

# FOUNDATION insider

## The Clothes Closet

*Providing Dignity for Patients in Need*

A simple idea born from a growing need has evolved into a vital resource at UPMC Washington. What started as a small initiative to provide clothing for patients has blossomed into the Clothes Closet, a full-fledged service that benefits patients across the hospital. This compassionate program, managed through the Patient and Family Centered Care (PFCC) program, is a testament to the power of community support and the generosity of individuals who donate to make a difference in the lives of those facing difficult situations.

The Clothes Closet came into existence several years ago when UPMC Washington's case management team noticed a recurring issue: patients arriving at the hospital with inadequate or unwearable clothing. When the need was raised to the PFCC program, they embraced the idea and decided to manage the project. Thanks to generous donations from the outpatient observation unit, the program was able to move from a small closet in the laundry department to an entire room dedicated to storing clothing. This expansion allowed them to serve more patients, including those in the behavioral health unit and those at UPMC Greene. With more space and improved organization, the Clothes Closet is able to better manage its inventory and serve the needs of the patients who rely on it.

The Clothes Closet provides critical clothing support to any patient across UPMC Washington and UPMC Greene. Whether patients are in the emergency department, admitted as inpatients, or attending outpatient services, they are all eligible to benefit from this service. **On average, the program distributes 1,500 items a year to patients in need; a 1140% increase in need since the closet's inception.**

Often patients will have unwearable clothing due to a medical issue or an emergency situation or not have family or friends available to bring replacement clothing. In such cases, the Clothes Closet steps in, offering clean, appropriate clothing to help restore some comfort and dignity during a difficult time. Therese Dott, a PFCC volunteer who has kept the Clothes Closet organized since its inception stated, "The first year, 150 items were given from the Clothes Closet and this past year 1,860 items were able to be given out!"



*PCCF volunteers folding items for the Clothes Closet*

The biggest challenge faced by the Clothes Closet is funding. The program relies entirely on donations, both monetary and in-kind clothing, to keep the shelves stocked. While clothing donations pour in regularly, many items cannot be used due to size or condition. Items that are not suitable for hospital use are passed along to other local non-profits that need clothing. Keeping the right size and type of clothing stocked is another hurdle.

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# From the Executive Director

As we step into the long days of winter, I want to take a moment to express my heartfelt gratitude for your continued support. Your generosity, passion, and commitment make a lasting impact, and I'm excited to share some of the incredible work we've accomplished together.

The Washington Health System Foundation continues to make connections, raise funds, and grantmake in Washington and Greene Counties. In this issue, you will read about the Clothes Closet: a program created to help our patients leave the hospital in clothing, comfort, and dignity. You will meet one of our many loyal donors to the closet and hear from our dedicated volunteers and UPMC Washington team members.

The WHS Foundation is continuously supported by multiple fundraising efforts. In this issue, we take time to recognize some of these efforts. This includes the Wilfred R. Cameron Wellness Center staff and members for their ongoing creativity and time to raise money to benefit the UPMC Washington Children's Therapy Center. In addition, we thank ABARTA Coke for their annual support in running a successful (and growing) fundraiser in October to benefit Women's Health Care.

This issue will also take us inside the exciting renovation of UPMC Washington's Austin Playroom, located in the Emergency Room. I want to thank the Mario Lemieux Foundation for their commitment to improving this special area dedicated to youngest community members.

Finally, Teen Outreach's multitude of programs and fundraisers will be explored. This includes Staunton Farms' ongoing work with the Teen Outreach Program. Staunton Farms' support is much appreciated, and I hope you enjoy learning about their impact on the youth in our communities.

Every donation, every volunteer hour, and every act of kindness contributes to our shared impact. We are so grateful for each of you and look forward to continuing this journey together.

