

MTSU Center for Health and Human Services Newsletter



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



CHANGE

"NEVER DOUBT THAT A SMALL GROUP OF THOUGHTFUL, COMMITTED CITIZENS CAN CHANGE THE WORLD; INDEED, IT'S THE ONLY THING THAT EVER HAS."

Margaret Mead, American anthropologist, writer, and activist

The Center for Health and Human Services (CHHS) is pleased to provide a summer update about our work as well as what's next as we



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

look forward to the fall semester. As the center continues its work to promote better health and well-being for all through projects, programs, and research with local, state, and national reach, we

continue to engage with our many partners to carry out meaningful work. The word "change" kept popping into my mind when thinking about the focus of this quarter's newsletter. In more ways than one, change seems to be the norm for CHHS. Every day is different. Ask any of our staff, and they will tell you that change is a part of CHHS culture and is quite the norm.

While the center has been in existence now for 29 years, it has changed so much since I joined MTSU as an employee in 2003. When I first

came to work for MTSU as a proud alum eager to make a difference "at home" on campus, the center had 2.3 employees with a small office in the Cason-Kennedy Nursing Building. We now have 12 employees plus another 13 faculty on our payroll who work for us in some capacity, with offices to call our own. As our staff has grown, so have our projects. In the past four years, we applied for and received the center's first federal grant, along with three more. Our annual operating budget has tripled in the past four years. Our work and our staff have changed, not to mention our physical location. Some may remember us from the early days when we were

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housed in Ezell Hall, with office space spread throughout the building, or even further back, when we were in the small space within the Cason-Kennedy Nursing Building. Or even further back to the very first office in Murphy Center, which was before my time, though I have heard the stories. What great memories, and wow how much CHHS has grown over the years.

Change doesn't stop with our staff, budget, and location. Being a primarily externally funded center that focuses on public health and filling gaps in communities throughout the state and region, we must stay on top of current public health trends, areas of need, and sources of funding, which are also frequently in a state of change. Some of the issues that were pressing early on have now shifted. For example, CHHS has a rich history of tobacco-use prevention work. Tennessee has always been a tobacco growing state and for many years, CHHS facilitated projects and research focused on tobacco-use prevention, creating a niche for the center. While tobacco use remains an issue in our Tennessee communities, there are new concerns about electronic nicotine delivery systems (ENDS) and vaping, which weren't even in anyone's vocabulary in decades past. We now have a national opioid crisis, increasing mental health needs, and of course COVID-19, to name just a few recent and current and pressing health concerns that have created changes in the areas of focus for our work. Chronic disease is still a priority area, as it has been for decades. That has not changed, yet the way we do our work in this area has. So much of what we do now involves the use of technology, including social media, text messaging, virtual platforms for education and programming, and more.

I reflect back on the one thing that has never changed over the decades, and that is that CHHS is changing lives. Our research is impacting and allows us to answer important questions that may lead to a healthier and better society, and our impact projects and programs demonstrate that positive differences are being made and that lives are being changed. Please read more about some of CHHS' work in this newsletter and learn about how we are helping to create healthier communities through our work. Blue Raiders Drink Up: Healthy Choices for Healthy Students is our featured project in this quarter's publication, and we have shared some preliminary outcomes from that project, which just wrapped up its third full year. Here's to change and all of the positives that may come along with it!

**What's Next?**

As shared in the last two publications, CHHS continues to actively seek funds for its externally funded **mental health** grant, which ended in October 2021 and which provided mental health awareness training to our campus community. With each new academic year, we have an opportunity to reach a new group of students, faculty, and staff, so there is an ongoing need for funding and partnerships to continue this important work. CHHS receives inquiries almost

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every week about mental health programming. We will continue to seek funding for this and would appreciate any leads for possible sources.

In anticipation of a grant funding announcement, later this year, we are working on a proposal to conduct **opioid use disorder research** in two additional rural Tennessee counties, similar to what is underway with our Rural Communities Opioid Response Program grant (mentioned below). Work also continues with a collaboration between CHHS, the MTSU School of Nursing and other community partners on a proposal that addresses current needs of the **health care workforce specific to long-term care facilities and nursing homes**. We have an opportunity to expand upon the new Blue Raiders Drink Up 2.0 impact project, which would serve students eligible for SNAP benefits and would further support **fruit and vegetable consumption, healthy lifestyles, and chronic disease prevention**.

With our 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 continue to embrace 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 bringing back mental health-focused initiatives through new grant awards and sponsorships.

If you 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 there, as is additional information on some of the many projects, programs, and research of the center. A few recent highlights are provided below.

