

ALABAMA'S HEALTH

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ALABAMA DEPARTMENT
OF PUBLIC HEALTH

ONE HUNDRED FIFTY YEARS OF PROMOTING, PROTECTING, AND IMPROVING PUBLIC HEALTH

In 2025, the Alabama Department of Public Health celebrates 150 years of promoting, protecting, and improving the health of the state's residents.

The road to Alabama's public health system was paved with hardship and tragedy. In its early days as a state (Alabama was admitted to the Union as the 22nd state in 1819) and on through the 1800s, Alabama was under siege from a variety of epidemics. Private physicians were overwhelmed by patients seeking treatment for cholera, yellow fever, diphtheria, polio, tuberculosis, and other illnesses. Alabama's infants were especially vulnerable at the time, with two out of every three dying before the age of one.

On February 19, 1875, the state's legislative body, the Alabama General Assembly, passed a law recognizing the Medical Association of the State of Alabama as the official State Board of Health. This gave the Board the authority to create and implement a much needed plan that would develop health laws, educational programs, and a "system of hygiene" designed to preserve and prolong life. Today, we consider this development the birth of the Alabama Department of Public Health.

The benefits of this landmark move have been significant. Since the creation of our public health system, the life expectancy of Alabama residents has nearly doubled. The state's food supplies are safer. Facilities such as laboratories and county health departments have been established

and improved. Our ability to track and contain outbreaks of infectious diseases, and to mobilize for mass vaccinations in the face of such outbreaks, continues to strengthen and evolve. What was once a small group of medical professionals has grown to become a statewide force dedicated to providing opportunities and expanding the possibilities for every Alabama resident to live a longer, healthier life.

This year, we will celebrate the milestones and achievements of the past 150 years, and as we look ahead to the challenges we must overcome to ensure a better quality of life for our fellow Alabamians.

By Blu Gilliland



SESQUICENTENNIAL CELEBRATION BEGINS!

We are reflecting on the many achievements of public health over the past century and a half this year, expressing our gratitude to the visionaries who established this department, our strong advocates and leaders through the years, the dedicated and compassionate workforce that has worked to address public health challenges, and the state's citizens for their support over the past 15 decades. County health departments will be hosting open houses and other events in 2025. The public is encouraged to participate and visit our website under Celebration News to read a StoryMap that provides a historical summary and timeline, view a 150th Anniversary video (excerpted on page 9), and see other reminders of the significant progress from our early days to the present in disease control and prevention, care for families, sanitation, safety, and responses to ever-emerging public health threats.

ADPH CYCLOSPORIASIS OUTBREAK INVESTIGATION REPORT PUBLISHED IN MMWR

A report of an epidemiologic investigation by the department titled “Outbreak of Cyclosporiasis Among Patrons of a Mexican-Style Restaurant – Limestone County, Alabama, May–June 2023” was published in the April 17, 2025, issue of *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report*.

Corresponding author Justine Goetzman, MPH; and colleagues Adyneshia Carter, MPH; Ana Oliveira, DrPH; and L. Amanda Ingram, MPH; authored the report on the investigation, which was opened June 7, 2023, after five laboratory-confirmed cyclosporiasis case reports were identified with a common patient exposure of eating at one Mexican-style restaurant.

Cyclosporiasis is an intestinal illness caused by the parasite *Cyclospora cayetanensis*. In the United States, cyclosporiasis outbreaks are commonly associated with fresh, imported produce.

The Bureau of Environmental Services conducted an environmental assessment of the restaurant; however, all fresh produce ingredients used during the period when patients ate there had already been discarded. Invoices obtained from the restaurant indicated that produce was received during May 25–June 5 from a distributor in Georgia. The invoices were shared with Georgia Department of Public Health and Georgia Department of Agriculture.

According to the study abstract, routine case investigations and case findings through the restaurant’s food delivery service contact list identified 42 additional cases. Analysis of case-control data identified cilantro as the likely food source associated with illness. The traceback investigation involving produce distributors in several states was illustrated in a diagram in the report. The cilantro was traced back to a Texas firm with no identified food manufacturing license that sources the product from Mexico.

Actions also included sending a statewide Health Alert Network message to Alabama healthcare providers, and a news release to notify the public that the number

of cyclosporiasis cases had increased, and prevention measures to take. The report noted that cilantro imported from Mexico remains a food source of concern for cyclosporiasis. Collaboration among multiple states and their respective agencies enabled the successful traceback of cilantro to a source in Mexico. The department provided recommendations to the restaurant, including changing produce suppliers and increasing sanitation measures.

The report abstract shared the following findings: “The outbreak and its investigation demonstrate the ongoing need for regulatory controls of produce suppliers, documentation and review of business licenses, and increasing public awareness of food safety and outbreaks. Distribution of potentially contaminated products via improper supply chain channels remains a public health challenge. Avoiding infection in the United States involves preventing contaminated produce from reaching local retailers and consumers.”

The report listed the following acknowledgments: the Bureau of Clinical Laboratories Team, Bureau of Environmental Services Team, Infectious Diseases and Outbreaks Team, Alabama Department of Public Health; Rapid Response Team, Georgia Department of Agriculture; Rapid Response Team, Texas Department of Agriculture.

State Health Officer Dr. Scott Harris and many others in the department expressed their pride in the public health team for doing a thorough epidemiological investigation and for sharing their knowledge with a broad audience of healthcare professionals in *MMWR*. The publication helped bring attention to cyclosporiasis in Alabama, and Chief Medical Officer Dr. Karen Landers was interviewed on this parasitic infection and ways to stay safe from it. The program is available on YouTube at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I09tANZIhb4>.

MMWR is a publication of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. To read the report, go to <https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/index.html>.

Alabama Department of Public Health

Mission

To promote, protect, and improve
Alabama’s health.

Vision

Healthy People. Healthy Communities.
Healthy Alabama.

Core Values

Excellence, Integrity, Innovation, and Community.

Alabama’s Health

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DEPARTMENT MAINTAINS NATIONAL ACCREDITATION STATUS THROUGH THE PUBLIC HEALTH ACCREDITATION BOARD

The Alabama Department of Public Health (ADPH) has successfully completed a review process to maintain national accreditation status through the Public Health Accreditation Board (PHAB). In maintaining its accreditation status for another five years, ADPH has demonstrated that it meets PHAB's quality standards and measures and has the capacity to continue to evolve, improve and advance to continue improving the health of the residents of Alabama.

PHAB was created to serve as the national public health accrediting body and is jointly funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. PHAB works to advance and transform public health practice by championing performance improvement, strong infrastructure, and innovation. PHAB's accreditation program sets standards against which the nation's governmental public health departments can continuously improve the quality of their services and performance.

"We are so pleased to again be recognized by PHAB for achieving national standards that foster effectiveness and promote continuous quality improvement," said State Health Officer Dr. Scott Harris. "I am proud of the many employees who really care about the quality of work we are doing in response to the needs of our state and appreciate what they have accomplished to continue our department's accreditation."

ADPH achieved national initial accreditation status through PHAB in 2017, after undergoing a rigorous, multi-faceted, peer-reviewed assessment process to ensure it met a set of quality standards and measures.

PHAB-accredited health departments demonstrate great leadership by placing their work for peer review, with the goal of using the feedback obtained during the process to improve the services they provide to their communities.

MOBILE COUNTY COMMISSION RECOGNIZES EP AND HCC FOR ASSISTANCE IN UNPRECEDENTED MOBILE SNOWFALL

The Mobile County Commission honored the Mobile County Health Department's Emergency Preparedness (EP) office, the Mobile County Healthcare Emergency Response Coalition (HCC), and other cold weather partners including missions, churches, transit services, and organizations who assisted during a winter storm that struck during January. Sustained below-freezing temperatures and historic snowfall led to life-threatening conditions for those needing shelter during the storm.