With appreciation,



Sara Schumacher, CFRE  
Executive Director



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## The Clothes Closet Continued

Over the years, the Clothes Closet has provided much-needed assistance to countless individuals. One particularly memorable story highlights how the service can make an immediate difference in someone's life. A young homeless man passing through Washington was brought to the Emergency Department with severe foot sores and clothing that



*Therese Dott, a PFCC volunteer*

was beyond repair. After receiving medical treatment and a shower, he was provided with fresh, clean clothes, helping him to continue his journey with a sense of dignity and hope. Another example involves patients who have suffered sudden disasters, The Clothes Closet was able to step in and provide them with clothing, helping them through an incredibly difficult time.

The Clothes Closet continues to face the challenge of maintaining adequate stock, particularly due to rising clothing costs. Community support is key to ensuring its success.



*Photos of the clothes closet itself. The closet's organization is maintained by a group of volunteers.*

The Clothes Closet is a true reflection of the power of community. Through the kindness of donors and the dedication of those who manage it, the program continues to provide essential support to patients who need it most during times of crisis. Your generosity can make a profound impact on those in need.

By supporting the Clothes Closet, you're not only offering clothes but also restoring comfort, dignity, and hope to those facing some of life's most difficult moments.

### How you can help support the Clothes Closet:



**Clothing Donations:** Gently used clothing items such as sweatpants, sweatshirts, and t-shirts are especially needed. Items like jeans, dress clothes, socks, underwear, and shoes cannot be accepted. If you are donating clothes, they can be dropped off at the main lobby of UPMC Washington.

**Monetary Donations:** Financial contributions are always welcomed, helping the program purchase essential items to meet patient needs. You can give online at [whs.org/foundation](https://whs.org/foundation).



**Volunteer Engagement:** Community organizations and individuals who wish to get involved can reach out to the hospital for more information on how they can contribute or host a donation drive.

### A new way to give!

**Amazon Wish List:** Want to donate new clothes directly to the closet? You can do so using the Clothes Closet's Amazon wish list. Scan the QR code to view the Clothes Closet's Wish List on Amazon and have your donation sent directly to UPMC Washington!





# 1897 SOCIETY RECOGNITION DINNER HIGHLIGHTS

The Foundation often refers to the 1897 Society as some of its most loyal and generous donors. That loyalty is not only represented through their faith in our ability to advance our mission, but it is also apparent through members' ongoing commitment to giving. The generosity of those who elevate through the levels of the 1897 Society is especially meaningful to us. It's through their sustained commitment that we can ensure lasting change and continue to expand our reach. Thanks to all who attended the 1897 Society Annual Recognition Dinner this past September. The Pennsylvania Trolley Museum provided the perfect venue for fun and fellowship!



# WILFRED R. CAMERON WELLNESS CENTER FUNDRAISERS

2024

Throughout the year, the Wilfred R. Cameron Wellness Center hosts various fundraisers to benefit multiple causes. Below, we have featured four of the most infamous events: Battling Bikes, Gingerbread Houses, Lemonade Stands, and the newest event - Dunk for a Cure!

## BATTLING BIKES

Battling Bikes has been hosted by the Wilfred R. Cameron Wellness Center every October for the past 15 years! Members provide a minimum of a \$5 donation to ride for 30 minutes. Proceeds benefit the Women's Center for breast cancer awareness and mammography screenings.



## GINGERBREAD HOUSES

Every winter, the Wilfred R. Cameron Wellness Center hosts a gingerbread house competition. This is a tradition 16 years in the making! Various departments from across UPMC Washington compete, and voters donate \$1 to vote on their favorite house. All proceeds for this fundraiser benefit Children's Therapy Center. Most recently, proceeds were used to purchase two new standardized tests that are used as evaluation tools to determine a child's need for therapy services.



## LEMONADE STANDS

Children attending summer camp at the Wilfred R. Cameron Wellness Center participated in a childhood tradition - manning lemonade stands! All proceeds benefited the Women's Center for breast cancer awareness and mammography screenings.



