

MTSU Center for Health and Human Services Newsletter



*Better Health and Well-Being
for Tennesseans and That of the Nation*



PARTNERSHIP

"ALONE WE CAN DO SO LITTLE, TOGETHER WE CAN DO SO MUCH."

—Helen Keller

The Center for Health and Human Services (CHHS) is pleased to share more about its recent work, as well as what's in store for the coming



*Cynthia Chafin, M.Ed.,
MCHES® CHHS director*

quarter. As we continue our work to promote better health and well-being for all through projects, programs, and research with local, state, and national reach, we continue to engage with our many partners

to carry out meaningful work that impacts the health and well-being of many. Since I first came to MTSU in 2003, there has not been a time I can recall when CHHS-led initiatives have not involved the efforts of many. To do the work we do, we rely on our partners. We simply could not accomplish all we do without committed, enthusiastic, and engaged partners, both on and off campus. CHHS is eternally grateful for those who support our mission and vision of better health and well-being for Tennesseans and

for all, and who dedicate their time, expertise, and resources toward moving that mission and vision forward.

In addition to the current programs, projects, and research mentioned in this newsletter, we continue exploring new opportunities. As shared last quarter, we are actively seeking funds for CHHS programs that will soon end or have recently ended. Two of those programs

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(chronic disease prevention and mental health awareness and support) focus on our campus community. With each new academic year, we have an opportunity to reach a new incoming group of students, so there is an ongoing need for funding and partnerships to continue this important work. We will continue to work with those who have supported our efforts in the past, and we have identified new partners for some of the new directions we are proposing for the mentioned programs.

We continue with plans to expand STEMsational Ag: The Virtual Farm into a new phase with content in multiple languages and an added technical assistance component. Early discussions are taking place to implement opioid use disorder research in an additional rural Tennessee county, similar to what is being implemented in Wilson County through our Rural Communities Opioid Response Program grant, which is mentioned below. CHHS continues its collaboration with the MTSU School of Nursing and other community partners to address the needs of the health care workforce specific to long-term care facilities and nursing homes, and we anticipate submitting a proposal in spring. We have a few other possibilities in the pipeline, and if all goes well, we promise to share more about those soon.

With our current portfolio of projects, programs, and research that focus on substance use disorders, obesity and diabetes prevention, foods and agriculture, environmental health, and workforce development, we embrace our many partners who make our work possible as we make a difference in the lives of Tennesseans and others throughout the nation. CHHS looks forward to continuing to serve the public in these

important areas, as well as bringing back mental health-focused initiatives through new grant awards and sponsorships.

For those who are not familiar with CHHS, please take an opportunity to visit the [center's website](#) to read more about our work. Previous editions of the CHHS newsletter are posted there, as is additional information on some of the many projects, programs, and research of the center. A few recent highlights are provided below.

Lastly, readers will note a fair amount of content in this newsletter surrounding mental health. Mental health is important to overall health and well-being. Mental Health Awareness Month has been observed in May in the United States since 1949 and was started by the Mental Health America organization. The month is observed with media, local events, activities, and more. It provides a great opportunity to raise awareness of mental or behavioral health issues and to help reduce the stigma surrounding mental health. CHHS is getting an early start on Mental Health Awareness Month, with special activities planned in April as we seek to involve as many students as possible before they leave for summer break. Details are provided later in this newsletter. CHHS cares about mental health.

Recent CHHS highlights include:

- **Opioid prevention shifts to implementation funding.** CHHS recently received a Rural Communities Opioid Response Program (RCORP) implementation grant from the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) that provides **\$1 million** to implement activities and secure needed resources in rural Wilson County communities to address the opioid epidemic over a three-year period. This funding provides a transition from activities of

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the earlier planning grant under which activities began in October 2020 with funding from HRSA. CHHS, our campus partners, and Wilson



County community partners represented by **DrugFree WilCo** look forward to continuing to fight the opioid epidemic and make a difference in the health and lives of

Tennesseans. This project was highlighted in the **fall 2021 CHHS newsletter** for those who would like to read more.

Over the last couple of months, while transitioning from the RCORP planning grant to the RCORP implementation grant, CHHS has been focusing on three core initiatives in Wilson County:

Wilson County law enforcement MAT training—

The CHHS team assembled 538 boxes of promotional items for law enforcement to encourage their participation in online training classes on medication assisted treatment (MAT) and other harm reduction approaches to substance use disorder held January 11–12, 2022. Six classes were held, with **112 officers trained**. These officers represented Mt. Juliet Police Department, Lebanon Police Department, and Wilson County Sheriff’s Office. Lunches also were served for law enforcement during the training dates. Our speaker was Ronald Martin, a part-time law enforcement consultant for the North Carolina Harm Reduction Coalition, with over 20 years of experience in the New York City Police Department. A quote from one of the attendees summed up the training well: “I would recommend this training to every law enforcement officer in the state from the top all the way down to the regular patrol officer or corrections officer. I cannot thank Mr. Martin

and MTSU CHHS for this training enough!” said Cpl. Matthew McPeak. We were able to get the story published in three local news outlets to build awareness for DrugFree WilCo and CHHS.

Billing/coding training at treatment centers—

We started with the clinical staff, practice managers, and medical directors at



Cedar Recovery in Mt. Juliet on December 9, 2021. The educational session focused on how treatment providers can ensure their financial sustainability by

maximizing reimbursement for substance use disorder/opioid use disorder treatment and mental/behavioral health encounters, as well as billing across insurance. This will help ensure we maximize the number of citizens in Wilson County who are able to access treatment.

“We are grateful for the billing/coding training that was provided to our team! Our staff learned new information in addition to confirming existing knowledge. We are confident this training will allow us to increase efficiency and offer more access to those suffering from substance use disorders,” said Paul Trivette, the chief operating officer at Cedar Recovery.

