

OHIO STATE PUBLIC HEALTH

THE MAGAZINE OF
THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY
COLLEGE OF PUBLIC HEALTH

FALL/WINTER 2017

FROM COLUMBUS TO KABUL

Improving Reproductive
& Sexual Health



TACKLING OHIO'S
OPIOID CRISIS

A BARBER-ACTIVIST
CHANGES LIVES

CLASS OF '74 STEPS
UP FOR STUDENTS

“Because of your generosity, I can make the most of my Ohio State education. **Public health changed my life, and with my degree, I intend to help improve the health of our nation.**”

—Caleb Ball, bachelor of science in public health fourth-year student
College of Public Health General Scholarship recipient

Caleb always wanted to help others be healthy. His scholarship – made possible by Buckeyes like you – allows him to intern at a health policy institute and work hard toward his public health degree. Instead of worrying about finances, Caleb can pursue the experiences that will help him follow his passion and change lives.

Thank you for helping Caleb and the next generation of public health leaders earn their Ohio State degrees. Please give now to the College of Public Health General Scholarship Fund.

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OHIO STATE PUBLIC HEALTH MAGAZINE

Managing Editor
Gary Snyder

Writers
Steve Barrish
Rachel Bules
Gary Snyder

Proofreader
Renee Watts

Design
Lisa Klancher
Heather Brelsford

Photography
Will Shively
Steve Barrish
Rachel Bules
Gary Snyder

Editorial Board
Courtney Maierhofer,
MPH '15
Alison Norris, PhD
Mikafui Dzotsi, '18
Jon Bullock

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Tasleem Padamsee, PhD
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Julie Robbins, MHA '93, PhD '13
Niru Muralidharan, '18
Steve Smith, MS '77



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DEAN'S MESSAGE



As Conrade Hinds said in his eloquent and inspiring speech at our 2017 Pre-Commencement Celebration, Ohio has long been a pioneer for creating groundbreaking ideas that spur invention and also tackle seemingly intractable challenges.

The same spirit of teamwork and innovation – which made Ohio the birthplace of aviation and helped virtually eliminate the scourge of typhoid fever and cholera – is required again if we are to solve the toughest public health burdens of our day.

In this issue of Ohio State Public Health, you will learn more about how The Ohio State University and our College of Public Health are working to find answers to one of our state's greatest challenges: the opioid crisis. We are all in this together, and we must find solutions together.

Beginning with this issue, we also bring you expanded content and a new design to more fully share the stories of the college's work, partnerships and impact. Clearly, our faculty, students and 3,151 alumni continue to make a great difference, improving the livelihoods and well-being of people in Ohio and beyond.

William J. Martin II, MD

COMMUNITY

College Celebrates Graduates During Pre-Commencement

The College of Public Health celebrated the academic journey and successes of its graduating students during the college's annual Pre-Commencement program in May at the Fawcett Center. About 500 students and their families, faculty, staff, and alumni gathered for the celebration. The Class of 2017 included 239 graduates who joined the ranks of the college's 3,151 alumni.

Featured speaker, author and historian Conrade C. Hinds, spoke on "Ohio's Spirit of Invention: The Key to Conquering Our Tough Public Health Challenges." Hinds shared how the same pioneering ideas and work in Ohio that helped end typhoid fever and cholera here and around the world is needed now to solve our greatest public health challenges, from opioid addiction to water and air pollution.

Hinds' book, "The Great Columbus Experiment of 1908: Waterworks that Changed the World," tells the story of how Columbus and Ohio brought the best minds together to develop a state-of-the-art water and wastewater treatment system to eradicate a typhoid and cholera epidemic. The "moon shot" of its day worked, revolutionized water treatment systems worldwide, and saved millions of lives.



Author-historian Conrade Hinds: "You're the real-world heroes."



A few of the 239 Class of 2017 graduates.

Raising Friendships, Fighting Homelessness in Columbus



PhD students Katie Swidarski (health behavior and health promotion), Robert Orellana (epidemiology), and Joyce Rudy (epidemiology) were among the more than 100 CPH students, alumni, faculty, staff and friends who showed up in full force in August to make new friends, kick off the semester, play some trivia and put a dent in homelessness by raising money for the Columbus Coalition for the Homeless. The Coalition publishes the monthly Street Speech publication, sold by homeless or formerly homeless men and women in Columbus. Learn more at: columbushomeless.org

Demand for College's BSPH Degree Continues to Rise

Both the Institute of Medicine and the Association of Schools of Public Health have chronicled and forecast the looming shortage of highly educated and trained public health professionals, warning that tens of thousands more public health workers are needed by 2020.

In order to help address this workforce shortage, the College of Public Health developed and launched the BSPH degree program several years ago. The goal, according to Gail Kaye, PhD, RD, CPH director of undergraduate programs, was to build a core public health curriculum with interdisciplinary specializations in public health sociology and in environmental public health, and to give graduates several options.

"We wanted graduates to be qualified for early career, entry-level positions in public health agencies and other organizations," says Kaye. "But another primary desired outcome was to build a strong foundation that served as a pipeline for them to advanced study via graduate and professional degree programs."

Fast forward to the present, and the BSPH program has become a resounding success on all levels. Along with student academic quality rising, the number of BSPH students has risen nearly 300 percent from 2012-2016, from 59 to 231 students. When combining all BSPH majors and pre-majors plus students pursuing a global public health or epidemiology minor in the college, the number rises to 552 students, representing an increase of 141 percent.



Top: Pallavi Oruganti in Los Robles, Jinotega, Nicaragua during her MPH culminating project. Oruganti with other OSU students, Comunitad Connect and Los Robles leaders.

MPH student spends rewarding summer conducting research in Nicaragua

It was an unforgettable summer for College of Public Health student Pallavi Oruganti, who conducted fieldwork and collected data in Los Robles, Jinotega, Nicaragua for her Master of Public Health (MPH) culminating project.

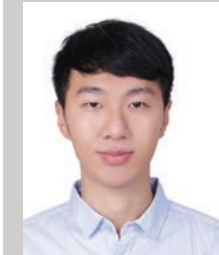
Oruganti was part of an interdisciplinary research team made up of Ohio State students from public health, anthropology and veterinary medicine. Her project focused on infant and child gut microbiomes. Oruganti observed how interactions with soil, water, animals and other items in the household impact microbiome makeup, and ultimately the risk of diarrheal disease.

“We worked in the community with several households, collecting biological samples from children, animals, soil and water,” explains Oruganti, who is earning her MPH with a concentration in veterinary public health. “Additionally, we observed children and babies and conducted interviews with several moms in the community to understand cultural perspectives on raising children and animals in Los Robles.”

“We partnered with the Comunitad Connect public health organization, which allowed us to gain our footing in

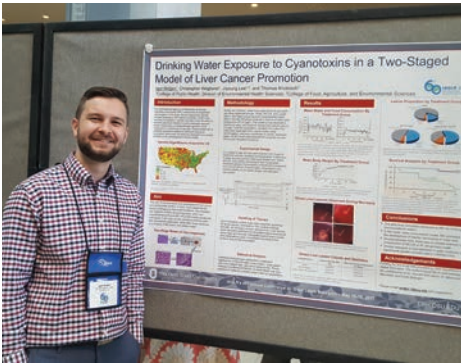
Nicaragua and the community,” Oruganti says. “We are also incredibly indebted to the Brigadistas of Los Robles for sacrificing their time to assist us with identifying households, sharing their public health knowledge and becoming our friends along the way.”

Guo Named New Koch Fellow in Biostatistics



Xiaohan Guo, a PhD student in the college, is the latest recipient of the Dr. Gary G. Koch & Mrs. Carolyn J. Koch Fellowship in the Interdisciplinary PhD Program in Biostatistics.

Guo grew up in Jinan, China, and received his BA in statistics in 2017 from Beijing Normal University. He finds the theory and application of biostatistics appealing, and is excited to make a difference in the world. “I believe that in this field, I may have a chance to make some contribution to the health of human beings,” Guo says. “It is really meaningful.”



Student’s harmful algae blooms and cancer research honored with Science Communication Award

Igor Mrdjen, a PhD student in the College of Public Health’s Division of Environmental Health Sciences, received the Science Communication Award at the International Association for Great Lakes Research’s 60th Annual Great Lakes Research Conference, held in Detroit in May.

Mrdjen’s research, titled “Evaluation of Cyanobacteria and Their Toxins in a Two-staged Model of Hepatocarcinogenesis,” showed that chronic ingestion of the toxins may promote the development of liver tumors in mice previously exposed to a chemical carcinogen. The study was co-authored by CPH faculty members Jiyoung Lee, PhD; Thomas Knobloch, PhD; and Christopher Weghorst, PhD.

The research focused on the toxins that can be created during harmful algae blooms in which cyanobacteria, microscopic organisms found in most lakes and rivers, grow rapidly and affect the cleanliness of the water.

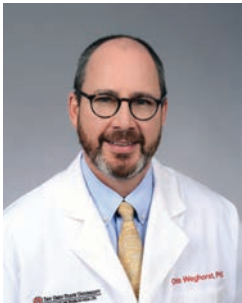
Ghefe studies public health and culture in Japan

Hanna Ghefe, public health-sociology undergraduate student, spent part of her summer in Japan, examining its history, culture and public health practices.

“I was able to explore the diversity of Japan, its history as an industrial country, and the health issues caused by different environmental factors,” says Ghefe. “I learned about their disaster prevention strategies at the Honjo Prevention Center, and went to the Adachi incineration plant to see how Japan gets rid of their waste since they don’t have much space for landfills.”

Team Science = Research Success

Ohio State Public Health sat down with Christopher Weghorst, PhD, associate dean for research, to talk about research at the college and the role his office plays to advance discoveries.



You’ve experienced success as a cancer researcher in the college and at OSU’s Comprehensive Cancer Center - James Cancer Hospital and Solove Research Institute. Can you speak to the team approach to research and how collaboration helps researchers be successful?

