

HEALTH HOPE OPPORTUNITY

SUMMER 2024

Improving our Communities in New and Different Ways



Conceptual rendering of Shea Ravines

Tasha Blackmon, CEO and President of Cherry Health, thinks outside the box when it comes to improving lives in our community. And that means we have exciting news to share!

We know that affordable housing is a component of healthy living. We also know there is a shortage of affordable housing. Cherry Health sees this first-hand with our own patients. In 2023, we served more than 13,000 unstably housed people, including more than 1,200 children.

For that reason, Cherry Health will be working with Woda Cooper Companies, Inc. to develop a new affordable housing option called Shea Ravines. Shea Ravines honors Chris Shea, Cherry Health's founding CEO. This 56-unit building will be built on the property of our Wyoming Community Health Center. Having housing located right next to comprehensive healthcare will give residents barrier-free access to essential care and services.

What is stable housing and why does it matter? Children are considered to live in stable housing if they move fewer than four times. According to the National Institutes of Health, there is a 75% increase in Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) for children who have unstable housing. This makes them more likely to develop anxiety and depression symptoms from childhood, often leading to depression symptoms as adults.

"We know that children in unstable housing do not do as well in school," said Eric Hufnagel, executive director of Michigan Coalition Against Homelessness. "They also have poorer health outcomes."

By some estimates, housing instability can reduce a person's life expectancy by an average of more than 27 years. Research shows that people facing housing instability are more likely to skip annual physicals and other routine preventive care. This means health conditions are often diagnosed later and need more expensive treatment. We can improve health outcomes and decrease healthcare costs through affordable housing. In one study, stable housing decreased Medicaid expenditures by 12%. Emergency department use declined by 18%.

These numbers get attention from policy makers. Their interest is paying off in this new development. Thanks to investors and low-income housing credits from the Michigan State Housing Development Authority, Cherry Health will receive financial benefits from this project for years to come. The project will require minimal financial contribution from us, while providing invaluable benefit to our community.

Shea Ravines will allow Cherry Health to further our engagement with the community and provide much-needed resources. We are excited about and humbled by this opportunity. Affordable housing is essential. This project will serve some of the most vulnerable and cost-burdened people in our community.



“As a real estate broker, I see a lot. I recently worked with a man who faced complicated barriers to finding resources and safe, affordable housing. I was able to connect him with basic needs. But making sure he didn’t become homeless was a very frustrating process. When I heard that Cherry Health is moving into that space, I knew I wanted to help.”

- Tanya Powell-May

Ongoing Appreciation

Tanya Powell-May is a successful real estate broker and proud mother of five. She is also a former basketball standout at Ottawa Hills High School and the University of Michigan. Most recently, she is a new monthly supporter of Cherry Health.

Tanya gave her first gift after attending *Prescription: Strength*, Cherry Health Foundation’s spring fundraiser. However, she was already aware of Cherry Health’s impact in the community.

After working as an accountant for several West Michigan businesses, Tanya became the Chief Financial Officer at Network180, a community mental health referral agency in Kent County. “I first became aware of Cherry Health at that point because they were an important provider in our (behavioral health) network,” she shared.

Fast forward, Tanya decided to go into real estate full-time. She made this move to provide a more flexible schedule for her busy family. In making that choice, she then sought health insurance through

the Health Insurance Marketplace and became a Cherry Health patient.

“I chose a Cherry Health provider and I have been extremely happy. When I go there, I feel that I am being heard, and they address my concerns. I first went there for financial reasons. I stayed there because of the service and care I receive,” Tanya shared.

“I was super excited to come to the Cherry Health event! I had never been to one before. I listened to the program, and my heart was so touched when I saw all that Cherry Health was doing for students in their schools. I’m a board trustee at Kentwood Public Schools, and I realized that Cherry Health is directly impacting the kids I serve.”

Tanya also loved hearing that Cherry Health was helping to address the need for affordable, safe housing in our community, and wanted to support Cherry Health's work.



From Inspiration to Investment



We are thrilled to share that donors gave more than \$100,000 to Cherry Health Foundation during *Prescription: Strength*, our spring event.

