



## Children's in the Community Summer 2024

*Children's in the Community* is a quarterly newsletter that highlights UPMC Children's efforts in the community, celebrates the successes and achievements of program partners, and connects people and partners to important resources. Thank you for reading. Please Contact [Anne Marie Kuchera](#) for more information.

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### Celebrating School Partners

UPMC Children's Healthy Schools Program, in partnership with the Alliance for a Healthier Generation, supports over 80 schools in the Pittsburgh region in implementing best practices focusing on the *Whole School, Whole Community, Whole Child* model.

We'd like to recognize and celebrate every one of these schools for their efforts to create a healthier environment for students, staff and families during the 2023-24 school year.

This year, an astounding 46 school partners became eligible for the prestigious award of, *America's Healthiest Schools*. This eligibility is a testament to the exceptional efforts of regional schools to advance the well-being of their school

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communities by **Improving Nutrition and Food Access, Strengthening Social and Emotional Health, Cultivating Staff Well-Being, and Promoting Tobacco-Free Schools.** The efforts of these schools in collaboration with UPMC Children's and the Alliance for a Healthier Generation have pivoted them toward becoming among the healthiest in the nation. Awardees will be announced this fall! See how the Healthy Schools Program is promoting healthy food and nutrition access at [Pittsburgh Minadeo Elementary School](#).

We'd like to thank the Hillman Family Foundations for enabling our school-health partnerships and look forward to working together again with schools in 2024-25. Contact Kristi Burry at [kristi.burry@upmc.edu](mailto:kristi.burry@upmc.edu) to learn more.

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## Expanding Families' Food Budgets with Food Bucks Rx

UPMC Children's is pleased to offer card-based Food Bucks Rx, a Produce Prescription program provided to UPMC Children's patient families in partnership with [The Food Trust](#). 280 families with children have enrolled in the 6-month program during their pediatric healthcare visit and are receiving up to \$100 per month, via a debit-like card, to purchase fresh fruits and vegetables at participating locations

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including Allegheny County farmers markets. While enrollment in the card-based program has ended, many UPMC Children's clinical settings are still distributing Food Bucks Rx paper coupons. See more information about how to access and navigate local farmers markets in sections below.

We are grateful to Giant Eagle and Rite Aid Healthy Futures, whose generosity has enabled Children's patient families to stretch their food budgets through Food Bucks Rx.

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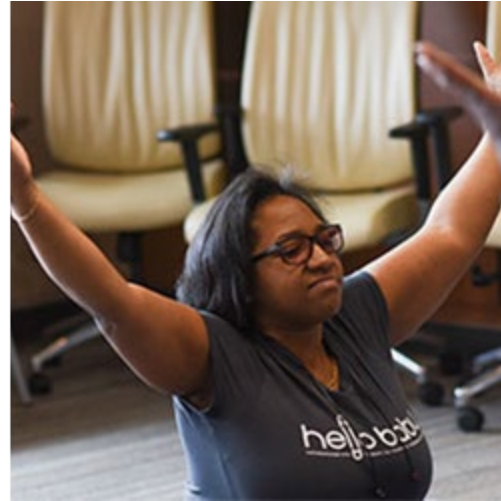
## Promoting Safety in Western Pa

Keep an eye out for Children's Safety Van around town this summer! UPMC Children's Injury Prevention team has been traveling far and wide to promote safety throughout the region. They recently held a safe storage event in collaboration with UPMC Hamot and the Erie Blue Coats in Erie, Pa. where they distributed 100 gun safes to community members. At the Crawford County 4-H Safety Day, they encouraged helmet safety on bicycles and ATVs, and they've been on the school circuit educating teens on the consequences of impaired driving - shown in the photo here from Clairton High School. A special thanks to FedEx Ground

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and Equitrans Midstream Foundation for their tremendous support of these safety and injury prevention programs.

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## Exploring Art and Play

Earlier this spring, Hello Baby welcomed new parents and caregivers in Allegheny County to experience art and wellness through play and exploration. "Baby and Me" activities included sound bowl meditation, mural painting, music and movement, and more. Partnering with Reading Ready, Pittsburgh Public Schools, and other community partners, parents and caregivers had access to tangible resources for themselves and their new babies. We'd like to thank Pitt's Community Engagement Center in the Hill District for hosting, and for helping to make the event a great success.

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## Blasting Off into Literacy

An "out of this world" space-themed literacy adventure provided more than 100 children and families from neighborhoods in and around Braddock, Rankin, Penn Hills, Lawrenceville, Hilltop and Turtle Creek with an unforgettable experience. Hosted by UPMC Children's Family Care Connection (FCC) at the Rankin Christian Center, partners from WQED, Moonshot Museum, Buzzwords, Reading Ready Pittsburgh and others introduced families to resources available in their own communities.

