



# 20 24



United Methodist  
**Health Ministry Fund**  
**YEAR IN REVIEW**



# LOOKING FORWARD

## DEAR FRIENDS,

These famous words by John Wesley resonate with me now more than ever: “Do all the good you can, by all the means you can, in all the ways you can, in all the places you can, at all the times you can, to all the people you can, as long as ever you can.”

As we navigate new waters, we remain committed and focused on doing as much good as we can — to continue improving access to care, nurturing health and helping children thrive, and building leadership in our church congregations and their communities.

By the time you receive this, we will have been hard at work on our 2025 goals and projects. However, it's important to reflect on the past year and celebrate all that we have achieved — the ways we've been able to do good and help improve the health of all Kansans. After all, that's at the center of everything we do.

In our *Access to Care* focus area, we continued our sharpen focus on strengthening coverage and services, supporting innovative care delivery and workforce development, and ensuring sustainable financing — especially in rural and underserved communities. We partnered to support emerging health care models that show great promise, including community paramedicine and mobile integrated health. These models expand access to care, increase health care system efficiency, and provide the right care at the right time and place. We also continued efforts to build sustainability for community health workers. We partnered to research how expanded care teams could increase access and better leverage the skills and expertise of existing health care professionals to address critical health care challenges. We also helped secure a \$2.5 million grant to strengthen the state's school-based mental health services, making this care more accessible for students.

In our *Thriving Children* focus area, we concluded a seven-year research effort on an evidence-based, home-visiting program, which proved successful in other states, to determine if it could work in Kansas to support healthy early childhood development and reduce the harmful effects of early adversity. The Attachment and Biobehavioral Catch-up (ABC) program concluded with positive results, showing it not only helped infants, but it also helped toddlers and better prepared them for preschool. It also decreased stress and improved feelings of empowerment for their parents and caregivers.

We also continued our work to support breastfeeding for optimal infant and maternal health, including by working to expand access to doula care and by continuing to help hospitals implement evidence-based practices to increase breastfeeding success. We were pleased to see that in 2024, Kansas ranked fourth nationally for exclusive breastfeeding at three months and fifth nationally at six months. We continued supporting increased availability and affordability of high-quality child care, along with efforts to streamline and consolidate early childhood services. Food security was a significant focus, as we partnered to help launch a Food Secure Communities Initiative seeking to end hunger in Kansas.

Through our *Healthy Congregations* program, we continued to see church participation and excitement about projects they're implementing to improve the physical, spiritual and emotional health in their congregations and communities.

Reflecting on the work of this past year gives us great hope for what we can achieve as we continue our efforts this year. And, though these uncertain times may impact our work in a variety of areas, we know one thing to be true: we will keep doing all the good that we can, in all the ways that we can, in all the places we can, at all the times we can and to all the people we can.

Sincerely,

**David Jordan**  
President and CEO





# ACCESS TO CARE

Supporting improved coverage and services, innovative care delivery and sustainable health system financing to ensure access for all Kansans.

## Community paramedicine top Health Fund priority in 2024

Gaps in Kansas' health care system continue to grow. Fueled by workforce shortages, health care facility closures and an aging population, the need for care is increasing at a time when access to care is decreasing — especially in our rural communities.

To help solve this issue, the Health Fund invested advocacy efforts and funding for an emerging health care model called community paramedicine. It leverages the skills of paramedics

in new ways to help bridge those gaps. They can provide both primary care and community coordination services conveniently in a person's home. This helps expand access to care, improve patient outcomes and increase health care system efficiency. They can provide the right care, at the right time, at the right place.



Check out *Pioneers in Health* episode #17 with Justin Duncan, of the Missouri EMS Association

### COMMUNITY EFFORTS

#### PILOT PROJECT

The Health Fund joined efforts with the Patterson Family Foundation to support a groundbreaking pilot program in Kansas and Missouri to demonstrate the effectiveness of mobile integrated health and community paramedicine. The Patterson Family Foundation is providing backbone support and funding for the pilot sites. The Health Fund's contributions will provide policy research, support and technical assistance with program evaluation for the project and Kansas sites, which include Dickinson, Franklin and Kingman counties. The Missouri sites include Caldwell, Carroll and Ray counties.

#### STAKEHOLDER MEETINGS

The Health Fund hosted multiple stakeholder meetings to discuss how to best support this emerging health care model.



