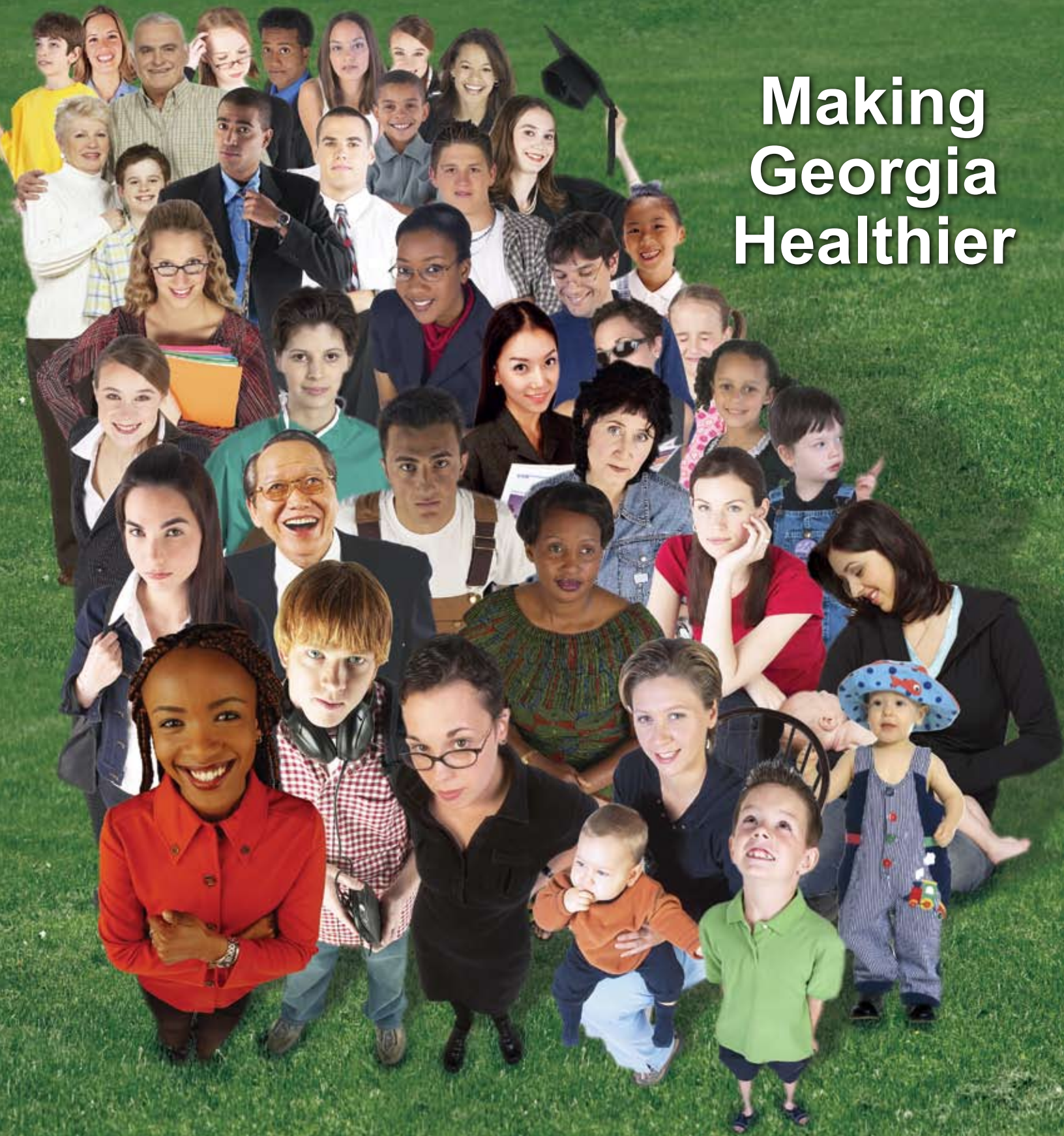


THE UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA COLLEGE OF

Public Health

Winter 2007

**Making
Georgia
Healthier**





The University of Georgia
College of Public Health

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Letter from the Dean



In 2005, the College of Public Health was established with our highest priority being to improve the health of the citizens of Georgia, and for the last two years, we have been doing just that. In addition to providing high quality, affordable public health education and training to Georgians, the College of Public Health also is serving the state by:

- Studying the effect of the recent wild fires on the air quality in South Georgia;
- Investigating the Clean Indoor Air Act's impact on outdoor air quality in Athens;
- Conducting a mass casualty exercise simulating pandemic avian flu to test the readiness and response of Georgia hospitals to a large-scale mass casualty crisis;
- Implementing and evaluating a program in North Georgia middle schools to prevent violence;
- Evaluating wellness policies to address childhood obesity in Atlanta Public Schools;
- Studying the human pathogens found in Georgia's estuaries and shellfish and their affect on the health of Coastal Georgia populations.

The cover story in this issue of the College of Public Health magazine dives deeper into our commitment to serve the state and examines not only what we've already done but also the impact we can have on the state's health in years to come. We have rapidly evolved over the past few years, and this fall we enrolled our first Doctor of Public Health students. Heather Edelbute, a member of this first cohort, is highlighted in the Health Policy and Management section of the magazine. Meanwhile, our Master of Public Health program continues to grow, and I hope you will enjoy reading about some of these students in the departmental sections. Another important feature in this issue is an update on the Institute for Health Management and Mass Destruction Defense, which joined our college last summer.

As alumni and friends of the College of Public Health, you are very important to us, and we hope to hear from you often. Thank you for supporting our commitment to making Georgia and the world a safer and healthier place.

Sincerely,

Phillip L. Williams, Ph.D., Dean

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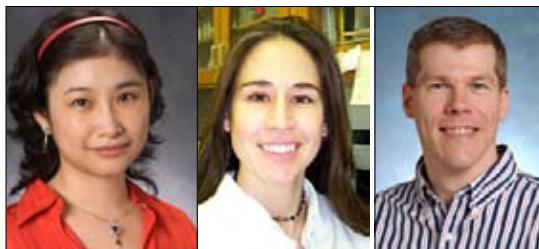
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Institute for Health Management and Mass Destruction Defense

◆ The Institute for Health Management and Mass Destruction Defense (IHMD) recently joined the College of Public Health. The mission of IHMD is to reduce the casualties and social disruption from Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) events and natural disasters through engagement in planning, mitigation, risk analysis, professional training, and the development of response capabilities and infrastructure. Dr. Cham Dallas is the director of the institute.

