

# Community Connections



KEEPING OUR COMMUNITIES CONNECTED AND ENGAGED

From The Director's Desk

Issue 14, May 2021

## BRAIN TUMOR

### AWARENESS MONTH

Spring is in full bloom, and signs of renewal are all around us with flowers, greenery and warm weather.

It is in this environment that we should be encouraged that better days are indeed ahead as we slowly emerge from more than a year of shutdowns, social distancing and uncertainty. Yet, in spite of the challenges, the Office of Community Outreach and Engagement has remained steadfast to our mission of serving communities.

As we continue into this season of newness, we are pleased to continue growing and reshaping our community of innovators and partners who are creating a stronger future for community outreach and engagement. This work continues and flourishes because of each of you.

Once again, we are so proud to highlight the incredible difference members of our team are making



when it comes to providing essential information to communities across our state and region. Amazing things are happening, and we are pleased to showcase just a few in our newsletter's pages this month.

As our 25th anniversary continues, stay involved, get others involved, and help us do even more as we embark on the next chapter of supporting communities and empowering them

with information. Together we have done so much, but there is much more to do.

Lastly, I urge you to search daily for opportunities to take care of yourself and take advantage of this beautiful season. For example, enjoy nature by taking a walk and observe the new colors that surround us.

– *Claudia*

## O'NEAL COMPREHENSIVE CANCER CENTER

UAB THE UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA AT BIRMINGHAM

### COMMUNITY OUTREACH & ENGAGEMENT

- **Dr. Monica Baskin** – Associate Director, Outreach and Engagement [mbaskin@uabmc.edu](mailto:mbaskin@uabmc.edu)
- **Claudia Hardy** – Program Director [chardy@uab.edu](mailto:chardy@uab.edu)
- **Molly Richardson** – Scientist and Lead of Outreach and Education COE [mollyrichardson@uabmc.edu](mailto:mollyrichardson@uabmc.edu)
- **Rochelle Wallace** – Health Initiatives Manager [rlw365@uab.edu](mailto:rlw365@uab.edu)
- **Joseph D. Bryant** – Newsletter Editor [josephbryant@uabmc.edu](mailto:josephbryant@uabmc.edu)

## May Health Awareness

M T O B Z Z W Y T I V I T C A L A C I S Y H P E  
 S S R J V V I Z W P U O G L B S D C C F A E W P  
 N E S Z S P H N R D C J K H N T X M O T W R P Z  
 A T T Q W G P I P Z M E A Y E S V Q I I G V C D  
 W V L P A P T E S T F U N Z B A F R R W A A P F  
 D P Y F L G K K P Q D X H V L U L Q U A P L O Y  
 V H Q P N E E R C S N U S P F L V T D U T H F V  
 N Y Z A Y J K Y G W P H I I U G T E H P A S M L  
 A H Q E E P D M R A A W P K O F K V M Y Z Q L M  
 B E P B J L R O D B T I R V U T R A Q V D X K O  
 A A X J U V T W L T N R W N V S M B X E G I P C  
 L J R E T K Y N H I D Z L Q G A L R D S N V E H  
 L I L W R Z W X B S S D R S R E C F O Y R Q R T  
 Z P P T Y M K Z E A R L Y D E T E C T I O N B J  
 H A P P R M N H R E B A G V V C O Z I G S R T A  
 O O Z Z E E U D M H F Q A X U P W X P N Q F R M  
 F S V B C Q T A G H B E T G J P N C U M E V E J  
 E A N C N N Y W Y W G V A F C A Z H T I X F O U  
 T U L M A M Y X F H B R J G C I I O I M R M H P  
 E V W P C R O F L Q U C H O K B H P S I K S J G  
 M Y I M N H V X M K T V D A A B D E R K D S I M  
 Z J U V I Q K X T J F Z T N N O D M E J D U F G  
 P R K F K Y W J A V H N J B R A I N T U M O R G  
 V W H C S A G O R E C N A C N I A R B O V J W B

- Early Detection
- Physical Activity
- Healthy Diet
- Brain Cancer
- Sunscreen
- HPV Vaccine
- HPV Test
- Pap Test Skin Cancer
- Brain Tumor

## COMMUNITY PROFILE

**A LIFETIME OF COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT: JOANICE THOMPSON CONTINUES FOCUS ON BUILDING, EMPOWERING HEALTHY COMMUNITIES**

Joanice Thompson didn't have a manual or a textbook about community outreach, engagement, or recruiting for research studies when she arrived at UAB more than 30 years ago.