"We need innovative ways to improve access to care, especially in our rural communities. This new health care model shows tremendous promise, and we look forward to seeing the implementation and results from this pilot project." — David Jordan, Health Fund

### EDUCATION



#### RESEARCH

The Health Fund partnered with the Kansas Health Institute to develop a research brief exploring community paramedicine as an emerging model of care. This brief helped show how this new model can strengthen care teams and improve access to health care.



#### FACT SHEET

The Health Fund developed a fact sheet to help spark conversation and understanding about the role community paramedics play on a care team.



## ACCESS TO CARE

### CHWs help bridge gaps in care, improve health outcomes

Community health workers (CHWs) are community members trained to work with the local health care and social services systems to bridge the gap between those systems and their clients. Utilizing CHWs leads to improvements in health

outcomes, increased access to appropriate services and care, and a financial return on investment. For these reasons, we continued to prioritize education and advocacy for this health care model in 2024.

#### REIMBURSEMENT RATE ADVOCACY

In partnership with Health Forward Foundation, the CHW coalition and partners, we successfully advocated for an increased reimbursement rate for CHWs last year. Kansas' Medicaid program, KanCare, increased the rate by more than 100% in June. This policy change was necessary in order to help ensure a stable CHW workforce. It makes it more financially viable for clinics, hospitals and community organizations to continue employing CHWs. We are pleased to see the growth and recognition of this field, which we've advocated and invested in for the past five years.



Read about our CHW campaign in this “Views from the Field” article:  
[www.healthfund.org/GIH-CHWCampaign](http://www.healthfund.org/GIH-CHWCampaign)



#### EDUCATIONAL DOCUMENTARY

The Health Fund was one of several funders and groups that partnered with the University of Kansas Medical Center to develop a documentary highlighting the profound impact CHWs have on individuals, families and communities. Called “Lifelines of Care: CHWs Making a Difference,” the film features the stories of three remarkable CHWs in Kansas and how they help their clients overcome barriers.

It has been shown more than 30 times across the state and country to demonstrate the value CHWs bring to a care team. The National Association of Community Health Workers has used the documentary as an educational tool during private screenings. It's even been screened internationally in Germany, France, Italy and Spain to spark conversation about the profession. Additional screenings are being scheduled for 2025.

Learn more about CHWs at: [www.healthfund.org/a/kansas-community-health-workers/](http://www.healthfund.org/a/kansas-community-health-workers/)

### Health Fund partners with KHI to research expanded care teams

Kansas faces multiple health care systems challenges, including a shortage of health care professionals, health insurance coverage gaps, hospital closures and an aging population that will place more demands on the existing system. The Health Fund partnered with Kansas Health Institute to research how an expanded care team could increase access to health care and leverage the skills knowledge and expertise of existing health care professionals. This brief highlighted how incorporating community paramedics, community health workers and others could help address critical health care challenges.



Read the full issue brief at:  
[www.healthfund.org/KHI-ExpandedTeam](http://www.healthfund.org/KHI-ExpandedTeam)

## Health Fund launches new podcast to highlight leaders in health care

In summer 2024, the Health Fund launched a biweekly podcast called “Pioneers in Health.” The podcast was created to share inspiring stories of pioneering leaders working to

improve health. President and CEO David Jordan interviewed 14 health care leaders in 2024, ranging from national health care experts to local difference makers.



### TOP DOWNLOADS:

**Benjamin Anderson, Hutchinson Regional Healthcare System**  
**Matt All, Blue Cross Blue Shield of Kansas**  
**Lindsay Ford, The Voter Network**  
**Lisse Regehr, Thrive Allen County**  
**Adam Barlow-Thompson, The Neighboring Movement**



## Children to gain better access to school-based mental health services

Continuing to prioritize mental health services, the Health Fund assisted the Kansas Department of Health and Environment in its successful grant application to bolster access to mental health services in public schools in 2024.

The \$2.5-million grant, awarded by CMS, will increase access to mental health and other health services where children spend most of their time — at school. It also will help eligible students and their families enroll in Medicaid coverage and enhance the outreach and educational efforts by schools to promote the health and wellness of students.

Schools provide an important role in the health of children and adolescents. They can provide early identification of health needs and connect students to a broad range of health care services, including mental health.

Data shows more Kansas students are experiencing hopelessness and sadness that leads to ending participation in activities, a key indicator of mental health concerns.

Accessing mental health services can be especially challenging in rural communities, so the availability of school-based services will help ensure timely access to needed help.



## Health Fund helps Thrive Allen County obtain federal grant

Thrive Allen County was awarded a multi-million dollar federal grant to help underserved communities, consumers and small businesses find and enroll in health care coverage. The Health Fund provided funding support to help Thrive Allen County apply for the grant, which was awarded by the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS).

