



A Message from the Chair, Dr. Stanley Bernard

Eras come and Eras go. The end of this era of pandemic is extremely meaningful to the field of public health. As a discipline, we have learned a lot of what to do and what not to do in addressing future epidemics and pandemics; especially that people's willingness to help others can stand against any dilemma. Changes are also happening at the University with the sunset of our current President Joe and the dawn of our new interim president, Dr. Dwayne Smith. We welcome Dr. Smith and look forward to his productive tenure in his new role.

This has been an amazing semester and academic year for the Department of Public Health. I am still getting my footing as the Chair of the Department. I am grateful that I have a wonderful staff, faculty, peers, and Dean's office that have supported me through my first year. I don't know if I could have done it without that support. The Department still has its challenges, but I am encouraged by the enthusiasm and collegiality of those I work with and their willingness to make sacrifices to make the department strong.

I want to thank our student workers for their support as well and congratulate all our students who are moving on to the next phase of their careers and personal lives. I want to especially thank Rebecca Stearns, who has worked diligently on this newsletter over the past two years. Rebecca is graduating but is leaving the work in the capable hands of our grad students and staff.

I think I have said enough. I want you to read this amazing newsletter that highlights just some of our accomplishments over the past academic year. You will be amazed at what can be accomplished, even with diminishing resources, if people are committed and have the will to achieve. In closing, our Department remains committed to social justice and moving toward equitable, healthy, and thriving communities for all. Take care.



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**Connecticut
Public Health
Association**

Supporting Connecticut's Public Health Since 1916



The Connecticut Public Health Society recently held their 2023 Spring Mentoring Event at the College of Health and Human Services. Students were able to speak with public health professionals and gain insight and clarity to their career path.



a Southern Connecticut State University
Department of Public Health Podcast
@SCSUPublicHealth

**PUBLIC HEALTH
CONNECTIONS**



Now is the time to catch up on the first 2 seasons of our department podcast. Listen to guests share about their work at NHTSA, Universal Healthcare Foundation of Connecticut, Community Health Center, Inc., CPHA, YNHH, HUD's ROSS grant program, and many more.

publichealthconnections.podbean.com

Special thanks to all who took time to come onto the podcast this semester including Kasey Harding of CHC, Inc, Dr. Anuli Njoku and Marcelin Joseph of SCSU presenting their work on COVID-19, Evan Serio of DESK, Sara Aburumi of YNHH and alum, Darcey Cobbs-Lomax of YNHH and SCSU, and Ermonda Gjoni-Markaj of SCSU and APT Foundation.

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Summer Studies



Princess Frimpong isn't experiencing any downtime over the summer break. Rather than heading to the beach, Princess is heading to University of Pittsburg to participate in the Pitt Public Health Undergraduate Scholars Program. This is an eight-week residential program that engages students with maternal and child health, environmental justice, and climate and health.

Princess grew up here in Connecticut in a large family. She found herself drawn to healthcare as she interacted with her own healthcare providers during treatments for cancer. Princess tried on Healthcare Studies and Nursing, prior to taking a course with Professor Tamara Rissman in Public Health where her public health spark was lit. Now completing her junior year, Princess said that she found tremendous support and appreciated the encouragement to succeed she has received here at Southern. Princess has participated with Public Health Club, and Res Life, she is also and active member of the Pediatric Cancer Awareness Organization (PCAO) and uses each connection at Southern as a frame for her public health studies. Princess found that public health gave her many opportunities to explore and learn and this Scholars Program is one of the highlights of her academic career.

Princess shared that her advisor, Dr. Njoku, initially sent her the information about the program at Pitt and then others in the department, including Professor Clinesmith reminded her that she wouldn't know if she could do this work unless she tried. Princess considered how she has found a sense of belonging here and in the communities she has helped to build. Knowing that she has the support here was foundational to Princess expanding her community to Pittsburg.