The resolution stated that almost 1,000 people were sheltered, more than 3,250 meals were served, and nearly 500 volunteer hours were donated in the coordinated sheltering effort which lasted from January 19 through January 25.

Accepting the certificate on behalf of the department were Erin Coker, Emergency Preparedness Administrator; Brittany Edmondson, EP Nurse Manager; Latosia Turnbough, HCC Coordinator; Shannon Faye, EP Program Administrative Assistant; and John "JC" Lahrs, Inventory Control Specialist.

"It was an honor to be able to assist those in need during the winter storm. I am happy that EP and the HCC were able to provide the necessities needed such as cots, linens, transportation, and a few additional items," Ms. Coker said.

"We truly appreciate the Waterfront Rescue Mission taking the lead and the local churches that stepped up to provide somewhere safe for those that truly needed somewhere warm and safe to stay. We can't protect and assist our community without partners like them! We are happy to assist anytime there is a need in our community."



Holding the resolution noting their support are, from left, Shannon Faye, Latosia Turnbough, Erin Coker, John Lahrs, and Brittany Edmondson.

NEW MEDICAL OFFICER IS COMMITTED TO PROVIDING CARE FOR THE UNDERSERVED



Olusunmisola Oyesiku, MD, MSc, DABFM, FAAFP

Dr. Olusunmisola Oyesiku, better known as “Dr. O,” is enthusiastic about her new position as a Senior Public Health Physician and the possibilities this opportunity to serve holds. She began her state employment with the Alabama Department of Public Health (ADPH) in November 2024.

Dr. Oyesiku has dual responsibilities at the ADPH: as a Medical Officer at the Bureau of Family Health Services and as a District Health Officer for the East and West Central Public Health Districts. The combination of clinical and administrative work in numerous worksites appears to be a good fit for Dr. O.

As she is becoming oriented to the various departments, she says, “I like meeting people, and it’s easy becoming a part of this team because people are so warm and welcoming.” She is mainly situated at the Montgomery County Health Department. She said, “This keeps me clinically engaged because I need to be involved in a wide range of things from family planning, STD treatment, cervical cancer screening, colposcopy, to immunization and TB management. There is a certain uniqueness about every county health department, even though they may follow the same protocols.”

Dr. Oyesiku praised the quality of her work environment and co-workers. She said, “The level of organization and the coordination of care at Montgomery County Health Department is impressive, from intake to triage to provider assessment, and even the checkout process is remarkable. The staff is very professional and well-informed about the clinic protocols, procedures, and updated treatment guidelines. I believe this system can help serve as a model for all other health departments.”

An example she mentioned is the efficiency of the Fast Track Testing Program for sexually transmitted infections. Patients can either walk in or schedule an appointment to receive same-day testing. After the visit, results are available electronically on the Patient Portal. Soon, she will spend more time visiting and engaging with the other county health departments she serves.

One of her goals is to launch a Mobile Health Service Program aimed at providing some healthcare services, primarily in the underserved communities of the Black Belt counties with limited access to healthcare facilities. The Mobile Health Units will offer family planning, STD testing, preventive screenings, immunizations, mental health support, and health education to vulnerable populations, including the elderly, uninsured individuals, and low-income families.

Her inspiration for the mobile health units stems from her experience at Rural Health Medical Program Inc., in Selma,

a federally qualified health center, where she worked as a Primary Care Provider, Mobile Contraception Clinic Coordinator, and Chief Medical Officer. Dr. Oyesiku

implemented a mobile clinic that provided free contraceptives and consultations at no charge. “I saw the need for improved availability and access to contraception for young women, so we created the mobile clinic and also offered free STD testing in collaboration with the Dallas County Health Department.”

Chief Medical Officer Dr. Karen Landers supports Dr. Oyesiku’s goal of exploring the possibilities of the Mobile Health Units in collaboration with other departments within the ADPH. Dr. Oyesiku also hopes to collaborate with other health agencies that currently have mobile units that provide specialty services such as eye exams, dental exams, mammograms, and other imaging services.

In her reflection, she says, “My transition to public health is influenced by the desire to help facilitate healthcare resource and service delivery to rural areas and improve the overall health of the underserved community. My multicultural background, exposure to different healthcare practices, and wide range of medical experience, both home and abroad, has better equipped me with a peculiar insight that can enrich my service at the ADPH.”

Dr. Oyesiku is a board-certified Family Medicine Physician and Women’s Health specialist with more than 10 years of medical experience in the United States and abroad. A native of Nigeria, she graduated from the Medical School at Windsor University School of Medicine, St. Kitts. She obtained her Master of Science in Women’s Health and Reproductive Science at University College London, United Kingdom. Then, she completed her Family Medicine residency training at UAB Selma Family Medicine.

She is an active member and Fellow of the American Academy of Family Physicians (AAFP). She was recently elected to serve in a prestigious role as a Physician Trustee on The AAFP Foundation Board of Trustees. The AAFP Foundation serves as the philanthropic arm of the AAFP, supporting programs each year aimed at improving the health of all people and advancing the practice of family medicine. The mission of the AAFP Foundation is to advance family medicine through philanthropy using humanitarian, educational, and scientific programming to improve health.

When she is not working, she makes time to pursue her hobbies of baking, event planning and gardening. With an optimistic outlook and joyous countenance, she says, “I love to smile and believe for the best, always.”

DOCUMENTARY FEATURES OPERATION WIPE OUT

Alabama's effort to eliminate cervical cancer, OPERATION WIPE OUT, is featured in a documentary via PBS. *Conquering Cervical Cancer US* features activities in Alabama, Texas, and New York. This film highlights Alabama's response to the global Call to Action to eliminate cervical cancer.

The documentary shares the experiences of two inspiring Alabama women who are survivors of cervical cancer, clinicians at ADPH and Quality of Life Health Services, who provide cervical cancer screening and follow-up services, school officials in Chambers County working together with students to increase HPV vaccination, and activities undertaken by

OPERATION WIPE OUT leaders. These leaders include Warner Huh, M.D., gynecologic oncologist; Isabel Scarinci, Ph.D., M.P.H., of the Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology at UAB; Nancy Wright, M.P.H., Cancer Prevention and Control Division director; and Heather White of TogetHER for Health.

For more information on the statewide action plan to eliminate cervical cancer as a public health problem in Alabama, please visit operationwipeout.org or alabamapublichealth.gov/bandc/assets/cervicalcanceractionplan.pdf. To stream the documentary, go to pbs.org/video/conquering-cervical-cancer-s4wd2u.

OPERATION WIPE OUT MAKES PRESENTATION AT INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

OPERATION WIPE OUT was invited to present its efforts at the 36th International Papillomavirus Conference in November 2024. The inaugural HPV Awareness Program session focused on innovative strategies to address the needs of underserved communities in cancer care, with a particular emphasis on HPV vaccination, screening, and cervical cancer prevention.

During the session, speakers and participants explored critical success factors and strategies to collaborate with governments, health systems, and communities to achieve the World Health Organization's 2030 cervical cancer elimination target. Nancy Wright, MPH, co-founder of OPERATION WIPE OUT and director of the Cancer Prevention and Control Division, presented alongside speakers from Hungary, Kenya and New Zealand.



HPV Awareness Program participants, from left, are Ico Togh (Hungary) Nancy Wright, Benda Kithaka (Kenya) and Bev Lawton (New Zealand).

