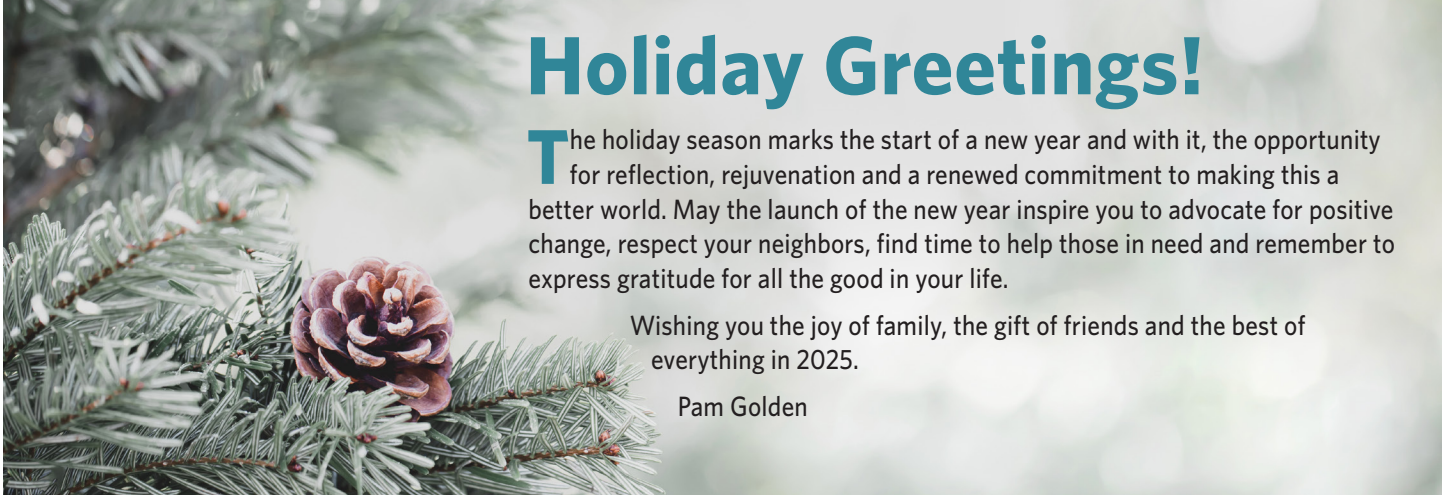




IN THIS ISSUE

- Holiday Greetings!
- Board Elects Two Trustees
- Foundation Awards Grants
- Trustees Elect Officers
- Farewell to Two Valued Trustees
- Kudos
- Mark Your Calendar



# Holiday Greetings!

The holiday season marks the start of a new year and with it, the opportunity for reflection, rejuvenation and a renewed commitment to making this a better world. May the launch of the new year inspire you to advocate for positive change, respect your neighbors, find time to help those in need and remember to express gratitude for all the good in your life.

Wishing you the joy of family, the gift of friends and the best of everything in 2025.

Pam Golden

## Board Elects Two Trustees

PCGF welcomes Trooper **Melinda Bondarenka** and **Muzz Meyers** who were elected to three-year terms to the Foundation’s Board of Trustees. Their terms will begin in January 2025.



Law enforcement officer **Melinda Bondarenka** possesses more than two decades of experience, first with Allegheny County and now in her 19th year as a Pennsylvania State Trooper.

Over the years, she has worked in various capacities including patrol and crime, where her responsibilities included conducting background investigations. As well, Melinda has served as Media Relations,

Community Service and Community Engagement Officer.

In addition to being a Community Affairs Officer, Melinda is Director of Allegheny County Camp Cadet, a weeklong law enforcement camp for youth ages 12 – 14. She organized Sunny Day Camp for children with special needs; Shop with a Cop; Mother’s Day and Father’s Day events for parents living in shelters; and Sweats for Vets to highlight a few events. Melinda is a Big Sister and a mentor for the Big in Blue program. She holds an associate degree in criminal justice and certifications from the Allegheny County Police Academy and the Pennsylvania State Police Academy.

*continued on page 2*

## Foundation Awards Grants

Earlier this year, following a strategic planning process, the Foundation announced a change to its area of emphasis to support programs that help children and youth develop social and emotional skills through education and relationships with role models.

