

# COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

KEEPING OUR COMMUNITIES CONNECTED AND ENGAGED

ISSUE 36, JANUARY 2024

## DIRECTOR'S NOTE

Happy new year from the Office of Community Outreach and Engagement (COE)! It is hard to believe that 2023 came and went so quickly. With each new year, we are reminded that we have another chance to make an impact to better the coming days, weeks, months, and year ahead. 2024 marks the official kick off of the new COE strategic plan guided by the three Es: Evidence, Education, and Empowerment. It also marks very important office changes to support this plan, including the addition of Silvia Camata, MPH, Pharm, RN, as Director of Community Health Access and Mackenzie Fowler, Ph.D., as Director of Evaluation.

I am so very glad that our COE team has the awesome opportunity to wish you all well in 2024. Our team is hard at work planning “out of the box” engagement activities that bring opportunities for community members to get connected to care services and learn more about research opportunities. We look forward to seeing some of you on April 20th at our inaugural Central Alabama Regional Wellness Day to be held at the Birmingham Crossplex facility. More information about the screenings, education, and fun to be had will be coming soon. Throughout the state, you can also look for us to be spreading the word about our “Community Research Academy to Foster Representation” (C.R.A.F.T.) program. The C.R.A.F.T. program is an interactive learning session that teaches community members about clinical research.

Keep an eye out for your local county coordinators bringing the C.R.A.F.T. program to your community. Lastly, the COE team has been challenged to increase referrals to cancer screening by 20%. With that, you will see our team out and about, developing relationships, and ready to help EVERYONE get age-appropriate cancer screenings.

2024 will be bright! I’m assured that UAB O’Neal Comprehensive Cancer Center’s OCOE will increase its engagement. Stand with us as we prepare for greater IMPACT!

*- Dr. Nolan*

## WHAT'S INSIDE:

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- 59 New CHAs Trained!



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**O'NEAL** COMPREHENSIVE  
CANCER CENTER  
UAB THE UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA AT BIRMINGHAM

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# FALL 2023 CHA GRADUATES



On November 28, 59 new Community Health Advisors (CHA) throughout Alabama and Mississippi graduated from a ten-session virtual training with the Office of Community Outreach & Engagement.

Joanice Thompson, founder and president of Alabama Communities Together (ACT) and president at Bush Hills Connections, was the keynote speaker.

O'Neal clinicians, researchers and other experts presented information on the office's impact cancers, HPV Vaccine, Tobacco 101, clinical trials, and screening referrals. These men and women are now trained to reduce cancer burden and disparities through evidence, education, and empowerment.

Congratulations to all new CHAs!

## **BOLIVAR COUNTY, MS**

Angela Tate Ruthie Hall  
Patsy Lawson

## **BULLOCK COUNTY, AL**

Annie Anthony-Wynn Louise Banks  
Ethel Ford Mary Turpin  
Karen Bowens

## **CHILTON COUNTY, AL**

Brenda Reed Victor Talley  
Linda Church

## **CHOCTAW COUNTY, AL**

Deborah Franklin Sophia Walton  
Luerese Jackson Willie Bryant  
Mary Grant

## **GREENE COUNTY, AL**

Evelyn Tiller Tyesha Weeks

## **GRENADA COUNTY, MS**

Annie Hankins Kuai Caldwell  
Dorothy Brown Madelene Willis

## **HALE COUNTY, AL**

Ashley Jones Patrick Braxton  
Kimberly Skipper

## **JEFFERSON COUNTY, AL**

Josa Crawford Titania Brown  
Sherin James Tracey Hardy  
Tange Toliver

## **MACON COUNTY, AL**

Demetria Pollard NaQuitha Bowen

## **MADISON COUNTY, AL**

Donna Lewis Phyllis Bowers-Boyle  
Levern (Lee) Eady Veda Eady

## **MARENGO COUNTY, AL**

Brittney Westbrook

## **MONROE COUNTY, AL**

Janice Henderson Lieasha Gissendaner

## **PANOLA COUNTY, MS**

Mattie Spann

## **SHELBY COUNTY, AL**

Kristen Glover Portia Mason-Harton  
Michelle Evans Racquelle Lane

## **SUMTER COUNTY, AL**

Annie Wade Jeanette Walker  
Charles Otis Ruby Moss  
Gwendolyn Carter

## **WALKER COUNTY, AL**

Angelita Jackson Karen Jones  
Antonio Jackson Myrtle Jackson  
Arthur Sudduth Rita Shepherd  
Brian Gann Sandra Sudduth

## **YAZOO COUNTY, MS**

Joyce Latiker Ramika Davis



(Community Research Academy to Foster Representation)

The Office of Community Outreach & Engagement recently released its latest health initiative, Community Research Academy to Foster Representation or C.R.A.F.T. It is designed to address clinical trial myths and increase general awareness of clinical trials.

