



## Community Partnerships: JPHCOPH and the Evans County Health Collaborative

Many of the health issues that face us today, whether we're referring to diabetes, HIV, cancer, depression, or so on, start in the community. The community environments where we live and act are pivotal in determining how healthy we will be. Community environments, in turn, represent a complex mix of social, economic, cultural, and political issues that come together to help shape our daily lives. Public health strives to engage with communities to understand and address these issues. In this way, we can work together to get at the root of health problems and health disparities. This approach has the potential to solve problems that cannot be solved with a focus on health care delivery.

In recognition of this important challenge, the Jiann-Ping Hsu College of Public Health (JPHCOPH) at Georgia Southern University is working to build partnerships with rural Georgia communities. These partnerships will allow us to understand better the needs of rural communities, and to support them in improving the health of their citizens. One such growing partnership is being forged between JPHCOPH and the Evans County Health Collaborative (EHC) in Claxton, Georgia. The EHC is a community-based initiative to improve the health of Evans County citizens. EHC members include community members representing a wide range of local businesses, schools, civic organizations, and health care providers. The EHC must consider the needs of an increasingly diverse populace, which includes a rapidly growing Hispanic community.



*Dr. Alison Scott (far right) and colleagues*

JPHCOPH currently is involved with two separate EHC initiatives. The first is the Worksite Wellness Project, which



*Rebecca Wilson, MPH Student*

was initiated by an EHC task force with representatives from three Evans County employers: the Evans Memorial Hospital, the Claxton Bank, and the Evans County Board of Education. The task force is working in collaboration with the Bureau of Business Research and Economic Development (BBRED) and JPHCOPH's Center for Rural Health and Research.

The Worksite Wellness Project strives to help Evans County workers live healthier lives, with a focus on healthy eating and exercising. The Project's Speaker Series provides worksite access to information about nutrition and eating well. It also provides information about diseases that affect many Georgians, such as diabetes and high blood pressure. In addition, the Worksite Wellness Project aims to provide opportunities to make exercise part of daily life, through organized fitness classes, personal training, and subsidized gym memberships. The Project's activities recognize the potential to avert disease, and to improve quality of life, by providing opportunities for exercise and healthy eating.

JPHCOPH is also working with the EHC to conduct a community health assessment. As part of the assessment, JPHCOPH faculty member Alison Scott and MPH student researchers Rebecca Wilson, Ashiyana Regmi, Forrest Robinson, and Pavan Panchavati are conducting qualitative interviews and focus groups with community members. This participatory approach allows community members to give voice to their experiences and impressions regarding health needs in Evans County. Emphasis is being placed on eliciting the perspectives of African American and Hispanic residents, given the disproportionate burden of ill health experienced by these groups.

This assessment also has served as an opportunity for JPHCOPH faculty and students to build bridges to civic

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## Faculty Spotlight...



**Dr. Kari Fitzmorris**  
*Assistant Professor of Environmental Health Sciences*  
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Dr. Fitzmorris joined the JPHCOPH family in August 2006. She received her MSPH and Doctor of Science degrees from Tulane University School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine in 2004. From there, she accepted a post-doctoral appointment as a research scientist with the United States Department of Agriculture in New Orleans where she spent two years on the development of activated carbon from agricultural residuals.

She is an active member of the Water Environment Federation and has recently been appointed the Vice-chair of the Agriculture and Industrial Committee. She has also consulted with several private companies regarding approval of sludge treatment processes with EPA's Pathogen Equivalency Committee.

Her areas of research interest include water quality and wastewater treatment, specifically those areas related to the development of value-added products from wastes and the use of indicator organisms in the evaluation of process efficacy. She has numerous publications and presentations in this field and is excited about building the Environmental Health Sciences program concentration at Georgia Southern University.

