:

Surgical Site Infections	7% outperformance
Blood Transfusions	12% outperformance
All Other Complications	5% outperformance

MEDIAN LENGTH OF STAY

AKRON CHILDREN’S	2 DAYS
COHORT HOSPITALS MEDIAN	3 DAYS

INTENSIVE CARE UNIT TRANSFERS

AKRON CHILDREN’S	0
COHORT HOSPITALS MEDIAN	23.3%

Source: American College of Surgeons National Surgical Quality Improvement Program Pediatric, 2024. ACS NSQIP® Pediatric Semiannual Report January 30, 2024, Chicago: American College of Surgeons.





*Victoria Gibbons,
behavioral health technician*



Creating a pipeline for behavioral health specialists

To meet the demand for pediatric behavioral health services, we've implemented several strategies to grow our team. We expanded our pediatric psychiatry fellowship from four to six fellows. We collaborated with nursing to create our first APRN fellowship in pediatric psychiatry and behavioral health. We also created a behavioral health track for the hospital's Career Launch program. Graduate students in mental health services receive financial assistance and a paid internship, in exchange for a two-year commitment to work at Akron Children's after graduation.

BEHAVIORAL HEALTH WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

8 APP FELLOWSHIP
GRADUATES IN **3** COHORTS

5 PSYCHOLOGISTS ADDED IN 2023

5 CAREER LAUNCH GRADUATES
AND **6** NEW INTERNS

Behavioral health services keep children close to home



Mansfield Behavioral Health Center



Canton Behavioral Health Center

As we continue to prioritize pediatric mental and behavioral health, our newest outpatient behavioral health centers in Canton and Mansfield are now open. These facilities bring services closer to home for children and teens.

We also continue to integrate mental health therapists into our Akron Children's Pediatrics practices and offer telehealth services to make it easier for families to access care. This is helping to reduce the stigma of behavioral health care, while ensuring more children and teens receive timely support.

A grateful mother shared, "Being able to call in and get seen right away was amazing. It was convenient, literally 6 minutes down the road. My child then started treatment right away and did not have to wait for months. Without this care, we would've ended up at the hospital, and she probably would've stayed."

Emergency care for children in crisis

Our Psychiatric Intake Response Center in the Akron Children's Emergency Department offers 24/7 support for children and teens in crisis who may be at risk for harming themselves or others. Our mental health therapists now provide virtual risk assessments to pediatric patients at Wooster Community Hospital. These therapists recommend the appropriate level of care, including direct admission to our hospital when necessary.

"As demand has increased both in our region and nationally, it is critical to tackle problems like anxiety and depression and to provide immediate help for children in a behavioral health crisis. Through prevention, screening and early intervention, we can better manage symptoms before they escalate to requiring inpatient care."

— Eva Szigethy, MD, director of pediatric psychiatry and behavioral health and the Lois C. Orr Endowed Chair in Pediatric Psychiatry

BEHAVIORAL HEALTH AT AKRON CHILDREN'S



TELEHEALTH AT AKRON CHILDREN'S



Akron Children's pilots virtual nursing

Akron Children's has completed a virtual nursing pilot and is now implementing this model of care in five acute care units. Experienced nurses support our bedside nurses virtually through two-way communication using audio and video technology. This is enhancing the delivery of high-quality, family-centered care, giving our bedside nurses more time to spend with their patients. Virtual nursing also supports greater patient safety and enhanced patient family education, while providing our patients with an excellent hospital experience.

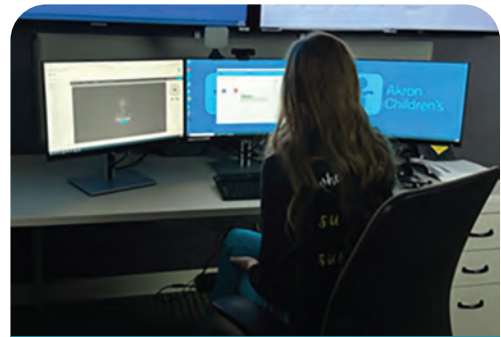


Jessica Vardeman, RN



10,591

INPATIENT ADMISSIONS



“The future of nursing is at the bedside and in the virtual world. This is another step toward our digital transformation, and we're excited to pioneer this model of care in pediatrics.”

