Screening the “Babies”
A local children’s health screening program is picking up where budget cuts left off.

Dr. Anju Mader’s own children always know when it’s screening day, because she gets very excited to “go play with the babies.” And there are a lot of “babies.”

Over a two-year period, many young children (ages 6 weeks to 5 years) will receive preventive health screenings conducted by Dr. Mader and her colleagues for the Healthy Kids Collaborative Project of the Stark County Family Council. The screening program was funded by the Sisters of Charity Foundation of Canton. Collaborative partners include Mercy Medical Center, Stark County Help Me Grow, Stark County Family Council, and the Stark County Educational Service Center. Families with children attending the J.R. Coleman Center, Canton Preschool, and the Canton YWCA will be offered health screenings to identify issues with vision, hearing, oral health, hemoglobin (anemia), and lead levels, as these issues are known to cause developmental and learning delays. These particular centers serve many of our community’s most impoverished families.

All children who are found to have an immediate health or dental need will be referred within four weeks to a provider who can address that need. Parental consent allows the collaborative partners to share information with medical and dental providers. Children will be referred to a provider for future preventive care as well, in the hopes that that provider might become the child’s medical or dental home. The Collaborative will follow up with families and providers in six months to identify continuity of care.

According to Dr. Mader, there would be no need for this project if the Early Learning Initiative (ELI) still existed. ELI was a state program for low-income families that funded early education services as well as preventive screening tests for approximately 13,000 children throughout the state. ELI funding was completely eliminated in 2010. This happened at the same time as other early childhood funding cuts, leaving centers scrambling to do more with much less. There was simply no funding available for screenings.

While annual physicals are required for admission into centers, these physicals do
Dear Friends,

As we begin a new year, our community faces many challenges. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, 46.2 million Americans are now living in poverty — that staggering figure is the highest in the 52 years poverty numbers have been tabulated. The Foundation begins 2012 with a brand new strategic plan that we hope will help us best meet the current needs of people struggling in our community.

We’re not the only ones working hard to combat the results of the recession. The more than 300 attendees of the recent Bridges Out Of Poverty workshop are working hard, too, every day — many on the front lines. The effort, led by Stark State College’s Education and Human Services Division in collaboration with the Bridges Out of Poverty committee, was more than worthwhile; we all learned new ways of understanding and addressing today’s social services challenges.

Just as we’ve streamlined our strategic direction, the state is looking to simplify by cutting inefficiency and waste. This year, we’ll be supporting work to discover ways that public health agencies throughout the state can operate most efficiently. All of us will reap the benefit of tax dollars saved as a result.

We’re focusing on preventive health as well. We know that it’s crucial that young children get the best possible start in life. The Healthy Kids Collaborative Project will provide hundreds of children simple health screenings that can detect problems early, while they can still be treated and before they prevent school readiness. In the words of public policy expert James Q. Wilson, “Our overriding goal ought to be to save the children. Other goals...are all worthy. But they should be secondary to the goal of improving the life prospects of the next generation.” I could not agree more.

As we move forward on new efforts and focus areas, we will continue to explore ways to build on existing efforts and identify and collaborate with strategic partners. We’re so grateful that we are not in this alone.

Sincerely

Joni T. Close
President
not typically include the dental and blood screenings that are so crucial to ensure proper development.

Results and Rewards
The screening program is definitely identifying problems that might otherwise have gone unaddressed. Out of all the dental screenings conducted so far, 20% have resulted in an immediate referral to treat a serious oral health problem. These children have received dental and medical treatment from community professionals.

Parents have responded favorably. One child’s mother was so happy with the Collaborative’s program that she spoke with her sister regarding her niece, who was then screened and treated by the same dental provider.

Dr. Mader has been pleasantly surprised to find very low levels of lead in the screened children, even measured against recently proposed stricter government guidelines. Since many at-risk families live in older homes that may still contain lead paint, this is critical. High blood lead levels pose a concern for many reasons. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the potentially irreversible effects of lead poisoning go “beyond cognitive function to include cardiovascular, immunological, and endocrine effects.”

As Dr. Mader stated in her proposal to the Foundation, “the early detection of risk factors through health and developmental screenings can improve outcomes, may reduce special education placement, and in the long term, reduce costs to society.”

Screening the “Babies” continued from page 1

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In 2009, as a proactive response to impending budget cuts to the state-sponsored Early Learning Initiative, Foundation staff convened a meeting with representatives from the early childhood community to identify areas in need of support. The group agreed that there would be great benefit in continuing to provide comprehensive screenings for children, with appropriate follow-up as needed. The Foundation provided a two-year grant in the amount of $148,000 to support this effort.
A year after our strategic planning process began, we have a solid plan rooted in our mission and tailored to the current needs of our community. Our new strategic plan is based on themes that emerged as we examined our past work, the experiences of our collaborators, and our mission. We encouraged numerous grantees and community stakeholders to share the challenges they encounter in their work and asked them how the Foundation could best help them navigate those challenges.

Collaborating with existing organizations and agencies to strengthen current efforts can sometimes be far more efficient than seeking to reinvent the wheel by creating new initiatives and programs. Our first approach, therefore, will be to strengthen current efforts and existing programs. However, where we find that community resources do not sufficiently address a challenge, we may choose to pilot or implement new programs.

