



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

2025 ANNUAL REPORT



Accelerating Pathways to Vibrant and Healthy Environments

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The Swetland Center 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. The following report provides an overview of our activities throughout 2025.

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Director's Note



Darcy Freedman, PhD, MPH
DIRECTOR

“

Transition has emerged as the defining theme of our endeavors at the Swetland Center in 2025. We welcomed significant changes, such as the addition of Dr. Shannon Conrey to our Core Faculty, and moving to our new home at the MidTown Collaboration Center. Conversely, we navigated challenging transitions, notably the loss of our decade-long partnership with Ohio SNAP-Ed following national defunding by Congress. By the year's end, our team was reduced by nearly 75%. This period has prompted deep introspection, urging us to consider how the Center can fulfill its vision of nurturing environments that promote holistic health for all. Despite these challenges, the transitions present an opportunity to explore innovative approaches that were previously constrained by existing commitments. We are actively engaging in discussions with our Faculty Affiliates and Advisory Council about charting the Center's path forward *together*--being curious while steadfast to our mission and values.

With gratitude,

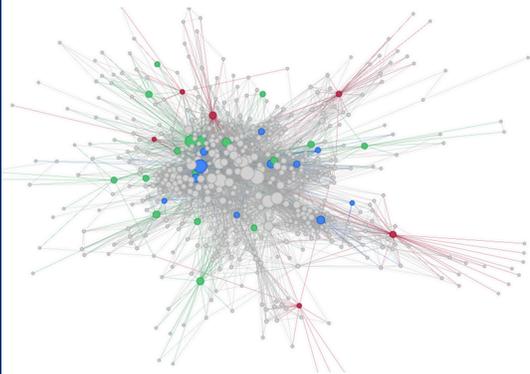
Our Mission and Model

Accelerating pathways to vibrant and healthy environments through collaborative research, immersive training, and authentic community engagement.



Community

Today, the Swetland Center continues Mary Ann Swetland's legacy by building community partnerships to discover and scale solutions to redress the environment's disparate impact on communities in Cleveland and beyond. Our participatory and action-oriented research maintains a focus on community ownership and translation to foster sustainability.



Research

The Swetland Center's research investigates environmental drivers of health with the goal of translating our findings into policies, practices, and relationships. We seek to contextualize environments using participatory methods to guide systems transformations that contribute to vibrant and healthy communities.



Training

The Center is committed to developing scholars and practitioners skilled to move knowledge into actions that advance environmental health for all communities. Through immersive training opportunities, our goal is to equip leaders at all levels with the tools, resources, and networks needed for collective impact locally, regionally, and beyond.

By the Numbers

The Swetland Center leverages its expertise and capacities to disseminate findings using diverse modalities. Our goal is to accelerate translation into data-driven policies and practices that advance environmental health for all communities.

\$2.16
million
2025 OPERATING BUDGET

13

STAFF

20

TRAINEES

21

CORE & AFFILIATED
FACULTY

16

PUBLICATIONS
BY CORE

6

SEMINARS

5

PUBLIC EVENTS

Strategic Priorities

2024 - 2029

Through collaborative, cross-institutional, and multi-sector initiatives led and/or supported by the Swetland Center, the Center will leverage the legacy of Mary Ann Swetland and her family's commitment to environmental health to achieve transformative impacts for all communities.

Our strategic priorities are in alignment with President Kaler's commitment to:

- Elevating academic excellence,
- Expanding the university's research enterprise, and
- Enhancing community engagement and impact.

Goal 1

Conduct collaborative research that drives systems transformation to achieve environmental health for all.

Goal 2

Expand research capacity building emphasizing participatory research and community-level translational science for tangible, real-world impact.

Goal 3

Foster cross-sector relationship building by engaging different sectors to effectively address emerging environmental health issues and needs.

Goal 4

Focus on collective impact by collaborating with partners on initiatives to further community wellbeing.

