



# 2023 Highlights



CELEBRATING  
A CONNECTED  
COMMUNITY

**Center for Community Health & Prevention**

Discovery. Inspiration. Transformation.

*Center for Community Health & Prevention founder and director Nancy (“Nana”) M. Bennett, MD, MS, retired at the end of the year, after a four-decade long career. As a nationally-recognized champion of community health and disease prevention, Dr. Bennett has made tangible contributions to science and improving the health of our local and regional community.*

*We are so thankful!*

## A MESSAGE FROM OUR NEW DIRECTOR

### **Edith Williams, PhD, MS**

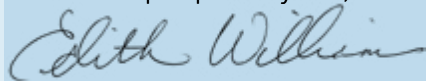
It’s an honor to be entrusted with the care and leadership of the Center for Community Health & Prevention (CCHP) as its new director. I am excited to share the work of my colleagues from 2023, under the leadership of predecessor Dr. Nana Bennett, and look forward to sharing what we’ve done together since I joined the Center in 2024.

My vision for the CCHP includes strengthening our existing programs and relationships with the community and expanding research opportunities. Being able to also bring the Office of Health Equity Research under the Center’s umbrella opens doors to so many exciting possibilities. Through focused research and joining forces with the community, we hope to develop and effectively disseminate interventions that ensure health equity.

Our interdisciplinary team is committed to creating environments that support healthy living and make better health accessible for all. We look forward to building upon our successes and helping everyone in our region live their healthiest life.

Please enjoy learning about many of the highlights of our team’s work in 2023.

So that the people may live,



Edith M. Williams, PhD, MS

Director, Center for Community Health & Prevention  
Founding Director, Office of Health Equity Research  
Dean’s Professor of Health Equity Research



*Edith Williams, PhD, MS*



## New Directions

### New Programs

▲ **Vape Escape** E-cigarette use among adolescents has reached epidemic proportions. A study published by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration and the CDC found that 2.55 million U.S. middle and high school students reported current e-cigarette use in 2022.

One way that our clinical team is responding is by offering “**Vape Escape**,” a free, virtual drop-in series for teens ages 12 to 18 years. Participants have the opportunity to learn about vaping, how it affects their health and ask our doctors and lifestyle counselors questions they’ve always wanted answered.

▲ **Prostate Cancer Education Grant Supports Shared Decision Making**

This \$650,000 [five-year grant-funded program](#), sponsored by the New York State Department of Health (NYSDOH), is focused on prostate cancer education and shared decision making in prostate cancer screening for Black men ages 45 – 69 living in Monroe County.

Program outreach addresses the risks of prostate cancer, the benefits of and guidelines regarding screening and support to engage participants in shared decision making about screening with a health care provider.

### Growing Our Clinical Team, Expanding Our Services

A pediatrician and nurse practitioner joined our clinical team to support and expand our cigarette and vaping cessation programs for adolescents and young adults, counseling them around nicotine and tobacco use, prescribing nicotine replacement therapy when appropriate and providing family-centered care.

[Katie Webster, MSN, APRN, FNP-BC](#), joined our team in June 2023. Katie sees patients for nicotine dependence, diabetes prevention, obesity and other chronic conditions related to metabolic health. She focuses on empowerment of the individual to advance their goals, lead a healthy life and carry health forward into their community.

[Susan Gasparino, MD](#), is a pediatrician at Golisano Children’s Hospital and an instructor in general pediatrics at the University of Rochester School of Medicine & Dentistry (URSMD). Dr. Gasparino was named the director of Child and Adolescent Health Programming at CCHP and is instrumental in assisting the clinic as we expand in these areas. She also leads the new teen Vape Escape program.



*Katie Webster, MSN, APRN, FNP-BC*



*Susan Gasparino, MD*

## Communicable Diseases Surveillance and Prevention (CDSP) Initiatives Gain Expertise

We officially welcomed two University of Rochester Medical Center (URMC) faculty working with our CDSP team on the CDC's Emerging Infections Program (EIP) initiatives and other projects.



Erica Bostick, MD

**Erica Bostick, MD**, is an assistant professor in the Departments of Adolescent Medicine and General Medicine at the URSMD. She is involved in several grants focusing on sexual health education and community engagement, including serving as faculty for the Clinical Education Initiative and as the New York site Principal Investigator (PI) for the CDC-funded HPV-IMPACT project. She helps guide our CDSP team's work on the HPV-IMPACT project.