**HEALTH STRATEGY**
We will continue to focus on oral health by enrolling more families in the Bethlehem Project. We will work to inform policy decisions about oral health care for the uninsured and underinsured by showing our policymakers the dramatic community impact of the Bethlehem Project and Mercy Medical Center’s Dental Clinic and General Practice Residency in Dentistry program. We will continue to promote health care access, by improving the efficiency and effectiveness of health care systems. We will work collaboratively to build the capacity and infrastructure of providers as they implement electronic records systems and create common data collection and analysis tools. We will explore opportunities and facilitate discussions at the state and local levels among providers, health departments, and others to improve efficiencies and reduce costs.

**New Focus**
We are interested in exploring ways to reduce childhood obesity in our community by researching what works to combat the problem. Based on results of that research, we will support obesity prevention and reduction programming that is found to be effective, modestly priced, and replicable.

**EDUCATION STRATEGY**
We are continuing our focus on early childhood. At the state level, we will ensure that policymakers understand the importance of investing in successful early childhood programs. We will continue our school readiness efforts through the SPARK SUPPORTING PARTNERSHIPS TO ASSURE READY KIDS™ program and consider expansion as funds are available. We will focus on strengthening SPARK and addressing sustainability. We will continue to collaborate with schools as they work toward implementing research-based ready schools practices. We will also continue our support of evidence-based bullying prevention programming that will result in systemic changes in Stark County public and parochial schools.

**Social Services Strategy**
We will focus heavily on basic aid, as there continues to be a real need in this area. We will strengthen the community safety net formed by the agencies and organizations addressing issues of poverty on the front lines. This includes continuing to work toward a common intake process and shared information and referral system for these organizations. We will also enhance the effectiveness of homelessness prevention efforts. In addition, we will collaborate with the Early Childhood Resource Center and others in our community to ensure that effective parenting programs are available and accessible to the community.

**New Focus**
We will focus on economic development and support programs that prepare unemployed and underemployed workers to meet the needs of a modern workforce.

Continued on page 5
Ohio’s Public Health System  
Planning for the future

Late in 2011, the Foundation awarded a grant to the Association of Ohio Health Commissioners to develop a new model for the state’s public health system. The group will work to establish core standards for Ohio’s 125 local public health departments based on best practices, state expectations, and national accreditation standards. The group will also develop a plan for facilitating collaboration between public health entities, and make recommendations on regionalizing and/or merging health districts where it makes sense.

The effort is in line with the Foundation’s new strategic plan, which prioritizes increasing health care access by improving the efficiency and effectiveness of health care systems.

The Health Policy Institute of Ohio, an organization co-founded and supported by the Foundation, will facilitate the exploration process. The Institute is an independent, nonpartisan organization that promotes informed health policy decision-making in Ohio through research, analysis, education, and dialogue.

This work aligns with the goals of Governor Kasich’s Office of Health Transformation. According to Greg Moody, the director of the Governor’s Office of Health Transformation, “Ohio Health and Human Service policy, spending, and administration is split across multiple state and local jurisdictions. This inefficient structure impedes innovation and lacks a clear point of accountability and we need to share services to increase efficiency…. The ultimate goal is “to share services in a way that improves customer service, increases program efficiencies, and reduces costs for Ohio’s taxpayers.”

The Bottom Line
Our new strategic plan identifies tangible actions that we believe are responsive to the changes that have occurred in our community over the last few years. The continuation of many of our existing efforts helps us capitalize on the momentum built over time. The addition of some new areas of focus ensures that we address the most pressing challenges we face today. Overall, the new plan charts the most effective course toward fulfillment of our mission, given the new face of the poor and underserved in Stark County.

The Foundation Welcomes Jean Van Ness
Jean Van Ness joined our team in October as Senior Program Officer/Special Projects. Jean previously served as vice president and senior program officer of the GAR Foundation and senior program officer at the Burton D. Morgan Foundation. Most recently, she served as a consultant to area foundations and worked with us to finalize goals and objectives during our strategic planning process. Jean has also served as board president for Project Grad Akron, Summit Education Initiative, and Canton Country Day School, and was on the board of the Summit County Social Services Advisory Committee. Welcome, Jean!
Our Mission

The Sisters of Charity Foundation of Canton supports and furthers the mission and ministry of the Sisters of Charity of St. Augustine. The principal components of their ministry are health, education, and social services. The Foundation’s focus is on issues of social justice relating to the poor and underserved in the Spirit of Jesus Christ.

A Ministry of the Sisters of Charity Health System

Seeking a Grant?

Workshops on our grant process are held twice a year; all prospective grant seekers are welcome. The next one will be held on April 3rd. To register, please call 330-454-5800.

Good Samaritan Cycle

May 1, 2012 | Concept forms are due
June 1, 2012 | If concept is approved, proposal is due
September 1, 2012 | Awards are announced
November 1, 2012 | Concept forms are due
December 1, 2012 | If concept is approved, proposal is due
March 1, 2013 | Awards are announced

Responsive Cycle

February 1, 2012 | Concept forms are due
March 1, 2012 | If concept is approved, proposal is due
June 1, 2012 | Awards are announced
August 1, 2012 | Concept forms are due
September 1, 2012 | If concept is approved, proposal is due
December 1, 2012 | Awards are announced