



We're in this together.

ANNUAL REPORT 2021

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We thank Jeffrey Stephens and Sovanna Pouv for their years of service.

Letter from the Board Chair



Since its inception in 2006, the Greater Lowell Health Alliance has had a profound impact on the overall health and wellness of the people living and working in our communities—and that impact has never been felt more deeply than during the COVID-19 pandemic.

At a time when racial inequities, misinformation, and societal division threaten the very foundation of our public health system, the Alliance has embraced a leadership role as a collaborator and facilitator for decisive action and positive change.

When the COVID-19 vaccines became available, the GLHA immediately recognized the need to bring together community partners—those in healthcare, social and human services, civic and business organizations, and other areas—to ensure the equitable distribution of vaccines to those populations where access to information and vaccinations may be impacted by racial, language, and logistical barriers.

Establishing a model of true community collaboration and coordination, this strategic alliance has made significant progress in breaking down those barriers and increasing vaccine adoption throughout our communities. At the same time, the GLHA has expanded the distribution of annual grants, delivering critical funding to those organizations on the front line of improving access to services and resources.

This success is possible only through the support and commitment of our wonderful community partners, dedicated GLHA Board of Directors, outstanding GLHA task forces, and a fantastic GLHA team, led by the tireless Executive Director Kerrie D'Entremont. I thank every one of you for your sacrifice, leadership, and energy.

In our mission to break down barriers and achieve health equity, we are certainly in this together.

Sincerely,

Sme

Susan West Levine, Board Chair

GLHA: A Catalyst for Action During the Pandemic

The continuing COVID-19 pandemic has affected not only how we operate, but also where we are focusing our resources. This report reflects on just some of the initiatives we have undertaken and the progress we have made in identifying and addressing unmet healthcare needs created by the pandemic. Throughout this pandemic, we will continue to work tirelessly to fulfill our mission to serve as a catalyst for action and solutions to improve the health of the communities we serve.



Letter from the Executive Director



We are pleased to share with you Greater Lowell Health Alliance 2021 annual report: "We're in This Together." At no time in our history has it been more clear what it means to be "in this together." Forging through the second year of a global pandemic, we are painfully aware of how inequities in our society threaten the health of our communities—and how critical it is for us to collaborate to overcome them.

As a coalition with a mission to affect positive change, the GLHA immediately saw the need in this pandemic to engage our community partners and create a platform to identify critical needs and work together to address them. From the distribution of personal protection equipment (PPE) to the awarding of pandemic grants to the equitable access to and distribution of the COVID-19 vaccines, the GLHA has embraced our leadership role in promoting true community collaboration and changing lives.

Even while addressing the unrelenting challenges of the pandemic, the GLHA has remained focused on our long-term goals and our mission to improve the overall health of our region. We have expanded both our grant distribution program and our grant-funded initiatives in collaboration with other organizations. Our 2020 Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP) is serving as a roadmap for significant change for our GLHA task forces and community partners, as we prepare for a new needs assessment and CHIP in 2022 and 2023.

Over the past year, we welcomed two outstanding staff to the GLHA—Community Data Manager Hannah Tello and Program Coordinator Devon Goldberg—who, along with Community Engagement Coordinator Amanda Clermont, are incredibly adept at keeping the GLHA ship on course. I am deeply grateful for the wisdom, leadership, and integrity of Lowell Community Health Center CEO Susan West Levine, who so graciously and skillfully assumed the role of Chair of the Board of Directors in the midst of a pandemic.

Supported by our dedicated board, steering committee, task force leaders and members, and hundreds of community partners, we are all certainly "in this together." And together, we will emerge stronger and healthier for the communities we serve.

Thank you all for your continued support and dedication. In good health,

Kerrie D'Entremont, Executive Director

STEERING COMMITTEE

TAMI MARSHALL, Chair Thom Anne Sullivan Center

MIRANDA ALLAN Community Teamwork Inc.

