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Inspiration + Motivation

"A new school year means new beginnings, new adventures, new friendships, and new challenges. The slate is clean, and anything can happen"
-Denise Witmer

"The great aim of education is not knowledge but action"
-Herbert Spencer

"There is no end to education. It is not that you read a book, pass an examination, and finish with education. The whole of life, from the moment you are born to the moment you die, is a process of learning"
-Jiddu Krishnamurti

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Public Health Memos

Fall 2023, Volume I



Welcome to the Public Health Memos!

Welcome new and returning Vols to the Department of Public Health's Memos Newsletter!

We are so excited to have you as part of our department this year!

We look forward to sharing events, spotlights, and public health updates with you!

Community Pantry!

Reminder! The Department of Public Health is Home to a Community Pantry!

The Community Pantry, located in **HPER 383**, is a need based, take what you need, leave what you can pantry. All UTK Public Health students, staff, and faculty can utilize this FREE department resource!

The pantry is open Monday-Friday

8:00am-5:00pm

(Excluding holidays and scheduled university closings)

Currently, the following items available for taking or giving:

- Non-perishable food and beverage items
 - Personal hygiene products
 - Cleaning supplies
 - Pet food and treats



Big Orange Pantry!

Available to all current students, faculty, and staff, the Big Orange Pantry provides a variety of non-perishable and fresh foods, hygiene products, and other essential items supporting basic needs.

The Big Orange Pantry is co-located with Smokey's Closet in the Center for Basic Needs, Student Union Room 376C



UTK's Free Store!



The Free Store is UTK's sustainable thrifting initiative that gives away gently used items through our 22nd St store and on-campus pop-ups at no cost!

Visit us M-F at 915 22nd St, the "22nd St Duplex"

**To stay up-to-date on all things Free Store, please follow us
at [@freestore_utm](#).**



Professional Development Events!



[REGISTER HERE!](#)

Ask an alumni - Careers in Health Departments

Learn about public health careers within state and local agencies from alumni currently in the field.

Friday, September 29th
12-1 PM EST

So, you want a terminal degree?

Learn about what to expect, career opportunities, and the differences between a PhD and DrPH.

Friday, October 13th
12-1 PM EST

Events are on Zoom and open to all BSPH, MPH, and PhD Students

New Vols Are Most Excited For...

Dr. Russomanno's PUBH 509 Public Health Seminar asked new MPH students what topics they were most excited to explore.

Here were the responses!



Faculty Spotlight!

Dr. Ashley Parks

Meet Dr. Parks!

Having obtained over a dozen public health and healthcare-related certifications, Dr. Parks' is passionate about teaching students how to apply key concepts in public health planning and assessment, healthcare financial analysis, quality analysis and performance improvement, data reporting and information technology, health policy, health services research, and project management.

Dr. Parks currently serves as the Society for Public Health Education's (SOPHE) Board Trustee for Professional Preparation where she works with faculty members across the nation to design and share curriculum and best practices for educating public health and health sciences students. Dr. Parks herself has multiple certifications in healthcare and public health including the Master Certified Health Education Specialist (MCHES), Certification in Public Health (CPH), Certified Professional in Healthcare Quality (CPHQ), Certified Professional Patient Safety (CPPS), Certified Lean Six Sigma Black Belt (CLSSBB), Project Management Professional (PMP) and more. If you have questions about specific continuing education opportunities, graduate school, or certifications, Dr. Parks would love to share her experiences and learn about your interests as a student or prospective student. Dr. Parks looks forward to getting to know each student and their unique career interests and personalities as part of our learning community.

During her time as a public health leader and health services administrator prior to entering academia, Dr. Parks worked as a director of quality in inpatient healthcare facilities and as the director of managed Medicaid and Medicare health plans for the AIDS Healthcare Foundation. In her role as a Research Associate at the UCLA Center for Health Policy Research from 2009-2017, Dr. Parks provided statistical analysis and grant writing workshops for the UCLA Health DATA Program and served as a researcher and grant writer on community-based participatory research projects on the topics of environmental justice, health services for older adults, and chronic disease prevention funded by the CDC REACH CORE program and the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services.

Dr. Parks has shared her research at multiple national conferences and enjoys partnering with students to prepare and submit research for presentation and publication. Her current research agenda includes healthcare quality topics such as patient experience in long term care settings, performance improvement, healthcare workforce preparation and mentorship, mental health, information technology, and telehealth. In 2023, Dr. Parks joined William Cleverley and James Cleverley as a co-author on the 9th edition of the Essentials of Healthcare Finance. Dr. Parks has also provided process improvement, data analysis, and grant writing consulting services to healthcare systems and local government organizations for over a decade.

Dr. Parks enjoys spending time with her three children, traveling, running, and hiking in the Appalachian Mountains. Dr. Parks enjoys endurance running, biking, and swimming. Every year she runs the Knoxville Marathon and enjoys exploring in East Tennessee. She is currently training for her 5th marathon of 2023, the New York City Marathon this November.



Meet the DEI Committee!

Public Health Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee

Jordan Shipley & Laurie L. Meschke, Co-chairs

Per the Public Health bylaws, the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Committee is dedicated to promoting diversity of thought, participation, and identity in UTK's Department of Public Health. We strive to encourage faculty, staff, and students in the department to build connections with each other and explore new ideas in pursuit of a more diverse and inclusive departmental environment.

To meet this charge, the DEI Committee facilitates and organizes a variety of activities and services. We host a session every year at the departmental graduate student orientation, encouraging our new students to start thinking about the many ways DEI is critical to a holistic and informed public health practice. We also present or arrange presentations four times a year in the graduate seminar class (PUBH 509). Former UTK-affiliated presenters include the Title IX Office and the Office of Equity and Diversity. We also host a book club with selections that address DEI, an annual community meal, and socials at locations outside the university.

The Public Health DEI Committee also maintains an awareness of the environment in the department. Every other year the DEI Committee administers a climate survey. This allows faculty, staff, and students to express their opinions and concerns about inclusivity in the department. We then present these results to facilitate discussions about how we can improve. In addition, we have facilitated Q&A sessions with Dean Ellen McIntyre and Dr. Dorian McCoy to address concerns regarding the department's commitment to diversity while navigating challenging legislation.

Finally, the DEI Committee has recently initiated the Guiding Collective. This is a graduate student mentoring program to assist in making DEI an active and prioritized facet of your professional development. For two years we have hosted panels of alumni and DEI professionals, who provide strategies, experiences, and motivation to nurture our efforts to be included and practice inclusivity in the workplace.

You too can join the DEI Committee. Membership in the DEI Committee has been deeply rewarding for many of our participants, and we hope that you will find it equally gratifying. Our members include students, faculty, and staff, and we have the opportunity to develop close relationships with people we may never have encountered otherwise. We strive to foster an organic, collaborative approach to our projects, allowing people to play to their own strengths and follow their passions. We practice being open to other people's ideas and perspectives, and we give each other a safe place to learn about DEI, to share our thoughts and challenge ourselves and each other with kindness and respect. We welcome all undergraduate and graduate students affiliated with Public Health.

If you are interested in learning more about the DEI Committee, please contact co-chairs Laurie L. Meschke (llmeschke@utk.edu) and Jordan Shipley (jshiple4@vols.utk.edu). Thank you for your dedication to public health!