Christine Young, DNP, MBA, RN, NEA-BC, chief nursing officer and Grace Wakulchik Endowed Chair for Nursing

SUPPORTS COMMUNITY BENEFIT



Trauma-informed care helps children heal

Through School Health Services, we're giving school staff the tools to help students who have experienced traumatic events, ranging from childhood abuse and neglect to the death of a loved one. If these emotions are not addressed, they can have negative long-term effects, impacting a student's behavior and ability to learn. It's not just about experiencing a traumatic event, it's about experiencing those stressors alone, and not having a trusted adult to turn to for help.

To help expand these efforts, Akron Children's partnered with Covelli Enterprises and their area Panera Bread locations to launch the Chip in for Children's Mental Health Campaign. Proceeds have funded an additional position to support this important work in Mahoning Valley schools.



Teresa Fletcher, MSN, APRN-CNP with student Amari Hollaman

“We need to ensure a safe and welcoming school community for all students. The more a student attends school regularly, builds connections with positive adults, and feels they belong, the more they will learn and thrive.”

– Melissa McClain, community outreach coordinator for School Health Services

721,464*
SCHOOL
HEALTH CLINIC
VISITS



Prestigious NIH grants awarded for autism and palliative care research



Ronald Seese, MD, PhD



Daniel Grosseohme, clinical researcher

Grants from the National Institutes of Health (NIH) are supporting innovative research at Akron Children’s.

Ronald Seese, MD, PhD, a developmental neurologist at Akron Children’s and an associate professor of pediatrics at Northeast Ohio Medical University, was awarded a five-year, \$1.95 million grant through the NIH’s High-Risk, High-Reward Research program. Recognized as one of our nation’s leading young physician-scientists, he aspires to better understand the brain basis of autism spectrum disorder and improve the diagnosis and treatment for children worldwide.

“Dr. Seese’s research aligns beautifully with our goal of improving child health through discovery. As a dedicated, compassionate child neurologist, he is inspired by his patients to seek deeper understanding into the origins of autism and autistic behaviors, that may one day

lead to novel treatments. This award also underscores the power of our collaboration with NEOMED, one of our regional academic partners,” said Michael Forbes, MD, chief academic officer.

An additional three-year, \$1.3 million grant from the NIH and National Institute of Nursing Research aims to better define the practices of high-quality pediatric palliative care, particularly by seeking the voices of the patients at the center of that care. Most of the current standards for home-based pediatric hospice and palliative care are rooted in adult services, so there is an urgent need to better understand the experiences of children, teens and young adults. This includes medically-underserved populations to reduce health disparities.

Akron Children’s is participating in this study with Nationwide Children’s Hospital, Cincinnati Children’s Hospital, Texas Children’s Hospital in Houston and Rady Children’s Hospital in San Diego. Daniel Grosseohme, a senior scientist in our Rebecca D. Considine Research Institute, is the principal investigator.

“Our mission is to ensure that children of all ages with life-threatening conditions receive the highest quality care possible, wherever they are. To honor this commitment means to hear directly from those we serve, to design and sustain care paradigms that allow them to live their best lives,” said Sarah Friebert, MD, pediatric palliative care physician and endowed chair in the Haslinger Family Pediatric Palliative Care Center.



Resident physician Jaron Maggard, DO, with Harlie Murphy, RN, in the Akron emergency department

Pediatric residency program celebrates 75 years

Our pediatric residency program has continued to grow, now offering training to 24 residents each year, along with residents from 29 other institutions. With a first-time pass rate on the board exam that exceeds the national average, our program provides opportunities in quality improvement and research. Our residents also participate in a community medicine rotation that introduces them to resources for children and families. As they develop a deeper understanding of the social determinants of health affecting children, we empower them to become advocates for all children.

