STANDING UP & TAKING ACTION:

One Year into Penn Medicine’s Revitalized Commitment to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

In June 2020, nearly 1,000 people from Penn Medicine and CHOP gathered in Franklin Field to kneel in memory of George Floyd and other victims of racism during a White Coats for Black Lives rally. A week later, Penn Medicine held a virtual Town Hall attended by over 1,200 people and replayed nearly 1,000 times. This community dialogue would be the first of many opportunities for Penn Medicine faculty, staff, and students to talk openly about race and racism—a critical component in the transformation of Penn Medicine to become an anti-racist, equitable, diverse and inclusive organization. By the end of that month, Penn Medicine had launched ACT (Action for Cultural Transformation), the framework leading to those crucial goals.

ACT is the enterprise-wide unifying plan for all of Penn Medicine. It is co-led by Eve Higginbotham, MD, ML, vice dean of the Office of Inclusion, Diversity, and Equity (OIDE) in the Perelman School of Medicine, and Dwaine Duckett, SVP and chief health resources officer of the University for the Health System. “We are committed to cultural transformation—not a sprint. Still, positive changes have continued throughout the year—and will continue to expand.”

ACT leaders note that this process is very much a marathon, not a sprint. Still, positive changes have already occurred. “We are committed to cultural transformation at Penn Medicine,” said J. Larry Jameson, MD, PhD, EVP at the University for the Health System and dean of the Perelman School of Medicine. “T e ACT initiative is a framework for enduring change, and we will not let up.”

Engaging Every Person in Learning and Change

One early goal was to have every person at Penn Medicine undergo unconscious bias training. Significantly, more than 98 percent of employees have now completed the training. T e online trainings were led by expert facilitators who combined instruction and interactive exercises with videos, and many participants logged off at the end of the session feeling informed and empowered. “We’ve walked away with a strategy on how to move forward and address such incidences [of unconscious bias] in the work environment or in our personal life,” one wrote in feedback. Another commented, “I now have resources and ways to work through these biases.”

Unconscious bias training was an essential part of the People pillar under ACT, which encompasses education for staff and leaders, training and advancement opportunities, consistent expectations and fair recognition—all in support of greater diversity at all levels of the organization.

“We need to continue connecting with our people and our communities as a premier source of employment and economic opportunity in the Philadelphia region,” D. M. U. said. “In the Health System we have the privilege of being able to impact individual lives through providing jobs and promotions, all while fulfilling our mission around providing excellent care.”

In parallel, ACT’s Culture pillar aims to build ongoing learning into the culture of Penn Medicine, among other goals that help to establish unity across the organization in becoming an anti-racism culture.

“Or power is in numbers,” said Larissa Morgan, MSN, RN, HUP—using Professional Development specialist and co-leader of one of the key action items within the pillar focused on culture with Phillip Ramautar, MSW, of Clinical Resource Management at Chester County Hospital. “We need to come together to do this. We’re moving something big, and it has to be moved together.”

Equitable Care for Patients, Now and in the Future

T is June, 4,000 Penn Medicine primary care patients received a package in the mail that could save their lives. Inside the friendly blue box slightly larger than a thick paperback book, they found an at-home testing kit that could help determine if they needed more advanced screening and ultimately treatment for colorectal cancer. Colorectal cancer is the second-leading cause of cancer death, and Black patients are 20 percent more likely to be diagnosed with it and 40 percent more likely to die.

Improving colorectal cancer screening rates is among the highest-level goals set by Penn Medicine’s leadership for the entire organization this year, connected to the ACT’s Clinical Care pillar. T e testing kits targeted to patients living in neighborhoods with low overall screening rates, were one of many ways Penn Medicine is tackling this disparity. T e results of the overall effort, which also

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Presby Nurse Creates a Beautiful Tribute to AAPI History

If you’ve been to Cupp 4 South at Penn Presbyterian Medical Center, you’ve likely seen some of Fayonna Gray’s work. Each month, she decorates the bulletin board to highlight different eras, events, and people. Fayonna is a nurse and a professor at the University of Pennsylvania School of Nursing.

To celebrate AAPI Heritage Month this May, Gray created a beautiful homage to AAPI history and to the contributions of various Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders to our society and culture. From the first Asian-American astronaut, to the Japanese-Americans who built the Atlantic Railroad, to Bruce Lee, to the first Asian-American Vice President Kamala Harris, Gray wanted to celebrate influential AAPI Americans who have had a positive impact on American life.

“While I’ve always been passionate about history and healthcare, these past 12 months have been particularly challenging,” said Gray. “I’m proud that Penn Medicine leadership has continued to support AAPI and Latinx employees, and that we have had a difficult experience with the rise in anti-Asian sentiment over the past year.”

Gray added, “This month it felt extra important to celebrate their heritage and important contributions through the lens of diversity, equity, and inclusion.”

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Bernie Banay, Lenora Butic, and Jenny John — all nurses on her unit — also contributed to the tribute.

In June, Gray decorated the bulletin board for Pride, highlighting important moments in LGBTQ+ history, and significant contributions from members of the LGTBQ+ community.

