



Our 2023-2024 Fiscal Year in Review

Letter from the President and CEO

Dear community partners,

As HealthSpark closes out its fiscal year, our team wanted to take a few moments to share our work and some of the reflections that are shaping our thinking moving ahead.

In the attached report, you'll find a catalogue of our major investment areas this past fiscal year, and some notes on our efforts that go beyond grants. While providing grant support to nonprofits is a core element of our philanthropy, we also recognize that our role in the community extends beyond that.

As a philanthropic foundation, we can and should be serving as an advocate, a convener, and an outspoken voice for the issues, communities, and organizations that are central to our mission of promoting a healthier and more just Montgomery County.

The role of advocate is one that has grown tremendously over the past year and one that we're recognizing must expand even more as we look ahead. Locally, we've seen how advocacy on housing affordability and solutions to homelessness are needed now more than ever, as local communities push back against our nonprofit partners' efforts to build permanent and temporary affordable housing.

Looking nationally, we've been gutted by the decisions from the Supreme Court

this past session, not just because we know that a handful of our neighbors in Montgomery County are imminently at risk following the Grants Pass ruling, but also because we see that decades of progress and precedent can be wiped out by the Court, such as in the overturning of the Chevron doctrine this session and *Roe v. Wade* two years ago.

These cases highlight how much tenacity is needed in our current political moment just to maintain the basic principles of democracy and human rights, let alone work towards the pursuit of true liberty and liberation for all.

Both the national and local narratives shaping public policy are, by design, missing critical voices. Our political systems have always found ways to exclude and deny whole groups of people the policymaking power to create and invest in real solutions to issues like poverty, educational inequity, homelessness, and others.

And for the most part, the nonprofit sector has viewed its main function as providing services to support those in need. This is necessary and meaningful work, to be sure, but it is also a positioning that allows the status quo of inequity to be maintained by our political systems. I include philanthropy in this as well.

What we see now, especially in Montgomery County, is that the nonprofit sector can no longer fill the gap created by inequitable economic, educational, criminal justice, housing, and health policy, and more nonprofits are recognizing a need to shift towards advocacy as a critical part of their mission to begin righting this imbalance.

Last fall at our Community of Practice, I spoke to how those of us in the nonprofit sector often choose public service because we want to be part of something bigger than ourselves. In light of this moment, we must recognize that harnessing a collective voice for change requires us to reframe our work together. From my vantage point at HealthSpark, I see the seeds of this change already taking root.

For example, over the last five years or so we've seen more and more nonprofits embed consumer voice into their program design in order to improve the services they offer. What if that consumer engagement model were to move towards consumer advocacy, where consumers of services were empowered and uplifted to advocate for policy change?

Similarly, more nonprofits are partnering with others that offer similar or complimentary services, such as by expanding their geographic or demographic reach to achieve an even greater impact towards their mission.

What if those nonprofits built on that capacity for partnership to include collectively advocating towards policy or funding priorities?

And finally, at HealthSpark we've noted a significant shift with how nonprofits have viewed their role in supporting systems change, where they're addressing issues like accessibility, equity, and inclusion into their program design. What if more nonprofits- supported by their philanthropic peers- continued to shift nonprofit culture to be a platform for righting power imbalances, where advocacy began to be built into their service model?

Philanthropy can and should be supporting and leading this shift in culture and practice- at least by providing funding to do so, but also in creating spaces for organizing to happen, in holding government accountable in ways nonprofits cannot, and in finding resources and tools to help ground that shift in tangible practices and strategies. In partnership with our peers, philanthropy has the capacity to uplift more voices, to shape discussions at the local and national level, to rethink our role as nonprofits, too.

To that end, our team at HealthSpark is beginning to form deeper connections with organizations and leaders explicitly working to build civic voice and power among historically underrepresented communities. We've been looking

towards our peers nationally to understand how philanthropy can be supportive to culture and narrative change. And we're really intrigued by the possibility of bringing those groups and traditional health and human services nonprofits together.

This is the emerging ethos that inspires me and our team at HealthSpark, and I know it's a vision that excites many of you, too. The strategic planning process HealthSpark began this spring has brought in data and insights from hundreds of you already, which is driving our shift in this direction. In the fall, we'll be sharing more about how we're leaning into building community power through the rollout of our new strategic plan and funding priorities, a plan which is wholly informed by the inspiration and challenge you've laid out for us.

As ever, we welcome your insights, ideas, inspiration, and accountability- so please connect with me or our team members Akshara, Clare, and John, or our new Board Chair Natasha Patterson, to share those.