Princess is excited to be a part of this program that will be both on Pitt's campus and working in the city of Pittsburg. Besides a hands-on learning opportunity, Princess will be creating a poster detailing what she has learned with her Pitt team. This poster will be presented to the CDC as an intervention proposal. Even though Princess is considering the wide reaching effects of her studies, she is looking forward to bringing back what she learns to her community in Connecticut. Princess has a desire to focus on women's education and maternal health whilst further defining the role of public health in these areas. Next semester, we will follow up with Princess to hear her report on her experience and how it has framed her public health vision. - *Rebecca Stearns*

Angela Corsino, a junior in the Department of Public Health, was recently accepted to the National Institute on Drug Abuse Summer Research Internship program. She will work closely with an endocrinologist based in California and focus on substance use and addiction research.



Angela Corsino

Students in Puerto Rico



Dr. Marian Evans and Ms. Dawn Stanton Director of University Access Programs (UAP) had the privilege and honor to embark on the second annual UAP study abroad trip to San Juan, Puerto Rico from January 8-15, 2023. Eight exceptional students who represent the various UAP programs as well as majors, were selected to participate through an application process where they were required to write an essay on how being selected to travel and study abroad would connect to their career, personal goals, and aspirations.

Selected students are required to contribute a minimal fee (\$200) to the trip, and to keep a reflective journal on daily prompts. The UAP study abroad program combines arts, culture, and service. Students choose their service project and work on it together throughout the Fall semester. Dr. Evans and Ms. Stanton worked diligently with university partners from the University of Ana G. Mendez (UAGM) and Dr. Philip Finley and his gracious team to map out an itinerary each day that left an indelible mark on the lives of our students. - *Dr. Marian Evans*

Valamae Jenkins, Social Work Major and ConnCap Coach at Southern writes: "My favorite part of my whole experience was traveling through the largest block of public land in Puerto Rico. El Yunque National Forest is a tropical rainforest in northeastern Puerto Rico. I am a person that loves taking risks and enjoying new adventures, so the tropical rainforest was just right for me. I was able to climb rocks in the rain and explore all that nature has to offer which was very amazing. The second part of the rainforest they had us jump off a cliff, slide down a natural rock waterslide and rope swing into water. One of our tour guides, John I, expressed to him how I couldn't swim and he put a life vest on me and he made me feel very comfortable with holding my breath under water. It guided me through the experience from beginning to end, he had me practice holding my breath underwater. Before this experience I was scared of drowning and having water cover my face. Having him and Ms. Dawn do the activity before me I was able to follow their lead and I felt comfortable with facing my fear. I am so glad that I went and I experienced that and I can't wait to go back again. I was surprised how open I was to exploring something new, for a long time I would find any excuse to not be in water in a swimming capacity. I had a fear of water and wanted nothing to do with it. So just for me to jump into water and not panic and be comfortable with change was such an eye opener."



Sara Aburumi

Sara Aburumi hopped on to Zoom with me recently to record a *Public Health Connections* podcast interview.

Sara had reached out to the Public Health Department as she is an alumni who wanted to give back to the school that had helped prepare her for a successful career as a Project Health Coordinator at Yale New Haven Health. After a few back and forths, I new I wanted to get to know Sara a bit better. Sara is passionate about public health and helping others reach their health goals.

Sara not only received a degree in public health whilst here at Southern, but also minored in wellness, nutrition, and psychology. Her hunger to learn continues today and is often seen when working with clients. Sara creates connections with her clients with empathy, drawing on her own life story as she listens and guides others.



Sara Aburumi

Even though Sara has only lived in the United States for a few years, she has thrown herself into community life. Sara is the Secretary of the Historic Wooster Square Association Executive Committee, she is also a member of the City Hall Board, Anchor Mission Board, and the Public Health Board. Sara spoke on *Public Health Connections* of her excitement about wanting to build knowledge within each person in New Haven about their roles in public health and how they make a difference in New Haven. - *Rebecca Stearns*



The SCSU Graduate Research and Creativity Conference

Martin Agbalenyo and Taiwo Folake Ajibola presented "Electronic Waste Disparities in Ghana". They looked at e-waste and the economic dependency of populations experiencing poverty in Ghana upon this waste and the health detriments caused by exposure to the toxins in e-waste. They call for policy change and regulations of e-waste in Ghana to curb improve health and environmental outcomes.