IHMD is an extension of an existing federally funded Center for Mass Destruction Defense (CMDD) that is part of the national network of Public Health Preparedness Centers within the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).



Hou

Lipp

Naeher

Promotions

◆ The University of Georgia has approved the promotion of three College of Public Health faculty members to Associate Professor: **Su-I Hou**, health promotion and behavior; **Erin Lipp**, environmental health science; and **Luke Naeher**, environmental health science.



The Cost of Violence

◆ Dr. Phaedra Corso, associate professor of health policy and management, was lead author on a study that found the cost of violence in the United States is \$70 billion annually, a figure that rivals federal education spending and the damage caused by hurricane Katrina.



College Names Founding Members of the Dean's Advisory Council

◆ The College of Public Health welcomed 10 members to the Dean's Advisory Council at its first meeting in September.

Ms. Susan C. Waltman (AB '73, MSW '75), senior vice president and general counsel, Greater New York Hospital Association, will serve as the council's chair. **Dr. Kimberly Brannen** (BSEH '94), Bristol Myers Squibb Company, Pharmaceutical Research Center; **Ms. Nancy Coverdell**, widow of Senator Paul Coverdell, Georgia World Congress Center Authority member; **Mr. John A. Drew**, president and CEO, Athens Regional Medical Center; **Mr. Charles R. Evans**, president and CEO, TMS Health, Board of Governors, American College of Healthcare Executives; **Dr. Anne Haddix** (PhD '93), chief policy advisor, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; **Dr. J. Donald Millar**, retired director of NIOSH, retired assistant surgeon general, Don Millar and Associates; **Karen Pannell** (BSED '73), chair, Memorial Healthcare System Board; **Dr. Doug Skelton**, Coastal District Health Director, president of Georgia Public Health Association and past dean of Mercer University School of Medicine; **Mr. Michael L. Thurmond**, labor commissioner, Georgia Department of Labor.

"The level of accomplishment we seek necessitates the additional support that only an independent body of dedicated volunteers can bring," said Phil Williams, dean of the College of Public Health. "As board members, they will help us strengthen our ties with key constituencies throughout our state and beyond."



Dahl



Galen



Hepburn

Associate and Assistant Deans Appointed at the College of Public Health

◆ The College of Public Health announced the appointments of **Dr. Eric Dahl** and **Dr. Robert S. Galen** as associate deans and **Dr. Valerie Hepburn** as assistant dean for the College of Public Health.

In addition to his appointment as associate dean, **Dr. Eric Dahl** will serve as a clinical professor in the Department of Health Policy and Management. He will also manage the College's activities in the health sciences as he continues his role in the university's medical education initiatives.

Dahl has a long history in higher education administration. At UGA, he has assisted the provost and faculty in forming the College of Public Health, UGA's Biomedical and Health Sciences Institute, the Faculty of Engineering, the New Media Institute and other programs. Dahl, who is a Rhodes Scholar, also works with the UGA Honors Program in selecting and preparing UGA candidates for the Rhodes and other scholarships. In addition to a B.A. and M.A. from Oxford, he holds a Ph.D. from the University of Washington.

As associate dean, **Dr. Robert S.**

Galen will oversee the College's outreach and research activities and will maintain his faculty appointment as a professor in the Department of Epidemiology and Biostatistics.

Galen received his medical degree from Boston University School of Medicine, completing his internship and residency in clinical pathology at Columbia-Presbyterian Medical Center and his Master of Public Health degree from Columbia University. Prior to coming to UGA, he served on the medical school faculties of Columbia and Case Western Reserve University. His research interests have focused on biomarkers of chronic disease and the newly emerging field of telemedicine. Galen is particularly interested in underserved populations in public health, especially indigenous populations in the developing world, and is the director of the College's study abroad programs in Vietnam and China. He also serves as chair of the Division of Public Health of the Biomedical Health Science Institute.

Dr. Valerie Hepburn will join the College of Public Health as assistant dean and assistant professor of health policy and management in January. Hepburn will be responsible for all academic matters other than promotion and tenure, and will lead the College's

Council on Education for Public Health (CEPH) accreditation effort.

Hepburn earned her Ph.D. in public administration and policy from the University of Georgia's School of Public and International Affairs and has over 25 years experience in state government, including a long tenure in the departments of Community Health and Human Resources. She recently served as principal investigator for the state's Task Force on Health Professions, chaired by the president of the Medical College of Georgia, and is the program consultant for the Board of Regents' Administrative Committee on Public Health. She recently returned from Australia, where, as one of two 2006 Packer Policy Fellows, she spent six months researching comparative health workforce policy. Hepburn was associate director of Georgia State University's Institute of Public Health.

"Drs. Dahl, Galen, and Hepburn will make significant contributions to our college as skilled educators, researchers and administrators," said Phil Williams, dean of the College of Public Health. "Their strong commitment to students, combined with extensive published research and knowledge of Georgia's public health concerns, will help us continue to develop and provide exceptional service to the state."



Making Georgia Healthier

By Mary Jessica Hammes

Jill McElheney had known this feeling before. And it wasn't a good one.

For the second time in 12 years, Jill McElheney's family and neighbors had been confronted by an invisible and unwelcome guest: deadly environmental toxins in her neighborhood.

The first time it had happened, back in 1999, she and her family had just moved out of an Athens mobile home park. No one living in the mobile home park suspected a problem until McElheney's son, Jarrett, was diagnosed with acute lymphocytic leukemia.

Jarrett's doctor asked the state's Environmental Protection Division to sample waste from the site. That prompted an investigation by the Environmental Protection Agency, which revealed high levels of carbon tetrachloride, petroleum chemicals, pesticides and benzene, which have long been linked to leukemia. Jarrett, who is now 12, has been in remission eight years.

