

## AKRON

Developer Tony Troppe said he has purchased the former Temple Israel and plans to turn it into an arts center. **PAGE 7**



**HEALTH CARE:** Cleveland Clinic, University Hospitals join forces to boost region. **PAGE 10**

# CRAIN'S

CLEVELAND BUSINESS

CRAINSCLEVELAND.COM | AUGUST 22, 2022



Dr. Ed Barksdale Jr., surgeon in chief at University Hospitals Rainbow Babies & Children's Hospital, Mary Anne Crampton, a volunteer with Moms Demand Action, and Beverly Pettrey, captain and interim chief of the Cleveland State University Police Department, are a few of the local officials working to combat gun violence and its effect on the community. | KEN BLAZE FOR CRAIN'S CLEVELAND BUSINESS

# SEARCHING FOR SOLUTIONS

Gun violence is a public health crisis, a political crisis and, ultimately, an economic crisis. Not only is it costly in terms of law enforcement, physical and mental health care and other obvious expenses, it's a threat to efforts by Cleveland, Akron and the state of Ohio to build back population and improve the environment businesses and people need to thrive. **PAGE 15**

## Evicting landlords don't need to prove properties are lead-safe

Appeals court rules in favor of Cleveland's apartment industry

BY MICHELLE JARBOE

The apartment industry won a significant legal battle this month, when an appeals court invalidated a Cleveland Housing Court rule that required landlords seeking evictions to comply with the city's lead-safe certification mandate.

Members of the Lead Safe Cleveland Coalition, a broad-based group focused on curbing

childhood lead poisoning, viewed the rule as a key tool for forcing property owners to clean up rental homes. But landlords, and the Northern Ohio Apartment Association, saw the edict as a judicial overreach.

On Aug. 11, a three-judge panel in Cleveland agreed.

"There is no authority in the statute for preventing an eviction," the judges wrote, citing state law. "If the property is in violation of (Cleveland's lead-safe ordinance) or any other health and safety law, the remedy is to

See **LEAD** on Page 25

## New development tactics

Legislation in North Olmsted is designed to lure in investment

BY STAN BULLARD

North Olmsted sits at the western edge of Cuyahoga County. Most of its residential growth came after the 1960s, near the end of the post-World War II suburban movement.

Though it once had an interurban electric rail line connecting it to other parts of the county, its development is distinctly later than the trolley era that defined inner-ring suburbs from Lakewood to Shaker Heights.

However, its scarcity of developable land — city officials say it is 94% developed — puts it in the same boat as much older areas. Most of its opportunities are likely in redevelopment. A

flurry of legislation adopted the past two months, with some pieces still pending, is designed to change the suburb's posture from catching what comes its way to taking steps to lure more commercial and residential investment.

At first blush, legislation passed earlier this summer to permit phased development looks made to order for potential redevelopment of the Sears area of Great Northern Mall.

But Mayor Nicole Dailey Jones and others say the steps are being taken with the long haul in mind rather than a specific property play.

See **NORTH OLMSTED** on Page 24

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# New college presidents to prioritize minority student engagement

BY KIM PALMER

Of the list of the 20 most in-demand science and tech job categories in Northeast Ohio, minority workers are underrepresented in all but one, Jacob Duritsky, Team NEO's vice president of strategy and research, told an audience Thursday, Aug. 18, at Cuyahoga Community College's Corporate College East.

In the next five to 10 years, Northeast Ohio's ability to attract, retrain and retain minority talent will determine whether the region can build the workforce necessary for future economic growth, he said.

"It's all about the talent supply-demand gap," Duritsky said during his presentation of two Team NEO research reports: "Lost Opportunities," which is about gender workforce disparities; and "2022 Misaligned Opportunities," focused on disparities in minority representation in the region's education and workforce.

The "Misaligned Opportunities" document follows two years of reporting on COVID's impact on the region's Black, Hispanic, Asian and racially mixed workforce, with an deep examination into minority representation in science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) fields. It aims to look at the diverse talent

pools across the region and to help identify ways to remove barriers to access and success for what has been an underemployed workforce population, Duritsky said.

"This is a workforce that needs to be tapped into, and the education factor is critical," Duritsky said, adding that the choices students make in the near future will affect the talent pipeline in the next five to 10 years.

Although Hispanic, Black and Asian students continue to be proportionately underrepresented in higher education, post-secondary enrollment for those groups increased by 25% from 2010 to 2020, according to the "Misaligned Opportunities" report.

Graduation rates also trended up in that same time period, with Hispanic students in Northeast Ohio completing STEM programs at an increase of 157% over those 10 years and Black students seeing a

10% increase, the report found. The progress is encouraging, but those students are still underrepresented when it comes to entering and completing post-secondary degrees.

"The barriers to that are financial, they're rooted in poverty, they're rooted in institutional and generational racism," Cleveland State University president Laura Bloomberg said during a panel discussion with



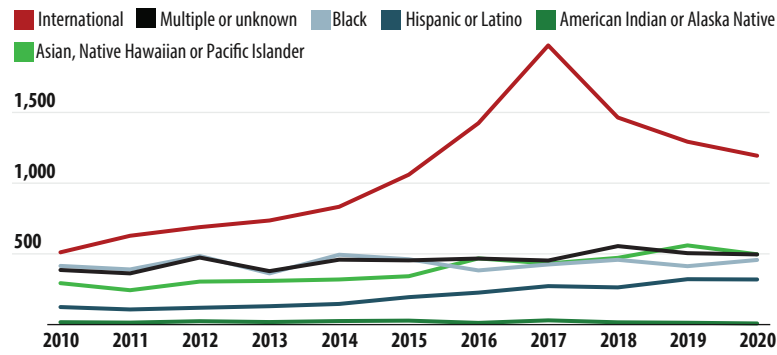
Baston



Bloomberg

## Northeast Ohio STEM program completions by race

Over the past decade, minority student completions in STEM programs have trended upward.



SOURCE: Lightcast 2010-2020 (Previously Emsi Burning Glass) via Team NEO | CRAIN'S CLEVELAND BUSINESS GRAPHIC

Michael Baston, president of Tri-C, at the Team NEO event.

According to data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics, racial disparities persist in both STEM education and STEM employment. In 2021, white employees represented more than 80% of the workforce in 15 of the top 20 STEM occupations identified in the "Misaligned Opportunities" report.

Bloomberg said she wants to increase minority enrollment by recognizing the unique barriers those populations face in seeking a post-secondary education, in tandem with welcoming and supporting the diversity they bring as students.

The future of higher education is less pipeline and more pathway, she said.

"I think about it like a freeway system that is navigated to have multiple on-ramps and off-ramps that go different directions at different times," Bloomberg said. "There is a growing number of people who have bachelor's degrees who may want to go back and pick up an associate's degree or some specific credential."

Flexibility and portability are critical as the region looks to attract certain communities to higher education, Baston said. Things like credit for prior learning and work experience, opening community learning centers so potential students do not have to travel, and offering plans for shorter training certificates will help bring in more diversity to the region's colleges and universities, he said.

"We have to be more intentional

about expanding the concept of college," Baston said. "It is not just degree programs. We have to redefine and demystify this concept of college."

Shortening the time to complete a degree and offering a clear path to graduation is critical to helping the growing number of Northeast Ohioans with some college and no degree, a situation known as stranded credits.

"We have to be able to help people get those credits that they earned connected to new educational opportunities so that they can get to degree completion," Baston said.

The goal is to engage potential workers in STEM and other in-demand fields who don't think college is obtainable, Baston said.

With new STEM jobs expected to increase by 10.5% in the next eight years, and projections for similar growth in the Asian and Hispanic populations, the region's workforce will be better positioned if minority talent continues to grow.

Bloomberg stressed that better representation in Northeast Ohio's higher education and STEM workforce has other benefits as well.

"We have a lot of research that tells us that we are better in industry, in commerce, in banking, in nonprofits, when there is a diverse community," Bloomberg said. "It's what drives me when I think about diversity in higher education."

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## THE WEEK

**NEW LEASE ON LIFE:** DSV, a global logistics company headquartered in Hedehusene, Denmark, has leased an empty warehouse at 9780 Mopar Drive in Streetsboro for a big increase in its operations here. DSV leased all of the building, which was vacated by Best Buy for a new, larger warehouse in Richfield Township, according to JLL Inc. Joe Messina, a JLL senior managing director and tenant rep agent, said the lease marks DSV's entry in Northeast Ohio as a logistics operator, although it already owns the Shurtape property in Avon and has a freight sales office in North Olmsted. "We evaluated Columbus, Northeast Ohio and Youngstown for this project," Messina said. "Streetsboro landed the lease because of its proximity to available labor, interstate highways and the condition of the property."

**HOME PURCHASE:** A Maryland investor has purchased the Home Depot store at Severance Town Center for \$17.15 million. Public records show that a company tied to Dr. Leonard Berger, a retired physician and former hotelier, bought the big-box building in Cleveland Heights in mid-July. The deal was part of a 1031 exchange, a real estate swap that allows an investor to defer paying taxes on capital gains. The seller was an affiliate of the Metcalf Family Living Trust, based in California. Through a limited liability company, the trust paid \$13.7 million for the Home Depot store in late 2019.

**PLACE YOUR BETS:** Which bars and restaurants will offer sports betting next year? Ohioans got an early answer on Wednesday, Aug. 17. The



Cleveland Browns quarterback Deshaun Watson will be suspended for 11 games and fined \$5 million. | CLEVELAND BROWNS

Ohio Casino Control Commission approved its first batch of Type C sports betting licenses, paving the way for a bevy of Northeast Ohio businesses to offer sports gambling when it becomes legal on Jan. 1, 2023. Type C retailers include bars, restaurants and other liquor permit holders who want to offer lottery-style sports betting kiosks. The commission approved about 200 entities at Wednesday's meeting, including dozens in Northeast Ohio. About 700 submitted applications and 1,250 were pre-approved to apply. The applicants will be licensed

for three years, beginning Jan. 1.

**SUSPENSION EXPANDED:** Cleveland Browns quarterback Deshaun Watson will be suspended for the first 11 games of the season and fined \$5 million for violations of the NFL's personal conduct policy as part of a settlement reached between the league and the NFL players' union on Thursday, Aug. 18. Also, Watson will "promptly undergo a professional evaluation by behavioral experts and will follow their treatment program," according to the league. The suspension will begin Aug. 30 and he will be

eligible to return on Nov. 28, just in time to face his former team, the Houston Texans, on Dec. 4 in Houston. The settlement concludes the process and there will be no designee ruling or additional legal steps, the league said. The NFL and the Cleveland Browns each will add \$1 million to the fine, which is the largest for a player in league history.

**PAY UP:** Walmart Inc., CVS Health Corp. and Walgreens Boots Alliance Inc. were ordered to pay a total of \$650 million over their failure to properly monitor opioid prescrip-

tions in Ohio, in the drug industry's latest setback in the sprawling litigation over the painkillers. A federal judge in Cleveland on Wednesday, Aug. 17, ruled that the companies must pay the "abatement" fees over 15 years to help two Northeast Ohio counties deal with the fallout from the public health crisis created by the improper sale of the drugs. The jury backed claims by Trumbull and Lake counties that the pharmacy chains had failed to create legally mandated monitoring systems to detect illegitimate opioid prescriptions. The counties sought reimbursement for the costs of dealing with addictions and fatal overdoses. Lake County will get more than \$306 million and Trumbull County more than \$344 million, according to court filings.

**JUMPING INTO THE STREAM:** Cord-cutters, rejoice! Bally Sports Ohio soon will be available to stream without a cable or satellite subscription. Bally Sports+, a direct-to-consumer streaming service, will launch across all 19 Bally Sports regional sports network brands on Sept. 26, Diamond Sports Group, a subsidiary of Sinclair Broadcast Group, announced on Wednesday, Aug. 17. That includes Bally Sports Ohio and Bally Sports Great Lakes, which air the Cleveland Guardians, Cleveland Cavaliers and Columbus Blue Jackets. The good news is, the service will launch in time for the Cavaliers' regular-season opener, scheduled for Oct. 19 in Toronto. The bad news? Fans won't be able to watch the Cleveland Guardians' final nine regular-season games, which run from Sept. 27 to Oct. 5.

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## SPORTS BUSINESS

# Access looks to help athletes make money off personal brand

BY JOE SCALZO

### How it works

Los Angeles Lakers forward LeBron James has the biggest social media audience of any professional athlete in America, with 131 million followers on Instagram, 52 million on Twitter and 27 million on Facebook.

King James makes a princely sum for his sponsored posts on those platforms — he gets upward of \$425,000 each time he promotes brands such as Nike or Hummer on Instagram — but that cash comes from companies, not fans.

Which begs the question: What if James convinced a fraction of his followers — say, 5% — to pay a monthly subscription fee in exchange for exclusive content, like behind-the-scenes footage of one of his workouts or a preview of what he'll be wearing after the game?

How much would that be worth? More importantly, how much would that platform be worth to an athlete with a smaller, but equally passionate following?

Rocky River native Tyler Harkins plans to find out. The former St. Edward High School and Ohio University hockey player recently teamed up with another former Bobcat hockey player, Garrett Jenkins, to create Access, a social media platform for athletes.

The subscription-based site is patterned after Twitch (e-sports) and Patreon (creators and artists) and is designed to serve as a "one-stop-shop for the athlete community to interact with fans."

"I think this is going to be an absolute freaking rocket ship," said Tyler's father, Donnie Harkins, the chief strategy officer. "We're really excited about it."

Access is designed for athletes at all levels, as well as anyone involved in athletics, such as coaches, trainers and equipment managers. Specifically, Access could provide a boost for amateur athletes looking to take advantage of name, image and likeness (NIL) opportunities.

"Let's say you're a five-star recruit and you want to announce where you're going to attend college," said Donnie, a former hockey coach whose two brothers, Todd and Brett, were NHL draft choices. "You could have a one-off pay-per-view event for \$5. CBS Sports can't get it, ESPN can't get it, 247 Sports — none of them. You create content and you own the content. Those other networks and media outlets would have to pay a licensing fee to get access to that event, but you can charge your fans for the pay-per-view."

"The most passionate fans are willing to pay for that kind of access."

On Patreon, they already are. The site has more than 6 million users and more than 200,000 content creators (artists, podcasters and musicians). The biggest money-maker among podcasters is one devoted to crime scene investigation, Donnie said.

"If there's that many users that are interested in Patreon, there's gotta be way more users interested in athletes," he said.

Here's how Access works. Athletes create a profile that can include posts (photos, videos and documents); stories; messaging (one-on-one conversations); and livestreams. It also can include a link to a merchandise shop; a "Shoutout" section, which allows fans to pay for birthday greetings (like the website Cameo); and a tip jar, where followers can tip money for things like "coolness" or "style."

So, if you're one of the 2 million people who follows LSU gymnast Olivia Dunne on Instagram, you can send her money simply because you like her haircut and it's not an NCAA violation.

"It can't be performance-based or recruiting-based because of NIL," Donnie said. "But if you're an alumni, you can tip her 100 grand if you wanted to and it's all legal. You can tip her a million dollars or 10 million dollars if you wanted to."

Access uses an 80/20 revenue model, with creators keeping 80% of the profit and Access keeping the other 20%. Athletes can set their own price for subscriptions, or charge per post, and Access doesn't require creators to have a minimum number of followers.

Ideally, Tyler said, creators would convert 5% of their social media followers to subscriptions. As an example, Ohio State quarterback C.J. Stroud has 128,000 Instagram followers. If he converted 5% of those followers to a \$5-a-month subscription model, he would make \$25,600 a month based on the 80/20 split. At a 1% conversion rate, he would make \$5,120 a month.

"We're being realistic," Tyler said. "It may not be in that 1%-5% range at the start, but that's the goal we're striving for."

The platform is in the beta stage of development, with plans to go live this fall. Access will be available on Apple's app store and Google Play.

"We're kind of rounding third," Tyler said of the timeline. "We're getting people on there so we can see which bugs need to be fixed, which features are working right away and obviously getting some customer feedback. Then, in the fall, we'll be getting it out the door."

### Origin story

Access grew out of an idea for another subscription-based site called Go Train, which would have charged users for training-specific content. Tyler got that idea while doing private hockey coaching lessons in the Cleveland area. There was significant demand for his services, but he grew frustrated by the limited number of time slots available at area ice rinks.

"It's not like a football field or a basketball court, where you can access it pretty much 24-7 in Cleveland," he said. "I was like, 'I can't be the only one going through this issue.'"

Go Train was designed to meet the growing need for private instruction, but Tyler quickly realized it would be difficult to monitor all of



A mock-up of what an Access mobile page would look like for Ohio State quarterback C.J. Stroud. | ACCESS

the creators to make sure they were qualified and providing quality content.

"So I took a step back to reassess, and it opened up a whole world of access," said Tyler, who played pro hockey with the minor-league Birmingham Black Bears last winter. "Athletes in general have this brand with a really loyal fan base. I myself have fans and so do all of my teammates. Once you get to a high-enough level, you're a hometown hero to someone, whether you're collegiate or pro."

"I figured there was a market here for athletes."

So, Tyler did some research, asking people whether this is something they would actually pay for.

"That put me in a vulnerable spot, because if you get a lot of nos, that crushes your dreams," he said, laughing. "But the feedback was good."

Access isn't the only company looking to invade this space — Access lists six direct competitors on its pitch deck, along with indirect competitors such as YouTube and Cameo — but Donnie isn't worried. Having competition means he's on the right track, he said.

"If I'm the only one standing on this beach, am I really that smart?" he said. "I believe we're in a good position compared to those other companies."

Donnie has been in this position before. In 2013, he started TEAM-INN, a digital platform used to books hotels at reduced rates for youth sports organizations. In March of 2018, he sold it to Blue Star Sports.