Developing opioid data dashboard—We are working with MTSU’s Data Science Institute to develop a data dashboard that will engage coalition members, collect critical information, and then report on this data monthly to show measurable progress in a timely fashion. We

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will measure the service area and consortium, demographics, prevalence of opioid overdoses, direct services, our local workforce, our activities, and treatment options to give a clear picture of the current problems, solutions, and how we are working together to make a safer community.

• **Environmental Health and Water Quality project continues into 2022.** CHHS' recent grant to address environmental health and



water quality from the **Tennessee Department of Environment and**

Conservation (TDEC), which began in February 2021, continues into 2022 with involvement from several partners, including the MTSU **Center for Environmental Education**, MTSU **Environmental Health and Safety Services**, the MTSU **School of Agriculture**, and members of the TDEC Nutrient Reduction Task Force. CHHS received just over **\$56,000** from TDEC to help tackle environmental health and water quality in the state of Tennessee. In closing out 2021, CHHS created a dynamic toolkit that provides a robust public education campaign addressing water quality and the impact of water on human and environmental health. This toolkit targeted four populations: K–12 education, agriculture, waste-water treatment facilities, and general public education.

The grant has been extended through the end of 2022, giving CHHS an opportunity to expand the educational toolkit with additional information from TDEC and other stakeholders and to add digital materials such as public service announcements and infographics. The

latter half of the year will be spent reaching out to entities and organizations statewide to promote the use of the toolkit and materials for maximum impact.

• **COVID-funded agriculture and STEM education project seeks collaborators.**

STEMsational Ag: The Virtual Farm, which started with a Rapid Response Research on



STEMsational Ag: The Virtual Farm
MIDDLE TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY

COVID-19 grant from the U.S. Department of Agriculture's National Institute of Food and Agriculture, continues to grow, offering agriculture, health, and STEM-focused curriculum for

teachers, parents at home placed in educator roles unexpectedly, and home-school families.

CHHS will be presenting and sharing the project at several conferences in the southeastern United States this spring and summer. The center also is seeking paid collaborators to assist in promoting the program in an 11-state area to ensure educators are aware of the curriculum. Contact **CHHS** to learn more.

STEMsational Ag: The Virtual Farm was created in partnership with the MTSU School of Agriculture and Fermentation Science faculty. The project currently has 29 exciting units available online for K–14 learners to explore. The best part? Everything is FREE! Learners can investigate the first steps in raising chickens, how to start a small garden at home, and how to make their own hams. All units are connected to National Agriculture Literacy Outcomes and are available online, via USB, or as printed hard copies. Those interested in

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exploring the units can visit mtsu.edu/STEMsationalAg to create a free account for access to all the units. Learn more about this project in the [spring 2021 CHHS newsletter](#).



Jeff and Lisa Shepherd own Shepherd's Rise Farm. It is the perfect setting for MTSU's Center for Educational Media to film the Chicken Coop, Chicken Soup module in STEMsational Ag: The Virtual Farm.

• **Blue Raiders Drink Up enters its third year; new funding sought.** This obesity and diabetes prevention project funded by the Tennessee Department of Health's Project Diabetes initiative has provided opportunities for thousands of MTSU students through twice monthly campus activities, access to free counseling sessions with a registered dietitian and/or health coach, personal training scholarships, and cooking classes. Since the kickoff of Blue Raiders Drink Up: Healthy Choices for Healthy Students 2 1/2 years ago, our program has gained tremendous momentum and is highly sought out by our student body. From **July 1, 2019, to January 1, 2022**, our team has been able to educate **3,368 MTSU students** on the importance of



reducing the consumption of surgery beverages. Blue Raiders Drink Up continues to offer a wide variety of activities such as cooking classes, counseling sessions with a registered dietitian and/or health coach, and 24 educational events per year where students learn how to lead healthy lifestyles.

Additional highlights of program activities include:

- On September 22, 2021, Blue Raiders Drink Up participated in its most attended in-person event, the Mental Health Wellness and Suicide Prevention Fair. **Ninety-eight students** stopped by our table during this fair to chat about healthy lifestyles and the connection to mental health. We partnered with MTSU Health Services to have our on-site registered dietitian, Kim Coleman, help answer any questions and set up appointments with interested students.
- A unique opportunity has presented itself to collaborate with several other organizations on campus, the American Association of Family and Consumer Sciences MTSU chapter, Aramark, and the American Heart Association. We plan to provide **25 MTSU students** health education classes during the spring semester through the Healthy for Life program. The Healthy for Life program was created by the American Heart Association and is an evidence-based community nutrition and well-being program. In spring 2022, we will be hosting four in-person classes where students will learn about topics like basic cooking techniques, meal planning, nutrition and food science, basic physical fitness, mental health, and so much more!

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- Blue Raiders Drink Up continues to provide two shipments of incentive boxes to cooking class participants. One includes multiple kitchen items such as cutting boards, measuring cups, and thermometers, and the other contains staple pantry items such as beans, rice, lentils, and oats. Recipes shared in the course incorporate many of the items that are included in these boxes. In the Spring 2022 semester, we are finally back to having in-person cooking classes, and students will be able to take home and use these items to re-create the recipes they learn in class.

We received valuable feedback on the program from our campus colleagues and partners at Student Health Services. “The partnership with the Center for Health and Human Services through Blue Raiders Drink Up has been invaluable. Our health care providers love having a dietitian and health coach located within our facility to whom they can refer their student patients, and students love that those resources are convenient and free of charge to them. So many students express interest in improving their nutrition and fitness habits, but with so much conflicting information online, they get overwhelmed with the options and with the stressors of school, and may quit entirely on their goals. With Blue Raiders Drink Up, an expert familiar with the school schedule and lifestyle can help them identify the action steps that will be most effective in reaching their goals. As the original grant is coming to an end, it is my sincere hope that we will be able to find subsequent funding to continue building on the incredible success of this program,” said Lisa Schrader, MTSU’s health promotion director.