Thrive Allen County is a nonprofit organization that strengthens Kansas’ rural communities through advocacy, programs, community outreach and communication. Its Navigator program, Kansas CARES, provides free assistance

to people exploring health care insurance coverage through HealthCare.gov. Navigators are federally trained, vetted and certified individuals who help consumers find and apply for health insurance through the federal Marketplace. They also can assist people with enrolling or renewing coverage through Medicaid or the Children’s Health Insurance Program (CHIP).

The initial grant of \$11.9 million was awarded for a five-year period. The first year received full funding; however, subsequent years were reduced by 90% due to funding cuts by the federal administration.



## ACCESS TO CARE

### Efforts continue to promote Medicaid expansion to help more Kansans

Expanding Medicaid in Kansas would provide health coverage to 150,000 hardworking individuals who earn too much to qualify for Medicaid but too little to receive subsidized coverage on the health care marketplace. It would protect struggling hospitals, create jobs, strengthen our communities and reduce health care costs for all Kansans.

For these reasons, the Health Fund has continued to advocate for Medicaid expansion, as well as support the Alliance for a Healthy Kansas in its advocacy. Kansas is one of just 10 states that hasn't expanded Medicaid.



Check out *Pioneers in Health* episode #4 with April Holman, of the Alliance for a Healthy Kansas

#### 2024 MEDICAID EXPANSION EFFORTS

- Launched the “Love Thy Neighbor” campaign with the Alliance for a Healthy Kansas and other faith-based organizations; it featured a series of events touting the importance and benefits of expanding Medicaid
- Provided testimony to and before state legislators
- Partnered with the Kansas Common Sense Fund to promote Medicaid expansion through a series of educational digital ads



### Health Fund reflects on efforts to improve Medicaid in Kansas

As a foundation, the Health Fund's mission is to improve the health of all Kansans. Our success, in large measure, depends on investments we make in advancing positive policy and systems changes that affect the state and communities.

With large numbers of the state's most vulnerable people relying on Medicaid for health coverage and care, we focus on leveraging the opportunities this program offers to sustain improved health outcomes and make progress on health equity. Today, as we enter a time of increased social and political uncertainty, with Medicaid's structure and finances under threat, such efforts are more crucial than ever. Philanthropic organizations like ours must continue to move forward, as well as act to preserve and protect the significant policy gains achieved over time.

In a “Views from the Field” article published in *Grantmakers in Health*, we discussed our multi-year effort with other stakeholders to help shape the reprocurement of Medicaid managed care contracts for KanCare. The reprocurement process established and amplified the state's health care priorities for the next several years and defined the expectations for all managed care companies serving Medicaid enrollees. We worked closely with the state on the reprocurement process to provide research and insights we've obtained through our experiences and grantmaking to help ensure the process would best serve KanCare enrollees.



Read the full “Views from the Field” article at:  
[www.healthfund.org/GIH-MedicaidContracts](http://www.healthfund.org/GIH-MedicaidContracts)



# THRIVING CHILDREN

Working to ensure that all Kansas children enjoy the healthy starts, safe and stable families, and early development and learning experiences needed to thrive.

## Health Fund invests in doulas to benefit moms, health care system

Doulas play an important role in supporting Kansas families, offering significant benefits to both mothers and babies. Their presence has been shown to improve health outcomes, enhance the birthing experience and reduce health care costs.

In Kansas, the urgency for solutions like doula care is clear. Nearly half of all counties are classified as maternal health care deserts, forcing many women to travel long distances to access essential services. Doulas, who provide non-medical support, can help bridge this growing gap in care, particularly in rural communities. They

provide continuous emotional, physical and informational support during pregnancy, childbirth and the postpartum period. Integrating doula support into the maternal health landscape is a promising, cost-effective strategy to ensure mothers across our state receive the support they deserve, no matter where they live.

For these reasons, we invested advocacy and grantmaking efforts last year to support the doula profession.



Check out *Pioneers in Health* episode #13 with **Sapphire Garcia, of the Kansas Birth Justice Society**

### TRAINING FUTURE DOULAS

We partnered with the Kansas Birth Justice Society to provide funding to help train 200 new doulas to enter the workforce and help families across Kansas.

The Kansas Birth Justice Society is a nonprofit organization that works to create health equity for families and babies. This group, pictured at right, was one of the first to participate in the training program.



