

Expert Clinics

October 1 | 11:30 a.m.

Lessons in Catalytic Investment- Early Childhood Development

Central Hub

Decades of research show that investing in young children delivers the highest return for children's outcomes and economic growth alike. As resources shrink and crises multiply, critical opportunities remain to ensure young children globally have the support they need to thrive. Speakers from SPOON, UNICEF USA, representing the Thrive Coalition, and Georgetown University's Collaborative on Global Children's Issues will share multisectoral recommendations to prioritize young children in today's political and funding environment, spotlight locally-led solutions supporting vulnerable children, and discuss how to translate broad support into effective policy and meaningful actions. An interactive discussion on barriers, opportunities, and immediate actions will help participants identify practical ways to advance early childhood development and turn global commitments into meaningful change.



Carolyn Moore

Director of Policy and Advocacy, SPOON

As the Director of Policy and Advocacy with SPOON, a global nonprofit with a mission to end malnutrition for children with disabilities and children without family care, Carolyn developed and now leads SPOON's advocacy strategy, working with coalitions, governments, and local partners to promote policies, practices, and investments related to inclusive nutrition, health, and early child development. She

has 15+ years of experience implementing global health programs, advocacy initiatives, and public-private partnerships. Carolyn serves as a co-chair of the Thrive Coalition and of the International Disability and Development Consortium Child Rights Task Group. Carolyn received a Master of Public Health degree from Tulane University.



Rachel Wisthuff

Director of Global Policy, UNICEF USA

Rachel serves as UNICEF USA's Director of Global Policy, developing and shepherding the execution of UNICEF USA's government affairs strategy. In her role, she oversees a team who build and maintain relationships with bipartisan policymakers in support of child-focused foreign assistance, including UNICEF's work for children globally. She

currently serves as a co-chair of the Thrive Coalition and as co-chair of the 1,000 Days Nutrition Advocacy Working Group. Rachel joined UNICEF USA in 2017. Prior to UNICEF USA, Rachel worked at the UN Foundation's Girl Up initiative. She is a graduate of Macalester College in St. Paul, Minnesota.

**Catherine ("Cat") Kirk***Senior Fellow, Georgetown University Collaborative on Global Children's Issues*

Cat is a senior fellow with the Georgetown University Collaborative on Global Children's Issues, where she contributes to the collaborative's efforts around centering children in adversity in a changing landscape of foreign assistance and funding. Her areas of expertise include early childhood development; parenting programming; maternal, newborn, and child health; early identification and interventions for children with disabilities; and health systems. She has 15 years of experience in the design, implementation, and evaluation of health, child development, and education programs in Sub-Saharan Africa, Latin America, Asia, and the United States. Cat served as the former senior technical advisor with the Children in Adversity team at the United States Agency for International Development, supporting early childhood development. She holds a Master of Public Health from the University of Michigan.

Aid Under Fire: Frontline Lessons in the Drone Age

The Forum

Modern warfare — drones, mass-casualty targeting, and attacks on healthcare and aid infrastructure — is reshaping humanitarian and health responses. As adherence to international humanitarian law (IHL) continues to erode and attacks on civilians and civilian infrastructure intensify, humanitarian actors are being forced to adapt under fire to increasingly dangerous and complex operating environments. This session pairs Hope for Ukraine's locally-led aid delivery model in drone-saturated Kherson, Ukraine, with MedGlobal's cross-conflict health systems expertise from Ukraine, Sudan, Gaza, and other conflicts. Together, panelists show how frontline innovation like decentralized logistics, mobile clinics, and rapid adaptation under active targeting offers a practical, replicable model for a sector that will increasingly face these conditions worldwide.

**Yuriy Boyechko***Founder and CEO, Hope for Ukraine*

Since launching the organization in 2016—and in response to the full-scale invasion in 2022—he has demonstrated strong leadership in mobilizing critical humanitarian aid across some of Ukraine's most devastated regions. Under his guidance, Hope for Ukraine has delivered essential resources to communities in crisis. Yuriy is the author of the upcoming book *Defiant Hope: Ordinary Lives, Extraordinary Courage, and the Fight for Ukraine* (Berrett-Koehler Publishers / Penguin Random House), which captures powerful first-person stories of civilian resistance and resilience on the front lines. Born and raised in Ukraine, Boyechko earned his master's degree in media communication from Regent University and is a member of the Forbes Nonprofit Council.



Dr. Zaher Sahloul
President and CEO, MedGlobal

Dr. Zaher Sahloul is a Syrian-American critical care physician, and humanitarian. He co-founded and serves as President of MedGlobal, a Chicago-based nonprofit delivering emergency medical care and health programs to crisis-affected communities worldwide, including Sudan, Colombia, Syria, Gaza, Yemen, Bangladesh, and Ukraine.