SOCIETY FOR APPLIED ANTHROPOLOGY

A Worldwide Organization for the Applied Social Sciences

Dr. Lamonica and students, Angela Corsino and Benjamin Godlewski presented their research on parenting and substance use disorders at the 2023 Annual Meeting of the Society for Applied Anthropology in Cincinnati.

Aukje Lamonica - “When I am not on drugs, I am a great parent” – Opioid Use, Parenting, and the COVID-19 Epidemic

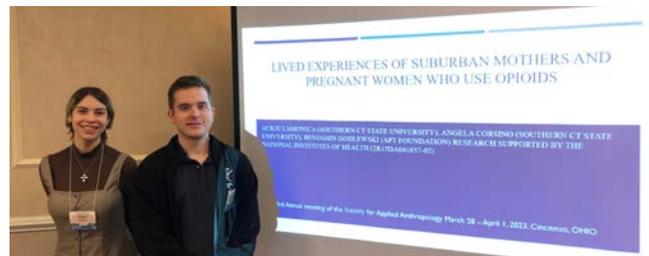


Dr. Aukje Lamonica, Angela Corsino, and Benjamin Godlewski

Angela Corsino - “Me staying clean for so long was solely because I had her”: Mothers Who Reinitiate Opioid Use After Long-term Sobriety



Benjamin Godlewski - “Factors Contributing to Relapse and Overdose among a sample of Opioid-Using Suburban Mothers and Pregnant Women During the Covid-19 Pandemic”



Angela Corsino and Ben Godlewski presenting at the SFAA Conference

Angela Corsino also presented her research on "Opioid Desistance Breakers in Mothers with Opioid Use Disorders" at the SCSU Undergraduate Research and Creativity Conference. The research conferences held each year at Southern for undergraduates and graduates is a great way to learn how to present research. Angela's research is important as she presented on a longitudinal study of motivating factors within mothers who return to opiate usage after a lengthy time of non-usage.





The annual conference of the Society of Public Health Education: the New Age of Civil Rights, Advocacy and Equity was held in Atlanta this year. Southern faculty, students, and alumni were busy at the conference this year sharing their research and projects as well as meeting other public health professionals from around the country.



Nicole Batista, MPH, EP-C and Dr. Deb Risisky

Dr. Deb Risisky and Nicole Batista, MPH, EP-C presented: *Preparing an Inclusive Workforce through CT SOPHE's First Two Years*. When Nicole was a graduate student at Southern she found the Connecticut chapter of SOPHE as part of her MPH. As part of her work, she and Dr. Risisky found that there was a need to provide support for the public health educators of our state with networking and professional development opportunities. CT SOPHE was able to build a webinar series showcasing equity for the public health educator workforce.



Members of the CT contingent to SOPHE

Dr. Sarah Benes presented: *Lessons Learned - Facilitating Workshops on Equity and Justice in Health Education*. Dr. Benes is an Assistant Professor and Coordinator of School Health Education in Southern's Health and Movement Sciences Department. She presented her findings in K-12 health educators and their knowledge of equity and justice in their work. Participants in the workshops explored systemic racism, health inequity, and cultural humility within educators' curriculum.





Atlanta, Georgia is my home away from home. My parents have lived in the city or suburbs of Atlanta for many years, and I take every advantage I can to visit. I attended SOPHE this year knowing that I would get to spend some time with them, create colleague connections, and learn from public health educators from around the country.

I was excited when I found out that Dr. Camara Phyllis Jones would be presenting on "Confronting Racism Denial: Tools and Habits of Mind for Social Justice Warriors." Okay, excited may not quite cover the fan girl moment I had.

