



## CONNECTIONS

NEWS FROM THE FOUNDATION OF THE PENNSYLVANIA MEDICAL SOCIETY -

Education. Wellness. Excellence. Always.

# Investing in Addiction Support is Crucial to Health Care



The Foundation of the Pennsylvania Medical Society thrives on generosity—and your support fuels its mission to uplift the medical profession. Paul Dende, DO, FACP Chief Medical Officer at WellSpan - Gettysburg Hospital, understands firsthand how your involvement can make a real difference.

Dr. Dende's recovery story began nearly forty years ago when he made a desperate call to a colleague for help. He knew others knew about his addiction and he felt like running away, but he didn't have anywhere to go and certainly not enough money to get there. "I went to meet him, and I told him my story," Dende reflects. "And he said, 'I know how you feel.' And I instantly believed it, and I knew it was going to be okay."

In the years since, Dende has made his mark as current vice chair for The Foundation of the Pennsylvania Medical Society, former 3<sup>rd</sup> district trustee with the Pennsylvania Medical Society (PAMED) board, and worked his way up to his current position as Chief Medical Officer with WellSpan Gettysburg Hospital. His experience fuels his work and his conviction that hospitals benefit from supporting physician health programs because it's an investment in quality medical staff, patient safety, and institutional reputation. Even now, later in his professional career, he knows that the intervention and resources provided by the Pennsylvania Physicians' Health Program (PaPHP) have benefited individuals within his own hospital.

The recovery that was kickstarted by his access to a physicians' health program opened doors to leadership positions he never expected. It helped him grow into his full potential, reigniting his sense of empathy and helping him fully understand the importance of being present

for patients. It has also shifted his priorities as a doctor, strengthening him to be a physician who prioritizes patient safety and quality care. His renewed attunement to the human experience underscores the vital role hospitals play in supporting physicians' health programs; programs that not only shape better physicians but ultimately lead to better care.

Dr. Dende urges professionals to remember that addiction can happen to anyone. "Since I'm not unique, I know that there are others still suffering like I was, and we have to have these programs to be around in the future for those people, because we can't leave it to insurance companies. We have to take care of each other. We have to take care of ourselves."

Dr. Dende wants to ensure the program is there for others in the future and is passionate about passing on the support that has been crucial to his success. "In the world of medicine, I totally get it; it's easy to reach for a drink or a drug at the end of the day, and then at the beginning of the day, and then throughout the day, and that's how it happens. Programs like the PaPHP need to be there to help people before they hit rock bottom. They need to be there to intervene long, long before that."

When considering that some hospital leaders may be hesitant to direct donations toward physicians' health programs, Dr. Dende advises leaders to approach addiction support with empathy, proactive intervention, and a belief in recovery's possibility. Taking active steps to support your colleagues fosters a hospital environment that prioritizes dignity and invests in human potential.

Please consider donating to The Foundation of the Pennsylvania Medical Society today at foundationpamedsoc.org/donate

to ensure that we can provide the systemic support our physicians need to reach their full potential.



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#### **CONNECTIONS**

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### FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR -

## **Celebrating 70 Years of Excellence and Impact**



This year, The Foundation of the Pennsylvania Medical Society proudly marks its 70th anniversary, a milestone that reflects decades of dedication, innovation, and unwavering commitment to supporting Pennsylvania's physicians, medical students, and other members of the health care team.

Since 1955, The Foundation has been a beacon of support providing scholarships, loans, peer assistance monitoring, wellness resources, and clinical assessment services that empower medical professionals at every stage of their careers. Our work has shaped generations of physicians, strengthened health care in our communities, and reinforced the well-being of those who dedicate their lives to healing others.

## **Recent Milestones and Expansions**

Building on the success of our Physicians' Health Program, we expanded our peer assistance monitoring to include additional members of the health care team, including nursing professionals, pharmacists, and registered dietitians. Peer assistance monitoring fosters accountability, resilience, and recovery, offering confidential guidance to health care professionals as they navigate substance use disorders, mental health challenges, or other personal difficulties.

