



FIVE-YEAR REPORT

2019-2023



**CASE WESTERN RESERVE
UNIVERSITY**
Mary Ann Swetland Center
for Environmental Health

DIRECTOR'S NOTE



Darcy Freedman, PhD, MPH

Mary Ann Swetland Professor of
Environmental Health Sciences

Dear Friends and Partners,

Five years ago, I became the third director of the Swetland Center, focusing our work at the intersection of food systems and health equity. Since then, we expanded to a team of 100 staff, trainees, partners, and faculty affiliates, increased funding from \$250K to \$2.1 million yearly, and nurtured a network of partners locally and nationally. More importantly, we became a center known for being synergistic, hopeful, innovative, thoughtful, and evolving. The Center's efforts have set the stage for further growth, including a move to the new MidTown Collaboration Center in early 2025 in alignment with CWRU's Population and Community Health Initiative. Reflecting on the past five years, you've helped me learn about the importance of investing in the driving force of relationships, embracing adaptability, and taking intentional and collaborative risks to achieve the bold goal of environmental justice. Looking ahead, the Swetland Center aims to connect more closely with the community to activate our research through real world practice. Thank you for trusting us, for offering advice to help us pivot, and for pushing us to grow in order to accelerate the pace of achieving environmental health equity in our community.

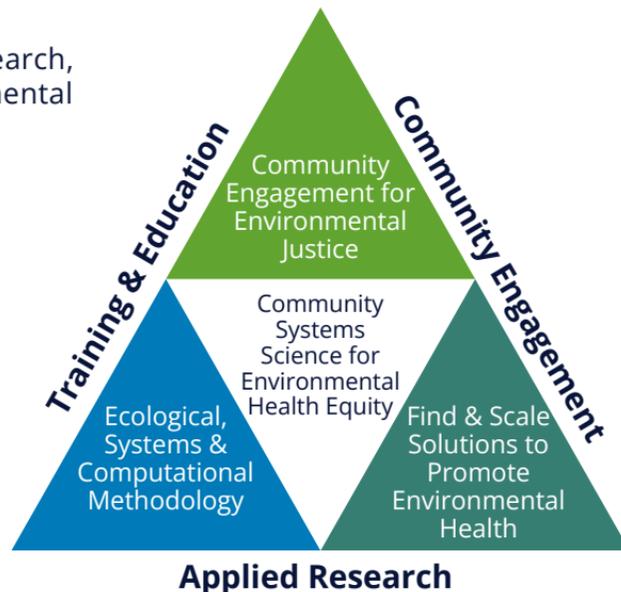
In solidarity,

OUR MISSION & VISION

The **mission** of the Mary Ann Swetland Center for Environmental Health is to study the complex interplay between environmental drivers and population health outcomes. The Center places special emphasis on community-engaged approaches that seek to disrupt the role of structural racism in creating and sustaining environmental health inequities. We aim 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 to achieve environmental health equity by:

- **Advancing** applied and community-engaged research focused on environmental drivers (social, built, physical, natural) of health opportunity.
- **Integrating** environmental health and community systems science into medical and graduate education.
- **Engaging** the community in research translation to inform equitable policies and practices.



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.



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.



OUR VALUES

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 HISTORY

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.



OUR UNIQUE STRENGTHS

The Swetland Center specializes in boundary-spanning and collaborative research and training focused on achieving health equity through food systems transformation and environmental justice. We do this through:

1. Sustained and trusting partnerships that include multidisciplinary and cross-sector collaborators.
2. Responsive and adaptive approaches aligned with emergent environmental health needs and opportunities.
3. Community-engaged and action-oriented research with a focus on community ownership and translation.
4. Immersive training opportunities strengthening research capacity to address the social and structural drivers of environmental health equity.





5-YEAR IMPACT SNAPSHOT

Over the past five years, feedback from the Swetland Center Advisory Council and organizational, institutional, and community partners revealed core features of the Center's approach (i.e., synergy, hopeful, innovative, thoughtful, evolving) and its areas of lasting impact on community health, nutrition, and environmental justice. These are directly related to the School of Medicine's strategic commitment to population and community health and to expanding CWRU's research capacity related to social drivers of health, health policy, and implementation science.

