# **COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS**

## KEEPING OUR COMMUNITIES CONNECTED AND ENGAGED

### From the Director's Desk

Issue 26, June 2022

As we enter the month of June, the spring season is ending along with the cooler temperatures. Flowers are in full bloom, and communities are returning to some degree of normalcy after more than two years of social distancing and limited activities.

June is a month full of celebrations, including Father's Day, Juneteenth and Pride Month. The Office of Community Outreach & Engagement works every day to be inclusive in our education and awareness to ensure that we address cancer needs in our targeted communities.

June is also a time of transition for COE as Monica Baskin, Ph.D., bids farewell to her role as associate director for Community Outreach & Engagement at the O'Neal Comprehensive Cancer Center. Baskin has spent more than 15 years at UAB addressing cancer disparities, particularly as a scientist focusing on

community-engaged research. Her next chapter will be in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, where she will continue to address health equity, cancer disparities and thoughtful ways to engage communities.

During her time at UAB, Baskin has served in various research and leadership roles. COE is most proud of her role as our inaugural associate director for Community Outreach & Engagement in transforming the Deep South Network infrastructure into a community engagement infrastructure that addresses current National Cancer Institute outreach and research needs.

We salute Dr. Baskin for all her hard work, passion and leadership. We wish her well and great success in all her future endeavors!

Best wishes,







### **COMMUNITY OUTREACH & ENGAGEMENT**

#### **Program Directors**

Claudia Hardy, Meghan Tipre and Francine Walton

**Health Initiatives Manager** 

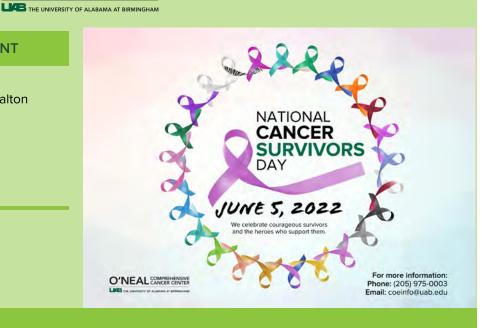
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## **NATIONAL MEN'S HEALTH MONTH**

**Guest writer: Derrick Flowers Jr.** 

Men, how many times have you tried to live a healthier lifestyle? For most of us, the count is higher than we care to admit. Eighty percent of people who make New Year's resolutions to live healthier give up by mid-February. Adopting better eating habits, exercising regularly, going to see the doctor and drinking more water can disrupt our comfort zones. However, the cost of continuing our old habits can have a negative impact on our health. Yes, making lifestyle changes can be challenging. But living in poor and failing health is much worse.

What are some beneficial truths that we must accept about the journey to better health? Understand the results will not be instant. Be sure to set realistic goals, celebrate them and then steadily graduate to the next level. Realize that this health journey takes time and consistency. And ask for help when you need it.

There is no better time than now to make the changes needed to reduce your cancer risk and be well. No matter how many times you have tried before, my brother – try again.



# JUNE is National Men's Health Month

- Encourage the men in your life to talk with their doctor about appropriate screenings for colorectal and prostate cancers.
- For men of average risk, colorectal cancer screenings should begin at age 45 and prostate cancer screenings at age 50.
- African American men should begin prostate cancer screening as early as age 40.



## RESEARCH CORNER

## **McFarland Gut Microbiome Study**





Braden McFarland, Ph.D.

Assistant Professor, UAB

Department of Cell, Developmental & Integrative Biology

What does your gut health have to do with cancer? More than we realize! As part of the microbiome, gut bacteria can affect how patients with certain cancers respond to treatment.

One cancer treatment, called immunotherapy, is particularly sensitive to gut bacteria. Immunotherapy works by helping the body attack its own tumor. Glioblastoma is a type of brain tumor that is most often diagnosed in older adults. Immunotherapy works well to treat brain tumors in research mouse models, but it has not been shown as effective in human studies.

Since mouse gut bacteria is different from human gut bacteria, Braden McFarland, Ph.D., and colleagues at UAB have created a mouse model where they add human gut bacteria to the gastrointestinal (digestive) tract of mice. They are trying to understand how human gut bacteria can impact mouse models

with brain tumors. They will first test how normal healthy human gut bacteria behave in the mouse models and will later test the gut bacteria of brain tumor patients from UAB.

So far, most gut bacteria samples from healthy people have come from young, white male adults. With the help of the Office of Community Outreach & Engagement and Community Health Advisors,

McFarland and her team will gather and analyze samples of gut bacteria from racially diverse, healthy adult volunteers of all ages and genders.

The samples will be placed into the mouse models to test brain tumor growth and how the mice respond to therapy. Many things like diet, exercise, health status and genetics can alter the gut microbiome. The goal is to identify certain bacteria that can help cancer patients in the future.

If you are interested in participating in this study, please see the flier included on this page below or contact your local county coordinator or CHA.



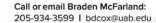
We are researching how healthy bacteria in your stool regulate cancer growth in laboratory studies.

#### Who is eligible?

- · Healthy volunteers
- · 18-80 years old (Women and Men)
- · Not on antibiotics
- · African American or Hispanic

### What is required?

- Collect a stool sample in the privacy of your home
  - · Collection kit will be shipped to you
- · Call FedEx to pick up your sample (free shipping)
- Compensation of \$50
- No clinic visit required



UAB Gut Microbiome Study
Office of Community Outreach & Engagement Pilot Study



## National Black Family Cancer Awareness Week

**Engaging the Generations** 

# JUNE 16-22

