Illinois Health and Hospital Association

With over $30.2 million from Endeavor Health's Community Investment Fund (CIF), the Evanston-based health system is propelling efforts to enhance community health and well-being through partnerships and to support local economic growth—which includes a serious effort to train future clinicians.

In the summer of 2024, Endeavor Health's CIF partnership with ASPIRE Lake County funded healthcare internships for high school students and community members. Twenty-one paid interns were placed in clinical and non-clinical areas at Endeavor Health Highland Park Hospital, offering opportunities for future healthcare workers to learn firsthand how to coordinate and prioritize care.

"I really think of it as growing the next generation of healthcare workers," said Magdelena Dudek, clinical nurse manager in the operating room at Endeavor Health Highland Park Hospital.

The program gives interns exposure to healthcare roles, builds job skills, and supports residents in securing a job in healthcare and meeting community employment needs. One intern, Madison, said the experience helped her understand the hospital setting and how to talk to people, among other benefits.

"I feel comfortable knowing this is going to be my life when I start to pursue my career," Madison said.

ASPIRE Lake County is a collaboration of community partners, including Endeavor Health, three school districts, three local colleges, Lake County Workforce Development and YouthBuild Lake County.

According to Endeavor Health, "Moving the needle on community health, is more than building the capacity of individual organizations. It is about working together, across organizations, across areas of focus and finding new ways to solve these complex problems." With clinician shortages among nurses and physician specialties, building up the local healthcare workforce is an important issue to solve.

The health system aims to inspire and encourage future clinicians, serving as a spark that motivates a career of caregiving in Illinois.

"We see the impact that it's having on our interns. When you have that light bulb moment, when someone's excited and engaged, we know that has an impact academically as well as also personally, socially," said Jacob Schulz, workforce development program manager with Endeavor Health. "We're seeing that this impact can really have an impact throughout our community."