MERCY ANAMPIU Lowell Community Health Center

HEATHER BEIDRZYCKI South Bay Community Services

MICHAEL HALL Clean Slate

KARRI GREENHALGE YMCA of Greater Lowell

AINAT KOREN University of Massachusetts Lowell

NANDI MUNSON Elder Services of the Merrimack Valley

AMY PESSIA Merrimack Valley Food Bank

MARIA RUGGIERO

Tewksbury Police Department AMANDA SHAW

Private Practice

LISA TAYLOR-MONTMINY Lowell General Hospital

MARY SHANNON THOMAS City of Lowell

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KERRIE D'ENTREMONT – Executive Director

AMANDA CLERMONT – Community Engagement Coordinator

HANNAH TELLO, PhD – Community Data Manager DEVON GOLDBERG – Program Coordinator

INTERNS

Doctoral - TAYLOR SHELDON

Graduate - GIANNA SANDELLI

Undergraduate – NYATUGA KUNGU, ERICA SAO, SOKOMAVADEY KANG

We thank the following for their years of service: MARILYN GRAHM, MICHAEL COLLINS, DANIEL HOWELL, IVY HO

Our mission is to sustain a strategic alliance of community organizations that improves the overall health and wellness of those living in the Greater Lowell region.

Funders

Community partners (health, civic, education, business, nonprofit)

GLHA

Task forces (with working groups and subcommittees)

Public/residents

Grants/Funding
Education/Training
Greater Lowell Community Health
Needs Assessment

Working Together to

Greater Lowell Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP)

Networking/ Collaboration Improved individual outcomes and overall population health

Improve the Health of Our Communities

Access to services and resources

Health equity for all

Greater Lowell Health Alliance: Who We Are

The Greater Lowell Health Alliance (GLHA) of the Community Health Network Area 10 brings together healthcare providers, business leaders, educators, and civic and community leaders with a common goal to improve the overall health of our communities.

The GLHA serves as a catalyst in identifying and addressing unmet healthcare needs, raising awareness, and providing resources for community partners to take actions that will lead to significant change for all.

Founded in 2006, the Alliance serves as an advocate for non-profits and community organizations, securing funding and sharing resources with the outstanding front-line agencies addressing the region's health priorities. Working collaboratively, the GLHA helps break down barriers that threaten our most vulnerable populations, linking them to available services and resources to address their needs.



GLHA staff: Executive Director Kerrie D'Entremont, Community Engagement Coordinator Amanda Clermont, Community Data Manager Hannah Tello, and Program Coordinator Devon Goldberg.



Promoting Health Equity and Access: Collaborative Pandemic Response

As the COVID-19 pandemic continued into its second year, the Greater Lowell Health Alliance enhanced our leadership role in coordinating community resources and access for those highest at risk, working tirelessly to fulfill our mission to serve as a catalyst for action and solutions to improve the health of the communities we serve.

Distribution of PPE

Funded by a generous 2020 grant from the Greater Lowell Community Foundation, the GLHA purchased \$25,000 in personal protection equipment (PPE)—including disposable and N-95 masks, gowns, shields, thermometers, and hand sanitizer—and distributed the supplies to more than 40 local community nonprofit organizations, schools, local businesses, and churches. In addition, through a donation from Provisions Ministries, the GLHA staff distributed 15,000 cloth masks to local community organizations, specifically to schools throughout Greater Lowell, as children were heading back to in-person learning.

Collaborative Equitable Vaccine Distribution Efforts

In December 2020, Susan West Levine—CEO of Lowell Community Health Center and Chair of the GLHA Board of Directors—approached the GLHA about partnering in an Equitable Vaccine Distribution & Educational Community Effort. This was a perfect fit for the GLHA: using our role as a coalition to coordinate community organizations and resources to work toward reducing the disproportionate effects of the virus for people of color, decreasing health disparities, and achieving population immunity through a vaccine.

The GLHA and Lowell Community Health Center began co-hosting weekly meetings with community leaders from more than 50 different organizations, providing updates on vaccine distribution, highlighting equity data, and engaging our community partners in the development of culturally and lingually appropriate COVID-19 education materials for the populations they serve.

GLHA Community Data Manager Hannah Tello and Project Coordinator Devon Goldberg also developed The Partnership for Equitable COVID-19 Vaccine Rollout Strategy Guide to help organizations guide resource allocation to target populations and neighborhoods. Supported by a \$15,000 grant from the Greater Lowell Community Foundation COVID-19 Emergency Response Fund, we developed a COVID-19 vaccine page on our website as a repository for comprehensive educational materials we developed in multiple languages, as well as resources from local and national health sources, to help community members gain confidence in the vaccine.





