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# Public Health Memos



## HAPPY FALL!

Happy November Department of Public Health! Hope everyone is enjoying the cooler weather and excuses for pumpkin flavored everything, fall decorations, and sweaters! We are over halfway through fall semester! For those of you taking comps, best of luck! Check out this issue for some exciting campus events, professional development opportunities, and highlights on new faculty and alumni. If you have any future ideas for the newsletter, please don't hesitate to contact me at [pprother@vols.utk.edu](mailto:pprother@vols.utk.edu)

## CAMPUS EVENTS

- **AIDS Memorial Quilt Decorating.** Hosted by the Pride Center. Tuesday, November 9th 9:00 AM—5:00 PM. Student Union, 373.
- **Friendsgiving Community Dinner.** Hosted by the Pride Center, Multicultural Student Life, and the I-House. Wednesday, November 10 5:30-7:00 PM. Frieson Black Cultural Center.
- **Cheryl Brown Henderson.** Hosted by the Campus Events Board. Tuesday, November 16th at 7:00 PM. Student Union Auditorium.
- **Grad Student Night at Main Event.** Hosted by the Center for Student Engagement. November 17th at 6:30 PM. [Pre-registration required.](#)
- **Transgender Day of Remembrance Vigil.** Hosted by the Pride Center. Thursday, November 18th 5:30-6:30 PM. Student Union Plaza.

## IMPORTANT DATES

- MPH Comprehensive Exam on **November 5th**
- APEx orientation session on **November 19th**
- Last day of fall classes is **December 1st**



# PUBLIC HEALTH STUDENT ASSOCIATION

The PHSA had two recent events—painting the rock and a hike at Ijams Nature Center! Check out some of the highlights below.



Stay tuned for more events soon and be sure to [follow PHSA on social media!](#)



## NEW FACULTY HIGHLIGHT: DR. MALLORY GARY

### **Please introduce yourself!**

My name is Mallory Lynn Gary, and I am an Assistant Professor of Practice. I have a BA in biological science, MS and Ph.D. in health education. I also hold a CHES certification from NCHEC. I have achieved some personal goals, including being the co-founder and former owner of a health education company, a 501C3, and a self-published author of my first book. I enjoy watching documentaries, reading, writing, visiting museums and historical landmarks.



### **What is your role in the department?**

I will be teaching both undergraduates and graduate students in the Public Health program. I am currently assisting with the continual development of the online MPH program and preparing to teach undergraduate courses in Spring 2022. My research interests include the following: the promotion of health wholeness, the interrelation between a sense of purpose and health behaviors, the impact of social interactions and their influence on health behaviors, and lastly, the mental and emotional effects of a built environment on vulnerable populations. I utilized my research interests by incorporating them into three areas of specialization: health literacy, program planning, and curriculum development.

### **Why did you choose public health, and what advice would you give new public health students?**

I often get the question; why did you choose public health? The answer is, I did not choose public health; it chose me. I began my college career with aspirations of becoming a medical doctor. During my junior year, my advisor encouraged me to take a health education course as an elective. During this course, my perspective of how I wanted to impact the lives of others began to change. I completed my bachelor's degree in biological science, and I decided to get a master's in health education. Over time and with several significant experiences in-between, I realized that being a communicator and advocate of preventive health was more in line with who I am. Changing my career trajectory has been one of the best decisions of my life.

My advice to new public health students is part of my teaching philosophy. I believe students should approach every course as an opportunity to be active participants in their journey of life. To be present in their academic experience, I believe in practicing a mindset that I call "owning the course." This process entails approaching each course as more than just an opportunity to "earn a grade." Take time to identify how topics discussed may be applied to your life now and in the future. Identify the teachable moments in each course and use them in life and your profession. This process also involves recognizing that life is more significant than your own lived experiences, and everyone's experiences are valid, meaningful, and needed. I also encourage students to ponder their sense of purpose throughout their learning journey. As a professor, I have seen many students choose professional pathways that do not align with their strengths or things that come naturally. In many cases, the result has not been satisfying for those students. When we become connected to who we are, which includes identifying our purpose, our lived experience represents a life that demonstrates our authenticity. Our "authentic self" should be a reflection of our intentionality.

### **What are your favorite things about Knoxville and UTK?**

There are several things I like about Knoxville. The city is beautiful, and I enjoy exploring the restaurants, shops, arts, and entertainment. I am new to UTK, but so far, the most favorable thing that I have experienced is the multiple opportunities that I am receiving to grow as a professional and as a faculty member.

## PUBLIC HEALTH RESOURCES

### Hoping to start job searching soon or want some ideas on the variety of public health jobs that may be available after graduation?

- Check out the [Public Health Employment Connection](#)
- [Check out this article from APHA](#) about how four public health professionals got a job they're passionate about.
- The CDC offers a range of full-time paid fellowship opportunities for recent graduates with a [master's](#) or [doctoral degree](#).
- Consider joining public health groups on LinkedIn for job postings and announcements! [Check out this article about](#) how to optimize your job search using LinkedIn.



