



# West Chester University

## MPH Connections



*Spring 2024 Issue*

Editor: Lindsey Howell

Co-editors: Dr. Stacie Metz and Dr. Gopal Sankaran



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# RAMONA STONE

Dear MPH Community,

As most of you know, Dr. Stacie Metz, our MPH Program Director and Graduate Program Coordinator, is on a brief medical leave. Until her return on July 1, 2024, I will assume the duties of her position. Please contact me if you have any questions or need support with enrollment, petitions, advising, career advice, or other issues that I might be able to help find a solution.

Dr. Metz and I are sending all of our MPH students the best wishes for a successful end of the 2023-2024 academic year, and the warmest congratulations to our Spring 2024 MPH Graduates. Best wishes on your final exams. Have a wonderful summer ahead.

*Thank you!*




Job, internship, fellowship, and professional development opportunities  
Accomplishments of students, alumni, and faculty  
Share job postings and refer friends or coworkers to join if interested in public health



MPH Student Advisory Board  
Student events and accomplishments  
Professional development opportunities and campus resources



Events and professional development opportunities  
Accomplishments of students, alumni, and faculty  
Campus resources



# STUDENT ACHIEVEMENTS



Congratulations to the following on being selected as the MPH SAB Executive Board 2024-25! These students join a select group of student leaders who serve as liaisons between students, faculty, and staff, in addition to fostering a sense of community, belonging, and professionalism within the MPH program.

## 2024-2025 MPH SAB Executive Board



**Victor Nwinee  
(President)**

Victor Nwinee, a Nigerian-trained physician, has dedicated his career to serving underserved communities in Nigeria through primary healthcare initiatives. Inspired by the transformative impact of public health interventions, Victor in the fall of 2023, embarked upon further education at West Chester University of Pennsylvania (WCUPA) for a Master's degree in Public Health. Known for his leadership qualities, affable nature, and commitment to effecting positive change, Victor has taken on various roles at WCU. He currently serves as the MPH-SAB Environmental Health Track Representative for the 2023/2024 session, a mentor to several students and athletes in the WCUPA COMPASS Program, and works as a Graduate Research Assistant in the Department of Public Health Sciences. Victor enjoys playing soccer, bowling, playing video games, playing scrabble, and watching movies. He aspires to continue making a difference in the field of public health while maintaining a balanced and enjoyable lifestyle.



**Shawna Wallace**  
(Vice President)

Shawna Wallace was born and raised in Wilmington, Delaware. She is in her last year as a graduate of the MPH-Community Health Track student at the West Chester University of Pennsylvania. Shawna holds a Bachelor's in Business Management from Wilmington University with an interest in epidemiology, the distribution of infectious diseases, and other health-related conditions as a public health issue. She has demonstrated strong leadership and intrapersonal skills in her academic and professional journey. Shawna is known for her lively and amiable nature, always eager to help others. As the recently nominated Vice President of the MPH Student Advisory Board, Shawna is committed to maintaining the values of the executive board and attaining its goals. She looks forward to working closely with a team and immersing students in the SAB activities. Holding the role of Vice President for MPH SAB allows the opportunity to bring fresh perspectives, develop personally, and show how interesting public health is.



**Hannah McDannald**  
(Secretary)

Hannah McDannald is a second-year MPH community health track graduate student at West Chester University. While completing her BS public health undergraduate degree at WCU (cum laude, August 2019- December 2022), Hannah was accepted into the accelerated program and was able to begin MPH coursework within her final undergraduate semesters. Through her undergraduate internship experience with PHMC's affiliate Turning Points for Children: The Philadelphia Food and Wellness Network (FAWN), Hannah was able to gain experience in community outreach, social media engagement, and nutrition and wellness promotion. This has sparked her interests in matters relating to food security, sustainability, food science and regenerative agriculture. Aside from academics, Hannah works part-time as a bartender and enjoys communicating and making connections with members of the community. She also loves to travel, cook, and to spend time with her furry children. Hannah is expected to graduate with her MPH in the spring of 2025.





**Delphen Page**  
(Healthcare Mgt Track Rep)

Delphen Page hails from West Africa, specifically Liberia. She attained a Bachelor's Degree in Health Sciences from Thomas Jefferson University in 2023. In the same year, she authored a paper on Malaria in children under 5 years in Liberia. With over ten years of experience in healthcare, Delphen is currently undertaking his first semester in the MPH Healthcare Management track. She strongly believes in the importance of self-commitment, emphasizing its role in setting and achieving personal goals by focusing on his abilities, desires, and behaviors to yield positive outcomes. Throughout her career, Delphen has collaborated with numerous social and religious organizations, bringing with her a reputation for good morals, professionalism, and respect for all. Her aspiration with her MPH degree is to contribute to the enhancement of public health through education, research, and the promotion of wellness practices.

Beyond her professional endeavors, Delphen finds joy in cooking and assisting others. She actively participates in church activities, particularly engaging with young people and seniors. During her leisure moments, she indulges in playing Gospel songs and singing along, as well as enjoying movies in the comfort of her home.



**Melanie DeCecco**  
(Community Health Track Rep)

Melanie DeCecco is currently enrolled in her second semester of the MPH program on the Community Health track. She completed her undergraduate studies at Penn State University in May 2023, majoring in Biobehavioral Health with a minor in Health Policy and Administration. During her time at Penn State, she served as an undergraduate volunteer research assistant for Penn State's Rural Health Disparities Lab. At West Chester, she works as a graduate research assistant for Dr. Holt and also serves as a Community Health Worker at Main Line Health. In her leisure time, Melanie enjoys spending time with family and friends, reading, and playing tennis. She is excited about her upcoming role as a member of the MPH SAB Executive Board for the term 2024-2025.





**Fanta Koita**  
(Social Outreach Manager)

Fanta Koita is a graduate student enrolled in the Master of Public Health program with a specialization in the Community Health Track. Serving as a Graduate Assistant in the Department of Public Health, she brings her passion for addressing public health challenges to her academic and professional endeavors. Originally from Philadelphia, Fanta was raised by parents from Mali, West Africa. Her early experiences visiting Mali exposed her to various public health issues, which significantly influenced her perspective. Drawing parallels between the health challenges faced in Mali and those in her Philadelphia community further fueled her interest in public health. Fanta is deeply committed to making a difference in people's lives, evident through her active involvement as a volunteer in both her local community and projects in West Africa. Her dedication to serving others is reflected in her primary interest in Maternal and Child Health. With aspirations for a long-term career focused on improving the lives of women and children, particularly as a mother herself, Fanta is driven by a desire to create positive change and contribute to the well-being of communities locally and globally.