OUR LASTING IMPACT

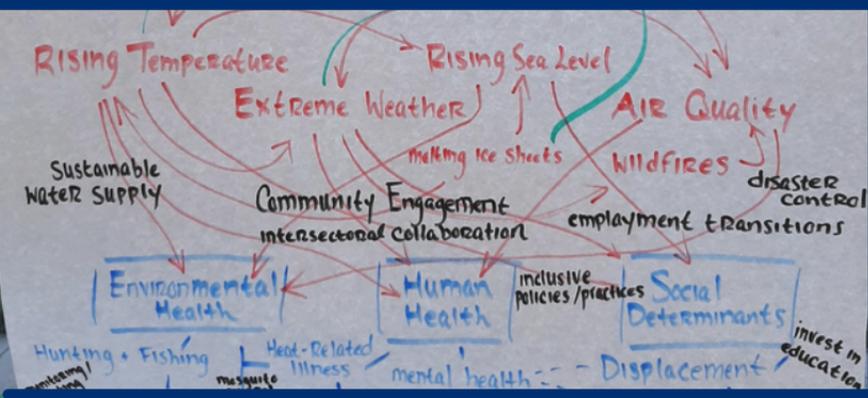


Findings of the Center's research are informing food policy to promote nutrition equity for people receiving federal food assistance benefits.

The Center's FM Tracks technology was licensed for use in 7 states to support implementation and evaluation of nutrition incentive programming.



OUR LASTING IMPACT



Facilitated integration of environmental health core competencies within all aspects of CWRU's School of Medicine curriculum.

Secured a contract to establish the first cohort of community nutrition extension practitioners at CWRU as a part of the Ohio SNAP-Ed program. The Center will hire 6 new SNAP-Ed staff in 2024.



OUR LASTING IMPACT



Offered strategic leadership to the newly refunded Clinical Translational Science Collaborative (CTSC) of Northern Ohio (\$56.3 million) with Dr. Freedman serving as the CWRU Site PI on the 7-year grant and Co-Lead of the Community and Stakeholder Engaged Research infrastructure.

Provided strategic leadership to form CWRU's Population and Community Health Initiative and its new physical location in the MidTown Collaboration Center, which will house the Swetland Center in early 2025.



KEY SCIENTIFIC CONTRIBUTIONS

Small improvements in an urban food environment resulted in no changes in diet among residents.

*Freedman, D.A., Bell, B., Clark, J., Ngendahimana, D., Borawski, E., Trapl, E., Pike, S., & Sehgal, A.R. (2021). *Journal of Community Health*, 46(1), 1-12. (29 citations)

Emergency food provision for children and families during the COVID-19 pandemic: Examples from five U.S. cities

Jablonski, B.B.R., Casnovsky, J., Clark, J.K., Cleary, R., Feingold, B., Freedman, D., Gray, S., Romeiko, X., Olabasi, L.S., Torres, M., van den Berg, A.E., Walsh, C., & Wentworth, C. (2021). *Applied Economic Perspectives and Policy*, 43(1) Special Issue on COVID-19; 169-184. (61 citations)

Food system dynamics structuring nutrition equity in racialized urban neighborhoods

*^Freedman, D.A., Clark, J.K., Lounsbury, D.W., Boswell, L., Burns, M., Jackson, M.B., Mikelbank, K., Donley, G., Worley-Bell, L., Mitchell, J., Ciesielski, T.H., Embaye, M., Lee, E.K., Roche, A., Gill, I., & Yamoah, O. (2022). *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition*, 115(4); 1027-1038. (25 citations)

Health outcomes in redlined versus non-redlined neighborhoods: A systematic review and meta-analysis

*Lee E.K., Donley G., Ciesielski T.H., Gill I., Yamoah O., Roche A., Martinez R., Freedman D.A. (2022). *Social Science & Medicine*, 294. (89 citations)