First, thank you for recognizing my successes here at OSU. However, the truth of the matter is that much of my success as a cancer researcher has come as the result of collaboration with others. Some of the most exciting and productive research efforts happening today are the result of large interdisciplinary teams of scientists focused on leveraging their expertise and perspectives from a wide array of disciplines and technologies on a particular research problem.

A perfect example of such collaborative team science is the Center of Excellence in Regulatory Tobacco Science which is located within our college.

How does that same spirit of teamwork help the college’s Office of Research?

We also use a similar “interdisciplinary” approach within the Office of Research to accomplish our goals. The college has an outstanding team of highly trained, capable and dedicated individuals who are passionate about seeing our researchers and students succeed in making great discoveries and positively impacting public health.

I am very proud to be working with Emily Modak, (Director of Research Administrative Services), Scot Erbe (Senior Grants and Contracts Specialist) and Mischa Hitchcock (Grants and Contracts Specialist). Each of them bring a unique and valuable set of skills to the office that together result in the high level of support provided to our researchers and students.

How does the Office of Research support faculty and students?

As associate dean for research, in addition to maintaining the office’s outstanding record of traditional pre- and post-award activities, my desire has always been to expand the role of the office to include services that foster not only the quality and quantity of research, but also assist faculty at all levels in their pursuit of independent and sustained research programs. For example, we have developed a series of new initiatives aimed at promoting proposal

development; data collection and collaborations/mentoring; and faculty development.

The office also actively underwrites faculty access to grant writing workshops and outside consultants, provides funds for seed grant and collaborative postdoc programs; supports faculty development seminars; as well as provides consultation and training related to laboratory safety and research compliance issues.

What are some of the strengths of the college’s research . . . and how might emerging public health needs dictate that work?

The college’s research portfolio is quite strong and diverse. CPH researchers are currently leading research and innovation efforts in a variety of impactful areas of public health, including tobacco control and prevention; reproductive and sexual health; health care access, costs, and policy; childhood obesity; cancer prevention; global health; health disparities; and water and air quality, to name a few.

In addition, several new areas of research interest are emerging that focus on local and national public health crises, such as the opioid epidemic and high infant mortality.

You’ve been involved with some important research over the years related to the effect black raspberries may have on cancer. What’s the latest with that work?

My research team and I are currently working as part of an interdisciplinary team with other researchers from the OSU Colleges of Medicine, Dentistry, and Food, Agriculture and Environmental Sciences on a clinical trial-based project that was recently funded by the National Cancer Institute. The project is an extension of my group’s initial finding that dietary administration of black raspberries dramatically reduced the number of oral tumors in a hamster model of oral carcinogenesis. The current translational project explores the critical bi-directional interaction that exists between oral bacteria and phytochemical-rich black raspberry food products within the oral cavity of smokers and non-smokers.

Studies suggest that the polyphenols found in black raspberries may have an impact on the types of bacteria found in the mouth, or prevent damage from cancer-causing chemicals in cigarette smoke. This may ultimately result in the attenuation of inflammation within the mouth and subsequent reduction of oral disease progression.

Ventilated Cigarettes Likely Contribute to a Form of Lung Cancer

Min-Ae Song, PhD, postdoctoral fellow in the CPH Center of Excellence in Regulatory Tobacco Science, and Micah Berman, JD, associate professor of health services management and policy, were among the co-authors on research which shows that ventilated or so-called “light” cigarettes have no health benefits to smokers and have likely contributed to the rise of a certain form of lung cancer that occurs deep in the lungs.

Song and Berman were among several co-authors from The Ohio State University Comprehensive Cancer Center — Arthur G. James Cancer Hospital and Richard J. Solove Research Institute, and five other U.S. and international cancer centers. The findings were published in the Journal of the National Cancer Institute.



Center Helps Guide Ohio Public Health Agencies Toward Accreditation

The college has received several grants from the Association of State and Territorial Health Officials (ASTHO) and from state health departments to develop programs that will educate and support governmental public health agencies and help them achieve public health accreditation.

According to Andy Wapner, DO, MPH '12, clinical assistant professor at the College of Public Health and director at the Center for Public Health Practice, Ohio is one of the most active states in the country regarding public health accreditation, with more than a dozen local health departments and the state's health department reaching accreditation recently.

Gallo’s Work on Objective Measures for Sexual Exposure Rewarded With Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation Grand Challenges Grant

Maria Gallo, PhD, associate professor of epidemiology, received a \$100,000 Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation Grand Challenges Explorations Award this summer. The funding will support Gallo’s research to “adapt a validated computer-based psychological test known as the Implicit Association Test to measure the implicit opinions of women in Vietnam on hormonal contraceptives in order to encourage use.”



Maria Gallo with collaborator and physician researcher Nghia Nguyen, MD, PhD. Nguyen will lead the data collection among contraception users and non-users in Hanoi, Vietnam.

Links Found Between Preschooler Routines, Emotions and Obesity

Family structure including regular bedtimes, mealtimes and limited screen time appear to be linked to better emotional health in preschoolers, and that might lower the chances of obesity later, a new study suggests.

“This study provides more evidence that routines for preschool-aged children are associated with their healthy development and could reduce the likelihood that these children will be obese,” says lead author Sarah Anderson, PhD, College of Public Health associate professor of epidemiology.

The study – the first to look at the connections between early childhood routines and self-regulation and their potential association with weight problems in the pre-teen years – appeared in the International Journal of Obesity.



Researcher Explores Vending Policy, Food Options and Student Choices

For several years, Gail Kaye, PhD, RD, associate professor of health behavior and health promotion, has been leading research efforts examining campus-based snack food choices and consumption, and the effects of policies on vending purchases.

One research study showed that students selected less healthier options from vending machines even when healthier products were increased.

Another examined the effects of Ohio State’s new policy changes which improved the nutrient quality of vending products campus-wide. In that study, Kaye and her team found that after the policy took effect, calories consumed, fat and sugar intake all decreased.

According to Kaye, who also serves as director of undergraduate programs at the college, “vending machine policy can be used as a mechanism to reduce the

availability of less healthy, energy-dense snack options and make healthier, nutrient-dense snack options more available to the public.”

Kaye’s campus vending food options and consumer behavior research receives \$34,000 in funding per year, with a 10-year commitment. The work also provides research experience for Ohio State undergraduate and graduate students.

Three-year Study Begins Examining Dramatic Rise of Syphilis

With syphilis rates rising across the country, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has awarded a \$1.589 million grant to Ohio State faculty members William Miller, MD, MPH, chair of the College of Public Health's Division of Epidemiology, and Abigail Norris Turner, PhD, associate professor in the Division of Infectious Diseases in the College of Medicine and CPH associate professor of epidemiology, to help examine the reasons for the increase.

The goal of the research is to identify behaviors and other characteristics which may increase syphilis risk, specifically by examining the social and sexual networks of men who have sex with men in Columbus.

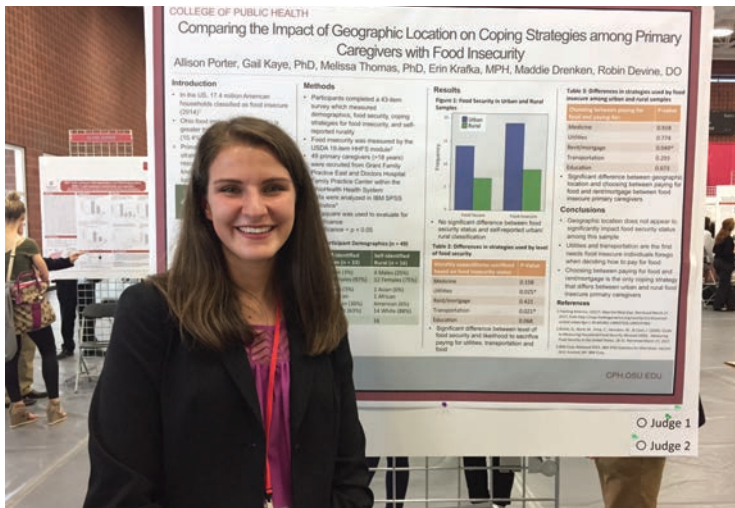
Years Before Brain Cancer Diagnosis, Changes Detectable in Blood and Immune System

Changes in immune activity appear to signal a growing brain tumor five years before symptoms arise, new research has found.

Interactions among proteins that relay information from one immune cell to another are weakened in the blood of brain cancer patients within five years before the cancer is diagnosed, says lead researcher Judith Schwartzbaum, PhD, associate professor of epidemiology at the college and a member of Ohio State's Comprehensive Cancer Center. The research was supported by the National Cancer Institute, and appeared in the journal PLOS ONE.



Students Excel at Denman Undergraduate Research Forum



Allison Porter, BSPH '17, with her award-winning research on food insecurity. Porter now works as a child nutrition assistant supervisor with the Canton City School District.

Several undergraduate students from the college presented their thesis research during the Denman Undergraduate Research Forum held at Ohio State, with two students receiving awards for their research.

Allison Porter, BSPH '17, took first place and Montgomery Burgoon took second place in the Public Health and Applied Health Sciences category.

Porter's research focused on food insecurity in central Ohio. She studied primary caregivers of children in Franklin County to find how they coped with food insecurity, and to learn what factors shape the decisions and lifestyles of those who do not have the means to feed themselves or their dependents.

BREAKING GROUND

By William Considine, MS '71



With nearly half of all U.S. children on Medicaid, we need to move beyond the funding uncertainty. Parents who heroically care for children with cancer, diabetes, cerebral palsy, and other chronic illnesses should not have to worry about the political whims of lawmakers casting votes based on campaign promises and re-election strategies.

