



ANNUAL REPORT

2022



MARY ANN SWETLAND
CENTER FOR
ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH

DIRECTOR'S NOTE



Darcy Freedman, PhD, MPH

DIRECTOR

Dear Friends and Partners,

CHANGE is the word to summarize 2022. We celebrated the transition of our food systems modeling research into a community action research project branded as the Nourishing Power Network. We modified our teaming structure to welcome two new research staff and a new post-doctoral scholar while adjusting to change that happens when trainees graduate and staff transition to their next. We affirmed that change requires persistence and accountability and looked to our Community Engagement and Racial Equity Plan as a guide to live into our values more fully as a center. Lastly, we came back to the basics of community engagement leaning into spaces to be together authentically—at networking events, nature walks, book clubs, listening sessions and casual meet ups. It was a year that called us to plan less and adapt more, to be present and open and to trust the tension realized through iterative cycles of research, reflection and action for environmental justice.

In solidarity,
Darcy

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Darcy Freedman". The signature is fluid and cursive, written in a professional style.



MISSION AND VISION

The **mission** of the Mary Ann Swetland Center for Environmental Health is to study the complex interplay between environmental determinants and population health outcomes. The center places special emphasis on community-engaged approaches that address the role of structural racism in creating and sustaining environmental health inequities. We seek to translate these findings into policies, practices and relationships that promote community and population health equity. The strategic **vision** of the Swetland Center is to leverage diverse skills and experiences through transformative research, training and community engagement in order to achieve environmental health equity by:

- **Advancing** applied and community-engaged environmental health research.
- **Integrating** environmental health and community systems science into medical and graduate education.
- **Engaging** the community in research translation to inform changes in policy and practice.



Innovative

We believe that honoring differences is foundational to cultivating a culture of innovation and changing the status quo.



Community Engaged

We believe that organizational transparency and elevation of community power and voice is essential to building trusting relationships, between research staff and the broader community, to achieve environmental health equity.



OUR VALUES

Racial Justice

We believe in partnering with the community to build sovereignty and promote environmental justice by sharing power, igniting change and dismantling racist structures.

We seek to enact Research, Community Engagement, Training and Education that heals historical scars and ongoing trauma of structural racism.



Inclusive

We believe in acknowledging and honoring diverse traditions, learning styles and experiences of individuals and value the dignity of all people. We work to promote an environment that respects the unique experiences and richness of its members.



Collaborative

We believe in the strength of our collective voices, knowledge and individual experiences as foundational strands woven together to form a tapestry of co-creation.





OUR APPROACH

With many influential contributors, the Mary Ann Swetland Center has pioneered environmental health research over the past three decades and continues to serve communities locally, regionally and nationally. The foundation for the center was built in the 1950's, when David W. Swetland and Mary Ann Swetland addressed the need to educate and empower medical professionals to better understand environmental impacts on human health. Today, the Swetland Center, led by Darcy Freedman, PhD, MPH, focuses on research, training and education and community engagement to build capacity for the next generation of scientists to work alongside community partners to promote healthy places for people to thrive.

RESEARCH

We entered 2022 with an eye toward engaging community partners in novel ways. We applied new methods to creatively capture partner feedback and perspectives about what matters most for racial and environmental justice. We tooled residents with cameras in a photovoice study to better understand the complexity of the emergency food assistance ecosystem. We developed a new web application called FM Engage designed to address the “pains” and “gains” of families with children and farmers market managers as they work together to achieve community food security. Our newly launched Nourishing Power Network represents a shift in the center’s research by focusing on praxis as we learn by doing in partnership with local leaders committed to food justice.

TRAINING

This year we expanded our support for developing environmental health scholars by increasing the Daniel Lewis Ravin, MD Award to include three awardees. Several of our faculty affiliates graciously served as mentors to these awardees, which brought special expertise to their training experience. We continued to explore ways to engage new audiences and create space for self-reflection, co-learning and ideation to accelerate policy and systems change through our Swetland Seminar series. 2022 also brought new graduates as we said farewell to two of our long-time students earning doctorates in Epidemiology and Biostatistics.

COMMUNITY

The Swetland Center continued to reimagine ways to partner with the community throughout 2022. New collaborations allowed us to provide technical assistance to community partners while also strengthening connections to our existing research. Working from within, we were able to increase opportunities for community research partners to utilize the benefits and resources that CWRU and the center have to offer through a community card program previously limited to select Cleveland neighborhoods. As we launched our Community Engagement and Racial Equity Action Plan, the center identified methods to infuse these priorities across our cores with a commitment to ongoing reflection and adaptation.