The Harkins are hoping to do the same with Access, although they're in no hurry.

"We're not going to hand it over right off the rip," Tyler said. "I want to stay on this journey and keeping building it until someone a lot smarter than me can take it over."

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# OhioGuidestone focuses on expanding access, research under new leadership

BY LYDIA COUTRÉ

Brant Russell assumed the role of president and CEO of OhioGuidestone this year with a goal of ensuring open, effective access to behavioral health care.

COVID and other challenges over the past couple of years have highlighted the needs for mental health care, substance use disorder services and other programs offered by the Berea-headquartered nonprofit, which has buildings in 17 counties across Northeast, Northwest and Central Ohio.

OhioGuidestone offers a range of services and programs reaching people from 79 counties: comprehensive mental health and substance use disorder services, early childhood services, workforce programming, family services, out-of-home care (including foster care services) and comprehensive care, including a crisis line, pharmacy and research. The organization's total revenue in fiscal year 2020 was \$72.9 million, according to its form 990.

Russell — who succeeded Richard Frank upon his retirement this summer after a 43-year-career with the organization — is focused on expanding and easing access to that broad list of services.

"We're trying to figure out ways to create access, to create capacity, to reach out to more individuals across our regions that we're currently in, and also regions that we're not currently in," Russell said. "And does that look like a future in different states? Maybe, but right now, it's a matter of, you know, where are we now? And how do we do it differently? How do we differentiate ourselves?"

**"THEY'RE TRYING TO TREAT, YOU KNOW, THE TRADITIONAL MEDICAL CONDITIONS — HYPERTENSION, DIABETES, AND THINGS SUCH AS THAT — BUT THEY'RE FAILING IN CERTAIN POPULATIONS BECAUSE IF (PATIENTS ARE) HAVING ANXIETY AND DEPRESSION AND HAVING MENTAL HEALTH DISORDERS, THEY ARE NOT TAKING CARE OF THEIR PHYSICAL HEALTH, SO THEY'RE TRULY INTERCONNECTED."**

— Brant Russell, president and CEO of OhioGuidestone

A few years ago, Benjamin Kearney, OhioGuidestone's executive vice president and chief clinical officer, was asked what would make the biggest difference in patient lives, and how can they prove it? He mapped out, built and in 2018 launched the Institute of Family and Community Impact collaboration with Brittany Pope, director of applied clinical sciences and research, as well as research fellow for the institute.

The institute leverages research, clinical innovation, training and advocacy "to impact people, programs, practices, and most importantly policy," Pope said.

"Because if we keep finding some of the same social determinants of health that are impacting

our clients, as well as a stumbling block for our great care that we're doing in the community, we need to address that, because we don't want to keep reproducing social ills," she said.

In her role as director of applied clinical sciences and research, Pope works to bring research and learning into the agency through a practice-informed lens, "but we also inform practice." It's a matter of looking for what may help with the provision of care, researching it and then getting the tools into practices in a way that complements what clinicians are already doing.

"That application is what makes this unique," said Kearney, who has been with the organization since 1993.

The work of the institute includes developing Joyful Together, a science-based tool created to address adverse childhood experiences and toxic stress. The parent-implemented model offers ways to infuse joyful play with their children into their daily routines, which science shows can decrease stress in parents and supports childhood resiliency, Pope said.

Another initiative is called Father's Feelings. The institute developed a paternal perinatal depression screening tool, recognizing that fathers are sometimes left out of such screenings for some policy and equity reasons, Pope said. What started as a validation study to learn more and understand how to help fathers be more engaged ballooned into a bigger initiative that now involves coaching fathers, including on Joyful Together.

things. And we address things like equity all of the time through what we say and do."

Having inherited a great culture and a team of caregivers who believe in the mission and are doing the tough work every day, Russell is focused on taking OhioGuidestone to new heights.

Russell continues to push Kearney and the team by asking questions similar to the one that sparked the institute: "What would differentiate us? What would make us next-level?" Kearney said even better patient-centered care would help differentiate the nonprofit.

A trained medic and nurse before shifting to operations, Russell is focused on solutions that also integrate behavioral and physical care. Primary care physicians are seeing in their patient panel greater behavioral health needs, which, left untreated, can result in worsening physical health.

"They're trying to treat, you know, the traditional medical conditions — hypertension, diabetes, and things such as that — but they're failing in certain populations because if (patients are) having anxiety and depression and having mental health disorders, they are not taking care of their physical health, so they're truly interconnected," Russell said. "My hope is that we can work with this obviously very talented team and come up with ways that we are on both sides of the equation."

Previously, Russell worked in Michigan as regional president and CEO of Ascension Providence Hospital and Brighton Center for Recovery, and chief operating officer of Ascension St. John Hospital. A Rocky River native with degrees from Cleveland State University and Baldwin Wallace University, Russell's position with OhioGuidestone is a return to Northeast Ohio, where he has worked for Summa Health, Cleveland Clinic and MetroHealth.

Ultimately, he's looking to con-

With these and its other initiatives, the institute is focused on adding to nationally accepted evidence-based best practices with OhioGuidestone's experience delivering mental health to diverse populations in rural, urban and suburban communities.

"What are we learning that's not being represented in the annals of journals and peer-reviewed journals because those populations aren't included? And that also is what differentiates our research because it looks like the work we do in the communities," Pope said. "We do the hard work. We work with people where you do have to chase them down a few times. They do want care, but they're navigating so many different

continue to enhance OhioGuidestone's wraparound services. Already, the organization works with community organizations to address needs a client may have. They partner with local food banks, workforce agencies and organizations that offer financial literacy training.

In addition to working with more primary care providers, Russell wants to continue to find like-minded organizations to partner with to support the health of the patients OhioGuidestone serves and whose care it manages.

"I think that, for us, is starting to get to the next level," he said.

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# Food service supplier Cres Cor expands portfolio

Branches into new market with decontamination cabinet for first responders

BY RACHEL ABBEY MCCAFFERTY

The COVID-19 pandemic disrupted a lot of companies' usual approach to business.

For some, like Cres Cor in Mentor, it provided a new path forward.

Cres Cor, a longtime maker of products like heated cabinets for the food service industry, in the past year began serving a new market with a new product: decontamination cabinets for first responders.

Cres Cor got its start in 1936 as a job shop in Cleveland, said chairman Cliff Baggott. During World War II, the family-owned company made a lot of military products, but after the war was over, it turned to a different area of high demand: food service. People were eating out more, Baggott said, and franchises were taking off. Food products needed to be delivered, and they needed to be kept warm. The company has created hundreds of products over the years to meet those needs, Baggott said.

"That's brought us up and been our main driver for all those years," he said.

Cres Cor, which employs about 150, makes all of its products in Mentor. Baggott, who recently took on the

role of chairman for the company, passing the role of president to his son, Greg Baggott, declined to share annual revenue for the family-owned business.

While Cres Cor, which moved to Mentor in the late '90s, has weathered other downturns, the pandemic posed a particularly strong challenge as restaurants shut their doors and stopped placing orders. The company had tried over the years to create new products for different markets, but they hadn't gotten a foothold. One that's still in progress is drying and decontamination products for the sports industry. But any growing interest in that space had also dried up in the face of a pandemic.

Still, during the early days of COVID-19, Baggott said Cres Cor realized they had a potential solution to the pressing need to decontaminate masks, using its metal-based core competencies and heat and humidity.

The company sought help from University Hospitals to vet its technology.

University Hospitals set up an internal task force focused on personal protective equipment needs — making, sourcing or reusing PPE — early in the pandemic, said Kipum Lee, vice president of innovation and product strategy at UH Ventures. The decontamination product from Cres Cor fit what the hospital system was

looking into in terms of the reuse of PPE. The claim that the company could decontaminate N95 masks without chemicals, just using heat and water, was intriguing, he said, but it needed to be proven out.

UH Ventures, with physician-scientists Dr. Shine Raju and Dr. Amrita John, took some of Cres Cor's prototypes and tested them out for free, checking under what conditions they would work, the time it would take and more. The results were "promising," Lee said. The technology achieved "log 6," he said, or "99.9999 efficacy" in terms of disinfection.

Baggott said Cres Cor started to seek FDA emergency approval, but the pandemic began to wane and mask supply caught up to demand before it was granted. But Cres Cor didn't abandon its new idea; it just shifted its focus.

The company learned that its approach to quick decontamination could serve first responders like firefighters.

The majority of calls firefighters are responding to aren't fires, Baggott said; they're EMS calls. And they're dealing with biological hazards, like viruses or bed bugs, on a regular basis.

The metal Cres Guard mobile decontamination cabinet uses heat and humidity, not chemicals. It's a manageable size at about 6 feet tall and 2.5 feet by 2.5 feet wide. And press

materials from Cres Cor note that the decontamination cabinet takes 15 minutes to clean gear, versus an hour-long wash cycle and 24 to 48 hours of drying that more traditional methods might take.

Cres Cor asked University Hospitals if it had the capacity to run more tests on the first responder product, and the system ultimately decided it did not, Lee said. But they gave an "indirect stamp of approval," he added, giving the company advice on how to best test it.

"They took that, ran with it, and we're so excited for where they are today," Lee said.

After the company again verified that its technology was decontaminating products to a high standard, it began networking and attending trade shows. Since the fall of 2021, the company has sold about 65 units, Baggott said.

One of those customers was the nearby Mentor Fire Department.

The department purchased five of the cabinets, one for each station, said Robert Evans, the department's deputy chief of staff. Before, the department had to rely on its three industrial washing machines. In addition to the long wash and dry cycle, the department's gear had to travel to where those machines were located. The Cres Guard cabinets are less expensive, and they're portable.

And what makes the decontami-



Cres Cor introduced its Cres Guard cabinets for first responders in 2021.

| CRES COR HEALTH & SAFETY

nation cabinets really stand out is the "quick turnaround time," Evans said, helping the department get equipment back in service fast.

Baggott said the awareness of the need for sanitation has increased drastically because of the pandemic, and the company has the opportunity to find more ways to offer that with their products.

Baggott said there are now other, related products in development, though he couldn't share details.

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# New life planned for former Temple Israel in Akron

BY DAN SHINGLER

Akron developer and arts backer Tony Troppe thinks he has found another way to help reinvigorate Akron and one of its historic buildings, this time with an arts center in Highland Square.

Troppe has purchased the Temple Israel on Merriman Road in the neighborhood and said he plans to turn it into a small venue for music, dance and other art forms, as well as a center of arts education and community engagement. Summit County records show a Troppe corporation set up for the project, Temple Hall Revival Group, bought the property for \$500,000 at the end of last year.

"What we're doing right now is getting the official historic designation as a landmark, Troppe said of the building.

Akron's Planning Commission voted to support that designation at its Aug. 12 meeting and will recommend that Akron City Council approve it in September, said Jason Segedy, the city's planning and urban development director.

As for Troppe's newest love, it's "a 1911 neoclassical revival made in the Lewis Miller 'Akron Plan' ... It's an octagonal basilica with a 35-foot-high ceiling," he said.

For those who don't quite have Troppe's level of interest in the history of Akron architecture, Miller was a 19th-century inventor, industrialist and philanthropist, in addition to being the developer of the Akron Plan. Miller developed the idea — a modern architectural concept that consists of a central assembly hall surrounded by small classrooms — for Sunday schools, and it later was adopted for other uses. Troppe said that included Temple Israel, which was designed by Harpster & Bliss, a prominent Akron architecture firm in 1911, when the temple was built.

Troppe now has his own plans in the works for the 46,000-square-foot building.

"We're going to be educating people in the arts," he said.

That will include using the site as a venue for music and dance performances in its main auditorium, which can seat about 250 people, Troppe said.

In addition to performances, Troppe said he plans to have dance, music and visual arts leaders use the main space and the small rooms that surround it as a teaching center. He already has received interest from some in doing just that.

Bobby Selvaggio, a local saxophone player and director of the Jazz Studies program at Kent State University, said he has seen the space and wants to use it to help introduce more young people to jazz — and to teach them as well.

Selvaggio and Troppe already knew each other. Selvaggio said he books jazz acts for Troppe's Blu Jazz+ club in downtown Akron, where he also has performed.

"What I'm going to bring to the table are aspects like a creative-arts collaborative center that will be a place where students, professionals and the community can come together to work on art and perform art and do it together," Selvaggio said.

"There could be a project with music and dance, where we bring students in to see how the process is done, attend master classes and maybe even be part of the performance. ... It's going to be unique to this whole region, in my opinion."

Also interested is Brian Murphy, a professional ballet dancer and teacher who in the past has worked with the Ohio and Cleveland Ballet companies, and now dances professionally here and across the country.

"What I bring is dance," Murphy said. "Master classes, workshops and even shows."

Murphy said he has talked with dancers and other artists who are eager to see the development progress so they can participate.

"I've already talked to a couple of people, and they're very interested

and wanting," Murphy said. "Artists are very willing to give their talent."

The facility also could be made available to Akron Public Schools for arts education and programming, Troppe said. That's another idea Murphy supports.

"It would bring kids in and let them work with professionals. That's something that excites me," Murphy said. "It creates a great synergy between the professionals and the youth."

Troppe's next step is to win council's approval for the historic landmark status. After that, he'll likely need a zoning variance to use it as a venue, Segedy said.

Segedy said he supports the project, likes what he has seen in Troppe's plans so far and is recommending that council support the landmark designation, which would give the site tax benefits Troppe could use to help finance improvements.

"We like the use he has for it, and we love that it's being reused," Segedy said.

The site likely will need the zoning changes for Troppe to use it as a live entertainment venue, but the site already has a long history of hosting attendees from its past as a temple, Segedy said.

As for improvements, Troppe said he'll spend money renovating the interior and creating classrooms and other spaces. He hasn't determined what that will cost, but he said the building doesn't need any major structural or mechanical work.

"She's a beauty," Troppe said. "The building is in excellent shape, including all the mechanical, electrical and plumbing. ... Basically, it's a light remodel."

As for when the project will be done, Troppe isn't sure, but said he hopes to move quickly.

"I hope in my lifetime," he joked. "We have a bunch of parties planned for year-end."

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The former Temple Israel in Akron's Highland Square neighborhood. | DAN SHINGLER/CRAIN'S CLEVELAND BUSINESS

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RICH WILLIAMS FOR CRAIN'S CLEVELAND BUSINESS

## EDITORIAL

# Center stage

Before he accepted the job as the next president and CEO of Playhouse Square, Craig Hassall, in one of his conversations with the nonprofit's board chair, Amy Brady, asked what keeps her up at night about the organization's future.

Her response, in a word: "complacency."

"I thought that was a really cool answer," Hassall said in an interview. "This (Playhouse Square) is an incredible place, but it says to me they want to see it continue to grow. They want to maximize the assets. If they didn't, it wouldn't be the job for me."

Hassall, 57, CEO of London's Royal Albert Hall since 2017, will get his chance to put his stamp on the place early next year, when he arrives in Cleveland. He'll bring an outsider's perspective — the Australia native also led Opera Australia in Sydney and was managing director of the English National Ballet — to a role that has been filled by two local icons. Current president and CEO Gina Vernaci, Playhouse Square's former chief operating officer, has nearly 40 years with the organization. She succeeded Art Falco, who retired in 2019 after running it for nearly 30 years.

Brady said Playhouse Square's search committee wasn't necessarily looking for an outsider. The focus, she said, was on finding "an experienced CEO" who was "a strategist and a visionary." Brady said there was, unsurprisingly, "incredible interest in the role," and that Hassall stood out as "a big thinker," which benefits Playhouse Square and the region.

Hassall came to town a couple of times during the interview process, and he said he sees big opportunities to maximize the use of Playhouse Square's 11 performance venues, particularly as the live-events industry continues to bounce back from pandemic-related shutdowns, and audiences yearn for connections to the real world that theater, dance, music and other art forms can provide.

"They're the type of spaces that should be known not just nationally, but globally," Hassall said. They made a fast impression on him. Hassall acknowledged that before he was approached about the job, he "had never heard" of Playhouse Square.

It helps enormously, he said, that Playhouse Square is "very strong" financially, with a huge base of season-ticket

subscribers to its KeyBank Broadway series; resident companies that include Cleveland Ballet, the Cleveland International Film Festival, the Cleveland Play House and Great Lakes Theater; and a unique twist in the world of performing arts nonprofits: a real estate portfolio that diversifies the organization's revenue stream.

Indeed, Playhouse Square may describe itself as the "largest performing arts center in the country outside of New York," but its importance goes beyond the cultural life of the city. Its real estate arm, created in 1999, drives a good deal of development downtown, including the Crowne Plaza Hotel and The Lumen, a 34-floor apartment tower just steps from the theaters. It also manages about 1.5 million square feet of real estate. Hassall was quick to note he'll have a learning curve in that area — "I'm no real estate mogul," he said — and will work with staff and trustees to continue to build this "very important part of the business model."

The organization takes on additional significance in this (somewhat) post-COVID era, where workers have been slow to return to the office and downtown is highly reliant on events to bring people into the city to spend at its bars and restaurants.

Hassall led Royal Albert Hall through COVID and through a recovery, though he noted "we're not quite out of the woods yet," and live-performance venues still need to take seriously the health and safety of staff, performers and guests. The industry is getting back to normal, but it hasn't completely found its footing; in London, he noted, even the popular BBC Proms, one of the world's leading classical musical festivals, is seeing attendance down about 30% from pre-pandemic levels.

The U.S. market, though, is "bouncing back a little faster," and he's eager to build on the successful programming pillars already in place at Playhouse Square. Another priority: engaging younger audiences with compelling shows.

Brady said board members believe that in Hassall, they have found "someone to tell us the art of the possible," focused on "what we could be doing that we haven't even thought about yet." We look forward to seeing what Hassall brings to town as he takes center stage.