As Congressional leaders spent much of the year debating various options for repealing and replacing the Affordable Care Act, we've heard about premiums and deductibles, CBO scores, the federal deficit, tax cuts, funding caps, the fate of the individual mandate, and pre-existing conditions. But one word that has barely been mentioned in the health care discussion is this one: Children.

The number one insurer for pediatric health care in this country is Medicaid, which was established with a focus on children in 1965. Since then, Medicaid has been expanded to cover nursing homes, and low-income or disabled adults not yet qualified for Medicare. This has resulted in children being crowded out of Medicaid. Currently, 45 percent of all Medicaid recipients are children yet they account for just 19 percent of total Medicaid expenditures.

In our state of Ohio we have 2.4 million children and 1.3 million depend on Medicaid for their health care but only represent nearly 20 percent of the Medicaid budget.

With nearly half of all U.S. children on Medicaid, we need to move beyond the funding uncertainty. Parents who heroically care for children with cancer, diabetes, cerebral palsy, and other chronic illnesses should not have to worry about the political whims of lawmakers casting votes based on campaign promises and re-election strategies.

It's time to spin children off of Medicaid and the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) and give them their own health care program. As I envision it, such a program would cover 40 million children and could be budget neutral. Individual states would be incentivized to structurally separate Medicaid funding for kids from the remainder of Medicaid funding, thus allowing elected officials to make

deliberate and specific decisions related to society's commitment to children's health care.

Ohio, with its strong network of children's hospitals, would be a great place to pilot this concept. The Ohio children's hospitals have been working together for years on quality improvement programs that have saved millions of dollars; and our primary care offices, child safety programs and advocacy efforts are keeping kids healthy and out of the hospital.

But no parent plans for a premature delivery, a chronic illness or a traumatic injury, so a safety net program will always be needed. It should be viewed not as welfare but an investment.

A 2015 Yale study quantified the positive return on investment seen for children covered by Medicaid. The study concluded, "People who had been eligible for Medicaid as children, as a group, earned higher wages and paid higher federal taxes than their peers who were not eligible for the federal state health insurance program."

I have watched the health care debate for 40 years, and the partisan divide shows no sign of improving. Our children and families deserve better.

Children don't vote. They are not Republican or Democrat. They don't have a lobby. We must speak up for them. Decisions being made now will impact a generation of children, and we cannot afford to shortchange their futures or the future of our country.

William H. Considine has been president and CEO of Akron Children's Hospital since 1979. He is a 1971 graduate of the Master of Science in Health Administration program at Ohio State.

FROM COLUMBUS TO KABUL:

Working to improve reproductive and sexual health

BY GARY SNYDER

Assessing how to build a hospital for mothers and children in Kabul, Afghanistan.

Deciphering why syphilis rates in the U.S. have skyrocketed.

Creating an accurate measure of contraceptive use among Vietnamese women.

Different parts of the world, same shared purpose: understand the needs and barriers, and find answers that lead to better reproductive and sexual health for individuals and populations.



Ohio State faculty members Maria Gallo, Alison Norris, William Miller and Marcel Yotebieng

Photo: Will Shively



Lee Hilling, MS '74, with Dr. Jalil, and father of conjoined twin, after surgery at the French Medical Institute for Mothers and Children (FMIC) in Kabul, Afghanistan.



Hilling with village health workers in Bamyan District, Afghanistan

DARING GREATLY IN AFGHANISTAN

"The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood; who strives valiantly; who errs, who comes short again and again ... who at the best knows in the end the triumph of high achievement, and who at the worst, if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly, so that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who neither know victory nor defeat."

"Citizenship in a Republic"
President Theodore Roosevelt, 1910

Lee Hilling has never kept company with "cold and timid souls."

During the Vietnam War, he helped lead a team of Navy doctors and corpsmen caring for a civilian population in the Mekong Delta on the Cambodian border. Tough duty, but one that planted the seed for his decades-long drive to improve lives in some of the most challenging places on the planet.

"Although we were a Navy team, we lived with a U.S. Army Special Forces unit,"

recounts Hilling, MS '74. "They provided our security, but we were accountable to the U.S. Agency for International Development. I saw the desperate state of civilians, especially women and children, during times of war. I met many people who had worked in similar situations all around the world. I decided I wanted to do that too, but I had to wait many years – until I finished my career with the Navy and had a brief health administration career in the U.S. – before I finally had the opportunity."

That opportunity arrived in 1992 when Hilling joined the Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN), moving with his wife to Karachi, Pakistan, where he was CEO of the Aga Khan University Hospital for six years. The AKDN then tapped Hilling's combination of health administration leadership and compassion to elevate health systems and care in Pakistan, India, Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, Tajikistan and now, in Afghanistan.

"My work in Afghanistan, with what eventually became the French Medical Institute for Mothers and Children (FMIC), initially an 85-bed



With children in traditional Afghan dress at FMIC's 10th Anniversary celebration.

children's hospital, began in June 2004," Hilling says. "I was asked by His Highness the Aga Khan to go to Kabul, on behalf of the AKDN, and assess an opportunity to enter into a partnership with the French development organization, La Chaîne de l'Espoir. La Chaîne was building a hospital in Kabul and they realized they needed a long-term partner. Based on my assessment and recommendation, His Highness decided to pursue the partnership."

"I participated in negotiations of an MOU for a public-private partnership, comprised of two private parties – the AKDN and La Chaîne and two public partners – the Governments of Afghanistan and France, with the AKDN managing the institution on behalf of all the partners. I led implementation of the FMIC, and have served as chairman of its board ever since," says Hilling.

In 2016, an additional 66 beds were opened at the FMIC, including 52 beds for high-risk maternity care and 14 neonatal intensive care beds.

"When asked to go to Afghanistan, I jumped on it," says Hilling, author of the book, "A Place of Miracles," which shares the story of the FMIC's important work. "The horrendous civil war was raging there when we lived next door in Pakistan. We visited an International Commission of the Red Cross (ICRC) hospital on the Afghan border and my hospital treated Afghan refugees and trained Afghan nurses who worked at the ICRC hospital. I had great respect



Hilling at FMIC's first post-graduate medical education graduation ceremony in 2016.

BRIDGES TO BETTER SEXUAL HEALTH

Spend a few minutes with JaNelle Ricks, DrPH, MPA, and you quickly see what makes her effective. A calm demeanor, bright smile, and compassionate focus help her build trust within communities struggling to overcome the complex barriers to better health.

An assistant professor of health behavior and health promotion, Ricks' expertise plays an indispensable role in sexual health studies, particularly in helping recruit hard-to-reach populations in order to better understand and define a problem, design a comprehensive study, and come up with solutions.

and empathy for them. I have now been to Afghanistan about 70 times, and my respect for and friendship with Afghans has only strengthened by working closely with them for the past 13 years."

Hilling says Ohio State provided the foundation for him to be successful in highly unstable environments.

"I was not a traditional student when I entered Ohio State's health ad-

ministration program," says Hilling. "I was 33 years old, married and had four kids. I had a lot of work experience and had served in Vietnam. Despite all that, everyone welcomed me. They prepared me for a successful career in the dynamic U.S. health care environment. I chose to work in the international setting, ultimately in some of the most troubled areas of the world. My Ohio State education and experience enabled me to do that and for that, I will be forever grateful." ✿

African-American men and what interventions may help," says Ricks. "We're looking at the roles sexual debut, financial imbalance in a relationship and internalized homophobia play, and how disclosure of STI and HIV status to a partner may be affected because of stigma, particularly in the Deep South."

Ricks is also part of a team working on a new \$1.589 million grant from the CDC to examine the reasons for the skyrocketing syphilis rates in Columbus and across the country. Joining Ricks in the study are faculty members William Miller, MD, MPH, chair of the College of Public Health's Division of Epidemiology, Abigail Norris Turner, PhD, associate professor in the Division of Infectious Diseases in the College of Medicine and CPH associate professor of epidemiology, and Julia Applegate, MPH '17, health program director at the Equitas Health Institute for LGBTQ Health Equity, based in Columbus.

Ricks is working with Equitas Health and Columbus Public Health on community engagement and in developing approaches to recruit a diverse cohort of men to participate in the study.

"Our collaboration with Columbus Public Health and Equitas Health on this project is essential, and will help build a sustainable research partnership," Miller says. ✿

Researcher JaNelle Ricks leads engagement with community partners, such as Equitas Health in Columbus, to recruit men to participate in sexual health studies.

FORGING TOOLS TO BOOST FAMILY PLANNING

Malawi and the United States mirror each other in some important ways.

"Our group studies why women and couples who don't want to have a baby sometimes don't use family planning methods," says Alison Norris, MD, PhD, assistant professor of epidemiology. "When couples don't use family planning, women are much more likely to have an unplanned pregnancy. About 40 percent of all pregnancies in Malawi, where we're doing our study, are unplanned. In the United States, the same proportion – 40 percent of all pregnancies — are unplanned. Unplanned pregnancy is an issue that is experienced everywhere in the world."

A Grand Challenges Explorations award from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation is helping Norris develop new tools to improve family planning, whether in Malawi or Ohio.

"The funding from the Gates Foundation can help us understand the barriers to family planning use. We will use our results to design a tool for clinicians and community health workers to guide women and couples with the goal of preventing unplanned pregnancies," explains Norris. "You might be surprised at the similarities between Malawi and the US in terms of barriers to using family planning. What we learn in Malawi will be useful to improving care and health outcomes for underserved communities here. When pregnancies are planned, women and the infants tend to be healthier than when pregnancies are unplanned.

"For example, we know that very close birth spacing is an important risk for pre-term birth, which is a leading cause of infant mortality in Ohio. This Gates Foundation grant is an investment in our ability to provide better services, leading to better health, for women and families in Malawi and around the world, including right here at home," says Norris.

Norris' research examines sexual and reproductive health with a goal of preventing sexually transmitted



Community members of Wachi village meet with Norris.

infections (STIs) and improving reproductive outcomes for women and men.