Since Russia's full-scale invasion, he has participated in multiple medical missions to Ukraine, recently returning from Odesa and Kyiv, with a focus on training in modern warfare injuries, CBRNE threats, and the use of technology in healthcare. A former president of the Syrian American Medical Society, he has published widely on global health and the impact of war on health systems. He practices critical care in Chicago and is an Associate Professor of Clinical Medicine at the University of Illinois Chicago. His work has been recognized with the 2020 Gandhi Award for Peace and Chicagoan of the Year in 2016.



Dr. Michael Samotowka
Board Member, MedGlobal

Dr. Michael Samotowka is a Ukrainian-American trauma surgeon and surgical critical care specialist. He serves on the Board of Directors of MedGlobal, a Chicago-based nonprofit that delivers medical care in multiple countries, including Ukraine. As Director of Trauma Surgery and Surgical Critical Care Training for MedGlobal in Ukraine, he leads

specialized capacity-building efforts for local clinicians. Over the years he has participated in professional conferences and collaborated with organizations such as the Ukrainian Medical Association of North America (Cleveland Branch) to deliver surgical and medical supplies to Ukrainian hospitals. Since the full-scale escalation of the war in 2022, Dr. Samotowka has completed more than twenty medical missions to Ukraine with MedGlobal and the David Nott Foundation. Earlier in his career he conducted medical mission work in Kenya and Cuba. He continues to practice trauma surgery and surgical critical care in the United States. In recognition of his sustained contributions in Ukraine, he was awarded the Saint Panteleimon Award this year.

When They Go Low, We Go Local: Expanding Civic Space for Advocacy

South Hub

As civic space contracts at the Federal level, state and local arenas have become the front line for advocacy in the U.S. Drawing on the mobilization work of Church World Service and Refugees International's Refugee Advocacy Lab, this workshop will equip participants to identify winnable local issues and mobilize communities to achieve impact in new ways. Speakers will share tested methods for coalition and power building used for refugee, immigrant and humanitarian advocacy, and discuss how thinking locally can build the collective power needed to effectively counteract shrinking civic space in Washington.



Matt Johnson

Strategic Community Partnership Officer, Church World Service

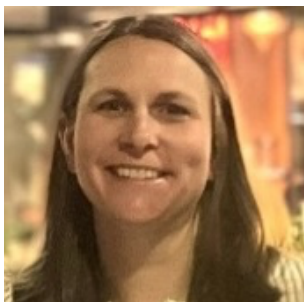
Matt Johnson is the Strategic Community Partnership Officer for Church World Service (CWS) in Lancaster, PA. In that role, Matt has led multiple local advocacy and program initiatives, including spearheading Lancaster's Welcoming certification, building immigrant leadership and working with local governments, businesses, nonprofits, and educational institutions to create a more welcoming and resilient community. Matt was recognized by Welcome.US as a 2026 Heart of Welcome Honoree and was named a Fellow for Franklin and Marshall College's yearlong, Mellon Foundation-backed program, Reckoning with Lancaster: Refugees, Migrants and the Question of Welcome.



Megan Smith

Communications Manager, Refugee Advocacy Lab at Refugees International

Megan Smith is the Communications Manager for the Refugee Advocacy Lab, a partnership housed at Refugees International and co-led with Church World Service, Refugee Congress and the International Refugee Assistance Project. The Lab works on the ground in ten states and nationally on advocacy and communications strategies that shift the narrative and advance welcoming policies for forcibly displaced people. Megan oversees the Lab's strategic communications portfolio, developing data-driven communications tactics and co-leading the Refugee Storytellers Collective, empowering 100+ refugee leaders to share their stories for social change. She has worked alongside 15 state partners in challenging and distinct political environments to build support for inclusion through coalition-building, communications, and campaigns. Previously, she worked at World Affairs Councils of America, Christel House International, and Lumina Foundation.



Mary Elizabeth Margolis [Facilitator]

National Campaign Strategist and Organizer, Rise Up for Refuge Campaign, Church World Service

Mary Elizabeth (M.E.) Margolis is the National Campaign Strategist and Organizer for Rise Up for Refuge, a campaign launched by CWS to strengthen, resource and amplify community-led efforts responding to threats facing immigrant and refugee communities. Margolis is leading efforts to mobilize faith communities and coordinate targeted action in 6 states, including local advocacy, training, voter education, community events, and mutual aid and accompaniment efforts. For more than 15 years, Margolis has led comprehensive campaigns to achieve meaningful social and political change, including mobilizing state and local leaders to publicly oppose the 2019 Refugee Ban Executive Order and co-founding Voice for Refuge Action Fund, the first 501(c)4 organization focused on growing the political power of refugee voters.