Hassall

## PERSONAL VIEW

# New normal divides global chip industry

BY TIM CULPAN/BLOOMBERG OPINION

Semiconductor stockpiles are at a record high, and a global economic downturn is unlikely to change that picture. But an increasingly tense geopolitical environment and continued supply chain friction is dividing the largest from other semiconductor manufacturers, which could impact how well they survive.

The technology Cold War between the U.S. and China that gained steam under the Trump administration and was exacerbated by the pandemic has reset expectations for how much product should be kept on the shelves. The global shortage of some chips peaked in 2021 after clients that included carmakers cut orders only to desperately need them a few months later.

At the same time, the popularity of streaming video services such as Netflix Inc., which were forced to expand their server capacity, and greater use of gadgets from companies like Sony Group Corp. created competition for limited manufacturing capacity.

Inventory days, a measure of how long it takes to sell and replace stockpiles, have never been higher at dedicated chip foundries Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Co. (TSMC), United Microelectronics Corp. and Semiconductor Manufacturing International Corp. Those three companies are ranked No. 1, No. 3 and No. 5 in global made-to-order market share — accounting for 67% of the total. (Samsung Electronics Co., the second-largest foundry, doesn't provide data for its contract chip business. Data for fourth-ranked GlobalFoundries Inc. only dates back two years.)

Manufacturers outside TSMC and possibly Samsung are still holding on to higher stockpiles as sales slow. At the end of June, inventory at TSMC, which accounts for around 55% of the foundry market, was equal to 40% of that quarter's revenue. Its rivals collectively had a figure of 57%. Even though semiconductor demand has not declined, it is weakening as consumers tighten their belts and companies including Apple Inc. freeze hiring or cut staff. Those chipmakers that focus mainly on older technology for mainstream use — such as components used in smartphones, computers and televisions — are seeing a more dramatic slowdown. TSMC and Samsung, the industry leaders, are enjoying more robust outlooks for their foundry services because they can offer clients superior manufacturing processes for higher-end applications like artificial intelligence and 5G mobile communications. This competitive advantage offers a greater financial buffer, reducing the risk of holding higher inventory.

Easing the danger for the other players are long-term supply deals including those made public in recent years by both UMC and GlobalFoundries. The latter last recently announced a new deal with Qualcomm Inc. that guarantees a total of \$7 billion in revenue from the California designer of chips used in smartphones through 2028, slightly more than GlobalFoundries' entire sales last year. While TSMC hasn't disclosed similar agreements, assurances that its capacity will find buyers are somewhat implicit in the company's business model and aggressive spending plans, with management repeatedly stating that the \$100 billion it's investing over three years is based on consultation with clients in anticipation of their needs.

A raft of new policies, including a \$52 billion spending package from the U.S. Congress, is aimed at making it easier and cheaper to expand capacity in America and Europe. TSMC, Samsung, GlobalFoundries and foundry newcomer Intel Corp. are all set to benefit. With Intel, Ohio stands to benefit, too, as the company plans a massive manufacturing operation near Columbus.

Yet investors remain unconvinced that all this spending will support earnings. Most foundry stocks have declined over the past year, even with continued double-digit revenue growth, in large part because the high rate of spending on new facilities heightens concerns that capacity will outstrip demand if a global recession hits. That's a reasonable concern, since semiconductor sales tend to closely track macroeconomic indicators such as growth in gross domestic product. But the new normal — a sustained higher rate of stockpiles — is also likely to worsen the divide between the biggest companies with better technology, and other chipmakers who are highly dependent on demand for mainstream products.

This changing landscape will likely mean that the strong get stronger, and the weaker struggle to hold on.



PERSONAL VIEW



The Global Center for Health Innovation, framed by "The City of Light" sculpture on Mall B, sits near the convention center.

# Startup 2.0 for the Global Center for Health Innovation

BY SHELDON FIREM

Naysayers depart and do not darken the nearly unused doors of Cleveland's Global Center for Health Innovation (formerly known as the Medical Mart). Take a long walk off the proposed short skywalk to innovation. We will not tolerate the anti-capitalist talk regarding this lodestone of corporate socialism.

One St. Clair is a holy place of commerce and upward, sustainable economic growth for Cleveland and its synergistic environs. It casts its next generation, global shadow of value added to at least East Ninth Street.

The Global Center was completed in 2013, nine years ago.

In a deep dive with big data, Cuyahoga County and MMPI leveraged the taxpayer's 0.25% sales tax into a potential nine-year collaborative possibility that only can succeed when given time to mature.

All it needs is time in the "center of it all" and a money transfusion.

Any innovator with a minimum of core-competency comprehends this truth. The naysayers desire us to get off the opportunity corridor because they have reached their pain-point.

Does one abandon one's 9-year old child simply because her soft skills have not integrated her into a wealth trajectory? Naysayer, like that child, the Global Center for Health Innovation is poised to become an agile money-maker! Poised, I affirm.

Poised means ready for the future, not for this pedestrian present. The present is a retrograde, retargeted paradigm for disrupters who support the Global Center's renovations; these disrupters will realign those who view the Global Center as a failure into true believers in this \$50 million ask.

The naysayers have a creative bandwidth that extends only into the past.

The Global Center has been shovel-ready and lease-ready for more than a decade; shoveling in another \$50 million to upgrade this opportunity zone is just the incentivizing ticket Cleveland needs. The truly informed thought-leaders in Cuyahoga County know this, believe this, and wish to make it happen. I say, "To the skywalk and beyond!"

No one asserted in 2013 that the Global Center would be a short-term success in health, health care, education, communication and technology. We need only look to the long-term with agile expectations, using yet undeveloped performance metric apps, employing minimally transparent, civic responsiveness, and the



Firem is a retired school psychologist who resides with his family in Chardon.

faith of a believer in the promise of Adam Smith: \$50 million buys this and so much more.

It's a lean ask.

After all, Starbucks is in the Global Center complex plying its trade of superb coffee and croissants to passersby who briefly stop in and then immediately leave on their way to their place of work in other downtown buildings.

Naysayers ask, "What about a return on investment? Isn't nine years sufficient to hope for the Global Center's financial viability?" Yes-men reply, "A pox on your near-term

heresy! Was Rome or RTA's Waterfront Line built in a day?"

Going forward, let us take a holistic, forward-looking appraisal of the Global Center's future.

Those who do not wish Cuyahoga County to pay for this renovation must do a 180-degree turn-around in their thinking for Northeast Ohio. Then they must do one more 180-degree turn-around to contemplate all that "The Land" will lose. Where does that leave them? You guessed it, rethinking all those "red-ink" and "white elephant" blasphemies.

The 235,000-square-foot Global Center for Health Innovation with its original four "themed" floors and recent county appraisal of \$425 million beckons our support. Teamwork will bring this innovative project home. A public-private partnership will facilitate the convergence continuum we need to be on. AI will keep us ahead of the curve. Workers who left during the Great Resignation will return to the city. A bewildering blockchain of return on investments will transpire. And the voter will absorb the opportunity cost.

At the end of the day, the Global Center for Health Innovation for the last half decade has been poised at the precipice of innovation; the proposed \$50 million transfusion will push it over the edge.

Naysayers, beware: You will be left in the dustbin of investment history.

The Global Center for Health Innovation is Cleveland's own.

It is our name, image and likeness.

It is our albatross.

It is our white whale.

It is our Phoenix rising!

FYI, ROI, IoT, KPI, ASAP.

CRAIN'S CLEVELAND BUSINESS FILE PHOTO

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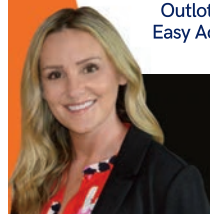
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Cleveland Clinic president and CEO Dr. Tom Mihaljevic, left, and University Hospitals CEO Dr. Cliff Megerian collaborate on community benefit work and meet regularly. | COURTESY PHOTOS

## 'STRONGER TOGETHER'

Cleveland Clinic, University Hospitals join forces to battle the pandemic, boost the region

BY LYDIA COUTRÉ

In early 2020, shortly after Dr. Cliff Megerian was tapped as the next CEO of University Hospitals, he met with Cleveland Clinic president and CEO Dr. Tom Mihaljevic for dinner, during which the two shared their visions for the region's two largest — and historically, fiercely competitive — health systems.

By the end of the two-hour meal, "we also realized that we trusted each other," he said in a joint interview

with Mihaljevic for Crain's. They parted ways that evening with an agreement to collaborate on community benefit work, believing they could do more together, and committed to meet regularly.

"And then COVID came, and you know, what we realized conceptually translated very quickly to a practical set of actions," Mihaljevic said.

Like virtually every other health system across the U.S. and beyond, the Clinic and UH were working together in new and different ways to learn about the

novel coronavirus, and then educate, test, treat and eventually vaccinate the public. They worked with each other, governmental entities, community partners and other hospitals in the region, including MetroHealth, St. Vincent Charity Medical Center, the Louis Stokes Cleveland VA Medical Center, Firelands Regional Medical Center and Southwest General Medical Center.

See **HOSPITALS** on Page 12



GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCK PHOTO



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# HOSPITALS

From Page 10

As underfunding of public health across the country left many departments struggling to offer needed services during the pandemic, hospitals moved to serve a larger role in supporting population and public health initiatives, said Nancy Foster, vice president for quality and patient safety policy for the American Hospital Association (AHA), which represents hospitals, health care systems/networks and their patients and communities.

"Because they were seeing that at basically the same time in their community, I think that encouraged the kind of collaboration we're talking about here," she said.

Across the country, a commitment to health equity and a desire to continue the mutual learning experienced during the pandemic are common driving forces behind continuing those collaborative efforts, she said.

Today, the relationship between UH and the Clinic has evolved from a collaboration accelerated in crisis to an intentional, expanding partnership led by Mihaljevic and Megerian, who continue to meet at least monthly for lunch or dinner. Megerian officially became UH CEO on Feb. 1, 2021.

For the past year and a half, the executive leadership teams of the two systems have gathered quarterly, alternating between the UH and Clinic campuses, to brainstorm how they could collaborate to benefit the communities they serve.

"At least in our shared memory, I don't think that has ever happened in the past; that the two executive teams would actually make that half-a-mile-long journey and have a meeting together and sit at the same conference room with one another," Mihaljevic said.

They started with four or five key topics of collaboration and now have expanded to eight: workforce; supply chain sourcing; research and education; Community Health Needs Assessment; opioid treatment and recovery; infant mortality; lead poisoning; and food insecurity. Each has at least one lead from each institution.

The systems first laid out their commitment to collaboration in "STRONGER TOGETHER: University Hospitals and Cleveland Clinic — COVID-19 Observations, Lessons Learned, Partnership and Roadmap for the Future," an April 2021 white paper they published jointly.

Because the Clinic and UH share a geography and a similar mission, "it's easier for them to work together," said Dr. Akram Boutros, president and CEO of MetroHealth, who notes there are initiatives where they all work together.

Though MetroHealth isn't a part of the Stronger Together commitment, Boutros applauds the effort as progress toward broader collaboration in the future. If that were to include MetroHealth, "even better," he said.

"We owe thanks to Tom Mihaljevic and Cliff Megerian for making that change (and) not looking at each one of us as, you know, this is a fight to the death, an incredible competition," he said. "It is thinking that we can do more for this community if we collaborate."

Dr. Jim Merlino, the Clinic's chief clinical transformation officer, also credits Megerian and Mihaljevic — and their bond and communication — for the growing collaboration.

"And candidly, they like each other," he said, "and that's what's really, to me, the most exciting part about this."

## From the trenches to meeting rooms

While collaborating through the crisis, employees at UH and the Clinic began building relationships and finding new ways to work together.

David Sylvan — who's been with UH for seven years, currently as president of UH Ventures, the system's innovation arm — had conversations with his counterparts at the Clinic maybe a couple dozen times before COVID. Now, they talk three or four times a month with a shared sense of mission: caring for the well-being of "our community and our patients."

T.J. Grimm, director of ambulatory and retail pharmacy services for UH, said the pharmacy department solidified its philosophy of partnering with Clinic counterparts while working alongside one another at mass COVID vaccination events.

Already part of the Northeast Ohio Hospital Opioid Consortium, the relationships were deepened, and they decided to partner to host collection efforts for proper disposal of unused or expired medications on National Prescription Drug Take Back Day in April.

In July, the Clinic and UH jointly launched the Diversity Equity Inclusion (DEI) Supplier Accelerator, a business development mentorship program that aims to boost the economic health of diverse businesses. They could have gone it alone, "but I think we did it better together," Andrea Kanter Jacobs, executive director of operations for the Clinic, told Crain's at the time.

The accelerator and drug take-back efforts are two examples of the systems freely expressing ideas and learning from each other, Megerian said. This requires putting down the shield of "we are always right, or we are the best thinkers," he said.

"So it does take a little bit of a mindset evolution, but that comes from trust," he said. "That's what you have to have, and I think it starts at the top; it really does. To be honest with you, if this was a grassroots phenomenon, and not supported by the CEOs, I doubt it would go this far."

Mihaljevic agreed.

The United States has an "untapped opportunity" for better hospital coordination to improve community health, he said. The pandemic offered a first glimpse of a "very powerful, yet grassroots-organized coordination" among health care systems in the country, which makes it easy to imagine a future where nonprofit health systems share mis-

sions of coordinating efforts to more meaningfully affect the communities they serve, Mihaljevic said.

Businesses beyond health care also reached across sectors and partnered with competitors down the road and around the globe, particularly in the early stages of the pandemic. Bill Koehler, CEO of Team NEO, calls this "the urgency of now," which created an environment to set aside competition. It has been gratifying to see this spirit of collaboration continue in many relationships, he said.

When companies consider investing in Northeast Ohio, they are looking to take advantage of the critical mass of all 18 counties in the region, as well as the unique capabilities across them, Koehler said. Marrying these two assets has been a longstanding challenge for the region, but leaders in business, higher education and communities are seeing the opportunity, he said. They're seeing that what's good for competitors may have complementary benefits for their own work.

"More people are viewing opportunities as that — as an opportunity, a way to create something bigger and better, as opposed to taking a point of view that they're sort of competing over a diminishing pie," Koehler said. "And I think that's really important."

## A history of working together

While the Clinic and UH have committed to collaborating in a specific, structured way with their quarterly leadership meetings and joint initiatives, the efforts are hardly limited to the two largest systems. Perhaps most notable is the Cleveland Innovation District, a \$565 million research and education partnership unveiled in early 2021.

The project is a commitment by the Clinic, MetroHealth, UH, Cleveland State University and Case Western Reserve University to spark innovation and economic growth in the region.

There will be areas where the systems will compete, but there's also so much more they can do as a collective, such as in the areas of lead mitigation and maternal fetal mortality, the Clinic's Merlino said.

There also are things that would be unnecessarily duplicative, such as the Cleveland Clinic BioRepository, that opened last year as the inaugural building of the innovation district. There's no reason every research organization needs to build such a facility, he said, so others can bring specimens there.

Although this level of collaboration is new, the health systems have worked together on specific initiatives over the years, especially in research, such as the National Center for Regenerative Medicine (driven by the Clinic, CWRU and UH) and the Clinical and Translational Science Collaborative (CTSC) of Cleveland — a collaborative of CWRU, UH, the Clinic, MetroHealth and the VA — that aims to streamline the process from bench to bedside to the community.

Based at CWRU, the Case Comprehensive Cancer Center (Case CCC)

supports cancer-related research efforts at UH, the Clinic and CWRU. Dr. Stan Gerson — dean of the CWRU School of Medicine and Case CCC acting director, which he has led for 18 years — said the successes of the cancer center offer an easy example of the value of coordination and allow comfort when collaborating in other areas.

Dr. Daniel Simon, chief scientific officer and president of academic and external affairs of UH Cleveland Medical Center, said the city's health care and research institutions have been getting more collaborative over time. As for what's driving that?

"Oh, it's easy, it's very easy: If you want to get funded, you've got to get the best people, and the best people could be here, and they could be at the Clinic, and they could be at Metro or the VA," he said. "We realize if we work together, we'll get funded; if we work separately, then Pittsburgh will get funded, or Northwestern or Chicago will get funded, or we'll lose out to the coasts as we usually do. So, I think that people realize that if we work together, we're more competitive."

## "WE NEED TO BE COMPETITIVE ACROSS THE NATION AND AROUND THE WORLD; IT IS A GLOBAL ECONOMY. AND IF CLEVELAND WANTS TO BE ON CENTER STAGE WITH THE WORLD, AGAIN, IT TAKES A TEAM, IT TAKES A COMMUNITY TO BUILD IT."

— Dr. Serpil Erzurum, Cleveland Clinic's chief research and academic officer

Dr. Serpil Erzurum, the Clinic's chief research and academic officer, said the best outcome of this growing collaboration would be if the communities benefit — not just in their health care, but in the city and region's economy.

"We need to be competitive across the nation and around the world; it is a global economy," she said. "And if Cleveland wants to be on center stage with the world, again, it takes a team, it takes a community to build it."

## Staying power

Megerian and Mihaljevic aim to ingrain this collaborative culture into the DNA of each of their institutions.

A cooperative spirit dependent upon their friendship will be short-lived and not impactful, Mihaljevic said. Megerian believes collaboration between UH and the Clinic will become an expectation for whoever holds their roles next.

"The muscle memory of the city and the region to expect the two organizations to be working together will become indelible," he said. "I really believe that's happening in real time now."

Foster, of AHA, sees the continued commitment to collaboration at this level at organizations across the country as "an open question," in large part because of the daily demands on the health care workforce. People gained a lot of value from collaborating in recent years, and the structures created to

continue those efforts certainly help, she said, but "I would be misrepresenting our members if I said anything other than we have an enormous strain on our workforce right now."