CHHS is seeking funding to continue this program beyond June 2022, because being on a campus with new students arriving every year creates an ongoing need for education and programming. The CHHS team appreciates any leads on funding opportunities that our campus community might share. We have some great new ideas to add to this already robust program and are eager to keep the momentum going.

Learn more about this project at our [website](#), in the [summer 2020 CHHS newsletter](#), and later in this quarter’s newsletter.

Infant Death Scene Investigation (DSI) and Safe Sleep project virtual classroom to continue for 2021–22 year; spring 2022 training for public health and social services staff on agenda.

With support from University College, this workforce training and development project has reached **over 34,000 first responders and over 1,700 public health and social services professionals** since 2004. DSI training is required for first responders in Tennessee under the Sudden Unexplained Child Death Act. As part of this training, responders also learn about sudden unexpected infant death (SUID) and safe sleep for infants. The externally funded project on safe sleep offers additional training opportunities for other public health and social services professionals.

The training transitioned to a virtual classroom format because of COVID-19, which was a challenge but ultimately very successful with the support and hard work of University College. Trainers and speakers, including the state medical examiner, have historically provided an interactive daylong training for first responders. Now, the virtual format may be continued as a model to complement live trainings when those resume in

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the future. The virtual option offers accessibility to training for first responders across the state who may not be able to travel even without COVID restrictions, increasing opportunities for participation. The project filled a gap for provider training within the first responder community and within health and social services fields. Virtual training will continue for the 2021–22 grant year. The project was featured in the [summer 2021 CHHS newsletter](#), for those who would like to learn more.

- **Campus-focused mental health awareness funding sought; “self-pay” model is piloted.**

In October 2021, CHHS wrapped up its third year of a Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration grant, which supported the Mental Health First Aid program on campus. **Over 1,100 students, faculty, and staff** have been trained in Mental Health First Aid since the program was launched on campus in 2018. As a result of this training, there were **more than 1,200 referrals** to mental health services both on campus and in the community. CHHS continues to

seek funding to offer training at no cost to interested departments on campus and is piloting a “self-pay” model for departments with a budget to offer the training. Corporate and individual sponsorship campaigns are underway to solicit dollars to fund a limited number of mental health training programs on campus until a larger grant can be secured. A funding opportunity has been identified that is expected to post in spring 2022, though dollar-for-dollar matches are needed for the application to be considered. Departments on campus that may be interested in supporting this application are encouraged to reach out to CHHS.

- **Partnerships and collaborations continue.**

CHHS continues to identify collaborators and partners both on and off campus to be involved in CHHS projects, programs, and research. Look for more updates via this quarterly CHHS newsletter, the CHHS website, and social media.

Cynthia Chafin, M.Ed., MCHES® CHHS director

Want to donate to further the work of MTSU’s CHHS?

MTSU CHHS operates primarily through external funding. To continue our mission of promoting health and well-being for all Tennesseans and that of our nation, we need financial resources to continue our work. We operate from public and private grants as well as sponsorships and donations.

Please consider a donation of any size, which will go directly to CHHS.

Visit mtsu.edu/chhs, click on Donate Now, and specify that your donation is for CHHS. The site accepts MasterCard, VISA, and American Express.

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Project Spotlight

Rural Communities Opioid Response Program: Law Enforcement and Substance Use Treatment Staff Training

“As we witness a tragic surge in overdose deaths, law enforcement is at the front lines to combat this loss of life. The enforcement of drug laws is an integral part of police work, but we also realize that we will not solely arrest our way out of this problem and need to offer these men and women protecting our communities additional tools.”

– Ron Martin, retired NYPD officer

MTSU Center for Health and Human Services (CHHS) received **\$200,000** in funding last year from the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), a branch of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, as part of an 18-month planning grant to address the opioid epidemic in rural Wilson County communities. The Rural Communities Opioid Response Program (RCORP) is a multiyear initiative supported by HRSA to address barriers to treatment in rural communities for substance use disorder, including opioid use disorder. CHHS has worked the last 18 months in partnership with DrugFree WilCo in Wilson County, public health faculty in the MTSU College of Behavioral and Health Sciences, the Data Science Institute, and other on- and off-campus partners to complete a needs assessment and gap analysis as part of the planning grant and to begin early stage implementation activities. One identified need was training for law enforcement personnel on

current issues surrounding opioid use disorder, including treatment and the prevention of opioid-related deaths, as well as training for substance use treatment providers on billing and coding to ensure maximum coverage for individuals seeking treatment.

In January 2022, **112 law enforcement officers** in Wilson County participated in a series of educational sessions pertaining to opioid use disorder led by retired NYPD officer Ron Martin. “As we witness a tragic surge in overdose deaths, law enforcement is at the front lines to combat this loss of life. The enforcement of drug laws is an integral part of police work, but we also realize that we will not solely arrest our way out of this problem and need to offer these men and women protecting our communities additional tools,” Martin said. There is growing sentiment that first responders, in the role of front-line triage, are crucial to lowering the number of overdose deaths throughout the country. Martin’s

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Educational outreach boxes

PROJECT SPOTLIGHT *continued from page 8*

session explored the intersection and importance of law enforcement and public safety officials' working within a harm reduction model. The sessions introduced evidence-based harm reduction programs—medication assisted treatment, as well as use of Narcan and syringe service programs—as a means of saving lives and helping countless people with substance use disorder achieve long-term recovery. Wilson County law enforcement officers are now more informed on these important topics and can continue to be part of the solution in addressing the opioid-related issues in the county. Officers continue to view the training, which was recorded and available online, with an additional 32 views as of the time of this publication. That number is expected to grow after a targeted outreach effort this spring.