Community Engagement and Racial Equity Action Plan

We launched our Community Engagement and Racial Equity Action Plan in early 2022. This plan guides how we align and operationalize our value of racial justice over the next two years within the three cores of our center: research, training and community engagement. Our commitment in creating and implementing this plan is to: be transparent about our process, progress and opportunities for growth; work together with other individuals, organizations and institutions towards a mutual goal of system transformation; and hold ourselves accountable to working towards racial justice through continuous learning, self-assessment and change.

This plan identifies three priorities. Examples of ways we are putting these priorities into action can be found throughout the rest of this year's annual report. This plan is helping the center stay intentional about how we conduct our work and maintain relationships within the community.

Priority 1

Elevate support for Black, Brown and Indigenous community research partners to build and sustain trusting research partnerships resulting in community-driven solutions that advance environmental health equity.

Priority 2

Recognize and value the efforts, skills, knowledge and experiences of Black, Brown and Indigenous community research partners to promote shared power in research relationships and cultural reinforcement.

Priority 3

Build capacity among leadership, staff and trainees to acknowledge and address structures of racism and other forms of oppression to advance environmental health equity through system-level transformation.

Dr. Freedman Honored for CWRU's Impact Through Innovation Award

Darcy Freedman, PhD, MPH was one of 30 Case Western Reserve University faculty honored for their impressive records of research and entrepreneurship during CWRU's inaugural Innovation Week Awards Ceremony. Dr. Freedman received the "Impact Through Innovation Award" recognizing her technology, FM Tracks, that supports implementation and evaluation of nutrition incentive programming at farmers markets across the United States. FM Tracks has been recognized by the USDA and CDC as a "best practice" tool for evaluating incentive programs.

**Impact Through
Innovation Award**

**Darcy
Freedman**

"Innovation is a combination of creativity and practicality that allows one to imagine and build bridges to where we hope to go."

-D. Freedman



FM Tracks

FM Tracks is a novel mobile application and web-based portal designed to collect, manage and evaluate information about farmers' markets and other direct-to-consumer markets, including CSAs and mobile markets. It was developed to provide efficiency and quality control for farmers' markets operating federal nutrition incentive programs. FM Tracks launched in 2015. It is currently used at over 500 farmers' markets nationally.

Working in partnership with the CWRU Tech Transfer Office, in 2022 FM Tracks was licensed to the following national partners who provide access to the technology and technical assistance to end users across the nation.

- Produce Perks Midwest
- Feeding Florida
- The Experimental Station



RESEARCH

Nourishing Power Network Study

Working in collaboration with The FARE Project and Neighborhood Connections, the Nourishing Power Network Study was launched in July 2022. The study aims to disrupt the status quo of health inequities by incubating and catalyzing food justice initiatives led by the community. The study will assess the effectiveness of centering nutrition equity as the goal for local food system efforts and the extent to which this generates a ripple effect resulting in dignified experiences in securing basic food needs, better balance between supply and demand for fresh and healthy foods and enhanced community empowerment and community ownership of food systems change. The intervention includes four integrated components designed to enhance the availability of healthy foods, while also empowering communities to effect lasting changes.

The Nourishing Power Network, an action-oriented intervention that includes networking, a fund, a fellowship and a community advisory council, will eventually be rolled out in 10 cities in Cuyahoga County with the highest rates of food insecurity and has already begun work in these five areas: Cleveland, Cleveland Heights, East Cleveland, Euclid and Garfield Heights.

NOURISHING POWER ADVISORY COUNCIL



Angelina Bell



Shirley Bell-Wheeler



Shawn Brown



Dawn Glasco



Julian Khan



Lindsey Lott



Shelby McGhee



Teela Patterson



Ismail Samad



Michael Walton

TRAINING AND EDUCATION



Ravin Awardees

The Daniel Lewis Ravin, MD Award honors current MD students and PhD candidates enrolled in the School of Medicine at Case Western Reserve University who show promise in the fields of occupational or environmental health. The center was pleased to expand the number of awardees for the 2022 - 2023 award to include three MD students (L-R): Hannah Clarke, Rebekah Russell and Anirudh Prabu.

Swetland PhD Graduates

The center is proud to announce that in 2022, two of our scholars, Gwen Donley and India Gill, successfully defended their dissertations and finished their PhDs in Epidemiology and Biostatistics from the Department of Population and Quantitative Health Sciences at CWRU.

Gwen's dissertation focused on experiences of crisis and how they relate to population health. Dr. Donley has since started a postdoctoral fellowship with the Institute for Research on Poverty, University of Wisconsin-Madison.

India's dissertation explored the impact of structural racism on child asthma emergency healthcare across Cleveland. Dr. Gill is currently a postdoctoral fellow at the Social Interventions Research and Evaluation Network, University of California, San Francisco.