Swetland Center Advisory Council 2025-2027



Emily Bacha
Fresh Water Institute



Karen Bolte Mulloy
Case Western Reserve University



Nicole Burt
Cleveland Museum of Natural History



Lucy Chamberlain
Philanthropist



Mark Chupp
Case Western Reserve University



Crystal Davis
National Parks Conservation Association



Marianne Eppig
Sears-Swetland Family Foundation



Anthony Giambroni
MidTown Cleveland Inc.



Dawn Glascoe
Dawn Visions



Yvonka Hall
Northeast Ohio Community Resilience Center



Lydia Harrington
Sears-Swetland Family Foundation



Shelby Kaemmerer
Mt. Sinai Foundation



Brandy Phipps
Central State University



Zainab Pixler
Cleveland Department of Health



Francisca Richter
Case Western Reserve University



Ruth Eppig
Sears-Swetland Family Foundation



Colleen Walsh
Cleveland State University



Michael Walton
Catalytic Change Link



Monica Yepes-Rios
Cleveland Clinic



Matt Zone
Western Reserve Land Conservancy

Swetland Center Faculty Affiliates 2026-2027



John Pastor Ansah
Community Health
Integration
CWRU



Ther W. Aung
MetroHealth



Jill Clark
Ohio State University



Andrew Curtis
Population &
Quantitative Health
Sciences
CWRU



Jacqueline Curtis
Population &
Quantitative Health
Sciences
CWRU



Jarrod Dalton
Cleveland Clinic



Robert L. Fischer
Mandal School of
Applied Social
Sciences
CWRU



Bridget Hegarty
CWRU, Engineering



Miranda Leppla
CWRU, Law



Adam Perzynski
MetroHealth



Brandy Phipps
Central State
University



**Francisca Garcia-
Cobian Richter**
Mandal School of
Applied Social
Sciences
CWRU



Ashwini Sehgal
MetroHealth



Kurt Stange
Community
Health Integration
CWRU



Colleen Walsh
Cleveland State
University



Peter Whitehouse
School of Medicine
CWRU



Xiong (Bill) Yu
School of Engineering
CWRU



Allision Lukacsy-Love
Kent State
University

Swetland Center

Core Faculty Spotlight



Shannon Conrey, PhD, MS

Assistant Professor

Department of Population and Quantitative Health Sciences
CWRU School of Medicine

Shannon Conrey, PhD, MS, became a part of the core faculty of the Swetland Center after joining the faculty at CWRU in January 2025. Dr. Conrey completed an MS in Nutrition Science and a PhD in Epidemiology at the University of Cincinnati and two post-doctoral fellowships focused on human milk composition and molecular epidemiology.

Dr. Conrey's research is focused on the metabolic, socio-economic, and environmental determinants of lactation biology, with the translational goal to lead research that informs public health interventions that reduce barriers to breastfeeding and optimize the benefits of human milk. She extends the Swetland Center's expertise offering new opportunities for research partnerships focused on environmental drivers of maternal and infant health.

Research Highlights in 2025

Teoh, Z., Midgley, C.M., Conrey, S., Burrell, A., White, B., Mattison, C.P., McMorrow, M.L., Schlaudecker, E.P., Vawter-Lee, M., Morrow, A.L. and Payne, D.C., 2025. **Burden of disease and spectrum of illness from enterovirus-D68 infections in US children 0-2 years of age from a longitudinal community-based cohort, 2017-2019.** Journal of the Pediatric Infectious Diseases Society, 14(7), p.piaf057.

Conrey, S. C., Payne, D. C., Leon, M. D., Epperson, M., Coughlin, M. M., Burrell, A. R., ... & Morrow, A. L. (2025). **Optimizing the sensitivity of detection of respiratory syncytial virus infections in longitudinal studies using the combination of weekly sample testing and biannual serology.** American Journal of Epidemiology. doi: 10.1093/aje/kwaf271.

SNAP-Ed Implementation



OHIO SNAP-ED

Program Overview

SNAP-Ed (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Education) was a free, evidence-based nutrition education program for those receiving or eligible to receive Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program benefits (previously known as Food Stamps). SNAP-Ed was designed to help participants stretch SNAP dollars, gain skills for healthy cooking, and engage in physical activity. The Swetland Center led SNAP-Ed implementation for Cuyahoga County through November 2025.

