



# Public Health Connections

Southern Connecticut State University  
School of Health and Human Services

Department of Public Health

## A Message from the Chair Dr. Jean Breny

### Endings, Transitions, and New Beginnings

Happy Spring and end-of-semester greetings to all. Here we are once again, finding ourselves in the most wonderful time of year – commencement season! And, although this year’s commencements will look and feel very different than our pre-COVID norm; the University and our Department will be celebrating our graduates in full force and following all public health guidelines. We are so proud of our graduating BS and MPH students and the beginning of the next phase of their lives – the world is out there waiting for your energy, passion, and commitment to social justice!

As is my normal practice, I review past newsletter welcome messages when I sit down to write a new one. This year it occurred to me, that our Public Health Connections newsletter is 8 years old! In our inaugural issue, I expressed my hope that our newsletter would be a place for “community building and re-connecting friends, alumni, and colleagues of the SCSU Department of Public Health.” When I look inside each issue, this is exactly what I see; our community members connecting with each other, engaging with community, promoting the profession of public health, and expanding our reach to the greater community connected to our Department. Evidence of this appears here in this issue, where you will see work from our adjuncts, highlights of our Department’s Health Equity and Anti-Racism (HEAR) committee, extensive scholarship by our faculty, and current student highlights including awards and professional presentations.

More evidence of the strength and growth of our Department community is our fundraising success for our Public Health Student Development Fund, which supports student attendance at professional conference. This year’s SCSU Day of Caring event was particularly successful, and I am grateful to all who donated; most especially Laura Wallace, MPH ('02) whose generous donation and match doubled our fund’s balance!

Also, in this issue, we include a very heartfelt, but bittersweet, salute to Dr. Peggy Gallup, who after 29 years in the Department of Public Health will be retiring on August 1st. She will be deeply missed and her absence will be very much felt by all of us. She leaves behind a legacy of commitment to student success, a strong sense of professionalism, and literally hundreds of former students who continue to honor her. Godspeed, Peggy, and may your retirement bring much rest, relaxation and world travels!

And to all of you, our Department of Public Health community – I wish you a healthy and safe summer, and one that brings you back together with family and friends and we slowly and gratefully emerge from the pandemic. Thank you for all you do!

**“People say that crisis changes people and turns ordinary people into wiser or more responsible ones.” -Wilma Mankiller**



### In This Edition

Dr. Peggy Gallup

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thank  
you

Dr. Peggy Gallup  
Retires

## A Reflection from Dr. Bill Faraclas

When Dr. Peggy Gallup retires at the end of this academic year, 29 years after she joined the Public Health faculty in 1992, she will leave the Department a legacy of strong academic programming, centered on professional competence and social justice. Her work is celebrated as a powerful example of academic rigor and conscientious service. Throughout her career, she held students to high expectations because she believed in their abilities and wanted to give them the same learning opportunities she had enjoyed. Peggy's students and colleagues will recall her animated classroom instruction and encouraging supervision of graduate theses. Her undergraduate degree in English and Theatre prepared her well for those roles.

Peggy's compassion extends beyond her students, and took her into the neighborhoods of several towns and cities, including Bridgeport, where she supported many projects, including a community garden. Her concern about health inequities was the basis for her study of food security and the creation of academic courses on the topic. She can be satisfied that her efforts led to broader understanding of hunger, development of a food justice curriculum (with colleagues) and related courses, as well as actions on our campus and elsewhere.

As teacher, academic advisor and Coordinator of Undergraduate Studies, Peggy always has looked for the best in students and has been eager to help them succeed with their studies, solve problems, and chart of path for the future. Now, Peggy's future looks bright. Having a touch of wanderlust, her retirement will be filled with lots of travel, knitting projects in between trips, more time to be a grandmother, and much deserved relaxation every day of the year.

Congratulations, Peggy!

## Dr. Gallup receives Emeritus Status

We are happy to announce that Dr. Gallup has received Emeritus status from President Bertolino! This is a most deserved and coveted honor. Congratulations, Peggy!!



# Racism is a Public Health Issue

The SCSU Department of Public Health condemns racism in all forms.