She wonders whether the stress and demands of care and other work will diminish the opportunity to continue collaborations going forward.

One area of collaboration seeks to address just that. The Workforce Connect Healthcare Sector Partnership, housed at Cuyahoga Community College, is a partnership among UH, the Clinic, MetroHealth, the VA, Southwest General and St. Vincent Charity. It aims to understand and address health care workforce challenges.

Kim Shelnick, vice president for talent acquisition at UH, who's been with the system for 15 years, said she wouldn't have imagined possible even five years ago the current level of collaboration across health care in the region.

The pandemic and significant supply and demand gaps for talent have forced employers to think creatively and strategically to solve problems. Though competitors in talent as they hire back and forth from one another, "we have to think of innovative ways to build the future pipelines, and we need to do it together," Shelnick said.

Within the first 30 days of joining the Clinic in March 2021 as executive director of talent acquisition operations, Kiersten Kanaley joined the health care sector partnership and met Shelnick as well as leadership at MetroHealth and others with the sector partnership. To so quickly meet counterparts at organizations traditionally considered competitors is "unheard of," she said.

With a mission of retaining health care workforce, Kanaley views someone leaving the Clinic — because it's not the right match from a transportation or geographic perspective, for instance — for another system like UH "still a win."

"Because our community will have another health care workforce member," she said. "But more importantly, our community will be able to receive the care that it needs."

Megerian and Mihaljevic have agreed that for anything that touches the community, they are collaborators. This includes things like food access and lead poisoning.

"The community as a whole is our patient; it's our joint patient," Megerian said.

Because they serve the same community, it is "only natural, it's logical, it's rational" to combine resources and join their efforts to create better health for that community, Mihaljevic said.

In science, they are collaborators and competitors.

Mihaljevic notes that competitiveness is nothing to be ashamed of, and can lead to better, healthier care and make both organizations better. They don't shy away from competition, he said.

"We are actually very competitive — as we should be," Mihaljevic said. "But you know, being competitive doesn't mean that you cannot be friends and colleagues."

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Foster



Erzurum



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# Behavioral care providers determining role after hotline launch

BY DOUGLAS J. GUTH

Everyone knows to call 911 in case of emergency. However, not all crises are created equal, particularly when an individual's mental health is involved.

Bridging the response gap is the country's first nationwide mental health crisis line. Launched in July, the new 988 system is designed to connect callers to trained local counselors, ideally getting them precision behavioral services not always available through standard emergency care.

Cuyahoga County hospital systems and service coordinators are still determining their roles in this new care environment. Results reported by FrontLine Service — a nonprofit behavioral health organization — demonstrate that 988 is at least being used in its early days.

During the first Saturday of the system's operation, 51 of 188 calls made to the FrontLine Service crisis center originated from the 988 line. The center had been averaging about 20 calls from the national line on a typical Saturday. Over its first two weeks, 988 doubled the weekly average of incoming calls previously made to the National Suicide Prevention Hotline.

The 988 effort builds on the national suicide hotline, a network of 200 crisis

centers situated throughout the country. Locally, FrontLine Service manages a 24-hour suicide prevention, addiction crisis and mental health number (216-623-6888) where individuals in need are referred to emergency or treatment options.

Current services for Cuyahoga County include a mobile crisis team or a behavioral specialist that accompanies police on calls. The program, funded by the county Alcohol, Drug Addiction & Mental Health Services (ADAMHS) Board, is part of a fragmented system that too often leads to poor outcomes, noted Dr. Patrick Runnels, a psychiatrist with University Hospitals.

Typical crisis services, for instance, may direct someone with schizophrenia into an emergency room setting ill-equipped to handle such a delicate issue. Such a siloed approach is why a more comprehensive mental health crisis system is needed.

"Emergency rooms are designed for a physical health crisis," Runnels said. "Those settings are rigid, noisy and crowded, and not connected with high-level behavioral services. You won't get psychotherapy in an ER, because that's not what it's envisioned to do."

MetroHealth child psychiatrist Dr.

Raman Marwaha said Ohio's 19 crisis agencies may send a first-response or behavioral health team in an emergency. As availability can vary by location, it's crucial to link people in trouble with a tailored response as quickly as possible.

Casting ahead, the 988 system can be to mental health what 911 is to serious medical problems or other life-threatening situation, Marwaha said.

"The whole goal of 988 is to have crisis-care response linking people with community-based providers," he said. "Do we need a stabilization center, or a behavioral specialist coming in with EMTs who don't otherwise have expertise in de-escalating someone in a mental health crisis?"

## Managing each crisis with care

Suicide is a leading cause of death in the U.S., claiming the lives of nearly 46,000 people in 2020, per figures from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Factors like the COVID pandemic have only exacerbated the nation's mental health issues, making coordinated efforts to offer individuals the correct assistance even more critical, said Scott Osiecki, who heads the ADAMHS board as CEO.

ADAMHS, which funds local services including the FrontLine Service

emergency line, will support 988 through billboard campaigns and continued financial support. Osiecki envisions 988 becoming a household name for people needing urgent mental health assistance.

"Everyone knows 911 for emergencies — using 988 for behavioral health is bringing importance to the issue," Osiecki said. "There's still stigma associated with mental health and addiction, making this as important as a 911 call. There's nothing to be ashamed of if you're seeking treatment or a referral."

Residents called 988 during its first week in operation simply to ask for information about the system. Easing the response process has become even more vital as shortages in national mental health services remain widespread. Recruitment and retention problems among front-line behavioral workers have increased during the pandemic, a scarcity that the Health Resources and Services Administration estimates has impacted about 132 million Americans.

Marwaha of MetroHealth said there is a need for about 47 child psychiatrists per 100,000 U.S. children, while the American Academy of Pediatrics reports the current figure to be around 9.75 per 100,000. Such shortfalls can equate to months-long waits for appointments. While 988 will not solve these problems entirely, the program

can help create a more complete crisis response.

"For someone talking about self-harm, extreme depression or use of substances, 988 will get them a certified counselor who will connect them with the appropriate resources," Marwaha said.

Further, emergency mental intervention should be a dedicated place of support led by social workers and people with lived experience, said Runnels.

The UH-based psychiatrist envisions a county crisis center that provides immediate stabilization in case of a psychological emergency or urgent medical need. In Oregon, a program called CAHOOTS (Crisis Assistance Helping Out on the Streets) acts as a 24/7 mobile intervention dispatched through a police-fire-ambulance communications network. An ideal outcome of 988 for Cuyahoga County would be a fast-acting mobile response team aligned with police and other emergency services.

"988 would tie all these things together, no matter where you are," Runnels said. "People will feel better if they have an easier time interacting with the system. It's a critical piece of making sure everyone has a place to go to manage their individual crisis."

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Marwaha

## SPONSORED CONTENT

# Solving the wealth puzzle

John Adams and his team at Adams, Gut and Associates provide health care professionals, business owners, C Suite executives, entrepreneurs and others financial clarity and confidence by putting all their financial puzzle pieces together.

By Brooke Bilyj  
Crain's Content Studio-Cleveland

The wealth advisors at Adams, Gut & Associates approach their clients' financial plans as if they're putting together a puzzle. Instead of just focusing on insurance, investments, tax strategies or any other single piece, they take a comprehensive approach to integrating all the strategies involved in attaining financial security.

"People go through life accumulating puzzle pieces like IRAs, 401(k)s, insurance policies, wills and trusts, but there's often no plan to tie all the pieces together with what's in their heart," said private wealth advisor John Adams, CLU®, ChFC®, CASL®, RICP®, CFP®. "We help them connect those pieces and align all the right tools and tactics today to accomplish what's important tomorrow — giving them financial clarity and confidence instead of hoping it's going to all just work out."

As independent contractors affiliated with Northwestern Mutual, Adams and his team can recommend a full spectrum of wealth management solutions to help clients attain their long-term financial goals with an integrated approach. "Like your doctor, we have an open script pad to represent all the companies in the industry," Adams

said. "We can build the most efficient plan because of our broad approach to the entire market."

## COLLABORATIVE CARE

Adams, Gut & Associates specialize in serving physicians, who make up about 80% of the firm's 700 clients. Their team-based approach relieves busy health care professionals of the financial planning burden by helping them navigate the complexities of growing and protecting their wealth.

"A Vanguard study found that people who work with advisors tend to do 3% better over time than those who don't," Adams said. "There's value in having a specialist in this space, especially having a team of specialists operating in your best interests."

With 34 years of financial planning experience in this niche, Adams has developed a strong rapport with medical professionals. (Of course, being married to one helps too — his wife is a pediatrician.) He's learned that the key is building partnerships that go beyond an investment portfolio.

"As trusted advisors, we're looking for a relationship versus a transaction," Adams says.

## GIVING BACK

Adams' clients aren't the only ones who appreciate



the firm's unique approach to comprehensive wealth management and financial planning. Forbes recently again honored Adams as one of the top financial security professionals in the nation and as one of top wealth advisors in Ohio. Locally, Crain's Cleveland Business also recognized Adams as one of the 2022 Notables in Finance.

"Those rankings are endorsements of our quality, competency and results," Adams said. "I hope it's gratifying for our clients to see that they're working with one of the best firms in the nation."

But Adams' ultimate definition of success isn't earning awards or increasing assets under management. It's about the clarity and confidence their clients achieve because of work that they do together. Giving back to the community they serve is also very important to him. Three years ago, for example, Adams and his wife started an annual scholarship to support future advisors enrolled in the financial planning program at the University of Akron.

Adams, Gut and Associates volunteer their time and efforts with the Akron-Canton Regional Foodbank,

United Way, Akron Community Foundation and many more. They are an active member of the Tocqueville Society, a Career Readiness Partner with United Way of Summit & Medina County, a donor and member of Hudson Rotary Club, the Hudson Community Foundation and University of Akron, along with being an advocate for Alex's Lemonade Stand Foundation.

"By being good stewards of our clients' resources, it provides us with the resources to do things in the community that we couldn't otherwise do," Adams says. "Helping people with their resources is our calling."

Story sponsored by:



**“WE’VE BEEN BUSY THIS YEAR. IN FACT, WE SAW MORE GUNSHOT WOUNDS THROUGH JUNE THIS YEAR THAN WE SAW IN ALL OF LAST YEAR — AND LAST YEAR WAS A RECORD.”**

— Dr. Ed Barksdale Jr., surgeon in chief at University Hospitals Rainbow Babies & Children’s Hospital



Dr. Ed Barksdale Jr. sits in an exam room at University Hospitals Rainbow Babies & Children’s Hospital in Cleveland. Barksdale is surgeon in chief at the hospital. | KEN BLAZE FOR CRAIN’S CLEVELAND BUSINESS

# A THREAT TO US ALL

Gun violence is a public health, political and economic crisis

BY DAN SHINGLER

When a shooter barely old enough to buy his gun took the lives of seven others at a July 4 parade in the Highland Park suburb north of Chicago, people across the country were appalled and horrified.

They should have been. Seven lives were needlessly wasted; others were afflicted forever by life-changing injuries; families were forced to endure unimaginable pain. At least one child was orphaned, while others were once more given what even a kid knows is a valid reason to be afraid in the world.

And while the nation was numbing itself to another spectacular tragedy with whatever next big thing social media threw its way, the everyday killings that plague cities like Cleveland and Akron continued. And a chorus of local mayors, police chiefs and other civic leaders continued to pray and beg for an end to the violence that they know kills kids and can also kill cities.

“This is very personal to me,” said Cleveland Mayor Justin Bibb, who has seen some of the people he grew up with in the city lost to gun violence. “There’s not a day that goes by that I don’t think about gun violence in Cleveland. ... I hear about it everywhere I go, from the gro-

cery store to church to the barber shop.”

Bibb and others say it’s more than a matter of saving the lives of inner-city youths most affected by gun homicides, or the middle-aged and older white males most affected by suicide — though those ought to be reasons enough. Gun violence is a public health crisis, a political crisis and, ultimately, an economic crisis. Not only is it costly in terms of law enforcement, physical and mental health care and other obvious expenses, it’s a threat to efforts by Cleveland, Akron and the state of Ohio to build back population and improve the environment businesses and people need to thrive.

## About this series

In its ongoing monthly Forum series, Crain’s Cleveland Business will explore issues at the intersection of public policy and business.

Find the complete series online at [CrainsCleveland.com/Forum](http://CrainsCleveland.com/Forum)

“It is the No. 1 reason, including the weather, that people don’t come here ... based on the people I’ve spoken to,” said MetroHealth CEO Dr. Akram Boutros.

See **CRISIS** on Page 20

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# We must act together to reduce the threat of gun violence

BY MARY ANNE CRAMPTON

It takes all of us. This is the dawning realization of Americans whose government representatives have failed to protect our communities from the gun violence epidemic. Instead of waiting for our state lawmakers to act, citizens are stepping up in unprecedented numbers and taking action themselves.



*Crampton is a local volunteer with the Ohio chapter of Moms Demand Action.*

The lifelong collective cost of anguish and fear borne by individuals, families and neighborhoods due to constant gun violence is destroying our sense of freedom, compromising the joy of gathering in public spaces and shredding the very fabric of the American experience. We should not have to reside in fear that gun violence can ring out at any moment — no other high-income country on the Earth lives like this.

The rate of gun deaths in Ohio rose 44% from 2011 to 2020. Refusing to consider a single evidence-based safe gun bill that would save lives, the Ohio Statehouse's response to this crisis has been to expand access to more guns in more places with fewer regulations, caving to the gun lobby's interests despite the fact that a clear majority of voters support common sense gun safety measures.

Gun violence, including tragedies like suicides, homicides, mass shootings, domestic violence, city gun violence and unintentional shootings, costs Ohio \$22.3 billion each year. Nationally, employers lose an average of \$1.47 million on a daily basis in productivity, revenue and costs required to recruit and train replacements for victims of gun violence. While no number could ever fully reflect the toll of gun violence on families and survivors, our society loses \$1.34 billion daily in quality-of-life costs from their suffering and lost well-being.

In stark relief to other high-income countries, firearms are the leading cause of death for children and teens in the United States. Compounding that tragic fact, the psychological and mental well-being of our children and teens is harmed when a friend or family member is



Mary Anne Crampton of Moms Demand Action with Myesha Watkins, executive director of the Cleveland Peacemakers Alliance. | KEN BLAZE FOR CRAIN'S CLEVELAND BUSINESS

killed with a gun, when someone they know is shot, and when they witness and hear gunshots. When homes, neighborhoods and schools are not safe from gun violence, entire generations of American children are affected.

Research shows that stronger gun laws equate to less gun violence. States with background checks, red-flag laws, secure storage measures, and firearm permitting and training requirements have lower levels of gun violence.

Investing in the environment and buttressing the leadership of residents living in long-neglected, once red-lined districts can also have a significant impact on reducing gun violence. For instance, the collaborative effort of local organizations curated by Stop the Violence and supported by law enforcement in the Linden neighborhood of Columbus has offered a sig-

nificant benefit to that community. In Cleveland, the efforts of organizations such as Cleveland Peacemakers Alliance and grassroots violence prevention groups such as M-PAC and Together We Rise are supported by Moms Demand Action volunteers from across the region and are starting to be recognized more broadly for their positive impact in reducing city gun violence and the trauma it creates.

Moms Demand Action is the largest volunteer gun violence prevention organization in the nation and offers a vast array of opportunities for individuals to participate in reducing the daily threat of gun violence. In the wake of multiple tragedies, residents in every state are joining its nonpartisan fight for public safety measures that can protect us. Stepping up where our legislature has failed, Ohio Moms

Demand Action volunteers are supporting city violence interruption initiatives, building community awareness about the importance of secure gun storage, and acting as persistent, determined advocates for evidence-based gun safety laws in Columbus.

From school boards to Congress and every city- and state-elected position in between, it is imperative that voters support lawmakers and officials who promote gun safety as well as "gun sense" candidates running for office who will build a policy infrastructure to protect the public from gun violence. If our current leaders won't take action to save lives and end gun violence, it's time to elect new ones who will.

It takes all of us to end the scourge of gun violence. Join the movement to make our country a safer one, text READY to 644-33.

# This is a public health crisis that deserves a public health response

BY GREG JACKSON

Almost three years into a global pandemic, communities across the country have become all too familiar with public health emergencies, epidemics and the vital role local, state and the federal governments play in developing and implementing public health strategies to save lives. As the attention of the nation shifts from COVID-19, gun violence advocates and survivors like me are leading the charge at the local, state and federal level to demand our leaders act on a whole-of-government approach to curb the gun violence epidemic and keep our communities safe.



*Jackson is the executive director of Community Justice Action Fund.*

Gun violence is too prevalent in communities around the country, and too many families have experienced first-hand the devastation that it brings. Every year more than 1,600 people are shot and killed in Ohio. Most of their stories, like mine, don't make headlines, but instead they leave in their wake a lifetime of trauma.

We know that our governments are equipped

with the tools and resources to effectively address the gun violence epidemic plaguing this country. Our leaders just have to approach this problem with the same level of urgency, intensity and resolve afforded to other epidemics and public health crises. The nationwide response to COVID is just the latest example of decisive action needed to drastically improve outcomes in communities experiencing the worst effects of a public health crisis. Yet, decade after decade, the American gun violence epidemic has continued unabated and, in recent years, grown to record levels.

To eliminate gun violence in Ohio and across the country, we must move swiftly to recognize this is a public health crisis, and it deserves a public health response. We have an obligation to move beyond our anger, grief and collective sense of powerlessness to demand our communities and the leaders who serve them meet this moment with purpose and clarity and invest in the healing we desperately need.