UNIFIED APPROACH WORKS TO WIPE OUT CERVICAL CANCER IN ALABAMA

State Health Officer Dr. Scott Harris was among the speakers at a summit held January 31 to discuss the three-part strategy of Operation WIPE OUT Cervical Cancer Alabama. The Rotary Club of Birmingham helped support the summit, which 165 people attended. Alabama is the first state in the nation to undertake a statewide partnership to eliminate cervical cancer, and the coalition has received both national and international acclaim in publications including the *Wall Street Journal* and *Rotary International* magazine.

Alabama consistently ranks in the top five in the nation in deaths from cervical cancer, and the state's HPV vaccination rates are lower than the national average. In Alabama, more than 60 percent of the women who die from cervical cancer do not receive follow-up care.

WIPE OUT Cervical Cancer Alabama is a statewide effort to engage and empower every Alabamian to share the news that cervical cancer can be stopped and to take the steps toward protecting our families, friends, and neighbors from this deadly cancer. In order to WIPE OUT Cervical Cancer in the next decade, the three steps to follow are:

- 1) Increase HPV vaccination.** The human papillomavirus (HPV) causes cervical cancer. The vaccine protects against ever getting cervical cancer.
- 2) Increase cervical cancer screening -- HPV/Pap tests.** Regular screening detects precancer or cancer early, when it is easy to remove.
- 3) Appropriate follow-up if the screening results show abnormal cells.** It is important to return to your physician if your HPV/Pap test comes back abnormal to determine next steps or treatment.

Partners include universities, healthcare providers, community leaders, agencies, and organizations.

DR. AMBER CLARK-BROWN: OUR VOICES MATTER IN ENSURING THE BEST PRACTICES FOR PATIENTS

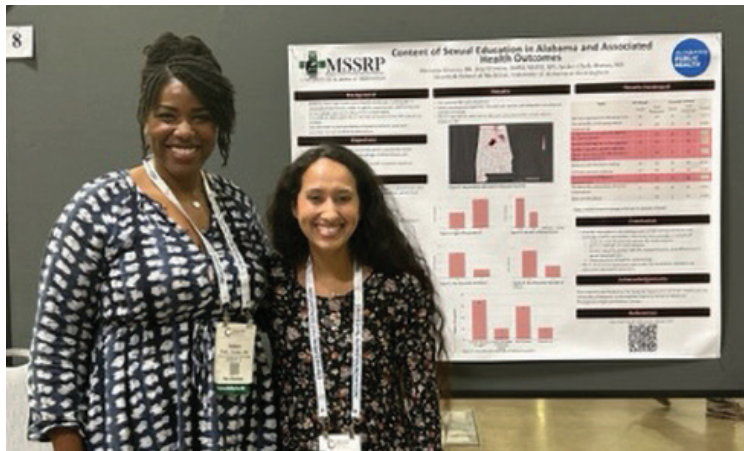
Key healthcare policies were among the topics discussed in three professional conferences in which Dr. Amber Clark-Brown participated this fall. Dr. Clark-Brown is Medical Director of the bureaus of Health Provider Standards and Home and Community Services and is the Medical Advisor to the Office of Health Equity and Minority Health.

At the massive American Public Health Association Annual Meeting in Minneapolis, Minn., the need for partnerships to protect and improve the health of communities was emphasized. She especially enjoyed the disability and public health administration tracts offered in the broad-based conference. A point of pride for Dr. Clark-Brown was that Mariana Alvarez, a former research project participant whom Dr. Clark-Brown mentored, was selected to showcase a poster presentation at the prestigious meeting.

Ms. Alvarez expressed her appreciation and said, "Thanks to the Montgomery Regional Campus and the Alabama Department of Public Health, I was able to attend the American Public Health Association Annual Conference in Minneapolis, where I had the opportunity to present my summer research poster. I got to connect with a diverse group of healthcare professionals, exchange ideas with others in similar fields, and gain valuable insights from the conference sessions."

Ms. Alvarez, a third-year student at the UAB Heersink School of Medicine, participated in the UAB Medical Student Summer Research Program in June and July. Her presentation highlighted the results of her summer research project titled,

APHA POSTER PRESENTATION



UAB Heersink School of Medicine Summer Research Project student Mariana Alvarez explained the results of her summer 2024 study with Dr. Amber Clark-Brown, at left.

"Content of Sexual Education in Alabama and Associated Health Outcomes."

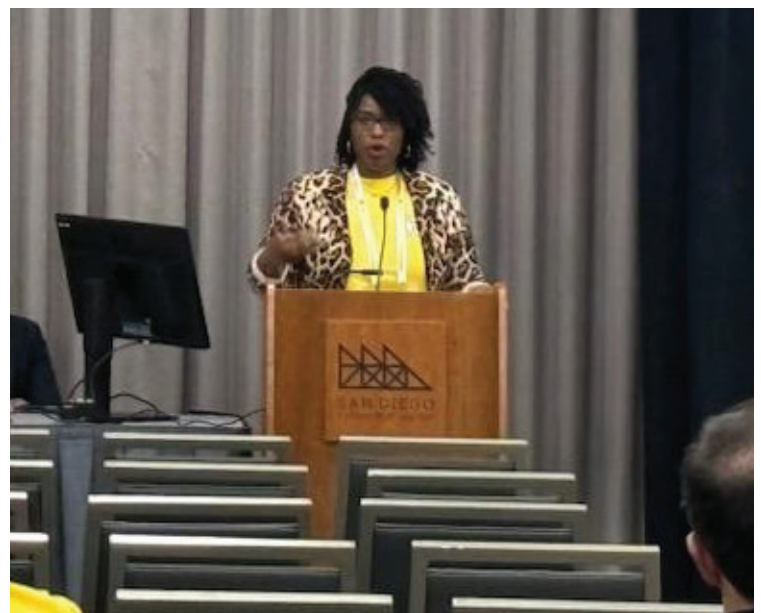
Next Dr. Clark-Brown went to San Diego, Calif., where she attended the American Academy of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation Annual Assembly. She served as a panelist in a breakout session, "Advocacy 101," which was included in the health policy and legislation tract. Many medical students and residents attended.

She commented, "Healthcare and medicine are politicized, and we don't have the luxury of sitting on the sidelines. We can be involved at all governmental levels and must know how to get policy through because it affects the way we can learn and practice."

Her professional travels then took her to Orlando, Fla., for the 2024 American Medical Association Interim Meeting of the House of Delegates, the policy-making body of the association. She was selected as an alternate delegate for the Association of Academic Physiatrists. Physicians from numerous specialties attended to discuss critical issues.

Dr. Clark-Brown said, "It is wonderful to be able to be a part of implementing policy in the House of Medicine to advocate for patients, especially those with disabilities."

The conferences not only updated Dr. Clark-Brown on the latest advancements, but it also provided an opportunity to network about emerging public health challenges.



Medical Director Dr. Amber Clark-Brown addresses the American Academy of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation Annual Assembly in San Diego, Calif.

COACH LEONARD ‘PAYS IT FORWARD’

Quincy Leonard, senior programmer analyst in the Systems Development Division of the Bureau of Information Technology, firmly believes in following a healthy lifestyle and promotes its benefits not only for his family, but also for young people in Montgomery. He is enthusiastic about golfing and generously shares his love for the game and its health benefits for the mind and body in order to have a positive impact on our society.

The health of too many young people suffers, he said, because they are spending too much time inside at screens and eating junk food instead of enjoying the beautiful scenery and fresh air of a golf course and being physically active. For the past 15 years, he has taken the initiative to coach thousands of boys and girls through his golf clinics.

Although Leonard grew up in a community that didn't have golf at all, he was introduced to the game through his uncle. Leonard has played since the 1980s and encouraged his three children to discover the joys of the game at a young age. The family spends many weekends and summers at tournaments, including large-scale events he hosts. All three of his kids enjoy and excel at the game, and his older son and daughter have been awarded college golf scholarships.