Gwen Donley



India Gill

COLLABORATION

Neighborhood Community Health Needs Assessment

The Swetland Center provided technical support to the development, implementation and analysis of a neighborhood-based community health needs assessment (CHNA) conducted in Cleveland's Central, Kinsman and Buckeye-Shaker/Woodhill neighborhoods.

This work was conducted in partnership with Burten, Bell, Carr Development, Inc. (BBC) and Old Brooklyn Community Development Corporation (OBCDC). This multiphase process included a series of focus groups with community residents and stakeholders that informed the development of a survey given to residents in the three targeted neighborhoods. A dedicated "Street Team" of community members were trained on data collection and ultimately collected 1,402 surveys, which will provide a snapshot into the unique health conditions, needs and priorities of residents in these neighborhoods.

The CHNA was conducted to inform and secure support for future neighborhood-based and health related program development, and policy initiatives that align with community needs and desires for change. Examples of initiatives that may result from these findings include: proposing policy changes, targeted investments in neighborhood health programming, fundraising for neighborhood health priorities, strengthening existing collaborations and expanding opportunities for future collaborations to support resident and neighborhood health. The assessment will also serve as a key resource for the 2023-24 cohort of the Nourishing Power Fellowship as a segment of the fellows will be selected from these target neighborhoods.

BURTEN, BELL, CARR DEVELOPMENT, INC.

HAVE A SAY IN IMAGINING A HEALTHY NEIGHBORHOOD!



A Community Health Needs Assessment is a process that helps identify the top health needs in a certain place. We want to hear from you! Everything shared will be used to elevate the voices of those living in the Central, Kinsman, Buckeye-Woodhill, and Buckeye-Shaker neighborhoods.

Your opinion could help shape:

- Developing programs
- Advocating for policy changes
- Securing funding
- Building new partnerships.

**TAKE THE
SURVEY AND
YOU COULD WIN!**

**GIFT CARDS:
\$200, \$100, OR \$50**



<https://rebrand.ly/BBC-CHNA>

For more information, contact
Sherita Mullins at 216-542-2861 or
SMullins@bbcdevelopment.org

COMMUNITY HEALTH NEEDS ASSESSMENT

In partnership with Old Brooklyn Community Development Corporation and Swetland Center for Environmental Health

COLLABORATION



FM Engage

In 2022, the Swetland Center's Healthy Food Shopping (HFS) Customer Engagement Study commenced and led the way to the development of a web-based tool to support food shopping at farmers' markets.

The HFS study, completed in partnership with SNAP-Ed at The Ohio State University and Produce Perks Midwest, aims to develop tools to make healthy food shopping easier for families receiving federal food assistance program benefits, such as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). This study addresses a key finding of our prior research – many SNAP consumers are not aware of nutrition incentive programs that are designed to reduce cost barriers to fruit and vegetable purchasing.

Our team is looking to technology to bridge this gap. Using a participatory and iterative app building process, the HFS team engaged SNAP consumers with children, farmers' market managers, and technology experts to design FM (farmers market) Engage. FM Engage will be launched across Ohio in 2023.

PSE READI

Throughout 2022, the community nutrition team continued to develop and expand the PSE Readiness Assessment and Decision Instrument (READI), a web-based tool used to assess community readiness and capacity to implement community nutrition Policy, Systems and Environmental (PSE) changes.

This expansion included two new PSE assessment areas: Food Pantries and K-12 Schools, and required extensive indicator development, consensus conferencing, indicator refinement and pilot testing. The Food Pantry assessment went live on the updated website in November 2022 and the K-12 area is expected to go live in early 2023. In a collaborative effort with our SNAP-Ed partners, our team was able to develop a PSE READI Dashboard that provides SNAP-Ed partners with easy access to state-wide readiness data. The dashboard includes aggregated information about PSE READI assessments completed statewide and aims to inform the work and future decision-making of our SNAP-Ed partners.



COLLABORATION

'What We Bring to the Table' Photo Exhibition

Dr. Owusua Yamoah, Research Scientist, led the Emergency Food Assistance and Food Security (EFAFS) study focused on food insecurity and healthy food access among food pantry patrons. The study team shared findings by partnering with the Greater Cleveland Food Bank to host a photo exhibition at the MLK Jr., branch of the Cleveland Public Library entitled "What We Bring to the Table: Exploring Community Food Access and Experience." The event attracted a range of stakeholders including elected officials, organizational partners and community leaders.

Participants of the photovoice project were asked to document things in their environment that enhance or limit their access to healthy foods. Some of the themes identified were: crime, the lack or limited availability of healthy food retail stores, the nutritional quality of food from food pantries, unemployment and general disinvestment in neighborhoods.