Left: Updating the number of people vaccinated at the end of a Community Partner Vaccination Day, Right: Executive Director Kerrie D'Entremont and Thomas Slicklen, Provision Ministry, with donated PPE to be distributed to the Greater Lowell community.









Clockwise from top: The GLHA staff—Program Coordinator Devon Goldberg. Executive Director Kerrie D'Entremont, Community Data Manager Hannah Tello, and Community Engagement Coordinator Amanda Clermont—was honored by Lowell General Hospital/Circle
Health for leadership in running two community COVID-19 vaccination days. The MVP site on Pawtucket Boulevard during a Community Partner Vaccination Day. Program Coordinator Devon Goldberg doing outreach. Lowell Community Health Center staff at the City
of Lowell Block Party in July 2021.

Community Partner Day - COVID-19 Vaccine Clinic

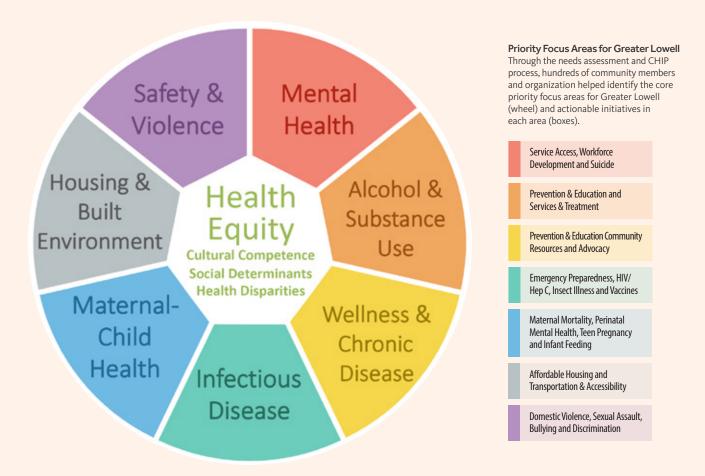
In the spring, the GLHA was offered up to 1,000 vaccines to support a community partner-driven vaccine clinic. We coordinated with more than 25 community partners to sign up community members for two clinic dates at the Lowell General Hospital Mass Vaccination Program site in Lowell. To eliminate access barriers, we offered transportation (through Community Teamwork, Inc.) and increased the number of translators and medical interpreters at the site for the day. We held two clinics, administering 749 doses on April 4 and 944 doses on May 5. A remarkable 91 percent of those vaccinated in April returned for their second dose, in addition to 245 people receiving their first doses. These clinics were a true show of community collaboration!

Neighborhood Block Party: A Successful Community Collaboration

On Saturday, July 24, 2021, the City of Lowell hosted a Community Block Party that generated national recognition—with viral Twitter threads and coverage in the *New York Times*, *Vogue*, and the *Washington Post*—for its innovative approach to encouraging vaccinations. Featuring free food, music, raffles, and entertainment, the block party vaccinated nearly 10 times more people at a single community clinic than many previous mobile clinics. In an essay published by *Vogue* magazine, Community Data Manager Hannah Tello wrote:

"The city's vaccine block party was successful because it was a family event that functioned as free child care; because nearly every organization that sponsored a table also brought along multilingual staff who were happy to interpret for people who needed help; because people felt comforted seeing their co-workers, neighbors and friends sitting in the vaccine tent alongside them; because there were no complicated booking systems to navigate to secure a vaccine appointment; and because interpreters and advocates were available to help with registration so people felt reassured that it was okay that they did not have health insurance or an ID card."

The GLHA was proud to be part of this successful event, a shining example of what can happen through true community collaboration.



GLHA Task Forces and the Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP)

Our Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP) serves as a road map for the GLHA and our priorities, steering us in the direction we need to take to improve health outcomes within the communities of the Greater Lowell region. The CHIP's mission is to turn data into action to address our community's top health needs.

The GLHA's six health-focused task forces—Health Equity, Wellness & Chronic Disease, Maternal Child Health, Behavioral Health, Housing and the Built Environment, and Substance Use and Prevention—have adopted the CHIP as the driving force behind their efforts, creating working groups to set goals and develop action plans addressing specific areas of focus identified in the CHIP process.