## DUNK FOR A CURE

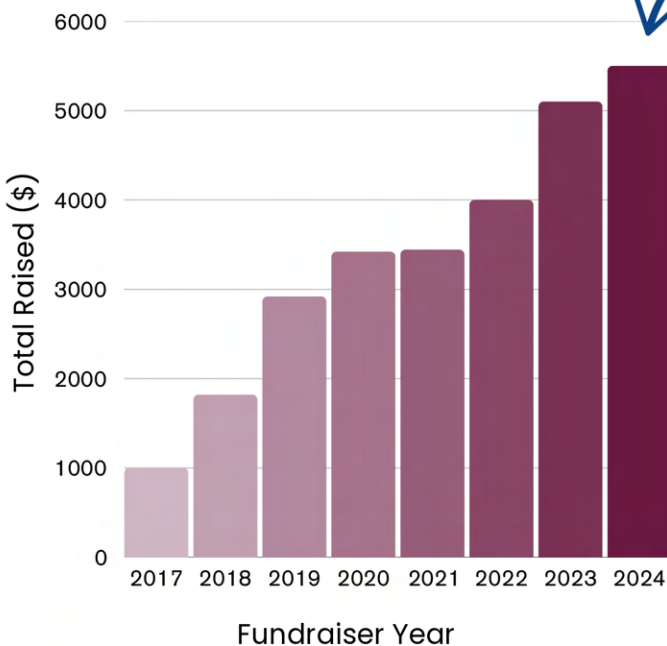
This year, the Wilfred R. Cameron Wellness Center introduced a new fundraiser - Dunk for a Cure! Members and staff at the Wellness Center donated for a chance to dunk some of their favorite staff members! This event raised nearly \$1,200 for the Women's Center for breast cancer awareness and mammography screenings!



# 2024 ABARTA COCA-COLA FUNDRAISER



We are thrilled to announce that ABARTA Coca-Cola's 8th annual fundraiser for breast cancer awareness was a resounding success! This year's event raised a total of \$5,500 for the Women's Cancer Center at UPMC Washington. A heartfelt thank you goes out to all the local businesses that generously contributed donations. Together, we are making a difference in the fight against breast cancer. ABARTA Coca-Cola is looking forward to continuing this important tradition and working together to support those in need.



**THE 2024 FUNDRAISER RAISED \$5,500 - A NEW RECORD! SINCE 2017, ABARTA HAS RAISED A TOTAL OF \$25,000!**



This accomplishment would not have been possible without the amazing team at ABARTA Coca-Cola. The fundraising team is pictured above. From left to right: Sue Riley, Mary Ann McClory, Shannon Kurnik, Jamie Schmid, Alicia McClain, and Myrna Lea. Not pictured: Todd Tuma and Pat Kennedy.

## THIS YEAR, THE FUNDRAISING ACTIVITIES INCLUDED:

- 383** T-shirts sold
- 67** Specialty items sold
- 51** Prizes donated for auction
- \$142** Raised in 50/50 raffle



# AUSTIN'S PLAYROOMS

66

## CHECK OUT THE UPDATED UPMC WASHINGTON'S AUSTIN'S PLAYROOM!

Austin's Playroom provides safe, fun, and engaging atmospheres for kids while their families focus on health and healing in the face of difficult medical challenges. Austin's Playroom is supported by the Mario Lemieux Foundation, a nonprofit dedicated to funding cancer research and patient care while supporting families in challenging medical situations. An Austin's playroom was installed our Dr. E. Ronald and Constance Salvitti Center for Emergency Care in 2011. Since then, children in our community, whether visitors or patients themselves, have benefited from the cheerful playroom. The playroom was recently updated with new wall mounted activities, iPads with kid friendly games, a new TV, and child sized tables with interactive games.

**Photo (Right):** Mrs. Nathelie Lemieux, chair of Austin's Playrooms and Vice President of the Mario Lemieux Foundation at the ribbon cutting ceremony for the playroom in 2011. **Photos (Below):** The newly renovated Austin's Playroom.



# THE LONG REACH OF TEEN OUTREACH!

## ALL ABOUT UPMC WASHINGTON'S TEEN OUTREACH PROGRAMS



### STAUNTON FARM FOUNDATION DONATES TO ROAD TO MENTAL HEALTH EDUCATION PROGRAM

Staunton Farm Foundation is dedicated to improving the lives of people who live with mental illness and/or substance use disorders. It works to enhance behavioral health treatment and support by advancing best practices through grant making to non-profit organizations in ten southwestern Pennsylvania counties. This past October, Staunton Farms donated \$30,000 towards Teen Outreach's newest program, The Road to Mental Health Education.

