

MTSU Center for Health and Human Services Newsletter



*Better Health and Well-Being
for Tennesseans and That of the Nation*



GROWTH

"CHANGE IS INEVITABLE. GROWTH IS OPTIONAL."
– John C. Maxwell, American author, speaker, and pastor

Each quarter the CHHS newsletter features a "focus word" that describes the current state of the center's activities and work, is inspiring, and serves as an invitation to reflect on the bigger picture amid the day-to-day tasks, distractions, and, at times, challenges. It's a great reminder for team members of why we do what we do and encourages us to keep going. Sometimes choosing a word requires much thought as to what is most fitting at a given point in time. This quarter, without a doubt, the focus word is "growth."

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SUMMER OVERVIEW *continued from page 1*



Cynthia Chafin, M.Ed.,
MCHES® CHHS director

As a primarily externally funded department on campus, there have been a lot of bumps and bruises along the way, but thanks to perseverance (last quarter's focus word) and a

dedicated staff, CHHS has found itself in a really great place.

Since 2018, CHHS has:

- Grown from having **1.8 FTE** employees with **4** individuals on the payroll to having **5 FTE** employees—with **2 more** to be hired this summer—and **21** individuals on the payroll.
- Increased the average annual operating budget of **\$405,000** to a current annual operating budget of **\$1.8 million**.
- Increased its federal grant awards from **0** prior to 2018 to **5** as of July 2023.
- Expanded its service area, which was primarily in all **95 Tennessee counties** prior to 2018, into an **11-state area** thanks to large-scale federal grant project activities.
- Received notification in **June 2023** that that our proposal to the Federal Office of Rural Health Policy (FORHP) in the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) has been recommended for approval. This proposal would be the largest grant in the 30-year history of the center, totaling **\$2,921,726**, which would support the expansion of medication-assisted treatment (MAT) for those impacted by substance use disorder in five rural Tennessee counties.

The center has experienced phenomenal growth over the last several years thanks to the efforts of CHHS team members, who understand the vital role their work plays in the success of the center; our internal and external partners, who provide needed support, services, and expertise; and finally, the support, encouragement, and confidence of the University administration, which has seen value in CHHS' work and helped forge paths in uncharted territory as part of the center's five-year growth plan.

Thank you to all who support the CHHS mission of improving the health and well-being of Tennesseans and that of the nation through research and service. The center will no doubt continue to grow as new funding is secured and additional public health needs are identified. The CHHS team remains enthusiastic and optimistic about important work—past, present, and future—that impacts the health and well-being of so many. Read more about CHHS' work throughout this newsletter and on the CHHS website, mtsu.edu/chhs.

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SUMMER OVERVIEW *continued from page 2*

What's Next?

- **New HRSA Application Recommended for Funding to Address Opioid and Substance Use Disorders:**

In June 2023, CHHS was notified that one of its outstanding federal grant applications had been recommended for funding for **\$2,921,726**. The **Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA)** approved the funding to CHHS through its **Rural Communities Opioid Response Program (RCORP)** to address opioid and substance use disorders. This will be accomplished through expanded medication-assisted treatment (MAT) access points and increased capacity for sustainable MAT service in five rural Tennessee counties in partnership



with **Cedar Recovery**, a CHHS partner and leading addiction treatment organization.

This project was submitted for funding following the successful completion of an 18-month HRSA-funded RCORP planning grant, as well as a subsequent three-year implementation grant (nearing completion), to address the opioid epidemic in Wilson County communities. Cedar Recovery has served as an invaluable CHHS partner in the implementation grant, helping to strengthen the partnership in the pursuit of this access grant. Service areas will be announced pending finalization of the funding recommendation and upon approval of the funder. It is anticipated that five rural counties will be serviced by a mobile unit with a proposed addition of adding methadone treatment in year two or three of the grant.

The CHHS team will be busy getting organized for a **September 2023 start date** with the

HRSA MAT Expansion Grant, pending final approval from the funding agency. It's going to be a busy fall semester!

- **CHHS and the MTSU Data Science Institute Launch MTSU Office of Prevention Science and Recovery:**



Data Science Institute

The Center for Health and Human Services, in conjunction with MTSU's Data Science Institute, has launched the MTSU Office of Prevention Science and Recovery to work with Rutherford County, and later other Tennessee counties, on allocating opioid settlement dollars that are being made available to states and local governments. The new office will leverage the expertise and experience of CHHS and that of the Data Science Institute, which turns complex data into actionable, value-added information to solve important problems.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports that more than 932,000 people have died of drug overdoses in the United States since 1999, with opioid overdoses the main driver of these deaths. In 2020, 75% of the nearly 92,000 drug overdose

deaths involved an opioid. Since 2021, there have been a series of landmark settlements involving drug distributors, pharmacies, and manufacturers who have been identified as contributing to the opioid crisis. These settlements



SUMMER OVERVIEW *continued from page 3*

top \$50 billion nationally, with dollars flowing down to states and local governments, and mark the second largest public health settlement in U.S. history, after the tobacco master settlement in the 1990s.

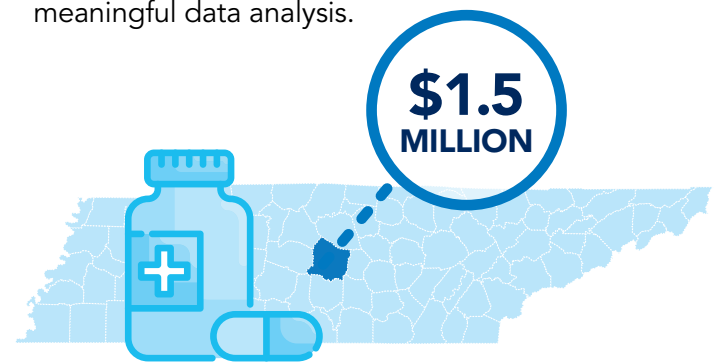


Tennessee is set to receive \$31.4 million in abatement dollars during 2023, according to the [Tennessee Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services](#). A state Opioid Abatement Council report indicates that Rutherford County is set to receive over \$1.5 million in 2023, with additional dollars anticipated in future years. Additional abatement dollars are available to Tennessee counties through an application process administered by the state; that process has recently been announced.