Recent CHHS Projects, Program, and Research Highlights Include:

- **Opioid prevention shifts to implementation.** CHHS received a **\$1 million** Rural Communities Opioid Response Program (RCORP) implementation grant from the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) last September, allowing us to implement activities and secure needed resources in rural Wilson County communities to address the opioid epidemic over a three-year period. This funding provides a transition from activities begun in October 2020 under a planning grant from HRSA. CHHS, our campus partners, and Wilson County community partners represented by **DrugFree WilCo** look forward to continuing to fight the opioid epidemic and make a difference in the health and lives of Tennesseans. This project was highlighted in the [fall 2021 CHHS newsletter](#) for those who would like to read more.

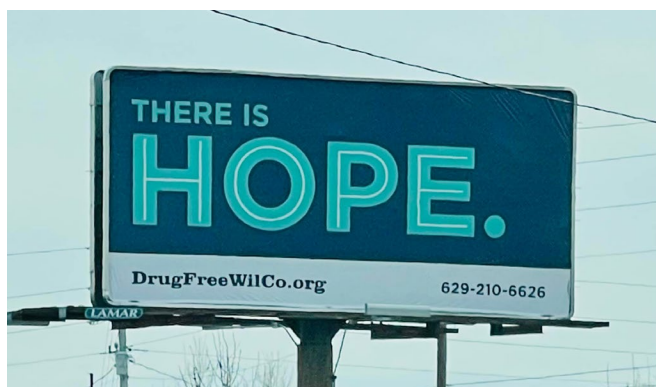


Last quarter we highlighted three core initiatives that are part of the RCORP grant and recently wrapped up: **medication assisted treatment (MAT) training** for Wilson County law enforcement, **HRSA-sponsored billing and coding training** for recovery treatment center staff, and development of a **data dashboard for opioid overdoses** that would allow for improved data sharing, interagency communications, and decision-making. Current activities include a **stigma reduction campaign** that includes unified and cohesive messaging across multiple platforms, most recently through six billboards placed around the county, continued work with **jail-based programming**, and work with the **Preventing Incarceration in Communities Center**, a local

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drug diversion facility. Transportation is being provided to patients needing transportation to treatment, and qualifying patients are now having treatment costs covered through the grant. We are in the early stages of developing a sustainability plan with the local coalition for work to continue when the grant ends in August 2024. Project outcomes will be shared at the end of the project.



- **Environmental Health and Water Quality project wraps up in 2022.** CHHS' recent grant to address environmental health and water quality will wrap up at the end of the calendar year. The grant from the [Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation \(TDEC\)](#) began in February 2021 and involved several partners, including



the [MTSU Center for Environmental Education](#), [MTSU Department of](#)

[Environmental Health and Safety Services](#), [MTSU School of Agriculture](#), and members of the TDEC Nutrient Reduction Task Force. CHHS received almost \$60,000 from TDEC to help tackle environmental health and water quality in Tennessee. In closing out the 2022

year, CHHS is finalizing a dynamic toolkit that provides a robust public education campaign addressing water quality and the impact of water on human and environmental health. The toolkit targets four areas: K–12 education, agriculture, waste-water treatment facilities, and general public education. Work also continues on wrapping up other project deliverables, including infographics and other digital media content. If additional funds become available, CHHS hopes to continue the partnership and spearhead outreach to entities and organizations statewide to promote the use of the toolkit and materials for maximum impact.

- **COVID-19 funded agriculture and STEM education project grows.** STEMsational Ag: The Virtual Classroom has **39 exciting units** available online for K–14 learners to explore, with more units releasing in the coming months. The curriculum is offered at no cost. Learners can investigate the first steps in raising chickens, how to start a small garden at home, and making your own ham. All units are connected to National Agriculture Literacy Outcomes and are available online, via USB, or with limited printed copies. Those interested in exploring the units can visit mtsu.edu/STEMsationalAg to create a free account for access to all the units.

STEMsational Ag staff at CHHS kicked off a STEMsational Ag tour this summer, taking the materials to multiple cities in Tennessee, South Carolina, Florida, Georgia, and New York. The team will continue its tour in several other states throughout the summer and fall.

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CHHS team members Michelle Sterlingshires and Jill Heather Thomas at the 11th annual Building Expertise Educators' Conference promoting *STEMsational Ag: The Virtual Farm* curriculum as part of the CHHS *STEMsational Ag* Southeast Regional Tour. We are proud to serve educators in 11 states with this far-reaching and amazing project! @usdagov @mtsu_ag #NIFAimpacts

CHHS obtained funding for *STEMsational Ag* through the United States Department of Agriculture's National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) Rapid Response Research on COVID-19 grant opportunity in 2020. The grant application was made in partnership with Fermentation Science faculty in MTSU's [School of Agriculture](#). Content for *STEMsational Ag: The Virtual Farm* continues to be developed and deployed, providing agriculture, health,

and STEM-focused curriculum for teachers and home-school families in an 11-state area for grades K–14.

Learn more about *STEMsational Ag* in the [spring 2021 CHHS newsletter](#).