In addition, he teaches golf to many other kids who might not have had the opportunity to learn the game. To help debunk the perception that golf is only for the elite, he founded a golf academy, Leo Golf, a nonprofit organization affiliated with U.S. Kids Golf. The mission of that organization is "to help kids have fun learning the lifelong game of golf and to encourage family interaction that builds lasting memories."

Like popular team sports such as football and basketball, the young golfers must qualify for competition, be mentally strong, and learn to deal with adversity. Weight and height do not matter.

"I work with a lot of families without access to resources to provide for their children," Leonard said. "Many people donate to help, and it's a blessing to me."

Leonard finds many parents enjoy the benefits of the outlet as well once they try it. Some parents took up the game during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Coach Leonard has coached students from the Montgomery Therapeutic Recreation Center with physical and mental disabilities. The champions have competed and won in Special Olympics Golf events. He also hosts golf sessions with schools in the Montgomery Public School System both during the school year and the summer for elementary and middle school students.

A newer endeavor for Leonard is the Moving Montgomery Forward Golf Initiative for middle school students. The goal is to teach important academic skills in an 8-week program. The program will integrate reading, critical thinking skills, and STEM activities while teaching the fundamentals of golf.

In addition to founding the LEO Golf Academy, Leonard is the Valiant Cross Academy Golf Coach, Central Alabama Sports Commission Board Member, U.S. Kids Golf Montgomery Tour Director, GPS (Golf Program in Schools) Hosting Golf Course Academy Director, and Jim Thorpe Invitational Junior Golf Tournament Director). He has received honorable mention recognition from U.S. Kids Golf, landing him on its annual Top 50 Kids Teacher Award. The award recognizes the world's most outstanding youth golf instructors and Leonard is part of this select group which has earned honorable mention accolades among more than 500 applicants. Leonard is also a 2023 African American Golfers Hall of Fame Inductee.

He also endorses the benefits of a plant-based diet for himself and others. He began following the plant-based diet in 2010 with the department's Scale Back Alabama campaign and lost the expected 10 pounds. Since 2017, he has eased into the diet that works best for him, dropping meat, dairy products, alcohol, and sugars. He feels good thanks to his lifestyle changes. His daily regimen begins with herbal tea, eating some fruit after 12 noon, and eating a lot of plant protein at dinner. He eats nothing after 9 p.m. and stays at a weight of 155 to 160 pounds at age 52.

In October, a local law firm in the River Region honored Leonard with the "Pay It Forward" recognition for his work, a presentation broadcast on local television stations. This public health hero believes service to youth is his calling in life. He said, "It would be a travesty to me if I didn't."



Quincy Leonard works with junior golfers.

PATRICIA VINSON HONORED ON 50 YEARS OF SERVICE

The Alabama Department of Public Health proudly celebrates Patricia Vinson, assistant to the State Health Officer, for reaching a remarkable milestone: 50 years of continuous service to the department. In a recent meeting, the State Committee of Public Health recognized Mrs. Vinson for her unwavering commitment, loyalty, and deep institutional knowledge that have benefited generations of colleagues and leaders alike.

She began her journey in 1975 in the Bureau of County Health Services in the State Office Building (now the Lurleen B. Wallace State Office Building). From the early days of duplicating reports by hand to managing rapid mailouts, Mrs. Vinson has witnessed the evolution of public health work and technology firsthand.



It was a different time in the workplace. Personnel Director Virginia Kendrick was strict and often demanding with employees. In fact, women employees were required to wear stockings with dresses or skirts. Should Mrs. Kendrick detect an employee with a run in her stocking, Mrs. Vinson said, the woman had to scurry downtown to replace it at once.

Public health problems have continued to challenge the department. These have included the emergence and response to AIDS and the COVID-19 pandemic. Among the other concerning events were weather events such as hurricanes, the Gulf Oil Spill, and the 2011 tornado outbreak. Asked about any memorable events on the job, she said, “The most horrible thing I remember was when a man brought an animal head wrapped in a towel to my desk and asked to test it for rabies.” Then, after 9-11, concerned citizens wanted to bring in whole mailboxes to the department for anthrax testing.

Over the years, Mrs. Vinson’s role evolved, affording her the opportunity to work with colleagues throughout the state. She experienced both the routine and the unpredictable. From her earliest days at the department to the present, she has deeply appreciated the value and necessity of county health departments and the relationships she has built across the organization.

When the department moved to the “temporary” location of state offices in the Normandale Mall (that lasted 5 years), she transferred to Administration when her supervisor, H.E. Harrison, was relocated to work with the State Health Officer in a small storefront next door to a Chinese Restaurant. The distinctive aromas became unpleasant after a time, so much so that she had no taste for Asian food.

After relocating to The RSA Tower, Mrs. Vinson found the work environment more functional, spacious, and comfortable. She has adapted to amazing technological advancements—from her first Selectric typewriter to a word processor, then to a personal computer with a tiny screen, and now to a state-of-the-art desktop computer.

She has witnessed the leadership of five State Health Officers—Dr. Ira Myers, Dr. Claude Earl Fox, Dr. Donald Williamson, Dr. Tom Miller, and Dr. Scott Harris—along with Interim State Health Officer Dr. Carole Samuelson. She adapted through multiple departments and navigated public health crises ranging from HIV/AIDS and COVID-19 to Hurricanes Katrina and Ivan. Through it all, her professionalism, adaptability, and sense of humor have remained constants.

In the 150-year history of ADPH, Mrs. Vinson has shaped and served one-third of it. Her impact reaches beyond titles or tasks—she embodies the very heart of public service.

Thank you, Mrs. Vinson, for your incredible service, your inspiring dedication, and your steady hand through decades of change. We’re honored to celebrate this milestone with you.

VIDEO CELEBRATES THE IMPACT OF PUBLIC HEALTH FROM 1875 TO THE PRESENT

One hundred fifty years ago, in 1875, a vision for the health and well-being of the people of Alabama began--a vision that would grow into an institution dedicated to promoting, protecting, and improving the public health of our state. For 150 years, the Alabama Department of Public Health has safeguarded our communities, responding to challenges, innovating healthcare, and protecting public well-being.

State Health Officer Dr. Scott Harris said, "As we celebrate the 150th anniversary of the Alabama Department of Public Health, it is truly an honor to serve as State Health Officer. Reflecting on our legacy of dedication and service, I am inspired by the countless individuals who have worked tirelessly to improve the health and well-being of Alabamians."

The Early Years

From its humble beginnings in 1875, ADPH was established to tackle infectious diseases and improve living conditions. At the time, Alabama faced serious public health challenges, from epidemics to sanitation issues.

Before the department was founded, rampant epidemics led to deaths from illnesses such as cholera, diphtheria, polio, smallpox, tuberculosis, and typhoid fever--malaria being the most widespread and fatal. Two in three infants died before reaching 1 year of age.

Advocates recognized the need to oversee matters of public health that involved developing "a system of hygiene to preserve and prolong life; to plan an educational program on the rules which govern a healthful existence; and to determine a way to enforce health laws for the welfare of all people."

On February 19, 1875, the Alabama General Assembly passed a law designating the Medical Association of the State of Alabama as the State Board of Health and designated affiliated county medical societies for their respective counties. Alabama became the seventh state to pass a law creating a state public health department and later became the first state in the nation to establish basic public health units in all its counties.

Dr. Jerome Cochran was elected the first State Health Officer, and the department's success is deeply rooted in the leadership of physicians who shaped its direction. Their vision, dedication, and courage guided Alabama through challenging health crises and transformative periods.