Not too many years after Jarrett's original diagnosis, McElheney and her husband learned of neighbors' concerns with air quality in their new neighborhood in Winterville, on the outskirts of Athens. As they acquainted themselves with the area down Pittard Road, McElheney felt that same sinking feeling in her gut.

"I remember as if it were yesterday telling my husband, 'This neighborhood is like our other one was. It is a toxic zone,'" she says.

Of particular concern was the presence of trichloroethylene, or TCE, a carcinogenic chemical that was being used as a chemical solvent by the nearby Nakanishi Manufacturing Corp. plant.

But this time, taking action against an environmental invader was nothing new for McElheney. She had started the environmental group Micah's Mission in 2003 and co-founded the Northeast Georgia Children's Environmental Health Coalition with the Northeast Health District in 2004.

She decided to lobby for the plant's removal of TCE use and contacted Jeff Fisher, environmental health science professor in the University of Georgia's College of Public Health for help.



Jill McElheney

Dr. Fisher and some of his students agreed to take air samples and analyze them to determine whether TCE levels were too high. Dr. Fisher also helped McElheney form an advisory board for the project. He also prepared McElheney for the possibility that their study could be in vain.

"Dr. Fisher had forewarned me about the possible outcomes of this study," says McElheney. "He is a consummate scientist, but he is also a compassionate human being."

The results landed a victory for residents concerned about air quality. While the detected TCE levels were under the suggested federal limit, the rallying effort from UGA, area churches, advocacy groups and citizens convinced the Nakanishi company to completely phase out use of the chemical.

"The TCE sampling project was instrumental in giving us data which verified that this dangerous toxicant was invading the air that children breathe," she says. "Because children are more vulnerable to TCE exposure, their risk for disease is greater. I am grateful that the industry participated with us, and used the results as a catalyst for visionary change. They serve as a model to companies all over this country who need to substitute a safer degreaser for TCE."

"The establishment of the College of Public Health created a strategic opportunity to focus existing strengths in the UGA faculty on a critical state need"

-President Michael F. Adams.

That's just one example of how the College of Public Health uses academic research to bring life-changing results to the community. And the recent formation of the College could not have happened at a better time. McElheney's new neighborhood needed the College, but so does the entire state.

“The establishment of the College of Public Health created a strategic opportunity to focus existing strengths in the UGA faculty on a critical state need,” says UGA President Michael F. Adams. “Georgia’s public health rankings, from obesity to heart disease to diabetes and beyond, are alarming, and as the land-grant university, UGA has a duty and an obligation to serve the people by addressing those issues.”

“Our first mission is to serve the people of the state of Georgia,” says Phillip L. Williams, dean of the College of Public Health. “The university is showing a commitment to public health by committing resources to develop and support this college.”

Georgia’s public health concerns are complex and extensive, says Williams. Many rural Georgians, for example, have limited access to primary care physicians. There is a nursing shortage that mirrors that of the rest of the country and a high rate of uninsured people and a lower utilization of preventive services, including cancer screenings. In addition to direct health concerns, rural areas face difficulties in attracting industry because of lower educational levels and higher health care costs.

Williams acknowledges that addressing Georgia’s many problems is a challenge requiring an entire shift in how people regard health care. For instance, in some counties in Georgia, the average amount being spent on public health is only \$2 per person a year, he says.

“Public health is prevention-based,” says Williams. “If you invest in getting

people to live healthier lives, you can alleviate their suffering and cut down on healthcare costs.”

“Changing conditions is a difficult process, and seeing this type of paradigm shift will take time,” he says.

“To address complex issues, you need to be creative. You need to be able to work with other people. You need to collaborate, make connections, stretch beyond yourself, and that’s exactly how the College of Public Health operates.”

The College of Public Health was established in January 2005 and now has four departments: Epidemiology and

sentinal that faculty in various fields work together effectively to address complex problems.”

Consider smoking as an example. Epidemiologists make the connection that smoking can cause lung cancer. Biostatisticians assist in the study design to ensure that such a conclusion is statistically sound, possibly even devising new statistical models for this purpose. Health promotion and behavior then comes into play, designing cessation programs that can help people change or quit their smoking habits. Environmental health scientists conduct studies

to assess the effects of cigarette smoke on the quality of the air people breathe. Then health policy and management experts use the information and outcomes to develop and champion appropriate policies—like creating warning labels for cigarette packages, or making it illegal to smoke in public places.

Addressing public health issues sometimes

requires collaborating with other departments. Epidemiologists collaborate with laboratory researchers in the life sciences to understand biological factors of disease transmission. Similarly, public service and outreach and cooperative extension specialists contribute to an understanding of rural health conditions. These partnerships can bring education and aid to rural residents, many of whom are uninsured, have little access to preventative services and are more likely to suffer from heart disease, obesity, diabetes and cancer.



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Biostatistics, Environmental Health Science, Health Policy and Management, and Health Promotion and Behavior. The Institute of Gerontology joined the College in 2005. This year, the College added the Institute for Health Management and Mass Destruction Defense, a public health preparedness center that was started with the support of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

“Although each of those areas is an independent discipline, they are very interconnected,” says Williams. “It is es-

Impact in Athens and Beyond

That spirit of collaboration across departments is echoed in the college's work with community groups—like Fisher's TCE sampling project in Winterville.

"Athens presents the perfect opportunity for the College of Public Health to get involved with the community; the city is home to some of the best medical, research, and public outreach programs," says recent graduate Kevin Caspary, who is now a chemical and radiation planner for the Georgia Division of Public Health's Office of Preparedness. "I think the CPH can help link the medical and academic communities to address health disparities that exist in Athens. As the flagship university for the state, a major goal of UGA is to address public health and healthcare needs in Georgia. Why not start close to home?"

"The 'public' in public health means we have to be good communicators especially in these times of great uncertainty," says Cham Dallas, director of the Institute for Health Management and Mass Destruction Defense and an expert in addressing public health concerns across the globe. He has given addresses at the United Nations and regularly discusses his research on Fox News, but he also chose a Georgia focus for a series of large hospital exercises simulating a mass casualty event to predict impacts on the health system. A resulting publication of his spent four weeks as the most accessed paper on the BioMed Central Website.