Social equity is health equity. Our goal is to promote anti-racism actions through education, health promotion and research.

We are committed to working with all communities to unify and dismantle systems of oppression.

## Health is a human right.



Racism can impact health in many ways, including limiting access to employment, housing, and education. These accessibility barriers make it harder for non-white Americans to be able to afford proper care. Health equity cannot be achieved until everyone has an equal opportunity to be healthy.

Health equity is harder to obtain for many due to systemic racism; therefore, **racism is a public health issue**. The basis of public health is ensuring that everyone has an opportunity to obtain complete health, including mental and social health. Therefore, it is every public health professional's responsibility to advocate and push for social justice.



## The Department of Public Health Launches Health Equity and Anti-Racism (HEAR) Committee

The Department of Public Health has launched the Health Equity and Anti-Racism (HEAR) Committee. Members include faculty Drs. Anuli Njoku (Chair), Stanley Bernard, Jean Breny, Marian Evans, and Michele Griswold, and Department secretary Michelle Mann.

**HEAR objectives are to** 1) look internally within the Department to ensure a clear focus and mission around antiracism and equity across the curriculum and through faculty development, 2) promote work being done by faculty and in our community around racism being a public health emergency, and 3) establish a Center for Health Equity and Eliminating Racism (CHEER) in partnership with the SCSU Foundation.

### HEAR Committee goals and activities include:

- Fall 2020: Police brutality, Black health, and COVID-19 webinar presented by Dr. Anuli Njoku.
- Fall 2020: Letter of Intent submission for RWJF Policies for Action: Public Policy Research to Advance Racial Equity and Racial Justice to analyze educational gaps for Black and Brown school children in Connecticut during COVID-19.
- Revise Department's mission, course objectives, etc., to reflect our commitment to anti-racism.
- Spring 2021: Reproductive justice webinar led by Dr. Michele Griswold and funded by an SCSU social justice grant.
- Conduct faculty training around racial justice.
- Spring 2021: Four Department faculty, including 3 HEAR committee members, presented health equity and anti-racism-guided presentations at SCSU's Spring Faculty Tapas.
- Spring 2021: COVID-19 health & wealth webinar co-presented by Dr. Marian Evans and sponsored by SCSU's Minority Retention and Mentoring Committee.

For more information, contact **Dr. Anuli Njoku** ([njokua3@southernct.edu](mailto:njokua3@southernct.edu)).

## Health and Financial Wellness Workshop

On April 15th, 2021, the Minority Recruitment and Mentoring Committee (MRMC), in conjunction with SCSU's SUOAF/AFSCME, presented a workshop featuring **Dr. Marian Evans**. The workshop taught students how to take care of their health and financial well-being.



## SCSU Public Health Reproductive Justice Panel Discussion

SCSU Department of Public Health Presents:  
**A Reproductive Justice Panel Discussion**  
 Wednesday, April 14, 2021 from 1-2pm



**REPRODUCTIVE JUSTICE:** "The human right to maintain bodily autonomy, to have children, to not have children and to parent children...in safe and sustainable communities"(SisterSong, n.d.).

**Panelists Include:**

			
<b>Dr. Lucinda Canty,</b> Ph.D., CN.M., Certified Nurse Midwife Assistant Professor of Nursing University of Saint Joseph	<b>Dr. Tekisha Dwan Everett</b> Executive Director, Health Equity Solutions, CT	<b>Ms. Cynthia Hayes,</b> CLC, Interdisciplinary Doula with Earth's Natural Touch: Birth Care and Beyond.	<b>Ms. Mudivah Kadeshe</b> Immediate Past President, International Lactation Consultant Association, Director of Programs and Grant Management, DC Breastfeeding Coalition

 Funding for the panel is generously supported by the SCSU Social Justice Committee

To register, click the link above or email [clinesmithe1@southernct.edu](mailto:clinesmithe1@southernct.edu)

On April 14, 2021, 66 participants joined public health faculty member **Dr. Michele Griswold** for a virtual reproductive justice panel discussion. Dr. Griswold received a grant from the SCSU Social Justice Committee to fund the event.