**Daniel Engelbrecht**  
(Env Health track Rep)

Daniel Engelbrecht (They/Them) grew up in Upstate New York and currently lives in Philadelphia. Daniel's interests in the environment and technology started very early in their youth by disassembling electronic devices to understand how they worked. Daniel spent time walking through their neighborhood to help elderly individuals clean and rake their properties to prepare for winter months. Today, Daniel's interests and role as a Graduate Assistant continue these interests using technology to measure air pollutants in communities near West Chester University. Additionally, as a trained Industrial Hygienist, they have spent some of their professional career working on health and safety projects through Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Maryland, and New York. As the Environmental Health Track Representative for the Student Advisory Board, Daniel brings a unique perspective to foster professional development and experience among students and staff alike.

# 2024 Delta Omega Inductees

The 2024 Delta Omega selection committee of the Beta Xi Chapter of the Delta Omega Honorary Society in Public Health at WCU would like to congratulate the following on being selected for induction into Delta Omega. Each year, Delta Omega elects new student and alumni members based on high academic standards and outstanding performance in scholarship, professional, and/or community service. Delta Omega also inducts faculty members based on leadership in teaching, scholarship, and service. Election of membership in Delta Omega is intended to not only recognize merit, but also to encourage and further excellence in and devotion to public health work.



**Students:**

Sameera Guttha  
Kayla Katsman  
Chiamaka Ilondu  
Katie Sanford  
Kevin Andoh  
John Omole Matthew

**Students:**

Miriam Andoh  
Naya Weeks  
Parisa Karimzadeh  
Matthew Martillotti

**Alumni:**

Ragha Mohan  
Sara Wojciechowski  
Nia Coaxum

**Faculty:**

Gopal Sankaran





**Kevin Andoh**

He is a beacon of ambition and compassion, is almost at the end of his journey as an MPH student at West Chester University of Pennsylvania, specializing in community health. Hailing from Ghana, Kevin holds a Doctor of Pharmacy degree and is fervently interested in combating infectious diseases as a public health imperative.

Diligently serving as a graduate assistant for the College of Health Sciences Global Health Research and Biostatistics teams, Kevin's dedication to scholarly excellence is unparalleled. His academic and professional pursuits are underscored by a profound commitment to service and leadership, evidenced by his active involvement in extracurricular activities.

Known for his warm demeanor and unwavering altruism, Kevin finds joy in extending a helping hand to all he encounters. During his tenure as President of the MPH Student Advisory Board, Kevin exemplified steadfast dedication to upholding the board's values and achieving its goals.

Looking ahead, Kevin stands poised to champion the cause of health equity with unwavering resolve. Driven by a fervent commitment to transformative change, he is prepared to lead the charge toward a future where health disparities are addressed, ensuring a brighter, more equitable tomorrow for all.



**Miriam Andoh**

Miriam Andoh, a guiding light of aspiration and compassion is in her final semester as an MPH student in the community health track at West Chester University of Pennsylvania. Miriam holds a bachelor's degree in Statistics from Kwame Nkrumah University of Ghana in the Western part of Africa.

Miriam Andoh serves in dual roles at West Chester University, showcasing her dedication and versatility. As a Graduate Assistant within the College of Health Sciences Dean's Office, Miriam contributes to scholarly excellence through research support and active involvement in extracurricular activities. Simultaneously, within the Frederick Douglass Institute, she plays a vital role in administrative tasks, including file organization, meeting coordination, and public relations material design. Her commitment to service and leadership shines through in both capacities, reflecting her passion for advancing academic pursuits and promoting social justice advocacy.

As she prepares to embark on her career in public health, her unwavering commitment to wellness and health promotion fuels her aspirations. With a steadfast belief in the power of prevention and holistic well-being, Miriam eagerly anticipates collaborating with organizations dedicated to fostering wellness within communities. She aims to work closely with seasoned professionals to develop, implement, and evaluate wellness programs tailored to diverse populations.





**Ilondu Chiamaka Sandra B**

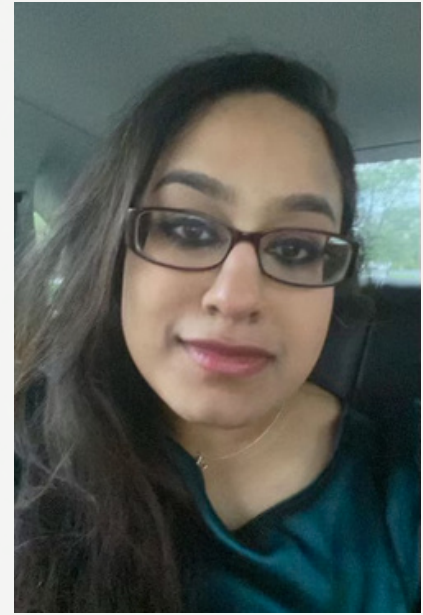
Ilondu Chiamaka Sandra B. is an international student at West Chester University, currently pursuing her Master of Public Health (MPH) degree, with an expected graduation date in August. Hailing from Enugu, Nigeria, she holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Applied Biochemistry.

Devoting five years of service after completing her undergraduate studies, Chiamaka has diligently worked to improve the lives of others in various capacities. It is this dedication that has propelled her into the field of public health, driven by a desire to enhance population health outcomes.

As an MPH student, Chiamaka has excelled academically, overcoming a few challenges along the way, and actively applied her knowledge in practical settings. She served as a graduate assistant, participated in health fairs, and volunteered in initiatives aimed at community well-being. Additionally, she served as the secretary to the dear Student Advisory Board.

When not engaged in her academic and extracurricular pursuits, she finds solace in practicing self-care and indulging in her passion for cooking.

Chiamaka's overarching aspiration is to leverage her capacities to address pressing health challenges and effect positive change in communities worldwide.



**Sameera Guttha**

Sameera Guttha, I am thrilled to be sharing my story with you. I was born in North Wales, Pennsylvania, and raised in nearby Lansdale.

I am in my final semester of the MPH- Healthcare Management Program at West Chester University, and I am also excited to be starting my intern year in the family medicine residency program at Suburban Community Hospital this summer.

I hope to use the invaluable knowledge I have attained during my time at West Chester University to enhance my training.

In my leisure time, I enjoy playing the piano, traveling, exploring new languages via Duolingo, and spending quality time with my adorable cockapoo nephew, Alfie. I would also like to take the opportunity to express my gratitude to the Delta Omega Selection Committee for the privilege of being inducted into this prestigious society and to all my professors for their kind guidance.



**Parisa Karimzadeh**

Parisa Karimzadeh, I am a Medical Doctor from Iran. I'm currently in my final semester of the MPH program, Community Health Track.