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Recently released units include:

- Pigs Love Slop
- Gardens of All Shapes and Sizes
- Creating a Pollinator Garden
- Horses

Module 9: Unit 5
HORSES

Created By:
Gina Stewart

For more details, visit
STEMsationalAg.com

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- **Blue Raiders Drink Up: Healthy Choices for Healthy Students finishes its third year and gets new funding.**

This obesity and diabetes prevention project funded by the Tennessee Department of Health's Project Diabetes initiative has provided opportunities for thousands of MTSU students through twice monthly campus activities (virtual during COVID-19), access to free counseling sessions with a registered dietitian and/or health coach, personal training scholarships, and cooking classes. Since the kickoff of Blue Raiders Drink Up (BRDU) three years ago, our program has gained tremendous momentum and is highly sought out by our student body. From **July 1, 2019, to June 30, 2022**, our team has been able to educate **over 6,000 MTSU students** on the importance of reducing the consumption of sugary beverages. BRDU continues to offer a wide variety of activities where students learn how to lead a healthy lifestyle.

We recently received news that a grant application to fund the project for another three years was approved. The Tennessee Department of Health Project Diabetes initiative awarded **\$450,000** to continue the program. **Blue Raiders Drink Up 2.0** will allow for formation of a Vending Choice Taskforce, a new partnership with the MTSU Food Pantry, and installation of more water refill stations. Read more about the new grant and current project activities and the impact the program is having on our students later in this publication. You can also read more about it in the [summer 2020 CHHS newsletter](#) and on our [website](#).



We look forward to later sharing outcomes from the three-year pilot project as that analysis is complete.

- **Infant Death Scene Investigation (DSI) and Safe Sleep project virtual classroom wraps up for 2021–22; spring 2022 training for public health and social services staff completed.** With support from University College, this workforce training and development project has reached over 34,000 first responders and over 1,700 public health and social services professionals since 2004. DSI training is required for first responders in Tennessee under the Sudden Unexplained Child Death Act. As part of this training, responders also learn about sudden unexpected infant death (SUID) and safe sleep for infants. The externally funded project on safe sleep offers additional training opportunities for other public health and social services professionals.

The training transitioned to a virtual classroom format because of COVID-19, which was a challenge but ultimately very successful with the support and hard work of University College. Trainers and speakers, including the state medical examiner, have historically provided an interactive daylong training for first responders. The virtual format continued through the 2021–22 grant year and is being looked at as a model to complement live trainings in the future. The virtual option offered accessibility to training for first responders across the state who may not be able to travel even without COVID restrictions, increasing opportunities for participation. The project was featured in the [summer 2021 CHHS newsletter](#) for those who would like to

SUMMER OVERVIEW *continued from page 6*

learn more. The project filled a gap for provider training within the first responder community and within health and social services fields.



- **Campus-focused mental health awareness funding sought, and “self-pay” model is in motion!** In October 2021, CHHS wrapped up its third year of a Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) funded grant that supported the Mental Health First Aid program on campus. Over

1,100 students, faculty, and staff were trained in Mental Health First Aid since the program was launched on campus in 2018. As a result of this training, there were over 1,200 referrals to mental health services both on campus and in the community. CHHS continues to seek funding to offer training at no cost to interested departments on campus. Meanwhile, we are piloting a “self-pay” model for departments with a budget to offer the training. We have received requests from three departments on campus to offer the self-pay training and have our first corporate training planned for a large national corporation seeking to train 30 of its c-suite executives and managers.

- **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.

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.

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Project Spotlight

Blue Raiders Drink Up: Healthy Choices for Healthy Students

Blue Raiders Drink Up (BRDU) is wrapping up its third year, having served over 3,000 students. We are pleased to share that a new grant award of \$450,000 has been received and the program will continue—with some exciting new additions—through June 2025.

Cooking Classes

Blue Raiders Drink Up cooking classes have been an engaging, interactive, and innovative success for MTSU students since October 2019. Over a four-week series, students meet once a week in the MTSU Ellington Human Sciences building to have a unique, hands-on experience. Students learn cooking basics like meal planning, healthy beverage choices, shopping on a budget, basic nutrition, and food science. The last session of each series allows students to receive a guided grocery store tour with a registered dietitian to learn about nutrition label reading and healthy alternatives they can choose to save time and money.



"I enjoyed the variety in assignments and the multiple different easy-to-follow instructions. I not only learned about finding more nutritious foods, but I also learned what I need to do to lose weight through my eating habits. I hate that this class is so short!"

– Jordan Feild, 20, junior

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the BRDU team pivoted and utilized an online platform that delivered the same curriculum as the in-person series. To address the barrier of accessibility and affordability from COVID-19, students were mailed food boxes full of pantry staples that were used in the recipes written in the curriculum. Students in both the online and in-person formats have been extremely enthusiastic about learning how to strengthen their cooking skills and better their understanding of basic nutritional concepts.