Wishing you rest, restoration, and reflection this summer.

In partnership,
Emma



Grantmaking

The **Safety Net Grant Program** funded \$300,000 to thirteen organizations that are supporting a more accessible, equitable, and connected safety net system in Montgomery County. We're pleased to support a few new grant partners this round, including Planned Parenthood of Southeastern PA and The Center for Loss and Bereavement, as well as offer continued support for past grant partners like the Jaisohn Wellness Center and The Welcome Project PA.

During the Code Blue emergency this past winter, HealthSpark provided a \$60,000 emergency grant to support Access Services' Street Outreach team's overtime hours and additional needs related to the lowered temperature threshold.

Grantmaking

Leadership & Capacity Building

Leadership and Community Building continues to be a focus area for the Foundation, where we are in the fourth year of our funding commitment to the Racial Equity Learning Community administered by the Bucks-Mont Collaborative, TriCounty Community Network, and Interagency Council of Norristown.

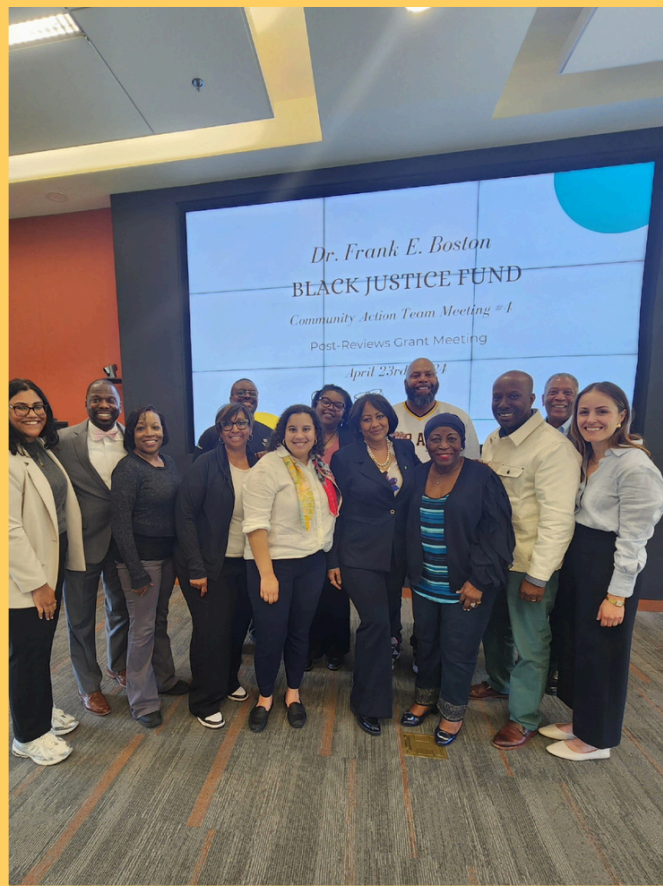
We've also supported two scholarships to the Greater Philadelphia Leadership Exchange for Montgomery County participants. Melonie Butler of I Choose to Win traveled with the leadership conference to New Orleans in fall 2023 and a member of the Family Promise Montco PA team will join the conference in California this October.



“GPLEX put me in the room to increase exposure for my organization, expand my network of [Greater] Philly leaders and nonprofit professionals while also offering content and discussions that enlightened in both a tightly focused sense (facing the challenges and meeting the needs of our organization) and a broad sense (about how the work we're collectively doing is positively impacting the people of [Greater] Philadelphia). I'm grateful to have been selected among the 200 delegates and honored to have the support of HealthSpark to make it happen,” Melonie said.

[Read more about Melonie's experience.](#)

Grantmaking



The **Dr. Frank E. Boston Black Justice Fund** supported \$122,000 in grant awards this spring, including to organizations like Be Resilient, Healing Through the Arts; Making A Difference Economically; and The George Washington Carver Community Center. This Fund, which supports Black-led and Black-serving organizations engaged in building power, changing the narrative, and supporting youth development, has now funded over \$370,000 to Black-led nonprofits since its inception in 2021.

[Read more about the Black Justice Fund grantmaking process.](#)

Advocacy is an emerging grant area for HealthSpark, with grants supporting the Bucks-Mont Collaborative and the Montco 30% Project this year.