For more than six years, the Community Justice Action Fund has led the fight alongside gun violence survivors across America for a comprehensive approach to fighting the gun violence epidemic, advocating for policies that invest in community-based solutions proven to make our families safer. This summer, for the first time in three decades, Congress acted on this public health crisis with an urgency we

have seen on countless issues, turning the collective pain of survivors, families and communities impacted by gun violence into power and delivering on legislation that will help to keep guns out of our communities and funding to ensure survivors have the wrap-around support and resources they need to heal.

But federal partners alone cannot deliver the whole-of-government response that Ohio communities deserve to address this public health crisis. While states and the federal government play essential roles in addressing the gun violence epidemic, as it continues to wreak havoc on families and communities nationwide, cities can and must spearhead community violence intervention strategies and investments using the many levers of local government at their fingertips. Mayors, city councils, city managers, city attorneys, city offices of violence prevention, and local health departments must make good on their primary duty of protecting the health, safety and well-being of the communities they serve.

This is why we created the City Violence Prevention Index (VPI), the first and only national analysis of municipalities' programs, laws and policies designed to reduce gun and other forms of violence. The VPI scorecard assessed and ranked 50 U.S. cities with the highest incidents of gun violence in 2021, including Cleveland, Toledo, Columbus and Cincinnati.

Our research outlined in the VPI confirms for the first time what many gun violence prevention advocates have known for years: Cities experiencing the highest levels of gun violence need a comprehensive public health approach to violence prevention to save lives. Only 36% of cities rated had a violence prevention plan that incorporates public health strategies. While the VPI report also found that nearly 60% of cities, including Cleveland, Toledo and Cincinnati, have begun the work to invest in the community violence intervention model known as outreach-based violence intervention, there is still room for improvement as cities commit to advancing violence prevention investments and infrastructure during the first annual VPI scorecard cycle.

Three years of intergovernmental collaboration to fight COVID-19 spikes across the country, protect public health and save lives have proven that decisive action at the local level can drastically improve outcomes. Ohio cities have taken up our challenge, and Community Justice looks forward to working alongside these policy makers and violence intervention organizers toward intentional investment in the strong, community-based solutions needed to reduce gun violence in our communities and improve related health outcomes, especially in Black and Brown communities most impacted by this crisis.



# Here's an 8-point approach to preventing gun violence

BY DANIEL J. FLANNERY

After the 2018 shootings at Marjorie Stoneman Douglas High School, an interdisciplinary group of scholars who have studied gun violence prevention for decades, including myself, came together to develop an eight-point "Call for Action to Prevent Gun Violence in the United States of America" that was endorsed by many national organizations representing over 5 million professionals. In response to an increase in mass shootings in schools and other public places, the group updated its call for action in May 2022.



Flannery is the director of the Begun Center for Violence Prevention, Research and Education at Case Western Reserve University.

What we need in this space is a comprehensive public health approach to gun violence that is informed by scientific evidence. This kind of approach involves three levels of prevention: (1) universal approaches promoting safety and well-being for everyone; (2) practices for reducing risk and promoting protective factors for persons experiencing difficulties; and (3) interventions for individuals where violence is present or appears imminent.

On the first level, we need: (1) a national requirement for all schools to assess school cli-

mate and maintain physically and emotionally safe conditions and positive school environments that protect all students and adults from bullying, discrimination, harassment and assault; and (2) a ban on assault-style weapons, high-capacity ammunition clips and products that modify semi-automatic firearms to enable them to function like automatic firearms, and universal background checks on all gun purchases.

On the second level, we need: (3) adequate staffing (such as counselors, psychiatrists, psychologists and social workers) of coordinated school- and community-based mental health services for individuals with risk factors for violence, recognizing that violence is not intrinsically a product of mental illness; (4) reform of school discipline to reduce exclusionary practices and a focus on prevention that fosters positive social, behavioral, emotional and academic success for all students; and (5) comprehensive background checks as part of licensing for firearm purchasers, bans on large-capacity magazines, laws requiring gun owners to lock up their guns so that they are not accessible to underage youth, and extreme risk protection laws that allow removal of firearms when there is a clear threat of lethal violence.

On the third level, we need: (6) a national program to train and maintain culturally proficient school- and community-based crisis intervention and threat assessment teams that include mental health and law enforcement partners. These programs should include prac-

tical channels of communication for persons to report concerns as well as interventions to resolve conflicts and assist troubled individuals in a fair and equitable manner that protects individual rights; (7) removal of legal barriers to sharing safety-related information among educational, mental health and law enforcement agencies in cases where a person has threatened violence; and (8) laws establishing Gun Violence Protection Orders that allow courts to issue time-limited restraining orders requiring that firearms be recovered by law enforcement

## WHAT WE NEED IN THIS SPACE IS A COMPREHENSIVE PUBLIC HEALTH APPROACH TO GUN VIOLENCE THAT IS INFORMED BY SCIENTIFIC EVIDENCE.

when there is evidence that an individual is planning to carry out acts against others or against themselves.

What is Cleveland doing about gun violence? While our community is not immune to the increase in gun violence, especially among young people, there are organizations and individuals working every day to reduce injury morbidity and mortality due to firearms via efforts that are consistent with a public health approach.

Our local and federal law enforcement agencies collaborate to identify violent perpetrators and intercede in neighborhoods with high rates of gun violence. Our county prosecutor utilizes

innovative prosecution to address chronic violent offenders. Cuyahoga County Common Pleas Court Administrative Judge Brendan Sheehan runs an innovative "gun court" to divert eligible first-time offenders to treatment rather than jail. Our health systems include emergency department-based programs to intervene with victims of gun violence and provide trauma-informed care.

We also have organizations like Partnership for a Safer Cleveland that work tirelessly to implement community-driven strategies to reduce violence. A network of violence interrupters, the Peacemakers Alliance, seeks to reduce retaliatory gun violence and get young people connected to schools, mentors and other needed supports. These are just a few examples.

So there is hope in this space, despite many challenges. A commitment to gathering information about the changing nature of gun violence across all of our systems can help us determine where resources should be allocated. Nationally, Congress and the executive branch must remove barriers to gun violence research and institute a program of scientific research on gun violence that encompasses all levels of prevention. Well-executed laws can reduce gun violence while protecting all constitutional rights, but laws will not change until we elect representatives who will take effective action to prevent gun violence in our nation.

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# THE GOOD GUN FIGHT

## Searching for solutions

BY DAN SHINGLER

Dr. Akram Boutros has plenty of options in terms of how to spend his time once he retires as the MetroHealth System CEO at the end of this year.

He's been a physician for 30 years, the last 10 of which he spent at the helm of MetroHealth, turning the hospital system around financially and dramatically expanding it to become a linchpin of the local health care system.

He could do just about anything he wants with his time, connections and expertise. He's decided, though, that gun violence is the most important issue to which he can apply his skills.

"I'm so concerned we're crossing the Rubicon here — where we may not as a city, a county or a country be able to diminish this in time. My major civic responsibility after MetroHealth will be to pursue the creation and formation of a national center for the reduction of gun violence in Cleveland," Boutros told Crain's in an Aug. 2 interview.

**"IT'S ALSO A CONTAGION — IT ACTUALLY SPREADS. THE MORE PEOPLE ARE AFFECTED BY GUN VIOLENCE, THE MORE WHO INTERACT WITH IT — AND WE'VE SEEN A LOT MORE GUN VIOLENCE IN THE LAST TWO YEARS."**

— Dr. Akram Boutros

Boutros wants to create a center to study gun violence from all angles — who it affects, its causes, where and why it happens, along with what works and what doesn't when it comes to efforts to combat it.

As far as Boutros is concerned, it's a public health crisis.

"Public health crises are those things that impact the community as much as they impact individuals. So, when you think about COVID, the vast majority of COVID patients recovered, but the impact on the community was profound. Gun violence has the same impact," Boutros said. "It's also a contagion — it actually spreads. The more people are affected by gun violence, the more who interact with it — and we've seen a lot more gun violence in the last two years."

The fact that Boutros is devoting himself to this single issue speaks volumes. Louder still might be the support Boutros said he's already getting from other local business and civic leaders, including several who have said they'll help pay for the new center.

Because what Boutros wants to do won't be cheap.

"I'm focused on raising \$50 million from the community from 10 funders, and these will hopefully be health care institutions, universities, businesses, with Cuyahoga County and the city each committing (an addi-

tional) \$1 million to support this. Then I will ask local and national foundations to raise another \$50 million."

That should keep the center funded for up to five years, said Boutros, and most of that money will go for personnel costs. He won't be CEO, he said, but plans to be involved until the center is funded and ready to launch, which he hopes to accomplish by mid-2023.

Boutros said the center should be in Cleveland, in an area affected by gun violence, and involve hundreds of people, including its own researchers and staff, along with law enforcement, members of the community and other local people working on the issue of gun violence. The center would use the local community as a proving ground for the strategies it develops, which should ensure it wins future funding, he said.

It's not impossible. In fact, so many business and institutional leaders have become alarmed by gun violence, fundraising efforts are already off to a good start, he said.

"I've already had a significant number of discussions with leaders and received verbal commitments from six organizations," Boutros said, adding that each of the six have said they're willing to put up \$5 million apiece. He said it's too early to name his funders and will wait until their commitments are fully decided upon.

But while Boutros might be among the best-known soldiers signing up for the battle against gun violence, he is far from alone. His efforts, however, might inform some already in the fight.

### Speak up, save lives

Among the tactics now employed, local universities are employing community outreach strategies they hope will get more people to speak up when the wrong people have guns or when anyone who owns a gun exhibits signs of trouble.

The University of Akron lost a student to a shooting near campus in September of 2021, which also resulted in the shooting death of a 25-year-old Akron man and the wounding of another person who was shot. Rocked by that incident, school officials began working closely with local landlords and business owners who come into regular contact with students. That's on top of other measures, liking having monitors who walk the streets on and around campus and working with the city to install more security cameras in and around campus, said Kerry Jackson, the university's director of off-campus safety.

"We try to meet with landlords on



Beverly Pettrey, captain and interim chief of the Cleveland State University Police Department, patrols the campus.



Kerry Jackson is director of off-campus safety at the University of Akron. The school lost a student to a shooting near campus in 2021.

a regular basis, and we have open and frank conversations with them," Jackson said. "The things we've talked about are where in the neighborhoods are these gun incidents happening? They're our eyes and ears on the ground now. They don't live there (in their off-campus housing), but they talk to their tenants, and they know what's going on."

Cleveland State University takes a similar approach with its faculty and students, said its police chief Beverly Pettrey.

"We have practices in place to identify anything that could be a threat to the university — especially a violent incident like an active shooter," Pettrey said.

It's hard to say when a preventative measure works, but more people than ever are willing to work with her department and report suspicious or concerning behavior, she said.

"People are afraid and concerned," Pettrey said.

The universities' tactics are solid pieces of a good strategy, according

to Matt Doherty, a former Secret Service agent who is now managing director of workforce risk management for the consulting firm Sikich.

Doherty said getting people to be observant and to speak up about potential dangers is critical. There are almost always advance warnings that someone is going to commit an act of violence like a school or workplace shooting. They typically have a new or increased fascination with weapons, violence or other killers, Doherty said, and they've usually had a prior



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weapons within their municipal borders.

Cities, under a once-treasured provision of Ohio government known as home rule, used to have the ability to pass their own laws governing many aspects of gun ownership. But in 2006, state legislators took that away with their own law banning any firearm regulations by cities and other local governments.

"It is a significant concern for us, and has been for a while. It's probably the most frustrating thing I deal with, in terms of not having as much control as we would like," Horrigan said.

Bibb is also frustrated, and not hopeful things will change in Columbus.

"Republican lawmakers in Columbus, they want to tout that they 'back the blue.' But their policies don't support that — if they backed the blue, they would allow big-city mayors around the state to have the tools they need. Instead, you're now allowed to carry a (concealed) gun around the state with no permit, and that doesn't make sense to me."

That's not likely to change anytime soon, either.

"There are eight Democrats voting no, every single time" that Republican state senators pass another law loosening state gun restrictions, said state Sen. Kenny Yuko, one of those eight, who represents parts of Cuyahoga and Lake counties. Eight out of 33 state senators is far from enough to stop any such legislation, let alone pass any new restrictions, he said, as the GOP has coalesced around increasing rights for gun owners.

"I've been in since 2005, and things have changed dramatically since then with regards to gun violence, gun laws and attitudes," Yuko said. "It's hard to even have a conversation these days ... so, at a time when we need more strict laws, what are we doing? We're passing less strict laws. You can't do that; it makes no sense."

But that's not going to change unless voters change the composition of

the state Legislature, or support a voter referendum on gun restrictions in Ohio — something Yuko said might have to be attempted as a last resort.

### Healing minds

Meanwhile, non-profits like Cleveland-based Frontline Services and the Cleveland Peacemakers are doing what they can to help heal kids affected by gun violence. But they are

stretched thin.

"We have a team that's shrinking, and we currently have 17 on staff," said Peacemakers executive director Myesha Watkins. "This work is hard; you can't do it forever. So, when people need to transition, we respect it," she said.

Hard indeed. Her organization works closely with Cleveland police, as well as with Level 1 trauma health care centers that receive gunshot victims in the city. They deploy immediately to do violence mitigation, often

giving people what Watkins calls "parking lot programming" on the spot to help them slow down, think and come up with a plan that does not make things worse for themselves, family and friends.

"It's all about, how do we reduce the chances of retaliation?" Watkins said. "Before adding more violence to a situation that's already the worst — let's think this through."

Frontline Services offers children and other residents a place to turn that is not connected with the sort of government social workers some communities disdain, offering help with a broad range of issues including homelessness.

For kids affected by gun violence, and other trauma, it offers emotional support services, help with safety issues, and activities like its one-day Camp Bridges, which was held this year on July 22 at Cleveland Metroparks' North Chagrin Reservation.

This year, 32 kids each had their own personal volunteer to hang out with for a day while they went on hikes, watched bubble shows by Dr. U.R. Awesome, and just generally got to be carefree kids in a safe environment, treated with kindness they might not be used to.

"The little boy I'm with today asked me, 'Why are you guys being nice to me?'" said volunteer Christine Oblak, a Parker Hannifin aerospace group leader who's been working with Frontline for more than six years.

Frontline — sometimes a kid's next stop after Peacemakers — also hopes it's helping to break the cycle of violence. If kids don't deal with their trauma, it comes out in harmful ways later, said CEO Susan Neth.

"Often times, it's an inability to focus, nightmares, acting out in schools, headaches, insomnia — if they can't find the words to get it out, it comes out in other ways," Neth said.

In other words, said Neth and others, it becomes part of the overall stress load that can eventually feed the cycle of violence.

### Fear and hope

No one working on the issue says it's going away, or that they intend to stop trying to fight it.

But the recent uptick in violence has been disheartening, some said, and expressed both optimism and a sense of foreboding.

They believe what they do helps, but they also know that violence leads to more violence, and they fear the recent upward spiral could be hard to reverse. They, too, fear the nation and their own communities could be crossing the Rubicon that Boutros warned about.

But the cost of gun violence is a statewide issue. The anti-gun-violence group Everytown for Gun Safety estimates gun violence costs Ohioans \$937 million a year. Boutros said every gunshot emergency room visit amounts to at least \$50,000 in medical expenses alone — and they can easily run much higher, into millions of dollars, for more severe injuries.

"But the cost of it on whole families and whole neighborhoods is what is most concerning," Boutros said.

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# The gun deaths no one wants to discuss

BY DAN SHINGLER

A lot of shooting ranges these days will rent you a gun to shoot if you don't have your own.

But don't expect to come in off the street for the first time, rent one, and walk out into your own lane by yourself.

"We have a policy: If you do not bring a firearm or you are not with someone else, you will not rent a firearm and you will not go onto the range," said Joe King, range and training manager at Black Wing Shooting Center in Delaware, near Columbus.

That's not because Black Wing doesn't welcome new shooters, he said. The range prides itself on bringing new shooters into sports like trap, skeet and sporting clay shooting. Black Wing throws 1.7 million clay targets a year for its 1,500 members and guests, including more than 50 young shooters per day during the summer months.

"That's strictly to prevent suicides," King said of the no-rent policy for newcomers. "And that's not just Black Wing — it's standard practice at the best ranges around the country."

Other ranges confirmed they use the same policy.

"That is common practice," said Mark Leach, range and training manager at another range, Vance Outdoors in Alum Creek.

The two men and their organizations are supporting an organization called Life Side Ohio, a suicide-prevention initiative that hopes to reduce the number of suicide victims in the state. Life Side is doing it by reaching out to a demographic that has been hard hit by the upward trend in suicides across the country in recent years, namely middle-aged, often white, men who own firearms.

Its backers figure that men who shoot are best positioned to talk to other men who shoot about the dangers of suicide and the need to do something when someone needs help with their mental health.

The silence around suicide and mental health issues is something that results in more of their peers falling victim to suicide, they said, and that must end.

"We're not going to talk about it quietly anymore — that's one of the things I love about Life Side Ohio," King said.

Whether you consider suicide to be a form of violence like most homicides, those working to prevent it said it leaves damaged and destroyed families in its wake much like other gun violence does.

It also has been on the rise in recent years. The Ohio Department of Health reports there was a 27.4% increase in suicides statewide between 2010 and 2019, the last year for which the department has data available.

There was a slight decline in suicides nationally between 2019 and 2020, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, but the CDC reports that there were still nearly 46,000 Americans lost to suicide in 2020.

Men, and especially white men, make up the majority of those

deaths — though non-white males have been affected by rising numbers in recent years. That's partially because men tend to use the most effective method — firearms — far more often than women.

Though they make up only about 30% of the U.S. population, white males accounted for 69.68% of U.S. suicide deaths in 2020, the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention reports.

That's why King, Leach and others involved in shooting sports and even Ohio firearm retailers such as Fin Feather Fur Outfitters are supporting the efforts of Life Side Ohio. If white men who own firearms are going to listen about how it's OK to have a problem, and OK to seek help, they figure it's likely to be from other sportsmen and shooters.