Long-term goals of social and emotional development:

- encourage completion of high school
- increase self-confidence
- develop interest in and explore career opportunities
- connect with role models

*continued on page 2*

### PITTSBURGH CHILD GUIDANCE FOUNDATION 2024 BOARD OF TRUSTEES

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VICE PRESIDENT

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# Board Elects

continued from page 1



A lifelong Pittsburgher, **Muzz Meyers** is a graduate of Pittsburgh Public Schools and holds a master's in teaching from Colgate

University. In the early 1980s, he opened the Balcony Restaurant and Jazz Club and Hotlicks Restaurant. After a successful 18-year run, he left the restaurant business and since has been involved in education and non-profit work. Muzz spends much of his time in Westinghouse High School connecting students to community resources. He created the Youth Business Initiative to train high school entrepreneurs and organized

## Trustees Elect Officers

The following Trustees were elected to one-year terms:

- **Paul David Spradley**, EdD, President
- **Joan Eichner**, DrPH, Vice President
- **Michele Rone Cooper**, Secretary
- **Aaron Aldrich**, Treasurer

E-Fest, a community festival. In 2018 he founded his own non-profit, The Day One Project, which provided housing and wrap-around services for single-parent families. His passion for leveling the playing field for the underserved continues to guide his life's work.

## WITH GRATITUDE

The Board and staff extend our thanks to two valued Trustees who are leaving the Board.



**Brian Allen**, Chief Investment Officer for CS McKee, has served as Treasurer of the Foundation for nine years. Brian will continue his affiliation with the Foundation as a member of the Advisory Board serving on the Finance Committee.



**Jason Lando**, Chief of Police, Frederick, Maryland, served on the Board for five years. While living in Maryland, he continued his volunteer work in Pittsburgh.

## Grants

continued from page 1

- impart life and work-ready skills that might not otherwise be available.

We were pleased to receive a robust response to the call for proposals and look forward to partnering with the following organizations in this new direction:

- ▶ **Angels' Place** offers an accredited program for children birth to age 5 that integrates STEAM concepts that align with PA Early Learning Standards and cultivates social/emotional development, cognitive, gross motor, fine motor and self-help skills.
- ▶ **Big Brothers Big Sisters** offers a mentoring program for 400 middle and high school students in 25 area schools. It introduces them to role models, teaches conflict resolution and conversation skills, and provides homework assistance while students plan for their futures.



*Brookline Teen Outreach takes a field trip to the Museum of Illusions.*

- ▶ **Brookline Teen Outreach Center** supports students with homework assistance and STEAM activities that integrate social emotional learning with life skills and career counseling. Free mental health counseling services are also available.
- ▶ **Casa San Jose's** Youth with a Purpose highlights education as a path to success, connecting Latino students with peers and mentors who provide personalized academic, social and emotional support in their

native language. This support helps them to make informed decisions, avoid negative influences, and stay focused on their educational and personal development.

- ▶ **Dragon's Den**, built on five pillars — physical wellness, nutrition, academic support, STEAM activities and mental health — equips children with skills to make better decisions, manage stress, and build confidence.
- ▶ **East End Cooperative Ministry** will hold a Summer Camp for 200-250 children ages 5 - 16 from low-income households to provide, life skills and education enrichment activities and workshops.
- ▶ **Familylinks'** Adolescent Semi-Independent Program provides an array of trauma-informed and culturally response services to youth 16 - 21 who are transitioning from foster care. The program focuses on four outcomes: educational advancement; independent living and life skills development; sustainable employment; and self-sufficiency.

# Grants

continued from page 2

► **FBI Citizens Academy Alumni Association** supports countywide outreach efforts to connect traditionally disenfranchised communities with law enforcement to improve relationships, expose the 300-400 participants to career opportunities, and educate youth about the threats to their safety from online predators and the protective strategies they can take.

► **Focus on Renewal's** Teen Time Program offers homework assistance, test preparation, study strategies, mentoring, discussion groups, creative expression activities and mental health support. Participants learn self-regulation, develop leadership skills, and engage in community services projects.

► **Fund for Advancement of Minorities through Education** provides personalized tutoring, college readiness, leadership development and career exploration workshops for 70 students in grades 3 through 12.

► **Greater Valley Community Services'** grant supports the summer writing and STEAM programs. One hundred youth will participate in SEL-based activities that focus on self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, responsible decision-making, and teamwork.

► **HEARTH** will expand enrichment activities for children by engaging new partners that provide crucial opportunities for healing and development through creative expression, movement, and mindfulness.

► **Hello Neighbor's** Study Buddy Program is designed for English Language Learners. Seventy newly arrived middle and high school students (some who have endured



*Pittsburgh Arts & Lectures and author Jamar Nicholas visit Cleveland Elementary School.*

traumatic experiences including war and persecution) are matched with tutors and mentors.

► **Homeless Children's Education Fund's** Teen CEO program will provide 47 to 65 high school students with at least eight weeks of work experience at a paid job along with food, clothing, and transportation stipends. Students will also receive individualized mentorship, financial literacy, and life/professional skills classes.