HealthSpark continues to contribute to **The Nonprofit Repositioning Fund**, which has distributed \$495,000 to nonprofit partners in the Greater Philadelphia region over the last year. We've seen an uptick in the number of Montgomery County-based organizations applying to this fund, which provides grants to nonprofits working towards sustained collaborations, fiscal and operational partnerships, and mergers.

Research



HealthSpark is proud to serve as the fiscal manager for the **Asian American Strengths and Needs Assessment**, an ARPA-funded project from Montgomery County. Over the last year, the Asian American Healthcare Coalition- led by the Chairs George Choe and Dr. Francis Jeyaraj- has grown to include membership from ten Asian community groups in Montgomery County. The study continues moving forward through focus groups with Asian ethnic communities, and ultimately will provide insight into policy changes, learning opportunities, and other considerations for lifting up the valuable contributions of Asians in Montgomery County.



Advocacy

Through our participation on the **Collaborative Advocacy Network**, HealthSpark has been incredibly proud to support a growing coalition of nonprofit partners in advocating for affordable housing and behavioral health investments. We hosted a series of trainings to support our partners in meeting with legislators during our first Day of Advocacy in Harrisburg in May.

We continue to participate in the **PA Health Funders Collaborative**, a statewide coalition of funders that educate and advocate on health policy. This group met twice during the year and is focused on supporting a stronger mental healthcare workforce, 988 rollout, “healthcare through housing” funding through changes to Medicare, and other administrative healthcare priorities.

HealthSpark also continues as a member of a number of national and state advocacy groups, such as **Funders Together to End Homelessness** and the **Housing Alliance of Pennsylvania**.

Mission Aligned Investing



HealthSpark was incredibly proud to partner with Manna on Main Street to support our first **below market-rate loan** for their Online Market Hub renovations at their new site in Lansdale. This loan- which is structured as simply and inexpensively as possible- adds a new tool to our toolbelt of investment into the community.

We have participated in the **Mission Aligned Investing cohort** through Philanthropy Network of Greater Philadelphia, where we've been learning about strategies for aligning all of our roughly \$39 million in assets with our mission, vision, and values.



Convening

Our efforts to convene systems leaders continued this past year. We kicked off the fall with our first in-person **Community of Practice** since 2020, “Embracing Our Spark: Stepping into Our Voice and Power”. We followed that event with “Meeting the Moment: Taking Action on Homelessness and Affordable Housing in Montgomery County” in February. At both events, we sought to engage, inspire, and connect a broad swath of community leaders who are interested in coming together to collectively build a healthier and more just Montgomery County.

“As I sat in the room at Normandy, I also was thinking of my own experience (or story) with that space. I attended a wedding reception there for the daughter of a dear friend who just died. I’ve attended gatherings there on topics presented by the [Bucks-Mont] Collaborative. And, I’ve attended previous events offered by HealthSpark....I enjoyed feeling relaxed and open to learning. I enjoyed the laughter. I enjoyed the sense that you were having a room full of friends over, to talk about meaningful things. I felt only welcome. Thank you so much for that. I’m grateful to be back in the room and I’m grateful for the story’s [HealthSpark’s] next chapters,” Doug Esbach, Executive Director of Generations of Indian Valley on his experience at the Community of Practice in October 2023.

We’ve also started hosting smaller conversations on building community power, engaging grassroots groups and community activists around opportunities for aligning actions on voter mobilization, immigrant-led civic engagement opportunities, and grassroots groups organizing around climate and racial justice. *More to come.*

Community Leadership



Advocating for our mission and serving our community often translates into volunteerism onto boards and commissions, where we have the opportunity to further our own work through collaboration and partnership with others. In the last year, HealthSpark staff have served in the following roles: Co-Chair of the **Montco 2050 Advisory Committee**, Co-Chair of the **Moving Montco Forward Transition Committee on Affordable Housing and Homelessness** for incoming Commissioners Jamila Winder and Neil Makhija, Vice President of the **Nonprofit Repositioning Fund**, Co-Chair of the **Collaborative Advocacy Network**, member of **Health Funders for Housing Justice**, and member of the **Montco Anti-Hunger Network Data Committee**.

Grantee Partners

Safety Net Grant Program

ACLAMO

Catholic Social Services of
Montgomery County/Martha's Choice
Marketplace

Episcopal Legal Aid

Family Promise Montco PA (FP Montco)

HopeWorx, Inc.