"The whole concept of Life Side Ohio is about the issue of people not necessarily trusting the other side — but we've got to do something about this issue," said Jim Samuel, a political consultant in Columbus who works for industry and also the Ohio Suicide Prevention Foundation.

Samuel helped to found Life Side because he was looking for a way to reach those impacted by suicide, and particularly white, rural males who he says are particularly affected and also often the most reluctant to seek help for problems when they should.

"So how do you deliver a message about gun safety and specifically reducing deaths by suicide — how do we deliver that message to gun owners?" Samuel said. "We're gun owners talking to other gun owners about mental health."

Life Side works with other suicide-prevention groups, but also shooting ranges, gun shops and other firearm retailers, the Buckeye Firearms Association, and the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. Its main message is a simple one: It's OK to not be OK, and there is no shame in asking for help for yourself or a loved one.

The group is new, formed in 2021 and only gaining traction this year, Samuel said. But he said he's pleased with the response Life Side has gotten from both those in the shooting-sports and firearms industries, but also from public safety and other suicide-prevention agencies.

Most of the people involved with Life Side are in favor of gun rights, including Samuel — but they're careful to not let the debate over guns eclipse their goal of ensuring that suicides are given attention along with other gun deaths.

That's helped attract supporters like King, who supports the Second Amendment but doesn't want to become embroiled in the increasingly volatile public debate over firearms.

"We're not trying to control legislation. We're trying to deliver a message predominately about mental health and safety to a community of responsible gun owners," Samuel said.

That seems to have also helped the group to gain support, including in the firearm community.

See **SUICIDE** on Page 22

run-in with the law.

"Once they come to your attention, you look at their social media, conversations with friends, neighbors and classmates. Because, in the majority of these cases, someone knew about their progress on the path to violence before the violent event took place," Doherty said. "If you sense something, say something."

The key, he said, is to intervene before they commit any acts of violence — which is also before a potential shooter likely faces any legal consequences as well, he said.

### Hamstrung cities

Local civic leaders, including Cleveland Mayor Justin Bibb and Akron Mayor Dan Horrigan are trying to address the stressors many experts, including Boutros, said contribute to gun violence. That includes improving schools, health care and city services, and investing in housing and community infrastructure. Even Akron's current 15-year rebate on housing construction improvements is part of the city's larger plan.

"They all work together, and I think they're all trying to accomplish the same thing," Horrigan said, because ultimately, "better communities have less violence."

But both mayors said they've been stymied by the state Legislature when it comes to having any control over



Matt Doherty is a former Secret Service agent and managing director of workforce risk management for consulting firm Sikich. | COURTESY

## CRISIS

From Page 15

Gun violence will be the issue Boutros devotes himself to full time after he retires at the end of this year, he said.

Many others also cite it as a top issue in terms of health, economic development, maintaining good neighborhoods, and creating and attracting successful and productive citizens.

“Every week we see killings,” said Akron Ward 8 Councilman Shammias Malik. “And addressing safety and violence is really an absolutely necessary thing when it comes to having a community. It’s hard to have good health outcomes, housing outcomes, education outcomes or really anything, because it’s such a basic building block of any community.”

Gang and community-revenge violence certainly is part of the problem. But gun violence has become a multilevel cyclone that even envelops law enforcement, exacerbating friction between police and the policed in an era of highly publicized shootings of Black people by cops.

Some local community leaders want the police to become less militarized, perhaps showing up in khakis and polo shirts, rather than bulletproof vests, to better interact with the residents they encounter. Cities like Cleveland and Akron are trying such things, as well as sometimes taking social workers on calls to keep such interactions calm or even friendly.

**“EVERY WEEK WE SEE KILLINGS. AND ADDRESSING SAFETY AND VIOLENCE IS REALLY AN ABSOLUTELY NECESSARY THING WHEN IT COMES TO HAVING A COMMUNITY.”**

— Shammias Malik, Akron Ward 8 councilman

But it’s a hard ask to get his police force to “demilitarize” and take on a wholly softer look when officers face an increasingly dangerous criminal element due to more powerful weapons on the street and rising tendencies for people to use them, said Akron Mayor Dan Horrigan.

“When you look at what people may have in the community — extended magazines, military hardware — it’s difficult to ask (an officer) to do that,” Horrigan said. “We’re not in an active way trying to militarize our police force. But it’s morphed, in a way, due to what’s out there.”

A cocktail of gun violence and a community protesting its police is what some like businessman Don Taylor said can threaten a community’s overall progress and economic development.

Developers, many of whom now have a stake in the efforts of Cleveland and Akron to rebuild their downtown populations, see gun violence as an economic concern, on top of being a major community issue generally.

“Any violent crime is bad, but when you’ve got people shooting each other, that’s really bad,” said Taylor, CEO of the Welty Building Co. and the leader of the redevelopment of downtown Akron’s Bowery district, among other area projects. “I’m in the business of helping people feel

secure. ... If they don’t feel secure, they don’t renew leases.”

Gun violence and the prevalence of more high-powered weapons also contributes to law enforcement officers working in an environment where they feel threatened, Horrigan and other mayors said, and could contribute to violent encounters with police like the June 27 shooting of Jayland Walker, who was reportedly shot dozens of times after what began as a routine traffic stop in Akron.

His death prompted protests in downtown Akron similar to those seen in other cities that have experienced recent police shootings. Though Akron’s protests were on a smaller scale than others, it still caused some restaurants and other business downtown to temporarily board up their windows.

Taylor said he avoided that at Bowery, where the new Crave restaurant recently opened. But he did have guards outside for a time and said the effects of such protests are another concern for developers.

“No one wants to eat at a boarded-up restaurant,” Taylor said.

But some worry we’re becoming numb to gun violence — at least when it happens in poor inner-city neighborhoods filled with people of color. If not for the fact that the Highland Park, Illinois, killings involved many deaths at once, in an affluent and relatively white suburb, it’s likely the nation would have not noticed much.

“What happened in Highland Park is a low number for a weekend in Chicago,” lamented Ken Trump,

president of National School Safety and Security Services in Cleveland. He’s an expert who has made a business of teaching schools how to keep their students and faculty safe from gun violence, including mass shootings

and isolated incidents. That’s an industry now.

He’s correct. In fact, eight people lost their lives in Chicago that same summer holiday weekend, mostly on the city’s relatively poor and largely Black south side.

### Our gun violence problem

The days around July 4 were no picnic for Cleveland or Akron either.

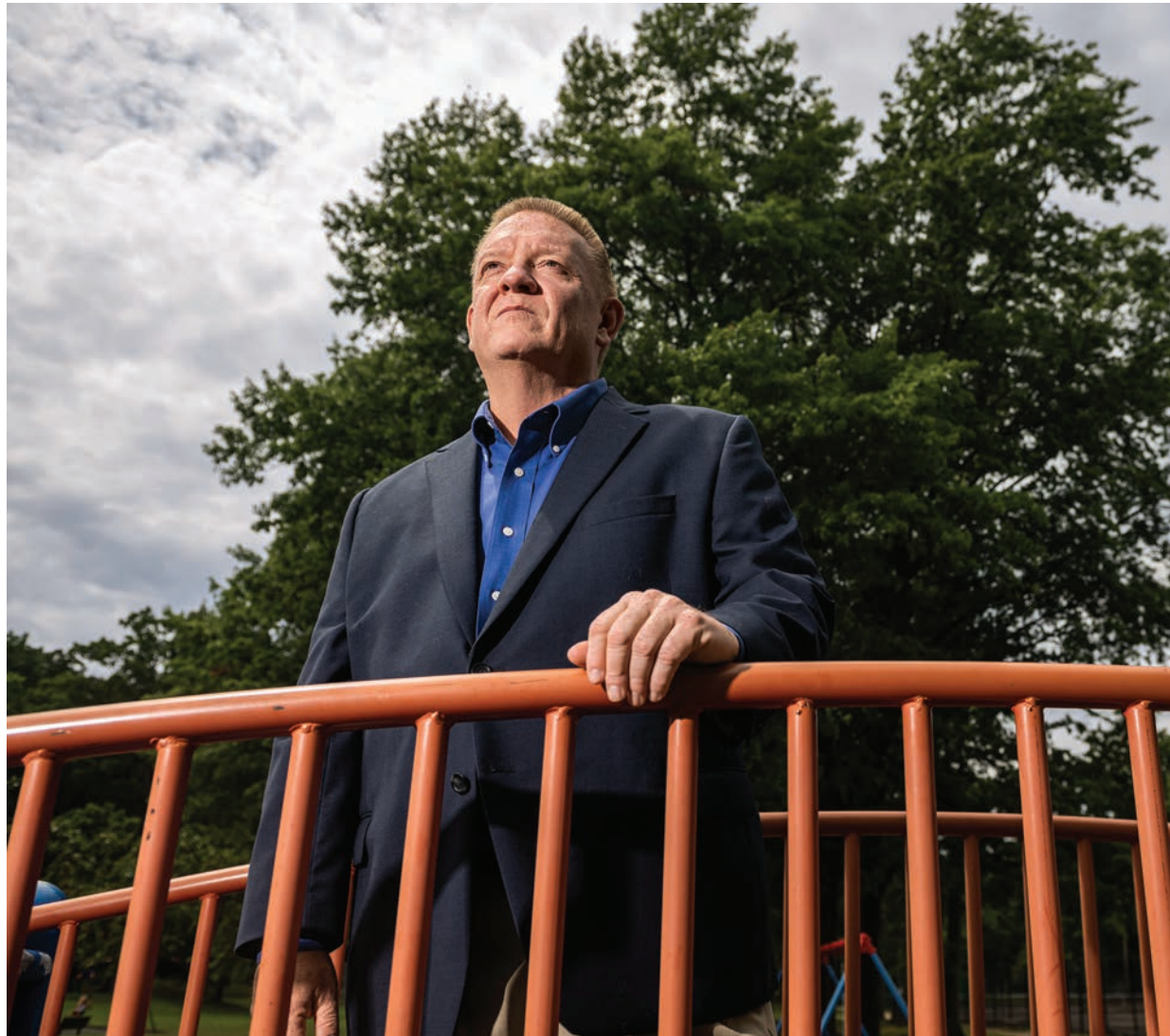
On July 4 in Akron, a 26-year-old woman was shot in the head and killed, apparently from the other side of Summit Lake, as she sat on her couch. Then, later that week on July 8, a 4-year-old girl and a 40-year-old man were killed by gunfire in Akron, also in the Summit Lake area.

In Cleveland, police reported 21 people were shot across the city over the holiday weekend, including three who died, in 13 separate incidents.

Summer is the busy season for local homicide detectives, police said. But it has been a rough couple of years for the two cities generally.

Cleveland Police reported 83 homicides through July 23 of this year, 74 of which involved firearms. The city had 170 homicides in 2021 and 193 in 2020, the vast majority again by firearm — it’s the city’s worst two years since the 1980s, when it had about 200,000 more residents.

As of Aug. 6, Akron had 30 homi-



Ken Trump, president of National School Safety and Security Services in Cleveland, is an expert who has made a business of teaching schools how to keep their students and faculty safe from gun violence.



“Every week we see killings,” said Akron Ward 8 Councilman Shammias Malik.

cides so far this year, according to the city’s website. That’s down from the 32 over the same period in 2021 — which ended with an unexplained but welcomed three-month respite — but still leaves the city worrying it could match its record of 50 homicides in 2020.

At this point, neither city has a chance of posting anything that would be considered a good year by recent historical standards — Akron

had only 17 homicides in 2004, Cleveland had just 55 in 2013.

Behind those statistics are the shootings in homes, bars, on streets, parking lots and in yards and playgrounds, that make up the vast majority of shootings here and around the country, said Trump and others.

Despite how it may seem, mass shootings like those in Highland Park account for a very small part of the problem of U.S. gun violence.

Children are most likely to die by a gun in their own home or another residence, followed by roads and parking lots where they might play or hang out, researchers with the University of Virginia found, according to data on the school’s website.

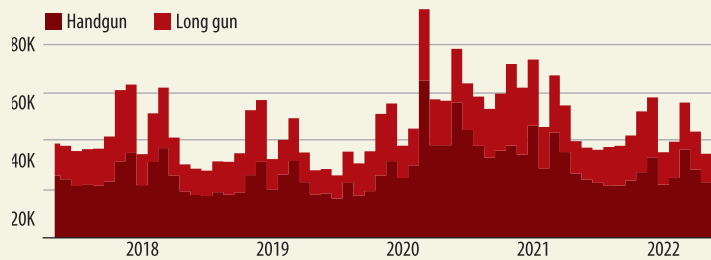
Whether it’s by street violence, other forms of homicide, or suicide, there are a lot of gun deaths in the U.S., which saw a record of more than 43,000 people killed by firearms in



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## Arming Up

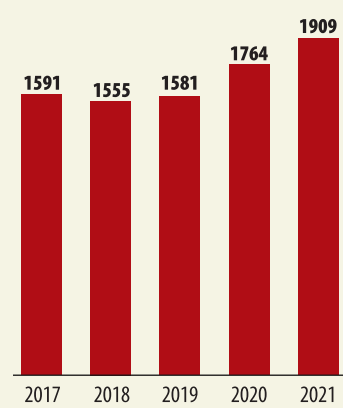
As tensions rose around COVID and politics in recent years, Ohioans bought more weapons, as evidenced by a rising number of background checks.



SOURCE: NATIONAL INSTANT CRIMINAL BACKGROUND CHECK SYSTEM CHECKS AS REPORTED BY THE FBI

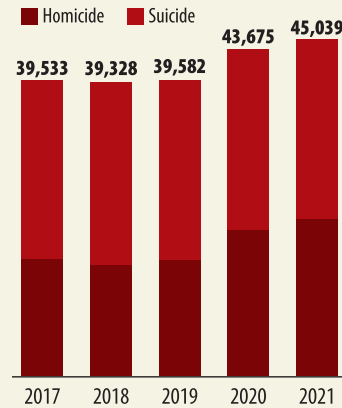
## Another Pandemic

Ohio's gun deaths have been on an upward trend, along with gun purchases, beginning around the time the COVID pandemic struck.



SOURCE: OHIO DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

U.S. gun deaths were already high, but have spiked in the last two years, mirroring growing gun sales and causing concern for officials.



SOURCE: GUN VIOLENCE ARCHIVE

2020, including nearly 20,000 homicides, according to data from the Gun Violence Archive (GVA), which tracks data from more than 7,500 sources. Suicides, also rising, make up the majority of gun deaths every year.

The nation then shattered that record with more than 45,000 gun deaths in 2021, GVA reported.

There are also too many in Northeast Ohio.

Over a five-year period beginning in July 2017 and ending in July 2022, there were 3,464 people killed or wounded by firearms in Northeast Ohio, according to the Gun Violence Archive. That's across the 11th and 13th U.S. congressional districts, which include Cleveland and Akron as their largest cities.

GVA's local figures show there were 1,160 deaths by guns over the five-year period, including suicides, across the region: 630 in Cleveland and 212 in Akron. That includes suicides, which typically account for about 60% of gun deaths.

Things seem to be getting worse too, said Dr. Edward Barksdale Jr., surgeon in chief at University Hospitals Rainbow Babies & Children's Hospital. As part of his job, he operates on many young victims of gun-fire in and around Cleveland.

"We've been busy this year," he said. "In fact, we saw more gunshot wounds through June this year than we saw in all of last year — and last year was a record."

Barksdale has been so busy, and so passionate about addressing the problem, he has become a sought-out expert on gun violence. He has given nearly 50 talks on the subject nationally, to date, he said.

He sees gun violence the way most would view a health crisis like COVID.

"Gun violence is a pandemic. The medical term I use is 'syndemic,' which is when two pandemics coexist, and the end result is worse than either one of them alone," Barksdale said. "That's really what's occurred."

The first pandemic is violence, Barksdale said, noting that felonious assaults also are rising generally.

The second pandemic, he said, is the proliferation of firearms, too many of which end up in the wrong hands, including with youths not old enough to legally own them who send people to his operating table and often end up there themselves.

## The guns

Americans, and Ohioans, have been on a gun-buying binge in recent years, as evidenced by the number of background checks, which are required for nearly but not all gun purchases.

Federal data from the National Instant Criminal Background Check System show the number of background checks submitted for gun purchases in Ohio rose from 468,974 in 2011 to a record 976,751 in 2020, before falling to 851,887 in 2021.

That 2021 figure amounts to one background check for more than 7% of the state's population in a year. It doesn't equate to the total number of firearms purchased because each background check only represents a single transaction, which could include several firearms.

The Buckeye Firearms Association, a pro-gun rights group, estimates that four million Ohioans own some type of firearm.

Many of those firearms leave home with their owners, who carry them. The Ohio Attorney General's office reported that a record 108,622 Ohioans renewed their concealed carry per-

mits in 2021, an increase of more than 50% from 2020.

That number represents only a fraction of the total number of people who had permits to carry a concealed weapon, since CCW permits were good for five years. And as of June 13, no permit is needed, so no one knows how many Ohioans are carrying guns today.

Handguns are the real killers when it comes to gun violence. "Black rifles," the AR-15s and other military-variant long guns that have a bad reputation with many for their ability to kill large numbers of people quickly, are not what are typically used to kill area youths, or being used in suicides as a rule.

According to the Pew Research Center, a "nonpartisan fact tank" on public issue data, at least 59% of murders in 2020 involved a handgun. Data are tough to parse because details are not tracked closely in the U.S., according to Pew, with 36% of gun murders associated with unspecified firearms and fewer than 5% assigned to shotguns or assault rifles combined.