Our approach is rooted in compassion, acknowledging that health care professionals, like anyone else, may encounter challenges and need structured support to regain stability. We proactively address concerns to reduce risks to patient safety, minimize professional isolation, and foster a culture that encourages health care professionals to seek help without fear of stigma.

In 2024, our investment in medical education reached an all-time high, with the awarding of 28 scholarships totaling \$149,300. Since our inception, The Foundation has awarded loans and scholarships totaling \$25,590,162 to 4,893 students, ensuring that future physicians receive the financial support they need to thrive.

Recognizing emerging clinical competency needs, our LifeGuard® program expanded to include the American Board of Emergency Medicine (ABEM) Re-Eligibility PREP Program. To date, all participants who have completed the program have successfully passed their qualifying exams, underscoring the effectiveness of this initiative.

## Looking Ahead

None of this would be possible without our supporters. Whether you have contributed through donations, volunteer efforts, board leadership, or staff service, you are a vital part of our mission. Together, we have built a legacy of excellence that will continue for years to come.

As we celebrate this milestone, we also look ahead—to new opportunities, expanded programs, and a future where our impact reaches even further. Your continued support ensures that we can evolve alongside the ever-changing landscape of medicine and remain a trusted resource for Pennsylvania's physicians and the broader health care community.

Thank you for being part of our journey. Here's to 70 years of impact—and to the next chapter of excellence!

With heartfelt gratitude and warmest regards,

Heathwa. Wison

Heather Wilson, MSW, CFRE, CAE **Executive Director** 

#### **OUR MISSION**

The Foundation of the Pennsylvania Medical Society provides programs and services for individual physicians and others that improve the well-being of Pennsylvanians and sustain the future of medicine.

# Scholarship Recipient Paves the Way for Personalized Care



With the help of a scholarship from The Foundation of the Pennsylvania Medical Society, Britney Fitzgerald is breaking barriers and paving the way for a brighter future—not just for herself, but for the patients and communities she hopes to serve. **YOUR** support paves the way for a brighter future for Pennsylvania's aspiring physicians and the communities in which they care.

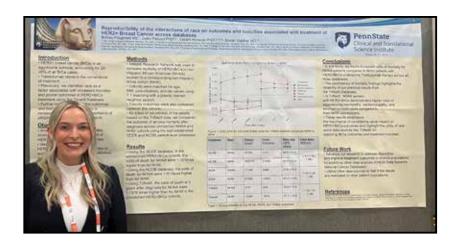
Britney's story is one of resilience, determination, and hope—a testament to the life-changing power of education and the kindness of donors like you. At 28 years old, Britney is thriving as a medical student at Penn State College of Medicine, pursuing her passion for gastroenterology while balancing life with her two dogs and her supportive partner.

Growing up in Pittsburgh, she was the first in her family to graduate high school, a milestone that inspired her to aim higher. Raised by her stepdad, whose compassion and care deeply influenced her values, Britney learned early on the importance of putting others first. Despite

financial hardships and the emotional toll of family struggles, including loved ones battling substance use disorders, Britney persevered—working up to 20 hours a week to support herself while excelling in her studies.

Her journey has not been easy. Today, as a medical student living with Crohn's disease, she brings a unique perspective to patient care. "Having Crohn's has given me the ability to truly empathize with patients," Britney says. "It allows me to personalize their care in a way that comes from shared experiences."

Because of **YOUR** generosity, this scholarship has been a lifeline for Britney. "Receiving this scholarship was such an honor," she says. "It has eased the financial burden of medical school and allowed me to focus on being present and pursuing my education. I'm eternally grateful for the generosity of the donors who made this possible."



When you contribute to The Foundation of the Pennsylvania Medical Society, you're not just providing financial support, you're investing in the future of health care. Students like Britney, who embody compassion, perseverance, and excellence, are the heart of our medical community. Please consider donating to our program today so we can continue to assist the next generation of medical excellence.



www.foundationpamedsoc.org/donate

## FALL AWARDING SCHOLARSHIPS ACCEPTED NOW THROUGH SEPTEMBER 30TH

Applications are now being accepted until September 30th for the Foundation's 13 scholarships. Please share with your family, friends and patients!