Key Milestones Over the Years

Behind every successful initiative is a dedicated team of healthcare professionals, volunteers, and community leaders. ADPH's impact is made possible by the hard work and compassion of those who serve Alabamians every day.

Over the years, ADPH has played a vital role in transforming the state's health landscape. From the establishment of vaccination programs in the early 1900's to the eradication

of diseases like polio and smallpox, ADPH has been at the forefront of public health progress.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, ADPH's role became even more vital – leading the charge in testing, vaccination, and ensuring vital health resources reached every corner of the state. Their dedication saved lives and brought communities together in the face of an unprecedented challenge.

The Heart of ADPH: Our People

Today, as we celebrate 150 years of progress, we look ahead to the future – committed to new innovations, stronger partnerships, and continued dedication to improving the health and wellness of every person in Alabama.

Dr. Harris said, "We are proud of the work we've done, but we know the journey doesn't stop here. The next 150 years are just as important as the first. Together, we'll continue to create a healthier Alabama."

The Alabama Department of Public Health is evolving to meet new challenges in the digital age, from telemedicine services to data-driven health initiatives. ADPH remains dedicated to addressing the needs of communities throughout Alabama. Whether it's the homeowner who needs a septic permit, or a new mom bringing her baby in for immunizations or WIC visits. Whether it's a patient in need of home health services or a senior in a nursing home who depends on our department to ensure their facility is safe. ADPH is always there. Our team at ADPH provides these services and countless others that make a difference in the lives of the people of Alabama.

Ready for the Future. Together!

From the early days of disease outbreaks to ensuring safe drinking water and vaccinations, the department has been a constant presence in the lives of Alabamians.

Through the past century and a half, public health has positively impacted Alabama's health and quality of life. As we look ahead to the next 150 years, ADPH remains committed to the health and well-being of Alabama's future generations, building on a legacy of service and commitment. Together, we'll create a healthier future for all Alabamians. With the power of innovation and the spirit of collaboration, we're prepared to face tomorrow's health challenges together.

Thank you to all those who have been part of our journey and to those who continue to serve every day to protect and promote health in Alabama!

This article is excerpted from a video script prepared by Ryan Easterling, director of the Division of Health Media and Communications, for the sesquicentennial celebration of Public Health. The 150th historical timeline can be accessed at <https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/058ebdb6dc144d0bb04d545ab1280e29> where the video edited by Audiovisual Specialist Darren Gilley is posted for viewing.

TWO PRESTIGIOUS AWARDS PRESENTED TO STATE EMS DIRECTOR JAMIE GRAY

Jamie Gray, NRP, TP-C, Office of Emergency Medical Services Director, was presented the **President's Lifetime Achievement Award** by President Joe Biden in November. In addition, he was named the recipient of the **Citizen of the Year Award for 2024** from the Alabama Association of Rescue Squads at its annual conference, also in November.

In a letter on White House stationery, President Biden congratulated Gray "for his volunteer leadership during his 18,000 hours of service and his lifelong commitment to building a stronger nation through volunteer service."

As Citizen of the Year, Gray was honored for his exceptional service and dedication to the community.

Gray began in emergency services in 1998. In addition to medical certifications, he holds certifications as a firefighter, fire service instructor, and EMS instructor, as well as HAZMAT operations. He has served as a dispatcher, ridden an ambulance, and taught EMS classes full-time at a community college. He still teaches CPR classes for healthcare students of all disciplines and local churches and organizations.

The EMS office is responsible for protecting the health, safety, and welfare of the public by assuring that emergency medical services provided by response agencies, training entities, and technicians meet or exceed established standards.



Gray is pictured receiving proclamations of EMS Week and EMS for Children Day from Governor Kay Ivey.

SUSTAINABLE AND PREDICTABLE FUNDING NEEDED

State Health Officer Dr. Scott Harris, president of the Association of State and Territorial Health Officials (ASTHO), testified before a U.S. House subcommittee on April 9 to advocate for sustainable and predictable public health funding.

"Governmental public health agencies are on the front line protecting our nation and improving the health and well-being of the entire U.S. population," Dr. Harris said. "Our country continues to face many public health challenges, deaths associated with chronic diseases, the re-emergence of vaccine-preventable diseases, and opioid misuse. To build long-term resilience, public health funding must be consistent, forward-looking, and rooted in community-driven initiatives that address the needs of people where they live."

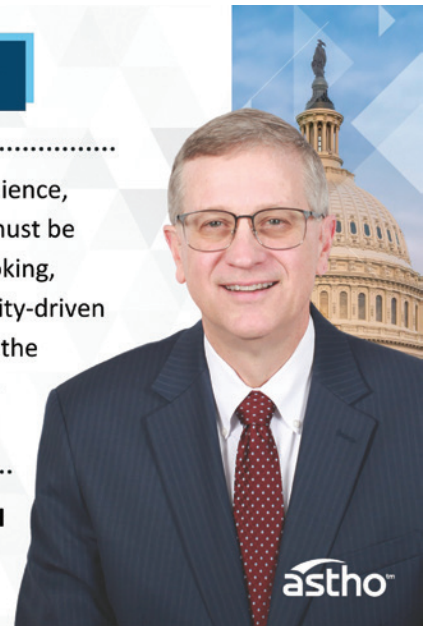
An ASTHO news release states that the association "calls on Congress to provide stable and long-term financial support for public health agencies. Without consistent investment state, local, tribal and territorial health agencies will struggle to strengthen their infrastructure, build public trust and protect the health and safety of all Americans. We must have a firm

News Release

“.....
To build long-term resilience, public health funding must be consistent, forward-looking, and rooted in community-driven initiatives that address the needs of people where they live.
”.....

Scott Harris, MD, MPH

ASTHO President and State Health Officer, Alabama Department of Public Health



commitment to lasting resources that ensure a healthier future for our communities."

Dr. Harris' testimony was given before the House Committee on Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), Education and Related Agencies, chaired by U.S. Representative Robert Aderholt of Alabama's 4th Congressional District.

SALUTE SELMA, INC., PARTNERS WITH COMMUNITY LEADERS



State Health Officer Dr. Scott Harris joined health department staff members at the Salute Selma, Inc., 60 Healthcare-Pre Mass meeting February 20. Infection Prevention and Control staff offered COVID-19 and influenza vaccine and educational materials were made available to attendees. Dallas County Health Department Administrator Sarina Stewart spoke about the many services that focus on healthy lifestyle choices. State Senator Robert Stewart and State Representative Prince Chestnut hosted the event attended by business, community and faith leaders.



Healthcare was the focus, and public health programs including family planning, WIC and Well Woman were promoted.

CALENDAR

MAY

Alabama's effort to eliminate cervical cancer, OPERATION WIPE OUT, is featured in a documentary via PBS.

Conquering Cervical Cancer US features activities in Alabama, Texas, and New York.

For more information and to stream the documentary, go to pbs.org/show/conquering-cervical-cancer.

JUNE 13, 11 - NOON CDT

Know the Signs; Find the Words; Answer the Call! A Suicide Awareness Toolkit

Evidence-based practices to intervene on behalf of those with suicidal ideation will be provided.

This program is for public health employees and other healthcare professionals.

For more information, contact the Health Media and Communications Division, (334) 206-5635.

SERVICE PIN PRESENTED

Home Health Aide Mary Jo Coleman, left, receives a 35-year service pin at a reception on April 1. Jacqueline Kliner, West Central District Home Care Nurse Administrator, made the presentation and thanked her and all district home health aides for their dedication to clients.



