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

The Swetland Scoop

May 2025

In 2024, the Swetland Center made significant strides with community, academic, and organizational partners to advance environmental health for all communities. [Check out our 2024 Annual Report](#) to learn more.



CASE WESTERN RESERVE
UNIVERSITY
Mary Ann Swetland Center
for Environmental Health

2024 ANNUAL REPORT



**Accelerating Progress Towards
Environmental Health for All Communities**

New Collaboration with the Northeast Ohio QI Hub

The Swetland Center is working in partnership with the NEO Quality Improvement (QI) Hub's [AHEAD Initiative](#), a project led by CWRU School of Medicine and the Northeast Ohio Medical University, to expand chronic disease prevention efforts through funding from the Ohio Department of Medicaid. We will conduct the Produce Path Program, a pilot initiative that aims to support health promotion among Medicaid or Medicare beneficiaries or uninsured patients of participating practices in Cuyahoga, Summit, and Portage counties. Findings from the pilot will inform future produce prescription efforts that integrate community engagement into program design.

Welcome to our Produce Path Program Summer Staff

Student Interns assist outreach at clinical and farmers market sites.



Abra Lisowski. I am from Cleveland Heights, and am currently pursuing a Master of Social Work with a focus in school social work. In my free time I love to explore nature, read, and get yummy food with my friends. I enjoy working with kids and their families and hope to be a school social worker after graduation next year!

Kira Zakem. I am a first year CWRU student from Cleveland, majoring in nutritional biochemistry and metabolism with a minor in Chinese. In the future I hope to conduct nutrition research or pursue a law degree specializing in food and drug law. I represent CWRU on the mock trial team. You can usually find me trying new cuisines, thrifting, or drawing.





going into my junior year at Case Western Reserve University. I am passionate about environmental justice and am on the pre-law track, hoping to go into environmental or health law. I am really excited to work for the Produce Path Coupon Program and develop connections with community members that want to learn more about it!

Naomi Hillyer. Naomi Hillyer is a Posse Foundation Leadership Scholar and honors student at CWRU, pursuing dual degrees in Sociology and Environmental Studies with a minor in Geological Sciences. As a new member of Alpha Kappa Delta Sociology Honor Society, she aims to combine academic rigor with activism, working to advance environmental health and justice through the Swetland Center's Produce Path Program and sustainability initiatives in the Ohio community.

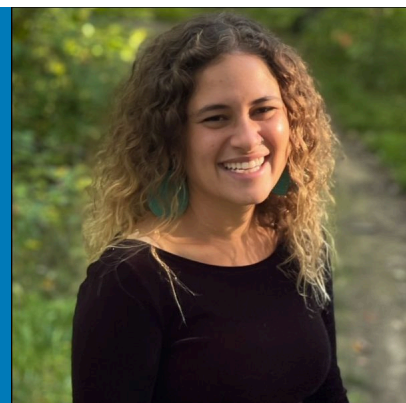


Farmers Market Educators link patients to market resources.



Angelena Acierno. I am a graduate of Kent State University Honors College with a degree focused in Environmental Studies and Creative Writing. My passions include equitable food systems, ecopoetics and education, sustainable farming, and mixed media art.

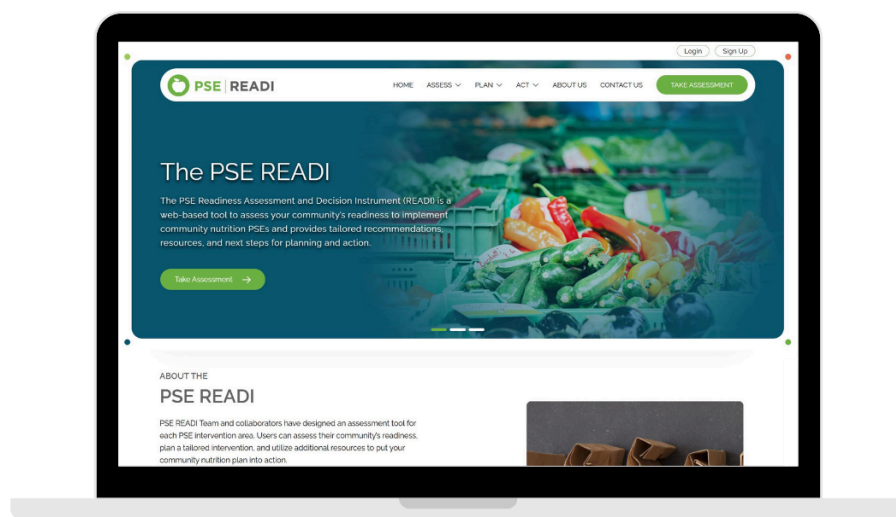
Jessie Garson. I am a farmer with lots of experience working on different small organic veggie farms across the country. I own J Grows, working with clients to grow veggies and native pollinator plants in their own spaces.