By providing students with first-hand experiences, community collaboration is also beneficial to College of Public Health students, says Doug Skelton, director of Georgia's Coastal Health District and a member of the CPH Dean's Advisory Council. He says that he can imagine a group of UGA graduate students visiting his health district to observe restaurant inspections, tattoo parlors, rabies control, septic systems, economic impact issues, beach water advisories and shellfish samples.

"Environmental health issues are a major concern in the Coastal Health



District—lead contamination in Savannah and Brunswick, beach water quality in Jekyll, St. Simons and Savannah and declining oxygen content in coastal waters with major ecological shifts ahead if changes don't occur upstream," he says. "And, of course, avian flu and the risk of a pandemic. We have a lot of preparedness efforts ongoing."

"A College of Public Health at Georgia's flagship university must play a huge role in focusing and advancing public health, from a dynamic student association to field research, to perhaps developing a teaching/learning health district or county health department," Skelton says.

Farther away from home, the College reaches out internationally with several study abroad programs, addressing health issues specific to the communities overseas. Carol Cotton, an academic professional in Health Promotion and Behavior, teaches a special topics class in that subject for the Croatia Maymester Study Abroad Program; Bob Galen, a physician and one of CPH's associate deans, leads students to Vietnam every Maymester, where they can attend the Hanoi School of Public Health; and Luke Naehner, assistant professor in environmental health science, has traveled often to Peru to study air quality.

Graduating experts

In its three years of existence, the College has already built a heady reputation.

"We're the only purely academic unit on campus that from the beginning has brought in more annual research dollars than state budget support," says Williams. "We're really rather proud of that."

Also, demand for CPH degrees is high. There were 150 applicants vying for the 45 spots in the first Master of Public Health class, and 15 applicants applied for the three spots in the Doctor of Public Health programs, which debuted this fall.

The college offers bachelor degrees in environmental health and health promotion; master degrees in public health, environmental health and toxicology; and doctoral degrees in health promotion and behavior, toxicology and the recently added Doctor of Public Health. Students can also pursue a graduate certificate in gerontology; a health promotion and behavior certificate, either through Women's Studies or Gerontology; or certificates in atmospheric sciences, environmental ethics, international agriculture or water resources through Environmental Health Science.

Just as faculty and staff use their expertise to aid Athens, the state and other countries, CPH students are already making their marks in the world.

Beyond Academia

In Environmental Health Science, the professors and their students are detectives, often examining the smaller details—whether it’s Prozac in frogs or *Listeria* in guinea pigs—to get the big picture. The results have impact beyond the academic community, perhaps best illustrated by Nakanishi Motor Corporation’s recent decision to alter production at their Athens’ plant, all prompted by a student study of airborne toxins (*see cover story*).

Air pollution is not the only environmental public health concern. Assistant professor Erin Lipp is researching waterborne salmonella in a toxic hotbed that sorely needs help.

“We’ve consistently been the top for salmonella cases in the country,” she says.

Indeed, in 2002, the national average of salmonella cases was 11.5 per 100,000 people. The Georgia average for that year was 23.5 per 100,000, and in the Valdosta area, it was 80.5 per 100,000.

As the salmonella strains in south Georgia aren’t commonly associated with food production, Lipp’s team is studying the Little River watershed in Turner and Tift counties. So far, they’ve found that salmonella cases rise with peaking summer temperatures and increased rainfall, and their findings have big potential for the residents of that area.

**Such work “is satisfying because you know what you’re doing has an impact.”
- Erin Lipp**

“The state is interested in putting together educational information on this, because it’s such a burden to the area,” says Lipp. Her research will help educate residents about how to avoid contamination, and it may trigger more intense investigation from the state to hone in on actual sources of salmonella.

Such work “is satisfying because you know what you’re doing has an impact,” she says.

Marsha Black, Associate professor and EHS interim de-



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partment head, also works with water. Her recent research has found that Prozac in the water supply has significant impact on aquatic animals. *Gambusia affinis* (or mosquito fish) exposed to Prozac take a significantly longer time to reach reproductive maturity; *Xenopus laevis* (African clawed frogs) exposed to Prozac experience delays in undergoing metamorphosis, and are smaller once they do reach metamorphosis, which increases their risk for predation—as smaller frogs, they can be eaten by smaller animals, increasing the pool of predators.

There are several human implications beyond just the interest Black’s research holds for aquatic health.

The aquatic animals “are early warning signals for chemicals that might ultimately harm humans,” she says. Knowing that the chemicals are in the water in the first place can lead to improved water treatment processes. Also, as frog metamorphosis is cued by the thyroid, Black can study relationships between Prozac and human thyroid production.

Associate professor Mary Alice Smith’s research of *Listeria* contamination in monkeys and guinea pigs may one day lead to vaccines or new treatment therapies for the toxin’s



From left to right: John Pearce, Megan Williams, Gordon Martin, and David Brown

susceptible targets: pregnant women, older adults and people with compromised immune systems.

Pregnant women infected with *Listeria* can have stillbirths. “Fortunately, it doesn’t happen a lot, but when it does, it’s a devastating thing,” says Smith. Older people or those with compromised immune systems are also susceptible to the toxin. Smith’s research may reveal if there is any amount of *Listeria* exposure that is safe.

Like all of her colleagues, Smith often works with other researchers across campus. The College of Public Health’s interdisciplinary nature is crucial, Smith says.

“To really tackle the big problems in terms of a disease, you have to collaborate,” she says. “No one person has all the expertise to do all that has to be done. My success with the *Listeria* work has been because I’ve collaborated with microbiologists, pathologists, primatologists, immunologists...It really takes a whole team of people to understand that disease process.”

And in the end, Smith, like her colleagues, takes satisfaction knowing that her work serves the interests of public health.

“I really enjoy doing research that has potential for outside of academics,” she says.

—*Mary Jessica Hammes*

Oh, the Places You’ll Go

Looking back at his experience at the College of Public Health, John Pearce remembers taking air samples in Peru, fine-tuning cutting-edge geospatial technology and winning first prize in a poster competition in Paris.

“I can honestly say that the College took me places I never thought I would go,” he says.