Overall, the BRDU cooking classes have been a wonderful way for students to meet their peers, gain knowledge about healthy lifestyles, get out of their comfort zones, and eat free food!

About Blue Raiders Drink Up cooking classes

More than 300 students have participated in Blue Raiders Drink Up cooking classes over the three-year project period. For those students participating in the classes and for which analysis is complete:

- **85%** planned to increase their **fruit and vegetable** consumption.
- **80%** increased their **water intake** within the past week.
- **69%** indicated that they would purchase more **pantry staples** on their next shopping trip.
- **54%** indicated they would purchase more **frozen vegetables**, and **56%** indicated they would purchase more **fresh vegetables**.
- **87%** indicated they **prepared meals ahead of time** post-program, compared with 70% pre-program.

Water refill stations

CHHS installed nine water refill stations across campus and distributed 1,493 water bottles to students. There were 26,526 refills made from these water stations.

- **90%** indicated that they develop a **grocery list** to take to the grocery store post-program, compared with 77% pre-program.

Final outcomes for the full 36-month period will be available later.



Other Blue Raiders Drink Up Outcomes

Over the last three years, BRDU funding has provided one-on-one counseling with a **health coach** and **dietitian** for students at risk for diabetes, obesity, and chronic disease. To date for the three-year period, over 650 students have received personal counseling through the grant. A three-year evaluation and outcomes report will be compiled by faculty evaluator Dr. Andrew Owusu, Department of Health and Human Performance, after the conclusion of the grant.

What Students are Saying about Blue Raiders Drink Up Dietetics Counseling and Health Coaching:

In February 2022, I was diagnosed with hypertension and high cholesterol, which would potentially endanger my ability to work as a pilot. My doctor and I decided to treat the conditions with low dosage medication as well as lifestyle changes. With health coaching from Becky Figueroa and nutrition counseling from Kim Coleman through BRDU, I have been able to lose 10 pounds and bring my blood pressure and cholesterol to healthy levels. I'm very thankful to be able to use Student Health Services and Blue Raiders Drink Up as resources.

– Jake Tumbleson, MTSU Aerospace student

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BRDU Partners with the American Association of Family and Consumer Sciences (AAFCS)

A unique opportunity presented itself in fall 2021 for the MTSU BRDU project team to collaborate with other organizations on campus: the American Association of Family and Consumer Sciences MTSU chapter, Aramark, and the American Heart Association. The team has provided learning opportunities for **25** MTSU students who completed the health education classes during the spring semester through the “Healthy for Life” program. Healthy for Life was created by the American Heart Association. It is an evidence-based community nutrition and well-being program that empowers people to make healthy food, nutrition, and lifestyle choices. BRDU collaborated with AAFCS, hosting four in-person cooking and educational

“I really enjoyed this class and learned a lot. I did not realize how much money I could save from purchasing whole ingredients to prepare meals instead of buying premade frozen meals.”

– Mikayl Frutiger, 20, sophomore

What’s new for Blue Raiders Drink Up 2.0, funded through 2025? The new three-year initiative has two key policy goals and five key campuswide campaigns to reduce obesity, prevent diabetes, and encourage healthy nutrition and beverage choices with students. To see the press release with more details, visit [MTSU News](#).

classes where students learned about topics like basic cooking techniques, meal planning, nutrition and food science, basic physical fitness, mental health, and so much more. The BRDU cooking class curriculum developed by MTSU registered dietitian Lisa Shepherd was used with supplemental content added on mental health awareness and physical fitness.

Our own BRDU student ambassador and MTSU dietetics graduate student Taylor Armistead was responsible for this partnership through a grant he wrote and received to implement this initiative. Please see page 15 for more about Taylor in the “Staff Spotlight.”



Highlights of new BRDU 2.0 Grant include:

- A Vending Choice Taskforce will be formed to evaluate vending policies across the nation and to recommend changes on campus that would provide healthy options in vending machines.
- A new partnership will begin with MTSU's [Student Food Pantry](#) to offer healthy items provided through BRDU grant funding.
- More water refill stations will be installed across campus. In the first three years, the grant covered the cost of installing nine water refill stations across campus and provided water bottles to incoming freshmen as well as to other students participating in campus events. During the three years that the refill stations were installed, almost 27,000 refills were logged from these water stations.

"I enjoyed the section on meal prep, as well as adding much-needed vitamins and nutrients to your diet. The pantry staples video was awesome and gave me so many ideas on foods I can utilize to up those nutrient intakes. I thought everything was very useful and helpful, and this class is a great first step in creating better eating habits."

– Caily Higdon, 18, freshman

"I really enjoyed learning how to restructure what's on my plate! My eating plate was not healthy. I don't believe there was a part of the class I didn't enjoy. Every topic, assignment, and discussion was interesting and well planned."