The nearly 300 guests, like Tanya (story on the preceding page), clearly recognized that healthy kids learn better. Our school-based, traveling, and mobile teams reach K-12 students in 50+ schools. We shared the positive health impacts of receiving medical, dental, vision, and behavioral health services in their school settings.

Here are some examples of why our guests were moved to give:

“I am dedicating my donation to the little girl who finally saw a crisp, clear, starry night thanks to a friend of my father’s who sponsored my first pair of eyeglasses at low cost or no cost. I know Cherry Health will help ensure other children have the same opportunity.”

– Debra Sikanas

eldest of 8 children whose family received food stamp benefits while growing up

“Our church sponsored Afghan refugees, including a single mom and her 4-year-old son. Housing, transportation, work, and acclimation to our culture have been major challenges. However, health care has been much less difficult as we were able to access medical and dental care through Cherry Health – so helpful.”

– Norm Thomasma

“I remember in elementary school how frightening and embarrassing it was to let anyone know I couldn’t read the board. I was filled with sheer delight when I was fitted with glasses and saw the individual leaves of a tree. I recognize that there are thousands of children in our community for whom access to corrective eyewear may not be as readily accessible without the efforts of organizations like Cherry Health.”

– Ruth Skidmore

“I am personally passionate about education. I understand how social determinants play a role in outcomes. Cherry Health understands the systems which impact health and I appreciate knowing that there are efforts underway in what I would call *early intervention*.”

– Ovell Barbee

 **Thank you for your continued support!**



Pacesetter Sponsor Support

Thank you to our 2024 Comprehensive Sponsors who are champions of community health. Their annual commitment sustains critical programs and services! We thank the following for their compassionate support:

- Acrisure Benefits Group
- Alera Group
- Tasha & Willie Blackmon
- Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan
- Consumers Credit Union
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- Experience Grand Rapids
- Ferris State University
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- Grand Valley State University
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- West Michigan Asian American Association
- Wolverine Building Group
- XenTegra

For information on sponsorship opportunities, email foundation@cherryhealth.com or call (616) 965-8254.

Save the Date

Cherry Health *Celebration*

This event will feature our Clubhouse Programs: supporting the wellness, connection, employment, and education needs of those on their journey from mental illness to mental wellness.

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 23, 2024 • 6-8 p.m.

FREDERIK MEIJER GARDENS & SCULPTURE PARK

TICKETS \$125

To purchase, scan the QR code or go to bit.ly/celeb24tix



GIVING FROM YOUR IRA

Qualified Charitable Distributions (QCD) from a traditional IRA are a terrific tax-advantaged method of donating if you are 70 ½ or older. Such gifts qualify towards your Required Minimum Distribution (RMD) while avoiding income tax and directly impacting the mission you value. Because Cherry Health Foundation is a supporting organization of Cherry Health, IRS rules state that **QCDs must be made payable to Cherry Street Services, Inc.** (DBA Cherry Health; EIN 38-2853534). Please inform your charitable giving advisor of this requirement.

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Donations to Cherry Health Foundation help provide needed support to consistently deliver equitable quality, comprehensive care in the communities we serve. **Gifts totaling nearly \$683,000 from more than 600 households and organizations bolstered our mission, enabling Cherry Health to develop solutions to barriers and encourage access to care.** What follows are examples of how donor generosity has helped empower us to keep our communities well through integration of care.

BEHAVIORAL HEALTH



Lockboxes for patients participating in the Medication Assisted Treatment (MAT) Program at our *Southside Health Center and Muskegon Recovery Center* were purchased to safely transport and store take-home doses for many patients who have children at home, use public transportation, or are unhoused. The combined MAT programs served 929 patients and administered more than 330,000 doses of methadone or other medication.

Additional **Narcan vending machines** were added at Cherry Health sites. The Kent County Health Department recently reporting a 30% decrease in opioid overdose deaths. We are optimistic that the hundreds of kits dispensed from our Narcan vending machines in Kent County and beyond are helping to make that difference.

Vitamin D is being furnished for our vitamin-deficient behavioral health patients. Taking vitamin D has been linked to overall reduction in the risk of a suicide attempt or self-harm.