Local governments are making decisions on how to spend the dollars already allocated to their counties and are considering application processes for local organizations to apply for and receive dollars from the county. An evidence-based and systematic approach to funding and monitoring local activities and services is needed to ensure opioid settlement dollars are spent wisely on evidence-based research and programs that address opioid and substance use prevention, treatment, and recovery. This is where the MTSU Office of Prevention Science and Recovery comes in.

Rutherford County has provided funds to launch the new office, which will provide expertise and technical assistance to the Rutherford County Opioid Board as it receives applications from

community organizations seeking funds for opioid and substance use services. The MTSU Office of Prevention Science and Recovery will develop an application and scoring process for community organizations seeking funding and will provide initial screening of applications. It also will provide training and technical assistance to the Opioid Board, develop metrics for monitoring and reporting, and prepare meaningful data analysis.



\$31.4 MILLION

With the new MTSU Office of Prevention Science and Recovery and subject matter expertise from the Prevention Coalition for Success, the county's substance abuse prevention coalition, Rutherford County is taking steps to ensure its settlement funds are used effectively. Final funding decisions will be made by the Rutherford County Opioid Board. Staff will be hired to facilitate this important work alongside CHHS and the Data Science Institute. The MTSU office may expand to provide services to other counties seeking assistance with their opioid abatement funds.

CHHS and the Data Science Institute look forward to being a part of the solution to the opioid epidemic in Rutherford County and beyond.

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SUMMER OVERVIEW *continued from page 4*

- **Outstanding grant applications and applications in progress:**

CHHS awaits notification for several other applications, including a proposal submitted in partnership with an African American church in one rural Tennessee community that would provide **a mobile unit for SUD/ OUD education, outreach, harm reduction, and linkages to needed services**. We have identified another funding opportunity that would allow us to conduct **opioid disorder research** in two additional rural counties, similar to what is underway with our HRSA-funded Rural Communities Opioid Response Program (RCORP) project, and we are working on a proposal for a June 2024 submission. Also in the space of substance use and misuse, we continue to work on a proposal in partnership with the Physician Assistant Studies program, the Public Health program, and the Social Work Department to develop an **interdisciplinary training program** to equip clinicians and practitioners with the skills necessary to identify, treat, and support individuals in rural communities with **SUD/OUD**.

We completed an application as a “second chance” opportunity to expand upon the **Blue Raiders Drink Up 2.0** project, which would serve students eligible for SNAP benefits and would further support **fruit and vegetable consumption, healthy lifestyles, and chronic disease prevention**. Work continues on a project we hope the Department of Transportation will fund to support **transformative infrastructure projects** that serve disadvantaged communities. Components of this proposal



include roads, bridges to connect people with needed health care services and programs, employment, resources needed to live healthy and productive lives, access to outdoor areas, and a planned recreational mecca—all to promote active living and the reduction of chronic disease. While it is still early in the planning stages, progress has been made, and we continue to be excited about this project. CHHS is eager to enter new partnerships with nontraditional partners.



Current Research, Projects, and Programs:

- Rural Communities Opioid Response Program Medication-Assisted Treatment (MAT) Expansion—pending approval
- Rutherford County Opioid Board/Office of Prevention Science and Recovery
- Blue Raiders Drink Up: Healthy Choices for Healthy Students 2.0
- Infant Death Scene Investigation/Safe Sleep
- MTSU Mental Health First Aid
- Rural Communities Opioid Response Program Implementation Grant
- Safe Stars Evaluation

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SUMMER OVERVIEW *continued from page 5*

With our current and recent portfolio of research, projects, and programs that focus on substance use disorders, obesity and diabetes prevention, foods and agriculture, environmental health, and workforce development, we again express gratitude to our many partners who make our work possible as we make a difference in the lives of Tennesseans and others throughout the nation. CHHS looks forward to continuing to serve the public in these important areas as well as our campus community through our campus-focused grants.

For those who are not familiar with CHHS, please take an opportunity to visit the [center's website](#) to read more about our work. Previous editions of the CHHS newsletter are posted and include featured research, projects, and programs.

- **Partnerships and collaborations continue.** CHHS continues to identify collaborators and partners both on and off-campus to be involved in CHHS projects, programs, and research. Look for more updates via this quarterly CHHS newsletter, the CHHS website, and social media.

"Growth is never by mere chance; it is the result of forces working together."

James Cash Penney, American businessman and entrepreneur, founder of J.C. Penney stores

Want to donate to further the work of MTSU's CHHS?

MTSU CHHS operates primarily through external funding. To continue our mission of promoting health and well-being for all Tennesseans and that of our nation, we need financial resources to continue our work. We operate from public and private grants as well as sponsorships and donations.

Please consider a donation of any size, which will go directly to CHHS.