– Danario Deveaux, 21, graduate student



The Blue Raiders Drink Up: Health Choices for Healthy Students project is funded under an agreement with the state of Tennessee Project Diabetes initiative.

Trying to drink more water this summer?

Here's a map of water refill stations on campus!

We will be adding three more water refill stations soon!

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 Boutwell Dramatic Arts Building
1-First Floor, 1-Second Floor

BRAGG John Bragg Media and Entertainment Building
1-Second Floor

CAB Caps Administration Building
1-First Floor, 1-Second Floor

CKNB Capron-Kennedy Nursing Building
2-First Floor, 1-Second Floor

COE College of Education Building
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

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

KOM Kirksey Old Main
1-First Floor

KUC Kathleen 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*

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 Science 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

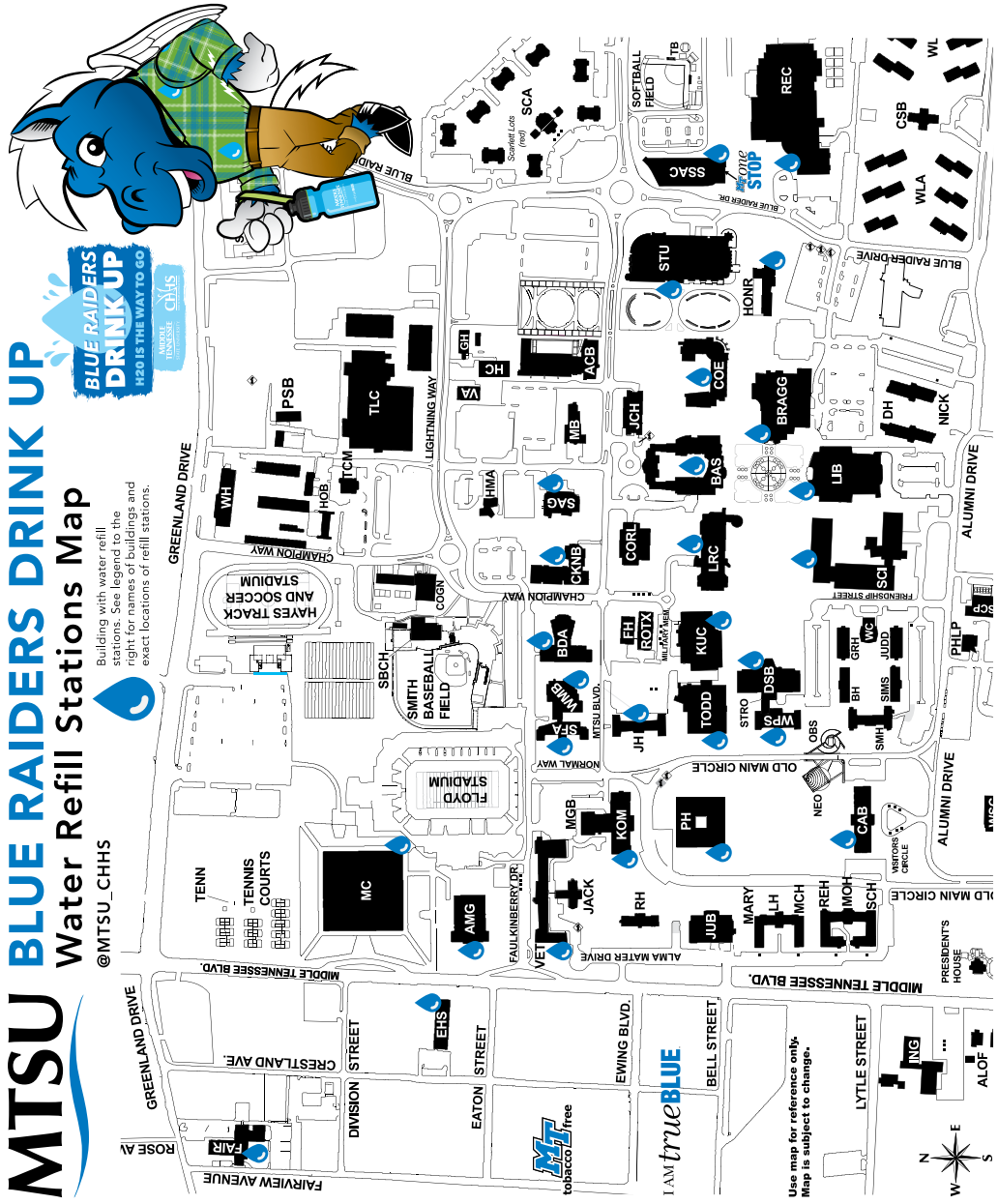
VET Voochies Engineering Technology
1-First Floor

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

WPS Wise-Patten Science Hall
1-First Floor

This program is funded under an agreement with the State of Tennessee.
MIDDLE TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY

* Funded by Blue Raiders Drink Up 0827-0983 / Middle Tennessee State University does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, age, or disability. For more information, contact the Office of Institutional Equity at 615-898-5493. See our full policy at mtsu.edu.



