

University Hospitals Food for Life Markets® Earn 2024 AHA Dick Davidson NOVA Award for Improving Community Health

American Hospital Association (AHA) honors hospitals and health systems that have demonstrated a deep commitment to creating healthier communities

CLEVELAND, Ohio (May 2, 2024) –University Hospitals (UH) announced today that its Food for Life Markets® program is one of five honorees earning the American Hospital Association’s Dick Davidson NOVA Award for its hospital-led collaborative effort that improves community health.

The NOVA Award recognizes hospitals and health systems for their efforts toward improving community health status, whether through healthcare, economic or social initiatives. UH’s Food for Life Market® is a food-as-medicine preventative model that addresses chronic health conditions by providing free, healthy food and dietitian consultation. The program’s goal is to help patients control chronic conditions such as high blood pressure and diabetes.

“This year’s Dick Davidson NOVA Award winners have demonstrated dedication and commitment to improving community health among the most marginalized by forging strong partnerships with other community stakeholders,” said AHA president and CEO Rick Pollack. “These hospitals and health systems offer exemplary, necessary services that have adapted and evolved to effectively meet the changing needs of their communities.”

At UH, when patients visit their clinician, they are screened for food insecurity. Those who screen positive receive a referral to a UH Food for Life Market®. Onsite dietitians help patients select food that addresses their medical needs while also remaining culturally sensitive to food preferences. Healthy recipes, meal preparation tips and cooking demonstrations are a popular part of this program.

“One secret of the markets,” said Celina Cunanan, MSN, APRN-CNM, UH Chief Diversity, Equity and Belonging Officer, “is the active participation of dietitians. That is a nice, wonderful way for our patients to get an individualized, tailored approach to their visit and form that relationship with the dietitian, because every month they come back and they see that same dietitian who can then check in on them.”

The program has expanded in urban and rural areas and expects to open its sixth market this year.

“We are honored to serve our community in this way. The precept ‘the neediest being considered the most worthy’ are words upon which University Hospitals was built,” said Cliff A. Megerian, MD, FACS, CEO of University Hospitals and the Jane and Henry Meyer Chief

This year's recipients will be recognized at the AHA Accelerating Health Equity Conference, May 7-9, in Kansas City, Mo. For more information on the award and the 2024 recipients, visit aha.org.

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Founded in 1866, University Hospitals serves the needs of patients through an integrated network of 21 hospitals (including five joint ventures), more than 50 health centers and outpatient facilities, and over 200 physician offices in 16 counties throughout northern Ohio. The system's flagship quater