Many of you have heard about what drew me to Southern over other public health schools. When I asked how public health programs were actively addressing equity, not only in their programs, or on campus, but within their community, I was met with phrases like: "we're starting a committee", or "we used to do something, but we don't anymore." Dear reader, I was disheartened when I learned that there were public health spaces that were not outward looking, let alone inc



A couple of years ago, I asked an esteemed friend for career advice. He noted that the common thread through my life choices was that I worked for organizations where all were welcome. Whether it was in a public library, providing youth services, or emergency medicine. As soon as he pointed that I out, it reverberated in me. This is why I was drawn to public health and why I believe public health is not only for all, but that everyone can play a part in our health outcomes. This is why I chose Southern. It was one of the few places I found filled with a robust and diverse student body, staff, and faculty.

Southern plays an active role in the health of our community and this includes addressing health disparities caused by racism.

I digress. Back to SOPHE. You may be familiar with Dr. Jones work around antiracism. I'm sure we've all heard her allegorical stories with restaurants or flowers, but did you know that when she worked at the CDC, Dr. Jones was told to not present on how "racism unfairly gives advantages some communities?" Today, this seems obvious, but only because so many people have not only named racism, but pointed out the effects of racism, including Dr. Jones.

We are very fortunate to be a part of a university that not only acknowledges these effects, but is actively working to change systems mired in racism. This is why I chose to further my education here.



I'm proud to be a part of an organization centered around Social Justice.

Which may be why I struggled a bit at SOPHE this year. Even though I spend most of my time away from Connecticut in Atlanta, I was acutely aware of being inside a nice hotel, sharing ideas centered around equity in public health and yet there were those outside of the hotel sleeping on the sidewalks or in the shrubs, just feet away.

And maybe the feelings I struggled with were magnified by being in Atlanta. This is a city whose residents helped to found the Civil Rights movement of the 1960's. The Southern Poverty Law Center (SCLC) was a short walk from the hotel where SOPHE was held and yet poverty was evident in those busking just outside the SCLC doors or in those sleeping on the steps of Georgia State University. So why, if those people who worked so hard for equity and to end injustice over 50 years weren't able to inspire the world today to complete their work, do I think I am going to move the needle in a world that celebrates greed, power, and celebrity?

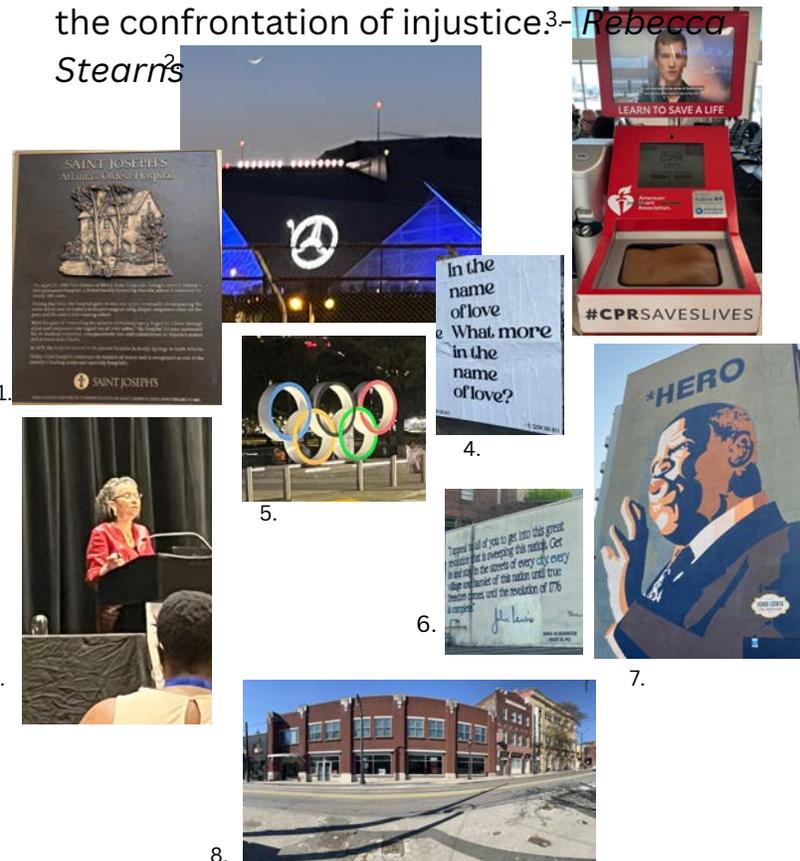
How do we as public health professionals magnify the voices and goals of those in need, walk in cultural humility, and create a world where people seen as the precious people they are?