Paul Trivette of Cedar Recovery with Capt. Scott Moore of the Wilson County Sheriff's Office

Capt. Scott Moore of the Wilson County Sheriff's Office and DrugFree WillCo said, "Combating the opioid crisis is vital to everyone working on the front line and requires innovative solutions to enact prevention, intervention, and treatment efforts." The virtual sessions were offered six times over a two-day period to accommodate various shifts. Cpl. Matthew McPeak of the Wilson County Sheriff's Office said he would recommend the training to every law enforcement officer in the state and added that "the experience has definitely enlightened me and opened my mind to the possibility of new ways to combat this epidemic of opioid abuse our state and many others like it are experiencing."

"Combating the opioid crisis is vital to everyone working on the front line and requires innovative solutions to enact prevention, intervention, and treatment efforts."

– Capt. Scott Moore,
Wilson County Sheriff's Office

CHHS, in partnership with DrugFree WilCo, facilitated billing and coding training at treatment centers in Wilson County in December 2021. Efforts began with the clinical staff, practice managers, and medical directors at Cedar Recovery in Mt. Juliet. The educational session focused on how treatment providers can ensure their financial sustainability by maximizing reimbursement for substance use disorder/opioid use disorder treatment and mental/behavioral health encounters, as well as billing across insurance. This will help ensure the number of residents in Wilson County who are able to access treatment is maximized.

CHHS is pleased to engage with the Wilson County community to improve the health and well-being of its residents and to educate the local workforce on important issues surrounding substance use disorder as a pressing public health concern. Work will continue over the next three years through the subsequent **\$1 million** implementation grant awarded by HRSA to implement components of the strategic plan. Working with DrugFree WilCo and other local consortium partners will continue. Faculty with the Data Science Institute and in the Community and Public Health program in the Department of Health and Human Performance are actively engaged in project activities and providing needed support.

Trying to drink more water this spring? Here's a map of water refill stations on campus!

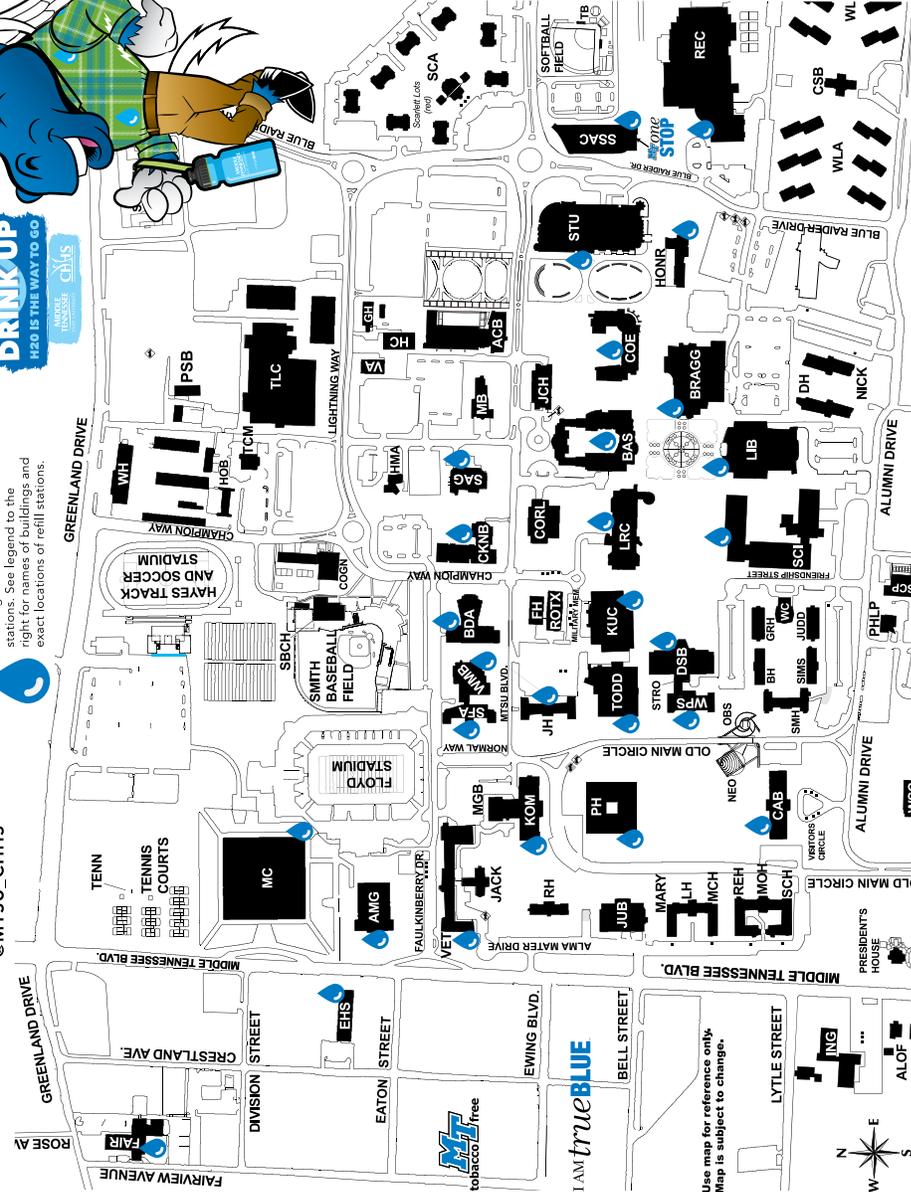


BLUE RAIDERS DRINK UP

Water Refill Stations Map

@MTSU_CHHS

Building with water refill stations. See legend to the right for names of buildings and exact locations of refill stations.