I obtained my MD degree in Iran and came to the US to pursue my interest in public health. During my time here, I've had the privilege of meeting many inspiring faculty members who have provided me with invaluable insight and support.

As I prepare to leave the program, I am deeply grateful for their guidance. I now have a clearer vision of my future career path, which involves integrating my clinical background with my knowledge of public health to work in clinical research field, with a focus on equity.

In addition, during my time in the program, I find so many great friends from different country and cultures and made so many fun memories with them.



**Kayla Katsman**

I received my bachelor's degree in Public Health, with a concentration in community health, and a minor in Health Administration from East Stroudsburg University.

While there, I worked as a Peer Educator in the Wellness Education and Prevention Office. In this position, I designed, planned, and implemented alcohol and other drug, AOD, programming for campus organizations. This experience was a driving force in my future career choices and where I found my passion for AOD, education, and public health.

After graduation, I worked for non-profits in Delaware and Montgomery counties before returning to school to pursue a master's degree. While pursuing this degree, I have worked as a graduate assistant for Wellness Promotion. This position solidified my passion for AOD education on college campuses.

I am thrilled to be in this field and excited to continue this work at another university post-graduation.





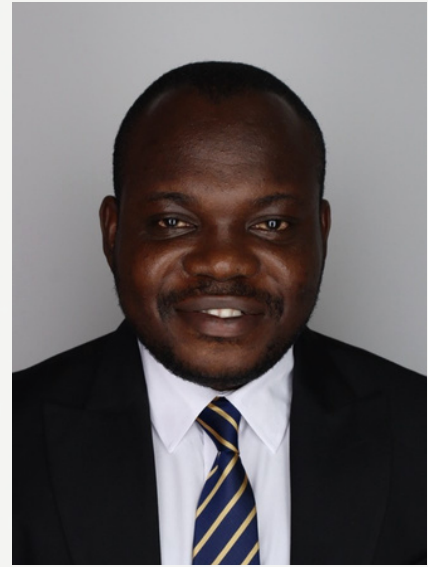
**Matthew Martillotti**

I am from Wayne, Pa in Montgomery County. I went to West Chester University for undergraduate school, I received my Bachelors degree with a major in Political Science and a minor in Health.

After I graduated, I decided to continue my education by applying for the Masters of Public Health program here at West Chester University. Currently, I am in my final year of the MPH program and I am in the Health Care Management concentration track.

For about the past two years I have been working at Pentec Health as a Denial Management Specialist working with the Revenue Cycle Management team. I am hoping to continue to advance and grow in my career in healthcare, especially as I approach graduation.

I will be forever grateful for everything West Chester University has done for me.



**John Omole-Matthew**

John Omole-Matthew was born and raised in Ibadan, South-West Nigeria and obtained his primary medical degree in 2014. He had his medical training at Nigeria's premier medical school, the College of Medicine University of Ibadan, Nigeria.

He had his residency training in Obstetrics and Gynecology at the Lagos University Teaching Hospital and became a member of the West African College of Surgeons in 2021. His interests lie in improving health through a combination of clinical and public health approaches which led him to enroll in the Master's in Public Health program at West Chester University in August 2022 to acquire non-clinical competencies.

He resides in West Philadelphia, enjoys sight-seeing, reading historical books and listening to classical music.

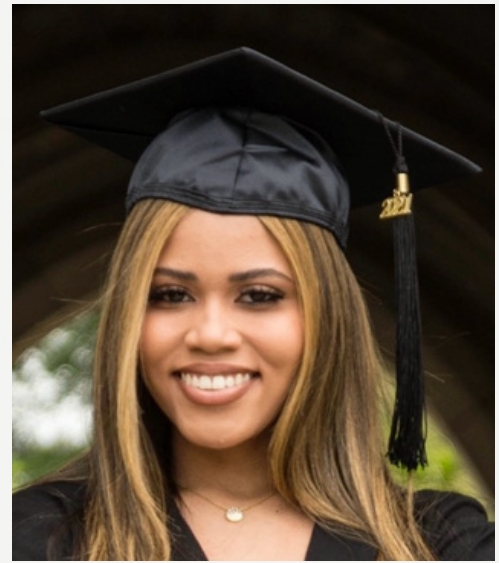


**Katie Sanford**

Katie Sanford received her undergraduate degree in Sociology and a minor in Gender Studies from Bloomsburg University and will be finishing her MPH in May 2024.

Katie has been working in violence prevention since 2018 and has spent the last two years working specifically with individuals on the autism spectrum to equip them with the tools necessary to have safe and healthy relationships. Through her work in violence prevention, she has found a passion for connecting with high school and college students to discuss how society and social norms contribute to the perpetuation of violence and what we can do to break the cycle.

When she is not working or studying Katie enjoys reading, thrift shopping, and crime documentaries.



**Naya Weeks**

I am a third-year graduate student pursuing my Master of Public Health: Community Health Track. I received a Bachelor of Science in Public Health from West Chester University in 2021 and currently a research graduate assistant for the Department of Public Health Sciences assisting faculty with research and data analysis; I have enjoyed my experience as a GA tremendously.

During the week, I am a program coordinator for a non-profit organization, Vision to Learn, coordinating school visits to provide free vision care to children in underserved areas. I am passionate about improving the quality of life for all and the WCU MPH program has fueled my drive to expand my knowledge and continue exploring the field of public health.

In my past-time, I enjoy reading, nature walks, and spending time with my cats Marley and Luna.





**Nia Coaxum, MPH, CHES**

Nia Coaxum, MPH, CHES, is the Philly Joy Bank Program Manager within the Maternal, Child, and Family Health Division of the Philadelphia Department of Public Health.

She holds both a bachelor's and master's degree in public health, specializing in Community Health, from West Chester University. Nia also serves on the Pennsylvania Office of Health Equity Advisory Committee. As a maternal and child health advocate and doula, she is committed to improving birth experiences and eliminating racial health inequities among Black women through education and advocacy; as well as centering their voices and right to bodily autonomy.

Additionally, Nia is a Certified Health Education Specialist, Irth App Ambassador, and the founder of Birth With Purpose Doula Services. Of all her roles, her favorite is being a mother to her 5-month-old son.



**Ragha Mohan**

She is a recent graduate from West Chester University with an MPH concentration in community health, complemented by her B.S in psychology from the University of Wyoming.

Currently, she serves as a Research Assistant at Temple University's Health Disparities Research Laboratory within the College of Public Health. Her primary focus is on qualitative analyses aimed at enhancing access to live donor kidney transplantation for vulnerable populations in the northeastern US, thereby mitigating disparities in healthcare.