MTSU BLUE RAIDERS DRINK UP

Water Refill Stations Map

@MTSU_CHHS

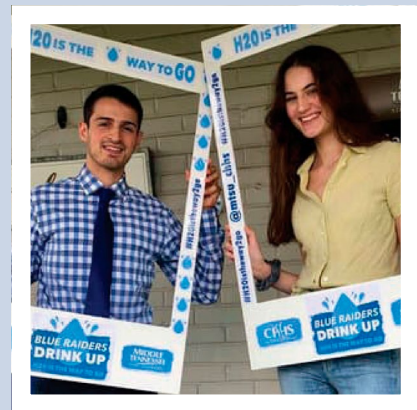
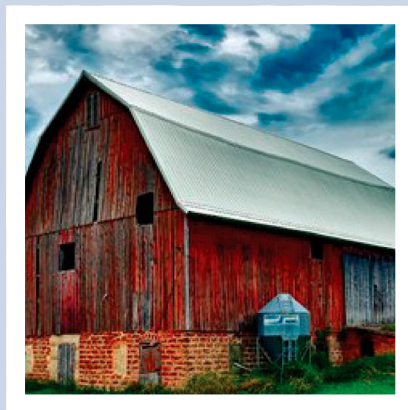
Building with water refill stations. See legend to the right for names of buildings and exact locations of refill stations.



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



Mental Health FIRST AID

from NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR MENTAL WELLBEING

CHHS is now offering MHFA training as a self-pay program to interested departments. Efforts to secure external funding to cover costs of training remain underway. Over the last three years, over 1,100 have been trained through MTSU Mental Health First Aid. Learn more at mtsu.edu/chhs!

To support continuing Mental Health First Aid workshops beyond fall 2021, CHHS is seeking grant opportunities as well as individual and corporate sponsorships and donations. Information on how to donate is available on the [CHHS website](https://mtsu.edu/chhs). Please include a notation that funds are for CHHS Mental Health First Aid. For departments with a budget to cover the costs of training, CHHS is pleased to facilitate training sessions of up to 30 participants. Please contact us for details.

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Staff Spotlight

Taylor Armistead

Taylor Armistead joined Blue Raiders Drink Up (BRDU) in April 2021 as one half of the BRDU project assistant and student ambassador team. He is completing his junior year in the Dietetics program at MTSU to become a registered dietitian and plans to graduate in fall 2023.

In his free time, Armistead can be found engaging in any type of competitive sports. His “happy place” is anywhere outdoors, partaking in physical activities such as running, hiking, and snowboarding. He has found a passion for helping people find healthier habits. He explains this passion as exhilarating and rewarding to see the “light bulb” come on when people begin to grasp different concepts that can help make them feel better and overall create impact in their lives.

It is very rewarding to see students grasp different concepts and get excited about implementing new healthy habits in their day-to-day lives.

– Taylor Armistead

This passion stemmed from Armistead’s researching nutrition due to long-distance triathlons and long-distance running competitions. He realized that focusing on nutrition not only helped him with his workouts, but also significantly improved most other aspects of his life. After making a few changes, he began to feel alert throughout the entire day, handled stress better, and started seeing the physical attributes he desired come to fruition.



Armistead’s personal wellness journey translates well into his favorite aspects about the Blue Raiders Drink Up program. He enjoys getting out on campus to meet students and work with them to understand how to make healthy food and beverage choices, as well as learn new skills. Armistead says, “It is very rewarding to see students grasp different concepts and get excited about implementing new healthy habits in their day-to-day lives. Our cooking classes have been a wonderful way to provide students with new cooking skills in a fun, collaborative environment and many students have expressed eagerness to start trying new recipes at home.”

Since Armistead joined the BRDU team, he has educated over **1,220 MTSU students** alongside his co-ambassador, Aura Ganster, through on-campus and virtual educational events.

Armistead prides himself on his work ethic and says that “you can always control your effort and commitment.” He always tries to see the best in everyone, understanding that when working with

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STAFF SPOTLIGHT *continued from page 14*

a team, everyone may have different personalities with varying strengths and weakness. His perspective is that we are all humans who should work together to help each other in whatever way we can. Commitment is one of Armistead's most defining traits. Whether it is a personal relationship or a job, if he commits to something, he will give it 100% and see it through until the end.