The Momentum Continues

Transforming our society to be anti-racist and equitable culture is a monumental task with much work still ahead. One year into the journey, AAPI’s leaders express optimism and excitement for the progress so far.

“We have achieved remarkable momentum,” said Hrysobob, who is also a professor of ophthalmology. “We’ve developed the framework to guide our work, and we developed it using an inclusive process that’s action-oriented. With infrastructure that includes anti-racism councils throughout the system, we have a clear path forward, and we’re poised to expand upon these efforts in the future.”

Enriching Our Community

Forging strong partnerships with the community to enrich the community’s health and wealth is a key component of the Fetal pillar of ACP’s Community Health Equity Agenda.

Beyond just vaccination, community engagement to address health inequities touches on every area of health need, from cancer screening to training community-based mental health providers, to Penn Medicine’s commitment to community-based preventive care as a partner in the new PHMC Public Health Campus on Cedar, where HUP – Cedar Avenue of cially opened in May.

As COVID-19 vaccines became more widely available and it became clear that under-resourced community members of color were more likely to lack access or feel hesitant about vaccination, numerous efforts across Penn Medicine arose to connect with the community, engage, educate, and help overcome barriers. In West, Southwest, and South Philadelphia, Penn Medicine engaged with faith communities including Black churches, as well as community organizations, to stand up convenient community vaccination clinics with accessible, shareable text-message-based signups.

“A dressing the vast disparity in both COVID-19 outcomes and vaccine distribution is a critical priority both locally and nationally,” said Kathleen Lee, MD, of Emergency Medicine and the Penn Medicine Center for Health Care Innovation. In the suburbs, Chester County H ospital invited leaders from a local Black church to be vaccinated and take part in an educational session to help answer questions from other congregants.

In our climate — and their lives.”

“T is month it felt extra important to celebrate their heritage and important contributions throughout history.”
THE BEST CARE FOR YOUR PATIENTS STARTS WITH THE BEST CARE FOR YOU

UPHS believes that the best care for our patients starts with the best care for our employees. That’s why the Wellfocused team is making it easier than ever for employees to take control of their health, manage mental wellness, improve their financial lives, and more. L’imagine — the UPHS Wellfocused app — is a one-stop-shop for well-being accountability and resources.

AAll employees, regardless of their medical coverage, are eligible to earn this annual incentive of up to $400 after downloading the app and participating. Get started by downloading the L’imagine ON E iOS or Android app or by accessing the program on pennmedicine.limeade.com. E-mail wellfocused@uphs.upenn.edu with questions. For questions about registering your account, please contact L’imagine by emailing support@limeade.com or by calling 888.849.4846.

NOTE: L’imagine General Health is administered by L’imagine, Inc. L’imagine program is already supported by L’imagine. One L’imagine employees can also access their program on the web at lgh.limeade.com.

PRINCETON HEALTH

Lambertville Agencies Partner to Vaccinate Low-Income Individuals

When it comes to making needed changes in health care or other issues around the world, one common piece of advice is to think globally, act locally. T at idea also applies when it comes to the Penn Medicine Office of Inclusion, Diversity, and Equity and its Action for Cultural Transformation (ACT) workgroups. Roughly, the Penn Medicine Office of Inclusion, Diversity, and Equity seeks to eliminate structural injustice, while promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion (D E I), across the health system and the communities it serves. To support this mission, ACT launched Strategic Pillar Co-Leaders, consisting of six workgroups focused on the topics of clinical, research, education, culture, community, and people. T at’s the “global” structure of how Penn Medicine works to transform its culture.

On a “local” level, the workgroups collaborate with Pennsylvania Health’s DEI Steering Committee to ensure their strategies and tactics for advancing equity in health care are properly considered and executed locally in each entity across the system. “A is a minority and as a foreign medical graduate who grew up in the Philippines, I thought that I could be an advocate and a voice for others in this position, as well as listen and understand what can be done to reduce institutional barriers for underrepresented groups,” said Ian Soriano, MD, section chief of GI Surgery at Pennsylvania Health and physician lead of the PAH DEI Steering Committee.

At the first PAH DEI Steering Committee meeting, representatives from each workgroup identified three common themes among the attendees, including mentorship to establish allies and connect people of all backgrounds, recognition of voices to ensure all groups are represented, and lastly, data gathering, such as feedback from our staff and results from initiatives. “T at is allows us to track the change we want to see,” Soriano said. As a minority and as a foreign medical graduate who grew up in the Philippines, I thought that I could be an advocate and a voice for others in this position, as well as listen and understand what can be done to reduce institutional barriers for underrepresented groups.

HOW THE PRINCIPLE OF ‘ACT Locally’ IS GETTING STARTED AT PENNSYLVANIA HOSPITAL

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DIGNITY AND COMPASSION: New Mobile Hygiene Unit to Serve Homeless in Lancaster County

I imagine it’s summer and you’ve spent the entire day outdoors. Now picture the relief and comfort you’ll feel after a shower and clean clothes. While you are homeless, these simple acts that most of us take for granted are often out of reach. Penn Medicine Lancaster General Health’s Lance County Health Homeless Coalition (Lanc Co M & YH, OM) is addressing this community need with the purchase of a mobile hygiene unit.