These questions are similar to what drew me to a public health career and Southern. Even as I plan for graduation

Will I be able to move the needle? Will I be a part of a team that shares not only a broken heart for the world, but the passion to help heal it?

We have chosen a career that is not centered around our egos. Rather, public health and the education thereof, is about creating equity and lifting up others.

I am grateful for the few days at SOPHE. Not because of the connections I made, or because I was able to listen to so many share their insights; rather I am grateful for the moments I was moved outside the doors. These *Public Health Connections* are the ones that will challenge me as I step into a new career dedicated to others. I don't want to deny the pain of inequities, I want to be able to be bold in the confrontation of injustice.³⁻ *Rebecca Stearns*²



1. Place in the Atlanta's largest hospital 2. Moments of Boldness 3. Learn Hands-Only CPR in the Airport 4. U2 Promotion (not seen, two unsheltered people sleeping next to poster 5. Olympic reminders 6. John Lewis Quote 7. John Lewis Mural 8. SCLC 9. Dr. Camara Jones

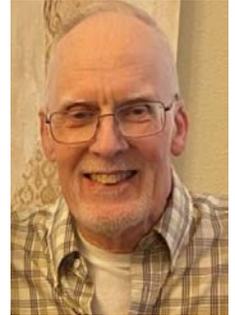
In this edition of Public Health Connections, we look back at the lives of those who lived and worked in such a way as to still inspire all of us at Southern.

Sheila Mangan, Alex Cinotti, and Robert Marino

Dr. Robert Marino taught at Southern and his wife Dr. Doris Marino is a retired professor in the School Health Education Department. Dr. Robert Marino was a life-long learner which led him to be a caring professor for many Owls prior to teaching at other universities.

Dr. Robert Marino

1 November 1954 - 17 April 2023



Alex Cinotto, MPH received his Master's of Public Health from Southern. He furthered his career in public health by working with the East Shore Community. He was the Assistant Director of the East Shore Health Department for 20 years. Alex's life was filled with public service having been a member of the US Army, a lay minister in the Congregational Church, and an active participant in the Connecticut Environmental Health Association. An advocate for the people of Connecticut, Alex worked diligently for better health for all.

Alex Cinotti

14 April 1956 - 3 November 2022

Sheila Mangan, MPH was a remarkable student here at Southern. Sheila held multiple degrees, including two master's. One from UConn in public administration and her MPH from Southern. Sheila was fluent in 3 languages. Sheila did not collect knowledge for herself, rather she studied to reach her goal of working in the Peace Corps. Sheila continued to work in Africa after her time in the Peace Corps. She worked in Namibia, Kenya, as well as what is now South Sudan, and Senegal. Sheila provided education for the prevention of HIV/AIDS as well as access to care for patients living with HIV in her role at UNICEF overseeing the West and Central Africa Regional Office in Dakar, Senegal.

Sheila Mangan

5 December 1966 - 26 May 2012



When I first read Sheila Mangan's obituary, I wondered why her life was not shared more prolifically here at Southern. Sheila lived a life that created change upon the hope she built.

Her life is more than inspirational, it is a challenge to all of us as practitioners of public health, to embody our dreams of health for all. - *Rebecca Stearns*

Period Poverty



Dr. Evans and the Public Health Society held an event to address Period Poverty on campus. Participants were able to win AERIE period panties. Thank you to Angela Corsino and Grace Jaworoski of the Public Health Society for photographing the event.