Pearce graduated last spring with a master’s degree in environmental health and certification in geographic information systems and plans to pursue a Ph.D. He found his taste for science as a boy in Clayton, Ga.

“My mom was a science teacher,” he says. “When I was a kid, I was always reading guide books and National Geographic. I was like, ‘This is so cool!’ And that’s when I first became interested in science.”

While getting his bachelor’s degree in ecology at UGA, Pearce was introduced to a branch of geospatial technology called geographic information systems, or a computer-based system that handles spatial information and can create maps. The technique is adaptable to many fields, including forestry, ecology, geography and urban planning. He found it “fascinating and revolutionary.”

Between undergraduate and graduate studies, he familiarized himself even more with the technology while working for a local planning company.

“I was impressed with what the technology could do, and wanted a challenging problem to apply it to,” he says.

He found that challenge in Cusco, Peru. In summer of 2005, Pearce was part of a student team who traveled to Cusco with Luke Naeher, assistant professor in Environmental Health Science, to research air pollution there. Naeher, who was recognized as the 2007 Outstanding Teacher for the College of Public Health at last spring’s Honors Day, directed the project, along with Manuel Aguilar Villalobos of Environmental Air Association, Lima-Peru, Cusco’s city hall and Cusco’s department of health and transportation.

The researchers found that air pollution levels were relatively high both on the streets congested with traffic and in homes, where cooking is fueled by open fires—sometimes made from toxic plastics. Another concern is the combination of thin air and increased rates of respiratory illness, as 800,000 tourists visit Cusco yearly to explore ancient Incan ruins in the mountains.

In October 2006, Naeher and others traveled to Cusco to share the teams’ findings with city officials, thus ensuring future collaboration between UGA and Peruvian universities with the hope of developing policies and regulations to control the pollution.

As for Pearce, his poster on the project went to the International Society of Exposure Analysis 2006 Conference in Paris. He won first place in the student competition.

“I was very surprised to win the award and was quite honored,” he recalls.

—*Mary Jessica Hammes*





Dr. Claire Robb (right) met with Dr. Martine Extermann and Dr. William Haley at Moffitt Cancer Center in Tampa, Fla., to discuss her continuing research in the area of cancer and aging.

Life After Breast Cancer

There's no need for aging adults to resign themselves to illness. After all, aging is natural, but disease is not", says Claire Robb, assistant professor of Epidemiology in the Department of Epidemiology and Biostatistics.

"Sometimes illness is thought to go hand-in-hand with aging," says Robb. "It doesn't, and it is important for health care professionals working with older adults to distinguish the difference between normal age-related changes that occur in the elderly and those changes that are a direct result of illness and disease."

Robb's mission is simple: "Draw some attention to the plight of the older cancer patient and survivor," she says.

Her initial interest in this field was in the area of older breast cancer survivors. Although 70 percent of breast cancer cases occur in women age 65 or

older, some of the most aggressive cases can be found in young women—so that demographic has had much of the research focus. It's only in the past decade that researchers have started paying attention to older cancer survivors, partly because there are simply more older cancer survivors alive these days as cancer treatment has improved.

Even though older breast cancer survivors are living longer, they are not necessarily living well, as Robb's research reveals.

Robb co-authored two papers that were published in the *Critical Reviews in Oncology/Hematology* journal last April: "Impact of Breast Cancer Survivorship on Quality of Life in Older Women" and "Individual Differences in Well-Being in Older Breast Cancer Survivors." Working with principal investigator William E. Haley of

the University of South Florida, Robb surveyed 127 survivors who had been patients at the H. Lee Moffitt Cancer Center and Research Institute in Tampa, Fla., as well as a control group of 87 cancer-free women. The cancer survivors, whose mean age was 78, were on average five years from initial diagnosis without recurrence—a benchmark often thought of as a sign that the patient is cancer-free.

"We thought we might see a little more functional disability in the survivors," says Robb. "We weren't sure what we'd find."

What Robb and her colleagues did find was that, on the average, older patients fare worse in physical function, general health and mental health.

Part of that can be due to the fact that older women take a longer time to recover from the primary treatment—a

lumpectomy or mastectomy—followed by radiation therapy, chemotherapy or, more recently, hormonal therapy. While younger women treated for breast cancer usually recover fully within two years, “It just takes older people longer to recover,” says Robb.

Some of this may be due to a lessening of reserve capacity in older adults, she explains. In other words, it takes older adults a longer time to “bounce back” from a physical assault on the system than it does in younger adults.

Also, the women who were survivors did not report more depression than the control group, but did report significantly less satisfaction in their lives than their cancer-free counterparts.

The ultimate goal of Robb’s research is to design interventions and special therapies that will help women recover more fully, and bring the research she and colleagues have done in a cancer center into the community.

“Everyone has a right to live their life the best they possibly can,” she says.

In the meantime, Robb continues to research “the next frontier” in cancer patient support: the community setting. In September, Robb brought Martine Extermann, the research director of the Moffitt Center’s Senior Adult Oncology Program, to speak at the Cancer and Aging Salon sponsored by the Institute of Gerontology. Robb also represented the College of Public Health as a member of the planning committee—along with Georgia Comprehensive Cancer Prevention and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention—for the state’s first Cancer Survivorship Conference, held in Peachtree City, GA.

Her inspiration is simple. “A great affinity for courageous older adults—that’s what got me interested in this,” she says.

—Mary Jessica Hammes

Palm Pilots to Help People Quit Smoking



There are lots of reasons why people smoke, and everyone knows it’s hard to quit. But if researchers can analyze patterns of quitting and relapse, then better therapies can be created for smoking cessation.

Enter Steve Rathbun, associate professor of biostatistics, who is studying smokers’ habits using a new technology: Palm Pilots. Test subjects record when they light up and can give responses in the moment regarding how they’re feeling, describe their surroundings or note whether they’re alone. Data is collected while following subjects in their own environment. It’s called ecological momentary assessment data—real time responses, as opposed to vague memories recorded later.

“One of the problems with previous studies is they were done with paper surveys, where they asked smokers to recall their memories,” says Rathbun. “When you try to recall your mood from two weeks ago, you may not remember correctly.”