Visit mtsu.edu/chhs, click on Donate Now, and specify that your donation is for CHHS. The site accepts MasterCard, VISA, and American Express.

mtsu.edu/chhs • Follow us on social media





Project Spotlight and CHHS Campus Collaborations: Blue Raiders Drink Up: Healthy Choices for Healthy Students 2.0

MTSU Student Food Pantry and MTSU Healthy Vending Task Force

MTSU Food Pantry Collaboration

A new addition to the Blue Raiders Drink Up 2.0 grant, funded under an agreement with **Tennessee Department of Health Project Diabetes Initiative**, is a collaboration with the MT Food Pantry to help supplement the pantry with healthy food staples for students in need. The first donation was completed April 28, 2023, and consisted of 826 items that are nonperishable healthy pantry staples. Donations included organic quinoa and brown rice packets, multigrain Sun Chips, plant-based complete

meal solution packets, 172 cans of low sodium vegetables, and 66 cans of no-sugar-added fruit.

Each semester a portion of Blue Raiders Drink Up 2.0 funds will supplement the **MTSU Student Food Pantry** with a donation until the grant ends in 2025. Each student who visits the pantry will also receive a Blue Raiders Drink Up 2.0 refillable water bottle and a healthy lifestyle resources brochure (see brochure below) that contains quick suggestions for snacks on the go, pantry staples, and nutrition label hacks.

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Lightning says...

NUTRITION IS THE MISSION!

Healthy Lifestyle Resources

Snacks, anyone?

- ≤ Dried Fruit (NO Added sugar)
- ≤ Veggie Straws/Puffs
- ≤ Nuts/Trail Mix (check label for sugar & sodium)
- ≤ Popcorn Chips
- ≤ Dates
- ≤ Seeds (Pumpkin, Hemp Hearts, etc.)
- ≤ Crunch Dried @ Veggies

Pump up the protein!

- ≤ Canned Tuna, Salmon, Chicken
- ≤ Jerky (low sodium!)
- ≤ Protein Packs (P3, Balanced Breaks)

Pantry Staples!

- Oatmeal
- Cereals (low added sugar)
- Nut Butters (Peanut, Almond, etc.)
- Seeds of Change Microwave Pouches
- Rice Pilaf Microwave Packs
- Soups (Low/No added Sodium)
- Canned Fruit (No Sugar Added)
- Canned Vegetables (Low/No added Sodium)

Nutrition Label Hacks

#1 Protein: A percentage daily value for protein is not required on the label. Eat moderate portions of lean meat, poultry, fish, eggs, low-fat milk, yogurt and cheese, plus beans and peas, nuts, seeds, and soy products.

#2 Choose items that are low in saturated fat, added sugars, and sodium. "Low" is categorized as 5% or less.

PROJECT SPOTLIGHT *continued from page 7*

MTSU Healthy Vending Task Force

The **MTSU Healthy Vending Task Force**, another component of the Blue Raiders Drink Up 2.0 grant, has successfully launched and is in full motion since its formation in September 2022. In a little under a year, the task force has grown to include **nine vested health advocates and professionals** who have come together to craft a MTSU-centric policy on healthy vending choices.


The task force has reviewed several evidence-based programs and policies from other schools that have implemented a similar approach of swapping at least **10% of all vending machine items** to “healthier choice” items (i.e., low calorie, no sugar, low fat, or low sodium). Most recently, task force members dove even deeper into research studying Tennessee state law on vending machine contractors, assessing the number of vending machines on MTSU’s campus, and reviewing the survey that will gather opinions of MTSU faculty, staff, and students on the vending machine options on campus.



The survey has been finalized and the Institutional Review Board application has been approved. Data collection will begin with the fall semester on August 28, 2023. Our goal is to survey at least 400 MTSU faculty, staff, or students to gain enough data to properly strengthen the proposal to incorporate healthier items in campus vending machines.



Trying to drink more water? Here's a map of water refill stations on campus!