► **Jeremiah's Place** will engage children staying at the emergency care facility in developmentally appropriate STEAM learning opportunities.

► **Jubilee Association's** John Heinz Child Development Center encourages social and emotional development, exposes children to extracurricular activities, and builds foundational skills needed for literacy, mathematics, science and social studies.

► **Light of Life** and its partner organizations will offer workshops and classes for children that include talk therapy, tutoring sessions and activities designed to increase self-confidence; encourage self-expression; creative thinking;

develop life skills; encourage career exploration and engage role models.

► **Pittsburgh Arts & Lectures** will increase the level of literacy and love of reading by encouraging public discourse; donating books to participating schools; and connecting young readers with role models through school visits and library-based programs with well-known authors.

► **Prep Forward** is a co-ed program that prepares student athletes ages 13 - 18 to successfully complete postsecondary education by offering diverse activities such as etiquette, exposure to the arts, financial literacy, and stewardship. Students have opportunities to explore individual interests and participate in wellness programs. Each is required to volunteer in the community.

► **Schools That Can** builds an education-to-employment pathway that closes the opportunity and skills gaps for 800 to 1,000 high school students. Trained facilitators work with students in the classroom to develop critical thinking and other skills.

► **Serenity Living Transitional Home's** Taking Youth Higher program serves 25 youth who have experienced personal and family trauma that has destabilized



## Grants

*continued from page 3*

their lives. Participants attend workshops designed to encourage the completion of high school, increase self-confidence, foster an interest in career exploration, connect participants with role models, and teach life and work-ready skills.

► **South Hills Interfaith Movement** offers a host of youth-focused initiatives including Early Childhood, After School and Youth Mentoring programs as well as Summer Camp, all of which enhance educational attainment, promote family economic mobility, increase career readiness, and strengthen community integration.

► **Steel City Squash** is an academic and athletic program that incorporates education, mentoring, community service, and wellness to help youth reach their fullest potential. Students participate in at least two practices and academic sessions weekly. Staff and volunteers work to ensure that students not only complete their assignments but do so accurately and with understanding.

► **The Children's Home's** funds will support the transition of approximately 25 young adults who are aging out of the foster

care system. Teens receive mental health counseling and learn coping skills, emotional regulation, and how to build healthy relationships.

► **The Pittsburgh Project** hosts an after-school program for 100 K-12 youth that provides transportation from four local schools, homework help, and tutoring. A variety of extracurricular lessons, such as robotics, cooking, dance and fitness classes are offered; and students engage in community service.

► **Women's Center & Shelter's** Children's Advocacy Program ensures that the basic needs including medical, dental and developmental screening services for the 125 children living in their shelter are met. They receive academic tutoring and participate in before and after-school programming and social engagements.

► **Youth Guidance's** Becoming a Man (BAM) program partners with Pittsburgh Public Schools, Clairton, McKeesport, Penn Hills and Sto-Rox School Districts to reach 500 young men. BAM provides field trips, group and individual counseling sessions, and other activities to improve attendance rate, promotion to the next level or graduation, and improve social-emotional well-being. ■

## Mark Your Calendars

2025 Board meetings will be held on the following Tuesdays at 4:30 pm: **January 28, June 17, and September 16**

The Board and Annual Meeting will be held on Tuesday, **November 4, 2025**

## Kudos to...



**Marc Bloomingdale**, who has been named CEO of Big Brothers Big Sisters of Greater Pittsburgh. Marc possesses more than three decades of experience in non-profit leadership, including serving as CEO of the Lutheran Services Society of Western Pennsylvania and Chief Operating Officer of the Food Bank of Eastern Oklahoma.



Congrats to **Kathi Elliott**, CEO of Gwen's Girls, who was awarded the Dr. Mildred Joyner Social Justice Award by the National Association of Social Workers.



Congrats to **Brandice E. Miller**, who was promoted from Director of Finance and Administration to Executive Director of Tickets for Kids.



Best wishes to **Joni Schwager** on her retirement at the end of the year after serving for 26 years as Executive Director of Staunton Farm Foundation that advocates to have behavioral health understood, supported, and accepted.



Well-done to **Megs Yunn**, Founder and Executive Director of Beverly's Birthdays. After 12 years, Beverly's Birthdays has rebranded to become Beverly's PGH to represent the broader array of services the organization provides. Through the Three B's — Birthdays, Babies, and Basic Needs — Beverly's PGH continues to create meaningful celebrations and provide essential resources to tens of thousands of families in the region. ■