Improving disparities in well-child health



Sladjana Courson, DO, examines Jermel McKinnie Jr.

As we work to improve health equity, one area where we are making an impact is the disparity in well-child care for Black children ages 0-15 months.

“During this time, there are six recommended wellness visits, but only about 60% of Black families complete those six visits, compared to 76% of white families,” said Andrea Sims, MD, MPH, a pediatrician and health equity coordinator at Akron Children’s.

“To identify the reasons behind this disparity, we began surveying parents. This has shown us that although they recognize the importance of these well-child visits, they place less importance if their child is not scheduled for any vaccines – knowing they can catch up at another visit,” said Jennifer Ross, Ed.D., director of diversity, equity and inclusion. “Issues such as scheduling multiple visits when there are other children create a barrier for parents who may not have flexibility in their work schedules. If all children could be scheduled in the same visit, this would save time.”

Measures that have already been implemented to address the disparity include scheduling the next appointment before patient families leave their pediatrician’s office and designating time for walk-in visits at our Akron East pediatrics office.

“We understand that patient families have competing priorities, especially if they have more than one child. As we look for other ways to make an impact, we are exploring mobile medicine, where we bring services to families in their communities, as well as a health passport to make it easier for parents to manage their child’s health care,” said Dr. Sims. “Education is also key in helping families understand the importance of following the recommended vaccination schedule.”

Delivering family-centered care to our patients

Primary Care Visits	587,541
Specialty Care Visits	371,991
Other Outpatient Visits	265,250
Observation Visits	10,940
Surgeries	20,399
Children’s Home Care Visits	3,033
Emergency Room Visits	99,045
Urgent Care Visits	41,509
Total Transports	2,955

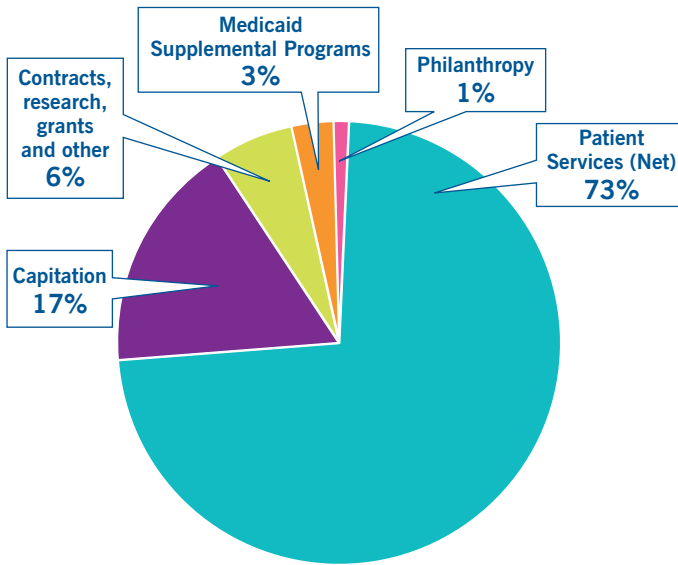




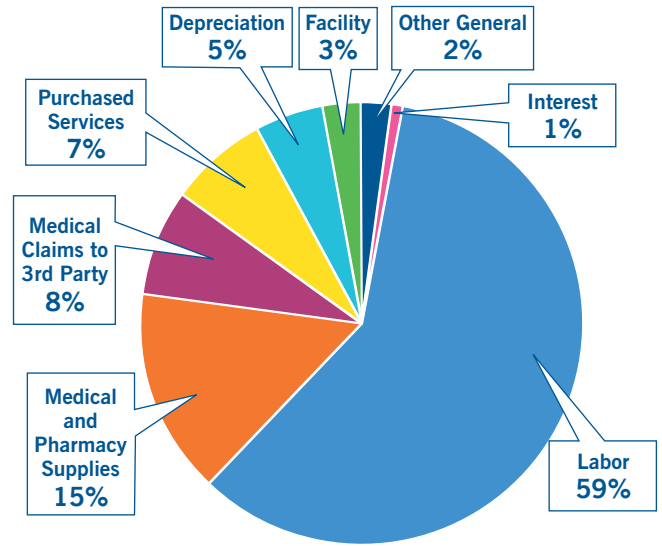
Jade McKinnie with her baby sister Jordyn