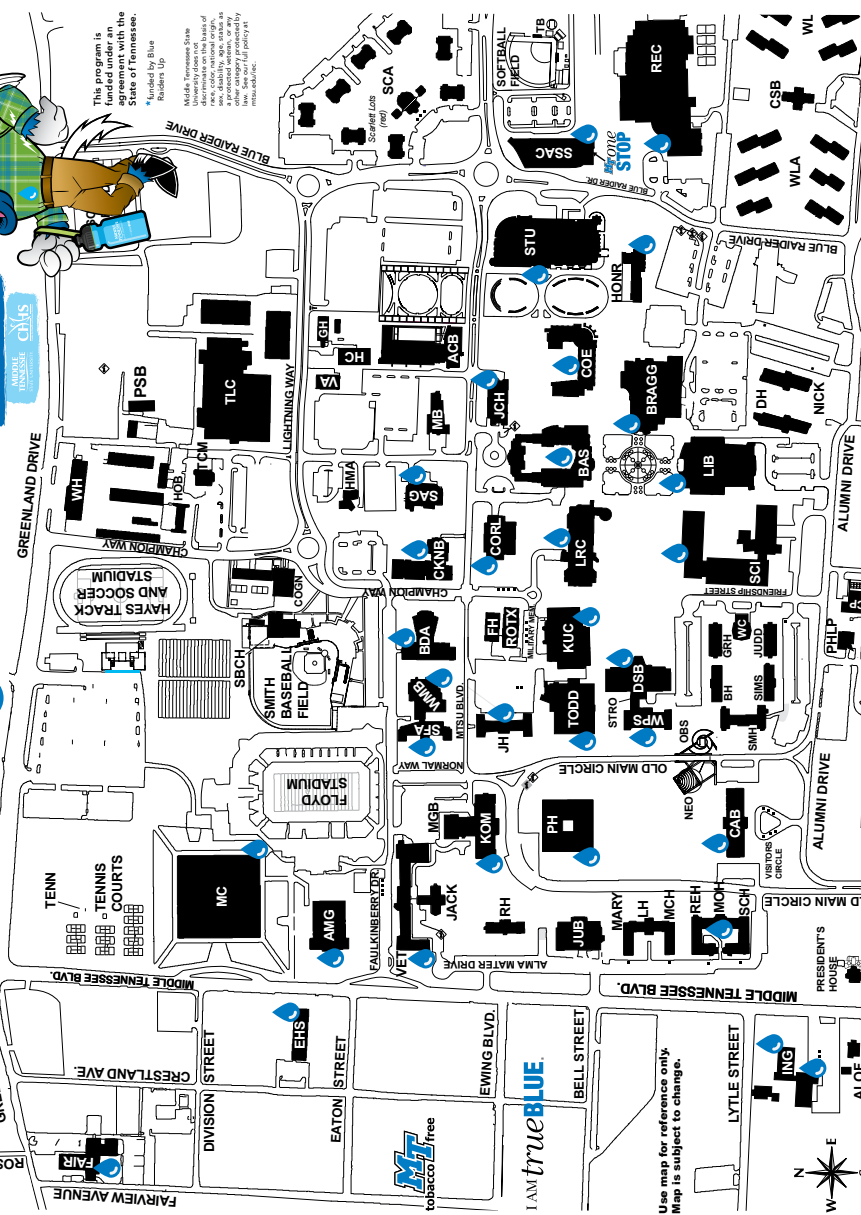
BLUE RAIDERS DRINK UP


Water Refill Stations Map

@MTSU_CHHS

Building with water refill stations. See legend to the right for names of buildings and exact locations of refill stations.







BLUE RAIDERS DRINK UP
H2O IS THE WAY TO GO

MTSU CHHS

This program is funded under an agreement with the State of Tennessee.

Managed by Blue Raiders UP

Middle Tennessee State University is an equal opportunity institution. Policies and procedures are subject to change without notice. See your full policy at www.mtsu.edu.

AMG Alumni Memorial Gym
1-First Floor, 3-Second Floor*

BAS Business and Aerospace Building
1-First Floor, 1-Second Floor, 1-Third Floor

BDA Boudwell/Dramatic Arts Building
1-First Floor, 1-Second Floor

BDRG John Bragg Media and Entertainment Building
2-Second Floor

CAB Caplan College of Arts Building
1-First Floor, 1-Second Floor

CKNB Casanovese Kennedy Nursing Building
2-First Floor*, 1-Second Floor*

COE College of Education Building
1-First Floor

COR Corlew Hall
1-First Floor*

DSB Davis Science Building
2-First Floor

EHS Ellington Human Sciences Building
1-First Floor

FAIR Fairview Building
1-First Floor

HONR Paul W. Martin Sr. Honors Building
1-Second Floor

ING Sam H. Ingram Building
1-Garage Level, 1-First Floor

JCH Jim Cummings Hall
1-First Floor*

JH Jones Hall
1-First Floor, 1-Third Floor*

KOM Kirksey Old Main
1-First Floor

KUC Keathley University Center
1-Second Floor

LIB James E. Walker Library
1-First Floor, 1-Second Floor

LRC Ned McWhorter Learning Resources Center
1-First Floor*

MC Murphy Center
4-First Floor*

MOH Monohan Hall
1-First Floor

PH Peck Hall
1-Second Floor

REC Health, Wellness, and Recreation Center
1-First Floor, 1-Second Floor

SAG Stark Agriculture Center
1-First Floor

SCI Sciences Building
1-First Floor

SFA Saunders Fine Arts Building
1-Second Floor, 1-Third Floor*

SSAC Student Services and Admissions Center
1-First Floor, 1-Second Floor

STU Student Union Building
1-Second Floor

TODD Andrew L. Todd Hall
1-First Floor*, 1-Second Floor

VET Voonhies Engineering Technology Building
1-First Floor

WMB Wright Music Building
1-First Floor, 2-Second Floor*

WPS Wiser-Patten Science Hall
1-First Floor

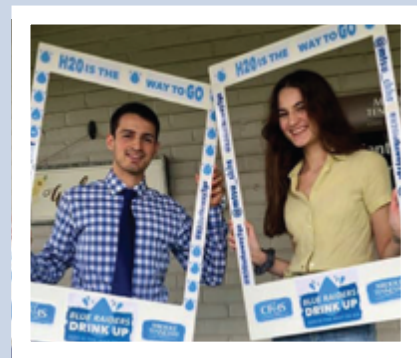


CHHS installed fifteen water refill stations across campus over the last four years and distributed 1,493 water bottles to students. There were 91,261 refills made from these water stations. Water bottles will continue to be provided during 2022-2025.

Whom Do We Serve?

The Center for Health and Human Services collaborates with MTSU faculty and staff, and public and private organizations and partners, to develop and implement local, regional, and statewide programs, projects, and research activities designed to improve the health and well-being of Tennesseans and of the nation. Did you know that much of our work involves off-campus initiatives? One of the more

common misconceptions about CHHS is that we solely serve the campus community. While some of our efforts do focus on our campus, the majority of our work is done in communities across Tennessee, some of which serve as models for other states. Our projects have touched all 95 Tennessee counties, with some involving multistate partnerships and others having national impact.



Ash Abro and Rose Chilsen, recent Dietetics graduates and former CHHS staff.

CHHS Campus Resources



MTSU Mental Health First Aid

CHHS is offering MHFA training **FREE** to those who are part of the campus community as part of a newly awarded grant from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). Visit our [MTSU Mental Health First Aid](https://www.mentalhealthfirstaid.org) website to learn more. CHHS is currently unable to offer an MHFA self-pay option to those not affiliated with our campus or another university. Community partners and outside organizations can find trainings available in their area (or virtual options) at the Mental Health First Aid website. For non-university partners wishing to have a training session just for their group, it may be worthwhile to use that tool and reach out to trainers listed as offering sessions in your locality. [mentalhealthfirstaid.org/take-a-course/find-a-course/](https://www.mentalhealthfirstaid.org/take-a-course/find-a-course/)

Over the 2018–2021 period, over 1,100 were trained through MTSU Mental Health First Aid. We look forward to serving the campus community again during the 2023–2026 calendar years with this evidence-based national program.