Yet, by the time she retired in 2018, Thompson had become a sought-after authority on community engagement and ensuring that research translates into opportunities and improvements for communities.

"I found very little when it came to practical application, so I just started building my own strategies," said Thompson, former Associate Director for Community Outreach at the UAB Minority Health and Health Disparities Center, and an early figure in the development of the Office of Community Outreach and Engagement.

"There's nothing like being out there in the community, because that's where you learn. You must follow some procedures but invariably write your own story, build your own road map based on the many different communities you work within."

Thompson's association with the Office of Community Outreach and Engagement goes back to 2000 with the development of the Deep South Network for Cancer Control. The Deep South Network reached urban Birmingham-area communities, Alabama's



Black Belt, and the Mississippi Delta.

She traveled with the Deep South Network team and offered guidance primarily in recruitment and identification.

Thompson stressed the need for the Community Health Advisors (CHAs) to recruit participants from within their own communities - their personal spheres of influence, such as stores, beauty shops, churches and schools.

"CHAs are priceless," Thompson said.

"There's nothing like word of mouth and having boots on the ground carry the message. If you're going to make a difference, then you must train people in the community and unapologetically help identify resources, because they know the community better than you would ever know it, but often do not have the resources needed to make a difference."

The Deep South Network became the flagship program for OCOE and created the template for how the office currently operates.

Thompson vividly recounts the early days of the program, including collaborating with founder Dr. Edward Partridge and Program Director Claudia Hardy.

"Dr. Partridge had the passion and the heart for the people that he was trying to help," Thompson said. "When you know him as a person, and you know his family, then you know why. It wasn't a put-on." She compared Partridge's excitement and dedication to the program to that of a traveling preacher filled with a zeal for his mission.

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“He was a very high-level leader, but he was also a very compassionate leader,” Thompson said. The health and societal impact of the Deep South Network was broad and longstanding in communities and the CHAs.

“Every time I boarded a bus with CHAs of more than 50 on each bus, I would often look around and think of the opportunity we had to impact the CHA’s personal health while encouraging and teaching them to educate others,” Thompson said. “I strongly believe the Deep South Network also had a positive impact on CHAs’ families.”

Thompson remembered a woman who found encouragement to return to high school to earn her diploma.

“I saw women who participated in Deep South Network training sessions

come from the back of the room up to the front of the room and became some of the best spokespeople that you would ever meet,” she said. “The impact of the Deep South Network was far-reaching. I still visit some of the counties and will always meet someone that remembers the Deep South Network.”

Thompson began her career at UAB conducting phone interviews in the Division of Preventive Medicine. She rose to become the first Recruitment Coordinator in the Division of Preventive Medicine and helped establish the first Recruitment and Retention Shared Facility at UAB.

“My community partners were gracious, even when no compensation followed,” she said. “They provided letters of support, thousands of mailing lists to help build our recruitment database. I met Dr. Mona Fouad when I

was written into a grant to be the recruitment Coordinator for the Women’s Health Initiative. We teamed up to find ways to engaged and address health issues in underserved communities. Dr. Fouad stayed the course amidst many major barriers we faced with community engagement.”

In her roles, Thompson knew she needed to be in the communities she sought to engage. Thompson learned to find leaders and influencers, including pastors, elected officials and neighborhood leaders, who could help give her credibility. Thompson encountered a variety of people throughout her travels of the state and region.

“I could sing Amazing Grace in any way and in any church,” she quipped. Yet, there remained a common theme among the

people when discussing health issues, particularly clinical trials.

“They do not want to be guinea pigs. People needed more information to help them make an informed decision,” she said. “If you stay in the community long enough, build trust and give people enough information, they will make informed decisions.”

After retiring from UAB in late 2018, Thompson founded her own organization, Alabama Communities Together (ACT) which continues and expands upon her previous community engagement work.

“I like connecting the dots,” Thompson said. “I like helping people move from dependency to self-sufficiency, especially when it comes to their health and where they live and play. This is who I am.”