Graduate Open House Spring 2023



Dr. Marian Evans

Each semester Dr. Evans welcomes perspective students at the Graduate Open House. She answers questions and explains the application process. Dr. Evans is always on hand to answer questions about the MPH program at SCSU and help students as they plan their public health career. Alumni are often on hand to help Dr. Evans and answer questions as well. Southern is proud to offer 3 different MPH programs. Each program is designed for students to succeed in Health Promotions of Management and Leadership.

The Health Promotion track focuses on ensuring that graduates can assess population needs and design programs to improve population health as well as to advocate for communities. This program is available both in person and online. For students already working in public health, the Executive MPH, which concentrates on Management and Leadership aims to elevate public health professionals to leadership whilst building on their established foundations. This track is both fully online and hybrid.

Each spring Southern's Department of Public Health and Connecticut's Department of Public Health offer the Environmental Health Training Program for future sanitarians. If you're excited about Food Protection, Sewage Disposal, and Environmental Health, this program is for you. You may take all modules or mix and match. This program is endorsed by the Connecticut Association of Directors of Health, the Connecticut Environmental Health Association and the Connecticut Public Health Association. Space is limited and this program is open to students worldwide.

For more info: <https://inside.southernct.edu/public-health/ehp>



Dr. Christine Unson

Massachusetts Institute of Technology Professional Education Applied Data Science Course

- Dr. Unson completed this 12-week course, that ran between May and August 2022, covered data analytical techniques such as unsupervised and supervised machine learning, decision trees and time series, deep learning and recommendation systems. The intensive course involved pre-training in Python, 2-hour live online lectures, 4-hour weekend mentoring sessions, quizzes, two course projects and a capstone project. Dr. Unson hopes to apply the tools she learned to analyze national and international public health datasets.

Dr. Anuli Njoku and Dr. Marian Evans

- Both professors were featured speakers at the University of Pennsylvania's *Black Maternal Morbidity and Mortality - Beyond the WHY!* event during Maternal Health Week (11 April 2023). This event hosted by the Penn School of Nursing featured birthing justice for Black women and infants.
- Dr. Njoku's presentations, many done with Dr. Evans, for the Spring semester can be found here: <https://www.southernct.edu/directory/njokua3#Presentations>
- Dr. Evans presentations, may be found here: <https://www.southernct.edu/directory/evansm7#Presentations>

Chloe Johnson, MPH

- The Southern adjunct professor of public health recently accepted a position as a project coordinator at Yale. Ms. Johnson will be performing Special Projects of National Significance grant research in the School of Medicine on HIV and Aging. Congratulations!

Dr. Njoku - Top Owl Social Justice Award

Regular readers of this newsletter will know that Dr. Anuli Njoku works tirelessly for the betterment of her students and carries a drive to perform research that improves public health for all. Her advisees know that Dr. Njoku will provide guidance and connections for their own careers. Listeners of the *Public Health Connections* podcast will know that Dr. Njoku believes in paying it forward and does so everyday here in the Public Health Department. And now the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Advisory Council at Southern has honoured Dr. Njoku's contributions to social justice from the public health perspective.



Dr. Stanley Bernard, Dr. Anuli Njoku,
Tracy Tyree, VP for Student Affairs

Dr. Anuli Njoku recently one the Top Owl Social Justice Award. This award is given monthly to 3 Top Owls - Staff, Students, and Faculty. Top Owls are nominated by fellow Owls, and are honoured with a certificate and a pin for their contribution to "Southern's values of dignity, respect, kindness, compassion, and civility." Southern's mission of "creating and *sustaining* an inclusive community" is demonstrated by the Top Owls, and certainly by Dr. Njoku.

<https://news.southernct.edu/social-justice/>



Southern Connecticut State University
Department of Public Health
501 Crescent Street
New Haven, CT 06515
203-392-6950

<https://www.southernct.edu/publichealth>

[Dr. Stanley Bernard](#), Chair
[Dr. Marian Evans](#), Graduate Program Coordinator
[Dr. Deb Risisky](#), Undergraduate Program Coordinator
[Dr. Aukje Lamonica](#), Internship Coordinator
[Rebecca Stearns](#), Public Health Connections Editor