“T e unit is more than a facility for personal hygiene. It is an endeavor aimed at redressing human dignity to a population that is too often overlooked,” said Jennifer L. Koppel, MHA, director, Penn Medicine Lancaster General Health’s Of ce for Lanc Co M & YH, OM. “Black and brown populations represent 28 and 25 percent of the homeless population, respectively. ‘It’s important to make sure we are using a racial equity lens when we create and deploy services,’” Koppel added.

A trip to arrive in August, the trailer (to be pulled by a truck) will house two shower/sink combinations and an of ce for community care—from mobile medical care provided by the Lancaster Emergency Medical Services Association, to social services of ered by a variety of partner organizations. T e staff will hand out free underwear and socks, as well as non-perishable snacks. Funding from a grant will make it possible to offer paramedicine services to anyone in need, regardless of insurance. Services will include vaccines, wound care and blood pressure checks. T e unit will also be available for behavioral health services via telehealth.

Learn more at https://lancomeomyhome.org.

CHESTER COUNTY HOSPITAL LOOKS TO HELP Clear the Path for Local Minority Students

Last summer, Chester County Hospital (CCH) began a partnership with a local nonprofit called the Young Men & Women in Charge (YM & WC) Foundation. T e organization is dedicated to increasing the number of economically-disadvantaged and/or historically underrepresented physicians through all the stories she has told.

PEOPLE’S FRIDGE: AN Oasis of Food for Those in Need

It’s like an oasis in the desert. Donata Dubose, an administrative secretary in Cardiology, volunteers at the People’s Fridge on 52nd, located in front of Mina’s World, a small café in West Philly, and received a Penn Medicine CARES grant to support these efforts. T e People’s Fridge is a place where people take what they need, Dubose said. “If someone is hungry and needs to empty the whole fridge, that’s fine. It’s about people putting in food and others taking it, any time of day.” T e People’s Fridge was started last summer by sisters Sonam and Sonia Panik, in memory of their father who lost to COVID. T e café, which they run, provides the electricity, and the sisters oversee the initiative. T e refrigerator is a commercial model, with glass doors like that found in a grocery store.

Read more about the People’s Fridge in System News online!

DIFFERENCE MAKERS

INSPIRING STAFF THROUGH THE GIFT OF STORYTELLING

When a surgical technician volunteers on Saturdays to ensure kids in her community have safe places to play; when a patient transporter builds bonds with long-term patients as they roll through the halls for scans; when nurses on a unit help cheer patient years after year through crafting creative Christmas trees... Health care is full of stories that unfold every day — and when people know their stories have been heard, shared, and appreciated, it means the world.

A dedicated teller of such stories as the editor of HUPlate and System Novel, Sally Sapega has touched thousands of lives and raised up those who might otherwise go unrecognized. Sapega retired in July 2021 after more than 25 years at Penn, leaving a lasting impact through all the stories she has told.

“One of our goals with this partnership is to help create a pipeline for young students in Chester County, especially those of color,” said Rhonda West-Haynes, MHA, BSN, director of Revenue Operations at CCH. “‘Any kids only think of doctors and nurses when they think of hospitals, but there are all kinds of career opportunities within a health system. We want to help expose the scholars to those roles. But, above all, we want to support their budding interest in the health sciences.’

T e hospital was recently awarded $1,000 through the Penn Medicine CARES Grant program, which provides funding to help support community initiatives throughout the health system’s geographic footprint. T e grant will be used to purchase the required YM & WC uniforms for 10 scholars, said Jackie Felicenti, MA, the hospital’s chief HR of cer. ‘T e money will go toward necessary education materials and student expenses for a successful summer experience.’

For Sapega, through telling stories in HUPlate since September 2000, HUP has been her most meaningful professional home. HUP employees might not all have known her name, but most will recognize the brightly dressed, curly-haired woman they’ve seen walking the halls with her notebook, camera, and digital recorder, ready to capture stories with a smile.

“HUP is so large and complicated that sharing the little things makes it feel so much more human,” said Regina Cunningham, PhD, RN, CEO of HUP. “Sally gets the little details that collectively make up this incredible organization. She brings all of that to life. To be a storyteller is a gift, and I am grateful for her for it.”

AT PENN MEDICINE, WE ALL ASPIRE TO BE DIFFERENCE MAKERS WHO REPRESENT THE PENN MEDICINE EXPERIENCE (PMX) IN ACTION.

PMX SETS A CONSISTENT STANDARD ACROSS ALL OF OUR ENTITIES AND WORK LOCATIONS TO MAKE EVERY TOUCHPOINT AN OPPORTUNITY TO BUILD ENDURING CONNEXIONS WITH PATIENTS, FAMILIES, VISITORS AND COLLEAGUES, WHICH IS A FOUNDATIONAL PART OF THE UPHS SUCCESS SHARE PROGRAM.

T e newsletter is produced monthly for Penn Medicine employees. Access System News online at PennMedicine.org/SystemNews.