"I want to understand how context, such as endemic disease, social norms, demographic factors, and cultural and institutional structures, influences health and disease," Norris says. "Methodologically, I focus on using innovative methods to obtain high quality data about sensitive and stigmatized topics."

An ideal platform for complex research

Not long after arriving at Ohio State in 2012, Norris launched a research program in Malawi called Umoyo wa Thanzi (UTHA), which means "Health for Life" in the Chichewa language.

The Umoyo wa Thanzi team has been working on community and clinic-based projects in collaboration with the non-governmental organization, Child Legacy International (CLI), in Malawi. The CLI organization provides direct community access for researchers and continuity through their daily operations in the areas around Malawi.

The UTHA partnership aims to understand how women's and men's decision-making impacts fertility,

family planning, pregnancy, and childbirth, as well as HIV and STI testing and treatment.

"With the funding from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and multiple Ohio State grants, we have carried out three waves of a longitudinal study in a cluster-randomized sample of more than 1,000 reproductive aged women and their partners," says Norris, who is also an assistant professor in the College of Medicine. "We are assessing barriers and facilitators to contraceptive use among UTHA cohort participants. This research partnership and community cohort serve as an ideal platform for investigating complex sexual and reproductive health research questions."

The UTHA study site is based at the McGuire Wellness Centre, a health facility founded by Child Legacy International. Located in the district of Lilongwe in central Malawi, the clinic serves a catchment area of 68 villages (~20,000 people) and provides clinical exam rooms, laboratory space, and accommodations for researchers.

The structure of the UTHA has become a model for the development of sustainable partnerships between universities and non-governmental organizations.



In the future, the ongoing partnership between Ohio State, CLI, and the University of Malawi College of Medicine will be focusing on designing culturally acceptable interventions, based on research, to improve the health of people in Malawi.

“I love my research team,” says Norris. “The Malawians on the team are creative, thoughtful, hardworking and committed. We have a great time designing research studies and implementing them together.” ✿

Norris with UTHA research team members in Malawi village.

CREATING MODEL HIV CARE IN THE CONGO

“Some of the challenges that I see in the Congo remind me of my youth growing up in rural Cameroon,” says Marcel Yotebieng, MD, PhD, MPH, assistant professor of epidemiology.

“The limited or difficult access to basic commodities, water, electricity, or sanitation,” Yotebieng says. “The same challenges accessing health care and outcomes. You see children dying at home from preventable diseases like malaria because families cannot afford to take them to the health care center or they take them there when it’s too late.

“Even when they get there, the life-saving medication might not be available.”

Yotebieng’s commitment to finding answers and improving health in low-resource regions has been the propelling force behind his work with collaborators to develop strong research infrastructures in the Democratic Republic of Congo and in other central Africa countries.

His work has informed national and international guidelines on tuberculosis management and treatment of HIV in children. He is currently leading a large cluster trial involving 104 health facilities from

the 35 health districts of the province of Kinshasa, DR Congo, with plans to enroll 3,000 HIV-infected pregnant and breastfeeding women and their HIV-exposed infants and follow them for multiple years.

Since 2004, with funding from the NIH, the President’s Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR), WHO, CDC, and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Yotebieng and his research team in the Democratic Republic of Congo have worked with the Ministry of Health and other organizations to develop and test best models for scaling HIV care.

“Working with a team of over 80 Congolese collaborators, we successfully engaged key community organizations which together control most of the health care infrastructures in the country — to directly provide quality HIV prevention, care, and treatment in almost 200 health clinics,” Yotebieng says. “We have identified key barriers to access and use of health services in DRC, proposed and evaluated solutions, and worked with the Ministry of Health to implement at scale for the benefit of the national community. One example of this win-win partnership is in the work to prevent mother-to-child transmission (PMTCT).

“We also designed a mother-infant registry to collect real-time data on

uptake of critical prevention services,” he says. “With this registry, we learned that the most pressing issue was a high rate of ‘loss to follow-up’ patients. In consultation with the ministry we developed numerous interventions to address this problem including a financial incentive intervention.

“The registry is now being used by the Ministry of Health throughout the nation to monitor PMTCT implementation and to gain an understanding of the long-term programmatic and clinical outcomes among mothers and infants receiving HIV care in maternal and child health clinics in Kinshasa.” ✿



Marcel Yotebieng with a family during home visit in Maluka, DRC. Ashley Ray, BSPH ’16, MPH ’17, also worked with Yotebieng as a student to conduct a longitudinal analysis of data which examined optimal feeding practices for HIV-positive mothers in the DRC.

CONCEIVING MEASURES TO IMPROVE REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH

By the time the speaker finished talking to her fourth-grade class, the career wheels were already churning.

“A Peace Corps volunteer spoke to us about her experiences in Bolivia, helping people sell plants and coffee as part of a micro-business,” says Maria Gallo, PhD, associate professor of epidemiology.

“I decided that day I was joining the Peace Corps.”

Gallo made good on that grade school pledge, serving in the Peace Corps in Nicaragua from 1995-1997. It was also then in a small village in Nicaragua where Gallo witnessed that people fell ill with a “mysterious hemorrhagic fever.” Until a team from the CDC arrived and identified the outbreak of leptospirosis, the cause was unknown.

Gallo says that “seeing a field investigation unfold in real life was powerful.”

The public health “bug” implanted, Gallo would go on to work in Bardstown, Kentucky, educating migrant farmworkers about health services, helping communities organize, and interpreting in clinics.

“That was like the Peace Corps, but in the US,” says Gallo. “I was attracted to public health because it dealt with

inequalities and you were able to see what was happening on the ground.”

After taking her first graduate school course in epidemiology, she found the perfect fit.

“I just love epi,” says Gallo. “You use concrete quantitative skills and also can work with people and on issues on the ground. In public health, we think based on making the system better, and epi is essential to population health.”

For the past 16 years, Gallo has conducted research, primarily in low-resource settings, with the “overarching goal to influence public health, clinical practice, and individual behavior in order to improve women and men’s reproductive health.”

Her research, which includes an NIH RO1-funded trial in Thanh Hoa, Vietnam, and a study in Kingston, Jamaica to “debunk myths about contraceptive safety among women,” focuses on understanding, measuring, and preventing risky sexual behavior and related outcomes, such as HIV and other sexually transmitted infections, unexpected pregnancies, and unsafe abortions.

Gallo’s work in Vietnam received a boost this summer when she received a Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation Grand Challenges Explorations Award. The funding supports her research to “adapt a validated computer-based



Health educator in Vietnam counsels a couple on contraceptive options.

psychological test known as the Implicit Association Test to measure the implicit opinions of women in Vietnam on hormonal contraceptives in order to encourage use.”

Much of Gallo’s work has been centered on developing semen biomarkers as objective measures for sexual exposure. These biomarkers revealed to Gallo and her team that women might not be able to give good accounts of their exposure to unprotected sex. She and her team were not surprised by these findings and Gallo says that, “it is critical that we improve our research on sensitive topics by developing ways of measuring that don’t rely on self-reports.”

With the Gates award, Gallo begins a new project that will build off of her previous research, extending a validated computer-based psychological test—the Implicit Association Test (IAT)—to collect implicit measures of beliefs about contraceptive safety and naturalness.” The IAT is available online and is used to measure racial prejudices.

According to Gallo, the IAT is used in social psychology as an implicit measure of the association between two constructs and has proved useful in research concerning attitudes, self-esteem, and stereotypes. It is helpful when people may be hesitant or unable to report their true feelings.

Using the IAT to objectively measure women’s beliefs could “improve both clinical care to women and the quality of research methodology in the field of contraception,” says Gallo. ✿

Maria Gallo with health care team at Hanoi hospital.



SHEAR ADVOCATE

The indomitable Al Edmondson clips hair, grows hope for all

By Gary Snyder

A botched home haircut. Taunts from schoolmates. The future looked bleak.

The young Jonathan Robinson had enough. He needed a problem solver. Pronto.

Better call Al.



Jonathan Robinson and Al Edmondson.

Photo: Gary Snyder

"When I was in elementary school, my dad would cut my hair. I used to get mad at him because he would always nick me and mess up. The final straw was one time he was cutting my hair pretty low and he put a big hole in my hair. I had a huge bald spot and everyone was making fun of me at school.

"That's when I decided my dad wasn't cutting my hair anymore. We knew Al through our church and knew he had a barber shop. Ever since, I've been coming here."

That bald spot tipping point 13 years ago kick-started a special relationship between Al Edmondson, owner of A Cut Above the Rest barber shop, and

Robinson, a 2017 BSPH Ohio State graduate. One that goes well beyond shears and styles.

Like he has to many in the Columbus Near East Side community, Edmondson became more than a barber to Robinson. The Gulf War veteran became a mentor, sounding board, and example of a true man of action working every day to improve the well-being of women, men and families in his once-thriving-and-could-be-again neighborhood.

"Blood pressure. Haircut. They go hand-in-hand."

While he has always carried a strong sense of service, Edmondson kept plenty

busy in the early days of his barbershop building the business and providing expert haircuts.

But the death of one of his customers 15 years ago spurred him to go beyond barbering.

"I had a client who passed away who was a very good friend of mine. He was a diabetic," says Edmondson. "It made me think about how many African-American men come to our barbershops who may have high blood pressure issues and diabetes, and aren't going to the doctor to check it out."

"So I worked with the American Heart Association and talked to them about

bringing their information in here to help men learn a little more about diabetes and the health risks for African-American males. I connected with Ohio State's College of Nursing and with Chi Eta Phi, an African-American program for nurses, and they started doing health screenings in the shop.

"At first, men were cautious about getting the screenings," says Edmondson. "They didn't want to know the bad news. But after a while, over the years, they became more comfortable with it. They'd see the sign up and know I was going to ask them about it. Blood pressure, haircut. They go hand in hand."