BLUE RAIDERS DRINK UP
 #20 IS THE WAY TO GO
 MTSU CHHS

AMG Alumni Memorial Gym
1-First Floor, 3-Second Floor*

BAS Business and Aerospace Building
1-First Floor, 1-Second Floor, 1-Third Floor

BDA Boutwell Dramatic Arts Building
1-First Floor, 1-Second Floor

BRAGG John Bragg Media and Entertainment Building
1-Second Floor

CAB College Administration Building
1-First Floor, 1-Second Floor

CKNB Carson-Kennedy Nursing Building
2-First Floor*, 1-Second Floor*

COE College of Education Building
1-First Floor

DSB Davis Science Building
2-First Floor

EHS Ellington Human Sciences Building
1-First Floor

FAIR Fairview Building
1-First Floor

HONR Paul W. Martin Sr. Honors Building
1-Second Floor

JH Jones Hall
1-First Floor, 1-Third Floor*

KOM Kirksey Old Main
1-First Floor

KUC Keathley University Center
1-Second Floor

LIB James E. Walker Library
1-First Floor, 1-Second Floor

LRC Ned McWeater Learning Resources Center
1-First Floor*

MC Murphy Center
4-First Floor*

PH Peck Hall
1-Second Floor

REC Health, Wellness, and Recreation Center
1-First Floor, 1-Second Floor

SAG Stark Agriculture Center
1-First Floor

SCI Science Building
1-First Floor

SFA Saunders Fine Arts Building
1-Second Floor, 1-Third Floor*

SSAC Student Services and Admissions Center
1-First Floor, 1-Second Floor

STU Student Union Building
1-Second Floor

TODD Andrew L. Todd Hall
1-First Floor*, 1-Second Floor

VET Voochies Engineering Technology
1-First Floor

WMB Wright Music Building
1-First Floor, 2-Second Floor*

WPS Wise-Patten Science Hall
1-First Floor

This program is funded under an agreement with the State of Tennessee
* funded by Blue Raiders Drink Up

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Whom Do We Serve?

The Center for Health and Human Services collaborates with MTSU faculty and staff, and public and private organizations and partners, to develop and implement local, regional, and statewide programs, projects, and research activities designed to improve the health and well-being of Tennesseans and of the nation. Did you know that much of our work involves off-campus initiatives? One of the more

common misconceptions about CHHS is that we solely serve the campus community. While some of our efforts do focus on our campus, the majority of our work is done in communities across Tennessee, some of which serve as models for other states. Our projects have touched all 95 Tennessee counties, with some involving multistate partnerships and others having national impact.



Ash Abro and Rose Chilsen, recent Dietetics graduates and former CHHS staff.

CHHS Campus Resources

MTSU Mental Health First Aid

Over the last three years, over 1,100 have been trained through MTSU Mental Health First Aid. Learn more at mtsu.edu/chhs!



To support continuing Mental Health First Aid workshops beyond fall 2021, CHHS is seeking grant opportunities as well as individual and corporate sponsorships and donations. Information on how to donate is available on the [CHHS website](#). Please include a notation that funds are for CHHS Mental Health First Aid. For departments with a budget to cover the costs of training, CHHS is pleased to facilitate training sessions of up to 30 participants. Please contact us for details.

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MTSU Center for Health and Human Services Cares about Mental Health



A National Crisis - Mental Health on College Campuses

In December 2021, the U.S. Surgeon General, Dr. Vivek Murthy, issued a new Surgeon General's Advisory warned of a growing youth mental health crisis during the COVID-19 pandemic. Mental health issues have long been a concern of college students and have only worsened with COVID-19 along with other current issues such as social injustice, economic uncertainty, and violence. Dr. Murthy says, "The challenges today's generation of young people face are unprecedented and uniquely hard to navigate. And the effect these challenges have had on their mental health is devastating."

The *Chronicle of Higher Education* issued a special report, "Overwhelmed. The real campus mental health crisis and new models for well-being" in 2020, which said, "Overwhelmed students are seeking help, overwhelming their colleges." These needs cannot be met by campus counseling services alone.

Ask faculty and staff on the MTSU campus if there is greater need for mental health awareness and support, and the experience of the campus' Center for Health and Human Services (CHHS) is that the answers have been a resounding "yes." CHHS was able to offer mental health awareness training from October 2018 to October 2021 through grant funding from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. Over 1100 faculty, staff, and students were taught how to recognize signs that someone is having a mental health crisis, what to do, and where to refer them for help and support. Since the grant ended in October 2021, numerous faculty, staff, students have continued to express the need for more training as well as recount personal stories of how the training has been beneficial and, in some cases, life-saving.



The Healthy Minds Study administered to MTSU students in 2021 found:

- 55% of respondents indicated that they agreed with the statement in regard to perceived public stigma, "Most people would think less of someone who has received mental health treatment."
- 49% reported that they had experienced "any depression" within the last two weeks, with another 22% reporting "moderate depression" and 27% "severe depression" within the last two weeks.
- 41% reported that they had experienced "any anxiety" within the last two weeks, with another 19% reporting "moderate anxiety" and 22% reporting experiencing "severe anxiety" within the last two weeks.
- When asked, "In the past 4 weeks, how many days have you felt that emotional or mental difficulties have hurt your academic performance," 31% indicated "6 days or more" in their response with another 26% indicating "3-5 days" and 29% indicating "1-2 days." Only 14% indicated "none" in their response.

Over 75% of mental health conditions start before the age of 24.



Mental health may impact:
 student success
 student health & well-being
 overall campus well-being
 campus safety



MTSU Center for Health and Human Services Efforts to Support Mental Health on Campus

During fall 2021, MTSU CHHS wrapped up its third year of a Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration grant, which supported the pilot MTSU Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) program on campus. Mental Health First Aid, from the National Council for Campus Wellbeing, is a course that teaches participants how to identify, understand, and respond to signs of mental illnesses and substance use disorders. The training provides the skills needed to reach out and provide initial help and support to someone who may be developing a mental health or substance use problem or experiencing a crisis. Since the MTSU pilot program's 2018 launch, **1,108** students, faculty, and staff have been trained in Mental Health First Aid. Of those participants, 857 were faculty members or students training to work in one of the helping professions. As part of this work, **1,325 referrals** were made to mental health services both on campus and in the community, with 727 of those referrals during the second year when the COVID-19 pandemic began.

