

S P R I N G 2 0 1 7

# Public Health Connections

*Southern Connecticut State University  
School of Health and Human Services*

## Department of Public Health



### A Message from the Chair

The longer and brighter days of the Spring semester are always a welcome relief from the wintry days of the Fall semester! I hope this newsletter finds you all energized and excited about the culmination of another successful academic year.



Like a beehive, our Department is busy and abuzz with accomplishments, ideas, and activity. We are happy to report that we had a positive start to our new fundraising campaign last Fall and were able to support four students to conferences this semester. We will launch a Spring campaign to continue to support students in these and other scholarly endeavors. You will also see that faculty continue to publish, present, receive grants, and do all of this in collaboration with students.

Several of us just returned from our annual Society for Public Health Education (SOPHE) meeting in Denver and - despite bouts of altitude sickness – the conference was a huge success. The efforts to continue to work towards health equity is alive and well, political activism abounds with the work we need to do under our current administration and the power of collaborations with communities dominates this work. With that in mind, we continue to nurture our partnerships and, with CARE now a vital part of our Department and School, these partnerships are growing and deepening.

As you may have heard, on April 22<sup>nd</sup> there will be a March for Science in Washington, DC as well as over 400 satellite locations around the world. As an evidence-based discipline, we in Public Health know the importance of conducting high-quality research and translating that research into programs and policies that improve health equity and quality of life of all Americans. Please join us on Saturday, April 22<sup>nd</sup> at 1:00pm on the New Haven Green as we march in solidarity with our science-minded colleagues to ensure the support of future science.

We may be living in troubled and trying times right now, but we will prevail if we remain vigilant and awake. We must continue to respect each other and raise awareness of the need to remain culturally humble. In the face of adversity, hope is what will get us through. Be well.

*"Man can live about forty days without food, about three days without water, about eight minutes without air, but only for one second without hope."*

Charles Darwin

## Department Honors Students for Outstanding Achievements

**Courtney Bugden** will receive the Dr. A. Kay Keiser Valedictory Award for highest academic achievement (undergraduate), class of 2017. This award was made possible by the late Dr. Kay Keiser, a former Public Health professor. **Alyssa Kegley** and **Wahiba Mougoud** will both receive the 2017 Public Health Award for Excellence (exemplary academic standing and making a meaningful contribution to the field of public health through service. These outstanding students will be recognized at the Eta Sigma Gamma induction ceremony on April 21st and at the University Honors Convocation event on April 30<sup>th</sup>.

MPH students will receive similar awards at the MPH Graduation Banquet to be held on May 17<sup>th</sup>. Congratulations graduates!

## SOPHE Annual Meeting & Conference



Pictured at the 68<sup>th</sup> Anniversary SOPHE conference in Denver, CO, left to right are:  
**Dr. Victoria Zigmont, Nolan Rourke (BS, '17), Francesca Testa (MPH, '17), Dr. Jean Breny, Dr. Deb Risisky and Valen Grandelski (MPH, '17)**

**Valen Grandelski** received SOPHE 2017 Vivian Drenckhahn Scholarship Award and was honored at the 68<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Annual Conference Awards Ceremony in Denver, CO on March 31<sup>st</sup>.





**Drs. Evans and Zigmont presented posters at the 2017 SOPHE Annual Meeting and Conference**



## Connecticut Health Educators Conference



**Dr. Michele Vancour** attended the “1st CT Health Educators Conference” at the East Shore Health District’s new offices. There were 34 attendees, representing 20 health departments/districts. Twenty-one attendees were SCSU BS/MPH alumni (14) and undergraduate SCSU public health students (5) or our interns (2), some of whom are pictured, above. The conference focused on new findings in persistent problems, like lead poisoning, and emerging threats like the growing opioid epidemic. The conversation presented new topics concerning many local health department health educators, opportunities for us to intervene with education and partnerships.

## Public Health Faculty Research Activity

**Betty Jung**, MPH, RN, CHES, wrote chapter 7, “Epidemiology in Community Health Care” in the 9<sup>th</sup> edition of “Community and Public Health Nursing: Promoting the Public’s Health.”

**Dr. Aukje Lamonica** was awarded an NIH Grant. The broad goal of this research project is to fill the gap in our understanding of opioid and heroin use patterns in suburban communities where opioid use is epidemic. The specific aims of this suburban study are (1) to examine opioid and heroin use initiation, trajectories, settings, situations, and risk practices; and (2) to compare opioid and heroin use patterns by race, ethnicity, and gender. Dr. Lamonica says, “our aims are significant because they respond to an urgent need to know why opioid and heroin abuse continue to increase despite widespread prevention and intervention programs implemented to address the opioid epidemic. Building on our previous ethnographic research in the suburbs around Boston, Massachusetts; New Haven, Connecticut; and Atlanta, Georgia, our sample will include 180 opioid and heroin users (60 in each field site).”