Patterns in the study are still emerging, but there have been a few observations already, some expected and some not: Subjects tend to smoke when restless and alone; the women in the study are more likely to be affected by being alone; the men, meanwhile, seem to be more affected by mood variables.

As a biostatistician, Rathbun’s job is to come up with a new methodology to find unbiased results that can be mathematically proven valid. When he’s not doing that, Rathbun keeps busy with an online course offered in collaboration with the College of Pharmacy’s regulatory affairs department, teaching students the statistical principles and issues involved in clinical trials. The course was first offered last summer.

Rathbun is not new to collaboration. He often works with other departments on campus, an opportunity common in biostatistician programs, he says: Grant proposals are more likely to be funded with a statistician on board. And there are always more collaborations on the horizon.

“It’s a pretty exciting opportunity to be in on the ground floor of a new college,” he says.

—Mary Jessica Hammes

Public Health Policy Was What Made Me Tick

“Life has not been a straight road for me, to say the least,” says Heather Edelblute, who this fall became the College of Public Health’s first doctoral student in Health Policy and Management (DrPH).

Indeed, she started with an information technology degree from the College of William and Mary—study something that will get you a job, her father always said—and ended up as far away from a traditional IT job as she could.

“So, what did I do with this great IT degree after college?” she recounts. “Not go to D.C. or New York like most IT majors—I ended up packing up my compact car with my dog and moving to a border town in Arizona to fulfill a dream and work on a ranch.”

It was a serendipitous choice. Living in a remote area near the Sonoran desert, she’d find the echoes of the nightly activity of undocumented immigrants making the dangerous trek across borders: footprints of bare feet in the sand, or discarded water bottles.

“All of this opened my eyes to the realities and inequities present in the world, through the lens of a barren desert where survival was always a factor,” she says. She decided that she needed to explore her writing and critical thinking skills, so she picked up another degree, arriving at UGA’s Grady College of Journalism and Mass Communication in 1999 for graduate school.

While in school, she worked in the College of Education’s Public Information Office. After graduating in 2001, she moved to San Antonio and balanced two seemingly disparate activities: working in Spanish radio while maintaining a steady stream of freelance work for the College of Education.

“Working in radio made me realize that I am a ‘non-profit kinda girl,’ and



“All of this opened my eyes to the realities and inequities present in the world”
- Heather Edelblute

didn’t get the benefit I was looking for by working in radio,” she says.

So, she returned to Athens and the College of Education to work as a grant writer and public relations coordinator for the Center for Latino Achievement and Success in Education. Edelblute helped secure funding to give international experiences to U.S. educators of Latino students in Costa Rica. She also was able

to fund her own global learning community between teachers and students in Costa Rica and Georgia, in which the students learned about the global economy through projects on coffee.

Edelblute enjoyed her work, she says, but “I had known for quite some time that I wanted to move into public health.”

In 2005, she began working as a writer and editor at the National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. There, she worked with grantees across the country on marketing materials for how states, Indian tribes and territories used Preventive Health and Health Services Block Grant funds.

“All of this made me realize that public health was where I wanted to be, and specifically, that public health policy was what made me tick,” she says. “I also realized that I needed to get a graduate degree in public health to go anywhere with it. I didn’t want to get another master’s degree and was at a point in my life where I was ready to move forward and pursue my doctorate.”

She wasted no time. Before the semester began, she had already worked on a grant and visited Costa Rica and Nicaragua for three weeks on a study abroad program, visiting clinics and learning more about the two health systems.

After a number of life experiences, Edelblute says her career goal is now clear: to work for an international public health organization doing policy research.

“This is an important goal for me, because it gives me purpose in what I do. Over the years, I have realized that is what I want from a job and from life in general,” she says.

—Mary Jessica Hammes



Angela Fertig

Researching to Impact Policy

As a new faculty member at Indiana University, a newspaper article caught the attention of Angela Fertig. The story speculated that poorly nourished children visiting a health clinic were not, as some might assume, children who lived in public housing.

The article spoke to Fertig who is now an assistant professor in health policy and management at UGA and also a public service assistant in the Carl Vinson Institute of Government. As a health economist, the well-being of low-income families had always been a professional interest of hers. And at the time she saw the article, she had been talking with a colleague—David Reingold, an associate professor in Indiana’s School of Public and Environmental Affairs—about how there had been few studies examining the relationship between low-income housing policy and health.

So, the two decided to collaborate in writing the paper “Public Housing, Health, and Health Behaviors: Is There a Connection?”, published in September’s issue of the *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*.

The results were interesting. Fertig and Reingold at first posited that

subsidized rent may free up incomes for healthier food and health care and that public housing may give easier access to health clinics and social support networks willing to serve the poor.

But their findings painted a more complex picture, revealing that public housing residency has mixed results on health. In fact, the only detectable connections between public housing and health are mothers’ overall health and overweight status, and domestic violence. They are more likely to be hit by fathers (but are less likely to be seriously injured) and more likely to be overweight. Fertig and Reingold suggest this may be due to a host of factors, including limited access to grocery stores, peer effects and crime.

Fertig’s research may well play a part in sparking change for these families.

“We hope that this article raises awareness about these issues among other researchers as well as policy-makers and housing administrators,”

says Fertig. “More research needs to be done using other data sets and measures before we can be confident in what we are seeing. In the meantime, if those who determine policies and procedures in public housing realize that a connection may exist, they may be able to take steps to improve the health of their residents.”

The paper may already be published, but Fertig isn’t through with the research.

“David and I are studying the determinants of homelessness among families with children using this same data,” she says. “We are trying to figure out what makes a family vulnerable to homelessness, whether it is health problems, domestic violence, losing a job or being disconnected from a community.”

—Mary Jessica Hammes



Lighten Up: Weight Management in the Workplace

One in four adult Georgians is obese.

That's what the Georgia Department of Human Resources found in a 2006 study. The study also showed that the percentage of obese adults in all areas of the state has skyrocketed since 1993, that only two in five adults are regularly active and that obesity costs Georgia around \$2.1 billion a year in both direct and indirect healthcare costs.

What to do? Well, you can't change genetics, but you can change behavior, and that's what the Workplace Health Group in the College of Public Health is trying to do.