"They carry rifles more or less for videos, but nine times out of 10 it's still a handgun being used in a crime," Cleveland police Sgt. Barry Bentley, who works with the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) and other agencies to get illegal guns off the street, said of the criminals he encounters.

AR-15s "have become more common over the course of the years, but they're still far behind handguns," Bentley said. "You can carry 30 rounds in a handgun now, the same as you can a rifle."

Pro-gun rights groups say it's not the type of weapon that's the problem, it's the type of person who owns the weapon. People like Buckeye Firearms executive director Dean Rieck

contend gun violence is a problem caused by a small number of criminals, usually known to authorities, committing street-level gun violence.

"Those who want more restrictions on firearms talk as though anyone with a gun might commit a crime at any time. That's simply not true," said Rieck.

He's right, but also not describing the entire picture, said some working on the issue of gun violence.

It's true that repeat offenders, especially in crime-ridden inner-city neighborhoods, are the people most likely to commit a murder or other gun violence, said Bentley, a 15-year Cleveland police officer who heads the department's efforts at the Cuyahoga County Gun Crime Intelligence Center (CGIC).

"As the saying goes, 5% of the criminal population commits 70% of the violent crime," Bentley said.

MetroHealth's Boutros, who like Barksdale at Rainbow Babies & Children's Hospital has seen more than his share of gunshot victims, agreed. But he said the universe of offenders and victims is expanding.

"It's the 20-80 rule: 83% of the people shot in Cuyahoga County come from 10 zip codes," Boutros said. But, he added, "over the past five years, the number of women and Hispanics who are now victims of gun violence has doubled. The rising percentage of women who are both using guns and becoming victims of guns is an alarming change because it's a societal adoption of something that used to be so gender specific. By increasing the number of women using and being victims of guns, it shows we are the precipice of a massive change. As I've said, the more it happens, the more it happens."

In terms of criminals acquiring guns, some guns purchased by law-abiding owners end up stolen, including from cars when an owner goes into an establishment that doesn't allow firearms.

Other guns are seemingly purchased legally, but by straw buyers who then sell them to someone who could not get a gun legally.

And, sometimes, those two things converge, Bentley said.

"The word is out on what can get passed as 'oops, my bad — I didn't know that gun was there,'" he said. He was referring to the growing number of incidents where someone says a gun was stolen, but investigators later find it was purposefully left in a specific place for a criminal to pick it up.

"There's a lot of, quote, 'gun theft' in Cleveland where people get their guns stolen from unlocked cars and it's more than a coincidence ... it's hard to prosecute but we know people are leaving guns on purpose," Bentley said. "When the same person does it three or four times, that's not a coincidence."

Those who get caught face tough, sometimes years-long sentences under federal gun law charges, in part because the ATF is involved and also because the local governments backing the CGIC unit that Bentley heads are keen to get weapons off their streets, he said.

Bentley worries the state's new law, allowing any legal owner to carry a gun on their person or in their car, will exacerbate the "gun theft" problem he encounters.

"With the new CCW law, it really

opens up everything. Before, you couldn't carry a gun in a car without a CCW (permit). Now, you can put it anywhere," he said.

## The violence

Regardless of whether too many guns on the street is the issue, or whether it can be addressed, there is still another, possibly greater problem at hand, said many experts on gun violence, law enforcement and the issues affecting those likely to commit violent acts.

People, especially young people in the inner cities, are too quick to become violent. When they do, the danger dial goes from 1 to 10 in a single, instantaneous twist.

Mixing that with the number of weapons available today creates the toxic brew that is costing so many lives, said people like Akron City Council's Malik.

"It's creating a situation where more and more people have weapons and a situation that might have been settled with fists 10 years ago is now settled with a gun."

Cleveland's new chief of police, Wayne Drummond, who grew up in a relatively rough neighborhood on the city's East Side near East 95th Street and Cedar Avenue, said there were fights when he was a kid, but rarely gun fights like seen today.

"We had issues — but we didn't turn to weapons. Did we have fights, and fight with kids from other neighborhoods? Sure we did. ... But here today, the proclivity is to turn to gun violence to address issues," Drummond said.

And when one person pulls a gun on another — and it's often one young, hot-headed person pulling a gun on another — the situation instantly and often irrevocably changes for the worse, Drummond said.

"When people pull a weapon out, there's no time to think," Drummond said. "And it's almost impossible to reverse the dynamics at that point."

## The reasons

Of course, none of what you just read is a novel premise. People have been saying for generations that teenagers aren't as well behaved as they remember, and they've said that young people are getting more violent during other historical spikes in gun deaths as well. Remember the so-called "super predators" of 1990s politics?

That doesn't mean it's not true, but it might mean that change is a constant over the years.

What does seem to be changing now, though, is the approach to tackling the issue of violence generally. Many people are turning away from the lock-em-up-it's-their-own-fault approach and instead beginning to look at violence the way Dr. Barksdale described, as a disease.

It's a disease that is not only contagious, but has specific causes related to stress — things such as generational poverty, poor schools, poor housing, a lack of transportation and other services, racism, inadequate physical and mental health care. In other words, the things that often are part and parcel to being poor and Black or brown in America today, or ever.

## CRISIS

From Page 21

That's not just a liberal's view of things, either. More and more, civic leaders, elected officials and business owners and executives have come to believe that's true. That includes Taylor, known to be a savvy, business-minded developer and the husband of one of Ohio's most conservative politicians, former Republican Ohio Lt. Gov. Mary Taylor.

"I used to look at it and say if these people would just do this, this and this, it would solve the problem," Taylor said. "But there are institutional poverty and mental health problems, and other issues involved."

Taylor said his opinions have changed, in part, because of his participation in Leadership Akron and the resulting exposure to other business and civic leaders working on the issue of violence.

"It's a multidimensional problem and a single solution never works," Taylor said.

It takes investment too — and that's not coming from a developer, or even a mayor, but Drummond, Cleveland's police chief. He points to Cleveland's West Side, around the area now known as Gordon Square, which he said sees far less violence since it's gotten investments in new housing and businesses.

"West 65th was drug infested, prostitute infested, we had an adult bookstore there and a lot of crime. Go to West 65th and Detroit now and it's night and day. Do you know why? It's all the investment — high-end restaurants, folks moving back to the city in that area and investing in so many different things," Drummond said. "If you had told me in 1990 you'd have people living there in \$200,000 and \$300,000 (houses), I'd have told you you're out of your mind."

### The future

Ironically, keeping that sort of investment going depends at least in part on tamping down gun violence, local leaders say.

Cleveland Mayor Bibb said state leaders should realize the economic impact that gun violence has on Ohio's big cities, and by extension, all of Ohio.

"We represent a majority of the state's GDP — Cleveland, Columbus and Cincinnati. If I can't do my job as mayor to tackle violent crime and gun violence, it makes our cities less safe and less likely to receive investment," Bibb said. "There's a direct correlation between that and the economic prospects of the state."

He, Akron's Mayor Horrigan, and many nonprofits and other organizations working to tamp down the

violence and help heal those affected by it said that, despite the rising number of guns on the streets and the increased level of gun violence in recent years, they remain hopeful and dedicated to the cause.

And developers remain committed to creating more housing, businesses and other attractions in downtown neighborhoods. Like Cleveland police Sgt. Bentley, they think the investments they make in

**"IF I CAN'T DO MY JOB AS MAYOR TO TACKLE VIOLENT CRIME AND GUN VIOLENCE, IT MAKES OUR CITIES LESS SAFE AND LESS LIKELY TO RECEIVE INVESTMENT. THERE'S A DIRECT CORRELATION BETWEEN THAT AND THE ECONOMIC PROSPECTS OF THE STATE."**

— Cleveland Mayor Justin Bibb

communities can be part of the solution. Taylor said he has been told that after Cleveland began attracting residents to its downtown again in the early 2000s, the number of 911 calls concerning crime in and around downtown shot up.

"That was a good thing — people cared enough about their city to report bad things," Taylor said.

MetroHealth's Boutros said addressing the issue of gun violence would also be addressing the No. 1 problem when it comes to recruiting new professionals to the area, at

least when it comes to the highly trained doctors, nurses and others that he needs.

"Our cost of living is incredible. We have some of the best medical care in the country. We have some of the best cultural experiences within 20 minutes of our location, anywhere in the county. If you don't like public schools, which are getting better, we have extraordinary and affordable private schools. We have

plenty of excellent housing stock. The one problem we encounter when recruiting doctors and others is their concern about safety," Boutros said.

Progress is being made, but more is needed, Bibb said.

"We took 1,600 guns off the street this year alone," Bibb said of the city police department's efforts through July of this year. "But that's not good enough. We have to do more."

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## SUICIDE

From Page 19

"One reason I joined is because they said: 'We're not going to like (Second Amendment) politics, we're going to talk about the issue at hand,'" King said.

Life Side offers coaching, references to source of help with mental health issues, and even tips for how to store guns safely off-site in the event someone suspects a loved one might be at risk. At the top of its web page, it states, "If you or someone you know is in crisis or in need of help, call 1-800-273-8255 or text '4HOPE' to 741-741."

If that phone number sounds familiar, it's also not only the number for National Suicide Prevention Lifeline — now known as the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline, but also the title of a 2017 song by the rapper Logic.

As for Life Side, it's just getting started and doesn't know yet if it can and will move the needle when it comes to suicide deaths in Ohio.

But King, for one, welcomes the help.

"We are blessed that it has not happened here — but I have peers around the country who have had it happen," King said, speaking of suicides at other shooting ranges.



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# CRAIN'S LIST | HEALTH CARE COMPANIES

Ranked by local full-time equivalent employees

RANK	COMPANY	LOCAL FTE STAFF 1-YEAR CHANGE	TOTAL FTE STAFF	DESCRIPTION	YEAR FOUNDED	TOP LOCAL EXECUTIVE
1	<b>DISCOUNT DRUG MART INC.</b> , Medina 330-725-2340/discount-drugmart.com	2,647 5.0%	3,036	Regional drug store chain	1968	<b>Don Boodjeh</b> , CEO
2	<b>MEDICAL MUTUAL OF OHIO</b> , Cleveland 216-687-7000/medmutual.com	2,233 -4.7%	2,688	Health insurance company	1934	<b>Steven C. Glass</b> , president, CEO
3	<b>STERIS</b> , Mentor 440-354-2600/steris.com	2,112 9.0%	16,767	Infection prevention products and services provider	1987	<b>Daniel A. Carestio</b> , president, CEO
4	<b>EMBASSY HEALTHCARE</b> , Beachwood 216-378-2050/embassyhealthcare.net	1,800 50.0%	3,800	Short- and long-term skilled nursing, assisted living	1998	<b>Aaron Handler</b> , president; <b>George Repchick</b> , CEO
5	<b>NOMS HEALTHCARE</b> , Sandusky 419-626-6161/nomshealthcare.com	1,090 18.3%	1,090	Independent multi-specialty physician group	2001	<b>Joshua G. Frederick</b> , president, CEO
6	<b>DANBURY SENIOR LIVING</b> , North Canton 330-497-6565/danburyseniorliving.com	952 <sup>1</sup> 0.0%	—	Senior living provider offering independent living, assisted living and memory care	1997	<b>Andy Harpster</b> , chief operating officer
7	<b>SPRENGER HEALTH CARE</b> , Lorain 440-989-5200/sprengerhealthcare.com	817 -21.7%	958	Senior housing and care continuum services provider	1959	<b>Nicole Sprenger</b> , CEO; <b>Michael Sprenger</b> , COO
8	<b>QUADAX INC.</b> , Middleburg Heights 440-777-6300/quadax.com	746 -1.7%	803	Health care revenue cycle software and services provider	1973	<b>John S. Leskiw</b> , president, CEO
9	<b>U.S. ACUTE CARE SOLUTIONS</b> , Canton 855-687-0618/usacs.com	575 —	5,000	Physician-owned acute care medical group	2015	<b>Christopher R. Hummer</b> , CEO
10	<b>NORMAN NOBLE INC.</b> , Highland Heights 216-761-5387/nnoble.com	513 —	534	Manufacturer of medical device implants and products	1946	<b>Scott Noble</b> , vice president, CFO
11	<b>APPLIED MEDICAL TECHNOLOGY INC.</b> , Brecksville 440-717-4000/appliedmedical.net	506 26.5%	—	Manufacturer of feeding devices, accessories and surgical products	1986	<b>George J. Picha</b> , president, CEO
12	<b>GEMCORE</b> , Hudson 833-245-4845/gemcorehealth.com	403 8.6%	403	Mail-order diabetes supplies, medications, coaching, wholesale distribution services	1992	<b>Matthew Edwards</b> , CEO
13	<b>INVACARE CORP.</b> , Elyria 440-329-6000/invacare.com	395 -10.6%	3,000 <sup>2</sup>	Medical device manufacturer for the home and post-acute care markets	1979	<b>Matthew E. Monaghan</b> , chairman, president, CEO
14	<b>UNITY HEALTH NETWORK</b> , Cuyahoga Falls 330-923-5899/unityhealthnetwork.org	324 -4.1%	324	Primary care and specialty physician network	2004	<b>Robert A. Kent</b> , president
15	<b>FIRST CHOICE HOME HEATH OF OHIO</b> , Cleveland 216-221-4444/firstchoiceohio.com	300 <sup>1</sup> 0.0%	—	Home care, staffing and wellness services provider	1998	—
16	<b>PARTSSOURCE INC.</b> , Aurora 330-562-9900/partssource.com	296 13.8%	455	Health care technology and service marketplace for medical device supply chain	2001	<b>Philip Settimi</b> , president, CEO
17	<b>OHMAN FAMILY LIVING</b> , Newbury 440-338-8220/ohmanfamilyliving.com	265 0.0%	265	Post-acute health care system	1965	<b>Anderson C. Ohman Sr.</b> ; <b>George H. Ohman Jr.</b> , co-presidents
18	<b>ANNA MARIA OF AURORA</b> , Aurora 330-562-6171/annamariaofaurora.com	262 —	262	Continuum care residential community	1965	<b>Aaron Baker</b> , administrator, owner
19	<b>PREMIER PHYSICIANS CENTERS INC.</b> , Westlake 440-895-5038/premierphysicians.net	250 0.0%	250	Independent physician group	1994	<b>Bassem Haddad</b> , president
20	<b>MIM SOFTWARE INC.</b> , Cleveland 216-455-0600/mimsoftware.com	236 11.8%	271	Medical imaging software company	2003	<b>Andrew Nelson</b> , CEO
21	<b>RETINA ASSOCIATES OF CLEVELAND</b> , Beachwood 216-831-5700/retina-doctors.com	220 10.0%	220	Private ophthalmology practice of retina specialists	1974	<b>David G. Miller</b> , managing partner
22	<b>COMFORT KEEPERS OF GREATER CLEVELAND</b> , Valley View 216-595-3681/greatercleveland.comfortkeepers.com	200 0.0%	200	Non-medical in-home senior care	2001	<b>Paul Burke</b> , president, CEO, owner; <b>Mark Shee</b> , CFO, owner
22	<b>HOME INSTEAD CLEVELAND EAST</b> , Oakwood Village 440-914-1400/homeinstead.com/116	200 0.0%	200	Non-medical home care	1996	<b>Margie Orth</b> , general manager; <b>Scott D. Radcliff</b> , president; <b>Jeannie Radcliff</b> , vice president
22	<b>KEMPER HOUSE STRONGSVILLE &amp; HIGHLAND HEIGHTS</b> , Strongsville 440-846-1100/kemperhouse.com	200 0.0%	200	Residential care facilities focused on Alzheimer's and dementia	1999	<b>Kristin West</b> , president
22	<b>QUALCARE LLC (HOME INSTEAD - MENTOR)</b> , Mentor 440-257-5800/homeinstead.com	200 0.0%	200	Home care services provider for seniors	2000	<b>Therese Zdesar</b> , president, CEO
26	<b>CLEVELAND DENTAL MANAGEMENT</b> , Moreland Hills 216-905-8454/streetsborodental.com	172 —	163	Dental offices	1998	<b>Jeff Rosenthal</b> , president, owner
27	<b>APEX DERMATOLOGY</b> , Mayfield Heights 833-279-7546/apexskin.com	170 13.3%	170	Medical practice specializing in medical, surgical and aesthetic dermatology	2011	<b>Jorge Garcia-Zuazaga</b> , president, CEO
28	<b>BRENTWOOD HEALTH CARE CAMPUS</b> , Sagamore Hills 330-468-2273/brentwoodhealthcarecenter.com	140 0.0%	140	Provider of assisted living, memory care, long-term care and rehabilitation services	1989	<b>Brent Classen</b> , president
29	<b>QMD</b> , Pepper Pike 803-366-7036/qmd.net	135 —	2,100	Supplier of silicone components and complete medical devices	1966	<b>Mauricio Arellano</b> , CEO
30	<b>ECHO HEALTH INC.</b> , Westlake 440-835-3511/echohealthinc.com	112 6.7%	135	Provider of payment solutions for the health care and insurance markets	1997	<b>William Davis</b> , chairman, CEO
31	<b>NORMANDY SENIOR LIVING OF ROCKY RIVER</b> , Rocky River 440-333-5400/thenormandy.com	110 —	110	Continuing care retirement community	1993	<b>David B. Orlean</b> , owner
32	<b>GEOCARE INC. (HOME INSTEAD - PARMA AND NORTH OLMSTED)</b> , North Olmsted 440-734-7441/homeinstead.com/257/home-instead-senior-care	98 -10.9%	98	Non-medical home care provider	1998	<b>Geoffrey Moore</b> , president

Research by Chuck Soder (csoder@crain.com) | Information is from the companies. This list includes private sector companies based in Northeast Ohio that generate most of their revenue from health care-related products and services, excluding hospitals. NOTES: 1. As of June 2021. 2. Approximate total employment as of Dec. 31, 2021; from 2021 annual report.