Program Highlights

Training Provided

593 SNAP-Ed program sessions were completed from October 2024 - September 2025.



Population Reached

792 unique individuals took part, resulting in **4,685** participants (duplicated) engaged in SNAP-Ed programming.

Partner Sites in Cuyahoga County (N=23)

AdvantageCLE
Boys and Girls Club of Northeast Ohio
Catholic Charities Head Start Catholic Charities Senior Programming Greater Cleveland Food Bank
Cuyahoga Metro Housing Authority (CMHA)
CWRU Food Pantry
Discovery Point Early Learning Center East Cleveland Neighborhood Project
East Cleveland City Schools
Greater Cleveland Food Bank
Haven Home

Hunger Network
KD&D HUD HousingNational Church Residences
Providence House
Saint Martin de Porres High School
Sisters of Charity
The Centers Recovery Housing
The Centers Workforce Development
The Centers Head Start
The Friendly Inn
Thrive for Change
University Hospitals Rainbow BabyCafe

COMMUNITY

REACH: Fruit and Vegetable Incentives & Produce Prescriptions (PRx)



Program Overview

The vision of the REACH Project is to ensure anyone in Cuyahoga County can access a produce prescription (PRx) from their healthcare provider when needed. Working with partners, we seek to:

- Expand the number of clinical sites offering PRx.
- Increase the number of people in prioritized areas of Cuyahoga County using fruit and vegetable incentives and PRx.
- Ensure local PRx programs are culturally tailored and sourcing as much of their food as possible from local growers and suppliers.

The primary awardee for the REACH grant is Cuyahoga County Board of Health. Partners working directly with the Swetland Center on the project during Year 2 of the grant were Better Health Partnership, Catalytic Change Link, Cleveland Fresh LLC, North American Food Systems Network, and Produce Perks Midwest.

SWETLAND
GOAL

3

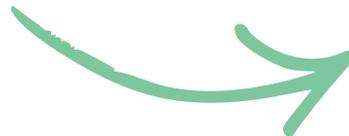
SWETLAND
GOAL

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REACH

Program Highlights

The **Produce Prescription Working Group** (PPWG) developed a communications strategy for pitching PRx programs to gain buy-in and shared understanding across different audiences.



Sunday Dinner, Reclaimed: How Fresh Produce Transformed Soul Food Traditions

Article Date: October 14, 2025

When Leora Porter learned she was pre-diabetic four years ago, she felt scared and uncertain about her future. What started as a concerning diagnosis became the catalyst for a transformation. Leora would not only reverse her pre-diabetes, but, also shift how she honored her African American food traditions.



L to R: Naomi Hillyer, Teela Patterson, Dr. Owusua Yamoah

Partnered with the Northeast Ohio Quality Improvement Hub to conduct the **Produce Path Coupon Program**, distributing \$37,900 of produce prescriptions to 430+ patients on Medicaid, Medicare, or Uninsured across three counties (Cuyahoga, Portage, and Summit) in Northeast Ohio.

By the Numbers

- **3** new farmers markets used Produce Path app to support nutrition incentive use
- **35** info booths to enroll patients in the Produce Path PRx program
- **8** new clinical sites issuing PRx
- **379** patients enrolled in the PRx program in Cuyahoga County (REACH sites)
- **1,302** new enrollees in the Produce Perks fruit and vegetable incentive program
- **9** technical assistance hours provided to support PRx programs

REACH

Program Highlights



L to R: Dr. Kelli Littlejohn, Veronica Walton, Holly Davenport, Brejona Whitlock, Asya Aretskin-Hariton, Beverly Cody, Tim Lewis, Dr. Kedon Newton

Four teams (8 individuals total) graduated from the **REACH Fellowship**, a 6-month program that paired healthcare professionals with local growers and nutrition educators to co-design a PRx program for implementation in 2026.