### EXPANDING ACCESS TO DOULA CARE

The Health Fund supported and funded partners, including the Kansas Birth Justice Society, Kansas Breastfeeding Coalition and others, who successfully advocated for doulas to become recognized by KanCare, Kansas' Medicaid program, and to become eligible for reimbursement. We supported this effort in order to improve maternal health outcomes in our state. The state announced in summer 2024 that it would begin recognizing doulas as non-physician providers

and cover doula services for Medicaid enrollees. This significant policy change enables thousands of Kansas women to now access these beneficial services.

### EDUCATIONAL FACT SHEET

The Health Fund worked with its partners to develop a fact sheet on the benefits of doulas as part of the care team. This fact sheet will be used to help educate and advocate for the profession.



Access the fact sheet and other resources at: [www.healthfund.org/a/resources/](http://www.healthfund.org/a/resources/)



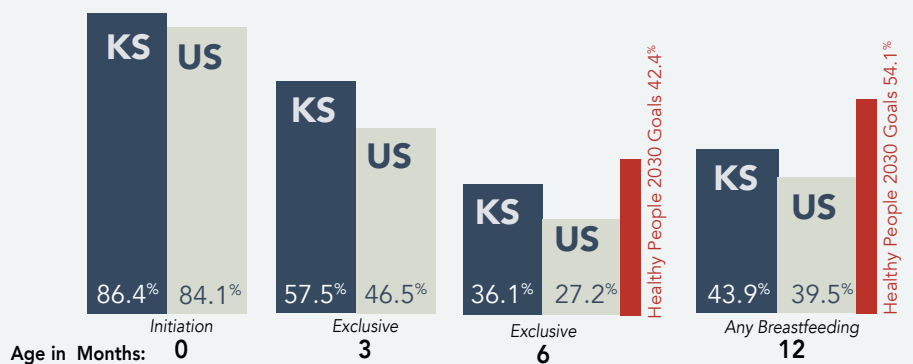
Breastfeeding makes a significant impact on the health of moms and babies, and hospitals and birthing centers play a crucial role in the initiation and successful continuation of breastfeeding. Participating in the Health Fund's High 5 for Mom & Baby program demonstrates their commitment to infant and maternal health by supporting breastfeeding success.

To honor facilities for their continued commitment to breastfeeding, High 5 launched a new recognition program in 2024 to honor those that have attained High 5 status for five and 10 years. High 5 Program Coordinator Cara Gerhardt, BSN, RN, IBCLC, (*speaking at left*) recognized the 10-year anniversaries at the 2024 Kansas Breastfeeding Conference.

- HaysMed in Hays, KS
- LMH Health in Lawrence, KS
- Newman Regional Health in Emporia, KS
- Republic County Hospital in Belleville, KS
- Salina Regional Health Center in Salina, KS
- Stormont Vail Health in Topeka, KS

The Health Fund has long supported breastfeeding initiatives and continued those efforts in 2024 through grantmaking and advocacy work with the Kansas Breastfeeding Coalition and High 5 for Mom & Baby program.

We were pleased to see data released in 2024 shows Kansas continues to exceed the national average in breastfeeding initiation and duration rates.



Source: CDC's National Immunization Survey, babies born 2021

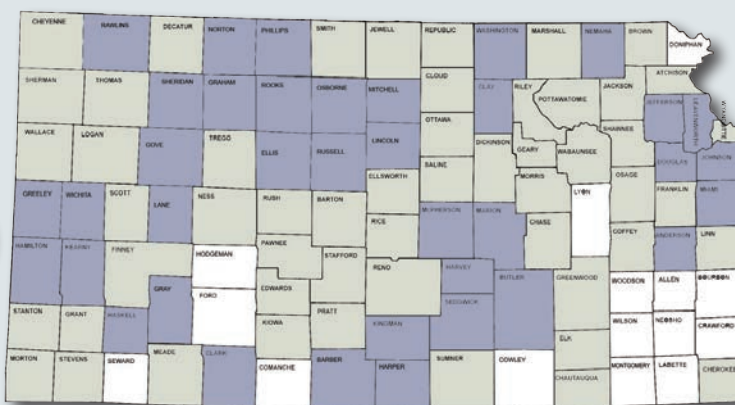


Kansas  
Breastfeeding  
Coalition, Inc.