The **Road to Mental Health Education** is a five-pronged approach of proactive education to raise teen mental health awareness and enhance suicide prevention. The prongs include:

1. Parent online support
2. Teen Mental Health Advisory Board
3. Evidence-based in-school education
4. Professional in-services on cyberbullying, suicide prevention, and teen depression
5. Teen discussions groups on grief & loss

#### Interested in joining?

Contact Dr. Mary Jo Podgurski for details:  
412-877-4906  
podmj@healthyteens.com

Teen Grief/Loss Discussion Groups are held at The Common Ground Teen Center (92 N. Main Street) each 3rd Thursday at 6 P.M.



Washington's Got Talent is a perfect fundraiser for the Teen Outreach -- it not only supports important youth programming but it also provides an empowering experience for Washington County youth! Washington's Got Talent is teen-driven and teen-led.



### Congratulations to this year's winners!

- 1st Place - Grace Holland
- 2nd Place - DEPAC dance studio
- 3rd Place - Victoria Cirillo
- Fan Favorite- Dylan Isbell



# TEEN OUTREACH PROGRAMS

#EACH PERSON IS A PERSON OF WORTH

## EDUCATE CHILDREN FOR HEALTHY OUTCOMES (ECHO)

ECHO is a one-on-one early educational/mentoring program that seeks to recognize young people at risk for early childbearing, violence, drug and alcohol involvement, academic failure and other risky behaviors with a goal of empowering these youth to make healthy choices. Staff is available to children and families 24/7, 365 days a year.

## PEER EDUCATION

Starting in 1995, this program has trained over 20,000 teens to teach younger teens. The current curriculum is Respect Online, which provides education into developing and maintaining a healthy social media presence.

## PREGNANT AND PARENTING TEEN PROGRAM (PPT)

A one-on-one educational mentoring program with the goal to empower young parents to graduate high school AND parent well.

## REAL TALK FOR REAL TEENS

An original sexuality education curriculum targeting young people in grades 6 – 12. The program has been presented to over 330,000 young people in five counties and 48 schools.

## REAL TALK PERFORMERS

Peer Educators interested in educational drama create their own plays, acting as both playwright and student directors. Past topics include peer pressure, labeling, teen pregnancy, stereotypes, and more.

## AMBASSADOR FOR RESPECT

Students in grades 4 – 12 are presented with a topic for respect and taught lessons promoting worthiness. Past topics included Respect for Older Adults, Respect for People of Color, Respect Online, and Self-Respect.

## ADOLESCENT ADVISORY BOARD

Started in 1999, The Adolescent Advisory Board consists of six to ten high school students from local schools. Each spring, the Board conducts a Youth Conference at Washington & Jefferson College to facilitate conversations on contemporary topics.



## COMMON GROUND TEEN CENTER

Located at 92 N. Main Street in Washington, PA, this teen-run and teen-driven safe space is open M-F from 4-8 P.M. A typical week at the Teen Center can look something like this:

**M:** Social Time, Dungeons & Dragons

**Tu:** Social Time, Anime Club, Trading Card Club

**W:** Social Time, Chess Club, Art Club

**Th:** Cooking Club, Creative Writing Club, Peer Education

**F:** Video Game Club, Games Night

*"The best thing about the teen center is that it is a place where you can be yourself"*

## ABOUT DR. MARY JO

Dr. Mary Jo Podgurski's life work is serving young people and their families. In her vast career, she is responsible for presenting sexuality education to over 330,000 young people! She also has authored 38 books and has presented over 950 workshops. Dr. Podgurski bases her numerous education programs and books on her foundational belief of **#EachPersonIsAPersonofWorth**. Her ability to respect all people, listen to young people, and develop inspiring and empowering curricula create a safe environment for learning. Dr. Podgurski founded The Washington Health System Teen Outreach in 1988 and a peer education program in 1995.



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