His favorite quote comes from a speech by Theodore Roosevelt and fits Armistead's hard-working, driven personality well: "It is not the critic who counts; not the man who points out

how the strong man stumbles, or where the doer of deeds could have done them better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood; who strives valiantly; who errs, and comes short again and again, because there is no effort without error and shortcoming; but who does actually strive to do the deeds; who knows the great enthusiasms, the great devotions; who spends himself in a worthy cause; who at the best knows in the end the triumph of high achievement; and who at the worst, if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly, so that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who know neither victory nor defeat."

When asked what advice he has for incoming MTSU freshman, Armistead said, "I think the most important thing to remember when you decide to commit to going to school, just graduated school, or starting a new job, is to remind yourself that you decided to begin that journey for a reason. When things get hard, remember what reasons made you begin. You never feel a sense of accomplishment unless you completed something difficult. Don't look at tasks as a burden, but an opportunity to grow as a human being, and if you can't find happiness in the thing you're working on, then it might be time to look elsewhere. I feel that we focus on the desired outcome of things too often without enjoying the journey along the way."

What a wise piece of advice that we should all take into consideration. Throughout his time with CHHS, Taylor has proven to be a hard-working, kind, dependable, and a dedicated asset to the center. BRDU is extremely fortunate to have him a part of our team.

STAFF SPOTLIGHT *continued from page 15*

Aura Ganster

Aura Ganster joined Blue Raiders Drink Up (BRDU) in April 2021 as the other half of the BRDU project assistant and student ambassador team, alongside Taylor Armistead. Ganster is a rising senior Buchanan Fellow in the Nutrition and Food Science major with a concentration in Food Industry and minors in Human Sciences and University Honors. She is extremely involved on campus, being an active member of multiple organizations, including her sorority, Alpha Chi Omega; Food Science Association; Nutrition and Dietetics Association; Phi Kappa Phi Honor Society; and Omicron Delta Kappa Honor Society. She is a part of MTSU's Honors College and is working on her thesis project, which is a Chinese culture educational cookbook.



Ganster's biggest passion is cooking. Her mom taught her how to cook at a very young age, and over the years she developed a deeply rooted love for the process of creating and experimenting with dishes and having others taste them. In between being a hard-working, involved MTSU student, Ganster enjoys trying new foods and restaurants, citing herself as an "Elite Yelp reviewer." Before she goes out to eat, she likes to find a restaurant she's never heard of and will write a review for them based on her experience.

She also loves to learn about other cultures and languages. Ganster won national awards for her German fluency in high school and taught herself how to read and write in Korean. She also knows Mandarin Chinese and Cantonese from her mom.

Ganster's initial interest in nutrition began when she was younger, stemming from her self-esteem being heavily impacted by her body image. Fad diets were and still are very rampant, and she had difficulties separating what was proper nutrition advice and what was not. This, in addition to her passion for food and cooking, spurred Ganster to major in nutrition in college to better equip herself with knowledge needed in the real world to help people much like herself.

That same interest in nutrition and cooking is what drew her to the BRDU program. Blue Raiders Drink Up is all about teaching students basic nutrition and giving them the skills and resources they need to make consistent and healthy lifestyle choices. She admires how we apply this to reality in our cooking classes. "It is a joy to teach students how to cook, read nutrition labels, and shop smart. Watching them hone their skills over the course of the series and improve with each meeting really makes me feel like I'm making a difference," Ganster said. Since she joined the BRDU team, she has educated over **1,220 MTSU students** alongside her co-ambassador, through on-campus and virtual educational events.

Apart from working on BRDU, Ganster loves traveling and exploring new places. Planning road trips within and outside of the state with friends is her favorite way to use her school breaks. Though COVID has affected her international plans, she hopes to fly outside of the country very soon to continue exploring new places. Other than traveling, in her spare time she works as a food science lab technician. She runs tests of food like milk, yogurt, teas, and juices and works on special projects within the plant to

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ensure food safety and develop better ways to analyze samples for quality. After obtaining her degree, she hopes to switch into food product development and research.

Like her co-ambassador, Taylor Armistead, she too has a favorite quote by Theodore Roosevelt: "Comparison is the thief of joy." This quote resonates with Ganster because she knows that everyone will follow different paths in life to achieve their goals, and comparing yourself to others to gauge your own success is unfair to you and breeds discouragement. Remember that life is not just about the result, but also the journey it takes to get there!

When asked what advice she had for incoming MTSU freshman, graduating seniors, or new employees, Ganster said, "To incoming freshman: Do not be afraid to go outside your comfort zone and try new things! College is meant to be a trial-and-error experience. Not every step you take must be calculated; even mistakes have value because of the lesson you learn from them. Take advantage of the opportunities available on campus (there are SO many!). You never know what you might discover about yourself in the process. To graduating seniors: Congratulations! I applaud you for your determination and hard work. Acquiring a college education is no easy feat and proves your resolve and desire to succeed. Wherever you go next, I wish you the best and hope you bring good memories of MTSU with you. To new employees at CHHS: You have joined a wonderful group of people who are



so supportive and kind. We may work on different projects, but we all share a common goal of improving the health of our beautiful state. These folks have your back, so don't be afraid to ask for help when you need it."