CHIP in Action

The results of the 2019 Community Health Needs Assessment informed the development of the 2020 CHIP, as we engaged hundreds of individuals and organizations in listening and planning sessions to provide community feedback and create action plans surrounding the priority areas. Those plans have turned into action through two key routes: GLHA task forces and GLHA grant funding (see pages 10-11).

A new **Community Health Needs Assessment** will take place in 2022, giving us new information on which to develop the 2023 CHIP, building off the ongoing work and success of previous plans.

The CHIP's mission is to turn data into action to address our community's top health priorities.









Clockwise from top left: Elder Services of the Merrimack Valley staff at the Greater Lowell PRIDE flag raising. GLHA outreach at National Night Out in Tewksbury. GLHA Intern Erica Sao, Community Data Manager Hannah Tello and Molyka Tieng of the Lowell Police Department at the PRIDE flag raising. Grant-funded vests at the City of Lowell Block Party in July.

GLHA Task Forces

The work of each of the GLHA's task forces, individually and collectively, is creating long-term improvements in specific health areas and the overall health of our community, with a focus on encouraging collaboration among member organizations. These task forces are made up entirely of community volunteers who take time from their full-time commitments to focus on the health of others. These pages include just a glimpse of the profound impact these task forces and their leaders are making in our region.

Pandemic Pivot

Early in the pandemic, we recognized there was still a great need for people to connect, even as in-person meetings were halted. Our six task forces quickly pivoted to a virtual platform and continued to meet monthly, welcoming some new members who had previously been unable to attend in-person meetings. These groups were crucial in providing a platform for communicating agency changes, updating programming, and coordinating COVID safety and personal protection equipment (PPE) efforts.

Network Luncheons/Lunch & Learn Events

We shifted our Network Luncheons/Lunch & Learn events to a virtual platform and developed a series of educational workshop addressing topics identified from CHIP goals and objectives, including **Compassion Fatigue** – Lianna Chong (Williams College); **Suicide Prevention/Self Care** – The NAN Project; and a three-part webinar series:

"Enough Abuse: Protecting Our Youth from Sexual Abuse, Exploitation and Trafficking" in partnership with The Center for Hope and Healing and MassKids.

Improved Connections

We held a series of trainings, in coordination with **Aunt Bertha**, a social care network that connects people and programs, making it easier for people to find social services in their communities, for nonprofits to coordinate their efforts, and for customers to integrate social care into the work they already do. The GLHA has worked with Lowell General Hospital to implement this service—rebranded as **"WellConnected.Net"**—and train our community partners on how to use it and gather data to benefit the public they serve.

GLHA Events

Greater Lowell PRIDE 2021

For the past five years, GLHA has been the lead organization planning the Greater Lowell PRIDE flag raising, festival, and parade. While many PRIDE events were canceled due to COVID restrictions, we held a successful flag-raising event at City Hall on June 1st, welcoming an appreciative crowd of vendors and spectators.

Merrimack Valley Substance Use Disorder Symposium

Shifting this annual event to a virtual platform, we had a **successful, all-day virtual event** on December 7, 2020, with over 250 attendees, including nine productive workshops. The GLHA participates in the planning and execution of this coordinated effort among multiple towns and agencies in Greater Lowell, as well as serving as the fiscal agent.

Among the dozens of CHIP-driven accomplishments by GLHA task forces over the past year:

BEHAVIORAL HEALTH TASK FORCE

CO-CHAIRS: MATTHEW PAGE-SHELTON, DEBBIE HELMS

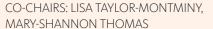
Highlight: The task force launched a Behavioral Health & Substance Use treatment audit for the Greater Lowell region, to assess the availability of services so that we can advocate for unaddressed needs. The audit will be carried out by task force members, community members, students, and GLHA staff and interns.

HEALTH EQUITY TASK FORCE

TRI-CHAIRS: MERCY ANAMPIU, NANDI MUNSON, MIRANDA ALLAN

Highlight: The task force revived the Healthcare Navigation Video that was in full swing pre-pandemic, recording the narration (with the help of a University of Massachusetts Lowell student), and moving ahead with a local videographer to begin developing the visual content.