Brenda Tesini, MD

**Brenda Tesini, MD**, is an assistant professor in the Departments of Medicine and Pediatrics in infectious diseases at the URSMD. She is the Rochester-site PI for several EIP projects and participates in other population-based infectious disease surveillance and prevention research activities funded by the CDC and National Institutes of Health. Dr. Tesini has been working with our CDSP team as a co-investigator since 2018, but took over Dr. Nancy Bennett's EIP responsibilities when she retired.

## Partnerships

### Community Capital Alliance for Recovery Research

A [new community partnership](#) between Recovery Houses of Rochester, the University of Rochester (UR) School of Nursing, and the CCHP aims to improve substance use disorder recovery, sexual health, and mental health outcomes while advancing research on sober living facilities.



Faculty, Monroe County officials, and Recovery Houses staff and residents celebrated the launch of the collaboration, titled the Community Capital Alliance for Recovery Research, at a barbecue in July.

Through the collaboration, researchers hope to promote holistic, comprehensive healing; foster research and innovation in recovery, eliminate stigma surrounding addiction, and strengthen community bonds to create a unified network of recovery support and resources.

### Office of Health Equity Research

We proudly partnered with the [Office of Health Equity Research \(OHER\)](#) for the 2023 Dr. Satcher Community Health Improvement Awards (read about the honorees on page 10). OHER founding director Edith Williams, PhD, MS, presented the awards, as well as a monetary gift to the awardees' community partners for their collaborative efforts and impact on the community.

### Flower City Public Health AmeriCorps

We welcomed Ayanfe “Fe” Adebajo, **our second Flower City Public Health AmeriCorps member**, in December. She is helping with our Promote HEALTH program (read more about Promote HEALTH on page 8).



“I really enjoy being able to help my community while also being a part of something bigger.”

– Ayanfe “Fe” Adebajo

### Rochester Deaf Kitchen

The [Rochester Deaf Kitchen](#) opened at the Rochester School for the Deaf in 2023, and has since served more than 100,000 meals from its pantry. Executive Director Zachary Ennis has partnered with a research advisory team from URMC, including CCHP leaders Holly Russell, MD, director of Clinical and Community-Based Programs, and Laura Sugarwala, RD, MBA, director of Community Health Partnerships, as well as UR researchers Aileen Aldalur, MD, and Wyattte Hall, MD.

Challenging the deeply rooted stories of deficiency and dependency that have long plagued Deaf individuals, the pantry provides essential food resources and has become a lifeline to individuals from various cultural backgrounds. Research will further highlight the unique and often challenging experiences of Deaf individuals experiencing food insecurity, and bring visibility to their personal stories.

# Disease Prevention: Helping People Lead Healthier Lives



In 2023:

**85** group or 1:1 community presentations throughout six counties served

**102** provider site presentations

**235** clients that enrolled for the first time

## **Cancer Services Program of the Finger Lakes Region (CSP-FLR) Awarded 5-Year Renewal**

The CSP-FLR received a \$1,980,000 grant renewal for the next five years from the NYSDOH. The grant cycle runs from 10/1/2023 – 9/30/2028. This new funding will support the program's ongoing work, paying for breast, cervical and colorectal cancer screening for uninsured individuals who live in Monroe, Livingston, Yates, Seneca, Wayne and Ontario Counties.

Over the last 5-year grant cycle, the CSP-FLR supported

**1,835**  
breast cancer  
screenings

**709**  
colorectal  
cancer  
screenings

**350**  
cervical cancer  
screenings

### **Spotlight: 5 Years of Sister's Day with Yates County**

For the fifth consecutive year, the CSP-FLR and the Yates County Public Health Department cohosted two Sister's Day breast cancer screening events in Himrod and Benton. Yates County is home to many Mennonite and English (non-Mennonite) individuals alike. Sister's Day invites women from all cultures to come together in 'sisterhood' to learn about important health screenings and preventive care and get a potential life-saving mammogram.

The partnership between CSP-FLR, Yates County Public Health and RRH Mobile Mammography Unit helps both insured and uninsured women get screened for breast cancer.