Reproductive justice is defined as “the human right to maintain bodily autonomy, to have children, to not have children, and to parent children...in safe and sustainable communities” (SisterSong, n.d.). Reproductive justice (RJ) is a movement developed in the 1990s by Black and Indigenous people of color (BIPOC), activists, and organizers to bridge the gap between principles of reproductive health and social justice. Initially aiming to broaden the conceptualization of abortion rights, reproductive justice principles encompass the contextual factors associated with access. Specifically acknowledging that people make choices about their bodies in the context of the choices available to them, as influenced by structural, biological, and historical factors.

Black Mamas Matter Alliance. (n.d.). Black Maternal Health Week. Accessed at: <https://blackmamasmatter.org/bmhw/>

### Dr. Deb Risisky and Dr. Vicki Zigmont promoted in May, 2021



Dr. Risisky was promoted to full professor.

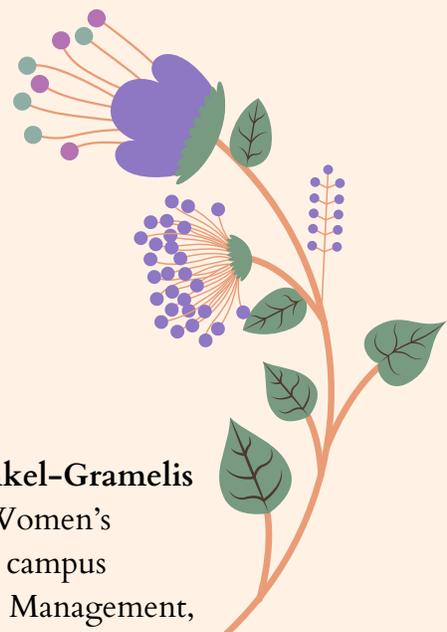


Dr. Zigmont was promoted to associate professor and awarded tenure.

### Congratulations Adjunct Faculty Member Diane Frankel-Gramelis!



On April 22, 2021, adjunct faculty member **Diane Frankel-Gramelis** was awarded the Trailblazer Award from the Yale Working Women’s Network for her outstanding dedication and work improving campus culture at Yale. Ms. Frankel-Gramelis currently teaches Stress Management, PCH 270, at Southern.





### **Dr. Jean Breny**

Valdez-Barkwell, CM, Breny, J., Fagan, M., & Roe, K. (2021). Implementation Tools, Program Staff, and Budgets. In, Fertman, C. & Grim, M. (Eds.) *Health Promotion Program Planning, Implementation, and Evaluation: A Practitioner's Guide* (3rd ed.). Jossey-Bass.

Breny, J., De Leon, B., Welfare, M., Mahama, F., Raymond, A., Palmer, C.P., Hart, K., & Sykes, J., Photovoice: Visual social justice storytelling to promote health equity. Oral presentation at SOPHE 2021dx Annual Meeting, May, 2021.

Breny, J., Johnson, J., Early, J., Gloner, M., Luquis, R., Rich, R., McMorrow, S. & Sammons-Hackett, D. Antiracism and Public Health Education: Implications for teaching, research, and practice. Oral presentation at SOPHE 2021dx Annual Meeting, April, 2021

Breny, J. Revealing COVID-19 Racial and Ethnic Health Disparities: Photovoice as a catalyst for social justice. 8th Annual Faculty Tapas, SCSU, March 15 ,2021.

### **Dr. Aukje Lamonica**

Lamonica, A., Boeri, M., & Turner, J.\* (2021). Circumstances of overdose among suburban women who use opioids: Extending an urban analysis informed by drug, set, and setting. *International Journal of Drug Policy*, 90, . DOI: 10.1016/j.drugpo.2020.103082

### **Dr. Anuli Njoku**

Njoku, A., & Wakeel, F. (2021). Cancers in rural areas in the United States. In J.N. Inungu, & M.J. Minelli (Eds.), *Foundations of rural public health in America* (pp. 217-234). Jones & Bartlett Learning.

Wakeel, F., & Njoku, A. (2021). Application of the Weathering Framework: Intersection of racism, stigma, and COVID-19 as a stressful Life event among African Americans. *Healthcare*, 9(2), 145. PMID: 33540498. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.3390/healthcare9020145>

Joseph, M., & Njoku, A. (2021). Environmental Racism and Its Role in The Burden of Asthma among New Haven, CT Residents. Poster presentation at the Yale School of the Environment New Horizons in Conservation Conference, April 18-20, 2021, Virtual.