In 2010, with the health screenings off and rolling in eight different shops within the neighborhood, Edmondson decided it was time to launch a non-profit effort aimed at tackling greater needs in his community. Making a Difference Inc. was born.

"Making a Difference started with a back-to-school rally and then we created a fatherhood program that included basketball clinics," says Edmondson. "You have to find a carrot to get the kids to come in...so we combined school supplies with a basketball camp, which the dads also enjoy. We brought professionals in to speak about wellness."

"I reached out to my friends, the banks, and then to the YMCA because I want people to come out and talk about the importance of having family values," he adds. "I brought Jonathan's father, J. Tracy Robinson, on board to help lead the fatherhood program. We're also trying to provide healthy food options in the corner convenience stores, build economic growth through the Mt. Vernon Business District, and attract a grocery store."

"It's been a great ride."

Edmondson now aims to replicate and expand his model...and the impact.



Photo: Jodi Miller

Ohio State College of Nursing students and faculty have partnered with Edmondson for many years, providing a range of health screenings and education in the barber shop.

“The newest thing I’ve put together under the Making A Difference umbrella is the Ohio Black Barber/Beauty Network,” says Edmondson. “I reach out to other barbers and beauticians to become part of this network so we can all do this work together in the areas of health and wellness, legislative awareness and youth mentorship.”

“People want to do the same things but they don’t know how to get the supplies and programs together. So, I’m telling them to join the network which is free, I’ll teach you, and you go out in your neighborhood and do the same thing. Duplicate it. We want it to go statewide.”

“We’ve got about 10 shops involved so far and that’s how you begin to change your neighborhood. I tell them if they need help, call me, and I’ll send somebody out to help them work on community engagement. Then they can be the champion in their neighborhood.”

Mentors and “the best clients in the world”

“I always say I’m barber to the stars . . . past, present and future.”

The “stars” on Columbus’ Near East Side include a Who’s Who of American culture, sports and education. Walk into Edmondson’s shop and you’re greeted with a mural with portraits of Columbus’ famed East High School alumni. The icons include the acclaimed writer-humorist James Thurber, three-

time All-American Ohio State legend Chic Harley, and McArthur Genius Grant recipient and artist-storyteller Aminah Robinson.

The present-day stars may not be household names, but they shine just as bright as mentors to Edmondson. Doctors, business owners, and budding leaders inspire him.

“I’ve had good men around me. One of my mentors is sitting right over there, Dr. Hicks. He was an OSU doctor and professor.”

Another long-time community leader and A Cut Above the Rest customer is 83-year-old Nelson Crawley, owner of Crawley’s Frame Shop since 1975.

“Mr. Crawley comes to the shop and we talk a lot about things that need to be done in the community,” Edmondson says. “It’s important because you always want to learn from people who have been before you and learn how to jump over different obstacles and deal with different people in the neighborhood, and he’s done it all.”

“He’s been a great role model showing how to navigate certain situations.”

“I try to do my best to keep them on the right track and give them important information and sincere information and do all I can to help them continue the legacy out here on the east side,” says Crawley.

“When he says legacy, you figure we are both part of the fabric of this community,” says Edmondson. “Mr. Crawley passed the torch on to me, and now I’m passing the torch on to young men coming to the neighborhood, whether they’re starting new businesses or just need somebody positive that they can look up to. There’s a part that everybody plays in the community.”

Some of the best lessons come from those sitting in his barber’s chair.

“I tell people I’ve got the best clients in the world because I get the CEOs, the drug dealers, I get everybody,” says Edmondson. “I get to talk to them and get a feel for what they’re going through and things that they deal with and not be judgmental about their profession. But I get to learn about so many different things. I get to grow and I can take some of the stuff I hear and take those ideas and put them to use.”



Three generations of leaders: Edmondson, Nelson Crawley and Robinson.

“I told someone today that I’m doing something to help the businesses in the area and they were like ‘wow, how did you come up with that idea?’ I said hey, I talk to people every day. I found a need, let’s go do it. Let’s see if God opens up a door. And if He doesn’t, I’m good. And if He does, that’s great.”

Thriving, decay, and a comeback

The colorful, imaginative mural which stretches across the wall of the shop chronicles the rich heritage of Mt. Vernon Avenue, from the 1940s to the present. Local artist Greg Hawkins captures the flourishing culture and businesses, and of course, the hair and fashion styles through the decades.

“The history of this neighborhood — back in the 40s, this community was very vibrant, there were a lot of thriving businesses and then it started to die out during the 1990s when crack cocaine and drugs started pouring into the neighborhood, which caused the neighborhood to slide off the map for a little bit,” explains Edmondson.



Robinson could one day join the likes of Columbus East Side legends, writer James Thurber and artist Aminah Robinson, honored on the shop’s wall.

“Now there’s a rebirth. We have new investments, we have new businesses. We have new things going on that are bringing people back to the neighborhood. I’m so proud to be president of the business association to help these small businesses find capital to fix up the interiors and exteriors of their buildings.”

“It’s just been a blessing,” he says. “The next 5 or 10 years you’re going to see the same vibrancy you saw 60 years ago. People are going to come back and it’s going to be a very diverse community, and that’s great.”

Listening to Edmondson’s indisputable confidence in the comeback, you just know it will happen.

“Our overall goal is a healthy community, from a grocery store, to the health services provided in the barber shop, young people coming back with new and innovative ideas to help make neighborhoods like ours a great place to live. We’re all trying to play our part in helping make this neighborhood

healthier, better. For all those who come and those who leave, they can say, “man, that was a great place.”

Freshman year haircut opens the path to public health

So, back to that botched home haircut. After that, Jonathan Robinson enjoyed many years of education in the barbershop. But his career path

match between my interest in the sciences and also my interest in improving people’s lives through medicine.”

“So I took a few public health classes and then asked Al how I could get involved,” says Robinson. “I went to several health fairs and administered surveys to customers in shops. The surveys helped figure out what services they might need and understand their basic health metrics.”

Forward four years, Robinson graduated with a bachelor’s in public health from Ohio State, and has now started pursuing his MHA degree at Johns Hopkins University.

“The thing that I’m most proud of about Jonathan is that he’s going to take it to another level,” Edmondson says. “He’s going to help so many people from just a seed that was planted here in the barber shops. And I know the seed that his dad planted in me, and I can just see it trickling down.”

Wait, what’s *that* in the mural?!

Scanning the Mt. Vernon Avenue wall mural, you see the vivid portrayal of the storied street’s arts, music, business, and sports history. Looking closer though, there appears to be a family with a gentleman sporting a Michigan jersey.

“That’s my younger brother and his family,” Edmondson says. “He passed away after the mural was completed.”

“He was a Michigan fan. But hey, we embrace everyone here!”



A mural on outside of the building illustrates the Near East Side rising up to greater heights.

Ohio's opioid crisis: 'We're all in this together'

By STEVE BARRISH



A mural in the plaza of the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and Museum in Cleveland, part of a public awareness campaign by Cuyahoga County called "Know the Risks."

Photo: Steve Barrish

When Ohio Governor John Kasich passed through the sunlit atrium of the Ohio Statehouse one morning in early April, he noticed a meeting taking place with an all too familiar theme.



Ohio Gov. John Kasich addresses an audience of health, education and government leaders about Ohio's opioid crisis at the statehouse in April.

It was two days after Kasich gave his State of the State address in Sandusky, Ohio, where he discussed, among other needs, the opioid epidemic that has been ravaging his state. So when he stumbled upon a room full of education, health and government leaders discussing opiate abuse in Ohio, he seized the opportunity.

"We go all the way across the board... we're going to see results," Kasich said as he addressed the audience unannounced. "I believe we will see results, absolute positive results in the future, but we're paying for the sins of the past."

Governor Kasich's impromptu speech offered some hope, but was laden with the reality of a crisis that, in 2015, had Ohio leading the nation in opiate overdose deaths, according to a report by the Kaiser Family Foundation.

In this vicious opioid epidemic, Ohio is ground zero.

A CONVERSATION

The meeting in April was one of several events organized this year by The Ohio State University College of Public Health Dean William Martin, MD, that featured speakers and participants from Ohio State, local health departments, non-profits and other organizations on the front lines of Ohio's opioid crisis.

In January 2017, Martin and Director of OSU Extension Roger Rennekamp, PhD, co-hosted a summit on Ohio State's campus that invited experts from inside and outside of Ohio State to discuss their role in the crisis: what they've seen work and the challenges they face.

"We tried a number of novel approaches to highlight what was being done at Ohio State University because we already knew that was a major request of attendees," Martin says.



College of Public Health Division of Epidemiology Chair William Miller, MD, PhD, MPH (left), and Assistant Professor of Epidemiology Kathryn Lancaster, PhD (right), are working on research studies regarding opioid use, treatment and prevention in rural Southern Ohio.

The event featured keynote speakers from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Ohio Mental Health and Addiction Services, RTI International and more. Additionally, experts from a wide range of disciplines shed light on the crisis from their angle with brief “ignite sessions.”

Judy Tansky, PhD, senior lecturer at Ohio State’s Fisher College of Business, discussed her effort to prevent ex-offenders from returning to prison through an entrepreneurship program. Other sessions focused on the roles pets play in the crisis, community outreach efforts by the Ohio attorney general’s office and the Ohio State College of Pharmacy’s “Generation Rx” initiative that distributes education materials on prescription safety.

Martin adds that the primary goal he and Rennekamp had “was to galvanize OSU on this issue in such a way that we would have some actionable next steps.”

Feedback from attendees of the event identified many barriers organizations and individuals face in fighting the crisis, most notably the lack of adequate funding and coordination, and the stigma surrounding substance abuse.

“One of the issues is the ‘us vs. them’ mentality that some people carry,” an attendee commented in a post-event survey conducted by the College of Public Health. “There is no ‘us,’ ‘them’ or even ‘me’ in this situation; there is only ‘we,’ and we have a problem!”