FOLLOW US and stay connected!



CHHS Staff Spotlight

Becky Figueroa

This quarter CHHS is pleased to shine the spotlight on Becky Figueroa. Our interview with Becky is below.

CHHS: How long have you been with CHHS and what is your role?

BF: I joined CHHS as the student health coach and wellness educator in January 2022—so I've been at MTSU for a year and a half! My role with CHHS is to work within the Blue Raiders Drink Up grant to help students reduce their risk of type 2 diabetes and other lifestyle-related health challenges. I do this by meeting with students one-on-one to help them consider changes they'd like to make to their overall health, and helping them to break those changes into actionable, manageable steps. I meet with them every couple of weeks to check in, see how their progress toward their health goals is going, and help them overcome any challenges that occur. Additionally, I sometimes guest lecture on health-related topics to classes or clubs on campus.

CHHS: What is your favorite aspect of the job?

BF: My favorite aspect of the job is when I get to watch students surprise themselves at how much progress they are capable of when they set their mind to it! Sometimes changes might be hard, or sometimes students perceive making changes will be hard, and it is always a joy to see them come out on the other side triumphant and accomplished! No matter whether they have smaller goals or bigger goals, the momentum they can generate for themselves and their health often amazes and inspires them! It inspires me as well.



Kayla Huff, left, with Becky Figueroa, Student Health Services health coach and wellness educator.

CHHS: What would a movie or book about your life be titled?

BF: I think a book about my life might be titled "It's not going to go how you planned, and that's OK!" I had a very specific idea about how my life would look and go when I arrived at college. Ultimately, the direction of my life went a very different way, but it has turned out better than the plan I had in place all those years ago. Sometimes you have to pivot and walk through a door you hadn't planned on, but ultimately that might provide a richer, broader experience than you ever imagined!

CHHS: If you could learn to do one thing, what would it be?

BF: I would love to be able to play the violin. It is such a beautiful instrument, and I think it does a wonderful job of expressing human emotions! I wanted to play it since I was a child but did not have the opportunity. I think to play well requires years and years of study and practice, so for now, I can at least appreciate it for being beautiful music.

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STAFF SPOTLIGHT continued from page 11

CHHS: What advice do you have for incoming freshmen?

BF: My advice to incoming freshmen would be to put down the cellphone and connect yourself in person to fellow students and/or a group or club that interests you as soon as you arrive at campus! You may love the group, you may determine it is not your best fit, but at least you will start making those important connections that so MTSU can feel like your home away from home. The more you connect to campus, the more you will learn about other groups, activities, and resources our university has to offer. It will expand your horizons and allow you to have a deeper, more meaningful college experience!

CHHS: What is the best advice you have ever received?

BF: That's a hard one to answer! I have been fortunate enough to have had many wise people in my life who have given me such great advice. I would say the one that serves me the most is fairly simple: *If something is bothering you, or you have conflict, sleep on it and see what you think and/or feel in the morning.* This can be so hard—how do you get a good night's sleep when you are worried or concerned?! And yet, if I am able to set an issue aside—with the idea that I will come back to it in the morning—my perspective definitely shifts after a night's sleep. Almost always, clarity comes when I am well rested!



Wilson County RCORP Grant Update

The **CHHS Rural Communities Opioid Response Program (RCORP)** Implementation Grant has now reached a midpoint, and we have so much to celebrate. At the Wilson County PIC Center (also known as a diversion center), there are **39 people active in the program, 34 graduates of the program, and a 70% success rate.** RCORP transportation funds are being used to give rides to and from treatment appointments in the rural areas of Wilson County, where it can be difficult getting to a treatment facility. This summer, we will build on the [2023 RCORP Wilson County Provider and Community Stigma Report](#) by completing additional surveys at the Tennessee State Fair in Lebanon from August 17–26.

We continue to support [DrugFree WilCo](#) with new billboards in Lebanon, Mount Juliet, and



Watertown for stigma reduction and promotion of securing your medications in homes. We participated in the Drug Takeback Event on April 22, 2023, and had our largest volume of safely disposed medicine to date. Cynthia Chafin and Michael Ayalon attended the RCORP Reverse Site Visit from July 11–12 in Washington, D.C., which brought together rural community health and grassroots leaders who innovatively work to support and sustain access to care for rural residents across the country.

The War on Drugs Continues—Xylazine

Fentanyl is unfortunately not the only dangerous drug facing society. **Xylazine**, a tranquilizer used by veterinarians and increasingly found in the U.S. illicit drug supply, is emerging as another threat. Xylazine has been linked to an increasing number of overdose deaths in Tennessee and across the nation and is often mixed with other drugs. Fentanyl mixed with Xylazine has been declared an emerging threat by the White House's Office of National Drug Control Policy. People may be exposed to xylazine either knowingly or unknowingly and use it in combination with other drugs, including fentanyl, though it is not

approved for use in people. It is often mixed with cocaine, heroin, and fentanyl to enhance drug effects or increase street value by increasing the weight of the drugs.

Sources:

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
[What You Should Know About Xylazine | Drug Overdose | CDC Injury Center](#)

Tennessee Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services
tn.gov/behavioral-health/xylazine

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ACCESSIBILITY continued from page 16

FACTS ABOUT XYLAZINE

Knowledge and Tools to Save Lives



Xylazine is a non-opioid tranquilizer used by veterinarians. It's also linked to an increasing number of overdose deaths in Tennessee and across the nation. Xylazine is often mixed with other drugs, and people exposed to xylazine often knowingly or unknowingly used it in combination with other drugs, particularly illicit fentanyl.