*Pictured, from left to right, Ann Murphy, LPN, nurse with Yates County Public Health, Olivia Santiago, CSP-FLR intern, Sarah Ward, CSP-FLR patient navigator, and Hannah Farley, CSP-FLR community outreach manager.*



*Our team presented local data at IDWeek in Boston. We also participated in the Northeast Epidemiology Conference in Connecticut.*

## Keeping the Pulse on Communicable Diseases

The [Communicable Diseases Surveillance and Prevention program](#) collaborates with the CDC and NYSDOH on public health surveillance through the NYS Emerging Infections Program (EIP). The NYS EIP is part of a national effort to provide population-based communicable disease data to identify disease patterns, evaluate vaccine programs, and identify populations at risk.

### ▲ Communicating Flu & RSV Cases in the Community

2023 saw a busy respiratory season with high flu and RSV activity. The RSV catchment area was expanded to include Wayne, Ontario, Yates, Genesee, Livingston and Orleans Counties to better capture disease incidence in our region and align with COVID-19 and flu surveillance.

Our EIP team, in collaboration with CCHP staff scientist Kathleen Holt, PhD, published weekly data reports on flu and RSV cases in Monroe County on [RocHealthData.org](#). Available to the public, these include hospitalization and death rates by age group.

### ▲ Rapid Expansion of Surveillance of a Common Bacteria that Often Causes UTI

The EIP saw a rapid expansion of its [Multi-Site Gram-Negative Surveillance Initiative \(MUGSI\)](#) to include *E. coli* isolated from urine and sterile sites, helping provide background data to the CDC for potential vaccine development. This resulted in an additional 2,300 MUGSI cases reviewed in a very short time period. The EIP's existing infrastructure and positive relationship with the local clinical microbiology laboratories made this possible.

### ▲ Continued Contribution to the CDC's COVID-19 Vaccine Effectiveness in Healthcare Personnel Study

Our EIP site contributed the most enrollees of any of the 10 sites in the country and provided more than 1/3 of the data utilized by the CDC for analysis. This resulted in several nationally-relevant publications and presentations.

### ▲ Continued Work on Mpox

Our team continued implementing an evaluation of the JYNNEOS Smallpox vaccine against Mpox, partnering with the NYSDOH to recruit individuals at risk for the virus. We collaborated with the URMCC Office of Clinical Practice Evaluation to streamline recruitment, leading to 60 individuals recruited over 13 months.

## Diabetes Prevention Program Successes

The Rochester Diabetes Prevention Program (DPP) is an evidence-based, CDC-recognized program designed to help people who have been diagnosed with prediabetes prevent the development of type 2 diabetes. The year-long, lifestyle change program covers information about nutrition and physical activity, and how they impact our health and daily lives.

**82** participants were enrolled in **5** Diabetes Prevention Programs that began throughout the year.

**Four** groups were held over Zoom and one was in person at the CCHP.

It was reported by the CDC that our programs significantly exceeded the retention criteria expectation at every milestone session.



**63%** of the participants reduced risks for developing diabetes through one or more of the following outcomes:

- At least **5%** weight loss
- At least **4%** weight loss and 150 min/week on average of physical activity
- At least **.2%** reduction in their A1c (a measure of average blood sugar)