HOUSING & THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT TASK FORCE



Highlight: The task force, responding to the increased need for online information and resources during the pandemic, prioritized the maintenance and utilization of WellConnected.net, providing timely updates to the WellConnected.net team and ensuring that the information was accurate and up to date for service providers and community members.

MATERNAL CHILD HEALTH TASK FORCE

TRI-CHAIRS: HEATHER BIEDRZYCKI, AINAT KOREN, TAMI MARSHALL

Highlight: The task force reinstated the Breastfeeding/Infant Feeding Subcommittee, which worked closely with Reach LoWELL on an Infant Chest Feeding survey being distributed to local providers, including OB/GYNs, pediatricians, and family practitioners.

SUBSTANCE USE & PREVENTION TASK FORCE

TRI-CHAIRS: MICHAEL HALL, MARIA RUGGIERO, AMANDA SHAW

Highlight: The 4th Annual Merrimack Valley Substance Use Disorder Symposium is well underway by the planning committee. Speakers will be educating attendees on unique approaches to treatment and sobriety, lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic, best practices for telehealth/connection and more! We look forward to welcoming over 200 participants back on Friday, December 10, 2021, for this virtual event.

WELLNESS & CHRONIC DISEASE TASK FORCE

CO-CHAIRS: AMY PESSIA, KARRI GREENHALGE

Highlight: The task force engaged with Mill City Grows—an active member of the task force—in MCG's Community Health Food Assessment, assisting in distribution of the assessment survey to ensure high participation.



WellConnected

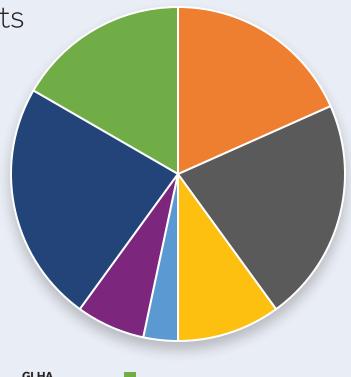
GLHA Community Grants

The Greater Lowell Health Alliance offers grants to support programs and services to improve the overall health of the Greater Lowell community. To date, we have distributed more than \$1.8 million in grants to organizations on the front lines of addressing unmet health needs. Over a 15-year period, the GLHA is distributing nearly \$5 million allocated by Lowell General Hospital through the hospital's Determination of Need process for its 2010 campus expansion.

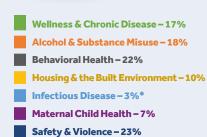
Grants are awarded around the health priorities and programs that meet specific areas of focus identified by the GLHA's 2020 Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP) process:

- » Wellness & Chronic Disease
- » Infectious Disease
- » Health Equity
- » Maternal Child Health
- » Behavioral Health
- » Safety & Violence
- » Housing & the Built Environment
- » Substance Use and Prevention

To learn about the impact of these grants in our region, visit greaterlowellhealthalliance.org







* Does not include pandemic assistance grants.

2021/2022 Community Health Initiative Grants

» AFRICAN COMMUNITY CENTER Outreach to African Homeless and Addiction/ Substance Use Population - \$5,000

» CENTER FOR HOPE AND HEALING Capacity Building for Schools to Support LGBQ/T Youth of Color - \$25,000

» **ELIOT CHURCH**Day Center - \$20,000

» ELLIE FUND

Basic Support for Breast Cancer Patients in Lowell and Surrounding Towns-\$20,000

» FRONT LINE INITIATIVE

Project Whole Hearted: Animal Assisted Co-Response - \$20,000

» GIRLS, INC.
Healthy Sexuality - \$10,000

» INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE OF NEW ENGLAND Greater Lowell Refugee Domestic Violence Prevention/

Adolescent Recovery Coaching Project - \$10,000

Support - \$10,000

» LOWELL HOUSE ADDICTION TREATMENT & RECOVERY

» LOWELL TRANSITIONAL LIVING CENTER

Permanent Housing for Formerly Homeless in Lowell and Merrimack Valley - \$10,000

» MILL CITY GROWS

Expanding Nutritious Food Access for Lower-Income Lowell Residents - \$5.000

» THE PHOENIX

Bringing Linguistic Diversity to Volunteer-Led Recovery Support Programming - \$10,000

» PLACE OF PROMISE

Addiction Recovery: Returning to Work - \$5,000







Left: Jen Melanson, of the Town of Chelmsford, with produce grown in Gardens for Good, funded by a 2020/2021 Community Health Initiatives grant. Center and right: Mill City Grows, a 2020/2021 grant recipient, leading cooking classes and tending their farms.