Evaluation outcomes from the pilot project found:

- Using the Psychiatric Skepticism Scale (PSS) to assess participant attitudes toward legitimate forms of mental health care, there was a 30% reduction in skepticism toward legitimate treatments from pre- to post-MHFA training.
- There was a 23% reduction in stigmatizing attitudes toward people with mental illness using an enacted stigma scale.
- Using a measure of literacy, there was a 15% increase in knowledge of mental health topics.

CHHS is seeking funding to carry the project beyond October 2021. By educating the campus community on mental health, and reducing stigma- negative attitudes and behaviors surrounding mental health- the campus community is better equipped to assist students in need of mental health services and students may be more likely to seek needed help. This program is critical for student well-being, success, and campus safety and has been embraced by faculty from many departments, with some now requiring the training as part of course and degree requirements.

Current and Future Plans

CHHS is currently identifying **grants** and submitting applications for funding to continue campus mental health training activities, seeking **corporate sponsorships** with assistance from the MTSU Development Office, and **offering self-pay options** for departments to cover the costs of training previously provided by external funding.

Please read about some of CHHS' mental health-focused activities this spring. Details are included elsewhere in this newsletter:

- April 11 - UNTOLD Project: Campus Diaries exhibit
- April 14 - Spring 2022 Distinguished Lecture: Let's Talk! Being Stigma-Free in a Stigma-Filled World - Mental Health, Substance Use, and Stigma

Departments requiring mental health awareness training as part of degree requirements or classroom activities:

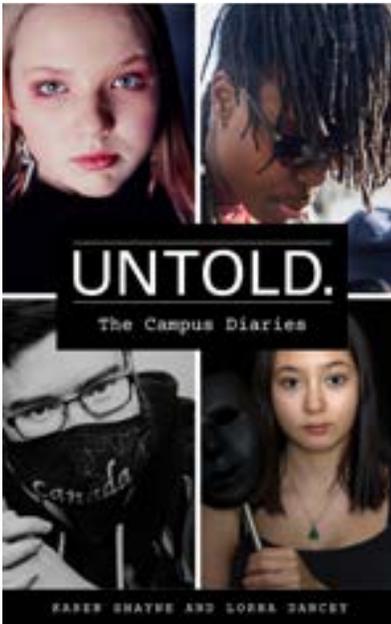
- Psychology
- Nursing
- Liberal Arts
- Child Development
- Nutrition/Dietetics



CHHS and Global UNTOLD Project Supporting Students' Mental Health Exhibit planned for April 11

After three years of COVID-related delays, the powerful and moving UNTOLD photojournalism exhibit is finally making its debut, with MTSU being the first campus in the country to host this incredible display of student bravery, perseverance, and inspiration amid life as a young adult and the many challenges that come with it.

While working on a spring 2020 internship with the Center for Health and Human Services and the center's partner, the global storytelling project UNTOLD, a Middle Tennessee State University



student proposed UNTOLD: The Campus Diaries as a mental health awareness campaign within the campus community. In a "Dear Diary" format, students submit anonymously through the UNTOLD Project online portal the powerful and moving stories of

their growing mental health challenges, adjustments to campus life, and their hopes for future opportunities. As a result, the inspiring blog became a showcase for enhanced mental health awareness on college and university campuses worldwide.

UNTOLD: The Campus Diaries has humanized the statistics of our students' mental health journeys—one story, one voice, and one picture

at a time. Today, after two years of research and a vast collection of stories shared by students, two books—a full-color hardback published by Covenant Books and a Student Edition diary-style journal—and a powerful traveling exhibit have been created to advocate for more mental health support in higher education.

The stylistic design and photographic journey of The Campus Diaries are fitting for stories that bare the soul. As one student wrote in his anonymous story, "The struggles are real on campus. No one prepares you for the stress that is about to unfold. It's OK not to be OK at times and it's OK to share how you feel. It might help someone else."

On April 11, 2022, on the campus of Middle Tennessee State University, the UNTOLD Campus Diaries Exhibit begins its journey from where it started and launches a campaign to change the conversation about mental health on college campuses worldwide. Please join UNTOLD creators Karen Shayne and Lorna Dancey for this remarkable and powerful exhibit of **UNTOLD: The Campus Diaries** from 10 a.m.–2 p.m. at the Student Union Atrium as UNTOLD begins an international awareness campaign to create a safe place of conversation and change.

UNTOLD.

The Campus Diaries

THE EXHIBIT



Coming
April 11

MIDDLE TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY
STUDENT UNION ATRIUM
10 A.M.-2 P.M.



Let's Talk! Being Stigma-Free in a Stigma-Filled World: Mental Health, Substance Use, and Stigma

April 14, 2022, 3–4 p.m.
James Union Building, Tennessee Ballroom

Immediately after the lecture, participants are invited to a casual meet-and-greet with Dr. Attilio.



Join us for an interactive, conversation-style lecture with **Leilani Attilio**, MPH, DNP, ARNP. Formerly an Army Nurse Corps officer and critical care nurse, she now provides primary care, gender affirming care, and opioid use disorder treatment in Tacoma, Washington. Attilio will talk openly with MTSU students about the stigma around mental health and substance use through a lens of health equity.

- Why is it so hard to talk about mental health or substance use?
- How can I start a conversation with a family member, a friend, or another student who uses drugs or has mental health needs so they can get help?
- What is stigma, what can I do about it, and how is it a health equity issue?

Join us for answers to these questions and more.

Can't make it to the live lecture? We will livestream the event mtsu.edu/live and will post a recording afterward at mtsu.edu/chhs/.