REACH Fellowship Facilitation Team

- Linea Webb, Program Manager, CWRU Swetland Center
- Brandie Strozier, Community Health Worker
- Michael Walton, Facilitator and Coach, Catalytic Change Link



RESEARCH

Nourishing Power Network



Program Overview

The Nourishing Power Network was part of the Nourishing Neighborhoods Empowering Communities study conducted by Case Western Reserve University in partnership with Neighborhood Connections, FARE and the study's Advisory Council.

The Nourishing Power Network systems-change intervention consisted of four components:

- Advisory Council
- Networking
- Fellowship
- Nutrition Equity Fund

The intervention concluded in July 2025.

SWETLAND
GOAL

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SWETLAND
GOAL

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Nourishing Power

Program Highlights

✓ Nourishing Power Network

- 8 members of the Advisory Council expanded the concept of Nutrition Zones through (a) funding Nutrition Zones Planning Grants (\$140K) within the Nutrition Equity Fund and (b) planning and hosting the Nutrition Zones Think Tank for Policy Action.
- The Think Tank for Policy Action brought together 60 grassroots leaders, organizations, and policy influencers to ideate 5 policy ideas to move forward for the next 90 days.

✓ Telling the Story of Systems Change

2 full length videos and three months of social media coverage was created and posted to tell the story of Nourishing Power Network. You can find this content on the program's YouTube, Instagram, and Facebook pages.

Into the Future

Dawn Glasco of Dawn Visions was selected by members of the Nourishing Power Network to lead the network into its next phase, from November 1, 2025 through October 30, 2026.

\$38,500

Allocated for for a one-year sustainability phase of the Nourishing Power Network.



The Nutrition Zones Think Tank for Policy Action resulted in 5 policy ideas created and voted on by attendees, representing grassroots leaders, organizations, and policy influencers.



Members of the study team and the second Advisory Council gathered at Neighborhood Connections for an Advisory Council Meeting. L-R: Darcy Freedman, Shelby Kaemmerer, Megan Paskey, Tiffani Sutton-Taylor, Wyndi Moore, and Morgan Taggart, Dawn Glasco



Co-Principal Investigators, Darcy Freedman (L) and Tom O'Brien (R), pass the baton to Dawn Glasco (Center) of Dawn Visions to lead the next phase of Nourishing Power Network.

Nourishing Power

Program Highlights

✓ Collaboratively Shared Study Findings

JAFSCD Journal of Agriculture, Food Systems, and Community Development
ISSN: 2152-0801 online
<https://foodsystmsjournal.org>

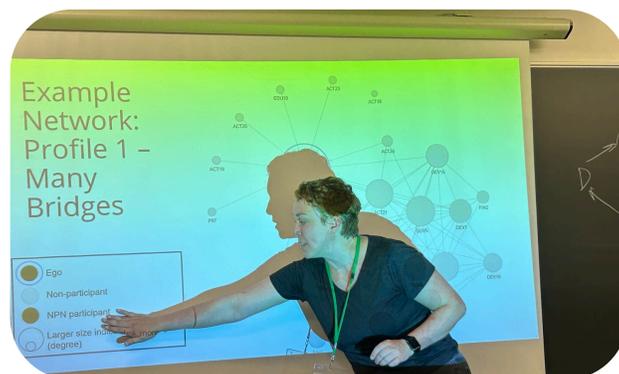
Realizing nutrition equity in urban food systems: Insights from food justice leaders about mechanisms of implementation

Darcy A. Freedman ^{a *} Case Western Reserve University	Don Gaddis ^f NorthStar CLE
Morgan Taggart ^b FARE Food Access Raises Everyone	Carol White ^g Case Western Reserve University
Michael Walton ^c Catalytic Change Inc.	Shirley Bell-Wheeler ^h RevLove Farm
Linea Webb ^d Case Western Reserve University	Dawn Glasco, ⁱ Owusua Yamoah, ^j and Emily Nelson ^k Case Western Reserve University
Ismail Samad ^e Loiter East Cleveland	

Submitted March 9, 2025 / Revised May 5 and June 7, 2025 / Accepted June 9, 2025 / Published online August 25, 2025

✓ International Dissemination of Social Network Findings

Dr. Emily Nelson presented findings from the baseline social network data illuminating perceptions of power shaping the food system in Greater Cleveland. Her oral presentation was accepted at the International Network of Social Network Analysis in Paris, France.