**4TH IN NATION**  
for rates of infants exclusively  
breastfeeding at 3 months

**5TH IN NATION**  
for rates of infants exclusively  
breastfeeding at 6 months

Source: Birth Certificate Data, , 2020-2022,  
Bureau of Epidemiology and Public Health Informatics, KDHE



## Child care advocacy efforts saw multiple successes in 2024

We kicked off our 2024 advocacy efforts by convening partners early to align around early childhood issues before the Kansas legislative session began. That proactive approach helped us successfully advocate for key issues, including:

- Increasing the child and dependent care credit. Not only did the amount increase, but it doubled — going from 25% to 50% of the amount of the federal credit allowed against the taxpayer's federal income tax liability. This will make child care more affordable for Kansas families.
- The state fully funding its portion of the child care assistance program, which will help increase access to quality, affordable child care.
- Protecting children by defeating a harmful licensing proposal.

Our “Child Care Providers: Perception of Child Care Subsidy in Kansas” report helped inform coordinated advocacy around improving the state’s child care assistance plans. We created model comments and worked with stakeholders to submit comments. All of this work paid off, as Kansas was the only state in the nation to meet all of the federal 2024 Child Care and Development Fund Final Rule requirements designed to help working families afford child care and support quality and accessibility in communities.

Lastly, we supported the reimagining and relaunch of the Partnership for Early Success (PES) and leveraged additional philanthropic support for the coalition, which was convened by Kansas Action for Children.

## Kansans share viewpoints on health care, child care, hunger

In 2024, we continued to center families in our work. We partnered with PerryUndem and the Kansas Common Sense

Fund to survey about 1,000 Kansans on health care, child care and hunger to help drive conversation on these topics.

**95%** WORRIED ABOUT HEALTH CARE COSTS INCREASING

**80%** INCREASINGLY DIFFICULT TO AFFORD HOUSING, HEALTH CARE, CHILD CARE AND HEALTHY FOOD

**79%** MOST STATE POLICYMAKERS AREN'T IN TOUCH WITH FINANCIAL CHALLENGES FACING FAMILIES



Read the full findings at:  
[www.healthfund.org/KS2024Survey](http://www.healthfund.org/KS2024Survey)

## New Food Secure Communities Initiative aims to end hunger in Kansas

The Health Fund partnered with the Kansas Health Foundation to help fund the launch of the Food Secure Communities Initiative by the Kansas Food Action Network. This initiative aims to end hunger in Kansas by addressing the policy, systems and environmental barriers to food security. It will put results in the hands of community members who are uniquely positioned to understand and address the root causes of food insecurity in their communities.

The Health Fund supported two of eight inaugural sites. The health and wellness coalitions selected included: Healthy Bourbon County Action Team, Thomas County Coalition, RISE Cowley, Healthy Harvey Coalition, Healthier Lyon County, Health and Wellness Coalition of Wichita, Liberal Area Coalition for Families and LiveWell Shawnee County. The initiative will share best practices, resources and strategies to advance food security at the local level.

## Health Fund supports efforts to protect, grow summer grocery benefit

A bill was introduced during the 2024 state legislative session that would have prohibited the Kansas Department for Children and Families from participating in Summer EBT, a federally funded program that helps families purchase groceries during the summertime. To qualify, families must have school-aged children who are eligible for free and reduced-price meals. Eligible families receive \$120 per child. The Health Fund supported Kansas Appleseed in its

successful advocacy efforts to defeat this bill. The Health Fund invested in focus group studies and surveys to gain insights into Kansans’ views on food security and assistance. These findings helped guide and develop messaging for partners to use in efforts to protect this valuable program. This research also was used to provide messaging support to help increase utilization of the Summer EBT food program after the bill was defeated.



# THRIVING CHILDREN

## Early childhood research remains priority in 2024

The years from birth to age 5 are critical for a child's development, with rapid brain growth and increased neural connections laying the groundwork for cognitive, emotional and social skills that last into adulthood. The Health Fund invested in research and programming to help better

understand how we can best serve our youngest children. We then shared the results through our "Thriving Children Research Series," which included webinars and panels with the researchers and industry experts.

### CHILD CARE SUBSIDY PROGRAM

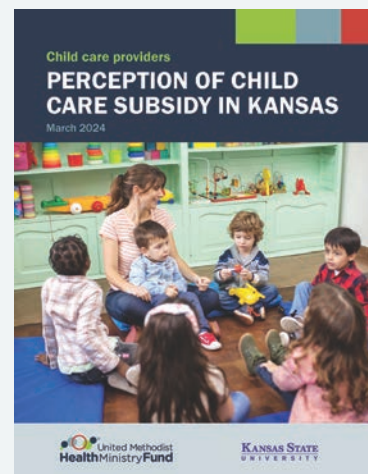
The Health Fund partnered with Kansas State University to survey Kansas child care providers to better understand their perception and experience with the state's child care subsidy program. This program is one of the most important tools used to address child care affordability. However, just 12% of eligible families participate in the program. Family participation is tied to provider availability and provider participation in the program. Survey results indicated several barriers that make it challenging to participate in the program. Providers also offered recommendations that would boost participation.