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# Despite COVID, Embassy Healthcare posts big growth

BY CHUCK SODER

Embassy Healthcare picked an interesting time to start expanding.

The Beachwood-based company, which operates nursing homes and assisted living facilities, saw its Northeast Ohio employment grow by 50% over the past year. That makes it easily the fastest-growing local employer on the Crain's Health Care Companies list, which includes locally based private sector companies in a variety of sectors within the broader health care industry, be they medical device makers, physician groups or home health care providers.

Embassy Healthcare, No. 4 on the list, had about 1,800 full-time equivalent employees in the 15-county area at the end of June, up from roughly 1,200 the previous year.

During that year, Embassy acquired three skilled nursing and rehabilitation operations in Euclid, Lyndhurst and Painesville, and it's continuing to add new facilities in Northeast Ohio, said Jody McComas, vice president of community relations.

The company has been expanding for the last few years — a period that

has been particularly challenging for companies in the senior living and long-term care space.

"Right when COVID started was when we started expanding," McComas said.

Growth was definitely slower for other senior living and long-term care companies on the list. Without Embassy, the other four companies that gave Crain's two years of data saw their combined local employment fall by 8.7%. Granted, that excludes Danbury Senior Living, which didn't provide a 2022 employment figure. Crain's ranked them No. 6 on the list, using data from June 2021.

The full digital list includes 46 health care companies with at least 20 full-time equivalent employees in Northeast Ohio. The senior living and long-term care facility operators take up the most space on the list, with eight companies, and are the largest local employers, with 4,546 employees. And that doesn't even include six other companies in the home health care space.

But by worldwide employment, the largest industry on the list by a long shot is the medical equipment sector.

That's largely because of Steris: the Mentor-based infection prevention products and services provider has 2,112 local employees, good enough for No. 3 on the list. But worldwide, Steris has 16,767 employees, which would easily put it at No. 1 if we ranked the list by total employment.

Another company in the health care sterilization space would move up much further by that measure. Sotera Health Co. of Brecksville is tied for No. 34 on the full digital version of the list with 80 local employees, but it has about 3,000 worldwide. If we ranked the list by total employment, it would be tied for No. 5 with Elyria-based medical equipment manufacturer Invacare, which is No. 13 on the actual list.

The No. 1 company on the list is Discount Drug Mart with 2,647 local employees, followed by Medical Mutual of Ohio with 2,233.

The full digital list contains 46 companies in Excel format and is available to Crain's Data Members. To learn more, visit [CrainsCleveland.com/data](http://CrainsCleveland.com/data).

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## What health care trend is having an impact on your organization?

Here are responses from a few firms on the full digital list:

**"The tightened labor market has created opportunity for us. We have been able to staff work as an outsource partner that medical groups struggled to execute internally."**

— Jerry Kelsheimer, president, Medic Management Group

**"Ohio continues to face systemic, structural challenges in its provision of mental health care services including funding inequities, an ever-changing regulatory landscape and workforce shortages. Adding to these issues are insufficient reimbursement rates and overly rigid licensing and certification requirements."**

— Ritu Chatterjee, CEO, Community Behavioral Health Center

**"Autism is being recognized and thus diagnosed in greater numbers providing Epicenter ABA with the ability to provide early intervention service to more children in need."**

— Mark Shankman, co-owner, Epicenter ABA

## NORTH OLMSTED

From Page 1

Jones said in a phone interview that all the steps stemmed from what she heard from many constituents during door-to-door drives in her successful campaign for mayor last year.

"The main concern after safety was about economic development," she said. "People either talk about empty storefronts or (conditions) at Great Northern Mall. That is the lens they use to look at economic development. We want to position the city so the mall can be developed to its highest use. We also want to be strategic about all the retail space and what we want the city to look like in 10 years and not just respond to what comes our way."

The mall retains four department store anchors, so it fares better than many. However, the last Sears store in the region closed in 2020. The shuttered store sits on 16 acres, including vast parking fields outside it. The Sears site is owned by R6 Motors Inc., an affiliate of Rafih Auto Group of Toronto. That company acquired the site from The George Group, the Westlake real estate and hospitality firm, for \$6.55 million on Nov. 29, 2021, according to Cuyahoga County land records.

Although tax bills for the Sears site go to the Mercedes-Benz dealership on Lorain Road operated by Rafih Auto, which acquired the dealership and other high-end brands in 2019 from former auto dealer Bernie Moreno, the properties housing the luxury brands themselves are owned separately from the businesses. So a move might be easier to execute than otherwise.

Matt Yousef, vice president of operations and head of Rafih Auto's Cleveland campus, said in an email on Thursday, Aug. 18, that the company is not ready to comment on its plans. Teri Rafih, CEO, responded the same way by email to a Crain's Cleveland Business query last June.



A change of direction may be in store for the former Sears store in North Olmsted, now owned by an affiliate of Rafih Auto Group, which operates a stable of luxury dealerships in the suburb. | CRAIN'S CLEVELAND BUSINESS



The site of the closed Forest Primary School in North Olmsted may be used to seed new housing in the largely developed suburb if plans by city officials reach fruition.

The phased-use measure could help redevelopment of the site and others in the suburb, said Max Upton, North Olmsted economic and development director, but he declined to comment on the auto dealership's plans.

Instead, he said, the measure updates the city's code to meet current development needs, particularly for a large development with multiple parts. Prior code required development plans to be completed within a year after approval by the city.

school and secure a builder or developer to put housing on it.

Upton said the phasing legislation will help redevelopment of the school site. Moreover, the city has secured options for other primary schools that might be closed in the future. The proposed CIC also could allow parcels too small to garner a developer's interest to be cobbled together into more usable sites, potentially for industry, Upton added.

CoStar, the online data source, estimates August retail vacancy in the suburb is 6.6%, up from a 4.5% average vacancy over the past five years. That seeming health is belied by individual plazas with large empty spaces. One strip center on Lorain near the suburb's west end has a sole occupant, a barber shop. A city plan to aid storefront updates to assist new tenants also is in the works.

Nathan Kelly, an economic development specialist before becoming managing director of the Cushman & Wakefield Cresco realty brokerage, said he sees the city activities as an effort to get ahead of problems that go with aging office, retail and apartment buildings.

"They're modernizing the structures of government to be equipped for the next set of users in terms of development activity," Kelly said, and many of the steps are common in older suburbs. "They have the benefit of hindsight and picking and choosing what works best."

For her part, Jones puts it simply.

"I believe the cities that are continuing to succeed are continuing to evolve," said the mayor, who had previously served on North Olmsted City Council. "I had felt for many years that North Olmsted had been stagnant."

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# LEAD

From Page 1

prohibit the re-rental of the property until the conditions have been corrected. Preventing an eviction precludes correction of unsafe conditions.”

Coalition leaders said they’re reviewing the decision and discussing how to respond.

Meanwhile, on similar grounds, the apartment association expects to protest a 2017 housing court rule that requires landlords pursuing evictions to list their properties on the city’s rental registry.

“We’re not done. I promise you that,” said Ralph McGreevy, the trade group’s executive vice president and chief operating officer. “We’re not done.”

Cleveland City Council passed a lead-safe ordinance in 2019, requiring residential rentals built before 1978 to be certified as safe — not free of lead, but free of hazards — before March 1, 2023. Officials started rolling out the program last year, imposing deadlines for certification by ZIP code on a quarterly basis. So far, compliance is low, at fewer than 20% of units citywide.

In early 2021, Cleveland Housing Court Judge W. Moná Scott made compliance a prerequisite for evictions. Her rule requires landlords to document whether a unit is lead-safe, working toward certification or exempt.

After hearing from frustrated landlords and lawyers, the apartment association hired law firm Dworkin & Bernstein to challenge the rule. Their test case was an eviction lawsuit filed by the owner of Shaker House, an apartment building on the city’s East Side.

The tenant had not paid rent in several months. The landlord, an affiliate of Cleveland-based Capital Properties Management Ltd., did not provide lead-safe certification paperwork — and argued from the start that the housing court’s rule was unenforceable.

The case, filed in August 2021, pinballed through the court system before landing in the Eighth District Court of Appeals. Meanwhile, the tenant stayed put — and kept quiet during the legal dispute. He has not paid rent in more than a year, an attorney for the landlord confirmed.

“This decision sends a message to this court and other courts,” said Grant Keating, a partner at Dworkin & Bernstein’s Cleveland office. “They need to follow the statutes. They can’t rewrite them.”

Through a spokesman, Scott declined to comment, citing judicial codes of conduct.

The housing court cannot appeal the decision. The only person with appeal rights is the tenant, who never attempted to defend himself.

Eleven interested parties, including the Legal Aid Society of Cleveland, the George Gund Foundation and the Schubert Center for Child Studies at Case Western Reserve University, advocated for the rule in an amicus brief filed with the appeals court. But they had no standing in the case.

Abigail Staudt, a managing attorney at the Legal Aid Society, said those advocates were dismayed by the ruling. But, she noted, the city has other avenues for enforcing the lead-safe housing law, by sending enforcement notices to unresponsive property owners and filing criminal complaints in housing court.

And the coalition is preparing to



Lead-testing professional Zak Burkons inspects a downtown Cleveland apartment in January. | MICHELLE JARBOE/CRAIN'S CLEVELAND BUSINESS

unveil broader incentives for property owners who comply.

“All of these different parts of our community have been advancing the ball,” Staudt said. “So while we’re disappointed about the outcome of this case, it doesn’t mean that this is the only way that we’re going to reach our goals.”

The housing court rule helped with compliance, though it’s difficult to quantify the impact, said Sally Martin, the city’s director of building and housing. Her staff has been sending out notices to landlords and recently filed an initial batch of lead-related lawsuits against errant property owners, Martin said.

Public records show that the owner of Shaker House obtained lead-safe certification for that property in September — after filing the eviction case. In general, major apartment owners and operators with well-maintained and renovated properties are complying with the law.

Mom-and-pop landlords, who control an estimated 60% of the city’s roughly 100,000 rental units, are much harder to reach. And the low failure rate on reports submitted to the city indicates that private-sector testers are not seeing the worst-off properties yet.

Starting in the fall, the coalition plans to increase the amount of funding — a mix of loans and grants — that property owners can tap to address lead hazards. And landlords will be able to use that money for a wider range of projects, such as window replacements.

The coalition also will make grants available to all property owners, regardless of income.

Higher-income applicants will receive a blended loan-and-grant package, while lower-income owners will be eligible for a grant of up to \$12,000, said Emily Lundgard, a senior program director at Enterprise Community Partners, a nonprofit group that is part of the public-private coalition.

Drawing on \$115 million in funding commitments, the partners also will boost incentive payments to landlords who obtain certifications.

“We’re going to try to make this as simple as possible for all property owners,” Lundgard said.

The coalition aims to spend the money, including pledges from the Cleveland Clinic and the city, by 2028. So far, though, landlords have been slow to seek funding. Without the cudgel of the housing court rule, expanded incentives and aid are even more important, advocates said.

Keating suggested that a better way to increase compliance would be

to allow evictions, bar re-rental of the units and help the landlords access funding to address lead hazards. Some repairs can’t safely occur with tenants in place. And some tenants have used the housing court rule to avoid paying rent, while blocking testers from accessing their units.

The appeals court ruling won’t impact many members of the apartment association, McGreevy said. The group represents professional landlords who, by and large, are complying with the lead-safe law.

But McGreevy believed it was important to take a stand on behalf of the broader real estate industry.

“This case, to me, was about someone stepping outside of their judicial role,” he said. “Who did it affect? It affected the small landlords. I’ve heard from a lot of them. That’s not my crowd. But we care that the courts everywhere are following the law.”

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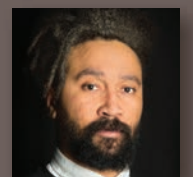
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# Return-to-office deadline after Labor Day sets up showdowns

BY BLOOMBERG

A return-to-office showdown is coming in September.

Companies such as Apple Inc. and Peloton Interactive Inc. have told corporate and office-based workers in the U.S. to come back next month, and whether they do will say a lot about the ever-shifting balance of power between bosses and their underlings.

If the latest calls for "RTO" sound familiar, they are: Last summer, many companies targeted Labor Day in the U.S. and Canada as the inflection point for remote workers to return to their cubicles. The Delta variant of COVID-19 upended those plans, prompting leaders to look to early 2022, but the Omicron variant soon scuttled that. Apple has pushed back its RTO nearly half a dozen times in the past year.

Across companies, the delays confused and annoyed workers, making some firms unwilling to deliver specific mandates, instead trying to lure staffers back with perks.

Those days might be over soon. As the U.S. economy and stock market deliver mixed signals about the outlook for growth, business leaders have decided to draw a line in the sand. Beyond Apple and Peloton, Royal Bank of Canada and Comcast Corp. have also told workers to return several days a week sometime after Labor Day, which falls on Sept. 5. Corporate chiefs like Jamie Dimon at JPMorgan Chase & Co. continue to bash remote work, raising concerns among some workers that staying home might be hazardous to their career.

But demand for labor remains rock-solid, providing skilled workers a good bit of leverage. Average office occupancy across 10 of America's largest cities has barely budged in the past five months. In the battle of the boardroom versus the bedroom, something has to give come September.

"We believe post Labor Day will be a meaningful milestone," said Jay Jiang, finance chief at Dream Office, a Canadian real estate investment trust, which owns office buildings and parking ga-

rages in Toronto and other cities. "We'll start to see a lot more traction after Labor Day and getting people back into the office."

A milestone for senior executives could be a millstone for the rank and file. After more than two years of flexible work arrangements, many white-collar workers have grown accustomed to being able to work where and when they wish, freeing them up to care for kids, aging parents or to simply escape endless Zoom calls and take a stroll in the backyard after lunch.

According to the Future Forum, a research consortium backed by Salesforce-owned Slack Technologies Inc. that polls more than 10,000 so-called knowledge workers every quarter globally, most workers want that flexibility, and might leave if they don't get it.

Most companies calling for September RTOs aren't demanding workers get back to the office every day — by now, they know that's a non-starter. Just one in five workers wants to be in the office all week, Future Forum

found in its most recent poll conducted in May. Workers who are in cubicles Monday through Friday say they're much less satisfied with their job compared with peers with more flexible arrangements, the survey found.

"People want the flexibility to go in or work from home, but when there's a mismatch there, burnout goes up," said Jim Harter, the chief scientist of workplace and well-being at pollster Gallup. "Getting that match right, between what the employer and the worker wants, is essential."

To do so, companies are adopting hybrid schedules, even at Dimon's firm JPMorgan, where about 40% of the workforce is in one day and home the next. Many hybrid plans call for workers to be in Tuesday through Thursday, which is what Peloton has planned. Another approach, laid out by Apple, also calls for three days in the office but lets individual teams select one or more of those days, an option that workplace consultants favor as it allows for some autonomy and recognizes that engineers, marketers and sales-

people don't all work in the same patterns.

Just under half of U.S. knowledge workers have some type of hybrid schedule, Future Forum has found.

## Tricky formula

Getting that hybrid formula right is tricky, and the September mandates suggest that leaders would rather tilt the scales on the side of in-person work, which they claim improves collaboration, coaching and mentoring. Policies that were once merely recommended will soon be enforced, with companies tracking who's badging in and who's not.

For some, that's a big ask.

Among those dissatisfied with the amount of flexibility their job affords, 70% said they'd look for a new opportunity, according to Future Forum. Corporate chiefs seem fine with that, especially those at companies such as Peloton that have had to rein in costs as their once-meteoritic growth rates stalled. For some firms, it could amount to a stealth layoff.

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Brouse McDowell is proud to welcome **Eric Fox** to our Business Transactions and Corporate Counseling Practice Group, and **Tyler Schlimme** to our Litigation Practice. Eric joins Brouse as Counsel focusing his practice on the development, review, and negotiation of contracts as well as transactional and data security matters. He has extensive knowledge of regulatory compliance, and systems development and integration. Tyler joins Brouse's Akron office as an Associate with experience defending commercial trucking and commercial coach carriers on general liability and professional liability matters. He also has experience representing employees in discrimination, wage and hour, and contractual matters.



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We are pleased to announce that **Dana Connolly** has been promoted to Director in our Managed Technology Consulting practice. She has over 20 years of experience working extensively with high-net worth clients. She provides individualized, fully integrated finance and accounting outsourcing solutions to manage the personal and business finances of the family while delivering significant value and peace of mind.



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We are pleased to announce that **Anita Fox** has been promoted to Senior Director in our Program and Project Management practice. Anita joined the firm over 4 years ago and has extensive experience working with clients as well as on internal initiatives, where she plays a key role in expanding and deepening our project management methodology. In her client facing roles, Anita has led and delivered on our most complex engagements, with an eye to successful delivery for a satisfied client.



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We are pleased to announce that **Robby Ginsburg** has been promoted to Assurance Senior Manager. Robby has been part of RSM's assurance practice since 2013 where he has provided professional services and business advice to a wide variety of clients including real estate companies, colleges and universities, charitable foundations and technology, media, and telecommunication companies.



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We are pleased to announce that **Hallie Pallante, CPA** has been promoted to Assurance Senior Manager at RSM US LLP. Hallie has 14 years of experience in the audit group, specializing in not-for-profit, healthcare, and real estate. Hallie joined RSM US LLP in 2008 after graduating from the University of Akron, earning a Bachelor of Arts in Accounting.



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**Volume 43, Number 31**  
Crain's Cleveland Business (ISSN 0197-2375) is published weekly, except no issue on 1/3/22, combined issues on 5/23/22, 6/27/22, 8/29/22, 11/21/22, at 700 West St. Clair Ave., Suite 310, Cleveland, OH 44113-1230.  
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Price per copy: \$2.00.  
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