Being Stigma-Free in a Stigma-Filled World: Mental Health, Substance Use, and Stigma

Participants will have opportunities to:

- Explore awareness and understanding of stigma and how it relates to mental health and substance use disorder at an **individual level** as well as that of a **future public health, health care, or social services provider**.
- Discover how attitudes can be changed with credible information and knowledge.
- Examine how words matter and how language choices may reduce stigma.
- Describe how stigma can be a barrier to seeking appropriate mental health and substance use care.
- Reflect on steps one might take to address stigma on a personal or professional level.



Leilani Attilio

Attilio was an Army Nurse Corps officer working as a critical care nurse for five years. After leaving the military, she received a Master of Public Health at the University of Texas at El Paso and a Doctor of Nursing Practice at The George Washington University. Attilio worked in drug policy reform and harm reduction among active drug users for a nonprofit organization in North Carolina. While there, she successfully lobbied for one of the most comprehensive drug overdose prevention laws in the country. Attilio organized one of the largest naloxone distribution programs in the U.S., combining fixed-site and mobile distribution in North Carolina. Currently, Attilio is an advanced practice registered nurse working in primary care, gender affirming care, and opioid use disorder treatment at a federally qualified health center in Tacoma, Washington. She was a 2018–20 Jonas Scholar and 2017 Tillman Scholar.

Presented by the MTSU Center for Health and Human Services in partnership with the Department of Health and Human Performance and the Community and Public Health program, and cosponsored by the Distinguished Lecture Committee.



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Staff Spotlight

Chipper Smith

Mike Ayalon, CHHS RCORP coordinator and supervisor of Chipper Smith, CHHS RCORP project assistant, interviewed Chipper as this quarter's featured CHHS staff member.

Mike: You're getting ready to graduate from MTSU's Master of Public Health program. How has this program shaped who you are and what you want to do in the future?



Chipper Smith

Chipper: The MPH program here has really equipped me with the functional knowledge to understand the public health system in the United States and the science that drives it. My favorite thing about the program

is that it allows the flexibility to apply the general principles we learn in our classroom toward real world topics that we are passionate about. I couldn't have asked for a more welcoming environment to grow in.

Mike: You did work as a contact tracer and COVID-19 immunization clinic assistant here at MTSU. How did working with officials at MTSU, as well as in the county, help you to think about future pandemics and what we can do to be more prepared in the future?

Chipper: Last spring was a super unique opportunity to help MTSU combat the effects of the pandemic through testing, contact

tracing, and vaccinations. It's one thing to read in a textbook about the progression of events from a prior pandemic and an entirely different experience to work through a pandemic not knowing how things will turn out. The lessons I learned from both MTSU and Rutherford County health officials on how to lead in times of severe adversity is something that I will never forget. Seeing people of authority put in a ridiculous amount of hours into their job when it was demanded of them for the general safety of the public is a lesson that truly showed me the character it takes to lead.

Mike: We've been so fortunate to work with you as the Rural Communities Opioid Response Program project assistant. What did you learn from facilitating focus groups and conducting interviews as it relates to gathering qualitative and quantitative data?

Chipper: Working on the RCORP project with CHHS was my first opportunity to practically apply lessons from the classroom into a project that impacts the community. The coolest part about the project has been researching public datasets and facilitating focus groups in the county that I grew up in. I think that makes the work I do so much more personal because I know it is aimed at impacting families, schools, churches, and communities I've known from childhood. Facilitating discussion groups with leaders in the community gave us a large amount of qualitative data on stigma and perceived understanding of available services in the county. By combining this qualitative data alongside the quantitative data, it gave our research results even more respect among community officials.

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STAFF SPOTLIGHT *continued from page 17*

Mike: You designed the community needs assessment for Wilson County, and it is a document that the community refers to often as we try to tackle SUD/OD. What is your advice to others as we develop documents that try to convey important community health information to a diverse group of citizens?

Chipper: The needs assessment for Wilson County was so much more dense than anything I had ever worked on in the past, and I knew I wouldn't be the only one slightly overwhelmed by the amount of information included in the document. That is why it was so important that we took our time in structuring the results in the document strategically, in order to engage the readers and tell the narrative of what Wilson County was experiencing. As far as advice, it was extremely helpful to get as many eyes as possible on the drafts of the document for comments and questions. Including proofreaders of different backgrounds, education levels, and community involvement levels really helped to make sure the document was useful for all citizens.

Mike: When you were serving lunches to Wilson County law enforcement during the MAT training, you received feedback about the importance of this training. Tell us more about that.

Chipper: Last month when we served lunches to local law enforcement, I believe I vastly underestimated how much people love a good ham or turkey sandwich. You would have thought we brought them a hundred-dollar bill by their reactions. I visited the Lebanon Police Department and was able to get some really good feedback from the officers regarding the virtual trainings. One conversation in particular stuck out with a dispatcher whose daughter just

reached 23 months of sobriety from opioid use. She went on to explain how her experiences with her daughter gave her an entirely new level of empathy toward individuals struggling with substance use disorder that may be calling into the dispatch center. However, not all of her coworkers have that same level of empathy and can, without even realizing it, pass stigma onto the individuals they serve simply because of their dependence upon opioids or other substances. This can be through using terminology such as "well, they're a drug addict, so . . ." in conversations with coworkers and not acknowledging the humanity of individuals at the other end of the phone. The dispatcher I spoke with was extremely encouraged to know that this training was helping her department prioritize helping individuals with substance use disorder and treating them as if they were a family member.

Mike: What does the future hold for Chipper Smith?

Chipper: Currently, I am in my last semester of graduate courses at MTSU and will be graduating this August after I complete my internship over the summer with the Coordinated School Health Office at the Tennessee Department of Education. After that I hope to be in a position where I can have a positive impact on the community, specifically toward kids and their families' capacity to adequately provide their children with what they need to develop.