### CSU Grants Awarded:

**Dr. Jean Breny:** “Using CBPR to Aid Men in Finding the Social and Cultural Underlying Conditions Affecting Safe Sex Practices.”

**Dr. Deb Risisky:** ‘Inclusion and Recreation: A Study of Inclusive Community Based Recreation Opportunities for Individuals with Disabilities.’”

**Dr. Christine Unson:** “Extending Working Life Among Older Women: a Two-Country Study.”

### SOPHE Presentations:

**Dr. Breny:** “Learning from our Students: Strengthening our professional preparation programs to unleash the potential of the next generation.”

**Drs. Evans & Zigmont:** “Trends in Obesity & Overweight Among Undergraduate Students at a Northeastern Public University.”

**Drs. Evans & Risisky:** KHAIR 2014 Program Evaluation

**Dr. Zigmont:** “Lessons Learned While Implementing the National Diabetes Prevention Program at the Worksite of a Large Health System in the Midwest.”



**Dr. Marian Evans** traveled to Cuba in March to study their health care delivery system and explore opportunities for collaboration.



## Alumni News

**David Arconti, BS, '08** is serving his second term in the Connecticut General Assembly proudly representing Danbury's 109th District. He currently serves as Vice Chair of the Environment Committee and as Assistant Majority Leader. He also serves on the legislature's General Law, Housing and Public Safety & Security Committees.

Born and raised in Danbury, David attended and graduated from Great Plain Elementary, Broadview Middle School and Danbury High School. He graduated Cum Laude attaining a Bachelor of Science in Public Health from Southern Connecticut State University.

Driven by his strong desire to serve his community, David devoted many hours volunteering with the Danbury Police Athletics League (P.A.L.) and the Connecticut Mission of Mercy in 2012, a program that provides free dental care to people without dental insurance. In addition, David is a member of the United Way's Coalition for Healthy Kids, a collaborative of community partners committed to the fight against childhood obesity and making a difference in the lives of children and their families.

One of David's passions is seeing Connecticut becoming a leader in preventive healthcare and a flagship state in battling and dealing with the obesity epidemic, and strengthening economic policies to attract and retain more local businesses and jobs.



**Ashley Ishman, BS '13, MPH, '16**, was inspired by her grandmother to follow in her footsteps by earning a public health degree from SCSU. She moved to Colorado shortly after graduation, and she currently is a Clinical Care Coordinator at the Metro Community Provider Network, which serves the Denver Metro area. In this position, Ashley provides one-on-one case management to Medicaid patients, uninsured patients, and homeless patients. She enjoys being an advocate and having the opportunity to help and empower patients to take control of their health. Ashley's advice to students is to take advantage of the resources available at SCSU and to reach for opportunities that will provide meaning and fuel their passion.

**Ryan Kennedy, BS, '12** will complete his Doctorate of Nursing Practice at Quinnipiac University this May and plans to take his State Board Exam this summer to get certified as a Family Nurse Practitioner. When he first entered SCSU, he wasn't sure which major he should choose, but he quickly realized the importance of public health. Ryan completed his undergraduate degree requirements in 2012 with a major in public health. After graduation, he completed a two-year nursing program at Bridgeport Hospital School of Nursing and immediately began working towards his doctorate at Quinnipiac University. Ryan is a Clinical Associate for Dr. Brown's Clinic in Hamden. Later this year, Ryan and Dr. Thomas E. Brown will relocate the office to Los Angeles, CA. There they will be partners in a specialty practice to help people with ADHD and related disorders. Aside from the demands of his career and academic pursuits, Ryan enjoys running, writing, traveling, working on his Podcast, and drawing. His advice to students on transitioning from college to career are to: make and maintain as many connections as possible with classmates, keep in regular contact with your professors for guidance, and write down goals and stick to them to achieve them.

**Scott T. Leroy, MPH, '04** was recently appointed Caroline County's health officer in Maryland. He served as Director of Health and Human Services for the City of Danbury for the last twelve years. After a thorough and competitive national search, it was decided that Scott had the knowledge, skills and experience necessary to lead the Caroline County Health Department, which is part of the State of Maryland's Department of Mental Health and Hygiene.

## Public Health Society Rocks it at West Rock Community Wellness Fair

In March, the Public Health Society participated in the West Rock Community Wellness Fair at Katherine Brennan School in New Haven. The club had a table aimed at the kids at the fair, with a health focus on healthy eating. They had two games – Tasty Twister and Healthy Hoops. For Tasty Twister, instead of using colors, the club members called out fruits and vegetables that matched the colors on the Twister board. For Healthy Hoops, the club members showed pictures of food, and if the kids saw one that was healthy, they were to throw a basketball into a hoop. The kids had a great time playing games with PHS!