## ANSWER KEY

### May Health Awareness

M T O B Z Z W Y T I V I T C A L A C I S Y H P E  
 S S R J V V I Z W P U O G L B S D C C F A E W P  
 N E S Z S P H N R D C J K H N T X M O T W R P Z  
 A T T Q W G P I P Z M E A Y E S V Q I I G V C D  
 W V L P A P T E S T F U N Z B A F R R W A A P F  
 D P Y F L G K K P Q D X H V L U L Q U A P L O Y  
 V H Q P N E E R C S N U S P F L V T D U T H F V  
 N Y Z A Y J K Y G W P H I I U G T E H P A S M L  
 A H Q E E P D M R A A W P K O F K V M Y Z Q L M  
 B E P B J L R O D B T I R V U T R A Q V D X K O  
 A A X J U V T W L T N R W N V S M B X E G I P C  
 L J R E T K Y N H I D Z L Q G A L R D S N V E H  
 L I L W R Z W X B S S D R S R E C F O Y R Q R T  
 Z P P T Y M K Z E A R L Y D E T E C T I O N B J  
 H A P P R M N H R E B A G V V C O Z I G S R T A  
 O O Z Z E E U D M H F Q A X U P W X P N Q F R M  
 F S V B C Q T A G H B E T G J P N C U M E V E J  
 E A N C N N Y W Y W G V A F C A Z H T I X F O U  
 T U L M A M Y X F H B R J G C I I O I M R M H P  
 E V W P C R O F L Q U C H O K B H P S I K S J G  
 M Y I M N H V X M K T V D A A B D E R K D S I M  
 Z J U V I Q K X T J F Z T N N O D M E J D U F G  
 P R K F K Y W J A V H N J B R A I N T U M O R G  
 V W H C S A G O R E C N A C N I A R B O V J W B

- Early Detection
- Physical Activity
- Healthy Diet
- Brain Cancer
- Sunscreen
- HPV Vaccine
- HPV Test
- Pap Test Skin Cancer
- Brain Tumor



# THE RESEARCH CORNER

## RESIDENTS IN ALABAMA AND MISSISSIPPI ARE GOING GREEN FOR IMPROVED DIET AND BETTER HEALTH

Fresh, home-grown vegetables are becoming more plentiful in counties across Alabama and Mississippi with the expansion of a program designed to improve healthy food options and providing options for physical activity.

The introduction of “Harvest for Health” signifies a major step for participants in the ongoing Chronic Disease and Health Disparities Program. The Chronic Disease and Health Disparities Program delivers education outreach activities that focus on cancer survivors, people with heart disease or diabetes who are 50 and older. The goal includes examining ways to prevent or manage chronic diseases with lifestyle adjustments.

Community Health Advisors from the Office of Community Outreach and Engagement at the O’Neal Comprehensive Cancer Center already deliver health messages and interact with local communities. They are now working to recruit and participants for the gardening component. Gardening activity will be phased in beginning this month.

Recruitment for participants is open in Alabama and Mississippi. Alabama Counties are: Bullock, Calhoun, Dallas, Madison, Marengo, Monroe, Sumter, Talladega and Walker Counties. Mississippi Counties



Dr. Jennifer Bail

are: Bolivar, Grenada, Humphrey, Panola, Sunflower and Yazoo Counties.

“Gardening seems like a very simple thing, but it is very holistic and affects people in many different ways,” said Dr. Jennifer Bail, Assistant Professor of Nursing in at the University of Alabama in Huntsville, a participant in the latest initiative. “It is bringing so many things together. It is helping people to eat healthier, to be more physically active, and it also helps people’s mood.”

The project is widespread and includes a team from several institutions in two states. **UAB:** Dr. Monica Baskin, principal investigator, Dr. Wendy Demark-Wahnefried and Claudia Hardy; **UAH:** Dr. Jennifer Bail; **Alabama A&M University:** Dr. Rudy Pacumbaba; **Mississippi State University:** Dr. David Buys and Dr. Jeff Wilson; **University of Mississippi Medical Center:** Dr. Angela Duck. Each gardening participant will get four containers on

wheels that can be used on porches, in yards or even on apartment decks.

“We’re trying to make it as easy as possible for people to make these healthier choices,” Bail explained. Participants will be given all the supplies they need and will be getting support from a master gardener from area extension services. “The special ingredients in this are the master gardeners who will mentor the participants,” she said. Harvest for Health in other areas has proven to be successful in increasing

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fruit and vegetable intake, increasing physical function and providing an opportunity for exercise and physical activity.

Harvest for Health was the brainchild of Dr. Wendy Demark-Wahnefried, Associate Director of Cancer Prevention and Control at the O'Neal Comprehensive Cancer Center, who began the program among cancer survivors. The current version expands participation to people with other chronic illnesses.