She previously held positions as a dual Graduate Assistant at the Dowdy Multicultural Center, where she worked with the peer mentoring program for students of color, and the Department of Public Health Sciences under Dr. Stacie Metz on a research project related to public health and social workers. She also served as the Social Outreach Manager on the MPH Student Advisory Board. Ragha is passionate about increasing mental health access for underserved communities and improving equitable services. She aspires to establish her own research lab one day.

In her free time, Ragha enjoys long walks, spending time with friends, and binge-watching shows.



**Sara Wojciechowski**

Sara Wojciechowski began her public health journey at the University of Scranton where she received a BS in Community Health Education and a minor in Counseling and Human Services.

Immediately after graduating, Sara obtained the Certified Health Education Specialist (CHES) certification. Sara interned with the Philadelphia Department of Health on the High School Screening Team which then transitioned into a full-time position within the STD unit as a Disease Intervention Specialist (DIS). She continued working in Philadelphia until she decided to return to school and obtain her master's degree. Sara completed her Master of Public Health degree with a concentration in Healthcare Management in December 2021.

Currently, Sara works at the Pennsylvania Department of Health as a Public Health Program Associate 2 in the Bureau of Communicable Disease, TB/STD program and lives in Philadelphia with her husband, Timothy.



**Gopal Sankaran**

Gopal Sankaran is a professor in DPHS at WCU with education, training and experience in medicine, public health, and health promotion. He has consulted with WHO, PLAN International, Childreach, and AZHCF in the areas of smallpox eradication, global HIV/AIDS prevention and control, child survival, reproductive health, and cardiovascular disease prevention.

He currently serves on the Executive Board of APHA and earlier was the chair of the Editorial Board of AJPH. At WCU, Gopal's administrative service includes appointments as the AVP for International Programs, AVP for Sponsored Research, Dean of Graduate Studies and Extended Education, and Presidential Fellow for Planning. Gopal has served as a Rotary Fellow, University of California Regents' Fellow, and American Council on Education Fellow.

He received the Civility Award and Faculty Merit Award for Service from WCU, and the Distinguished Section Service Award and the Carl E. Taylor Lifetime Achievement Award from the IH Section of APHA.



# WCU's 2024 Student Research and Creative Activities 1st Place Winners



**Naya Weeks**



**Maitiya Meadows**

MPH students, working under the supervision and guidance of Dr. Chiwoneso Tinago, earned First Place for their research presentation in the WCU Research and Creative Activity Day, organized by the Office of Research and Sponsored Programs, on Wednesday, April 17, 2024.

## **“If you are well, your baby will be well”: The Needs of Adolescent Mothers in Chester County, Pennsylvania**

Presenters: Naya Weeks and Maitiya Meadows

Faculty Mentor: Dr. Chiwoneso Tinago

Department: Public Health Sciences

**Abstract:** Studies have been developed to evaluate effective parenting interventions to improve caregiving practices however, these interventions have seldom been implemented in adolescent mothers—a high-risk population. To develop an effective intervention for adolescent mothers, researchers must understand the challenges they face around caregiving and their well-being and involve adolescent mothers in determining appropriate interventions to address their needs. This research aims to identify recommendations for interventions to address adolescent mothers' needs related to caregiving and parenting. 12 adolescent mothers ages 21 and younger from Chester County, Pennsylvania completed interviews and questionnaires regarding their well-being, caregiving and parenting. Findings emphasize the need for educational resources for adolescent mothers about pregnancy, prenatal care, and parenting strategies, in addition to caregiving support. Participants described the importance of self-care and mental health when raising their children and suggested interventions for adolescent mothers to prioritize their own well-being to best care for their children. Results of this research will inform the development of a parenting and well-being intervention for adolescent mothers in Chester County.

Kudos to Daniel Engelbrecht, Victor Nwinee, and Jess Hampton (MPH students) and their faculty mentor, Dr. Lorenzo Cena, for their successful research presentation at the WCU Research and Creative Activity Day.



## Air Quality Measurements Near Mushroom Farm Operations in Southeast PA

Presenters: Daniel Engelbrecht, Victor Nwinee, and Jess Hampton

Faculty Mentor: Dr. Lorenzo Cena

Department: Public Health Studies

Abstract:

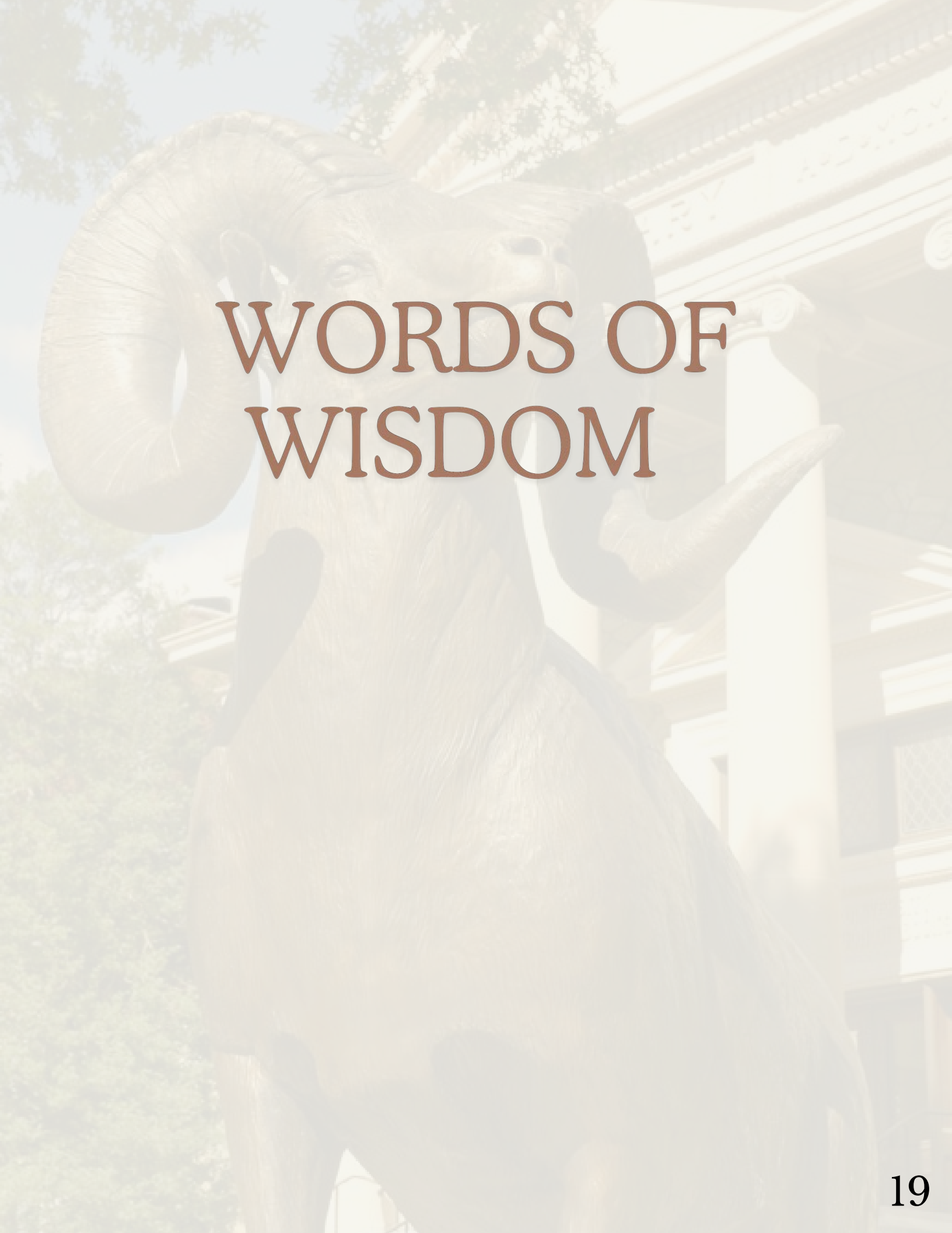
Introduction: Byproducts of composting and soil production include Ammonia ( $\text{NH}_3$ ), Methane ( $\text{CH}_4$ ), and Hydrogen Sulfide ( $\text{H}_2\text{S}$ ). Public concerns arise from exposure to these gases near mushroom farm operations and include pungent rotten-egg odors, metal corrosion, and health concerns. The CDC recommend a ten-minute ceiling limit for  $\text{H}_2\text{S}$  of 10ppm and 100ppm is immediately dangerous to life or health. The EPA reports the lowest observed adverse effects at 30ppm. Additionally, the Pennsylvania 24-hour standard for  $\text{H}_2\text{S}$  is 0.005ppm. Research is needed to better understand the concentration of these gases in southeast Pennsylvania communities.