CLOSE TO HOME

Tucked away in the middle of Cunz Hall, College of Public Health Director of Information Systems Don Shymanski keeps the lights dim as he oversees the cyber infrastructure that keeps faculty, students, researchers and staff pushing public health forward.

Yet, even after 15 years, it remains more than just a job to Shymanski; it’s a role in helping communities impacted by public health crises. And it’s personal.

Shymanski’s home county of Ashtabula in Northeast Ohio has been hit hard by the opioid crisis. Buried deep in the Rust Belt, the region’s diminished economy has many residents struggling to find work, and too often turning to substance abuse.

“You see the progression over the years where it changes from high school kids and tobacco to high school kids and all these other things,” Shymanski says. “Unfortunately, meth and heroin were things that just kind of took over up there.”

“There are many similarities from areas I worked internationally in the sense of communities living in resource-constrained settings with limited availability to health care services like harm reduction,” Lancaster says. “Identifying and linking people who are using opioids in rural Ohio to the care and services they need has the potential to change the outlook of this epidemic.”

— Kathryn Lancaster, PhD, assistant professor of epidemiology

Shymanski fondly recalls the times he and his friend Eric spent fishing and hanging out in their early twenties. But in 2016, at the age of 42, Eric lost his life due to an opiate overdose. He left behind three children, including his 10-month-old daughter.

“As with everything, you lose track of people over time,” Shymanski says. “And then you wake up one day and they’re no longer around.”

Eric is one of too many friends and neighbors Shymanski has seen fall victim to substance abuse, overdose or suicide in his small hometown.

“People like Eric, who are wonderful people, their smile would light up a room,” Shymanski says. And it’s this typical scenario of how you see these people fade away into the limelight. [The] smile on their face is nothing compared to what they’re battling inside.”

While he isn’t out in the field developing the public health solutions to combat these issues, Shymanski knows that his role maintains a digital environment of collaboration, communication and security that allows others in the college to help reduce the pain and suffering he has witnessed.

“Just being involved here and seeing the work that’s done for all kinds of different things, ... there’s an impact that we can make,” Shymanski says. “So anything that we can do here that can help out there is a great place for us to be.”

IN THE COMMUNITY

College of Public Health Division of Epidemiology Chair William Miller, MD, PhD, MPH, believes in starting small and building to get to the bigger things. He is the principal investigator on a new grant from the National Institute for Drug Abuse (NIDA), part of the National Institutes of Health (NIH), which has been awarded pending approval from the Ohio State Institutional Review Board (IRB).

The study will focus on managing substance abuse and preventing complications like HIV, hepatitis-C and sexually-transmitted diseases among those who inject drugs, namely opiates, in Scioto, Pike and Jackson counties in Southeastern Ohio. It will be one of eight similar studies across the country, all sharing data and best practices.

“The real hope is that we can develop a deliberative plan that is generalizable, scalable; that can be expanded throughout the rest of the rural areas in Ohio and other parts of the country,” Miller says. “I’m hopeful that – coming from all the projects together, not just ours but the whole thing – there will be some sustainable strategies for bringing services to rural areas, because that’s really what it’s about.”

Miller will examine the opportunities to bring some of the under-used and often unavailable treatment and prevention methods to rural communities, such as medication-assisted treatment (MAT) and syringe service programs, commonly known as “needle exchanges.”

“A lot of the project is going in, seeing what’s there, but then listening to what people want,” Miller says. “It’s very open-ended, so it’s where the community takes us, really.”

Joining Miller on the project from the college will be: Pamela Salsberry, PhD, associate dean for community outreach and engagement; Andrew Wapner, DO, MPH ‘12, director of the Center for Public Health Practice; and Abigail Norris Turner, PhD, associate professor of epidemiology.



Mark Hurst, MD, medical director of the Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services, provides an overview of the opioid crisis at the statehouse in April.

Miller will also be working on a project with Assistant Professor of Epidemiology Kathryn Lancaster, PhD, which will inform his NIH study.

They, along with other colleagues, will perform a systematic review of the opioid epidemic in Appalachian regions: looking at what is published; what interventions have been developed and implemented; identifying trends; and building recommendations on where to go next.

Lancaster has studied the effectiveness of prevention, intervention and treatment methods related to intravenous drug use in countries like Vietnam, Ukraine and Indonesia. She anticipates parallels between her work abroad and the work she’ll be doing in rural Ohio.

“There are many similarities from areas I worked internationally in the sense of communities living in resource-constrained settings with limited availability to health care services like harm reduction,” Lancaster says. “Identifying and linking people who are using opioids in rural Ohio to the care and services they need has the potential to change the outlook of this epidemic.”

Lancaster says that one thing she has learned from her international work is that partnerships are key in order to hit the ground running. “It’s necessary to develop the local partnership to gain that trust in order to not only start examining what is the current situation, what are the trends, but then also figuring out and determining what you do for next steps in addressing the issues.”

Miller and his other grantees involved in the NIH study have been invited by NIDA to a meeting in September to discuss implementation of the project.

OUR RESPONSIBILITY

The NIH-funded grant is a big step forward for the College of Public Health in taking on the opioid crisis, but it is only one layer peeled back from a complicated onion.

“Ohio has these huge challenges in public health,” Martin says. “But we must learn to listen more carefully to the communities we serve. Helping communities help themselves is central to the land-grant mission of OSU, and it is clear that in the middle of a public health crisis, we are all in this together.”

MHA Class of '74 Reaches Endowed Scholarship Goal, Doubles Impact

By STEVE BARRISH

For many, philanthropy is a deeply personal way to pave the path for those who will follow in their footsteps. For members of The Ohio State University's Hospital and Health Administration Class of 1974, it was also a way to mark decades of collective success since graduation.

Their philanthropic group effort resulted in the *Class of 1974 Distinguished Student Endowed Scholarship Fund*, which successfully completed its goal of \$100,000. The target was set by the Ohio Scholarship Challenge, a program that allowed endowed scholarship funds of \$100,000 or more to be matched 1:1 with payouts in perpetuity by Ohio State.

The idea to launch a class scholarship campaign evolved throughout the long-standing friendship of campaign co-chairs and Class of '74 classmates Ned Zechman, MS '74, and Mark Neaman, MS '74. When they learned in summer 2014 of the College of Public Health's fundraising priorities, they decided that creating an endowed scholarship fund seemed like the best way to give back to their alma mater.



Mark Neaman, MS '74

"When the seed was planted to do something in honor of the Class of '74, we knew it was the right time to do something with impact," Neaman says.

"We agreed that scholarships were the highest priority," Zechman added. "And the Ohio Scholarship Challenge – having the match dollars – was an extra incentive to increase the impact of our philanthropy."

Zechman was originally asked to chair the campaign by Tom Wickizer, PhD, chair and professor in the Division of Health Services Management and Policy. While excited about the opportunity, he knew that Neaman would make a great co-chair, and that their teamwork

The pitch to their former classmates was that their gifts would make a true difference in the lives of Master of Health Administration (MHA) student scholarship recipients, particularly as the cost of higher education continues to rise.

“Philanthropy is unique — it is both a responsibility and a blessing,” Neaman added. “It is fulfilling to see the way such an investment continues to multiply and touch the lives of so many individuals.”

— Mark Neaman, MS '74

would lead to a successful scholarship campaign. They both believed that their former classmates would get behind the opportunity to mark their 40-year milestone in such a way.

"MHA cohorts are small, but alumni are dedicated," Neaman says. "We knew the amount of gifts it would take to create a scholarship fund, and it was the right goal for our group."

"Being able to lessen the burden of debt on a hard-working student is making a real difference," Zechman says. "I hope that we are able to help someone who wouldn't otherwise be able to afford the cost of graduate school come out of the program we know and love with less debt, and have a jump-start on their careers and personal lives."



The Ohio State University Health Administration Class of 1974



Ned Zechman, MS '74

The fund will not only benefit students, but will also benefit the overall success of the College of Public Health's MHA program. For Neaman, professionalism starts at the university level, so investing in the program is an investment in the entire profession.

"We're helping to provide resources for talented students," Neaman says. "What these students achieve – in the classroom and in the field – fuels the future success and reputation of the MHA program at Ohio State."

"Philanthropy is unique --- it is both a responsibility and a blessing," Neaman added. "It is fulfilling to see the way such an investment continues to multiply and touch the lives of so many individuals."

The philosophy of giving back began in Zechman's childhood home where his parents modeled philanthropy. He spent his career leading children's hospitals, and a focus on philanthropy played a large role in the success of the organizations he led.

Zechman attributes much of his success to the skills and networking opportunities that Ohio State's MHA program provided. His positive experience at Ohio State is what drives him to pay it forward so that the program can be for today's students what it was for him.

"Ohio State, as a university, has a culture of paying it forward, and our time as students instilled in us that this should remain a constant in our lives even after we graduate," Zechman says. "Giving back, to me, is a way to say thanks for all the blessings I've been given."

College of Public Health students demonstrate knowledge, skill through case competitions

By RACHEL BULES & STEVE BARRISH

Students in all programs at The Ohio State University College of Public Health acquire the knowledge and tools to solve the world's most pressing public health and health care challenges. Some put their knowledge to the test in case competitions throughout the year.

Although not a required part of the curriculum, these competitions have allowed teams of students to gain experience applying their newly-acquired public health training.

"Case competitions give students the opportunity to apply what they have learned in the classroom to solve 'real life' health care problems, present executive-level recommendations and interact with health care leaders and colleagues from around the country," says Julie Robbins, PhD, MHA, director of the college's Master of Health Administration (MHA) program. "For the program, these competitions are an excellent external benchmark in which our students' success demonstrates the high quality of our students and program relative to other top programs around the country."

The MHA program has a long history of students participating in national case competitions such as the National Association of Health Services Executives (NAHSE) Everett V. Fox Student Case Competition, which Ohio State has

participated in each year since its inaugural event in 1996.