- Allegheny County Medical Society Medical Student Scholarship (ACMS)
- Alliance Medical Education Scholarship (AMES)
- **Blair County Medical Society Scholarship (BCMS)**
- Bucks CMS Donald E. Parlee, MD, Memorial Scholarship
- Dr. Satish & Rupal Shah Family Scholarship
- Saryu and Jitu Desai Foundation Scholarship
- **Solution** Foundation Education Award Scholarship
- Lehigh County Medical Auxiliary's Scholarship and Educational Fund (LeCoMASE)
- Lina & Jitendra Shah Scholarship
- Lycoming County Medical Society Scholarship (LCMS)
- Montgomery County Medical Society—William W. Lander, MD, Medical Student Scholarship
- Myrtle Siegfried, MD, and Michael Vigilante, MD, Scholarship
- Scott A. Gunder, MD, DCMS Presidential Scholarship
- Snyder, Union & Northumberland Counties Medical Student Scholarship (SUN)
- Trudell Medical Excellence Scholarship
- Truex Family Scholarship



Pennsylvania residents attending medical school may access the online application at www.foundationpamedsoc.org/scholarships

# The Foundation Eases the Financial Stress of Medical Education

Pennsylvania medical students are important to the future well-being of all Pennsylvanians. The Foundation of the Pennsylvania Medical Society is here to ease the financial stress of becoming a physician with a low interest rate and zero-dollar origination fee student loan.

Pennsylvania residents attending an accredited Pennsylvania medical school may receive loan awards up to \$15k for the 2025-2026 academic year. Compared to federal direct student loans, The Foundation student loan is a lower cost choice.

	Foundation Student Loan	Federal Direct Unsubsidized Loan	Federal Direct GradPlus Loan
What is the interest rate during medical school?	6.0%	7.94%	8.94%
When does interest begin to accrue?	January 1, 2025	At time of disbursement	At time of disbursement
Are there any other loan fees charged?	No	1.057% is deducted at time of disbursement	4.228% is deducted at time of disbursement
What is the interest rate during internship / residency / fellowship training deferment?	6.0% or less	7.94%	8.94%
What is the interest rate during repayment / post training deferment?	6.5% or less	7.94	8.94%

The Foundation loan awards are limited; students are encouraged to check with financial aid staff at their school to see if they are still accepting Foundation loan applications. More information and an application packet can be found at <a href="https://www.foundationpamedsoc.org/loans">www.foundationpamedsoc.org/loans</a>.

The Foundation loans are made possible by generous contributions from the Pennsylvania Medical Society, county medical societies and alliances, physicians, and other friends of medicine. For more information, contact us at: (717) 558-7809 or <a href="mailto:studentservices-foundation@pamedsoc.org">studentservices-foundation@pamedsoc.org</a>.





## **Welcome New Team Members!**

The Foundation is delighted to welcome two new staff members!



**Norma Willard,** Administrative Assistant, PAMP, joins us from the membership side of PAMED! Norma has worked alongside medical professionals since she was 18. She started at a Southwest Florida health center, which she loved because it was a teaching clinic where Army Reserves would intern and she was able to go into the lab to see how different tests were performed. She worked the OB/GYN clerical desk and booked the O.R. for surgeries among other duties. She also worked with a private practice OB/GYN and had similar duties there.

"I love working with The Foundation. With membership, I answered the calls, and now I get to hear the work that is done on the back end. The work that The Foundation does goes beyond what I had imagined. Everyone has been so welcoming and has made my transition within The Foundation amazing."



**Julie Heaney**, Coordinator, Outreach, Education & Communications, holds dual bachelor's degrees in Publishing & Editing and Creative Writing from Susquehanna University. With a background in recovery-focused communications, Julie is passionate about supporting those who dedicate their lives to helping others.

"I'm continually inspired by The Foundation's mission to support both health care professionals and students, ultimately strengthening care for the broader community. While I may not work directly with those we serve, I'm proud to contribute behind the scenes and help amplify the impact of those carrying out the mission firsthand."





Congratulations to **Michele Davis**, MS, LPC, CAADC on her new position as *Intake Coordinator*, *PAMP*!



Congratulations to **Katie Gruber**, MSW, CADC, on her promotion to *Billing*, *Data & Training Manager*, *PAMP*!