Historical neighborhood redlining and contemporary cardiometabolic risk

*^Motairek, I., Lee, E.K., Janus, S., Farkouh, Freedman, D., Wright, J., Nasir, K., Rajagopalan, S., & Al-Kindi, S. (2022). *Journal of the American College of Cardiology*, 80(2); 171-175. (38 citations)

*Trainee, ‡Community Partner, ^Faculty Affiliates of the Swetland Center are a co-author, Citations as of January 2024

KEY TRANSLATIONAL PRODUCTS

The **Menu of Actions for Community Driven Food Systems Change** brings together our collective insights to flip the food system to fairness in Greater Cleveland and beyond.

VOTE

MENU OF ACTIONS FOR COMMUNITY DRIVEN FOOD SYSTEMS CHANGE

BUCKEYE • CENTRAL • KINSMAN

Neighborhood-Level Community Health Needs Assessment

The **Neighborhood Community Health Needs Assessment (CHNA)** was conducted in 3 neighborhoods in Cleveland. Findings prioritize action steps, based on resident feedback, to advance community health.

TRAINEE SUCCESS

Launching Careers for Swetland PhD Graduates

Gwen Donley, PhD, MS

Postdoctoral Fellow
Institute for Research on
Poverty, University of
Wisconsin-Madison



Gwen Donley, PHD, MS

India Gill, PhD, MPH

Postdoctoral Fellow
Social Interventions Research
and Evaluation Network,
University of California, San
Francisco



India Gill, PhD, MPH

Abigail Roche, PhD, MS, RDN

Policy Analyst
Mathematica



**Abigail Roche, PhD,
MS, RDN**

Expanding Opportunities for Swetland Postdocs

Owusua Yamoah, PhD

Research Scientist
Swetland Center for
Environmental Health



Owusua Yamoah, PhD, MS

Eun Kyung Lee, PhD, MPH

Assistant Professor of
Environmental Science and
Forestry
SUNY



Eun Kyung Lee, PhD, MPH

David Ngendahimana, PhD

Data Scientist
University Hospitals



David Ngendahimana, PhD

INVESTING IN FUTURE PHYSICIANS

The Swetland Center awarded \$70K in scholarships through the **Daniel Lewis Ravin, MD Award** to medical students at CWRU who demonstrated promise in the fields of occupational or environmental health.

Daniel Lewis Ravin, MD was a 1980 graduate of the CWRU School of Medicine who died tragically early in his career. The award honors his dedication to training the next generation of environmental and occupational health physicians and scientists.

2020



Samuel Boas, MD

2021



Stephanie Wottrich, MD

2022-2023



Hannah Clarke, MPH

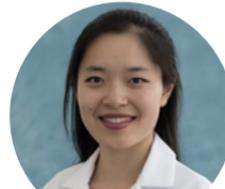


Anirudh Prabu



Rebekah Russell, MPH

2023-2024



Lauren Fane



Connor Riegel

INVESTING IN COMMUNITY LEADERS



The Nourishing Power Network is a systems-change intervention designed to bridge community power with organizational power to expand food justice initiatives led by the community.



Angelina Bell
Founder,
Humble Mornings
Coffee Co



Julian Khan
Network Builder,
Neighborhood
Connections



**Shirley Bell-
Wheeler**
Urban Farmer,
Revolutionary Love
Community Garden



Lindsey Lott
Development
Coordinator,
Birthing Beautiful
Communities



Shawn Brown
National Director
of Organizing,
The Humane
League



Shelby McGhee
Program Officer,
Mt. Sinai
Foundation



Ismail Samad
Founder,
Loiter



Dawn Glasco
Manager of
Engagement and
Social Innovation,
Cleveland Central
Promise
Neighborhood