## JPHCOPH Faculty Honored...



*Dr. Karl Peace, Provost Linda Bleicken, and Dr. Jerry Ledlow*

The March 2007 general faculty meeting of Georgia Southern University focused upon celebrating scholarship. Faculty from each college who wrote or edited scholarly monographs and made significant contributions to research between July 2005 -June 2006 were honored by the Provost. Dr. Jerry Ledlow was honored for editing a 3 volume series entitled Community Preparedness and Response to

Terrorism published by Praeger/Greenwood Publishers. Dr. Karl Peace was honored for his publications in referred journals, professional presentations, funded grants and contracts, and his efforts to establish a collaboration with the Southwest Georgia Cancer Coalition.

## Student Spotlight...



**Beth Graham**  
*(Pictured Center)*  
**M.H.S.A.**  
*1st Year Student*

Beth Graham was born on May 31, 1981 in Jacksonville, FL to Lewis and Debbie Graham. She is one of three children (the middle). She graduated from Paxon School for Advanced Studies in 2000.

Beth attended Georgia Southern University beginning in August of 2001. She graduated with a degree in English and a minor in Sociology. Prior to graduating she took a job at a local pharmacy. That was a significant turning point that ultimately led her to pursue her Masters degree in Health Services Administration.

Currently, Beth is finishing up her first year in the program. She is secretary for the Public Health Student Association as well as a member of the Dean's Student Advisory Committee. After graduating in December, Beth hopes to work in hospital administration for several years and eventually go on to earn her Dr.P.H. in Public Health Leadership.

## Alumni Spotlight...



**Kelley G. Chester**  
**MPH - Biostatistics**  
**Spring 2007**

Kelley Chester is from Atlanta, Georgia. She received her Bachelors of Business Administration degree from Georgia Southern University specializing in Finance in 1993. After graduation she worked briefly in the real estate appraisal field then moved into healthcare information technology when she accepted a position with Newnan Hospital in her

hometown of Newnan, Georgia. Since then she has accumulated 10 years in the field and has worked as a consultant and a software analyst in that time.

Kelley finished her M.P.H. degree in Biostatistics spring semester 2007. During her time at JPHCOPH she served as a graduate assistant for the Healthful Living program. She currently holds the position of Coordinator of Student Affairs and Enrollment Management for the college. It is Kelley's responsibility to recruit new students, maintain good relations with alumni and work with current students to help provide them with a positive graduate experience.

Outside of her duties to the college as a staff member, Kelley participated in many additional areas of the college. She helped found the Public Health Student Association at GSU and served as the first President of the organization. She also was a founding member of the Dean's Student Advisory Board. During the summer of her first year as a student, Kelley was able to work with Dr. Anthony Parrillo on the Ten Commandments of Good Health, a project funded by the Southwest Georgia Cancer Coalition. She also presented research at professional conferences including Sigma Theta Tau Nursing Research and Practice Conference, Phi Kappa Phi, and the Southeastern Regional Student Mentoring Conference in Gerontology and Geriatrics.

Kelley's immediate future plans are to continue her education and seek the Dr.P.H. degree from JPHCOPH in the area of Public Health Leadership. She was the first student to be accepted into the program.

Kelley is married to Heath Chester, her husband of 13 years, and they have a son Taylor who will soon be 4 years old. In her spare time, Kelley is an avid reader and enjoys sports. She is a long time supporter of the GSU Eagles and enjoys going to football and basketball games.

## Congratulations 2007 Graduates...

Thirteen students received their graduate degrees at the Spring 2007 Commencement. This marks our largest graduating class. Congratulations to all! The students and the degree/program concentration are listed below:

**M.H.S.A.** Miriam Daniel, Terrence Mabry, Matthew Seagroves, & Kristen Tyree

### M.P.H.

**Epidemiology** - Kaneshia Poole

**Biostatistics** - Kelley Chester, Jonathan Fairley, & Jiehui Zhu

**Community Health Education** - Demita Clark, Satish Bandaru, Pavan Panchavati, Ashiyana Regmi, & Rebecca Wilson

## CLEC Lecture Successful...

The man who inspired the movie "Doc Hollywood" spoke at Georgia Southern University Thursday, April 12th in the Nessmith-Lane Assembly Hall. His presentation, "Where Remedies Lie for the Ailing U.S. Health Care System," was a wonderful experience. Dr. Hotz's presentation was sponsored by the Jiann-Ping Hsu College of Public Health and the Campus Life Enrichment Committee. In addition to the presentation, he visited with faculty and students of JPHCOPH.



