

LANCASTER SCIENCE FACTORY

Lots of
FUN
to think about.

STEM IN ACTION

Profiles of STEM Professionals in our Community

Professionals in a wide variety of STEM careers are working during the COVID-19 outbreak to continue essential services in our community.

The Lancaster Science Factory is pleased to present profiles of these individuals and how they're putting STEM in Action right now.



Erica Lehman, RN, Lancaster Health Center

What is your role at The Lancaster Health Center?

I am a registered nurse with The Lancaster Health Center. I am currently helping to lead the Covid-19 response for The Lancaster Health Center through patient notification, close monitoring, and in-depth contact tracing, which we began in late March, the first in the area!

How has it changed during the COVID-19 outbreak?

Interestingly, my first official day with LHC was April 6th. I was previously an inpatient nurse at Lancaster General. This new role is primarily telemedicine and I'm not sure how this role will evolve as time goes on. But the team at LHC has been incredibly supportive by helping me jump in and work for our patients. Covid-19 is the only thing I talk about all day, every day, but it's exciting to be a resource to the community and come alongside our patients for quality and compassionate care.

From a science perspective, what do you want the community to know? Or, what do you wish they knew more about that would come in handy right now?

I am currently in grad school at Millersville University for my Nurse Practitioner degree and one message that is loud and clear is to listen to the science and make sure that your sources are reputable and based on evidence. Misinformation can confuse the public and advise them to make decisions that are unsafe and potentially dangerous to themselves and their loved ones. As non-medical people become information seekers, it is imperative to find research that is evidence-based. It is the foundation of the nursing practice.

The thing I want people to know is when there are questions, always feel free to reach out to those in the frontlines. We are always happy to give sound and evidence-based advice. We are there to listen to your questions because we care about you and always want you to be safe. And we love free food.

As we look to scientists to provide us with the facts about this outbreak, we are reminded of just how essential STEM education is to our community. Could you share any reflections you've had on this topic recently?

I echo my earlier sentiments regarding a focus on evidence-based science. As STEM education becomes a crucial part of holistic education in our community, I look forward to future students understanding high quality and strong research. I hear myself saying, almost every day, "well the evidence suggests" ...and that is an important conversation I hope more people start having.

I just finished my graduate research class, and one compelling lesson I have learned is how important developing critical thinking skills is when evaluating research. Although a study may fall into the category of research, learning methods to properly dissect that research to see if it was conducted with high quality, such as a randomized controlled trial versus something potentially more anecdotal like a qualitative analysis, is just as important, if not more, as understanding the outcomes.

What have you been doing to stay sane during this time? Any media recommendations?

Whew! That's tough. I definitely take work home with me. I worry about how many Covid-19 positive patients we will have the next day. I lay awake at night and think about

our families who are refugees or work with high-contact employers, and who have so many barriers and so much fear. My heart really hurts for them, but I get so much solace knowing how fiercely The Lancaster Health Center is fighting to give every person equal access to healthcare, regardless of their ability to pay. It makes me feel a lot of pride to work for an organization that genuinely cares about every single person in this community.

In terms of media, I think when it all becomes so overwhelming, a personal recommendation of mine is to go local. Our local leadership and news has a valid finger on the pulse of the community and operate with accurate and informed data with people that are our neighbors in mind. I think that can be comforting.

Do you know someone working in a STEM profession during the COVID-19 outbreak? We would love to feature them in an upcoming interview. Please reach out to abakay@tlsf.org for more information.

For more information about the Lancaster Science Factory and how you can support our nonprofit mission visit:

www.LancasterScienceFactory.org