AFFORDABLE PRESCRIPTIONS



The **Prescription Assistance Fund** aids Cherry Health patients who would otherwise not be able to afford their medications. We filled 383 prescriptions at reduced or no cost, eliminating financial barriers for many Cherry Health patients. Adherence to a medication regimen for patients with chronic diseases such as diabetes, hypertension, or high cholesterol makes this program especially important.



HEALTHY SMILES

Our **Belknap Commons Dental Center** was renovated and reopened with greater patient capacity to address urgent care needs. Dental staff treated patients during 68,403 visits to our 12 dental sites.



PEDIATRICS

With 17,227 pediatric visits, including 147 individual newborns, 5,343 age-, culturally-, and language-appropriate children's books were distributed to families during well-child visits through our **Reach Out and Read** program. These books support parents and caregivers, foster early literacy, and promote healthy relationships with young children.



AIDING OUR COLLEAGUES

Blue Butterfly Fund: This year, \$58,500 in donor gifts went to assist 63 Cherry Health employees experiencing financial difficulties beyond their control. Since the program's inception in 2021, more than \$150,000 has been awarded to 177 employees in times of need.

AmeriCorps Assistance Fund: This is a newly established source of aid for our AmeriCorps members in times of financial hardship or to enhance their education and professional development opportunities. The fund was established by donations received from and in honor of Chris Shea, Cherry Health's founding CEO.

Cherry Health is a 2023 HRSA GOLD level
Health Center Quality Leader Awardee



(continued)

AFFORDABLE CARE



More than \$40,000 was used to fill the gaps between actual costs and reimbursements from patients utilizing the **Sliding Fee Discount Program**, which ensures access to care for uninsured and underinsured patients. Did you know that, for every patient visit for which we receive Medicaid reimbursement, \$104 goes unreimbursed?

ON THE ROAD PROVIDING VISION SERVICES



Our **Cherry Health Mobile Vision Clinic** was purchased and retooled to eliminate barriers and expand access via school visits and rural community destinations. Last year, our vision services dispensed 849 pairs of glasses, the need identified during some of the 13,104 total patient visits.

HEALTHY KIDS LEARN BETTER



Our K-12 *school-connected programs* met the needs of approximately 1,600 students (medical), 5,600 students (dental), 2,300 students (vision), and more than 1,000 students (behavioral health) at more than 50 area schools. **Bus passes** (city) and **gas cards** (rural) were purchased for non-Medicaid eligible students to ensure they continue to receive medical and behavioral health services during the summer.

MAKING DIAGNOSES EASIER



Enhanced, point-of-care **Urine Analyzers** were purchased to consistently provide non-subjective, evidence-based results for the hundreds of tests performed on patients presenting with urinary tract complaints at our *Barry Community Health Center and Westside Health Center*.

WOMEN'S HEALTH



Recently purchased **OBGYN hysteroscopy equipment** will provide in-office exams and procedures at our *Westside Health Center* to uninsured women who would otherwise not be able to afford these services elsewhere.

HELPING OUR NEIGHBORS



A **Needs Pantry** was established at our *Southside Health Center* which includes basic clothing and personal care essentials, as well as items related to shelter and safety for patients, community members, and unhoused individuals.

BEACONS OF HOPE FOR MANY



Clubhouse membership was provided for 50 individuals who did not have access to our *Sheldon* (Grand Rapids) and *Lakeside* (Holland) *Clubhouses* through other funding sources. Through education, social activities, employment opportunities, and wellness initiatives, our Clubhouses support members on their journey from mental illness to mental wellness. Additionally, in-kind gifts assist in helping dollars go further and enable the expansion of opportunities and experiences available to Clubhouse members.

 We gratefully acknowledge the non-monetary goods and services that donors provided which extended our budget capabilities.

Cherry Health Foundation Staff

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Kat MacDonald | Donor Relations & Events Manager
Kathy Lipnicki | Annual Giving Manager
Angie Brown | Foundation Coordinator

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Our Mission:

Cherry Health improves the health and wellness of individuals by providing comprehensive primary and behavioral health care while encouraging access by those who are underserved.