Congratulations to **Debra Eshelman** on her graduation from Penn State Harrisburg with a B.S. in Psychology, and her promotion to *Case Manager*, *NHP*! She will be continuing her studies in Penn State Harrisburg's Master of Arts in Clinical Psychology program in the fall.



Congratulations to **Kelly Mlynek** for her promotion to *Office Manager*, *PAMP* in April of 2025!

## Lifeguard<sup>®</sup> Program



## Understanding the LifeGuard® Program: My Experience as a Physician Reviewer



Everett Hills, MD, MS, FAAPMR

A few weeks ago, I received a message from Program Director Tracey Ziegler with an **urgent request** regarding a Fitness for Duty assessment for a surgeon at a rural hospital. This individual was not only the sole surgeon at the hospital, but the hospital staff also had to divert all surgery patients to other areas until this surgeon could be assessed—both factors that played into the desperate need for a timely assessment.

As a result of the LifeGuard® team's dedication to their mission, they were able to help the rural hospital in their moment of greatest need. The team **jumped at the opportunity to accommodate** their schedules for assessment, ignoring any inconvenience to ensure that this hospital, and the surgeon, were in good hands.

Around the same time, while clearing out my files, I took a moment to reflect on the many physicians who have participated in the program. What truly distinguishes the LifeGuard® Program is **its understanding that trust is established by making each applicant feel confident they will receive a fair and thorough evaluation**. Through my role as a physician interviewer with LifeGuard®, I have been fortunate to meet and interview physician applicants from various specialties, age groups, practice settings, and regions across the United States. Each applicant comes to LifeGuard® under circumstances that require careful examination of their backgrounds to better understand their situations.

During my physician interviews, I start by allowing applicants to share their backgrounds and journeys into medicine. This open conversation naturally leads to a discussion about the specific circumstances and issues that prompted their referral to the LifeGuard® Program.

At the beginning of my involvement with LifeGuard®, I often questioned the relevance of these physician interviews. However, over time, it became evident that a key strength of the LifeGuard® Program is its commitment to treating each applicant as a unique physician with individual human qualities. Above all, the program is dedicated to ensuring clinical competency among all physician applicants. My role in this process aligns with that objective, and I strive to make each applicant feel supported and understood during what can be a stressful time.

**Everett Hills, MD, MS, FAAPMR**, is a Pennsylvania-licensed, actively practicing physician who is board-certified in physical medicine & rehabilitation. Dr. Hills is a Fellow of the American Academy of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation. He is a LifeGuard®-selected and vetted physician.

## **Events and Outreach**



## What We've Been Up To

Our team has been busy representing The Foundation of the Pennsylvania Medical Society across the state and beyond! From attending national conferences to connecting other leaders at local fundraisers, we've been on the move. Here's a look at some of the recent ways our staff have been engaging, educating, and expanding awareness of our mission.

## Dauphin County Medical Society Alliance Fashion Show



Executive Director of The Foundation Heather A. Wilson and Arlene Oyler, former Director of the Pennsylvania Medical Society Alliance, pictured at the Dauphin County Medical Society Alliance's Spring into Fashion Luncheon and Fashion Show! The event was held at the West Shore Country Club to help raise funds to bring science education programs to

youth and support community health projects in the Central Pennsylvania area.

## 2025 Federation of State Physician Health Programs Conference



The Federation of State Physician Health Programs (FSPHP) conference in Seattle was a remarkable opportunity for our team to engage in meaningful discussions and robust sessions focused on physician health and well-being.

The collaboration among various state physician health programs and treatment centers highlighted just how important community support is in our field.

Pictured (left to right) are **Dr. Edwin Kim,** *Medical Director*, **Debra Eshelman**, *Case Manager*, **Katie Gruber**, *Billing*, *Data*, and *Training Manager*, **Julie Droddy**, *Program Manager at the Department of State Bureau of Professional and Occupational Affairs*, and **Heather Wilson**, *Executive Director*, enjoying the 2025 conference.