### Looking for professional development opportunities to hone your public health skills and add to your resume?

- Consider getting a **CHES** or **CPH** certification. This can help you stand out to employers as it demonstrates your competence in public health and health education. Check out this [CPH Informational Webinar](#) on November 9th. To determine which certification may be most appropriate for you and your career goals, [check out this article](#) on the differences between CHES and CPH.
- Consider adding on a certificate or minor to your degree! The Department of Public Health offers a [Graduate Certificate in Food Safety](#) and a [Health Policy Interdisciplinary Graduate Certificate](#). There are also [Epidemiology and Statistics and Data Science Program minors](#).
- Volunteer! If there's a topic or organization you're interested in exploring, reach out! Many departments on campus will accept volunteers as well as non-profit organizations in the community. Not only can volunteering help you develop new skills, but it is also a great networking opportunity! Check [out this article on how to turn a volunteer position into a job](#).



### Want more places to learn about public health? The following organizations offer webinars, podcasts, articles, and more!

- [American Public Health Association](#)
- [Public Health Training Center](#)
- [Society for Public Health Education](#)
- [CDC Learning Connection](#)
- [Tennessee Public Health Association](#)



AMERICAN PUBLIC HEALTH ASSOCIATION  
*For science. For action. For health.*

## ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT: SARA KEEL

### **Please introduce yourself!**

I'm originally from Clarksville, TN and got my bachelor's degree in Anthropology from the University of Alabama. I moved to Knoxville to serve as an AmeriCorps VISTA member for two local hunger relief programs. Pursuing an MPH seemed like a natural next step to move my career forward, and I was drawn to UTK's Health Policy and Management concentration. I loved the opportunity to continue building my connections in Knoxville while learning essential skills and expanding my toolkit. While at UT, I was involved in RCORP-ETCs's Project HOPE and was a TA for Intro to Public Health, Public Health Aspects of Aging, and Health and Adolescence.

### **What was your APEX in the program?**

My APEX was working with the Knoxville—Knox County Community Action Committee's (CAC) Special Projects Director, Lisa Higginbotham. I primarily worked on building and implementing a neighborhood needs assessment survey for the Western Heights neighborhood. These survey results were used to inform a revitalization project in conjunction with the Knoxville Community Development Corporation (KCDC). I was already somewhat connected to Lisa and CAC before my APEX, but this experience allowed me to solidify those connections and be recognized for the skills I gained through the MPH program. This was a critical part of me ultimately being hired there after graduation.

### **Tell us about your current position!**

I am currently working as the Client Services Coordinator for CAC Mobile Meals, the local Meals on Wheels affiliate. Mobile Meals provides a daily hot meal as well as a daily safety check for homebound older adults across Knox County. Mobile Meals currently serves 1,200 seniors a day, and this position plays a critical role in addressing the unique needs of this population by connecting them to additional services and resources. While this position has always been crucial to the program's daily operations, my particular role in this position will be to evaluate their current practices and help streamline and standardize those practices. While that sounds intense, I do get to round out my day by chatting with clients, whether it be discussing their nutritional needs, making referrals to other programs, or simply having a nice conversation about their day.



### **How has your position had to adapt to COVID-19?**

Covid-19 has caused Mobile Meals to completely redesign their operations. Homebound older adults are particularly vulnerable to social isolation and mental health issues that are associated with it. For many Mobile Meals clients, the volunteer delivering their meal may be the only person they see or talk to that day. Because COVID-19 limited in-person contact, that causes many clients to become even more isolated. Programs such as Senior Care Calls were started to help provide safer social interactions for older adults.

### **What is your advice to students who are preparing for their APEX and job searching?**

My advice to anyone about to complete their APEX would be to consistently communicate with your preceptor from the beginning of your time together. Time flies by when you're working on something you're interested in, and that 12 weeks flies by fast. Schedule weekly check-ins with your preceptor and create a way to track your progress, whether that be a simple calendar or a Gantt chart. Also, learn about more than just your own role in the organization. Take any opportunity to connect with other people there that are doing work you're interested in. Your preceptor will most likely be more than happy to introduce you. You never know where an open position will appear!

## IT'S VACCINE SEASON!

The Student Health Center is offering the flu and COVID-19 vaccines.

- SHC has both the Moderna and J&J vaccine for COVID-19.
- Booster doses are now available for [those who are eligible](#).
- Yes, you can 'mix and match' vaccine doses for the booster! [Check out this article from PBS on how booster shots work](#).
- Flu shots are available at the Pharmacy. No appointment is needed and walks-ins are welcome Monday–Friday from 9 AM to 4 PM. [Find more information here](#).



## UTK HOMECOMING 2021

**Homecoming Week is November 7th–13th ending in the UT football game against the Georgia Bulldogs. Check out the events below for a celebration of all things Vols and Rocky Top!**

### Event Highlights

- Homecoming Comedy Show: Monday, November 8th at 7:00 PM in the Student Union Auditorium
- Homecoming Breakfast: Wednesday, November 10th at 9:00 AM on the Pedestrian Bridge at the Student Union
- Homecoming Ice Cream Social: Thursday, November 11th from 2:30-4:00 PM at the Student Union Plaza
- Homecoming Parade: Friday, November 12th at 4:00 PM at the Torchbearer Plaza
- Annual Frieson Black Cultural Center Homecoming Tailgate: Saturday, November 13th at 4:30 PM at the Frieson Black Cultural Center

[Check out the full list of events here.](#)



## SAFE ZONE TRAININGS



**There are still trainings available for Fall semester through the Pride Center!** Open to all faculty, staff, and students, Safe Zone trainings are educational workshops focused on terminology related to gender and sexuality, awareness and understanding of the intersections of gender, sexuality, and other social identities, skills to intervene in situations of discrimination and injustice, and knowledge about LGBTQ+ resources.