Current MHA student Wilkister Tangasi participated at the NAHSE competition in autumn 2016 and says that despite being challenging, the competition was very rewarding.



The team of Ohio State MHA students that competed at the University of Alabama Birmingham Health Administration Case Competition in February. (Left to right: Obineche Nnebedum, Rachel Rutledge, Olivia Moskaluk, Jessica Coon, Sarah Beinkampen, faculty adviser Tory Hogan, PhD)

"Ultimately, NAHSE was a fun way to develop transferable skills including leadership, analytical and strategic thinking, and presentation which will be vital for when I graduate and begin my career," Tangasi says.

Participating in national case competitions has been a valuable experience for MHA students, so much so that Ohio State students began hosting their own competition in 2012.

In March, the Association of Future Healthcare Executives (AFHE) MHA student organization at Ohio State hosted its sixth annual Ohio State Health Care Management Case Competition for first-year MHA students. Ohio State competed against 11 other universities including University of Minnesota and University of Alabama Birmingham.

"We are so proud of our students for putting on this amazing event and working to make it bigger and better every year," Robbins says. "Putting on an event of this scale requires tremendous leadership and commitment. We appreciate that they are willing to invest their time and talent to better the program and provide such a great opportunity for health care management students across the country."

Students of the college's Bachelor of Science in Public Health (BSPH) program have also had the opportunity to participate in national case competitions.

In April, a team of BSPH students competed in the second annual St. Louis University Public Health Scholar Bowl, taking home first place in the case study competition and third place in the trivia competition. Teams from 12 other universities competed, and according to BSPH student Niru Muralidharan, the competition was tough.

"OSU proved that we are a force to be reckoned with, similar to public health powerhouses like Johns Hopkins University and George Washington University," Muralidharan says. "We have brilliant faculty who are teaching us meaningful information and we're utilizing what we've learned in an ever-competitive environment."

The model used by the Public Health Scholar Bowl of incorporating the five core disciplines of public health inspired the College of Public Health Alumni Society.

This fall, CPH graduate and undergraduate students of all specializations will work together to provide creative population health solutions to an Ohio community's public health challenges using real community health assessment data. Teams will present their work in front of CPH faculty, staff, alumni, fellow students and a panel of judges.

CPH Alumni Society president Steve Smith, MS '77, sees this as an opportunity to demonstrate to students how creative problem solving from the wide variety of disciplines taught at the college can come together to solve today's public health issues.

"We are fortunate at the College of Public Health to have a broad spectrum of required academic disciplines," Smith says. "Our hope is that this case competition will challenge the student participants in a fun way and enhance collaboration for the college going forward."



The team of Ohio State undergraduate public health students who took home first place in the case study competition and third place in the trivia competition at the second annual St. Louis University Public Health Scholar Bowl. (Left to right: Yousef Yacoub, Ajay Saraf, Jordan Royster, Greg Zane, Maddie Drenkhan, Niru Muralidharan)

“OSU proved that we are a force to be reckoned with, similar to public health powerhouses like Johns Hopkins University and George Washington University,” Muralidharan says. “We have brilliant faculty who are teaching us meaningful information and we’re utilizing what we’ve learned in an ever-competitive environment.”

— Niru Muralidharan

FUTURE SNOW

By Niru Muralidharan



Niru Muralidharan
BSPH-Environmental
Public Health Student

"Future Snow" presents perspective from the student public health experience. The name is a "tip of the cap" to John Snow, considered the father of public health.

THE TRANSITION FROM SMALL TO BIG U

When I decided to transfer from a university with less than 5,000 undergraduates to one with 40,000, I was overwhelmed. I remember trying to reassure myself that statistically, I had to find at least one person that shared my interests.

I realized fairly quickly that I had severely underestimated Ohio State. I met people younger than me who were managing their own NGOs, running multiple student organizations, doing research abroad, and volunteering all over Columbus. Similarly, I met brilliant professors who were fighting health inequity every day, incredible staff that truly care about students, and aspiring PhD students who knew more about public health than I ever imagined possible.

I'm sharing my experiences to give you a sense of the College of Public Health community. I spend my Mondays studying adolescent male tobacco use with incredibly kind students and professionals from all over the university. It may sound like a boring research meeting, but Dr. Amy Ferketich's team never ceases to make me laugh and think critically. On Tuesdays and Thursdays, you can find me meeting with Dr. Gail Kaye, Dr. Michael Bisesi, or the Office for Academic Programs about how we can improve the undergraduate student experience.

Although The Ohio State University is notoriously big, I have been lucky enough to meet people who truly believe in a culture of improvement and change. I typically spend my Wednesdays navigating a future in epidemiology with Dr. William Miller, talking about environmental advocacy with Dr. Brenda Clark, or hanging out on the third floor of OSU's Cunz Hall with my closest friends.

Ultimately, Ohio State has given me an incredible opportunity to join something so much bigger than myself and work with passionate people all over Columbus to further public health, science, and society. I'm not quite sure where I'll end up for graduate school, but I can only hope my experiences are as positive as they've been so far.

THE GRADUATE

By Aaron Fields, MHA '10

Our Alumni Network: Vital to Furthering Your Career

Developing relationships is critical to your career success for two main reasons. First, no public health problem can be solved by yourself. Whether it is a city commission to reduce infant mortality, or a patient safety team trying to reduce the number of hospital-acquired infections ... any problem requires building strong relationships to solve it together.

The second reason relationships are so important is that they help advance your career opportunities. In February of last year, Business Insider published a research article showing that 85 percent of jobs are filled via networking. That is an astounding number! As CPH alumni hear of a job opening, their first thought will be, "Is there anyone I know that would be a good fit for the role?" When this happens, you want those alums to think of YOU.

For me, networking with alumni helped my career before I even had my first health care job. As a new Ohio State MHA student in 2008, I was uncertain of which job opportunities I wanted to pursue upon graduation. So, I reached out to an alumnus who had started his own consulting business in Chicago. He was happy to talk with me, and we spent over an hour discussing his experiences in consulting, as well as the pros and cons of that career path in general. Through this alum's insights and suggestions, I focused my graduation job search on health care providers, which was the best decision for me. To this day, he and I have never met in person, but the time he spent talking to me as a student dramatically shaped my career. I am forever grateful to him.

Through my experiences I have seen firsthand how important developing a strong alumni network is, but I also know that it can be an intimidating process to begin as a student. So here are some tips to help you start developing your network:

How do I find alumni?

- Ask your professors for recommendations.
- Talk to a guest speaker after class, email them with a question, or ask if you can set up time to talk with them one on one.
- During your summer experience, ask if any graduates are currently working at that organization.
- Seek out alumni that did a practicum, residency, or job that interests you.
- Look for alumni in the area of the country where you want to live after graduation.

To this day, he and I have never met in person, but the time he spent talking to me as a student dramatically shaped my career. I am forever grateful to him.

What should we talk about?

- First, don't be scared. Remember every graduate was a student once, starting their own network with the help of veteran alumni. They will want to help you the same way others helped them.
- Second, treat the first meeting like an interview. Dress professionally and come prepared with questions.
- Be curious and ask questions about the alum and his or her career.



Aaron Fields, MHA, is a 2010 graduate of the College of Public Health's Health Services Management and Policy program, and the President-Elect of the CPH HSMP Alumni Society. He is a strategy consultant for OhioHealth.

- Talk about your career interests, or current events in the field.
- Figure out what conversation medium you are most comfortable in. Some people are better on the phone, others do better in person. (I am the latter and set up a lot of coffee and lunch meetings with my network).
- Always, always ask the question, "Who else should I reach out to?"
- If the conversation goes well, ask if it's OK to talk on a regular basis.
- Your goal should be to make a connection.

Developing your alumni network is vital to furthering your career. I thoroughly enjoy my relationships with fellow alumni, as well as helping students start their own networks. I want to thank all of our amazing Ohio State CPH alumni for being so willing to give back. Your commitment to helping our students and fellow alumni is a real differentiator for our College of Public Health programs. To all our current students, it's never too early to start developing your network. Reach out to an alum today!

ALUMNI NEWS & NOTES



From his backyard observatory, Wyckliffe Hoffler captured this photo of the Horsehead Nebula (also known as Barnard 33). The Horsehead Nebula is a dark nebula in the constellation Orion and is approximately 1,500 light years from Earth. It is one of the most identifiable nebulae because of the shape of its swirling cloud of dark dust and gases, which bears some resemblance to a horse's head when viewed from Earth.

G. Wyckliffe Hoffler, MD, MS '68

G. Wyckliffe Hoffler, MD, MS '68, aerospace medicine graduate from the Department of Preventive Medicine, division of public health, is a retired NASA physician. In his work with NASA, Wyckliffe would evaluate astronauts' cardiovascular health pre- and post-flight - often traveling by boat out to shuttle drop-zones to greet astronauts as they exited the spacecraft. He also supported Shuttle launch and landings and occupational medicine.

As a young NASA flight surgeon, Wyckliffe took a break from studying for his medical boards, and went to the roof of the Manned Spacecraft Center, now the Johnson Space Center, to catch the second night of Apollo 13's flight to the moon. He and a few other NASA employees watched a TV monitor hooked up to a 16-inch telescope and saw oxygen from the craft's just-ruptured tank venting into space.

Wyckliffe said that Ohio State was the only aerospace medicine program accepting students, and he applied and was admitted. There were seven people

He and a few other NASA employees watched a TV monitor hooked up to a 16-inch telescope and saw oxygen from the craft's just-ruptured tank venting into space.

in his class. He earned his MD degree in 1960 from the University of North Carolina.

He grew up in eastern North Carolina, and his schooling and career took him many places before settling in Titusville, Florida, 40 years ago. He and his wife, Anita, live in the home they bought back then, and it is where they raised their three children. They now have great-grandchildren.