NALOXONE



BECAUSE IT IS NOT AN OPIOID, XYLAZINE DOES NOT RESPOND TO NALOXONE.

HARD TO DETECT



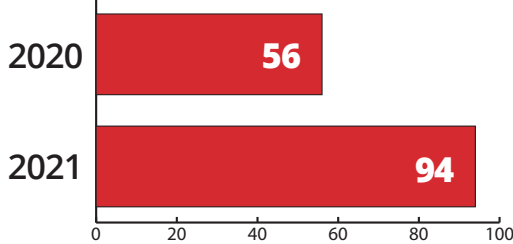
TYPICAL LAB TESTS DON'T LOOK FOR XYLAZINE, SO ITS FULL IMPACT IN TENNESSEE IS UNKNOWN.

RISK OF INFECTION



USE OF XYLAZINE CAN CAUSE WOUNDS AND SEVERE INFECTION REQUIRING MEDICAL ATTENTION.

TENNESSEE OVERDOSE DEATHS INVOLVING XYLAZINE



All xylazine lab testing data is sourced from TDH SUDORS.

TOP SUBSTANCES IDENTIFIED IN LAB TESTS WITH XYLAZINE

1. Fentanyl
2. Methamphetamine
3. Delta-9 THC
4. Cocaine
5. Alprazolam (Xanax)

All xylazine overdose deaths in Tennessee involved multiple substances.

RESPONDING TO AN OVERDOSE

Xylazine is not an opioid, so that means it doesn't respond to naloxone (Narcan), but you can and should still give naloxone to a person you think has overdosed.

- Call 911
- **Give naloxone if you have it**
- Wait with the person
- Give them CPR and rescue breaths if you know how. If you don't know how, the 911 dispatcher can help.

Learn more about xylazine and other emerging drugs by scanning this QR Code or visiting the web address below.



Department of
**Mental Health &
Substance Abuse Services**

[TN.gov/behavioral-health/xylazine](https://www.tn.gov/behavioral-health/xylazine)

Anthony Jackson, Jr.
Director of Early Intervention
and Prevention
615-585-8956
Anthony.Jackson@tn.gov

New Employees and Team Members

CHHS welcomes five new employees and team members. We are pleased to introduce four new students who are paid staff on the Blue Raiders Drink Up: Healthy Choices for Healthy Students 2.0 and the MTSU Mental Health First Aid projects, along with our new Blue Raiders Drink Up 2.0 dietitian.

Audrey Waite Blue Raiders Drink Up 2.0 Student Ambassador

“Hey everyone! My name is Audrey Waite, and I am going into my junior year in the Dietetics program here at MTSU this Fall 2023. I’m working toward a bachelor’s in Nutrition and Food Science with the goal of becoming a registered dietitian. I have recently been given the opportunity to join the CHHS as a student ambassador for Blue Raiders Drink Up, and I am so excited to spend my remaining semesters at MTSU working with a program that helps educate students about their health and provides them with indispensable resources. One of my favorite aspects of BRDU is that it allows me to get more involved with my school and community. Murfreesboro has felt like home since day one, and I am grateful to have the opportunity to give back to the school that has welcomed me with open arms!

“Being a student at MTSU has also been crucial to cultivating my interest in nutrition and food science. Through the Dietetics program, I have gotten to know so many students and staff members that share an exceptional curiosity about the world that has inspired my own continued interest in nutrition. However, my initial interest in nutrition dates back to my childhood and can



be credited entirely to my mother. She lives by the aphorism “health is wealth” and taught me health is a gift and should be prioritized above everything, especially material wealth and status. I grew up visiting farmers markets and ethnic grocery stores and spending lots of time in the kitchen. These experiences helped me understand how health is often a privilege reserved for the wealthy and reinforced the idea that more nutrition and health-related resources need to be available for everyone.

“Outside of school and my job at CHHS, I work as a server at The Chop House, which has also introduced me to incredible new friends and gotten me more involved in my community. While school and my two jobs keep me quite busy, I spend my remaining time playing bass guitar, going to concerts, and reading the occasional book.

“Something that I wish I had known as a freshman is that college is not always a linear journey. Missing a semester, retaking a class, or graduating later than expected is all part of the experience. For me, it took dropping a few classes, taking time off, and transferring schools to find the perfect fit. Overall, I couldn’t be happier as to where I have ended up, and I look forward to my future in the Dietetics program and with BRDU!”

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NEW EMPLOYEES AND TEAM MEMBERS *continued from page 15*

Hanan Baba

Blue Raiders Drink Up 2.0 Student Ambassador



“Hello everyone! My name is Hanan, and I am so excited to be a part of the Center for Health and Human Services as one of the new student ambassadors for the Blue Raiders Drink Up program. I am currently in my third year as a full-

time student at MTSU, working toward a Bachelor of Science in Nutrition and Food Science (NFS). I love my involvement in the NFS program so far! I am passionate about nutrition, and I have great professors who take the time to make the learning experience both enjoyable and rewarding.

“My favorite aspect of the Blue Raiders Drink Up program is that I get to meet other students at MTSU and share my knowledge of nutrition with them in various opportunities and events. My role as a student ambassador is never dull because we are continuously learning and thinking of new ways we can make a positive impact in the community.

“One of the first major experiences I had with nutrition began when I was 10 years old. While growing up in Jackson, a smaller city in

Tennessee, my family did not have close access to specialized health care. This was a problem when my dad was diagnosed with renal cancer in 2013. As I was brought along for his doctor’s consultations in Nashville, I heard about the strict diet he needed to follow, and I was fascinated to learn how the food we ate could improve or deteriorate our health. This led to my wanting to become a registered dietitian. In the future, I want to educate people against the lies concerning popular diet culture and guide them in learning about, preventing, and recovering from illnesses.