The goals of promoting healthier diet, encouraging physical activity and improving physical functioning remain the same under the program led by

Dr. Monica Baskin, associate director for Community Outreach & Engagement at the O'Neal Comprehensive Cancer Center.

"Dr. Demark-Wahnefried has noticed in her previous studies that the act of gardening does help in those areas," Bail said. "Even when people say, 'I really don't like fruits and vegetables,' when you've grown it yourself, in your own garden not only does it taste better, but you are more apt to eat it because there's a sense of self-accomplishment."

Bail said using the existing CHA model will help deliver greatest impact to the



Dr. Monica Baskin

communities that need it. "These aren't things that we are having to create. The CHAs are already there," Bail said. "I really love the angle of helping to empower



Dr. Wendy Demark-Wahnefried

people to improve their own health and well-being. This could be a great way to help people make better choices."

## HARVEST FOR HEALTH

A vegetable gardening program that may help to improve your health.

### Did you know growing a vegetable garden may help you:

- Improve Your Health
- Get More Exercise
- Eat Healthier
- Live a Better Life



### Who Qualifies:

- Men & Women ages 50 and up
- Cancer survivors
- People with Heart Disease
- People with Diabetes

For More Info, Contact:  
Phone: 205-975-0003  
Email: [coeinfo@uab.edu](mailto:coeinfo@uab.edu)



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# MAY IS BRAIN TUMOR AWARENESS MONTH

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FOR MORE INFORMATION:

PHONE: (205) 975-0003

EMAIL: COENFO@UAB.EDU

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CANCER CENTER  
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## A New Day!

*May 16, 2021*

Join the faith community on a national observance day dedicated to educating congregants and community members about tobacco, vaping and the role of flavors like menthol.

FOR MORE DETAILS AND REGISTRATION EMAIL: COEINFO@UAB.EDU • PHONE: 205-975-0003

CELEBRATING 25 YEARS OF OUTREACH & ENGAGEMENT

# ANNIVERSARY SERIES SPOTLIGHTS COMMUNITY OUTREACH IN LATINO COMMUNITIES

OUTREACH AND ENGAGEMENT



The Office of Community Outreach and Engagement continues its 25th anniversary series on May 25 with a virtual conversation on community outreach in Latino communities. Dr. Isabel Scarinci will be the guest during the virtual event.

Scarinci is a professor in the UAB Division of Preventive Medicine and is the senior advisor for Globalization & Cancer at the O’Neal Comprehensive Cancer Center. Throughout its 25 years, the office has relied

on community partners and community health advisors to form strategies that reach historically overlooked groups.

Scarinci will discuss the implementation of community health advisor programs in Hispanic

communities and discuss early research in rural communities regarding cervical cancer and tobacco use.

The event will be presented on Zoom and will also be available by conference call.

## WE WANT TO SHINE THE SPOTLIGHT ON YOU

As we mark 25 year of the Office of Outreach and Community Engagement, we want to hear from CHAs who have served 20 years or more. Please contact your local county coordinator. We plan to spotlight you in coming months.

# Community Outreach in the Latino Community



Join the Office of Community Outreach and Engagement as Dr. Isabel Scarinci gives insight on demonstrating the implementation of COE programs within the Latino community.



**Guest Speaker:**

Isabel C. Scarinci, PhD, MPH  
Professor, UAB Division of Preventive Medicine

JOIN VIA CONFERENCE CALL OR ZOOM

**TUESDAY**  
**MAY 25, 2021**  
**5:30 PM**



**REGISTER:** [GO.UAB.EDU/COE-LATINO](http://GO.UAB.EDU/COE-LATINO)

# SNAPSHOTS

## OUTREACH AND ENGAGEMENT TEAM MEMBERS DO THEIR PART TO DELIVER CANCER AWARENESS

Here's a look back at some of the activities by team members to promote colorectal cancer awareness in their communities in late March.



**Navy Sunday event at Macedonia Missionary Baptist Church, Panola County, Miss. with Adriana Ellis.**



**Coordinator Annie Perry-Smith of Panola County, Miss. presented the Navy awareness event in her community.**



**Grenada County, Miss. CHA Mary Stewart led Navy Sunday at Mt Vernon Missionary Baptist Church.**



**Scientist Molly Richardson, Ph.D, MPH, at the annual Rumpshaker 5K in Homewood, Ala.**