



ESTHER BUSH

The Pittsburgh Study

This month, the "Take Charge of Your Health Today" page focuses on a major child and adolescent health and wellness initiative called The Pittsburgh Study. Liz Miller, community engagement coleader of the University of Pittsburgh's Clinical and Translational Science Institute, and Esther L. Bush, president and CEO of the Urban League of Greater Pittsburgh, spoke about this topic.

LM: Good afternoon, Ms. Bush. I'm so grateful to have the opportunity to talk about the Pittsburgh Study with you as the Urban League has been an integral partner in conceptualizing this community-partnered study. As you know, the Pittsburgh Study is a large undertaking where we are trying to learn together with community members about what works to ensure children and adolescents are healthy, thriving and meeting their academic goals. The Pittsburgh Study will be looking at interventions to improve the health and wellness of pregnant women, infants, toddlers, school-age children and adolescents.

EB: Yes, Liz. Last year, I had the opportunity to speak at a planning retreat for the Pittsburgh Study about the importance of building trust. One of the key ways in which trust is built is by listening to and involving community members as active participants in the research. One of the shared principles that came out of that retreat was the importance of doing research "with" people and not "on" people.

LM: Absolutely. We've been meeting with community members across our county to hear what they believe thriving children look like. Community members have shared with us that "thriving" means having lots of love and support and safe environments free from oppression and pollution.

EB: I'm so glad that you mention oppression. This is so important to talk about because far too many children are living in neighborhoods with concentrated disadvantages where, because of discrimination and institutional racism, they're not afforded the same opportunities as children in more privileged environments. We need to have interventions and policies that recognize these inequities and work to correct them.

LM: Indeed. I'm so happy that many community organizations and people from diverse backgrounds are getting involved. We'd love to have interested community members join the different groups working on the Pittsburgh Study. Community partnerships help make sure that our science is meaningful and relevant.

EB: I think the Pittsburgh Study reminds us that it truly takes a village to nurture our children. Thank you so much for having this conversation with me, Liz. I really hope that more people get involved and excited about the Pittsburgh Study. I look forward to next month, as well, when we discuss sleep and how important it is for healthy kids and successful learning!

Take charge of your health today. Be informed. Be involved.



How are we supporting our children?

Most people would describe Pittsburgh as a city of people who are devoted to spending time with loved ones and loyal to neighbors and communities. We also know that the future of our families and communities very much depends on people so deeply important to us—our children.

So, how are we supporting our children? What are we doing well, and what needs to change in order to keep them healthy and thriving? If you have ever wondered how best to serve children in Allegheny County, you will find like-minded people in the Pittsburgh Study.

The Pittsburgh Study is community-partnered research. It is focused on the best ways to support children and adolescents in Allegheny County to be healthy, thriving and meeting their academic goals. It will be the largest long-term community-partnered intervention study to follow children from birth to adulthood. The Pittsburgh Study addresses health equity by supporting, evaluating and optimizing proved programs to help children, adolescents and families. It will investigate the most pressing factors influencing the health of the county's youth along their developmental paths.

"The Pittsburgh Study looks at the whole child, at their physical, social, emotional and psychological health and their academic performance," says Anna K. Ettinger, PhD, MSW, MPH, senior research scientist in the Department of Pediatrics, University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine. "We're focusing on health equity and disparities—from preterm birth and infant mortality rates to childhood reading levels to youth violence. But it isn't only about observing and collecting data. We're looking at what already works well and



ANNA K. ETTINGER, PHD

introducing interventions as needed based on feedback from community partners."

There are two opportunities to become involved in the study—one as a partner in the research to help



ELIZABETH MILLER, MD, PHD

be a part of the research team—a team that includes community members. One of the study's main principles is to develop research with people—not on people. Partnership and equity are

for a complete list of the Pittsburgh Study's shared principles) is that everyone involved is heard, learned from and included.