“When I’m not working or studying, I love to create! I’m a big fan of art and everything handmade. I’ve dabbled in drawing, cross-stitching, crocheting, sculpting, and cooking, among other things. My motto in life is “try everything once,” and I can stand by that saying most of the time. Other than that, I also love to spend time with family and friends when I can!

“My advice for incoming first-year students is to get involved on campus! My freshman year I joined the Nutrition and Dietetics Association because I heard of the great opportunities they offered for students interested in nutrition. Even as an introvert, that one club alone has helped me find my place in the community. Through it I have befriended other group members, met registered dietitians and other professionals in the field, and found joy in community service.”

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NEW EMPLOYEES AND TEAM MEMBERS *continued from page 16*

Chloe Keating

Mental Health First Aid Student Ambassador

“Hello everybody! My name is Chloe Keating, and I was recently hired at the CHHS to serve as one of the student ambassadors for the Mental Health First Aid grant. I am currently working toward a bachelor’s degree in Psychology, and I hope to use the knowledge I gain from MTSU to become a mental health counselor. While my role as a college student was initially assumed in 2018 immediately following high school graduation, my lack of ability to handle stress in a constructive way became an increasingly clear barrier to any success. Without any real motivation or passion toward anything substantial, I grew frustrated and discouraged that I was simply unable to contribute anything meaningful to anyone around me. By 2020, my mental health was at an all-time low. Years and years of suppressed wounds and ritualistic behaviors reached their peak and became severely debilitating in all aspects of my life. After being admitted into a residential treatment center, I had the great privilege to work directly with trained professionals on all the hurts and hang-ups that were preventing me from feeling alive.

“By this point, I was completely exhausted. I was no longer able to maintain the façade that I would be able to continue indulging in things actively harming me without real repercussion to my health. When I returned home, I began weekly EMDR treatment sessions with a wonderful counselor. While the process of healing has been (and often is) an exhausting, sad, infuriating thing, I have seen in real time how healthy and safe connections can completely transform every inch of your life. The ability to share emotions



and set healthy boundaries with the people that you care about, and that care about you, is vital, and only enhanced in the armoring of more knowledge around how to handle different mental health crises.

“I was recommended to apply for this position by one of my wonderful Psychology professors from the spring semester. She encouraged me that she felt it would be a good fit, having fully displayed an outgoing personality through my time in her class and passion for understanding mental health to serve others well. I was enthusiastic about the prospect of filling this role from the first time she told me about it. The preceding semester had made it abundantly clear that I was set on the path I would remain.

“My grades drastically improved, my curiosity had returned, and I finally felt like I was in a major where I did not feel out of place for some vague and unknown reason. I knew this was something that I was all in for, and the question of how I would develop my professional experience to enter the mental health field dynamically quickly arose. I am so grateful for the opportunity to learn and serve others in such a positive and intelligent environment! Mental health is a field filled with incredibly passionate people, and the constant drive to understand others more clearly is contagious. I am excited to gain wisdom from people who asserted years before me that this was their passion and devoted so much time and energy into focusing it.”

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NEW EMPLOYEES AND TEAM MEMBERS *continued from page 18*

Kaitlyn Dovan

Mental Health First Aid Student Ambassador



“Hello MTSU crew! I am a current student in the Professional Counseling program planning to one day be a licensed school and professional counselor. I obtained my undergraduate degree from MTSU in Psychology in 2019 and took a break to

gain experience working with individuals from underserved populations. After the completion of my current program, I plan on attending a Ph.D. program in Public Policy. I’m extremely passionate about advocating for mental health resources that will greatly benefit the community. I’m also passionate about providing equity for all and allocating resources where needed to help improve the well-being and livability of others.

“My passion for the field and experience working with underrepresented and marginalized individuals facing mental health issues allowed me to recognize the importance of mental health awareness, in addition to decreasing the stigma behind mental health and mental health treatment. When I received the opportunity to be a Mental Health First Aid ambassador for the Center for Health and Human Services, I just knew I had

to take it. The work the CHHS does for the community is truly incredible, and I’m ecstatic for the ability to bring awareness to the field of mental health through outreach and trainings on campus.

“When I’m not talking everyone’s ears off about mental health, I like to engage in creative hobbies such as writing songs and painting. I also love to take spontaneous trips and go hiking with my golden lab Marcy. A less active pastime I enjoy is rewatching my favorite shows such as *Parks and Recreation* and *Brooklyn 99*. Two of my favorite quotes come from these shows: ‘Never half-ass two things. Whole-ass one thing.’ – Ron Swanson; ‘Two steps forward and one step back is still one step forward.’ – Rosa Diaz. I carry these quotes with me in my everyday life, and they help me to not be so hard on myself and recognize that even the slightest progress is still progress.”

“Advice I would provide for incoming freshmen and new MTSU students is to get involved with the University through groups and events that pique your interest. As an undergraduate student, I made the mistake of prioritizing my schoolwork above all and regret not being more involved. This is why as a graduate student, I want to engage more with campus events, current and incoming students, professors, and staff to learn more about and be able to provide resources for the campus and community. I greatly look forward to utilizing my current and adapting new knowledge and skills to succeed in this position and positively impact as many individuals as possible!”

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NEW EMPLOYEES AND TEAM MEMBERS *continued from page 18*

Sarah Nicolette Blue Raiders Drink Up 2.0 Dietitian

"Hi, everyone! I am so excited to join on as the registered dietitian for BRDU! This will be my first time at MTSU, but I'm not new to the college experience. This May, I graduated with a master's in Community Health and Nutrition at Tennessee Tech University (TTU).

