

# MPH CONNECTION

The Official Newsletter of the Master of Public Health Program at Missouri State University

## A Word from the Interim Director



The Masters of Public Health program continues to grow both in size and in quality. We currently have 43 students enrolled including the undergraduates in the accelerated MPH program. Those students have taken advantage of the opportunity to enroll in our courses while still working on their baccalaureate degrees. They get to count 12 hours of work towards both the bachelors and masters degrees, a substantial savings in time and money. As soon as they graduate with the bachelor's degree, they already have 12 hours of course work towards the MPH.

Our affiliation with the Ozarks Public Health Institute (OPHI) provides many benefits, especially to the students in the MPH program. This year, five new graduate assistantships were created from grants to the OPHI and our students filled them all. The tuition waiver and stipend make a graduate assistantship a very desirable commodity.

Currently, we are on track to offer our graduate certificates starting in the fall semester. These certificates are in the (1) Public Health Core, (2) Public Health & Health Care Administration, and (3) Public Health and Homeland Security. The latter can be finished completely online. These certificates are especially targeted to Missouri's public health workforce, but anyone who qualifies is welcome to participate.

In short, we are busy and happy to be so. If you have questions regarding our program, please feel free to contact me at 417-836-8945 or at David Claborn@MissouriState.edu



## STUDENTS IN ACTION

On January 29th, the Surgeon General stopped in Springfield, MO on his recent listening tour. The students of the program had the opportunity to sit in and listen to the surgeon general and public health professionals in the

## CONGRATULATIONS

### Fall 2015 Graduates

Jillian Ball

Travis Fisher

Brent Jones

Kip Thompson

## Internship Experience: Jillian Ball

Are you about to do your internship or are in the process of looking for one but have no idea where to start? If that's you, here is a good place to start. This past summer Jillian Ball completed her internship at Taney County Health Department and has shared a bit about her experience.

As if graduate school was not already stressful enough, as you finally get close to the end of coursework, you find yourself stressing (quite possibly panicking) about where and how you can convince an agency to let you in their doors to complete the last leg of the MPH program – the internship. Well, I have good news. It turns out that finding a place to complete the internship and then having a positive experience is more of the norm for our students, thankfully. My experience at Taney County Health Department (TCHD) was no different. I spent the summer of 2014 under the supervision of Robert Niezgod, MPH and Director of TCHD. There were a number of valuable learning experiences that I took away from my experience.

**Witnessing leadership and mentoring.** We read about it and hear speaker after speaker discuss "leadership". If you are lucky enough, you actually get to experience and observe it in action. I was able to regularly observe Robert in many situations from grants meetings, manager and staff meetings, hiring interviews to tension-filled board meetings. In all situations, he regularly exhibited professionalism, patience, articulate thoughts and humility. He was quick to listen and always had time to explain and teach when I had questions. He found ways to challenge me and had patience to let me problem solve while letting me know he had confidence in my abilities.

**Conducting the family planning clinic program evaluation.** The major project that I completed for the agency was an extremely valuable learning experience. It was certainly a challenge to evaluate a program as an external party that has been in existence for 44 years. I learned firsthand why evaluations need to be designed in program planning. Inputs, activities and outputs (remember those logic models?) do not necessarily lead to intended health outcomes when outcome measures have not been set or tracked. I learned the importance of immediately and regularly involving all stakeholders, especially those implementing the program on a daily basis. I was surprised how much I learned from a single project.

**Observing and understanding the importance of partnerships and coalition building to move public health initiatives forward.** I had the chance to attend many community coalition meetings with the Community Development Manager, Jean. It was somewhat fascinating to see community coalitions create programs, write grants, set measurable goals and objectives and then see them actually move forward. I was able to see of the quantifiable progress, as well as the barriers, when I was tasked to work on the Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP) Annual Report for PHAB. I had to compare goals, objectives and activities that were initially created by the coalition and find a way to show measurable progress one year later. Again, it was apparent how important it is to plan goals, objectives and activities with measurable outcomes and health impact in mind. This is just another example of how the agency let me get inside the work they are involved in and truly learn by doing.

### Future Public Health Professional

**Upcoming Meetings**  
March 2nd - PSU 400  
April 6th—PSU 308C  
May 4—PSU 308C

The supervision provided by TCHD was excellent. I was never micromanaged, but I was expected to be working diligently on projects assigned. It was understood that I was to take the lead role in working with other team members as needed and not wait for them to come to me. Robert and the other managers stopped by to discuss projects and events on a daily basis to make sure that I wasn't struggling. As the experience went on, I was left to determine which activities were the most important for me to attend and how to best manage my time with the given responsibilities. Taney County Health Department is an excellent field experience site. The agency is best suited for students who are positive, flexible, adaptable and willing to engage and learn and take on tasks. I could not have asked for a better experience during the internship than the one that I had at TCHD.

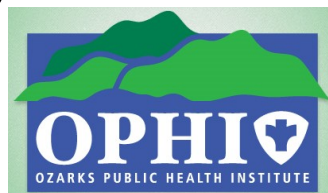
## Alumni Spotlight - Michael Onsongo

Michael is a graduate of the MPH program at Missouri State University. He has an undergraduate degree in biology with a minor in chemistry. He is currently a Public Health Epidemiologist in Independence, Missouri where he resides with his wonderful wife and energetic son.