The PHS will also have a team walking at the American Health Association New Haven Heart Walk on May 6<sup>th</sup>. Please support them or even better, join their team! Here is the link:

[http://www2.heart.org/site/TR?fr\\_id=2098&pg=team&team\\_id=175349](http://www2.heart.org/site/TR?fr_id=2098&pg=team&team_id=175349)



## Public Health Outreach



Remedy celebrated its 26<sup>th</sup> Annual Pie Day on Friday March 17<sup>th</sup>. Remedy is a non-profit that collects unused medical supplies from Yale New Haven Hospital and coordinates their donation to service groups going on medical missions in the developing world. The fundraiser involved cutting and serving over 400 pieces of 10 different varieties of pie to thank the staff that works to keep Remedy's mission moving forward.

**Dr. Vicki Zigmont** would like to thank first year MPH students **Josephine Ankrah, Amanda LeRoux, Abby Putzer and Whitney Allen**, undergraduate students **Taylor Seltzer, Renee Marquis, Devin Henaghan and Professor Elizabeth Schwartz** (also a 2016 SCSU MPH alum), for volunteering at the event!



## Department Launches Public Health Student Development Fund

An appeal was made to public health faculty, staff and SCSU alumni to donate to a special fund created to support student participation at professional conferences and study abroad opportunities. Thanks to the generosity of the individuals below, 3 students attended the SOPHE annual meeting and 1 student will attend the Global Health conference at Yale. Please help us reach our goal (or offer to do a match!) of \$10,000. Here is the link: <https://southernct.ejoinme.org/HHS>

Here is what student Nolan Rourke had to say about attending the SOPHE conference:

*As an undergraduate student at my first professional conference, I was amazed at how many great people I met and how much useful information I gained from attending the SOPHE conference. It was enlightening to see how the concepts I've learned in academics are applied to the professional field of public health. Not only did I benefit from networking with experienced professionals, but I also learned a lot about graduate school and higher education opportunities. I think all undergraduate students can benefit from attending conferences like SOPHE, and I hope more schools encourage and support student attendance in the future.*

**Thank you for your generous donations!**



**Dr. Jean Breny  
Dr. Sandra Bulmer  
Stephen Civitelli  
Marcia Doran  
Dr. Marian Evans  
Dr. Deborah Flynn  
Alicia Mulvihill  
Melanie Hernandez  
Kimberly Jawin  
Trent Joseph  
Joan Lane  
Midge Malicki  
Mark McRiley  
Deborah Pease  
Francesca Provenzano  
Linda Smith  
Laura Wallace  
Dr. Victoria Zigmont**





## In Memory of Alexander J. Farley

*August 24, 1994 – November 17, 2016*

The Department, along with Alex's fellow Public Health students, hosted a memorial service for Alexander Farley, a Public Health student who died tragically in an automobile accident last fall. Students, faculty, staff and members of Alex's family gathered together to remember this kind, gentle and bright young man, whose life came to an end much too soon.

## Department is Well-Represented at CPHA Annual Meeting and Conference

Pictured below are faculty, students and alumni who attended the Annual Meeting and Conference of the Connecticut Public Health Association last November. This impressive group represented about 1/3 of the total attendees at this meeting.





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We are looking for more Alumni Updates! You can use the questions below to guide your update or write about what you'd like. Please email your update to Dr. Michele Vancour at [vancourm1@southernct.edu](mailto:vancourm1@southernct.edu). Thanks in advance!



1. What led you to study public health?
2. What year did you graduate from SCSU? Which degree did you receive – BS or MPH?
3. Where do you currently work? What is your position?
4. What is the most rewarding aspect of your work?
5. Did you continue your education after graduating? If yes, where and towards which degree or purpose (i.e. professional development)?
6. What's a piece of advice you can share with new public health students?
7. What are three things you would recommend public health students take advantage of during their education or early in their career development?
8. Is there any other news you can share (e.g., awards received, birth announcements)?
9. What do you do for fun or for your health?
10. Do we have your permission to post on FB and share your information in our materials? If yes, provide your contact information with your answers to these questions in an email to [vancourm1@southernct.edu](mailto:vancourm1@southernct.edu). Thank you!

## Save the Date

### Adjunct Meeting

**June 2, 3:00-5:00 pm, Southern on the Green, 900 Chapel St., 10<sup>th</sup> floor**

Public Health adjuncts are invited to mingle with colleagues and share information. President Joe is scheduled to attend and there will be a workshop on services provided by the Disability Resource Center. Come and check out our beautiful offices at Southern on the Green!

Please RSVP to Michelle Mann, [mannm1@southernct.edu](mailto:mannm1@southernct.edu)

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