Ganster has an incredibly bright future ahead of her and has truly made an impact on the MTSU community, including CHHS.

New Employee

Kim Coleman, RD, LDN

Kim Coleman works out of MTSU Student Health Services and is funded through CHHS' Blue Raiders Drink Up: Healthy Choices for Healthy Students, a project grant-funded under an agreement with the state of Tennessee's Project Diabetes initiative.

Hello, fellow Blue Raiders! As a graduate of MTSU's Nutrition and Food Science program, I am so excited to be back on campus working to serve the students here. I joined the Health Promotion team at Student Health Services in February this year and continue to enjoy working with such a great group of individuals.

As a registered dietitian (RD), I help patients with their health goals as they relate to nutrition, dining habits, and exercise. Some of the main areas I focus on include managing weight, fueling athletic performance, and managing chronic diseases like diabetes, hypertension, and celiac disease. I also help individuals learn about general healthful eating, even if they are not struggling with a condition but just want to get healthier. I can work with patients to create meal plans that fit their needs and lifestyle. I can also help patients find healthy snacks, learn how to read food labels, pick out healthy foods at the grocery store, make better dining out choices, and plan and cook meals at home!

Although I primarily focus on providing counseling to those with specific conditions or diseases, I enjoy helping all patients to reach their health goals. I have always had an interest in sports, exercise, food, and nutrition. These interests, along with a desire to help others, helped lead me into this career as an RD. Prior to my becoming an RD, my husband and I served in the United States Marine Corps. I have also



lived in many states, had a plethora of unique jobs, and have traveled to many countries. I feel that these experiences have prepared me for relating to and helping people of all different backgrounds. I look forward to promoting health for all students!

Campus Partner Spotlight

Lisa Shepherd, M.S., RD, MTSU Department of Human Sciences, Nutrition and Food Science

Lisa Shepherd joined the Blue Raiders Drink Up (BRDU) team in 2019 when the project was initially launched. Shepherd serves as a registered dietitian and the BRDU cooking class instructor. Much of the success of the cooking classes can be attributed to Shepherd, as she developed the curriculum and led the class both in person and online.

Shepherd is an online instructor for the Nutrition and Food Science program in the Human Sciences Department. In addition to her work online, she has many outreach projects within her program for MTSU students, high school students, and the Murfreesboro community. She finds joy collaborating with her colleagues to encourage people to make healthier choices. She is pursuing her Ph.D. in Interdisciplinary Science Education so she can work with local students to combine STEM, nutrition, and fun cooking activities.



Shepherd notes that the BRDU program has been one of the most interesting projects in her time spent at MTSU. She has enjoyed many

conversations with students about cooking and working through any barriers that might prevent them from making healthy choices. Since July 2019, Shepherd has held 12 cooking class series, each class being four weeks long. Over the course of 48 cooking class sessions, she has educated **313 students** on how to cook healthy food on a budget, food safety, cooking basics, meal planning, and healthy beverage choices, and even provided an in-person guided grocery store tour.

When Shepherd is out of the kitchen and the classroom, you can find her running a small farm where her family raises much of their own food and volunteering with local scouting programs. She is passionate about the farm-to-table experience. For instance, on her small farm she enjoys taking care of all the animals and plants, knowing exactly where her food comes from. She loves helping people begin to grow their own food, even in small spaces! She is also passionate about helping people find more flavor in healthy food choices. Shepherd states, "Nutritious food should not be bland and boring, and it should fit into a variety of budgets." On the same note,

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BRDU Partners with the American Association of Family and Consumer Sciences (AAFCS). Read more on page 10.

Shepherd's favorite quote comes from Remy in the movie *Ratatouille*, "If you are what you eat, then I only want to eat the good stuff."

The science of nutrition and cooking has always been fascinating to Shepherd. Most of her work has focused on translating this science into practice so that anyone can learn how to enjoy better food choices. Through connecting with students in the classroom, running her own farm, and getting a Ph.D., her defining traits of being hard-working, thoughtful, and positive shine throughout.

The advice Shepherd would share for incoming MTSU freshman is "Always have the end in mind—where do you want this degree to take

you and who can help you get there? For graduating seniors, in your new career, remember to take time to listen. Listen to your mentors, your peers, and your clients, and keep learning. Last but certainly not least, advice for new employees is MTSU is the best place to work! There are many opportunities here, so take the time to reach out to those beyond your department."

If you are lucky enough to meet Shepherd in person, she is a ray of light and spreads positivity to everyone she meets. The Blue Raiders Drink Up program has thrived with her being a part of the team, and we couldn't have been as successful without her hard-working, thoughtful spirit.

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