Objectives: 1. Assess environmental concentration of  $\text{NH}_3$ ,  $\text{CH}_4$ , and  $\text{H}_2\text{S}$   
2. Determine the impact of weather and seasonal patterns on the concentrations

Methods: Outdoor environmental concentrations of  $\text{NH}_3$ ,  $\text{CH}_4$ , and  $\text{H}_2\text{S}$ , were measured using three real-time area monitors located within 100-600 feet from mushroom soil substrate. Weather and atmospheric conditions were also recorded.

Results: No elevated levels were observed for  $\text{NH}_3$  and  $\text{CH}_4$ .  $\text{H}_2\text{S}$  levels showed irregular concentrations well above the exposure limits and spikes exceeding the 100-ppm upper limit of detection of the instruments. These elevated concentrations were prominent in the fall months and were consistent with wind direction towards the instruments.

Conclusions:  $\text{H}_2\text{S}$  can be smelled at concentrations ranging 0.0005-0.3 ppm. Concerning elevated  $\text{H}_2\text{S}$  levels at or above 100ppm measured in this study are consistent with the metal corrosion complaints reported by residents and comparable to corrosion observable in sewer lines and wastewater treatment plants. The elevated levels pose a serious health concern for the public.



# WORDS OF WISDOM

# KEVIN ANDOH

A final year student for the Master of Public Health degree at West Chester University. Originally trained as a Doctor of Pharmacy in Ghana, I am now deeply engaged in public health initiatives.

I proudly serve as the President of the MPH Student Advisory Board and contribute as a Graduate Assistant in the Department of Public Health Sciences. I'm particularly excited about my involvement with the Global Health Planning Committee, where I've played a pivotal role in shaping the upcoming certificate program in Global Health, scheduled to launch in Fall of 2024. These experiences have not only honed my data analytical skills and program coordination abilities but have also provided invaluable insights into the complexities of public health practice.

Looking forward, I am deeply committed to advocating for health equity, driven by an unwavering dedication to effecting positive change. With a warm demeanor and a genuine spirit of altruism, I take great pleasure in extending support to those around me.

Under Dr. Stone's mentorship, my interest in pursuing a doctoral program in biostatistics/epidemiology has blossomed, and I'm eager to explore this path post-graduation. Additionally, I aspire to become a licensed pharmacist in the United States, further expanding my impact within the healthcare field.

Reflecting on my journey thus far, I am grateful for the supportive environment provided by the MPH program at West Chester University. The faculty's encouragement and resources, such as the writing center, have been instrumental in shaping my professional growth and preparing me for the road ahead.

To anyone considering pursuing the MPH program alongside other commitments, I offer a simple piece of advice: if others have succeeded, so can you. And if no one has yet paved the way, embrace the opportunity to be a trailblazer. As Soraya wisely said, "If someone else has done it, I can do it too. If no one has, then I can be the first."







**Maddy Heinberg (she/her)  
MPH Community Health Track,  
August 2025**

I'm a current graduate assistant for Dr. Brenner at the College of Health Sciences and I help with administrative/class work as needed. I'm also a graduate assistant for Dr. McCown at the Center for Contemplative Studies.

Over the past year, we've worked on a preventive youth mental health project aimed at parents and care-givers called Learning Life Skills Together. In May 2024, Learning Life Skills Together will be presenting at the NAMI Keystone Conference.

This spring, I'm starting research with Dr. DeJoy where we will use qualitative methods to study body image in university students.

The MPH program at West Chester is allowing me to hone my research skills in and out of the classroom. After graduation, I plan to pursue a doctorate degree in sociology, where I will concentrate on the social determinants of health and sociology of the body. A tip for current or future students would be to reach out to faculty, reach out to other departments, and take advantage of all West Chester University has to offer to help you meet your goals.



**Lindsey Howell  
MPH Community Health Track,  
May 2024**

Lindsey Howell received her Bachelors of Exercise Science from West Chester University in 2018 and will receive her Masters of Public Health May 2024.

Lindsey has spent time working as a technical writer in pharmaceuticals, while completing her master's at West Chester University. She has worked with the Learning Life Skills Together team to promote mental health within the Chester County community. Through her work in health promotion she has found a passion for health promotion and marketing.

When she is not working, she enjoys ballroom dancing, playing tennis, and spending time with her dog Sailor.

Her advice to current students is to remember to prioritize your health while working towards your masters. You may feel rushed to complete your degree but post-graduation, employers will see you and your degree not your timeline. We can't dedicate countless hours to studying health and ignore our own physical or mental health. Always practice what you teach.