"I haven't always had a love of nutrition, but after struggling with my own diet and witnessing many family members struggle with disordered eating patterns, I knew there had to be another way. Over the course of my internship and degree, I've had the opportunity to learn and help many different populations in rural Tennessee as well on TTU's college campus. As a registered dietitian, I love to help empower people to make lasting changes that have a positive impact on their quality of life. My role involves helping individuals improve their overall health and well-being through personalized nutrition counseling and education. Whether it's managing a chronic condition or simply wanting to improve their overall health. A common stereotype of RDs is that we are sticklers about food, but I



promise you I do what I do because I love food! If I can help you or anyone else feel even a fraction of the passion I feel for food and nutrition, then I've done my job.

"A little about me: I was born and

raised in South Florida, but I've been all over east Tennessee for about a decade now. Moving to Murfreesboro is going to be a new adventure for me, and I'm excited to see what it has to offer! Outside of nutrition, I'm a little bit of a film buff and a book nerd; that is usually what you can find me doing at home or loving up on my cat!

"I'm really looking forward to working with you all this upcoming school year. Wish me luck!"

*"You will either step forward into growth
or you will step back into safety."*

Abraham Maslow, American psychologist

CHHS Staff and Faculty Partners

The CHHS reports to David L. Butler, Ph.D., Vice Provost for Research at Middle Tennessee State University.

Director:

Cynthia Chafin, M.Ed., MCHES®
cynthia.chafin@mtsu.edu

CHHS Grant and Program Coordinators:

Sarah Gwinn, B.A.
 CHHS Proposal Development Specialist
sarah.gwinn@mtsu.edu

Michelle Sterlingshires, M.S.
 CHHS Grant and Program Coordinator
 Data Coordinator—Safe Stars, Mental Health
 First Aid, Blue Raiders Drink Up
michelle.sterlingshires@mtsu.edu

Program and Project Coordinators:

Michael Ayalon, M.S.P.
 Rural Communities Opioid Response
 Program (RCORP)
michael.ayalon@mtsu.edu

Christina Byrd, M.P.H., CHES®
 Blue Raiders Drink Up: Healthy Choices for
 Healthy Students, Death Scene Investigation/
 Sudden Unexpected Infant Death, Safe Stars
ctb4f@mtmail.mtsu.edu
christina.byrd@mtsu.edu

Jill Thomas, M.Ed.
 Mental Health First Aid
jill.thomas@mtsu.edu

Project and Student Assistants:

Kaitlyn Donovan
 Mental Health First Aid Student Ambassador
kad5f@mtmail.mtsu.edu

Chloe Keating
 Mental Health First Aid Student Ambassador
cnk3f@mtmail.mtsu.edu

Hanan Baba
 Blue Raiders Drink Up Student Ambassador
hmb6c@mtmail.mtsu.edu

Audrey Waite
 Blue Raiders Drink Up Student Ambassador
acw8b@mtmail.mtsu.edu

Chipper Smith
 Rural Communities Opioid Response Program
khs2z@mtmail.mtsu.edu

Maimoonah Dabshee
 Rural Communities Opioid Response Program
mkd3r@mtmail.mtsu.edu

Grant Support Staff:

Sarah Nicolette
 Blue Raiders Drink Up Dietitian
sarah.nicolette@mtsu.edu

Becky Figueroa, M.A., NBC-HWC
 Blue Raiders Drink Up and Student Health
 Services Health Coach
becky.figueroa@mtsu.edu

Lisa Sheehan-Smith, EDD, RD,LDN
 Blue Raiders Drink Up Cooking Class Dietitian
lisa.shepherd@mtsu.edu

MTSU Mental Health First Aid

Faculty Trainers:

Mary Beth Asbury, Ph.D.

Department of Communication Studies
marybeth.asbury@mtsu.edu

Deborah Lee, Ph.D., RN, NBC-HWC

School of Nursing, NHC Chair of Excellence
deborah.lee@mtsu.edu

Seth Marshall, Ph.D.

Department of Psychology
seth.marshall@mtsu.edu

Tiffany Wilson, Ph.D.

College of Education
tiffany.wilson@mtsu.edu

Project and Program Evaluators:

Andrew Owusu, Ph.D., OLY

Department of Health and Human Performance
andrew.owusu@mtsu.edu

Kahler W. Stone, Dr.P.H.

Department of Health and Human Performance
kahler.stone@mtsu.edu

Chandra R. Story, Ph.D., MCHES®

Department of Health and Human Performance
chandra.story@mtsu.edu

Angela Bowman, Ph.D.

Department of Health and Human Performance
angie.bowman@mtsu.edu

Keith Gamble, Ph.D.

Department of Economics and Finance,
and Data Science Institute
keith.gamble@mtsu.edu

Sara Shirley, Ph.D.

Department of Economics and Finance,
and Data Science Institute
sara.shirley@mtsu.edu

Jeff Stark, Ph.D.

Department of Economics and Finance,
and Data Science Institute
jeff.stark@mtsu.edu

Campus and Faculty Partners:

John M. Burchfield, M.B.A.

University College
john.burchfield@mtsu.edu

Richard Chapman, M.B.A., M.S.H.A.

Student Health Services
richard.chapman@mtsu.edu

Kim Godwin, Ph.D.

University College
kim.godwin@mtsu.edu

Lisa Schrader, M.P.H.

Health and Human Performance
lisa.schrader@mtsu.edu



MTSU Center for Health and Human Services, 1114 E. Lytle St., Murfreesboro, TN 37132
615-898-5493 • mtsu.edu/chhs • chhs@mtsu.edu

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