2023 Operation Revenues increased 3.9% to \$1,402.5 million

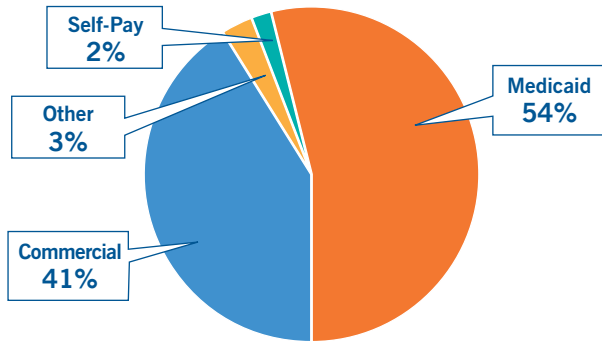
Operating Revenue



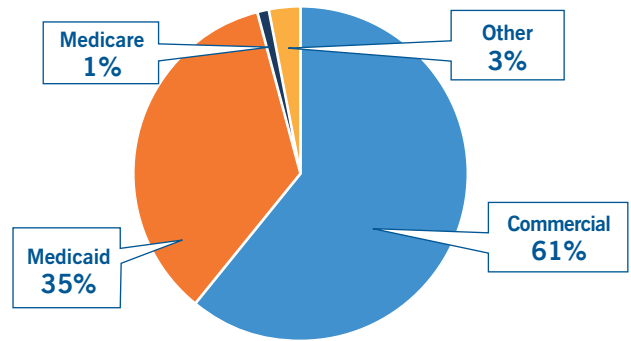
Operating Expenses



Payor mix based on gross charges

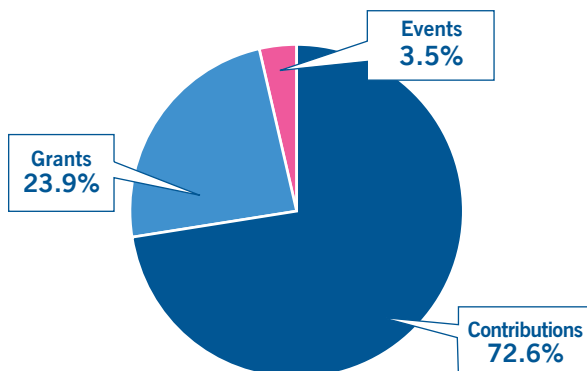


Payor mix based on net payments



Our investment in the children we serve would not be possible without the tremendous support of our donors. We are grateful for this generous support that helps us fulfill our mission of building a stronger, healthier future for all children.

Akron Children's Foundation Total Raised in 2023: \$36.5 million



Achieving Excellence

Nursing Excellence:

- Magnet Hospital Recognition by the American Nurses Credentialing Center

Patient Care:

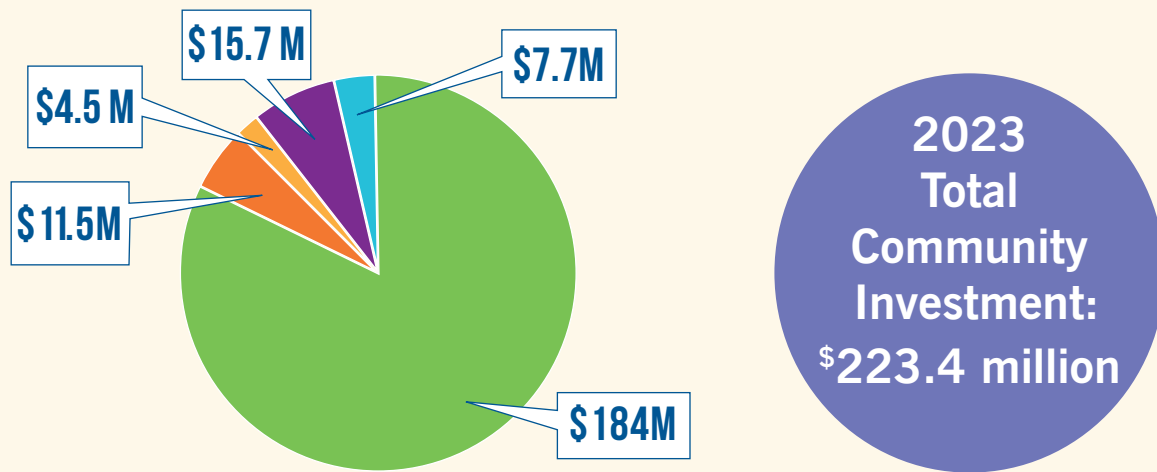
- U.S. News Best Children's Hospitals for Endocrinology (46th)
- Newsweek's World's Best Specialized Hospitals -- Pediatrics
- National Accreditation from the Commission on Cancer of the American College of Surgeons
- Gold Level ELSO Award for Excellence in Life Support
- Level 1 Pediatric Trauma Center, Committee on Trauma of the American College of Surgeons
- Level 1 Children's Surgery Center, Children's Surgery Verification Quality Improvement Program of the American College of Surgeons



Community Benefit Financials

Community benefits are programs, services and activities that we carry out for the purpose of improving our community's health and well-being. The Internal Revenue Service oversees community benefit reporting of not-for-profit hospitals. To be included in community benefit reporting, activities must incur a cost to the hospital, address an identified community need and meet at least one of four objectives:

- **Improve health care access**
- **Enhance community health**
- **Advance medical or health knowledge**
- **Reduce the burden on government and community-based agencies**



● Unreimbursed Medicaid & Uncompensated Care

- The unreimbursed portion of services for Medicaid patients and financial assistance for families who are unable to pay for all or part of medical expenses

● Subsidized Health Services

- Clinical services that are delivered despite financial loss because they address community needs

● Research, Advocacy & Community Partnerships

- Non-proprietary research supported by internal or eligible grant funds
- Advocacy for community health improvement and safety
- Financial and in-kind contributions to community organizations with missions that align with our own

● Health Professional Education

- Education and training, clinical rotations, and internships for students in programs associated with a health care credential
- Continuing education for practitioners in the community

● Community Health Improvement Services & Community Benefit Operations

- Community health education, outreach programs and supports that do not generate revenue
- Advocacy for community health improvement
- Staffing, administrative supports and other resources to operate and sustain community benefit programs



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Chief Information Officer

Todd Ritzman, MD, FAAOS, FAOA

Surgeon in Chief; Chair of Orthopedics

Bennett L. Williams, MPA, CDP

Chief Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Officer; Vice President for Community Initiatives

Christine G. Young, MSN, MBA, RN, NEA-BC

Chief of Hospital Based Services; Chief Nursing Officer

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Chair of Pathology & Laboratory Medicine

Bruce H. Cohen, MD, FAAN

Chair of NeuroDevelopmental Science Center; Philip H. Maynard Chair in NeuroDevelopmental Science Fund

Jennifer Dwyer, MD, FAAP

Chief of Primary Care

Jeffrey Hord, MD

Director, Division of Hematology-Oncology; LOPen Charities and Mawaka Family Chair in Pediatric Hematology/Oncology

Kerwyn Jones, MD

Medical Staff President

John Lane, MD, FACC

Director, Pediatric Cardiology and Adult Congenital Heart Service

Michael D. Rubin, MD

Chair of Radiology

Marya Strand, MD, MS

Chair, Department of Neonatal and Perinatal Medicine; Thomas R. & Mary Lynn Crowley Endowed Chair in Neonatology and Maternal Fetal Medicine

Eva Szigethy, MD

Director, Pediatric Psychiatry and Behavioral Health; Lois C. Orr Endowed Chair in Pediatric Psychiatry



Brian Wilson, BSN, RN, examines a patient in our new emergency department that opened on the Boardman campus in 2023