#### Top barriers included:

- Administrative burdens
- Difficulties managing the program
- Full centers and low subsidy rates

#### Key recommendations included:

- Streamlining existing processes
- Assessing alternative fee structures to cover actual costs and increase accessibility
- Adopting direct payment for providers
- Increasing support for providers
- Increasing awareness to dispel myths about families receiving subsidies



### WHAT WOULD INCREASE PROVIDER PARTICIPATION?

**74%**

**HIGHER  
REIMBURSEMENT  
RATES**

**71%**

**DIRECT  
PAYMENTS  
TO PROVIDERS**

**24%**

**ADDITIONAL  
SUPPORT  
(COACHING)**

**23%**

**RESOURCES LIKE  
PROFESSIONAL  
DEVELOPMENT**

**19%**

**ASSISTANCE  
WITH SUBSIDY  
MANAGEMENT**

### INFANT AND EARLY CHILDHOOD MENTAL HEALTH

In Kansas, there has been progress in recognizing the importance of infant and early childhood mental health and expanding access to services for young children and their families. However, challenges remain. The Health Fund partnered with the Kansas Health Institute to research how the Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinic (CCBHC) model presents a framework to address this gap in care. The report found that leveraging the model's services and payment structures could help ensure all children and families benefit from timely and effective mental health support.

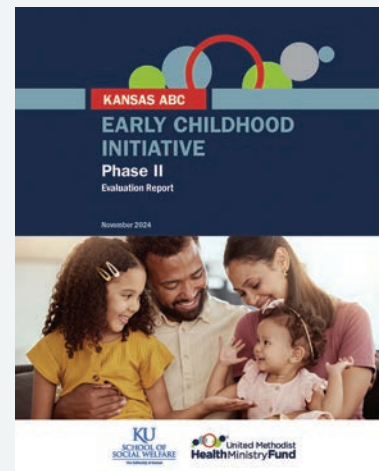


## ABC PARENT-COACHING PROGRAM

The Attachment and Biobehavioral Catch-up (ABC) program is a national, evidence-based, home-visiting intervention for caregivers of infants and toddlers who have experienced early adversity. It is designed to buffer the harmful effects of toxic stress and help support normal early childhood development.

To explore whether ABC would be effective for Kansas families, a collaboration of Kansas foundations first funded the Kansas ABC Early Childhood Initiative in 2017. The initiative was conducted in two phases. Phase I implemented the ABC-Infant model for children ages 6-24 months old. Phase II, which began in 2020, continued the infant model and added ABC-Early Childhood for toddlers ages 24-48 months old.

Phase II continued to evaluate social-emotional and physical development, but it also assessed caregiver stress, family empowerment and preschool readiness. The University of Kansas School of Social Welfare conducted and evaluated the program for both phases. Last year marked not only the end of Phase II, but also the end of the entire seven-year initiative. Results were promising and showed benefits for both caregivers and children.



“

The success of this Initiative underscores the importance of continued investment in early childhood interventions that support both child development and family well-being.

”



ABC Phase II teams gathered in November for their final learning community meeting and to celebrate the completion of the seven-year initiative.



# ENGAGED CONGREGATIONS AND COMMUNITIES

*Partnering with United Methodist churches and Kansas communities to improve spiritual, physical, social and emotional health and address social drivers of health at the local level.*

## Health Fund hosts annual retreat to focus on health, community

The Health Fund celebrated another successful annual retreat last year with 90 Great Plains United Methodists convening from across Kansas and Nebraska in Salina, Kansas, in April. The event featured great presenters and strong engagement on a variety of health topics.

Day 1 focused on Healthy Congregations members and included an interactive workshop titled “Leaving a Legacy of Abundance in a Culture of Scarcity,” which was facilitated by The Neighboring Movement. The activities and tools in the workshop helped churches see the power of becoming community connectors and reducing the sense of isolation and loneliness that is created when doing ministry in a culture of scarcity.

Day 2 focused on the faith community, as well as community members and those working in public health, health care and nonprofits. Titled “Intersections of Faith & Health,” the day explored current and emerging health issues with an emphasis on how stakeholders could work together to leverage their unique strengths to improve community health.