Pandemic Assistance Grants

In addition to the annual Community Health Initiatives grants, GLHA distributed mini-grants to area nonprofits addressing the COVID-19 crisis and working towards equitable distribution of the COVID-19 vaccines. These grants were funded in part with a \$15,000 COVID relief grant from the Greater Lowell Community Foundation, which helped us develop and translate COVID-19 educational materials into multiple languages, as well as support community partner vaccine efforts through GLHA mini-grants.

GLHA awarded **more than \$20,000 in grants**, ranging from \$250 to \$2,000, to more than a dozen community

partners to support educational materials, transportation to vaccine clinics, translators at clinics, and incentives.

In May the GLHA was awarded a \$22,500 Health Resources in Action (HIRA) Grant to help address the inequities of the COVID vaccine, particularly within the LatinX populations. A Hispanic/Latinx Advisory Group for Community Engagement, in coordination with Lowell Community Health Center, has focused efforts on the Latinx populations, coordinating outreach, vaccine clinics, and messaging.

Grants Received by Greater Lowell Health Alliance

The GLHA is engaged in two additional grant-funded projects to address unmet healthcare needs in Greater Lowell.

Boston Medical Center's HEALing Communities Study

The goal of this multi-site implementation research study is to reduce opioid-related overdose deaths in Lowell by 40 percent by July 2022. GLHA's role in the study includes serving as the fiscal agent, as well as providing two staff positions: Hannah Tello, a part-time project manager, and Devon Goldberg, the Lowell Coalition Community Coordinator.

Nearly \$1.5 million in funding will support:

- » Lowell General Hospital to expand the services of their Bridge Clinic and a new Addiction Consult Service;
- » Lowell House to add two harm reduction staff positions to specifically target the Hispanic/Latinx community;
- » Wheels of Hope to provide transportation to people seeking substance abuse disorder services;
- » Lowell Community Health Center to expand their Office-Based Addiction Treatment Program; and
- » Narcan supplies for an expanded Naloxone Leave Behind Program, largely facilitated by Trinity EMS.

To date, these services, in combination with additional networks of service in the community, have resulted in overdose death rates in Lowell decreasing by 9% in 2020, a significant success in a reporting year that saw an overall increase of overdose death by 5% at the state level.

Tufts Age-Friendly Grant

In September 2020, University of Massachusetts Lowell was awarded a three-year, \$300,000 grant from Tufts Health Plan Foundation to create a citywide, age-friendly initiative that builds community capacity to promote health, independence, and quality of life for older residents in Lowell. The effort is a partnership with the city of Lowell, Greater Lowell Health Alliance, and other local organizations. The GLHA's Hannah Tello was hired as Project Manager, and the GLHA will be assisting in a survey and assessment on the needs of older Lowell residents for this project.

The GLHA Needs You

The success of the Greater Lowell Health Alliance relies on the participation and engagement of individuals and organizations to enable us to inform, consult, involve, collaborate, and empower our communities. There are many ways you can become involved and support the GLHA.

Join a task force

The GLHA is always looking for new community members to join task forces and to collaborate on addressing the issues our community faces. All task force meetings are open to the public—whether virtual or in person—and all are welcome.

Participate in the Age-Friendly Lowell Initiative and Community Health Needs Assessment

We need your input as we gather critical data on the needs of our community. The Age-Friendly Lowell Initiative will help to promote the health, independence, and quality of life for older residents. Our Community Health Needs Assessment survey gathers critical information to define the area's priority health needs. **Please go to our website at greaterlowellhealthalliance.org to participate in these important surveys.**

Donate

As the GLHA grows in both scope and impact, so does our need for resources. As a nonprofit 501(c)(3), we rely on donations from organizations and individuals to sustain our mission, grow our programs, and keep our events free and accessible to everyone. Please consider donating to the Greater Lowell Health Alliance at greaterlowellhealthalliance.org/donate.

For more information on these initiatives and other ways to get involved with the Greater Lowell Health Alliance, visit greaterlowellhealthalliance.org.