Njoku, A. COVID-19 and Environmental Racism: Challenges and Solutions. Presenter, Annual Spring Faculty Tapas, Southern Connecticut State University (SCSU), March 15, 2021.

Njoku, A. Nutrition and Health. Keynote Speaker, International Conference on Research in Life-Sciences & Healthcare, Rome, Italy, April 16, 2021, Virtual.

### **Dr. Christine Unson**

McAllum, K., Simpson, M, Unson, C., Fox, S, Kilpatrick, K. (2021). The Socialization of Unpaid Family Caregivers: A Scoping Review. *Research on Aging* <https://doi.org/.1177/01640275211005092>

Jiakponnah, N., Unson, C, Chukwurah, Q. Correlates of Strength and Balance Training Exercises in Older African-American Adults. *The Gerontologist* (in press).

## Faculty Publications



### Dr. Vicki Zigmont

Zigmont, V., Tomczak, S. M., Bromage, B., Vignola, A., & Gallup, P. A. (2021). Helps my family survive hard times: An innovative summertime food relief program in New Haven, Connecticut. *Journal of Poverty*. Accepted. Retrieved from <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/10875549.2021.1890671>

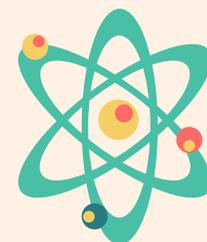
Oldach, B., Irwin, K., Pershing, M., Zigmont, V. A., Gascon, G. M., & Skully, R. (2021). A Preoperative Transthoracic Echocardiography Protocol to Reduce Time to Hip Fracture Surgery. *Journal of Clinical Outcomes Management*, 28(1), 27–34. Retrieved from <https://www.mdedge.com/jcomjournal/article/235101/surgery/preoperative-transthoracic-echocardiography-protocol-reduce-time>

Ruane, J., Ross, A., Zigmont, V., McClure, D., & Gascon, G. (2021). A Single-Blinded Randomized Controlled Trial of Mesenchymal Stem Cell Therapy for the Treatment of Osteoarthritis of the Knee with Active Control. *Publication Description Journal of Stem Cells and Regenerative Medicine*. Published. Retrieved from <https://www.pubstemcell.com/epub/016010300005EPA210420.htm>

## Adjunct Faculty Tracey Weeks and Tamara Rissman Work Recognized

**Tracey Weeks**, an adjunct professor here at SCSU in our Public Health Department, and Program Coordinator for the Connecticut Department of Public Health (DPH) Food Protection Program, and her colleagues at DPH were recognized by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) for their work on a multistate foodborne outbreak investigation of listeriosis. This investigation led to the rapid identification of a Mexican-style cheese, which resulted in the removal of the contaminated product from sale to the public. In a letter to DPH Commissioner Diedre Gifford, FDA said the “...lab, epidemiology, and food protection staff played a key role, not only in the national epidemiological investigation that identified Mexican style cheese as a suspect vehicle but also in confirming the suspect vehicle by finding the identical pathogen, by Whole Genome Sequencing, in an unopened queso fresco cheese from a store where an ill consumer purchased the product.”

This is important because illness caused by the pathogen *Listeria monocytogenes* has a high fatality rate (~20%), especially in elderly and immune-compromised individuals, and increases the risk of stillbirths and spontaneous abortions in pregnant women. Additionally, the DPH Emerging Infections Program Foodborne Diseases Centers for Outbreak Response Enhancement (FoodCORE) team at Yale University led by FoodNet Program Coordinator **Tamara Rissman**, also an SCSU adjunct professor in our Public Health Department, were highlighted in a CDC Success Story for their work in interviewing a key case that led to the identification of the suspect food in this outbreak. Teamwork putting public health into practice!



Just in case you missed public health student profiles on social media:



**Nina Robertson**

Undergraduate Public Health Student

What started you interested in Public Health?