# Congratulations MPH Graduates!



Spring 2024 Commencement,  
May 11, 2024





# ALUMNI SHARE THEIR EXPERTISE



## Casey Fenoglio, MPH, CHES (she/her/hers)

2018 Graduate of the WCU MPH Program – Community Health Track

### **Current roles:**

Serve as the Director of Community Engagement at Pottstown Hospital  
A 2024 Kathy A. Possinger Housing Policy Fellow with the Pennsylvania Housing Finance Agency

The Vice President of TriCounty Community Network’s Board of Directors

I have served as the Director of Community Engagement at Pottstown Hospital – Tower Health for the last five years. When I started the role, I was the first person in the department. The Hospital had recently transitioned to a non-profit entity, and they were looking for an individual to expand the Hospital’s community benefit programs. I eagerly stepped into the role and have not looked back! My department’s role is to identify the top health needs of the community, develop an implementation strategy to address the needs, and then work to carry out the implementation strategy. As a non-profit hospital, we are required to complete this process every three years. Since starting my job, I have brought four additional team members into the department. While I spent the first few years doing a lot of program implementation, I am now proud to lead my team towards success as they implement our community health programs. Currently, I work to drive strategic direction of the department, design new programs and initiatives, secure and maintain grant funding, and foster new community partnerships.

What I adore about my role is the creativity, flexibility, and innovation that it requires of me. Because there weren’t any pre-existing community health programs when I took the role, everything that our department accomplishes is new for the Hospital and the community. Having the freedom to truly address the community’s needs, without worrying about “well, we have done this for 20 years”, has been thrilling and so incredibly meaningful. My other favorite aspect of my job is the fact that I live in Pottstown and through this role I get to serve my neighbors. There is something so special about not only ensuring the health of a community but ensuring the health of YOUR community.

For current public health students or new graduates, I would highly recommend starting to engage in your local community. It is never too early to learn about the non-profits, service providers, and public health organizations that exist in your hometown, or wherever you would like to start your career. What coalitions, committees or public meetings are happening? Where can you volunteer your time? Relationships are the key to success, both personally and professional, and it is essential to start to build professional relationships as soon as possible in your career. Don’t wait until you graduate to start building your network. Get on LinkedIn, attend community events, and put yourself out there. If you are interested in a career in healthcare, please don’t hesitate to connect with me!



## Kelly Frizen, MPH Health Care Management

I graduated from WCU with an MPH and certificate in Healthcare Management in 2018. My entry into the MPH program was after working in for-profit and non-profit for over 15 years and having raised my two wonderful kids and a nephew with my husband. For me, this was perfect timing. I chose this track to be part of improving outcomes in behavioral health for those struggling with mental illness and addictions. Our family experienced some tough years, and God showed me that I had skills to help improve the system of care. After 12 years in health IT, moving up to Sr. Product Planner, I chose to be home a few years to raise children.

**Tip 1:** Put yourself and family first; this benefits everyone. I re-entered the workforce directing teams in behavioral health patient experience research with Voice & Vision, Inc. Our mission was to be the voice of people and families using services through data. I treasure the experience because it's where I learned first-hand the needs and network. After six years and getting my MPH, I moved to a quality manager role at an inpatient. I was in this capacity less than a year when they laid me off as part of a restructuring. It was a Godsend. On Day 1, I heard the CEO screaming at an employee. Staff were unhappy, competitive, and there was a lack of integrity in leadership. I took my severance and recommendation letter, picked my head up, and went for something better.

**Tip 2:** Expect integrity and respect. If you don't see it, leave. I accepted a position with the Commonwealth of PA as a Program Analyst. This gave me a macro view as I oversaw federal and state funding of addiction prevention and case management programs across 67 counties. I enjoyed the people and the work for three years as I helped build and participate in the measurement and monitoring of programs aimed at eliminating the devastation of addictions.

**Tip 3:** In government, there is opportunity to improve public and population health or to waste taxpayer dollars. Use your MPH superpowers; collaborate with community organizations, payers, and providers; use the research and the evidence as your tools; listen to the clients; measure and track results; and eliminate programs that don't perform. Work for leaders who empower and reward results. After three years with the state, I accepted a Program Lead position with Geisinger Health Plan. This move was to learn the insurance industry and be part of improving care outcomes and population health from the payer perspective. I'm thrilled to manage projects with goals to drive down cost and improve care, especially for people who are disadvantaged due to negative social determinants of health and vulnerabilities. Final Tips: Be a life-long learner. Take an entry level position if it helps you in the door. Track your accomplishments by dollars or time saved. Be kind. Listen...a lot. Assume everyone has something to offer. Work to make things better, not to be noticed. Learn from those before you. Be mission-focused, and have fun at work!



# ALUMNI ACHIEVEMENTS



# Servant Leadership Award



**Ethel K. A. Richards, MBA, MPH, CPH, LSSGB, PMP®, Prosci®**

Rev. Dr. Raphael G. Warnock and Rev. Bronson E. Woods, of The Historic Ebenezer Baptist Church, recognized Ethel Richards "The Plant Based Nutritionista™" for her efforts in helping lead the Ebenezer Baptist Church Community Supported Agriculture pilot program in partnership with The Black Church Food Security Network (Executive Director Rev. Dr. Heber Brown, III in photo)



Rev. Dr. Raphael G. Warnock and Rev. Bronson E. Woods, of The Historic Ebenezer Baptist Church, recognized Ethel Richards "The Plant Based Nutritionista™" for her efforts in helping lead the Ebenezer Baptist Church Community Supported Agriculture pilot program in partnership with The Black Church Food Security Network (Executive Director Rev. Dr. Heber Brown, III in photo) New book : *Cooking with the Plant Based Nutritionista™* by Ethel K. A. Richards, MBA, MPH, CPH, LSSGB, PMP®, Prosci®

## **Make a Difference Ball**

Celebrating individuals and organizations who have gone above and beyond to contribute positively to our community.

### **FOOD AS MEDICINE AWARD**



## **Ethel Richards**

For your incredible efforts, unwavering commitment, and the significant impact you have made in our community. Your work embodies the spirit of change and serves as an inspiration to us all.



March 15, 2024



# INDIAN HEALTH SERVICE

## 2023 ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH SPECIALIST OF THE YEAR



LT Justice B. Lambon, MPH, REHS, CPH is the 2023 Indian Health Service Environmental Health Specialist of the Year. LT Lambon joined the Indian Health Service (IHS) in 2021, reporting to Parker, AZ as a civilian and converting to the Commissioned Corps in 2022. LT Lambon is the lead Environmental Health Officer in the Colorado River Service Unit serving the Colorado River Indian Tribes, Chemehuevi Tribe, Ft. Mohave Tribe, Havasupai Tribe and the Hualapai Nation. LT Lambon is a model environmental health professional and has demonstrated exceptional leadership, professional growth, technical expertise and initiative.