Employee News

CHHS Team Member Heads Back to the Classroom

Sarah Gwinn, CHHS grant coordinator, is continuing her professional development as a



Sarah Gwinn

grant administrator with the pursuit of a Master of Public Administration through East Tennessee State University. This program is designed to train students to become highly qualified public and nonprofit

managers in the fields of city management, urban planning, community development, nonprofit administration, public budgeting, and financial management. This program is offered as an online program tailored to working professionals.

“I am so incredibly excited to begin this program and am grateful for the opportunity as an MTSU employee to take advantage of the education benefits offered to us. The classes of ETSU’s M.P.A. program will elevate my capabilities as a grant professional and enhance the quality of proposals and programs that CHHS seeks to fund,” Gwinn said.

New Employee

Becky Figueroa, M.A., NBC-HWC

Becky Figueroa works out of MTSU Student Health Services, with a portion of her time funded through CHHS’ Blue Raiders Drink Up: Healthy Choices for Healthy Students, a project grant-funded under an agreement with the state of Tennessee’s Project Diabetes initiative.



Becky Figueroa

Hi Blue Raiders! I am so excited to be here at MTSU and work with the amazing team in Health Services and Health Promotion. Since 2020 I have been doing some health coaching with the MTSU Nursing

program remotely, but now I get to work with all MTSU students in person. I’m very grateful for this opportunity!

As National Board Certified Health and Wellness Coach, I help clients bridge the gap between the health and lifestyle behaviors they’d like to change and implementing those changes so they become lifelong habits. In practice, I meet with clients to first hear about areas of health where they’d like to see change, why those changes are important to them, and where they are currently with their health behaviors. Then we narrow the focus and start to develop goals and action steps

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NEW EMPLOYEE *continued from page 19*

one at a time. By building habits step by step, clients ensure that these new behaviors make sense for their current schedules, and that these habit changes are “built in” for years to come. Some typical concerns for students are making changes in the foods they eat, increasing exercise and movement, and ways to reduce the effects of stress. But really, integrated health coaches can, and do, help with many areas that can impact the life and health of clients!

I began my career teaching, and then over the years moved toward working with students one-on-one to improve their academic performance. Additionally, I have worked on implementing various student health programs at the university level—also a great way to improve academic performance! I have a special interest in the

effects of physical health on mental health and wellness, and how exercise can be a simple method to impact health in a big way. I feel my previous experiences have uniquely prepared me for my role as a student health coach and wellness educator.

I am new to Tennessee—my husband and I relocated from Seattle, Washington, and are still settling in with our rescue dog, Wally. We have a son who lives in Minnesota, and a daughter who lives in San Diego. We are excited to get to know our new home state—and the number of sunny days sure beats the weather in Seattle! In my free time, I like to visit friends and family, exercise, travel, read, and listen to music. Please feel free to stop by the Health Promotion office to say hi!

Campus Partner Spotlight

Department of Health and Human Performance

CHHS would like to express our gratitude to the Department of Health and Human Performance for its support of our work and mission through faculty involvement in CHHS funded research, projects, and programs, providing undergraduate and graduate public health students to the center as part of a joint internship agreement, providing opportunities for engaging with service learning students, and for co-sponsoring special events such as the 2022 Distinguished Lecture activities, which will focus on stigma, mental health, and substance use.

A “thank you” is in order to the entire Department of Health and Human Performance, with a special shout-out to:

- Dr. Sonya Sanderson, Department Chair
- Dr. Vaughn Barry, Associate Professor
- Dr. Angie Bowman, Assistant Professor
- Dr. Brandon Grubbs, Assistant Professor
- Ms. Casie Higginbotham, Lecturer
- Dr. Andrew Owusu, Professor
- Dr. Kahler Stone, Assistant Professor
- Dr. Chandra Story, Associate Professor
- Dr. Bethany Wrye, Associate Professor



Community Partner Spotlight

UNTOLD Project



The MTSU Center for Health and Human Services is proud to highlight the UNTOLD Project as the spotlighted community partner this quarter. CHHS Director Cynthia Chafin has worked with UNTOLD founders Karen Shayne and Lorna Dancey for many years, including prior work with women cancer survivors and other health and wellness initiatives. The UNTOLD Project was created in 2019 and is a global storytelling movement mining the unknown tales of humanity. Consisting of dynamic photojournalism, books, and exhibits, along with an upcoming video series, podcast, and full theatrical experience, UNTOLD exposes the remarkable stories of everyday people—giving voice to life’s diverse experiences, challenges, and vulnerabilities in a mission that unites us all.

UNTOLD captures the essence of truth in a world of unspoken topics and draws in an audience craving to go deeper to discover the heart and hope of the human spirit. UNTOLD also addresses the societal issues that challenge today’s monumental and controversial topics that center around mental health. UNTOLD uncovers the art of extreme compassion in a nonjudgmental platform while focusing on the efforts of advocacy and awareness behind the stories—just humanity at its best.

The Campus Diaries project, detailed in another section of this newsletter, is a product of the UNTOLD Project and was created after an idea of one of our own Center for Health and Human Services interns studying Community and Public Health at MTSU.

CHHS is grateful for the UNTOLD Project and its team and looks forward to MTSU’s being the pilot campus for the 2022 Campus Diaries exhibit, which will travel throughout the nation.

CHHS work is all about partnerships and relationship-building.

“No one cares how much you know until they know how much you care.”
Theodore Roosevelt

The Center for Health and Human Services
is a proud partner of the Positive Aging Consortium.



Positive Aging Consortium

Please save the date for the first

POSITIVE AGING CONFERENCE 2022

Please Join Us

FRIDAY, JUNE 10, 2022

Miller Education Center
503 E. Bell St., Murfreesboro, TN 37130

Look for registration to open in April.
For more information, visit mtsu.edu/pac.

I AM *true* **BLUE**

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