Along with principal investigator Ron Goetzel of Cornell University, Group director David DeJoy and Mark Wilson, head of the Department of Health Promotion and Behavior, are in the middle of a \$4.5 million grant project that has designed interventions to help people manage their weight in the workplace.

"This project focuses not only on the individual but also the environment in which they live and interact," says Heather Bowen, project manager for the Workplace Health Group. "We have realized that we can't just tell them what to do. We must also make their surroundings conducive to the changes that we are recommending."

OBESITY costs Georgia around \$2.1 billion a year in both direct and indirect healthcare costs.

In other words, it's hard to preach the virtues of healthy snacking when an employee's only option is the high fat, high sugar snacks lurking in the vending machine down the hall.

Tested by over 6,000 Dow Chemical plant employees in Texas, Louisiana, West Virginia and New Jersey, the interventions included healthier vending machine, cafeteria and catering choices; signage addressing physical activity, nutrition and weight management; on-site walking paths; an individual weight management tracking program; and, of course, rewards and recognition for healthy progress.

Results are still being analyzed, but Bowen says that most of the interventions could easily be used in other settings, such as schools. While the workplace was chosen for the ability of reaching a large group of people, Bowen hopes that the interventions' influence will filter to home and beyond.

"Although the home environment is a very important piece of the puzzle, most of us eat more than two of our three meals away from home," she says.

—Mary Jessica Hammes





Student Spotlight: *Alex Wright*

Simply put, Alex Wright knows what she wants to do.

She knew she wanted to work in medicine, and had planned on majoring in biology. But a Swahili class at the University of Georgia sparked her interest in Africa, and a Maymester spent in Tanzania through the African Studies Institute gave her an epiphany.

“To see a picture of a child with no shoes and tattered clothing pulls on one’s heartstrings,” she wrote in *The Africanist*, the Institute’s magazine, “but to actually hold the hand of a child whose family can hardly afford to clothe him offers a totally different perspective. Little did I know exactly how much this trip would change my life.”

Somewhere in the middle of mountain climbing, camel riding, caving, snorkeling, rainforest hiking and even watching a tree frog lay eggs in her hand, Wright’s idea of adventure changed from climbing Mount Kilimanjaro to keeping African families safe from the ravages of malaria. Back in Athens, she quickly changed majors.

Wright, who graduates this December with a bachelor’s degree in health promotion and behavior and was named the College’s Outstanding Undergraduate Major, spent last summer in Zanzibar—this time to immerse herself in Swahili with the aid of a Fulbright-Hays scholarship.

“Out of respect for people, you should really be able to speak their language so you can help them,” she says. “They say it’s the same difficulty of speaking Spanish, but there’s nothing like it in the English language.”

With her eye on studying tropical medicine in graduate school at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, she focused her senior project on malaria prevention.

“They need a lot of help there with malaria. I’m really interested in the educational aspect of it,” she says. “It’s so key in preventing diseases.”

“Alex stood out from the beginning because she was so focused,” says Katie Darby Hein, a faculty member in the Department of Health Promotion and

Behavior. “She stood out to me because students often do not know what they want to do, and she certainly did know.

“Alex has also prioritized good experiences over speedy graduation,” she adds. “Her certificate is one example of this, and her current intensive course in Swahili is another. She could have finished her coursework to graduate last summer.”

Wright’s curiosity, creativity and determination made her the perfect fit right in the College of Public Health, Hein says.

“This college is a great place to be passionate, and I think such passion is fostered, encouraged, and rewarded. Students truly can focus on their interests, or stretch and try something new. Alex did both.”

Eventually, Wright would like to work with the CDC’s infectious disease program in Tanzania or Zanzibar.

“It’s a lifelong commitment,” she says. “I’d really like to live and work there for as long as I can.”

—Mary Jessica Hammes

ElderSpirit



Anne Glass

Anne Glass keeps a framed photo of her great aunt Betty in her office. In the photo, her silver hair in a sleek topknot, the older woman laughs uproariously with a younger Anne.

It's because of her great aunt that Glass pursued her career, she says.

"She was just really wonderful," she says. "She lived to be 105. She stayed interested in people and was very positive. Even at the nursing home, everyone called her Aunt Betty. She gave me a positive idea about aging."

Now, Glass, who is assistant director and graduate coordinator of the Institute of Gerontology and an assistant professor of health policy and management, is conducting research

at ElderSpirit Community, the nation's first elder co-housing community, located in Abingdon, Va.

The concept began in Denmark in the 1980s, says Glass, but it's new to the United States. At ESC, the community is designed to encourage older people to come together and interact with each other. The community is unique for several reasons, Glass says, including a focus on mutual support and a spiritual component. It is also affordable for people of moderate and low incomes.

In a setting like that, residents are able to make friends and cope together with the challenges they face as they age. Glass remembers two women she interviewed separately last sum-





Alumni Spotlight:

Linda Samuel

mer who were both losing their hearing. Each mentioned how they loved to get together after meetings to “discuss what they thought they’d heard,” and laugh about it.

“I haven’t laughed this much in years,” one of the women told Glass.

When Glass was interviewing subjects last summer, she asked what they were looking for at ElderSpirit, why they had come and what were their expectations. When Glass was interviewing subjects last summer, she asked what they were looking for at ElderSpirit, why they had come and what were their expectations. She will be presenting her research at national conferences such as the Gerontological Society of America’s conference this November.

Glass has received a grant from the Retirement Research Foundation to fund a three-year longitudinal study on the ElderSpirit Community.

—*Mary Jessica Hammes*

For more information:
The Institute of Gerontology
<http://www.geron.uga.edu>

Gifts to the Institute of Gerontology at UGA can be made by contacting Kate Lindsey, director of development, UGA College of Public Health, N122C Coverdell Center, Athens, GA 30602; 706-542-2590; krl@uga.edu

“When I was 40, I thought I was too old to go back to school,” says Linda Samuel. “Then a friend told me, ‘You could be a 45-year-old woman with a Ph.D, or a 45-year-old woman without a Ph.D.’ That motivated me.”

