July 2025

DONOR Connection

PITTSBURGH MERCY
A HERITAGE OF HOPE

#ONEDAY Critical Needs Alert is Almost Here!

Every year, The Pittsburgh Foundation hosts its **#ONEDAY Critical Needs Alert** in support of nonprofits in Allegheny and Westmoreland counties that provide essential human services in five areas: child care; employment; food and nutrition; eviction prevention and housing; and physical and mental health.

This year, Pittsburgh Mercy is grateful to have been invited to participate in the 2025 #ONEDAY Critical Needs Alert on behalf of our homeless services programs, with particular emphasis on our street medicine and outreach program Operation Safety Net (OSN).

For 33+ years, OSN has delivered compassionate medical care and vital support services to those experiencing homelessness in the Pittsburgh region. Under the

visionary leadership of Dr. James Withers, OSN meets people where they are—whether that be under bridges, on a city sidewalk, at a local park, or in an abandoned building—providing medical care, psychiatric services, and connections to homelessness prevention and housing navigation services —addressing each person's unique needs with dignity and respect.

On **Tuesday, August 5, 2025**, you can help sustain this life-changing work as part of **#ONEDAY Critical Needs Alert** On that day, every gift over $25 made to Pittsburgh Mercy through our **Critical Needs Alert webpage** will unlock prorated matching funds from The Pittsburgh Foundation incentive pool—making **August 5** the best day to make your gift go even further.

Every gift helps us provide care to people like Beth*: Beth first met the OSN team while living in an encampment downtown, where she was suffering from xylazine wounds caused by contaminated opioids.

Now, OSN is supporting her and her partner John* with medication-assisted treatment and primary health care services. “They are amazing,” says Beth. “I could never have gone 4-months sober without their support.”

“We wouldn’t be here if it wasn’t for the OSN team,” says John, who has suffered from substance use disorder for years. “They check in with us. They listen. It feels good to know they care.”

*name changed to protect patient privacy

Giving to Pittsburgh Mercy on #ONEDAY is easy! Starting at 8 a.m. on August 5, you can visit **pittsburghgives.org** and **select Pittsburgh Mercy**—or simply scan the QR code (left) with your smart phone or tablet.

Share this email and spread the word to give on **August 5** amongst your families, friends, and neighbors to help us make the biggest impact!

Visit our #ONEDAY Webpage

New Horticulture Therapy Program Promotes Health and Healing at Pittsburgh Mercy

A once-neglected garden at Garden View Manor in Wilkinsburg has blossomed into a vibrant hub of healing and hope, thanks to a new horticultural therapy initiative at Pittsburgh Mercy. What began as a pilot group exploring holistic gardening has grown into a powerful inter-program collaboration that's improving lives—one plant at a time.

Garden View Manor is one of **Pittsburgh Mercy's comprehensive mental health personal care homes**, serving adults aged 18 and older who have a mental health diagnosis for individuals who are currently unable to live independently. The facility provides private rooms, a small monthly spending allowance, and support with daily living tasks such as bathing, dressing, medication management, and emergency preparedness. For many clients, it's a safe and supportive environment to begin or continue their recovery journey.

The gardening project pilot was initially launched in 2024 by staff and clients of **Pittsburgh Mercy's Community Treatment Teams (CTT)**. These multidisciplinary teams, which include psychiatrists, nurses, therapists, case managers, peer specialists, and more, provide intensive, community-based mental health and substance use services in client homes for individuals who may not benefit from traditional care models.

When staff discovered that the garden space at Garden View Manor had fallen into disrepair during the

Participants in the horticulture therapy project nurture a variety of plants, including:

- Tomatoes
- Cucumbers
- Peas
- Leafy greens
- Carrots
- Peppers
- Eggplants
- Herbs
- Marigolds
- Wildflowers

pandemic, they saw an opportunity to revive an existing underutilized space and supplies and subsequently expand the project to include Garden View residents, creating a unique inter-program activity that fosters teamwork and social connection.

Led by CTT staff members Rachel Majcher and LaToya Steadman, the gardening project is an opportunity for CTT clients and Garden View Manor residents to explore the benefits of horticultural therapy—a method that uses gardening to support mental, emotional, and physical well-being and through which participants learn new skills or regain lost ones, while also improving memory, cognitive abilities, language, and socialization. The success of the 2024 pilot group quickly sparked broader interest amongst clients and staff.

“All of our [CTT] clients have the potential to be food insecure,” says Majcher. “Many live in food deserts and rely on food pantries. Teaching them to grow their own food—even in containers—can make a real difference in their health and independence.”

Due to limited funding, we are looking for in-kind donations of gardening tools and supplies, such as:

- Sturdy gardening gloves
- Trowels
- Shovels
- Small pruning shears
- Gardening scissors
- Rakes
- Kneeling pads
- Sunscreen

Would you like to contribute to our horticulture therapy project through in-kind gifts?

If so, please reach out to Pittsburgh Mercy's volunteer and engagement coordination **Brendan Copp** via **email** or by calling **412-897-8822**.

Clients are not only learning how to grow fruits and vegetables, but also how to incorporate them into their diets. They’re encouraged to try new foods, explore recipes, and reflect on how gardening makes them feel. The project engages all five senses and offers physical benefits like increased movement, fresh air, and vitamin-D exposure.

But perhaps the most profound impact is emotional. “The garden is a metaphor for recovery,” says Majcher. “It teaches patience, resilience, and the value of nurturing something outside of yourself. Clients learn that setbacks are part of growth—and that every new season brings another chance to try again.”

As the garden continues to thrive, so do the participants. They’re more engaged, asking questions, attending sessions regularly, and taking pride in their progress. From planting to harvesting, the garden is not just a source of food—it’s a source of empowerment, healing, and hope.

Volunteer Spotlight: Sisterson & Co., LLP

A big thank-you to our partners at Sisterson & Co., LLP! Staff members at the

downtown Pittsburgh certified public accounting and advisory firm recently dedicated a portion of their time and resources purchasing supplies for and putting together bagged lunches for people experiencing homelessness. The lunches, which included sandwiches, fresh fruit, and water, will be handed out at **Pittsburgh Mercy's Engagement Center at Second Avenue Commons**, where people experiencing homelessness can receive basic-needs items as well as access showers, laundry facilities, mail pick-up, and connections to other essential services at no cost.

Thanks to the 27 staff members who participated in bagged-lunch assembly, the company prepared an estimated **200 bagged lunches**!

Would you or your workplace like to contribute to the health and wellness of visitors and guests at Second Avenue Commons? Let us know by contacting Volunteer and Engagement Coordinator Brendan Copp at **Brendan.Copp@pittsburghmercy.org** or by calling **412-897-8822**.

Volunteer at Pittsburgh Mercy

At Pittsburgh Mercy, our volunteers provide a truly meaningful and enriching experience for community members in need. ***Thank you to our compassionate and inspiring volunteers!***

Would ***you*** like to make a difference in the lives of the thousands of people served by our programs? Pittsburgh Mercy offers numerous ways to get involved.

Consider these volunteer opportunities:

- Serving food at Second Avenue Commons.
- Hosting a sporting event watch party at a behavioral health residential program.
- Making arts and crafts at our adult day programs for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities.
- Making PB&J sandwiches for persons served at Pittsburgh Mercy's Engagement Center at Second Avenue Commons.
- Sorting donated clothing and basic hygiene supplies for people experiencing homelessness, housing insecurity, or other crises.

For more details or to sign up, contact Pittsburgh Mercy's Volunteer and Engagement Coordinator Brendan Copp at **Brendan.Copp@pittsburghmercy.org** or 412-897-8822.

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