LT Justice B. Lambon, MPH, REHS, CPH

### **Professionalism**

**Advanced Credentials:** LT Lambon has a Bachelor of Science in Environmental Science from the University of Minnesota (2016) and Master in Public Health in Environmental and Occupational Health from West Chester University (2018). On his own time, he is close to completing his Doctorate in Public Health (DrPH) in Environmental and Occupational Health from SUNY Downstate Medical Center (2025 projected graduation).

He maintains the following professional credentials: Registered Sanitarian/Registered Environmental Health Specialist (NEHA), Certified Safety Professional, Certified in Public Health (CPH), Child Passenger Safety Technician (Safe Kids USA), and ServSafe Certified Instructor and Proctor. Prior to joining IHS, LT Lambon served as a Preventive Medicine NCO with the U.S. Army and Industrial Hygienist with the Occupational Safety and Health Administration. He has used his extensive training and experience in occupational safety, food safety and vector control to cross-train and mentor food service operators, tribal and county EHS personnel and his peers throughout the Phoenix Area.

### **Leadership:**

LT Justice Lambon possesses highly advanced leadership skills. Since March of 2023, he has assumed the training and mentorship of a recent graduate Environmental Health Specialist, freeing the District Environmental Health Officer to train junior staff in other locations. LT Lambon is an advisor to the Colorado River Indian Tribes Head Start Advisory Committee and serves as the OEHE Service Unit Office Manager. He is the team lead for the Black Commissioned Officer Advisory Group (BCOAG) Letter of Appreciation Team. He is also a Cultural Ambassador with the Minority Officer Liaison Council (MOLC). LT Lambon has developed a strong rapport with Colorado River Indian Tribes' leadership and Health Director becoming a trusted resource for the tribe. He is a trusted advisor to Service Unit leadership who often seeks out his guidance during emergencies, investigations and healthcare facility audits.





# WCU's First Black Maternal Health Week

In the US, Black women are at a disadvantage when it comes to health but most significantly when looking at maternal and child health. When compared to White women, Black women are at least 3 times more likely to die within a year of childbirth. This is especially tragic given that 80% of pregnancy-related deaths in the US are preventable. Noting this cycle of premature mortality and the social forces behind it, President Biden proclaimed April 11 to 17 as Black Maternal Health Week (BHMW) on April 10, 2023. West Chester University held its first Black Maternal Health Week (BMHW) this spring. The week began with two panel presentations of community leaders, mothers, health care providers, and policymakers on April 11. MPH student in Community Health, Maitiya Meadows, served as the discussant for both panels, and Fanta Koita, MPH student in Community Health, served as a panelist. Feedback from students and other participants indicated that this panel was effective in raising awareness about Black maternal health inequities and ways to take action to improve the health of Black mothers. Other activities included a viewing of the documentary *Aftershock* on April 15 and a tabling event with Black Maternal Health Jeopardy designed by MPH student Kevin Andoh outside the SECC cafeteria to round out the week. A special thanks go to the Advisory Council (Drs. Zeinab Baba, Heather Edelblute, Chiwoneso Tinago, and Lindsey Mosvick) and the Center for Women & Gender Equity in making WCU's first BMHW a success.

## Black Maternal Health Week Panel

Thursday, April 11th; 11 am

**Jazzmin Boyd** (she/her) is a Full Spectrum Doula who is passionate about educating others regarding their sexual health/wellness, bodily autonomy, and reproductive rights.

In her career, Jazzmin has focused on educational literacy, community engagement, youth development, reproductive justice, and health promotion in schools, health facilities, and community-based settings. Jazzmin has educated adults and youth on safer sex practices and facilitated sexual health and contraceptive education workshops while helping individuals gain healthcare and other personalized resources.

As a native Philadelphian, she's passionate about supporting Black pregnant families before, during, and after their labor and birthing process while continuing to advocate for and educate her community on their reproductive rights and choices. She is currently in the process of becoming a midwife assistant to support labor and birthing in out-of-hospital settings.



**Jazzmin Boyd**

**Fanta Koita**

Fanta is a graduate student in the Master of Public Health program (Community Health Track). She is a first-time mom to a happy and energetic toddler boy (2 years). Fanta serves as a Graduate Assistant in the Department of Public Health.

She was born and raised in Philadelphia by way of parents from Mali, West Africa. Visiting a developing country such as Mali at a young age Fanta has witnessed firsthand public health issues which have broadened her perspective. As a native of Philadelphia, she also noticed some similarities in her community. With this leading to her interest in public health, she enjoys making a difference in people's lives through volunteering in her community and assisting with projects in West Africa. Her primary interest lies in Maternal and Child Health and she aspires to have a long-term career where she can make a change in women's and children's lives, especially being a mother.



**Fanta Koita**

**Tasha Isaac**

Tasha Isaac is a Senior Constituent Advocate/Casework Manager for the Office of Representative Christy Houlihan, Pennsylvania 6th District. Tasha has almost 3 years of experience working alongside the Houlihan Team. Tasha specializes in federal issues concerning Civil Rights, Senior/Older Americans, United States Postal Issues, and concerns regarding Social Security. She oversees all casework for the office.

Tasha is a powerful force in the workplace and uses her positive attitude to encourage others to work hard and succeed. Tasha is inspired daily by her faith walk. In her free time, Tasha enjoys being and spending time with family and friends. Words she lives by: Awareness=Action=Change!



**Portia Nichelle**

Portia Nichelle, a community advocate with over three decades of experience, is dedicated to preventing stillbirth, pregnancy loss, and neonatal death. She focuses on the Star Legacy Foundation's five pillars: research, education, advocacy, support, and awareness. Inspired by her own loss in 2007, Portia founded Covenant Lives Healing Heart Agency, Inc. to provide resources and support to families. She is committed to the mission of reducing pregnancy loss and improving care for affected families.



**Yolanda George Turman**

Yolanda is a servant leader who is passionate about philanthropy and community service. She believes the power of collective giving (resources and time) makes a difference in the community she serves and beyond.

Currently, Yolanda serves on the Chester County Women's Commission, is a former board vice president of the Maternal & Child Health Consortium, and is a member and former president of the Chester County Chapter of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc. (an associate member of Iota and ILL of America, Inc. in the Montgomery County (PA) Chapter of The Links, Inc. (serving Morco and Chesco); Black Women of Chester County in Action, and a supporter of many endeavors. She is committed to her church's mission, St. Paul's Baptist Church, West Chester.