ENVIRONMENTALISTS FROM THROUGHOUT THE STATE COMPLETE BETC

The Bureau of Environmental Services completed its fall and spring sessions of the Basic Environmental Training Course (BETC) held in October 2024 and March 2025. BETC is a two-week long course for all newly employed environmentalists and must be successfully completed prior to receiving permanent status with the state.

During BETC, instructors provide information on ADPH requirements for onsite sewage and wastewater disposal, food establishment inspections, body art (tattoo) facilities and operation, animal bite investigations, solid waste disposal, and more. The course also introduces the class to the ADPH legal staff and procedures; and includes topics on outbreak investigation and sample collection as knowledge needed in their future works.



Students and their base counties in the fall class, each row from left, were as follows: first row, Ashley Brettel, Calhoun County; Arthur Zurcher, Franklin County; Ashton Reneau, Choctaw County; Charlie Morrison, Clarke County; second row, Kirby Stargell, Madison County; Alexandra Bouchard, Pike County; Isabel Acker, Jefferson County; Shauntia Landrum, Morgan County; Christian Donath, Madison County; third row, Charleston Evans, Lee County; Rodriquiz Mays, Madison County; James Buford, Baldwin County; Rodney Hagler, Houston County; Nicholas Neill, Shelby County.



Spring session class members and their base counties, from left, were as follows: first row, AaMarryah Law, Central Office (Montgomery); Kelsea Purifoy, Jefferson County; Xavier White, Jefferson County; Martin Le, Mobile County; back row, Melissa Green, Lee County; Erwin Taylor, Mobile County; Daniel Norris, Clarke County; Emaleigh Hooker, Madison County; Dailyn Patton, Jefferson County; Robert (Tucker) Martin, Madison County.

CHOONA LANG RECEIVES NAACP HUMANITARIAN OF THE YEAR AWARD

The NAACP State Conference awarded its 2025 Humanitarian of the Year Award at the 2025 Bridge Crossing Gala to Choona Lang, RN, BSN, MHA, DHEd, director of the Bureau of Home and Community Services. The prestigious award was presented March 7 in Montgomery.

Supporters said anyone who has worked with Dr. Lang knows she is a leader who goes above and beyond what is expected. Her exceptional work ethic and achievements in the department, in her church, and in community service aptly fit the award eligibility criteria which are as follows:

Humanitarian Award recipients

- Significantly alter the way things are done as a whole
- Use their personality traits and attitude to spark change
- Look for new and innovative plans, efficiencies, production methods, and marketing strategies
- Use their time and determination, and have the ability to ride out any uncertainties that are present or that may arise

In 2017, Dr. Lang was chosen as recipient of the Frederick S. Wolf Award for demonstrating efficiency, dedication, and professionalism in the delivery of public health services and for providing unselfish community services in areas unrelated to public health. In 2014 Dr. Lang was chosen as Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, Inc. Woman of the Year for her unwavering community outreach service. In 2022 Dr. Lang was selected as Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc. South Eastern Region Sister of the Year for her steadfast service with a positive attitude. During the COVID-19 pandemic she was recognized as a Montgomery County Community Hero for monthly community weekend COVID-19 clinics and family support advocacy, just to name a few awards.

She continues to coordinate health educational workshops, seminars, and healthcare awareness programs. She and other volunteers are regularly available to provide academic tutoring, mentoring, life skills training, adult literacy, and GED prep classes at her nonprofit facility located in an undeserved community on the West Side of Montgomery. She directs the Christian Education and Health and Wellness Ministries at her church where she incorporates healthy living into the curriculum. She currently serves as the Vice President of the Health Services Incorporated, Inc. Board of Directors, Five Horizons Board of Directors Member, Medical Outreach Board Member, Ministry about People leadership team, friends of Montgomery Christian School Board, and President of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc., Beta Nu Omega Chapter. Her chapter honored State Health Officer Dr. Scott Harris for his service during the COVID-19 pandemic.

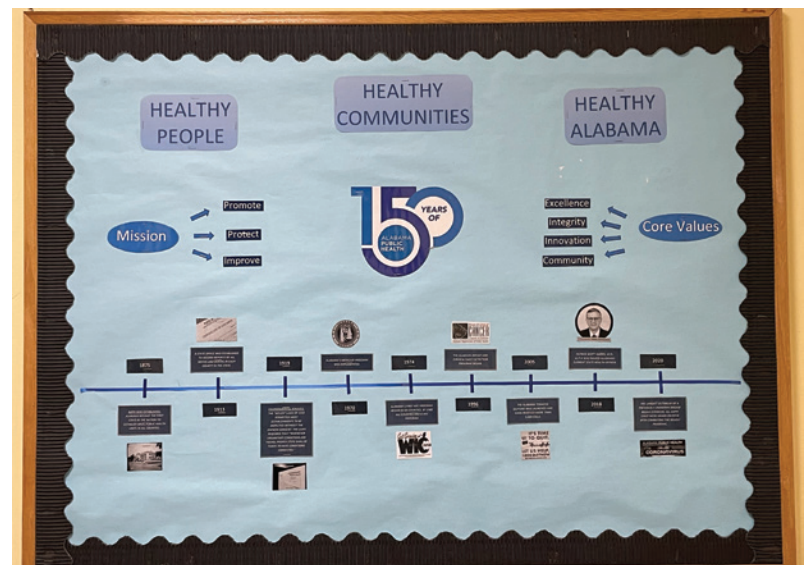
Dr. Lang has worked in several offices and bureaus during her 28-year public health career. She said, "Servicing others is a part of my DNA; if I can help someone while I am traveling this life, then my living shall not be in vain."



Dr. Lang strives to improve the lives of others.

COLBERT COUNTY BULLETIN BOARD TIMELINE MARKS PROGRESS

Staff of the Colbert County Health Department in Tuscumbia created this historical bulletin board in celebration of the sesquicentennial year of the department. Key milestones in the timeline display the many achievements accomplished in pursuit of the department's mission, vision, and core values in the past 150 years.



RETIREES

The following departmental employees have retired recently:

JANUARY

Debra Akhimie
Radiation Control

Karen Brock
Northeastern District

Sherri Cash
West Central District

Maggie Coachman
Southeastern District

Peggy Hartwig
East Central District

Rebecca Johnson
East Central District

Brenda Jones
Southwestern District

Elizabeth Jones
West Central District

Wanda Knight
West Central District

Patricia Lindsey
Environmental Services

Royce Moody
Northern District

Debra Reed
East Central District

Beverly Stokes
Northern District

Anna Sun
Environmental Services

Suzanne Walker
Northeastern District

Miranda Williams
Southeastern District

FEBRUARY

Larry Harris
Family Health Services

Evelyn Jackson
Health Statistics

Felicia Williams-Smith
Health Provider Standards

MARCH

Brenda English
Southeastern District

Maxine Hayden
Northern District

Gwendolyn Kennedy
Family Health Services

Arthur Lawson
Health Statistics

Earnestine Mitchell
East Central District

Tracy Phillips
Southwestern District

CAROLYN MILLER RETIRES



On April 11, co-workers in the Bureau of Family Health Services honored Carolyn Miller, director of the Perinatal Health Division, upon her retirement with 25 years of service.

STEERING COMMITTEE MEMBERS NETWORK WITH REGIONAL PARTNERS

Alabama was well represented at the January meeting of the Region IV Public Health Training Center Steering Committee. Ken Harrison, Workforce Development Director, and Ryan Easterling, Health Media and Communications Director, attended. The Alabama Public Health Training Network is a community-based training partner with the center located at the Rollins School of Public Health at Emory University, Atlanta. The meeting assisted colleagues from other states to coordinate and share resources including podcasts and webinars for public health staff.