Samuel is currently pursuing her Ph.D in social work from Clark Atlanta University and also researching the influences of religiosity and spirituality among caregivers and on end-of-life issues for elder African Americans at the College of Public Health’s Institute of Gerontology. Samuel, a licensed minister, already holds a master’s degree in social work, and has been a social worker for 20 years, the last five spent working with the elderly as a medical social worker.

Samuel worked with the Family Relations in Late Life Project, which began in 1997 and studies the well-being of caregivers and care recipients. In her research, she’s found that African-American women are more likely to use positive religious coping (“God helps me” instead of “God is punishing me”) to lessen stress. There is a long tradition of women taking on caregiving roles in the African-American community, she notes.

“It can be traced back to the tribes in Africa. You have to take care of the elderly, and women are traditionally caregivers,” she says.

Samuel eventually sees herself as a college professor, but she’s not ready to be finished with her own education yet. She will soon be a Post Doctoral Associate at the Institute of Gerontology, working with the Georgia Geriatric Education Center and conducting end-of-life research with Anne Glass.

“I came in as a social work veteran, but I hadn’t been to school in 15 years,” she says. “I want to continue to research and increase my research skills.”

—*Mary Jessica Hammes*

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Questions? Please contact Kate Lindsey in the College of Public Health Development Office at 706-542-2590 or krl@uga.edu.

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The CPH presents an unprecedented opportunity for UGA to address the public health needs in the state of Georgia

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Building a Constituency to Respond to Georgia's Important Health Concerns

In his 2007 State of the University Address, University of Georgia President, Michael Adams, charged the College of Public Health with the responsibility of “creating the avenues necessary to improve the entirety of the state’s health.” By expanding our faculty, pioneering innovative research, recruiting remarkable students and increasing our constituency of friends and alumni who support our mission, we are building the infrastructure necessary to respond to Georgia’s important health concerns.

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—Kate Lindsey

Alumni Spotlight:

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Denise & Lauren Flook

Mother and Daughter Graduate from the College of Public Health

Denise Flook had already had a successful career as a nurse. She'd worked more than 20 years with increasing responsibilities, culminating with being named the chief nursing officer at Northlake Medical Center in Atlanta. But there was more work to be done.

"My goal was always to get my master's degree," she says. And so, in 2003, she enrolled in the College of Public Health's Department of Health Promotion and Behavior—the very same department where her oldest daughter, Lauren, was studying as an undergraduate. Lauren received her bachelor's degree in 2004. Last spring, Denise got her long-awaited MPH.

The mother-daughter pair occasionally shared professors (for different courses) and would cross paths on campus. "Sometimes I'd have a late class so I'd spend the night at her place," she says.

Denise admits sharing a campus took some getting used to by Lauren's high school friends who had come to UGA, but the Flooks to it all in stride.

Denise Flook's path to a graduate degree started in 1976 from the University of Maryland. Immediately after graduation, she joined Volunteers in Service to America, a now-defunct domestic version of the Peace Corps and forerunner to today's AmeriCorps. Through VISTA, she came to Georgia to work with the Department of Human Resources and lived in Athens, where she worked on teen pregnancy prevention.

"I was ahead of Jane Fonda," she says, with a laugh, referring to Fonda's Georgia Campaign for Adolescent Pregnancy Prevention (GCAPP).

Working with those nurses piqued her interest in the profession, and she followed her future husband to Albany, Ga., to study nursing at Darton College. In 1980, she got her nursing de-

gree and the Flooks moved to Atlanta, where she worked in the telemetry unit at Northside Hospital and treated Atlanta's first AIDS patients at the former Georgia Baptist Hospital (now the Atlanta Medical Center). Although they didn't know the disease by name then, it still carried an immense stigma. The AIDS patients were often abandoned by families and partners, and "the nurses really became their families," Flook recalls.

After the birth of her two daughters, Flook was later recruited to the newly opened Northlake Medical Center to develop their infection control program.

When she decided the time was right for graduate school, she took a flexible position as a nursing consultant for the Georgia Hospital Association in Marietta and commuted to UGA.

In graduate school, she studied workforce development and its effect on the state's nursing shortage. In addition to researching healthy workplace environments, she returned to familiar territory: infection prevention. Last year, the federal Surgical Care Improvement Program (SCIP) was launched to help prevent healthcare-associated infections, and through her work with the hospital association, Flook helped state hospitals implement the SCIP initiatives.

"I got to see a lot of my old friends in infection control," she said.

Since graduating, she's taken a permanent position with the Hospital Association, and will continue to work in infection prevention and workplace environments. She also keeps an eye on future teaching opportunities.

And her influence has rubbed off once again on both her daughters. Lauren and her younger sister, Katherine are both studying to become nurses.



A Life Long Commitment

to Equal Rights, Equal Opportunity and Helping the Underserved and Underprivileged

In July, Stuart and Renee Feldman established the Stuart and Renee Feldman Health Disparities Awareness Fund to support the students, faculty and staff of the College of Public Health in developing a greater understanding of health disparities in health care and the underprivileged. Dr. Stuart Feldman, a former dean of the College of Pharmacy at UGA and professor emeritus in the College of Public Health, is the founding dean of Touro College of Pharmacy located in the historic urban community of Harlem in New York City. Renee Feldman studied to become a teacher at Boston University and taught at an inner city school in Buffalo, N.Y. and is an advocate for individuals with autism and developmental disabilities. The Feldmans have a life long commitment to equal rights, equal opportunity and helping the underserved and underprivileged.

The need for an increased understanding of the determinants or causes of health disparities in Georgia and for dissemination of this knowledge to its citizens has never been greater. According to reports released by the Georgia Office of Minority Health, death rates from infant mortality, heart disease, stroke, and cancer are all 1.5 to 2.5 times higher for African Americans than for Georgia's white population, and the health challenges that minorities experience are threatening to the entire population, not just a particular segment of the population.

Through their gift, the Feldmans are supporting The College's efforts of taking the longtime problem of health disparities and addressing it in new and innovative ways. If you would like to support this fund, please contact Kate Lindsey at 706-542-2590 or krl@uga.edu.



The College of Public Health at the University of Georgia promotes health in human populations through innovative research, exemplary education, and engaged service dedicated to preventing disease and injury within the state and around the world.



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