Highlights included a kickoff from Mad Science who demonstrated how air moves through space by shooting potatoes across the room and blowing balloons up in bottles. The oohs and aahs from the children in attendance were remarkable. Guided by FCC's Child Development Specialists (aka, astronauts), families then traveled through four space stations including puppet play with Moonshot Museum, rocket ship art and story time with Reading Ready Pittsburgh, phases of the moon art activity with Buzzwords, and a rocket ship ride movement station with ACH Clear Pathways.

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They ended their space flight with a boxed lunch, DK's My Best Pop-up Space Book, a space passport sticker book, and an astronaut fidget toy to keep the fun going once they arrived back home on planet Earth!

We'd like to thank the Rankin Christian Center for co-hosting the event with FCC, and the many community partners and families who made the event a great success. A special thanks to the Rona Jaffe Foundation for their support of FCCs early literacy programs and for enabling this fantastic event.

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## Connecting Clinical Providers with Community Partners

We'd like to extend a sincere thanks to over 30 community partners who recently attended the third Clinical-Community Partner Showcase at UPMC Children's! Hosted by Children's Community Health and Children's Pediatric Residency Training Program, community partners from United Way of Southwestern PA, Just Harvest, Greater Pittsburgh Community Food Bank, Breathe PA and several others were onsite at UPMC Children's on June 28 to meet and talk with more than 100 clinical providers and staff, incoming pediatric

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residents and seasoned faculty about community-based programs and resources that support the very same children and families we care for at Children's. Thank you!

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## Sharing Best Practices with School and Community Partners

Log on to Children's [Pediatric Education Series](#) of webinars to learn about best practices in pediatric healthcare. Recent topics include updates on Lyme Disease, Sleep Hygiene in Children, Psychosis in Children, and Pediatric Concussions. Webinars are free for everyone, and nurses can earn continuing education credits.

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## Community Health Staff Spotlight: FCC Child Development Specialists

A big shout-out to our amazing team of Child Development Specialists (CDSs) pictured here – Brianna, Diane, Dawn, Chris and Brenda – who recently served double-duty as astronauts for the Blast Off to Literacy event. These are the professionals

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who spearhead early childhood development and education programs at Family Care Connection, ensuring the blocks are built for children's social, emotional, behavioral and cognitive development. Thank you for all you do to support the youngest children who we serve!

## Community Partner Spotlight



*Laura Cherock, Board member from Child Health Association, pictured third from the left, with the team from Mt. Oliver Family Center.*





*Michelle Figlar, Executive Director of The Birmingham Foundation, pictured here on the far right with the team from the Hilltop Health Hub.*

Duquesne Light, Child Health Association of Sewickley, and The Birmingham Foundation

Children's Community Health would like to recognize and extend sincere thanks to our partners at Duquesne Light, Child Health Association of Sewickley, and The Birmingham Foundation. Because of their generous support, we can assist families in meeting their basic needs, connect patient families with vital community resources, and increase access to high-quality health care at the Hilltop Health Hub. Thank you!

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## Community Connections



Visit with Representative Lindsay Powell of the 21st District, Allegheny County

We had an opportunity to welcome Representative Lindsey Powell to our Lawrenceville Family Care Connection center for a tour and to discuss how we engage with families and can drive advocacy forward for greater resources with

transportation, housing, and supports for students. Thank you, Representative Powell, for visiting us and for your commitment to our communities!

## Farmers Market Season is Back

Now through November, farmers markets around the county are open and accepting many forms of payment. Families receiving Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP/food stamps), SUN Bucks, and Food Bucks can use their benefits at the market by finding the Fresh Access tent and asking about how to use their cards or coupons. For every \$5 spent with an EBT card, recipients receive an extra \$2 coupon for fresh fruits and vegetables to use at the market.

## SUN Bucks: Summer Food Dollars for Families with School-Aged Children

This summer, many Pennsylvania families will receive SUN Bucks, the 2024 Pennsylvania Summer EBT program that provides food dollars to low-income families with school-aged children during the summer months. Households will receive a one-time payment of \$120 for each eligible child. These benefits can be used at farmers markets and other participating grocery locations. For more information and to learn if your household is eligible, visit [this link](#).

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Children's Community Health works together with health care and community partners to advance health equity and elevate quality of life for children and families in the communities where they live, learn, work, and play. Visit [UPMC Children's Community Health](#) to learn more. Contact [Anne Marie Kuchera](#) for more information.