## 2025 Federation of State Physician Health Programs Conference



In April, LifeGuard® Director **Tracey Ziegler** traveled to Seattle, WA for the 2025 Federation of State Medical Board (FSMB) conference! The FSMB provided a fantastic opportunity to connect with leaders in medical regulation, allowing for important discussions on policy innovation and physician accountability. The conference was also an excellent

opportunity for networking, collaboration, and exploring emerging trends that are shaping the future of medical licensure and discipline.

## National Organization of Alternative Programs Conference



Peer Assistance Monitoring Intake Coordinator, Melissa Devonshire had the opportunity to attend the National Organization of Alternative Programs (NOAP) 2025 Conference in Las Vegas, Nevada. In reflection of the experience, Melissa shared, "The NOAP conference was extremely

educational, not only because of the information provided but because of the interaction with other state programs. It was intriguing to hear the other opinions and thoughts of programs, and how we are similar and yet so different on certain policies. The part I found most profound was the personal stories of not only the speakers, but also those in the audience. I have a new respect for what we all do and the specific population we serve."

## PA Osteopathic Association Conference (POMA)



While exhibiting at the POMA Conference in May, Physicians' Health Program (PHP) Intake Coordinator **Michele Davis** had the pleasure of sharing about our PHP services with others. "It was wonderful to hear from attendees about the help they or a colleague received from participating through the PHP,"

Michele shared. "I was overwhelmed by their expression of gratitude for the professionalism, kindness, knowledge, and support from the PHP staff."







## In Memoriam



#### In Memoriam of Donald E. Parlee, MD

The Foundation was sad to learn of the passing of Donald E. Parlee, MD at the age of 89 on March 21, 2024. Dr. Parlee earned his medical degree from Temple University School of Medicine and was a board-certified radiologist for 43 years at Doylestown Hospital. He helped to grow the hospital's radiology department from one to 20 radiologists, serving as its chief for 25 years, and established its School of Radiologic Technology where he was fondly known for his gentle teaching style.

He served as the vice chair of The Foundation of the Pennsylvania Medical Society and as president of the Bucks County Medical Society. In his memory, the Bucks County Medical Society renamed their scholarship with The Foundation to the *Bucks CMS Donald E. Parlee*, *MD*, *Memorial Scholarship*. Dr. Parlee's legacy will endure through his renowned generous philanthropy to charities for health care, education, and nature, as well as his esteemed leadership.



### In Memoriam of Gwendolyn Agnis Poles-Corker, DO

Gwendolyn Agnis Poles-Corker, DO, of Harrisburg, Pennsylvania passed away April 8, 2025 at the age of 71, leaving behind a great legacy of dedication and service. Dr. Poles' strength never wavered through years of personal treatments and hospitalizations due to sickle cell disease, and she lived her life with excellence, grace and grit.

Her leadership and vision extended well beyond the exam room with deep devotion to community health education, especially with minority, underserved, and faith-based communities. She was a proud member of the Pennsylvania Osteopathic Association, Christian Community Health Fellowship, and the Christian Medical and Dental Society. Her commitment to integrating faith and medicine made her a powerful voice in both healthcare and ministry. Dr. Poles found her spiritual home at Zion Assembly Church, where her faith fueled her mission of service, healing and advocacy.

## **Leaving Your Legacy**

#### Give Through Your Will

The Foundation of the Pennsylvania Medical Society offers unique estate planning opportunities to memorialize values and beliefs in the medical field. A gift through your will—called a bequest—is the most traditional way to continue your support of your charitable interests.

There are several ways that you can define the amount of your charitable gift to The Foundation:

An **Unrestricted Bequest** is a gift for general purposes. This can be the most useful kind of gift because it allows us to put your gift to the best possible use at the time we receive it.

A **Restricted Bequest** is a gift for a specific use, such as a special project or program that is important to you. It is best for you to consult with us before placing restrictions on your bequest to be sure we can carry out your wishes.

An **Endowed Bequest** is a gift where our organization invests your donation along with the rest of our endowment. We distribute these funds in accordance with our endowment spending policy. This approach assures that your gift will continue to benefit us long after you're gone. An endowed bequest can be restricted or unrestricted.

An **Honorary Bequest** is a gift made in honor of someone else. Any form of bequest can also be an honorary bequest. We would be pleased to recognize the people you wish to honor with your gift.