**"I was interested in public health because I wanted the opportunity to help communities and go beyond a clinical level of health. I like the magnitude of opportunities presented with a public health degree."**



**Rohit Thapa**

Undergraduate Public Health Student

What started you interested in Public Health?

**"I was actually focused on Nursing before I decided on Public Health. My driving passion is that I want to help improve the lives of others, and after giving that objective some more thought, I came to see that I could fulfill this desire in more places than just the hospital. I realized that I shouldn't limit myself to just one path, and with some advising I figured out that public health was what I was looking for."**



**Julie Golebiewski**

Undergraduate Public Health Student

Why Public Health?

**"I always knew that I wanted to take care of people and with public health I could do that, but on a larger scale. I grew to see that public health was a better major matching my values and ideals. I am mostly interested in health promotion and health education and get to practice each week by running meetings for the public health society."**

To find out more, follow us on social media:



@SCSUPublicHealth



<https://www.instagram.com/SCSUPublicHealth>



<https://www.linkedin.com/SCSUPublicHealth>



<https://www.facebook.com/SCSUPublicHealth>



## Eta Sigma Gamma National Health Education Honor Society Induction Ceremony

On Wednesday, April 28, 2021, the Department held its annual Eta Sigma Gamma National Health Education Honor Society Induction Ceremony. With no on-ground events last year, last year's inductees were included this year in our ceremony, for a total of 39 students inducted from the BS and MPH program. In addition, undergraduate awards were given out during the evening. Jackie Espinet received the A. Key Keiser Valedictory Award, and Muna Mah received the Outstanding Public Health Student Award. Eight students were presented honorable mentions for the Outstanding Student Award as well. We had 24 students present in Engleman to receive their awards and be inducted by Dr. Risisky, Dr. Breny, Dr. Gallup, Dr. Lamonica; Dean Bulmer was there to welcome everyone. With room sizing and distancing rules in place, no family members could be in the room. Still, we had over 50 log-ins to our streaming of the event – and we had a lot of fun waving to the families throughout the ceremony and seeing them clap for their students!



**Want to help reduce food insecurity in New Haven?** Donate to our #GiveHealthy online food drive! The SCSU Public Health Department is raising food donations to support three New Haven food pantries: FISH of Greater New Haven, IRIS, and Cathedral of Higher Praise. Our goal is to raise 2,000 pounds of food by Friday, May 14th. Please visit the link in our bio and consider donating!

**FISH** provides food to support families in need in the Greater New Haven area. They are the only organization that delivers groceries to homebound residents of Greater New Haven who are experiencing food insecurity. Their clients include people with disabilities and other mobility impediments.

**IRIS** is a non-profit organization that serves and empowers refugees and immigrants to become self-sufficient in their new communities. IRIS's food pantry distributes around 2,000 pounds of food each week to over 200 refugee and immigrant households in the Greater New Haven area.

**Cathedral of Higher Praise** is a local church that operates a food pantry in the Fair Haven neighborhood. They distribute food twice a month to individuals experiencing food insecurity.

 **Donate to our #GiveHealthy Online Food Drive**

**Now through May 14th**

Help us virtually raise food donations for three local food pantries: FISH of Greater New Haven, IRIS and Cathedral of Higher Praise.

**TO DONATE**  
Scan the QR code:



or visit:  
[bit.ly/SCSUGiveHealthy](https://bit.ly/SCSUGiveHealthy)





## SCSU Students and Alumni working at QVHD

Quinnipiack Valley Health District is a regional public health department that enforces health codes and regulations for Bethany, Hamden, North Haven, and Woodbridge. They respond to complaints; and inspect homes, public buildings, food facilities, and vendors, and other properties for compliance with health standards to protect the health and safety of residents. The public health department also responds to unsanitary or dangerous conditions in a rented house or apartment.

The coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic has continued to evolve rapidly, and as a result, guidance and state recommendations change frequently. QVHD continues to work with our partners throughout the region and state to monitor data, prevent disease transmission, and respond to new information. In collaborating with our trusted and experienced community partners, they strive to protect our communities.