Participants heard from health experts across the state on topics that included food security, maternal and child health, Medicaid expansion, voting and civic engagement, child care and more. Then, they explored those topics further and connected with resources through facilitated small-group conversations.

## Healthy Congregations: Spotlight on churches making positive impact

Healthy Congregations churches did a tremendous amount of good work in 2024. Here are just two examples of

how participating churches improved the health of their communities and congregations this past year.

### HARVARD UMC

First United Methodist Church of Harvard in Harvard, Nebraska, partnered with other local churches to provide meals for seniors in the community. After each meal, they played a game of Bingo and recognized birthdays.



### WILLIAMSBURG UMC

Williamsburg UMC in Williamsburg, Nebraska, planned worship experiences in their fellowship room and outdoors. Doing so created a more comfortable, “come-as-you-are” worship experience for their congregants and community.

## Healthy Congregations program continues making difference

The Healthy Congregations program continued strong in 2024. Fifty-five Great Plains United Methodist churches in Kansas and Nebraska participated in the program, which engages participants in projects that will improve spiritual, physical, social and emotional health in their congregations and communities.

We also continued to see participation in designated special grant opportunities, which provide churches with additional funding to extend the reach and impact of their health ministries.

### MENTAL HEALTH FIRST AID

The Mental Health First Aid training continues to be popular and touches the lives of so many across our state and our conference. Through this program, participants learn the risk factors and warning signs for mental health and substance-use concerns, strategies for how to help someone in both crisis and non-crisis situations, and where to turn for help.



In 2024, 102 people completed this training, which the Health Fund offered at no cost. Participants could choose between adult first aid or youth first aid, which focuses on adolescents ages 12-18. There were 63 people who completed the adult first aid, and 39 who completed the youth first aid training.

### FAITH-BASED ANIMATOR NETWORK

The Health Fund was able to expand its special grant opportunities in 2024, as The Neighboring Movement relaunched its Faith-Based Animator Network (FAN) program. FAN is a paid learning opportunity for those who want to dive deeper into the neighboring concept from a faith-based perspective. The Health Fund also partners with The Neighboring Movement to offer the Good Neighbor Experiment special grant opportunity.



### FAITH IN DEMOCRACY

This initiative was developed in partnership with The Voter Network, a nonpartisan nonprofit dedicated to ensuring every Kansan is able to be an informed, enthusiastic and engaged voter. In 2024, the Health Fund worked with The Voter Network to host relational training events specific to faith and health partners. Efforts last year increased access to voter information through ksballot.org and ksboleta.org, which was especially important during a general election year. Of note, the program reached 5,845 new people, making a total of 44,471 contacts. Program efforts led to engaged voters in 101 of Kansas' 105 counties.



### AS FOR ME AND MY BODY

This program helps believers bridge their spiritual and physical health. Program founder Candice McField hosted a five-week training in winter 2024, which attracted 20 participants from different faith traditions and included new exercises for seniors. This was the last year for this special grant opportunity.



# HEALTH FUND NEWS

## Team celebrates growth with promotions, new hire

The Health Fund team celebrated growth this past year through promotions and welcoming a new hire.



**KATIE SCHOENHOFF**, who has worked at the Health Fund for 11 years, was promoted to vice president of programs.



**JEFF GAMBER**, who has worked at the Health Fund for 25 years, was promoted to director of operations.



**NANCY McCREADY** joined the Health Fund in August as the communications officer.

## Health Fund, board honor Jeff Gamber for milestone work anniversary

Cheers to 25 years! The Health Fund team and Board of Directors celebrated Jeff Gamber's 25th work anniversary at its December board meeting.

Jeff first joined the Health Fund in 1999 as a program associate, where he assisted with communications, grant administration and site visits, as well as represented the Health Fund at public functions.

Since then, Jeff's role has evolved and his responsibilities have grown. Now, as director of operations, he continues to serve as an invaluable member of the Health Fund team. We



enjoyed celebrating Jeff and are deeply appreciative of his years of dedication and service to the Health Fund.

## New additions welcomed

The Health Fund welcomed two new members to its Board of Directors in 2024: Tanner Wealand and Robert J. Morris. Tanner serves as president and CEO/CFO at McPherson Hospital in McPherson, Kansas, and Robert serves as senior vice president and institutional consultant at Graystone Consulting in Wichita, Kansas. We also welcomed Jerry Williams, a retired T-Mobile executive, to the Program & Evaluation Committee.