Donors can notify The Foundation of intent to leave a legacy gift so that The Foundation can direct funds to the programs or services of donor choice. We would be happy to provide you or your advisors with more information about including The Foundation in your plans.



To learn more about how you can make an enduring gift, please contact Manager of Philanthropy and Hospital Relations Lori Storm at (717) 558-7813

Our legal name: The Foundation of the Pennsylvania Medical Society
Our federal Tax ID: 37-1732501



You are busy, you want to show your support for The Foundation... let us help you make it a little bit easier! Consider joining **The Foundation 2025 Sustainer's Circle**—a special group of donors who provide a sustaining stream of support for Foundation programs through their regularly scheduled and easy monthly contributions.

## Thank you to our current Foundation Sustainer's Circle Members

Tiffany Booher, MA, LPC, CAADC, CIP, CCSM Charles N. Burns Jr., MD, FASAM, MRO Susan Caputo Kenneth M. Certa, MD

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Ashley E. Wilkerson, MD

Heather A. Wilson, MSW, CFRE, CAE

#### **Education**

We offer scholarships and low-interest rate loans to our future physicians. Medical students are graduating with upwards of \$250,000 in debt, and, with your help, The Foundation has invested nearly \$20 million in the education of physicians.

#### Wellness

Eververy day at least 350 physicians suffering from substance use disorders, mental health and behavioral concerns are supported by the Physicians' Health Program. Your gifts help the PHP restore careers and confidence by helping more than 4,600 eligible health care professionals seek and receive the recovery care that enables them to safely return to work and lead a healthier life.

### Excellence

LifeGuard respectfully provides a path for physicians and other health care providers a pathway and a trusted resource to self-assess when there are clinical or cognitive concerns.

#### **Always**

Your gift to the Foundation means we will always have the needed financial resources to change and improve the lives and careers of Pennsylvania physicians.

Please contact **Lori Storm**, Manager, Philanthropy & Hospital Relations at Istorm@pamedsoc.org or (717) 558-7813 for further discussion on how your



charitable gift can benefit our shared community health.

Thank you!

## **Yes!** I would like to support and join the Foundation Sustainer's Circle.

Please use the enclosed envelope and send the form below. Thank you!



Name as it appears on card	Name Address		
	City		
Expiration Date	State Zip		
Please indicate the level of your monthly contribution:	Email		
\$10 \$25 \$50 \$100 Other	Phone		
I hereby authorize The Foundation of the Pennsylvania Medical Society (the Foundation) to initiate debit entries to my Credit Card. Each such debit shall be made on the (day of the month, i.e., 1st or 15th) of each month in the amount of \$ per month. Each such debit shall continue on a monthly basis indefinitely or until the following stop date://			



## DONATE&HONOR

## Lynn Lucas-Fehm, MD, JD

Pennsylvania Medical Society's 175th President



Contributions benefit The Foundation of the Pennsylvania Medical Society supporting medical education, physician health, and excellence in practice.

The Foundation invites you to recognize and celebrate **Lynn Lucas-Fehm**, **MD**, **JD** as she completes her term of office as PAMED's president.

This House of Delegates, stop by The Foundation's exhibit booth to donate in Dr. Lucas-Fehm's honor. Your contribution will earn you 1 raffle ticket towards one of our generously donated prizes. (Every \$100 donation qualifies you for 2 additional raffle tickets)

## Looking for more ways to win?

Scan the QR code to make an online donation and receive an additional 2 raffle tickets to enter for your chance to win. (Claim your raffle tickets at The Foundation's booth.)



OPEN CAMERA
SCAN CODE
GIVE NOW!

\* Virtual Attendees—Scan the QR code or go to www.foundationpamedsoc.org/donatefordrlucas-fehm to make a donation and you'll be entered to win an Amazon gift card.



Help sustain the Heart of the Pennsylvania Medical Society



www.foundationpamedsoc.org/donatefordrlucas-fehm

The mission of the Foundation of the Pennsylvania Medical Society is to provide programs and services for individual physicians and others that improve the well-being of Pennsylvanians and sustain the future of medicine.

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