QVHD has many of our public health students, both current and former, involved in vaccination clinics and preventing the spread of COVID-19. Thank you to Alicia Mulvihill, Ryan Currier, Elizabeth Matuska, Andressa Granado, and Avery Gartman. Another thank you to SCSU graduate Andy DelVecchio, the assistant director of the North Haven Rec. Center, where QVHD has been hosting many of their vaccine clinics. Our students are out there making a difference!



## 2021 Society for Public Health Education (SOPHE) Awards



**Dr. Jean Breny** received the SOPHE Trophy Award at this year's annual meeting. This award is given by the current SOPHE president to honor a member who has devoted substantial service to the organization. Dr. Breny received this award for her leadership with the launch of SOPHE's Health Equity and Anti-Racism (HEAR) Task Force.

Horizon Award



**Nicole Batista**  
Southern Connecticut State University

MPH student **Nicole Batista** received the SOPHE2021dx Horizon Award. The award recognizes a student's distinguished and promising health educator accomplishments. Ms. Batista is the Founding Board President of the CT Chapter of SOPHE, which she started in 2020.

You can also follow Connecticut SOPHE on social media!  
Instagram: @ctsopne, Facebook: @ctsophe, Twitter: @ctsophe

R. Brick Lancaster Community Health Internship Award



**Breanna De Leon**  
Southern Connecticut State University

MPH student **Breanna De Leon** received the SOPHE2021dx R. Brick Lancaster Community Health Internship Award. This award supports a student who, during an internship, will conduct a health education and health promotion project that addresses a significant public or school health issue, identified by a public health department or community agency.

### SCSU Public Health Student Development Fund

The SCSU Public Health Student Development Fund provides support to students seeking to further their professional development at conferences and study abroad experiences.

To contribute to the fund, please [click here](#) or visit [www.southernct.edu/giving/give-online](http://www.southernct.edu/giving/give-online). At the site, select Give Online, choose the College of Health and Human Services under **designation** and then write in Public Health Fund in the **leave a comment box**.

Thank you for your continued support!



### Nwanyieze Ngozi Jiakponnah (MPH '20) Publishes in Prestigious Gerontology Journal

A study by Ngozi Jiakponnah based on her masters' thesis was accepted for publication in *The Gerontologist* (currently in press). Her study, a cross-sectional survey of 90 older African Americans (Mean age = 66.7 ± 8.7 years; 70% female), was conducted to assess correlates of intention to undertake strength and balance training (SBT) exercises and the number of days that they currently engage in SBT. The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) and the threat appraisal of the Protection Motivation Theory (PMT) were used as frameworks for the analyses. This study demonstrated the utility of the TPB and PMT's threat appraisal construct in modeling intention and number of days of SBT participation among African American older adults. The study affirmed the link between intention and behavior and between knowledge of the benefits of SBT and intention. Fear of falling's positive association with days of SBT suggests that respondents saw SBT's efficacy in reducing falls. The unique contributions of this study are the inclusions of kinesiophobia as a correlate and multiple threat appraisals in the PMT. *The Gerontologist* is one of the top three journals (out of 36) in Gerontology. Its impact factor in 2019 is 3.286. Dr. Christine Unson was her thesis adviser and, along with Dr. Queendaleen Chinenye Chukwurah (MPH '15, Ph.D. Tulane '20), are co-authors of the publication.

**Ekpereka (Sandra) Nawfal (2016)** has been accepted into a Ph.D. program in Epidemiology at Florida International University in Miami, Florida. As part of her doctoral training, she will be working on an NIH-funded HIV/AIDS project.

**Dinny Mathew (MPH '12 & MBA '14)** and **Manish Watts (MPH '16)** are leaving for Canada. Dinny will be the Executive Director for the Prescott Family Medical Center in Prescott, Ontario. Dinny says "It is a small town but looks good in general and literally 5 mins from the US- Canada border." Manish had been working for DPH and will look for a new position while helping their girls Myra and baby Anya (1 year in May) settle in to their home.

### Important Dates

- May 9-15, 2021 - Finals Week
- May 19, 2021 - Spring Final Grades Due
- May 22, 2021 - Summer Session A Classes Begin
- July 6, 2021 - Summer Session B Classes Begin
- August 26, 2021 - Fall Classes Begin

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