He has participated in many medical mission trips to China and Africa, and he embarked on a 10-day trip to Kenya, near the Somalia border, this summer (at the age of 83). Until recently, Anita accompanied him on global health trips.

Wyckliffe has had a love of space since he was a kid, and is an avid astronomer. He has an observatory in his backyard with a massive telescope, computer, and other electronics to help him photograph space. He shared that he "gets wrapped up in exploring and photographing space and sometimes doesn't come inside until 4 am!"



Manoj Sharma, PhD '97

Manoj is an honoree for the Albert Nelson Marquis Lifetime Achievement Award for 2017, given by Marquis Who's Who Publication Board. He has also authored more than 500 publications in his career, including nine books and 195 peer-reviewed journal articles.

SHIRO TANAKA, MS '63

Shiro's beloved wife of 55 years, Fumiko, died of pancreatic cancer in August 2016 in Cincinnati. They were married in 1961 in Japan and he was then accepted to the OSU preventive medicine residency program. Shiro shared that he received an excellent education/training from Drs. Arthur Ashe, Bertram Dinman, Martin Keller and Charles Billings Jr. Columbus was their honeymoon town and they lived on a monthly stipend of \$300. "It seems just like yesterday," he says.

DAVID NEFF, MHA '81

David retired from the Medical University of South Carolina in Charleston, SC, in May 2016 after serving as the administrator for ambulatory and support services for 24 years. He currently serves on the Board and is a volunteer driver for Senior Ride Charleston, a non-profit community services organization that provides affordable transportation services to senior citizens and the visually impaired citizens of Charleston County. On July 1, 2017, David was appointed president of

the Rotary Club of Charleston — Breakfast where he has been a member of the club for 22+ years.

SHERY MILZ, MS '87

Shery serves as the 2017 chair of the board of directors of the American Conference of Governmental industrial Hygienists (ACGIH), one of two national organizations supporting the public health field of industrial hygiene.

CARSON REIDER, PHD '01, MS '87

Carson is now in his 30th year as administrative staff at Ohio State. He is currently the administrative director for the Neuroscience Research Institute. Concerning the College of Public Health, his proudest accomplishments are establishing the Mary Plummer Scholarship Fund and, more recently, the Richard R. Lanese Scholarship Fund – both endowed.

SARAH SAMPSEL, MPH '00

Sarah accepted a position as vice president at Discern Health, LLC, a health care quality consulting firm located in Baltimore.

JASON ROCK, MD, MPH '03

Jason is working as a psychiatrist in Northeast Ohio and Western Pennsylvania. He is board certified in both adult and child and adolescent psychiatry. Jason lives in Youngstown with his wife and four children.

ERICK VIDMAR, MHA '06

Erick recently accepted a new position as the administrative director of Cleveland Clinic's operations in Nevada.

BETH WAGG, MPH '07

In May, Beth received her second master's degree from The Ohio State University. She now has a Master of Public Health and Master of Applied Clinical and Preclinical Research.



Meredith Inniger, MHA '09

Meredith received the American College of Healthcare Executives (ACHE) Early Career Healthcare Executive Regent's Award, given by the ACHE Regent for Pennsylvania & Southern New Jersey. The Early Career Healthcare Executive Award recognizes ACHE members who have made significant contributions to the advancement of health care management excellence and the achievement of ACHE's goals.



MARISA BITTONI, MS '87, PHD '13

Marisa is a research scientist at the OSU Comprehensive Cancer Center and is currently conducting research on lifestyle factors, inflammation and lung cancer risk. She resides in Columbus with her husband, Giorgio. They have two grown daughters who also live in Columbus.



JESSICA JOLLY, MHA '13, MPH '14

Jessica started as the director of regional and clinical operations at the Louisiana Department of Health Office of Public Health in October 2016. In her role, she manages a \$35 million budget and is responsible for the strategic direction, operations, quality improvement, financials and human resource management of 64 parish health unit clinics, nine regional public health offices, pharmacy services and nursing services comprised of nine physicians, four pharmacists, 15 advanced practice nurses and 700 front-line staff. Their work assures that all Louisiana residents have access to family planning, STD/HIV, tuberculosis, WIC, immunizations, children with special health care needs, genetics, and vital record services statewide.



LAUREN BATTISTA, MPH '16

Lauren received a promotion to program manager of Buckeye Wellness, under the Office of the Chief Wellness Officer at The Ohio State University in January 2017. She co-facilitates the Buckeye Wellness Innovator program, effectively providing guidance and direction to over 450 volunteers. Lauren also manages all Buckeye Wellness programming for faculty and staff. She is an adviser for two student organizations, Buckeyes for Wellness and Alpha Phi Omega. She is also a co-founder and service/fundraising director of a new young professional's service organization called EPIC, Empowering (Young) Professionals in Columbus.

MARGARETTE SHEGOG, MPH '09

Margarette is heading to Fortuna, CA, to be "a full-scope family medicine doctor."

ERIN SHAFFER, MHA '10

In May, Erin was given the additional responsibilities of executive director of the Transplantation Institute at University of Chicago Medicine after 1 ½ years serving as executive director of the Heart and Vascular Center. Her new title is now executive director of the Heart and Vascular Center & Transplantation Institute.

DYLAN GALOS, PHD, MS '11

Dylan recently finished a PhD in epidemiology from the University of Minnesota, Twin Cities, and has begun work as a research scientist at Wilder Research. Dylan's work will involve overseeing and conducting research studies in public health, with the subject areas of health equity, active living and adverse childhood experiences as primary content areas.

AMY PETROCY, MPH '12

Amy has relocated to Australia where she is now working at the Brisbane North Primary Health Network, an Australian government initiative to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of medical services for patients. In her role as engagement & planning officer, she supports the organization's engagement with key stakeholders and assists with the PHN's regional health planning and commissioning processes.

EMILY DESHAIES, MPH '12

In September 2016, Emily took the position of environmental specialist II at the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency in the Division of Air Pollution Control at the Southeast District Office, Logan, Ohio. She was formerly a registered sanitarian at the Pickaway County Health Department.

KEITH HUSTAK, PA-C, MPH '12

In the last nine months, Keith received another promotion at Spectrum Health. He is now a vice president serving their APPs. This is the fourth promotion Keith has received since obtaining his MPH degree from Ohio State in 2012. He has three daughters: Avery; Sadie (born while he was in school); and now Haddie, who is two years old.

CHRIS REA, PHD '13, MPH '09

Chris recently accepted a position as an associate program officer at the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine in the Gulf Research Program.



Suzi Martinez (middle) in Nicaragua with two past Princeton in Latin America Fellows.

Suzi Martinez, global public health '17

Suzi has started a year-long Princeton in Latin America Fellowship (PiLA) in Nicaragua. She was placed with Comunidad Connect, a public health organization, as a Health Connections Fellow.

NILESH WICKRAMANAYAKE, MPH '14

Nilesh is currently working as compliance/QI director at Southeast, Inc. Healthcare Services.

JESSICA SOLOMON, MPH '15

Jessica was accepted into the Ohio State College of Veterinary Medicine DVM program for the Class of 2021.

KENDALL LESER, PHD '16

Kendall started on July 25, 2017, as a tenure track assistant professor of community and environmental health at Old Dominion University in Norfolk, VA. Kendall will be mainly teaching in the MPH program.

MICHAL ELIAS-BACHRACH, MPH '17

Michal earned her MPH in May 2017 and is working as a social worker at the Center for Healthy Weight and Nutrition at Nationwide Children's Hospital.

CLAIRE MEEKS, MPH '17

After graduating in May with her MPH, Claire recently took a new position as business systems analyst at The Ohio State University Wexner Medical Center.



BROOKE RENGERS, MPH '16

Brooke married her high school sweetheart of 10 years just a week after graduating in May 2016. After returning from their honeymoon in Riviera Maya, she jumped right into the Graduate Entry Nurse Practitioner program at Ohio State. She is now one semester away from NCLEX eligibility and five semesters away from graduation. Brooke thanks her "MPH foundation" for making her "a well-rounded and big picture kind of nursing student... and wife!"

ROBERT ORELLANA, MPH, PHD '18

Robert competed in his first triathlon, the 2017 Ross Tri-Fit Challenge, this year. In his career, Robert has served as the National Healthcare Safety Network (NHSN) facility administrator for The Ohio State University Wexner Medical Center. One of his roles in this appointment involves disseminating the risk modeling used to benchmark the hospital to others around the nation.

Did you recently get a new job? Earn a promotion? Make a difference in your community or work? Win an award? Get married? Have a child?

Share your news or update with fellow alumni, students, faculty and others at the College of Public Health and Ohio State. News submitted through the form may appear on our website and in publications such as e-newsletters and the CPH magazine. You may also use the form to update your personal and professional contact information on your OSU record.

THANK YOU AND GO BUCKS!

go.osu.edu/CPHalumninews



"I want to thank our alumni for supporting students as we navigate the complexities of our health care system. Our alumni contribute to our growth as leaders. The level of appreciation I have for alumni who are willing to share their experiences goes beyond words."

-- Obineche "Obi" Nnebedum, Ohio State MHA student

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"I completed my undergraduate education, medical degree, and residency at Ohio State, and I love this university. After a long and successful career in occupational medicine, Karen and I wanted to do something to give back to the school that gave so much to me. Our gift will support environmental health, because we care deeply about making sure that people work and live in safe and healthy spaces. We chose to make this contribution to help ensure that the future is a bright place for our young people, and we encourage everyone to consider a gift to Ohio State in their estate plans."

—Dr. Robert Fletcher, BS '57, MD '63 and Mrs. Karen Marie Fletcher



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“

Ohio has a great heritage of pioneering, innovation and problem-solving. That's what we do best. Congratulations, graduates. You are the real-world heroes. I'm looking at the people who will take on the real challenge of maintaining this human race...and taking care of the welfare of this land and this earth.

”

— *Conrade C. Hinds, Author and Historian*
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