Georgia, I bring a background in health, environment, and community well-being. Educated in Cleveland, I shifted from health sciences to environmental justice during the pandemic. As Founder and Executive Director of Healing Spaces, I work to transform underserved areas into sustainable environments. Recently, I served on the Nourishing Power Network Advisory Council, promoting food sovereignty and health equity in Greater Cleveland.

PSE READI Website Refresh & Newsletter Launch



Check out the redesigned PSE READI website! While the aesthetics have been enhanced, users can still count on the same valuable assessment tools and resources, conveniently located in the same familiar places. Feel free to explore the revitalized site at www.psereadi.org! Please reach out to our team at psereadi@case.edu for any questions or inquiries about using the PSE READI tool.

And don't miss out on our new newsletter, *Get PSE READI*, which is a go-to source for staying informed about all things PSE READI and the broader PSE landscape. Each issue will bring concise, helpful updates, including spotlights on PSE READI users and partners, highlights from our rich Resource Bank, important announcements, news about our publications and conference appearances, and much more. [Subscribe](#) today to stay connected and empowered in your PSE work!

Congratulations to our Graduate Research Assistants!



Anvitha Ravipati, a PhD student in Sociology at CWRU, is a recipient of the Graduate Council of Arts and Sciences (GCAS) Graduate Student Scholarship and Creative Endeavors (GSSCE) grant, including the Richard A. Zdanis Research Scholarship Award.



Eleanor Gillerlanke Hinkes, a PhD in Anthropology at CWRU, is a recipient of the Graduate Council of Arts and Sciences (GCAS) Graduate Student Scholarship and Creative Endeavors (GSSCE) grant.

Events & Opportunities

SAVE THE DATE

CELEBRATE THE
NOURISHING NEIGHBORHOODS
EMPOWERING COMMUNITIES
STUDY

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 6TH, 2025
5:30PM - 8:00PM

SEARS THINK[BOX]
CLEVELAND, OH

Join us to learn about the implementation of
the Nourishing Power Network intervention!
We will explore research findings and discuss
what is next for Nourishing Power Network!



Hot Off the Press

Swetland Voices in the News

[Proposed dessert restrictions on SNAP benefits wouldn't necessarily improve health, experts say](#) (April 12, 2025). Cleveland.com

think, would have a much greater impact on health than only restricting what you can buy," Freedman said.

[Cleveland's train to food justice, propelled by the Nourishing Power Network: Cheryl Clements and Darcy Freedman](#) (April 4, 2025). Cleveland.com

The Nourishing Power Network (NPN) is a force for opportunity, health, and sustainability that connects the best of Cleveland's history — innovation, resilience, and people — with a future that no longer tolerates a food system designed to exclude.

[Omega-3 is vital for heart and brain health. Most people are deficient, CWRU study finds](#) (May 5, 2025). Ideastream Public Media

"We must reduce the contamination of our ocean based food," Ciesielski said. "Unpoisoning the well will not be easy, but we must do it for ourselves, even if we are unwilling to do it for the plants and animals in these ecosystems."

Check out our Latest Publications

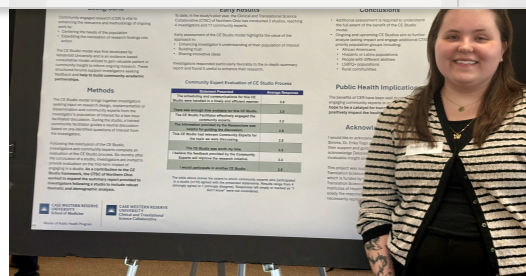
Barocas, J. A., Aldridge, A., Adkins, K. F., Barbosa, C., Battaglia, T. A., Bush, J., Castry, M., Corry, G., Clarke, T., El-Bassel, N., Figueroa, W., **Freedman, D. A.**, Freisthler, B., Gibbons, B., Gibson, E. B., Glasgow, L., Harlow, K., Huerta, T. R., Hunt, T., ... McCollister, K. (2025). [An economic analysis of community costs incurred to implement the communities that HEAL intervention to reduce opioid overdose deaths in four states.](#) *Drug and Alcohol Dependence*, 272, 112671.

Ciesielski, T. H. (2025). [Global Access to Uncontaminated Omega-3 Polyunsaturated Fatty Acids Requires Attention.](#) *AJPM Focus*, 100341.

Walker, SL, Goje, O, & Egede, LE (2025). [Case study on social risk - maternal fetal health.](#) In *Structural Inequalities and Health Outcomes for Chronic Disease*.

Conference Highlights

Translation Science Collaborative (CTSC), attended the Master's Spring Poster Symposium hosted by CWRU's Graduate Education Office. Rylie presented a poster titled "Community Engagement (CE) Studios as a Model for Gaining Community Insight to Transform Research Practices."