**73%** of participants were still active in the program after 9 months





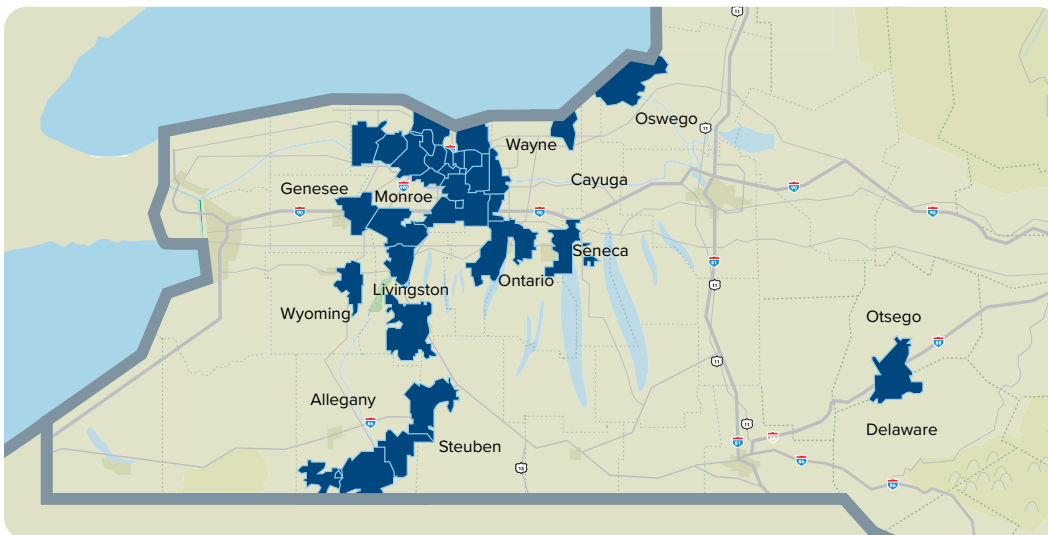
### Clinical Team is a Valued Resource for Regional Providers

Our [interdisciplinary team](#) of registered dietitians, certified personal trainers, lifestyle counselors, a nurse practitioner and physicians and their range of lifestyle management expertise serve as a **lifeline for other providers at practices throughout our region.**

Top referral sources in 2023 included primary care, cardiology, endocrinology, GI clinic, urology, lung cancer screening and nephrology. We are grateful to share in their patients' care.

**3,060**  
new patient  
visits scheduled  
in 2023

**60%**  
of new patient  
visits were done  
by telehealth



*This map illustrates where clinical referrals came from in 2023.*

## Promote Health. Prevent Cancer. Gets New Name

Promote Health. Prevent Cancer., a free eight-week healthy lifestyle program provided in partnership with Wilmot Cancer Institute, was renamed “**Promote HEALTH.**” The team continues to expand the approach to prevention of all chronic diseases and further integrate a focus on overall well-being.

**David Shearing**, 83, of Perry joined the spring program at the Geneseo Parish Outreach Center because he was interested in learning more about ways he could reduce his risk of chronic disease.

“The class was eye-opening,” he said. “We talked about little things like adding color to your plate, the importance of drinking water, and checking sugar and salt. They seem little, but they add up to make a big difference.”

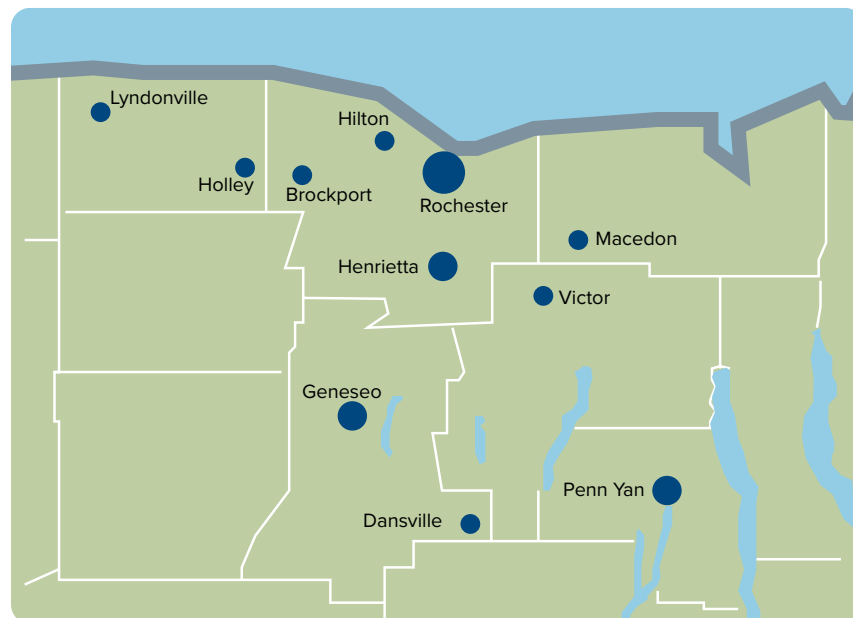


David Shearing

**316** people participated in at least 1 Promote HEALTH session

**52%** of participants who completed 5+ classes in 2023 increased fruit servings by at least 1 serving

**67%** of total participants in 2023 increased moderate or vigorous activity minutes per week from beginning to end of their program



Promote HEALTH programs were held throughout the region, with some locations hosting more than one program in 2023 as shown by the larger circles.