C.R.A.F.T. uses a "train the trainer" model to provide education and resources to train staff, Community Health Advisors (CHAs), and others on how to use culturally relevant techniques to address minority participation in clinical trials. The first C.R.A.F.T. training was held on December 8, 2023 with 16

participants. COE Health Initiatives Manager, Rochelle Wallace, and Stacey Ingram, Clinical Research Administration Manager, presented three sessions:

- (1) Introduction to Clinical Trails/Myth Busters,
- (2) Clinical Trial participant panel, and
- (3) How to Find Clinical Trials.

Introduced by Associate Director, Dr. Timiya Nolan, the C.R.A.F.T. program increased knowledge and improved perception of clinical trial participation by training participants.

For more information, contact us at [coeinfo@uab.edu](mailto:coeinfo@uab.edu).



## HPV: The Facts & Good News

By Peter Kettle, MD, Gynecologic Oncology Fellow, UAB

More than 14,000 women in the U.S. are diagnosed with cervical cancer every year, and more than 4,000 die from the disease. Almost all cervical cancers are caused by human papillomavirus (HPV) infection.

The good news is that almost all cervical cancers are preventable through three strategies: (1) HPV vaccination, which protects from HPV infection; (2) cervical screening, which can detect HPV infection and/or changes BEFORE it turns into cancer; and (3) timely follow-up in the event of an abnormal screening.

Researchers from the O'Neal Comprehensive Cancer Center are working in many fronts with the ultimate goal of eliminating cervical cancer as public health problem in the U.S. and globally. Some examples:

- Development of several new vaccines that: 1) can target even more high-risk HPV types that can lead to cervical cancer 2) can help a woman's immune system clear the HPV strain most likely to lead to cervical cancer and 3) can help prevent recurrence of cervical cancer in women being treated with chemotherapy and radiation.
- Development of evidence-based strategies to promote HPV vaccination uptake.
- Exploring innovative ways to increase uptake of cervical cancer screening and acceptability of these methods by health care providers and patients.
- Understanding why many women do not attend their follow-up visits after an abnormal cervical cancer screening.
- Working with partners in other countries to share how lessons learned in cervical cancer prevention in the U.S. can inform their efforts and bring their lessons learned back to U.S. through bidirectional partnerships.

The work conducted by O'Neal researchers and others have informed the development of a statewide plan to eliminate cervical cancer as a public health in Alabama which was launched by the Alabama State Health Officer in May 2023. Alabama is the first and only state in the U.S. to officially launch such a plan.



**Peter Kettle, M.D.**  
PGY-5, Gynecologic Oncology Fellow, UAB



**Rebecca C. Arend, M.D., MSPH**  
Associate Professor, Division of Gynecologic Oncology at UAB



**Isabel C. Scarinci, Ph.D., MPH**  
Professor, Department Obstetrics and Gynecology at UAB

### Fast facts about HPV (Human papillomavirus)



#### HPV

Human papillomavirus (HPV) is a very common STD, with an estimated 80 percent of sexually active people contracting it at some point in their lives.



#### CERVICAL CANCER

Over 4,000 women die of cervical cancer each year in the United States.



#### SEX

HPV can infect anyone who has ever had a sexual encounter.



#### EFFECTIVE

Since HPV vaccination was introduced, infections with HPV types that cause most HPV cancers and genital warts have dropped 71 percent among teen girls.



#### PREVENTABLE

Cervical cancer is the first cancer in women to be identified as being caused almost exclusively by a virus. It is preventable.

# CANCER PREVENTION

February is National Cancer Prevention month! Please join the Office of Community Outreach & Engagement for an interactive webinar on ways to prevent cancer.

- Physical Activity Demo
- HPV Vaccination
- Healthy Diet Cooking Demo
- Smoking/ Vaping Cessation

**FEB.13**  
**@ 6:00 PM**

Register online at the following link:

[go.uab.edu/preventcancer24](https://go.uab.edu/preventcancer24)

OR

SCAN HERE  
TO REGISTER



**UPCOMING  
EVENT!**



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to give to OCOE!