'SOCIAL WORK: COMPASSION + ACTION' THEME APPLAUDED AT 2025 ADPH SOCIAL WORK CONFERENCE

March is Social Work Month, a month to celebrate social work professionals and their many contributions to our state and nation. Social workers from throughout the state gathered at the Alabama Public Health Training Annex in Prattville March 11. The theme for 2025 was "Social Work: Compassion + Action." This theme emphasizes how social workers dedicate their lives to helping others while addressing societal challenges and promoting well-being.

State Social Work Director Bill Kennedy, said, "Alabama Public Health's mission is to promote, protect, and improve Alabama's health. Public health social workers address barriers to help improve the health of the people and communities we serve."

Kennedy and Chief of Staff Michele Jones welcomed participants and thanked them for all they do. In the department, social workers serve as members of a multi-disciplinary team of professionals skilled in using social work values, knowledge, and community resources to promote positive health outcomes. Their work is done while respecting personal choice and promoting the health and well-being of individuals, groups and communities.

ADPH programs in which social workers serve include the following: the Alabama Sexual Risk Avoidance Education Program, the Alabama Personal Responsibility Education Program, ALL Kids Children's Health Insurance, Child Car Seat Training, Diabetes Self-Education, Elevated Lead, Emergency Preparedness, Family Planning Care Coordination, HIV Care Coordination, Home Health, Licensure and Certification, Health Equity and Minority Health, Maternity Mortality Review, Newborn Hearing Screening, Newborn Screening Care Coordination, STD, Suicide Prevention, Telehealth, Tobacco Prevention, TB, Well Woman and WISEWOMAN programs.



The importance of social workers in Primary Care Service was emphasized when Medical Officer Olusunmisola Oyesiku, M.D., M.Sc., DABFM, FAAFP, addressed the conference.



Jennifer Blair Foster, Ph.D., Minister of Family Discipleship and Administration at Heritage Baptist Church, Montgomery, spoke on the topic "Leading in Between: How to Influence the Organization When You're Not in Charge."

TALLADEGA OPEN HOUSE

Guiding community members along the path to healthy lifestyle choices was the focus when the Talladega County Health Department held an open house. Professionals provided the public with up-to-date information and expressed appreciation for their clients and patients.



COMMENDATIONS

If you would like to praise employees for their accomplishments, send letters of commendation to the State Health Officer or the employee's supervisor and a copy by e-mail to Arrol.Sheehan@adph.state.al.us for inclusion in this list. Four items are needed: the employee's name, work unit, name of the person making the commendation, and his or her city and state.

Ginger Boling

Saranee Dutta

Nancy Lawrence

Annie Raymond

Information Technology

Jennifer Allen

Ryan Easterling

Prevention, Promotion, and Support
from Ricky Elliott

Blount County Health Department

from Carla Felix

Address unlisted

Jessica Deleshaw, R.N.

Northern Public Health District

from Northern District Administration
and Supervisors

Nekeshia Perryman

Center for Health Statistics

from Saniya Wideman
Birmingham, Ala.

Penny Roney

Jackson County Health Department

from Dr. Adam Harrison
Cullman, Ala.

COMMUNITY HEALTH FAIR HELD AT TUSCALOOSA COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

The West Central District Home Health and Remote Patient Monitoring (RPM) programs participated in the West Central District Health Fair on April 2 at the Tuscaloosa County Health Department. Several community organizations and other departmental programs provided community health resources/information to the public.



Michelle Ingle, RN Nurse Care Coordinator, stands at the Home Health/RPM table to hand out materials educating the community on the services and benefits of ADPH Home Health and RPM.

WORLD TB DAY 2025 PROMOTES AWARENESS

The Tuberculosis Control team created this display placed in the front hallway of the Tuscaloosa County Health Department for World TB Day on March 24.

Pictured from left are Teresa Pope, Cassandra Foster-Ervin, Jose Cintron, Shea Lamb, Narges Vatany and Melissa Martin-Knox.



JOSEPH MARCHANT RECOGNIZED AS ALABAMA'S 'COMMUNITY STAR' ON NATIONAL RURAL HEALTH DAY

Joseph Marchant has been named Alabama's 2024 "Community Star" by the National Organization of State Offices of Rural Health (NOSORH).

NOSORH and rural-focused organizations throughout the United States set aside the third Thursday of November to recognize National Rural Health Day (NRHD). This annual event is an opportunity to celebrate the "Power of Rural" and honor the individuals and organizations dedicated to addressing the unique healthcare needs of nearly 61 million people living in rural America.

"It is of vital importance that we ensure all Alabamians have the opportunity to be healthy and have access to affordable, quality health care regardless of where they call home," said Dr. Scott Harris, State Health Officer. "The Alabama Department of Public Health (ADPH) is proud to recognize the incredible work of health professionals and volunteers in our rural communities on National Rural Health Day and throughout the year."

The ADPH is proud to join NOSORH in honoring Mr. Marchant as Alabama's Community Star. As the President and CEO of Bibb County Health Care Authority, a not-for-profit Community Hospital based in Centreville, Ala., Joseph devotes his time to serving his community to provide outstanding healthcare to Bibb County residents while sharing his expertise statewide to ensure equitable healthcare is available to all Alabama rural communities.

In 2015, the Community Star Recognition Program was established in conjunction with NRHD to tell the stories of the people and organizations who make a difference in rural communities. Since then, over 300 inspiring rural stars have been honored nationwide on NRHD.

Additional information about National Rural Health Day can be found at <https://powerofrural.org>.



Joseph Marchant, left, is shown with State Health Officer Dr. Scott Harris. Marchant is president/CEO of Bibb Medical Center in Centreville.

EMPLOYEE ORIENTATION SESSION HELD IN EAST CENTRAL DISTRICT

New employees of the East Central Public Health District were welcomed when they gathered for orientation on December 12. Pictured standing from left are Darius Hall, Charlieghia Merritt, Benjamin Brown, Tanner Guttersohn, Jaquanda Daniels, Samaria Das, Fredericka Ramey, Kaci Wall, Charleston Evans. Sitting from left are Tammy Demus, Jennifer Capps, Karen Davis, Hannah Vogel, Arkimberly Hall, Kuneara Kelly.



ETOWAH COUNTY DOORS DECORATED



The Etowah County Health Department took part in a county-wide effort to demonstrate holiday spirit. All programs and groups were involved in decorating 24 doors. Clinic Supervisor Kirby McBride and Home Health Supervisor Kaci Beuckens led the efforts which brought the staff together as one big team.

TINSEL TRAIL TREE BENEFITS FAMILIES



The Tinsel Trail at the Government Plaza in downtown Tuscaloosa was brightened by this tree decorated by employees of the Tuscaloosa County Health Department on behalf of Tuscaloosa's One Place, a family resource center.

NATIONAL MINORITY HEALTH MONTH 2025

Employees recognized and celebrated National Minority Health Month with a special event at the RSA Park in Montgomery April 18. Health vendors from different parts of the state set up interactive and educational displays and several food vendors and food trucks were on site for the hungry employees. The festivities were sponsored by the Office of Health Equity and Minority Health to bring awareness and resources related to illnesses and chronic diseases in an engaging and entertaining way.



THIRD GRADERS PROMOTE CHILDREN'S ORAL HEALTH

Winners of the Eighth Annual Share Your Smile with Alabama competition are Channing Rose Coghlan from Lowndes County, who attends Fort Dale Academy in Butler County, and Trivedh Neel Thota, from Montgomery County, who attends Pike Road Elementary School. In announcing the two winners, State Dental Health Director Dr. Tommy Johnson stated, "We sponsor this annual contest to promote the benefits of good oral health to children, their caregivers, teachers, and others. Developing good oral health habits at an early age and scheduling regular dental visits helps children begin a lifetime of healthy teeth and gums."