Swetland Spotlight

Daniel Lewis Ravin, MD Awardees (2024-25)

The Daniel Lewis Ravin, MD Award honors MD and PhD students at Case Western Reserve University excelling in occupational or environmental health. For 2024-2025, three students made notable impacts in hospitals and communities, presenting their projects to Swetland staff and guests in April.



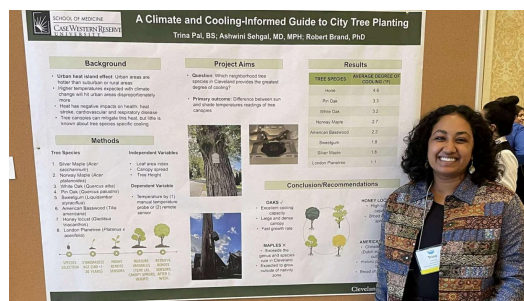
Nikita Das: During my 2024 Ravin Award year, I explored the deeply interconnected and bidirectional relationship between mental illness and incarceration. Supported by the CWRU Advocacy and Public Health Research Pathway, I was fortunate to work with an incredible team of mentors, including Dr. Vanessa Maier and Dr. Tani Malhotra, Dr. Karen Mulloy from the Swetland Center for Environmental Health, and Dr. David Kaelber from the MetroHealth Hospital System.

Our work was also enriched by inter-disciplinary allies such as Dan Mistak, a lawyer with the Health Care Initiative for Justice-Involved Populations at Community Oriented Correctional Health Services, and Laurel Diaz, Justice and Health Equity Officer for Cuyahoga County.

Together, we conducted a retrospective, multi-center study using the TriNetX database titled "*Prevalence of Schizophrenia Amongst Individuals Who Have Experienced Incarceration: A Retrospective, Multi-Center Exploration of the Criminalization of Mental Illness in the United States.*" Our findings revealed that schizophrenia is significantly overrepresented in incarcerated populations, and incarceration itself may be a contributing risk factor for schizophrenia presentation.

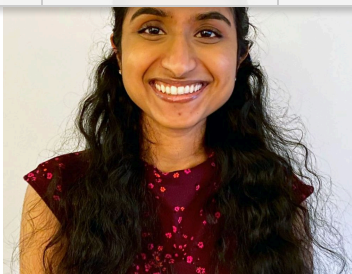
justice—one that prioritizes treatment and care over punishment—to address the broader crisis of mass incarceration in the United States. Our study has been submitted for publication in *Schizophrenia Research*, and we hope to extend its impact through presentation at a national conference and an op-ed in a local Cleveland newspaper to engage the public and inform policy.

Trina Pal: The Ravin Award was instrumental in fulfilling my environmental research goals at CWRU School of Medicine. My research area of focus is urban tree canopies. I conducted a pilot environmental field research study in 2022 to understand the cooling effect of different tree species in Cleveland, in collaboration with Metro Health Medical Center.



I followed up with the full-scale study on Cleveland's urban tree canopy in summer 2024, in collaboration with the Cuyahoga County Board of Health and Cleveland State University. Much of the field equipment used in this study was purchased using funding from the Ravin Award. My research has found that American Linden (*Tilia americana*) trees lower surrounding air temperature the most, followed by Oak species (*Quercus* species). As we know that lower air temperatures have beneficial effects on human health, notably lowering rates of heat stroke and cardiovascular/respiratory disease exacerbations, these findings can be used to inform future urban tree plantings in Northeast Ohio from a public health perspective. The manuscript from this research has been submitted for publication.

Additionally, I used the Ravin Award to purchase two online forestry courses offered by Michigan State University: "Understanding Forest Carbon Management" and "Urban Forests and Climate Change". I will be starting these courses in May 2025, with the hope that they will add to my foundational knowledge of natural and urban forest ecosystems. I start my Family Medicine residency training this June and intend to continue research on urban forests and their human health benefits.



University. I have been interested in sustainability since I saw pictures of the Great Pacific Garbage Patch in high school. In medical school, I have been involved in the Climate and Health Pathway, the Climate Collaborative, and Med Students for Sustainability.

I am extremely grateful for the Ravin Fellowship. Using the award, I was able to attend a Life Cycle Assessment (LCA) bootcamp course at Columbia University and conduct my own LCA project. I conducted an LCA project on adhesive medical tapes with the Sustainability in Surgery research group at the Cleveland Clinic. This project explores the environmental and financial impact of using 1.5-yd rolls vs. 10-yd rolls of tape. We are currently finalizing the manuscript and plan to work with supply chain managers to switch to ordering more sustainable and economic tape.

In the future, I hope to continue doing research on sustainability, including LCAs. The Ravin Fellowship provided me with the resources to learn how to perform an LCA. I will definitely use the experience I have gained from the bootcamp course and my project for future LCAs I work on. In addition, I have also learned how to generally execute a project, from idea conception to data collection and interpretation to manuscript writing. The Ravin Fellowship has been pivotal in my climate and health journey, and the skills I have obtained are a stepping stone for my future endeavors in this field.



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