These findings illustrate the need for continued policy and action to enhance healthy food access at food pantries in the Greater Cleveland area and also support future implementation of system level interventions to support pantry patrons.

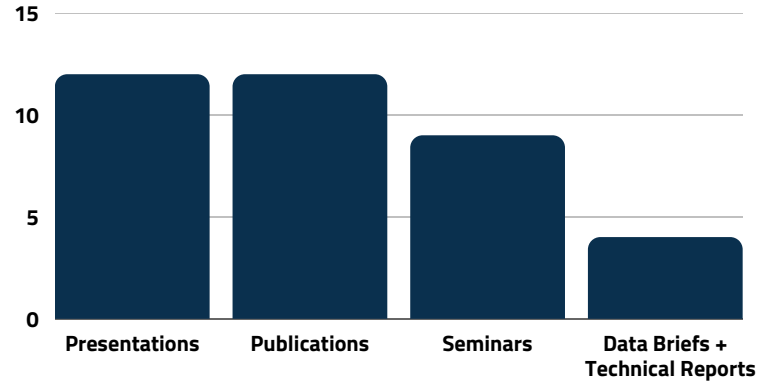
A digital version of the exhibit is available to view on the Emergency Food Assistance and Food Security page within the Swetland Center Website.



BY THE NUMBERS

The Swetland Center is focused on cultivating a diverse set of opportunities to engage students, staff, faculty and lifelong learners.

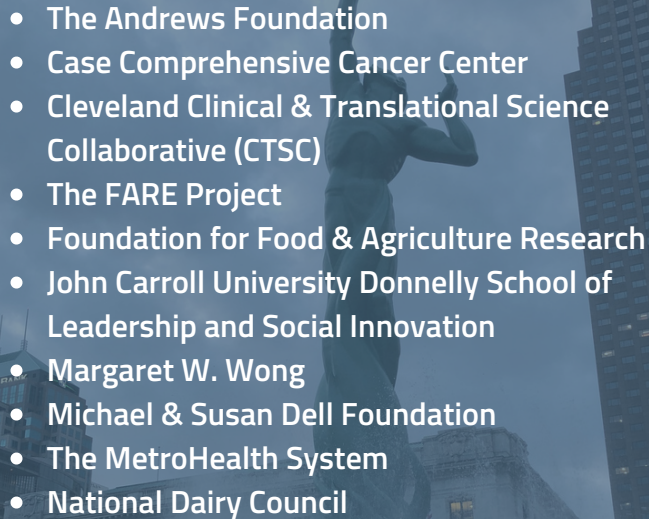
3	Core Faculty
7	Graduate Research Assistants
8	Trainees
14	Staff
14	Interns + Volunteers
24	Faculty Affiliates
20	Nourishing Power Advisors + Fellows
19	Swetland Center Advisory Council
86	Team Total



The Swetland Center prioritizes dissemination of our research using diverse modalities to accelerate translation into data-driven policies and practices that advance environmental health equity.

2022 FUNDERS

\$2.01 million Operating Budget

- 
- The Andrews Foundation
 - Case Comprehensive Cancer Center
 - Cleveland Clinical & Translational Science Collaborative (CTSC)
 - The FARE Project
 - Foundation for Food & Agriculture Research
 - John Carroll University Donnelly School of Leadership and Social Innovation
 - Margaret W. Wong
 - Michael & Susan Dell Foundation
 - The MetroHealth System
 - National Dairy Council

- National Institute of Drug Abuse
- National Institute of Minority Health and Health Disparities
- Neighborhood Connections
- Nutrition and Obesity Policy Research and Evaluation Network (NOPREN)
- Old Brooklyn Community Development Corporation
- Prevention Research Center for Healthy Neighborhoods
- Robert Reakirt Foundation
- Sears-Swetland Family Foundation
- Sisters of Charity Foundation of Cleveland
- U.S. Department of Agriculture

KEY PARTNERS IN 2022



FARE

Food Access Raises Everyone



**OHIO
SNAP-ED**



ProducePERKS

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LOOKING TO 2023

The Swetland Center looks forward to a fruitful 2023 with plans to:

1. Launch a 5-year strategic planning process to guide future directions for the Center.
2. Unveil and evaluate the FM Engage app and a modernized version of FM Tracks at farmers' markets nationally.
3. Release the Nutrition Equity Fund to support collaborative and community-driven food justice initiatives in Greater Cleveland.
4. Highlight innovative environmental health research of Swetland Center faculty affiliates and partners.
5. Expand support for students and trainees committed to environmental and occupational health.



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