

THE SWARTHMOREAN

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Foundation Finding Its Footing

A generation of mothers and children in Chester and elsewhere in Delaware County have lived healthier, happier lives as a result of programs of the county's Women's and Children's Health Services. For the past year, those programs have been under the auspices of the new Crozer-Keystone Community Foundation. Last month, the 25th anniversary was observed with events spotlighting its marquee programs in prenatal, perinatal, and early childhood development. These programs — including Healthy Start, the Nurse-Family Partnership, Cribs for Kids, and the Center for Hispanic Resources — represent the cornerstone of a growing structure of services CKCF administers to improve life for Delaware County residents.



(From left): Frances Sheehan of Swarthmore, president of the Crozer-Keystone Community Foundation, and Joanne Craig, CKCF vice president for programs, accepted a proclamation from the City of Chester presented by Councilwoman Elizabeth Williams and Mayor Thaddeus Kirkland last month during a week-long series of events celebrating the 25th Anniversary of Women's & Children's Health Services in Delaware County. Photo by Jack Zigon

The Swarthmorean recently spoke with Frances Sheehan of Swarthmore, the first president of the foundation, a position she took in late 2016. She said that the Foundation's identity and its substantial role in supporting health in the county are still evolving.

Frances Sheehan: "We're really thinking about 'What is the unique role that we can play in Delaware County?' We from the beginning took two different approaches compared to most hospital conversion foundations in the area. [CKCF was formed with the proceeds from the sale of Crozer-Keystone Health System to Prospect Medical Holdings in 2016.] One was that we inherited programs; we are really thinking strategically how we can build on them with our grant making program next year. And the other thing that's different from most foundations in the area is to be a community foundation.

"The assets we inherited have to be focused on improving health in Delaware County. But any additional dollars we bring to the table since the sale, for a variety of different purposes, are designated to improve the county more broadly. We already have a couple of donor advised funds. We may bring in field of interest funds. We had somebody who expressed an interest in starting a fund for women and girls in DelCo, which doesn't exist. We may expand programs that we inherited ... but how do we use our grantmaking dollars, and how do we expand in partnership with other entities?... We've got a tremendous problem with violence in some of our communities. How could we get the community mobilized to do something about that, in concert with the DA's office and the police chiefs?"

The Swarthmorean: So the Foundation has a collaborative role?

FS: Yes. Kurt Slenn [president of the Taylor Community Foundation in Ridley] and I have talked about cooperation. We have over 100 restricted funds that we inherited. Some are focused on cancer, hospice and home care, some would be ideally suited to support Taylor's very well-regarded hospice ... perhaps helping with staff training costs.

"Our full focus is on being very collegial, very much partners ... We initiated a convening of Delaware County funders group for foundations in DelCo as well as regional foundations serving the county to meet on a quarterly basis, share information, learn from each other, bring in outside speakers, start working together. You can't go it alone any more, you have to work together."

TS: What other challenges have you faced in launching the foundation?

FS: "Because of our name, helping the community understand that we are not connected to the health system, although we have many physicians, donors, and employees of the health system who support us and work with us. The other difficulty ... is educating people that those women's and children's programs that began 25 years ago are now part of the foundation."

TS: Is the Foundation fully funded at this point?

FS: "The size of the enterprise should be in the \$57-\$58 million range. The discrepancy in payments so far is \$25 million. We were successful in getting Prospect Medical Holdings to escrow \$21.5 million of that, and we have a jointly selected accounting firm as the arbiter, and they are reviewing the original audit conducted by Ernst & Young [at the time of the sale]."

TS: Do organizations come to you with requests for funding?

FS: "We've had a few approach us, but we haven't gotten into details because we don't have all assets. We are sponsoring a few events, but we're really not moving dollars out the door yet. We have awarded a few scholarships funded by donors, like the Eva Miller Nursing Scholarship. Working with the donor, we decided to look at two ends of nursing spectrum. Nurses starting out, i.e. RN prepared nursing students at Delaware County Community College, and then doctoral students at Widener. So \$5,000 a year goes to a doctoral student for expenses associated with his or her dissertation, and the DCCC student gets \$2,500 toward tuition for each of two years."

TS: How do you work with people and institutions elsewhere in DelCo?

FS: "We have United Way funding to work in partnership with Swarthmore College to look at the DelCo College Access Center, which is on Widener's campus ... Its future is uncertain. But let's not just close up shop; let's see what's worked, what has not, what does the community need, what are successful models around the country that we might replicate? So Sara McCullough of the United Way and Greg Brown [Swarthmore College VP of Finance and Administration], both of whom are Swarthmore residents, are very involved in helping us figure that out.

"Another Swarthmore resident, Dan Atkins, is founder of the Medical-Legal Partnership at Widener University's Delaware Law School. Two of his lawyers are embedded in our Healthy Start program, and we essentially pay the law school for their services. Women involved in our programs can benefit from free legal help if they run into a housing issue, utility or immigration issue... . We built this into our Healthy Start grant, and we were able to get the funding for it, and that's really important because our big collective effort is about reducing the percentage of low birth-weight babies in the African-American community. A lot of it is related to stress, and the mom being under a lot of stress which can be related to living conditions.

“I should also mention some other Swarthmore area neighbors: Amy Pollack, who does all of our publications, brought a team together to do our website, our e-newsletter, her group Twist & Shout is doing our communications. Andy Shelter is one of our photographers, along with Jack Zigon of Wallingford and Crystal Burrell of Chester.”

TS: We started by talking about the evolving identity of the CKCF in funding and providing services. What is the unique selling point for prospective supporters?

FS: “We’re very lucky because DelCo now has a community foundation with a significant asset base to build on. There may be school districts that have foundations, businesses, individuals or families that may be thinking of starting a foundation or donor advised fund ... or a group of people that really want to start a field of interest fund. Although there was an effort to start a Delaware County Community Foundation in the past, it never really got off the ground – it’s hard to start from scratch — this will be the first time that they will have a significant opportunity to put those funds with a community foundation in DelCo.

“Beyond Chester, we will be making grants to organizations all over the county that are addressing health needs ... the idea is to build on these gold standard programs and have an impact on a variety of issues that may or may not be unique to DelCo, but give people a chance to be philanthropists with impact in their very own community.”