Lansdale Public Library

Neighbors Helping Neighbors on the
Main Line (NHN)

Planned Parenthood Southeastern
Pennsylvania (PPSP)

The Center for Loss and Bereavement

The Philip Jaisohn Memorial
Foundation

The Welcome Project PA

Theatre Horizon

Willow Grove Community Development
Corporation

Dr. Frank E. Boston Black Justice Fund

Be ReZilient, Healing Through The Arts

Center for Positive Aging in Lower
Merion (PALM)

Community Hero Action Group

George Washington Carver
Community Center

I Choose to Win

KB Foundation Inc.

Making a Difference Economically Inc.
(MADE)

The STRIVE Initiative, Inc.

Wings of Victory Outreach
Corporation

Advocacy

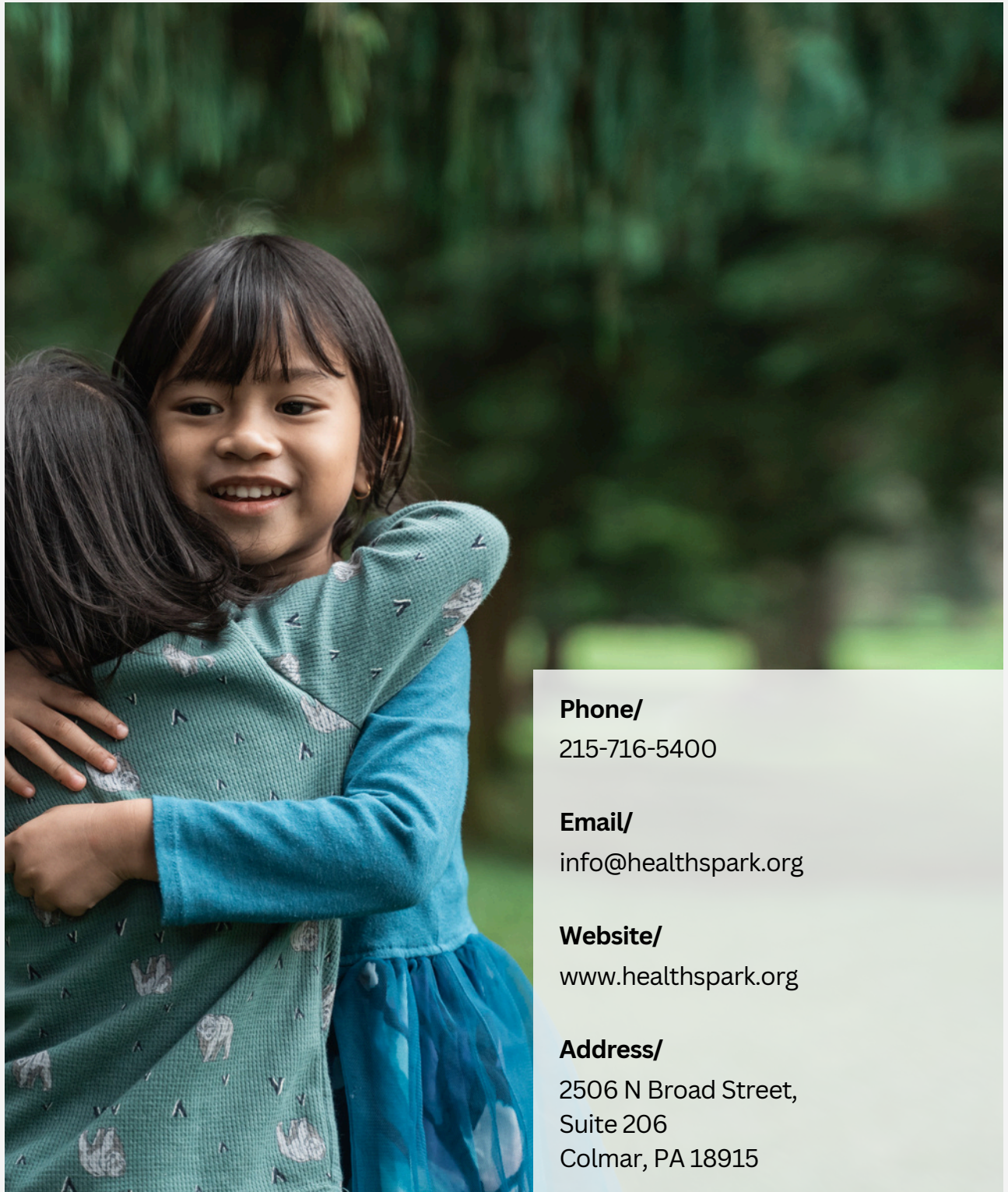
Bucks- Mont Collaborative

Montco 30% Project

Invited Application Process

Access Services

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