MASA PRESENTS OUTSTANDING YOUNG PHYSICIAN AWARD TO DR. AMBER CLARK-BROWN

Amber N. Clark-Brown, M.D., F.A.A.P.M.R., Medical Director of the Bureau of Health Provider Standards and Home and Community Services and medical advisor to the Office of Health Equity and Minority Health, was presented the inaugural Paul O'Leary, M.D., Outstanding Young Physician Award of the Medical Association of the State of Alabama.

Chief Medical Officer Dr. Karen Landers said, "Dr. Amber Clark-Brown is a rising star in the Alabama Department of Public Health. She is a transformational leader and very deserving of this award from the Medical Association of the State of Alabama. ADPH is excited to have Dr. Clark-Brown as a member of our physician team and looks forward to her long future with us!"

This prestigious award recognizes an outstanding young physician who has demonstrated exceptional leadership skills, dedication, and commitment to advancing the medical profession and improving patient care. Criteria for the award are that the recipient exemplifies the qualities of innovation, collaboration, and advocacy, and has shown remarkable promise in driving positive change within their institution, community, or the healthcare field at large.

The Medical Association of the State of Alabama is the professional association for 7,000 physicians of all specialties throughout the state. Dr. Clark-Brown's award was presented at the President's reception at the association's annual session in Orange Beach on April 12.



State Health Officer Dr. Scott Harris congratulates Dr. Clark-Brown.

IN MEMORIAM

Jennifer Pope

Southeastern District Administrator Corey Kirkland notified his staff about the loss of their coworker on December 4, 2024. He stated, "It is with sadness that I share the news of the unexpected death of Jennifer Pope, Home Health Supervisor with the Coffee County Health Department. Mrs. Pope began her career in home health with ADPH in 2014 as a visiting nurse and in 2020 was promoted to supervisor. She was a pastor's wife, mother of two, and primary caregiver to her elderly parents."

William J. "Jerry" Callan, Ph.D.

Dr. Sharon Massingale, director of the Bureau of Clinical Laboratories (BCL), announced the passing of William J. Callan, Ph.D., immediate past director of the BCL, who died January 17. After beginning his career with the department in 1967 as a student aide, Dr. Callan embarked on a career in newborn screening. He was involved in many advances in testing and authored several published articles on newborn screening and HIV. He served as BCL director from 1987 until his retirement in 2008.

Reginald Strickland

Center for Health Statistics Director Nicole Rushing let coworkers know of another passing. She wrote, "It is with tremendous sadness that I inform you of the loss of our former CHS Deputy Director, Lt. Col. Reginald (Reg) Strickland, at the age of 94. Reg worked for the department for approximately 30 years, retiring in 2015." He retired at age 85 after serving more than 33 years in the U.S. Air Force before beginning his second career with ADPH. He died February 25.

Betty W. Vaughan, M.D.

Former Assistant State Health Officer Betty W. Vaughan, M.D., of Decatur passed away on May 14 at age 89. A graduate of the University of Alabama and the University of Alabama Medical College at the top of her class, she began her 30-year public health career in 1967. She directed the Morgan County Health Department and served as assistant state health officer for the 12 North Alabama counties of Public Health Area I. Dr. Vaughan had a distinguished career advocating preventive healthcare for women and children. She received numerous state and local awards for her dedication to public health.

JOINT LEGISLATIVE RESOLUTION COMMEMORATES THE 70TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE NATIONWIDE POLIO ERADICATION CAMPAIGN

WHEREAS, seventy years ago, in 1955, the United States embarked on a historic public health initiative—the nationwide polio eradication campaign—marking the beginning of the end for a disease that had long afflicted children and adults, leaving thousands paralyzed or dead each year; and

WHEREAS, polio is a highly infectious disease that has existed for thousands of years, and which primarily affects children under the age of 5 and causes paralysis and death; and for which there is no known cure; and

WHEREAS, through the groundbreaking work of many physicians and scientists, the development of the first safe and effective polio vaccine offered hope to millions of families across Alabama, the United States and the world; and

WHEREAS, in the early years in the fight against polio, black doctors and researchers at the Tuskegee Infantile Paralysis Center at Tuskegee University conducted significant work in treating and eradicating polio, with the Center serving as the only place in the South where African American children with polio could come for treatment; and

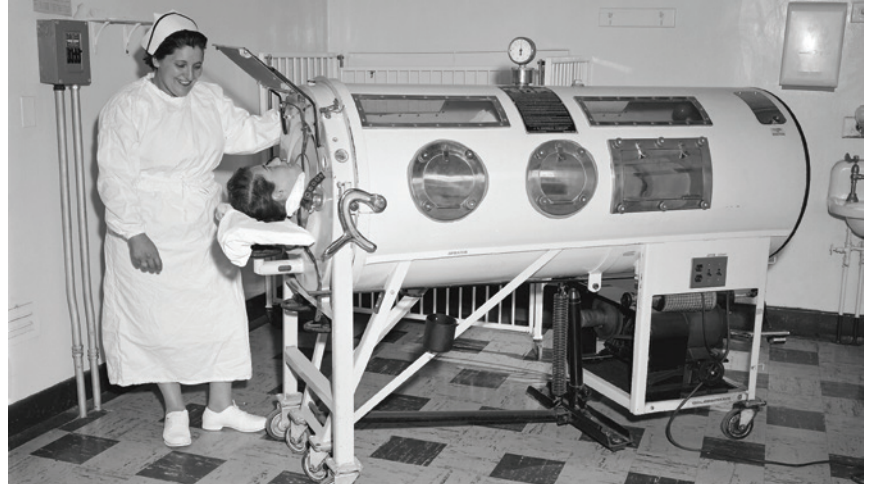
WHEREAS, In 1955, Ira Myers, MD, became administrative officer of the state Health Department and directed the mass Salk Vaccine Program in Alabama, after having served from 1950 to 1955 in the federal Public Health Service as Chief Epidemic Intelligence Officer, Communicable Disease Center, participating in field studies of polio epidemiology and trials of the Salk polio vaccine and co-authoring several scientific articles in national publications detailing the cause, effects and treatment for polio and other similar viral infections; and

WHEREAS, on April 12, 1955, the largest vaccination effort in U.S. history began, which ultimately led to the eradication of polio in the United States; and when President Dwight Eisenhower, whose administration played a key role in funding polio research and ensuring widespread distribution of the vaccine, stated: “I think that this is one of the greatest events of our time,” and

WHEREAS, this anniversary serves as a reminder of the power of science, medicine, and collective action in overcoming such a terrible and devastating disease affecting children and stands as one of the greatest public health triumphs of the 20th century, and

NOW, THEREFORE, the members of the Alabama Senate do hereby commemorate the 70th Anniversary of the nationwide polio eradication campaign and acknowledge and salute the tremendous accomplishments of all the scientists, physicians, public health personnel, parents, and others--many Alabamians among them--who made this remarkable achievement possible.

Thanks to the Alabama Chapter-American Academy of Pediatrics for introducing this resolution adopted by both houses of the Alabama Legislature.



A nurse cares for a polio patient inside an Emerson respirator, sometimes referred to as an iron lung machine. A mirror attached overhead enables the patient to see about his environment. (From CDC Image Library)

PORTABLE ELECTRONIC SIGNS INSTALLED

The East Central Public Health District recently held an employee training on its new portable electronic signs. The programmable signs are used to communicate and promote information to clients for directions, testing, vaccinations, and clinic operations.

District Administrator Tim Hatch welcomed the new assets as a way to quickly display information and education for staff and clients. The signs were made possible through the district's federal Epidemiology and Laboratory Capacity Program grant.