*Dr. Hotz discusses Community Health Institute with Faculty*

*Dr. Hotz discusses the Public Health Profession with Students*



*Attendees enjoy a social prior to the presentation*

*Miss Lee, Dr. Adu-Oppong, and Wilson Koech serve as the welcoming party*



*Provost Bleicken, Dr. Hotz, Becky Hardy, and Dr. Vogel enjoy the social*

*Lori Grice presents Dr. Hotz with an autographed lithograph - Provost Bleicken, Dean Hardy and Dr. Peace enjoy the moment.*



*Dr. Hotz enjoys talking with Lori Grice and Kelley Chester*

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groups and churches in Evans County. For example, this spring semester Rebecca Wilson, a graduating JPHCOPH Master of Public Health student, has conducted twenty interviews with members of the Claxton African American community, and spent three days a week volunteering at the First African Baptist Community Resource Center, a community based group that supports at-risk youth. This relationship has provided valuable insight for the community health assessment, and has provided valuable assistance to the Center as it conducts its important community work. Dr. Alison Scott and the JPHCOPH students also have enjoyed establishing ties with St. Christopher's Catholic Church and its Hispanic parishioners, who have been very welcoming, and very interested in the health assessment.

The assessment has received support from Georgia Southern University's BBRED, as well as through a Georgia Southern faculty research award to Alison Scott. All participants in the process are looking forward to discussing the assessment findings, and planning next steps.

JPHCOPH is committed to the growth of its collaboration with the ECHC, and to forging new ties with community groups in Bulloch County and other counties beyond. For more information about the Evans County Health Collaborative contact Dr. Alison Scott - phone 912.681.5079 email [ascott@georgiasouthern.edu](mailto:ascott@georgiasouthern.edu)

## Give to JPHCOPH...

Public health touches every aspect of our life. Our nation's economy, security, environment and the quality of our daily lives depend on the strength of the public's health and on the systems that support it. You can do your part to prevent disease, protect the public from harm, and promote the health of communities throughout the state, the nation, and the world by making a gift to the Jiann-Ping Hsu College of Public Health (JPHCOPH).

Every gift to the JPHCOPH plays a vital role in improving the public's health by supporting:

***Excellence in Public Health Education.*** Provides scholarships and fellowships to highly qualified, committed, and diverse students, many of whom cannot attend the JPHCOPH without financial help. Gifts will also support curriculum development, innovations, and linkages with public health practice.

***Excellence in Public Health Research.*** Supports distinguished faculty in their work to find answers and solutions to public health problems.

***Excellence in Public Health Service and Outreach.*** Supports programs that focus upon the development of community-based participatory programs and research.

Gifts to the JPHCOPH are critical to our development. Private financial support provides the margin of excellence that distinguishes good universities from great ones. As a Doctoral Research University, Georgia Southern University is proud to be a public university. But direct public support accounts for less than half of Georgia Southern University's annual operating budget. We rely on the generous support of our alumni, friends, and the research grant support of our faculty to make up the difference.

Please consider making a gift to JPHCOPH today. For more information contact Charles J. Hardy, Founding Dean, JPHCOPH at 912-681-5653 or check out our website at <http://jphcoph.georgiasouthern.edu>

## Public Health Matters..

Public Health Matters is a publication of the Jiann-Ping Hsu College of Public Health (JPHCOPH) at Georgia Southern University. Public Health Matters is published monthly for faculty, students and friends of JPHCOPH. If you would like to contribute to this publication please contact Kelley Chester, Coordinator of Student Affairs and Enrollment Management, at 912-681-5603, or at [kcheste3@georgiasouthern.edu](mailto:kcheste3@georgiasouthern.edu).

*The JPHCOPH decal is here! Help us advertise the college by displaying our decal. To obtain your decal please contact Kelley (See above).*