Teela Patterson
Executive Director,
Healing Spaces



Michael Walton
Facilitator,
Catalyst, Coach,
Urban Farmer

**Nourishing
Power
Advisory
Council 1.0**

THANK YOU FUNDERS AND SPONSORS

- Case Comprehensive Cancer Center
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
- Cleveland Clinic
- Cleveland Clinical & Translational Science Collaborative
- Drew and Debbie Sparacia
- Farmers Market Coalition
- Foundation for Food & Agriculture Research
- John Carroll University Donnelly School of Leadership and Social Innovation
- Margaret W. Wong
- Michael & Susan Dell Foundation
- Nationwide Children's Hospital
- National Dairy Council
- National Cancer Institute
- National Center for Advancing Translational Sciences
- National Institute on Aging
- National Institute on Drug Abuse
- National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute
- National Institute on Minority Health and Health Disparities
- Neighborhood Connections
- Nutrition and Obesity Policy Research and Evaluation Network (NOPREN)
- Ohio Bureau of Workers' Compensation
- Old Brooklyn Community Development Corporation
- Prevention Research Center for Healthy Neighborhoods
- Robert Reakirt Foundation
- Sears-Swetland Family Foundation
- Sisters of Charity Foundation of Cleveland
- Steven J. McHale Family Foundation
- The Andrews Foundations
- The FARE Project
- The MetroHealth System
- The S. Livingston Mather Charitable Trust
- University Hospitals
- U.S. Department of Agriculture

SWETLAND CENTER ADVISORY COUNCIL

Sheila Abraham, Advisor, Environmental Risk Management

Richard T. Andrews, Publisher & Editor, The Real Deal Press

Nicole M. Burt, Curator of Human Health & Evolutionary Medicine, Cleveland Museum of Natural History

Crystal M.C. Davis, Senior Midwest Regional Director, National Parks Conservation Association

G. Keymah Durden III, Co-Founder, Rid-All Green Partnership

Marianne Eppig, Trustee, Sears-Swetland Family Foundation

Ruth Swetland Eppig, President, Sears-Swetland Family Foundation and Chair of the Swetland Center Advisory Council

Lydia Harrington, Trustee for the Sears-Swetland Family Foundation and Harrington Family Foundation

Steve McHale, Founder, Explorys, an IBM company

Torrey McMillan, Director, Center for Sustainability, Hathaway Brown School

Frances Mills, Commissioner of Health, City of Cleveland Department of Public Health

Karen Bolte Mulloy, Associate Professor, Department of Family Medicine and Community Health, Case Western Reserve University

Brandy Phipps, Associate Professor, Department of Agricultural & Life Sciences, Central State University

Kristie R. Ross, Chief, Division of Pediatric Pulmonology and Sleep Medicine, UH Rainbow Babies and Children's

Kurt C. Stange, Distinguished University Professor, Center for Community Health Integration, Case Western Reserve University

Colleen Walsh, Associate Professor, Cleveland State University, School of Health Science

Shanelle Smith Whigham, Senior Vice President, Community Engagement Director, Key Bank

Margaret W. Wong, President & Managing Partner, Margaret W. Wong & Associates Co., LPA

OUR CURRENT NUMBERS

Annual budget in 2023

**\$2.1
million**

Center's annual budget prior
to Dr. Freedman's
appointment to director

\$250K



Our team in 2023 included

2	Core Faculty	4	Interns & Volunteers
6	Graduate & Undergraduate Research Assistants	24	Faculty Affiliates
6	Trainees (Pre/Postdocs)	30	Nourishing Power Advisors & Fellows
9	Full-Time Staff	19	Swetland Center Advisory Council

100 Team Total

LOOKING AHEAD

The Swetland Center looks forward to the next 5 years (2024-2029) with plans to:

1. Implement, evaluate, and sustain collaborative research that leads to systems transformation resulting in environmental health equity.
2. Grow research capacity building opportunities related to our expertise in food systems transformation, environmental justice, community-engaged research, and community-level translational science.
3. Strengthen and nurture relationships within and across the university, institutions, organizations, and communities to support agile research, training, and community engagement focused on the bold goal of environmental health equity.
4. Achieve collective impact through shared and synergistic strategies implemented within CWRU's Population and Community Health Initiative and the Swetland Center's new location in Midtown.

**SCAN THE QR
CODE TO STAY
UP TO DATE
WITH THE
CENTER!**