**TANNER  
WEALAND**



**ROBERT J.  
MORRIS**



**JERRY  
WILLIAMS**

## Staff on the move: Team connects, educates about key issues

Our team invested time traveling locally, regionally and nationally to provide education about issues of importance and to connect with others who can help make a difference.

Our team delivered seven presentations in and around Kansas and three at national events. Team members also participated in numerous work groups and funder groups to connect and collaborate to further the Health Fund's mission.

## LiveWell Northwest Kansas recognized for exceptional efforts

The Health Fund honored LiveWell Northwest Kansas with the Janet Sevier Gilbreath Award in 2024. The award, which is voted on by the Health Fund's Board of Directors, recognizes one exceptional project from all the initiatives the organization has funded during the year. Named for the Health Fund's first chairperson, it highlights a project that best exemplifies the Fund's and Janet's vision for a healthy Kansas.

LiveWell is a nonprofit advocacy organization in Colby, Kansas, that focuses on improving all aspects of health in northwest Kansas. LiveWell participated for the entire seven years of the Health Fund's parent-coaching early childhood initiative, called the Attachment and Biobehavioral Catch-up (ABC) program (see page 11). ABC is a parenting intervention for caregivers of infants and toddlers who have experienced early adversity. It's designed to buffer the harmful effects of toxic stress and help restore normal early childhood development.

Throughout the initiative, LiveWell worked hard to embed the intervention within the 12 counties they serve. They trained four parent coaches to serve all parts of their service area. One exciting development was having a bilingual mother who had previously received the intervention go on to become a parent coach herself to serve her community because she believed in the value of the program.

LiveWell identified there was a service gap for Spanish-speaking families and developed an early childhood program to meet that need. This included hiring another Spanish-speaking parent coach, who helped increase access to services.

By the end of 2022, 100% of their referrals were for Spanish-speaking families, demonstrating they had effectively reached this community.

They also worked with the court system to receive referrals for families at risk of having their children removed from their homes. They also connected with local judges, county attorneys, law enforcement, educators and others to discuss who may need services. Another important success was partnering with another ABC participating organization to secure funding through the Family First Prevention Services Act from the Kansas Department for Children and Families. They utilized this funding to train more home visitors so that they can further support families at risk of losing their children.



*David Jordan with LiveWell Northwest Kansas team*

## Health Fund honors Lisse Regehr with Kim Moore Award

The Health Fund presented Lisse Regehr with the Kim Moore Award for Visionary Leadership in 2024. Regehr is president and CEO of Thrive Allen County in Iola, Kansas. This organization works to improve the quality of life in Allen County by focusing on health, wellness, recreation and education conditions, and by engaging people and institutions around a common vision for the future.

Regehr's vision and guidance enabled Thrive's success in increasing access to health care, connecting people to programs and services, encouraging residents to live healthier lives, and providing leadership on important public issues. She oversaw Thrive's Navigator Program from 2014-17, reducing the county's uninsured rate from 21% in 2013 to 9% in 2017 — one of the biggest improvements in Kansas.

She, along with Thrive, helped Allen County navigate the COVID-19 pandemic, bringing in grant funding, creating programs to help local organizations, and defending health

department efforts to share accurate information.

Regehr has been active in supporting Allen County's prosperity and growth. She helped transform the loss of a local employer into a significant new opportunity and was instrumental in getting a new state park in Iola in 2023. She also oversees efforts to build a statewide rural health advocacy network, called Thrive Kansas, which works on substance misuse initiatives; assists with enrolling for Medicaid, Medicare, and Marketplace insurance; and increases awareness around statewide child care issues.



*David Jordan and Lisse Regehr*



*Check out Pioneers in Health episode #1 with Lisse Regehr, of Thrive Allen County.*



PO Box 1384  
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RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

## 2024 BY THE NUMBERS

**\$80** MILLION

GRANT DOLLARS  
INVESTED SINCE 1986

**\$2** MILLION

GRANT DOLLARS  
AWARDED IN 2024

**\$14.4** MILLION

FEDERAL GRANT AWARDS  
SECURED FOR KANSAS  
IN 2024

**115**

GRANTS AWARDED IN 2024

24 ACCESS TO CARE  
20 THRIVING CHILDREN  
67 ENGAGED CONGREGATIONS  
4 OTHER

**19**

EDUCATIONAL WEBINARS,  
TRAININGS, REGIONAL AND  
NATIONAL PRESENTATIONS

**14**

PODCAST EPISODES  
WITH HEALTH LEADERS