Professionally, Yolanda has a background that combines more than 25 years of entrepreneurial and corporate experience in strategic marketing, sales and training in leadership and consulting, with Merck, Genentech and Colgate-Palmolive. She and her husband reside in West Chester and are the parents of two young adults. She is proud that her only daughter Lauren, a journalist, is a former member of The Fund's Girls Advisory Board (GAB).



**Sponsored by the College of Health Sciences and the Center for Women & Gender Equity**



As Community Engagement Officer with The Alliance for Health Equity (AHE), Kimberly oversees community health efforts, grant allocations to nonprofits, and scholarships, centered in health equity and Trust Based Philanthropy. She also leads AHE's strategic initiatives in strengthening healthy communities through capacity building and leveraging cross-communal partnerships. As a champion for health equity, community health, & health promotion, Kimberly is actively engaged in collaborative efforts in Chester County focusing on decreasing black maternal & child health gaps and black women's health inequities. Currently, a doctoral student at the University of Illinois at Chicago School of Public Health, DPH program, Kimberly is focusing her studies on Health Equity and strategies to eliminate health disparities in communities of color.

Prior to joining AHE, Kimberly served as Director of Operations with KPSP-Philadelphia Senoche Adjunct Faculty, Temple University (College of Public Health, School of Social Work), and Senior Director with To Our Children's Future with Health, leading award-winning, locally strong programs and securing federal, state, and municipal grant funding. Kimberly is an immediate past Board member of the Ivy Legacy Foundation under Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Incorporated, Rho Theta Omega Chapter, supporting programs and scholarships for raising college bound youth in her hometown of Philadelphia. She resides in Phoenixville with her husband and 9-year-old twins.



**Kimberly Daye Hardy**

Heather W. Wilson is the Chief Strategy and Growth Officer at the YMCA of Greater Brandywine. Wilson has over 12 years of leadership experience within the YMCA movement and a passion for public health and health equity.

Most recently, Wilson served as the Senior Vice President of Membership and Health Innovation for the YMCA of Central New York, leading strategic efforts to expand the organization's membership base and establishing key partnerships within the healthcare industry. She also held leadership positions at YMCA's serving parts of Maryland, D.C., and New Jersey. In these roles, Wilson applied her passion for community integrated health care, strategic planning, and innovation to advance the mission of the Y and to increase health equity in local communities.

In addition to her professional experience, Wilson holds relevant Y-USA certifications, serves as the National Chair for the YMCA of the USA's African American Employee Resource Network (AERN) and has published two health and wellness books.




**Heather W. Wilson**

**Mary Fitcher**

Mary Fitcher, RN, BSN began her nursing career at Crozer-Chester Medical Center where she spent 17 years providing maternity and newborn care. In 2008, Mary joined the Nurse-Family Partnership (NFP) team at Chester County Health Department, providing nurse home visiting services to first-time pregnant and parenting families. Mary is currently the NFP Program Supervisor for a team of six nurse home visitors and three bilingual interpreters. She is passionate about promoting maternal and child health by empowering women, reducing disparities, and strengthening a culturally responsive healthcare network.



# FACULTY ACCOMPLISHMENTS



# Department Faculty Earn Tenure and Promotion

## Congratulations!

Zeinab (Zee) Baba  
DrPH, MS, CPH,  
Community Health



Zeinab Baba earned her doctorate in Community Health and Prevention from Drexel University in 2014 where she worked as an outreach educator for the Drexel University College of Medicine's Department of Surgery. Prior to joining WCU she worked as a Chronic Disease Epidemiologist in the Cancer Prevention and Control Program at the Delaware Division of Public Health and as a research assistant and data analyst/programmer at the children's Hospital of Philadelphia. Dr. Baba has extensive experience managing and analyzing various healthcare datasets for pediatric and adult populations. At WCU, Dr. Baba teaches courses in the undergraduate and graduate programs. She also serves as the Assessment coordinator for the MPH program. Dr. Baba conducts quantitative and qualitative research focused on prevention, health disparities, mental health, and perceptions of health.

Melanie Vile,  
Ph.D., M.S.  
Environmental Health



Dr. Vile is a Peatland Ecosystem Ecologist, and the bulk of her research takes place in boreal peatlands of northern Alberta Canada. Boreal peatlands occupy less than 3% of earth's land surface, yet store roughly 20-30 % of the world's soil carbon (C). Peatlands provide a wide diversity of ecosystem services, not the least of which is the long-term conversion of atmospheric carbon-dioxide into large accumulations of stored organic C as peat. Research in her lab includes effects of climate change-related drought, increased severity and frequency of wildfire on C accumulation and, more recently, effects of increasing nitrogen and sulfur deposition related to oil sands mining on peatland function in northern Alberta. Her research is a collaborative effort, as Dr. Vile work with Drs. Kelman Wieder (Villanova University), and Dale Vitt (Southern Illinois University).



Thank you to Dr. Gopal Sankaran for his involvement in the APHA Executive Board!



Photos include the Executive Board members and leadership in Washington DC on May 6th, 2024.



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## PUBLICATIONS

**Knight, E. & Rich, R.** (2024). "We Are All There to Make Sure the Baby Comes Out Healthy": A Qualitative Study of Doulas' and Licensed Providers' Views on Doula Care. *Delaware Journal of Public Health*, 10(1):46-59. doi: 10.32481/djph.2024.03.08.  
New book, "Cooking with the Plant Based Nutritionista™" by **Ethel K. A. Richards**, MBA, MPH, CPH, LSSGB, PMP®, Prosci®

## GRANTS

**Vile, M.** (2024). Impact of Oil Sands Mining on Peatland Ecosystems of Northern Alberta Canada, Alberta Environment and Parks. Grant Amount: \$37,000.

## HONORS

**Tinago, C.** (2024). Outstanding Faculty Advisor. Selected by the Honors College and Omicron Delta Kappa and recognized at an event on Tuesday, April 30.

**Sankaran, G.** (2024). Outstanding Faculty Educator. Selected by the Honors College and Omicron Delta Kappa and recognized at an event on Tuesday, April 30.

## INVITED GUEST LECTURE

**Sankaran, G.** (2024). Invited guest lecture, A syndemic Approach to One Health: relevance to Global Health, in PH 340: Global Health course at Fort Lewis College, Durango, Colorado, on Wednesday, April 10.

## PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

**Sankaran, G.** (2023). Committee for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CELT) Spring Book Club. Reviewed and discussed *Mind over Monsters: Supporting Youth Mental Health with Compassionate Challenge* by Susan Rose Cavanagh, 2023. Penguin Random House.





I have  
a  
great summer