"We thought that if this is going to be a Pittsburgh study, it has to be owned by the community," says Elizabeth Miller, MD, PhD, Edmund R. McCluskey Professor of Pediatric Medical Education and professor of pediatrics, University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine, chief of the Division of Adolescent and Young Adult Medicine at UPMC Children's Hospital of Pittsburgh and coleader of the Pittsburgh Study. "Our goal

veal which trajectories tend to help children thrive and which interventions bend the curves best.

"The study is definitely going to be unique because we're all learning," says Val Chavis, project director with the Urban League of Greater Pittsburgh's East Hills Family Support Center and Pittsburgh Study coleader. "I'm a community partner, along with other community partners, community members, doctors, researchers and scientists at the table. We're all humble enough to share ideas and say that not one person knows everything but that each person at

The Pittsburgh Study Shared Principles

1. Connect with communities with honesty, empathy and transparency.
2. Prioritize community input and recognize that neighborhoods matter.
3. Continue to build trust and show that we care, are fair, and consistent.
4. Develop research *with* people not *on* people.
5. Maintain open, inclusive communication – share everything to a fault, including data.
6. Keep learning, listening, and expanding the table.
7. Build collaborations, break down silos.
8. Have patience for the long-term measurable, sustainable impact.
9. Approach decisions with intentional action for impact.
10. Leave your ego at the door.

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THE PITTSBURGH STUDY

UPMC CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL OF PITTSBURGH

design, plan, evaluate and steer the study and the other as a participant in the study itself. Being a partner in the research involves serving on a scientific working group and playing a part in learning about child thriving.

What is unique about the Pittsburgh Study is that the people who want to help children are being asked to

intentionally built into the organization of the study. The leadership of each working group is required to include at least one academic researcher and one community partner. Each scientific group will be comprised of at least 50 percent community members. One of the study's shared principles (see elsewhere on the page

is developing science and doing discovery that matters. The only way to ensure that is to have community partners help to design the study."

The study started by engaging community members in defining what thriving in childhood and adolescence means to them. The study is also assembling and aligning existing data from the county, schools and other sources. It will fill in gaps in knowledge, combining survey data, health assessments, environmental and community information. Analyzing the data will re-

the table knows something. "I would encourage people to be involved because I truly think this is history in the making. This is something that's going to help generations to come. Come share ideas, be creative and have ownership in this research. Research only gets better when it involves people from all backgrounds. Here's your opportunity."

For more information on how to become involved with the Pittsburgh Study, contact Marcela Souza at mab472@pitt.edu or 412-692-8026 or visit www.pittsburghstudy.org.

Hopes for partnership

Theresa R. Jenks, Pittsburgh Study ambassador, Westside, and Elizabeth Miller, Pittsburgh Study coleader, had the opportunity to talk about the motivation behind being a partner in the Pittsburgh Study work.

E: Why are you involved in the Pittsburgh Study?

T: I am involved in the Pittsburgh Study because I believe that the study can change the way my community thinks about research—the African American community has been wronged in so many cases in the past. I believe that when research is with people, not on people, and if the research is for the growth and education of people to understand health issues and health history better, we can change the path and direction of our communities' health and wellness (especially mental health).

E: What is meaningful to you and the communities you serve about being involved in

the Pittsburgh Study?

T: The one thing that I would say is meaningful is to keep the community engaged in all aspects as much as possible so that every step is transparent to the community and the community has full ownership in the study.

E: What do you hope will emerge from this work together?

T: My hope for the Pittsburgh Study is that the community gets education and any and all access to become more healthy and knowledgeable about what it takes to be healthy, happy and thriving in all communities no matter what barriers exist. I wish I would have been more educated about healthy habits for myself and my family when I was a young, single mom putting everyone first and myself not even on the list. If you don't have your health, you don't have anything.

The Pittsburgh Study Community Partners

The Pittsburgh Study is collaborative to its core. Study partners are numerous and include the Urban League of Greater Pittsburgh, UrbanKind Institute, Healthy Start, Allies for Children, UPMC Children's Hospital of Pittsburgh, University of Pittsburgh and the Shear Family Foundation.

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