# Supporting Community Health Improvement

## Providing Resources Through Grants

### ▲ Mini-Grants

Supported and funded by the Center and the UR Clinical & Translational Science Institute (UR CTSI), the Mini-Grants are one-time grants up to \$2,000 and provide URMCommunity partnerships with additional funding to address concerns such as transportation, childcare, meeting space rental, and more.

### **SPOTLIGHT: Project: Promoting Mental Health and Substance Use Recovery Through Art**

**Recipients:** Amanda Lai, arts and communications specialist at the URMCommunity Department of Psychiatry, Strong Recovery Services and Bridge Art Gallery and Creative Wellness Opportunities

The goal of the project is to create a visual art workshop series and community art gallery at the URMCommunity Strong Recovery clinic, located at 2613 W. Henrietta Rd. Through this grant, the waiting area will be transformed into a new art space, bringing “hope and healing throughout the waiting room area and enhancing the physical environment by integrating it with artwork that is beautiful, calm, and positive.”

Funding will support the purchase and installation of frames at the clinic, which will rotate artwork annually. The grant will also fund art supplies for art workshops, as well as a gallery reception aimed at introducing community members to addressing the stigma associated with substance use disorders.



*Artwork in the waiting area.*

**5**  
URMC-  
community  
partnerships  
received  
mini-grants

### ▲ **Community Health Improvement Workgroup (CHIW) Grant Winners:**

The CHIW awarded Rochester Refugee Resettlement Services (RRRS) with \$15,000 as the mini-grant awardee. RRRS is a small community-based organization that helps New Americans become self-sufficient and successful community members. The goal of this project is to screen refugee children for behavioral health conditions through a CDC Mental Health screening developed specifically for pediatric patients.

# Highlighting the Work of Our Community & Beyond



## **Dr. David Satcher Community Health Improvement Awards**

David Satcher, MD, PhD, gave the keynote address “Revisiting the Highs and Lows of Public Health Practice.” Dr. Satcher, for whom the awards are named, is the founding director and senior advisor at the Satcher Health Leadership Institute at the Morehouse School of Medicine in Atlanta, Georgia.

### **HONOREES**

#### **Senior Faculty Awardee**

Michael Mendoza, MD, MPH

9th Commissioner of Public Health for Monroe County, NY; professor in the URSMD Department of Family Medicine

#### **Junior Faculty Awardees (Joint)**

Andrew Cohen, PhD; Allison Stiles, PhD; Corey Nichols-Hadeed, JD  
Co-directors for “EACH Youth in the RCSD;” faculty in the URSMD  
Departments of Pediatrics and Psychiatry

#### **Staff Awardees (Joint)**

Wendy Hou, DNP, RN; Christine Maness, MS, RN

Coordinators of “Little Shots, Big Protection: A Team Providing COVID-19  
Vaccine for Our Community’s Children;” assistant directors of Pediatric  
Nursing at Golisano Children’s Hospital

## **Dr. Bernard Guyer Lecture Series**

Alisha Moreland-Capua, MD, MACPsych, presented “Building Trauma-Informed Organizations and People: Why Healing Must Be the Way Forward” as the keynote speaker for the 12th annual lecture series, held in November.

## ▲ **Community Health Improvement Workgroup (CHIW)**

When the CHIW selected maternal child health as a priority area for the Monroe County 2019-2021 Community Health Improvement Plan, the **Maternal Child Health Advisory Group** was created. More than 72 members from 34 organizations or departments across Monroe County have met quarterly for the three years during the implementation phase of the plan and beyond. An average of 30+ attendees of providers and community leaders of social, health, and education agencies attend the quarterly meetings.

## ▲ **URMC Community Advisory Council**

**Throughout the past 18 years, the URMC Community Advisory Council has advanced the mission of the Medical Center by guiding and supporting education, patient care, research and community health.** Representatives from **25 community organizations** that serve historically-marginalized segments of our population and focus on health equity meet every other month to identify priority health needs and, in collaboration with academic partners, develop successful strategies that address these needs and reduce health inequities.