✓ Gaining Consensus Using ExperLens Delphi Approach

We enrolled about 60 urban food systems leaders from across the U.S. in consensus building research using the ExpertLens Delphi method. The goal was to gain consensus on the relevance and feasibility to measure 15 implementation mechanisms related to community-led food justice initiatives. The implementation mechanisms were derived from findings from the paper showcased above.

RESEARCH

Ohio SNAP-Ed Stakeholder Engagement Project



Program Overview

The Ohio SNAP-Ed Stakeholder Engagement Project to Promote Healthy Food Access (OSSEP) was a partnership between the Swetland Center and The Ohio State University SNAP-Ed Program. Our goal was to develop tools for engaging diverse stakeholders, including SNAP-Ed practitioners and SNAP and other low-income consumers, in Policy, Systems, and Environmental (PSE) changes designed to promote healthy food access. The project supported the development, implementation, dissemination, and evaluation of two technology-based tools developed by the Swetland Center.

- **Produce Path Customer Portal**
(Formerly FM Engage)
- **PSE Readiness Assessment and Decision Instrument** (PSE READI)



OSSEP

Program Highlights

✓ Capacity Building & Collaboration

We launched and evaluated a Community of Practice for new field staff, successfully establishing a peer-to-peer resource network that supported 28 new PSE interventions.

✓ Data-Driven PSE Strategy

A collaborative review of statewide PSE data provided key insights into intervention types and successful conversion from initiation to implementation.

✓ National Tool Enhancement

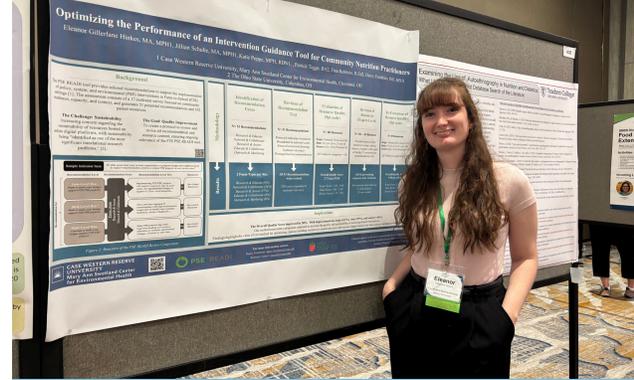
We completed a major redesign and maintenance of the PSE READI, ensuring this national resource offers the latest evidence and tailored action planning for practitioners.

✓ Statewide Expansion of Produce Path

The Produce Path Customer Portal app was successfully expanded to 10 farmers markets across 5 Ohio counties, powered by 6 Community Champions who promoted the app to connect SNAP consumers with produce incentives and fresh, local food.

By The Numbers

- **88** local events were used by Community Champions to promote the Produce Path app, reaching more than **1,200** potential users.
- **1** paper was published in a peer-reviewed journal and **3** professional conference presentations were delivered on our technology and evaluation work.



Graduate Assistant, Eleanor Gillerlane Hinkes, presented about the PSE READI maintenance process at the 2025 SNEB Conference in Indianapolis.



Ohio SNAP-Ed and CWRU staff gathered for a virtual Community of Practice meeting.



Community Champion, Maryanne Crockett, promoting the Produce Path app in Hamilton County, Ohio.

RESEARCH

CTSC's Community Engaged Research Support

Program Overview

The Swetland Center provides research capacity building support for community engaged research services offered through the Clinical and Translational Science Collaborative (CTSC) of Northern Ohio.

What is the CTSC of Northern Ohio?

A catalyst for high quality clinical and translational science and transformative research to positively impact the health of those in Northern Ohio and beyond.