**Why Public Health** -My interest in public health started off when I was in elementary school. I went to boarding school and it was located close to two big industries. One was a paper mill and the other was a sugar cane processing factory. Both were public companies but the main shareholders were senior government officials including the president. The two industries did not do a good job of fighting pollution generated from their factories. The paper mill was the biggest offender. They were the only paper mill in East Africa, the main employer in the area and the president was the main shareholder. The pollution generated caused acidic rain in the region, fouled the air, and the waste water was not properly treated before being discharged into a river that flowed by it. These pollutants lead to seeing conditions that were not common elsewhere in the country. This was a public health issue but I did not know that's what it was called. After my undergrad, I went to work for an environmental company as an environmental analyst. I realized that the skills and knowledge I was gaining in that field could not be easily implemented back home because it needed a strong government enforcement to be effective and I could see that even here the laws were not that closely enforced. So more education was the next step and it had to be something that I could practice back home. This is when I come to look into what public health is and got into it.

**Current Job**— I am the Public Health Epidemiologist. It is general position that allows me to look and work in other areas such as communicable diseases, disaster epidemiology and preparation, and occupational epidemiology. Communicable disease reporting, investigation, monitoring, and surveillance is what I do the bulk of the time. I am also the point person for the health department on data research and analysis needs. This extends out to other groups that work with the health department on community improvements and ranges from community coalitions groups to work being done with other city departments. I work as a team with other epidemiologists (state and LPHA) and statisticians in Kansas City metro

### Ozarks Public Health Institute



The OPHI is part of Missouri State University and aims to address public health issues across Missouri. One project that the OPHI is involved with is Staying Fit, which is a 16 week web-based program

sponsored by Cox Health Branson and Ozark Wellness Network. The program was originally created by Stanford University and geared towards high school students but is now being tried with middle school aged children. In the past year over 900 students have participated. Prior to the start of the program, baseline measurements are completed and each child is assigned to a group. To reduce stigma and embarrassment, the groups aren't revealed and each is designed to look alike. Each lesson contains different information about health such as exercise, nutrition or body image. Based on the group, the participant is assigned to a program that is geared towards how to maintain a healthy weight or how to improve habits and the importance of a healthy lifestyle. The overall goal of the program is to help students gain knowledge on how to be healthy and bring awareness to their eating and exercise habits. To track progress additional assessments are conducted half way through the program and at the end. Upon completion of the program personalized feedback is sent to every student. The program is expanding to new sites next school year.

area and the state through the Kansas City Data Collective (KCDC) group to make available Kansas City metro area specific data. The data provides regional and local health information to the community and identifies gaps in existing data sources and work to fill these gaps by producing missing/necessary population based data for the Kansas City Metropolitan Area and the cities of Independence and Kansas City, Missouri. I also work with the Diversity Advisory Council on Health Equity (DACHE) and this group works to facilitate access to equitable health services and to increase cultural competency in the area. I am currently working with a team preparing for the community health assessment. So depending on the time of week and month, I could be working with spreadsheets, doing interviews, talking or teaching in the community, in meeting or webinar.

**Advice to Current Students**—While the education and information you getting might be a lot, the field is vast and there is still more to learn. A lot of areas are interconnected and depending on which area you choose, it is very helpful to understand the general concept of other areas. I also work with a former program graduate, Nathan Matney and the team work we forged at MSU is the same one we still use. Plus there are many former graduates out there that are always willing to help if you reach out. Lastly, the MPH program at MSU is a great program. Take pride in it.

## Future Course Offerings

Course	Course Title	Fall 2015	Spring 2016	Summer 2016
PBH 720	Epidemiology	Online	Seated	
PBH 730	Biostatistics in Health Sciences	Seated	Online	
PBH 740	Health Behavior		Online	
PBH 745	Environmental Health	Seated		
MGT 701	Health Services Organization	Evening	Evening	
PBH 735	Software Applications and Data Sources in Public Health	Blended, Weekend		
PBH 756	Introduction to Public Health	Blended, Weekend		Blended, Weekend
PBH 760	Research Methods in Public Health		Blended	
PBH 783	International Health and Infectious Disease		Online	
PBH 775	Principles and Skills of Public Health Administration		Seated with Remote Access	
PBH 771	Public Health Preparedness			
PBH 778	Chronic Epidemiology			

Course		Fall 2016	Spring 2017	Summer 2017
PBH 720	Epidemiology	Online	Blended (weekend)	
PBH 730	Biostatistics in Health Sciences	Blended	Online	
PBH 740	Health Behavior		Online	
PBH 745	Environmental Health	Seated		
PBH 735	Software Applications and Data Sources in Public Health	Blended, Weekend		
PBH 756	Introduction to Public Health	Blended, Weekend		
PBH 760	Research Methods in Public Health			
PBH 783	International Health and Infectious Disease		Seated	
PBH 775	Principles and Skills of Public Health Administration		Seated	
PBH 771	Public Health Preparedness	Seated		
PBH 778	Chronic Epidemiology			Online

**This is for planning purposes only and is subject to change.**



### MASTER OF PUBLIC HEALTH PROGRAM

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