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.

— Conrad C. Hinds, Author and Historian
2017 Pre-Commencement Program
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.

give.osu.edu/CPHscholarship

OHIO STATE
PUBLIC HEALTH
THE MAGAZINE OF
THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY
COLLEGE OF PUBLIC HEALTH

FALL/WINTER 2017

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OHIO STATE PUBLIC HEALTH MAGAZINE
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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

which allowed us to gain our footing in
Connect public health organization, “We partnered with the Comunidad
perspectives on raising children and
interviews with several moms in the
concentration in veterinary public
samples from children, animals,
household impact microbiome
how interactions with soil, water,
gut microbiomes. Oruganti observed
Her project focused on infant and child
and application of biostatistics appealing,
his BA in statistics in 2017 from Beijing
Koch Fellow in
Biostatistics.

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anthropology and veterinary medicine.
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MPH student spends rewarding summer conducting research in Nicaragua

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**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.

**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.

**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.”

**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.

**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.
Students Excel at Denman Undergraduate Research Forum

Providence College students present their research findings at the Denman Undergraduate Research Forum. 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 Burgon 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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

With its strong network of children’s hospitals, Ohio could 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.
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.

“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 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...
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.

Ricks’ formative research is particularly germane to studies examining HIV/STI prevention and treatment, such as her work in an NIH-funded study exploring the high HIV rates found among minority men who have sex with men (MSM) in Jackson, Mississippi. Jackson has the nation’s highest rate — 40 percent — of MSM living with HIV.

“My current research addresses sexual and reproductive health issues among adolescent and young adult, racial and ethnic and sexual minority populations,” says Ricks. “I look at the intersection of individual, social and environmental determinants of health, with particular emphasis on health disparities.

“The Jackson study is part of a larger NIH study examining young 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.

“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.”

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 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 project in Malawi called Umoyo wa Tharzi (UTHA), which means “Health for Life” in the Chichewa language.

The Umoyo wa Tharzi 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, CIIL, 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.

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 ROI-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 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.”

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.

Health educator in Vietnam counsels a couple on contraceptive options.
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.

“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.


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 diabetics, 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.
“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 barber 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.

“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.”

“The stars” on Columbus’ Near East Side stretch across the wall of the shop. But his career path changed when he walked in one Saturday for a trim before he started his freshman year at Ohio State.

“I walked in and there was a table set up and there were nursing students there with people sitting down getting their blood pressure taken and receiving education materials. I’d never seen that before so I asked Al what was going on, and he told me it was a new initiative that his non-profit had started to reach out to the community and provide basic health services related to educating people about what resources there are for them and giving them knowledge about how to take care of themselves,” recounts Robinson.

“For me, it was really important that he was using his barber shop as a mechanism to draw people in to gain knowledge and gain resources in their community. That’s how I learned about public health because I told him this was a collaboration between him and Ohio State, and that if I thought I was interested, I should look into public health. I realized public health could be a good match between my interest in the sciences and also my interest in improving people’s lives through medicine.”

“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 shot 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.”

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

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.

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.
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

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

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 northeastern Ohio has been hit hard by the opioid crisis. Buried deep in the Rust Belt, the region’s diminishing 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 there.”

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 opioid 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 batting 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 resource-constrained settings with limited availability to health care services like harm reduction, “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 were 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,” Miller 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.”

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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.

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 would lead to a successful scholarship campaign.

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

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 adds. “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.

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.

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.”

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— Niru Muralidharan
FUTURE SNOW

By Niru Muralidharan

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. Gil 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 Cune 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 alumni 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 alumnus’ 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.

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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 alumnus 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 HSMMP 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 alumn today!
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.

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.

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.

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Erick Vidmar, MHA ’06

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

Sarah Sampsel, MPH ’00

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

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 Dinnman, 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 an 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.

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SARAH SAMPSEL, MPH ’00

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

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.

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/AIDS, 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.
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 MECKS, 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.

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.

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!”

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?

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-- Obineche “Obi” Nnebedum, Ohio State MHA student

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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.

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

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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

For information about making a gift to The Ohio State University College of Public Health, please contact:

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