CTSC Partners: Case Western Reserve University, Cleveland Clinic, MetroHealth, University Hospitals, VA of Northeast Ohio Healthcare System, Northeast Ohio Medical University, and University of Toledo



Community Engagement (CE) Studios

Consultation sessions bringing community partner expertise to inform any stage of the research process.

By The Numbers

- Developed pipeline of **37** trained community facilitators
- Conducted **3** CE Studios for **9** researchers from diverse disciplines
- Consultation provided by **39** community experts



CE Studio Facilitator Training



RESEARCH

Environmental Health Connector

Program Overview

The Environmental Health (EH) Connector is an agile resource to spark and strengthen partnerships that drive environmental health research, training, and community engagement in Greater Cleveland and beyond.



EH Connector Networking Event

Goals

The EH Connector will foster boundary-spanning collaborations to seed environmental health initiatives through the following:

- Meetups** - with faculty, students and community leaders to promote collaboration.
- Quartely Events** - to connect faculty, trainees, community partners and funders to share ideas.
- Annual Speaker (s)** - to raise awareness about environmental health innovations and build skills.
- Small Investments** - invest in research teams to promote interdisciplinary collaboration.



TRAINING

Educating the Next Generation of Environmental Health Researchers

Daniel Lewis Ravin, MD Award 2025-26 Awardee



Anthony Orsino
PhD Candidate, Epidemiology and Biostatistics
CWRU School of Medicine

Post-Doctoral Trainee Success



Shannon Walker, PhD, MEd
Assistant Professor, Family Medicine,
The Ohio State University, College of Medicine

Swetland Center Post-doctoral Scholar (2023-25)



TRAINING

Swetland Seminar Series

Overview

The Swetland Seminar Series is a free virtual learning opportunity that is open to the public. Each seminar features a presentation from a researcher or program implementer focused on environmental health topics.

2025 Speakers



Katie Ettman



Dr. Darcy Freedman



Dr. Myron Lard



Dr. Eun Kyung Lee



Dr. Jahred Liddie



Katie Poppe



Traci Singree



Michael Walton



Dr. Owusua Yamoah

By the Numbers



2025 Funders

Our work is made possible by the generous and ongoing support of our funders.

Thanks to their shared vision and generous financial support, we are empowered and enabled to do this critical work.



**\$2.16
million**
2025 Operating budget

The Andrews Foundation
Caroline Fredricka Holdship Charitable Trust
Case Comprehensive Cancer Center
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
Cleveland Clinic
Clinical & Translational Science Collaborative (CTSC) of Northern Ohio
Foundation for Food & Agriculture Research
John Carroll University Donnelly School of Leadership and Social Innovation
Lucy Chamberlain
Margaret W. Wong
National Center for Advancing Translational Sciences
National Dairy Council
National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute
National Institute of Drug Abuse
Prevention Research Center for Healthy Neighborhoods
Produce Perks Midwest
Robert Wood Johnson Foundation
Sears-Swetland Family Foundation
Sisters of Charity Foundation of Cleveland
The MetroHealth System
U.S. Department of Agriculture
Vitamix Corporation



As of March 2025, our team is based at the MidTown Collaboration Center (MCC), located in the historic Hough neighborhood. The MCC brings multiple sectors, companies and disciplines under one roof to foster a new model for a “both/and” approach to economic development that centers around community.

MidTown Collaboration Center
1974 E 66th Street, Suite 300
Cleveland, OH 44103

What’s happening in 2026?

The Swetland Center specializes in **boundary-spanning** and **collaborative** research and training to realize environments that promote holistic health for everyone through systems transformations driven by communities.

Highlights for our work in 2026:

- Incubate and expand locally rooted produce prescription programs in Cuyahoga County.
- Explore approaches to scale measures capturing the series of actions involved in shifting local food systems to the goal of nutrition equity.
- Conduct immersive training in environmental health sciences through collaborations within and outside of CWRU and the community.
- Enhance services to support participatory and contextualized solutions to improve environmental health.



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Accelerating Pathways to Vibrant and Healthy Environments

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