### **New Member in 2023**

Finger Lakes  
Community Health  
brings a focus to  
rural health priorities.

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Our Center plays a pivotal role in fostering collaborative academic-community research partnerships and enhancing public trust in clinical and translational research. We're proud to collaborate with the UR CTSI on Community Engagement Studios and Community-Based Participatory Research (CBPR).

## ▲ **Community Engagement Studios**

**The Center offered 5 Community Engagement Studios with the UR CTSI.** 2 new studios were offered in collaboration with the UR Medicine Health Equity Program Support Office (HEPSO) that provided a forum for community members to discuss common barriers to navigating the health care system and share lived experience. Feedback from the discussions, held at the Asbury First United Methodist Church, helped inform the HEPSO's Navigation for Health Care Equity Program.

## ▲ **CBPR**

**The 2024 cohort started in September 2023 with 13 representatives from the UR and 7 from community partners.** Three teams are working on projects related to cancer that are being conducted with support from researchers at the Wilmot Cancer Institute.

CBPR participants Lauren Spiker, founder and executive director of 13thirty Cancer Connect and AnnaLynn Williams, PhD, clinical and molecular epidemiologist at the URMC, recently announced a collaboration on research to understand disparities for adolescents and young adults (AYA) with cancer.

# Contributing to the Development of Future Health Care Professionals

**1,345** The number of people who attended Public Health Grand Rounds (virtually and in person) in 2023



Antonio Bottos

## Supporting Young Scholars

### ▲ Future Generations Mentored in Community Health

A total of **15 students**, including medical students, preventive medicine residents, student interns, and an AmeriCorps member took part in various community-engaged learning opportunities provided in partnership with CCHP.

### ▲ Community Health Improvement Course (CHIC):

The CHIC for medical students, directed by Theresa Green, PhD, MBA, director of Community Health Policy and Education at CCHP, teaches how policy, finance and engaging the community fit with health care delivery to improve population health.

**CHIC students worked with a variety of community partners including Foodlink, the WISH/HEAL Collaborative, the Central Library, EAST High school's Biomedical Sciences Pathway, Jordan Health, Children's Institute, Refugees Helping Refugees and more!**

### ▲ Students of Distinction:

**8 URSMD medical students were recognized at graduation as an MD with Distinction in Community Health**, an option for students who make significant longitudinal contributions to community service, excel in the CHIC courses and engage in learning about current issues and topics in community health throughout medical school.

### ▲ Andrus Fellow

**Antonio Bottos**, second-year medical student at URSMD, was selected for 2023. The CCHP E. Cowles Andrus Summer Fellowship is a funded 8-week opportunity during the summer for a medical student to plan and conduct a community health improvement project.

During his fellowship, Antonio collaborated with Holly Russell, MD, family medicine physician at Highland Family Medicine and director of Clinical and Community-Based Programs at our Center, on a vaping cessation support group for teenagers. He also worked with Francisco Cartujano Barrera, MD, at the URSMD on a project involving the use of exercise performance tracking in tobacco cessation programs for the Latinx community.

## ▲ **Teen Health & Success Partnership (THSP) Students Thrive**

THSP matches students living in the City of Rochester with employment opportunities at the UR and provides hiring and employment assistance to support students' long-term career success.

- 100%** of 2023 seniors graduated from high school.
- 2** graduating seniors received full rides to nursing schools.
- 18** departments hired THSP students in 2022 – 2023.
- 521** As of November 2023, 521 high school students have been employed at UR through the THSP program.
- 124** participating students and program grads have received promotions at UR over time.

### Promotions into high-needs jobs:

- 22** PCTS/AMBULATORY TECHNICIANS
- 2** CURRENTLY EMPLOYED LPNS
- 1** RN
- 6** OUTPATIENT ACCESS SPECIALISTS
- 5** PHARMACY TECHNICIANS
- 1** IT ROLE IN THE DATA CENTER



**“Working on the cardiovascular unit gave me a great opportunity to learn about the health care field and gain valuable experience.”**

*– Providence Simbi,  
URMC Nursing*

### **2023 Edison Tech graduate**

*Providence is attending Roberts Wesleyan to study nursing on a full scholarship, while continuing to work at URMC.*

## **Center for Community Health & Prevention**

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