UCONN HEALTH

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH SCIENCES

June - August

PUBLIC HEALTH HAPPENINGS

Preparing Leaders for a Healthier Tomorrow

First Days & Fresh Starts

Faculty Promotions - PAGE 17

Fall 2026 MPH Orientation - PAGE 24

Student Spotlight Ethan Gasteyer - PAGE 27

Public Health Explained Podcast - PAGE 28

The summer introduced new beginnings, including a new cohort, podcast, video series, and faculty titles. Stay updated on the latest public health news.

Table of Contents

Department News

Your Dose of Public Health - PAGE 8
Department Retreat - PAGE 9
Mixed Methods Video Series - PAGE 12

Faculty & Research Updates

Grant & Research Updates - PAGE 14
Faculty Promotions - PAGE 17

In the Community

Donation Drive Results - PAGE 19
MPH Outreach Events - PAGE 20
Community Green Infrastructure & Plant Propagation Initiative - PAGE 21

Program and Student News

Fall 2026 MPH Orientation - PAGE 24
Fall 2026 Service Activity - PAGE 26
Student Spotlight Ethan Gasteyer - PAGE 27
Public Health Explained Podcast - PAGE 28
Student Spotlight Sandy Doan - PAGE 29
PHLAME Career Workshop - PAGE 30
Upcoming Events For Prospective Students - PAGE 31

Note from... THE DIRECTOR

"We delight in the beauty of the butterfly, but rarely admit the changes it has gone through to achieve that beauty." ~ Maya Angelou

There is something fitting about this quote as we look back on the summer. We see the butterfly, the finished product, but not the transformation that made it possible. In many ways, our own growth looks like that. We tend to notice the big milestones, but not always the smaller changes, challenges, and experiences that made them possible.

Summer has a different rhythm than the rest of the academic year, and this one was no exception. It also has a way of disappearing before we realize it. A few short months can feel like a long break when we are looking ahead to June, but somehow August arrives almost overnight. Summer is brief, but it can be full of experiences that stay with us long after it ends.

Many of our students spent these months out in the field, putting what they have learned into practice at sites across the state and beyond. There is something different about watching public health happen outside a classroom. The conversations get harder, the problems get messier, and the answers are rarely as straightforward as they seemed on paper. But that is where some of the most meaningful learning happens. If you were one of the students who spent your summer doing that work, I hope you took a moment to recognize how much you learned and how much you grew. It probably mattered more than you realized in that moment.

For those of us on the faculty and staff side, summer brought a different kind of work: the unglamorous, behind-the-scenes projects that keep a program running and help us make it a little better each year. We reviewed curriculum, strengthened documentation, planned for the year ahead, and thought carefully about where we could improve. None of it makes for a particularly dramatic story, but it is the foundation everything else gets built on.

Summer also gave us something we do not always have during the semester: a little room to breathe. Time to read, write, think, reconnect, and remember why we do this

work in the first place. I hope you found some of that too, wherever the summer took you.

As we head into a new academic year, I am grateful for everyone who kept showing up over these past few months, whether that meant working at a practicum site, moving a research project forward, preparing for the semester ahead, or simply staying connected to this community from a distance. Every one of those contributions matters.

And perhaps that is the reminder I take from Dr. Angelou's words. Growth is often happening long before we see the result. The transformation can be quiet. It can happen in a challenging conversation, a new experience, a problem we finally learn how to navigate, or simply in becoming a little more confident in our ability to handle what comes next.

The summer may have been brief, but I hope it gave you something meaningful to carry into the year ahead.

Thank you for everything you bring to our public health community.

With gratitude,

Stacey Brown, PhD

Director, Program in Applied Public Sciences

Reminder! 12th Week is November 10th, 11th, 12th

For 2026-2027 Academic Year

Thurs, Aug 27	**New Student Orientation**
Mon, Aug 31	Fall semester begins
Mon, Sep 7	Labor Day – No classes
Mon, Sep 14	Courses dropped after this date will have a "W" for withdrawal recorded on the academic record. Last day to add or drop courses without additional signatures.
Fri, Sep 25	Deadline to apply for graduation and to submit Final Plan of Study for conferral of a Fall 2026 degree
Tue, Sep 29	Dean's signature required to add courses
Mon, Oct 26	Registration for Spring 2026 semester via Student Administration System begins
Sun, Nov 1-Wed, Nov 4	APHA Annual Meeting & Expo (San Antonio, TX)
Mon, Nov 16	Last day to withdraw from a course
Tue., Nov 10-Thu, Nov 12	Public Health 12th Week Activities (no classes scheduled – students expected to attend)
TBD	CPHA Annual Conference
Sun, Nov 22-Sat, Nov 28	Thanksgiving Recess – No classes
Fri, Dec 4	**Last day for degree candidates to submit thesis** final copies to Submittable and related paperwork to Degree Audit in the Office of the Registrar for conferral of a Fall 2026 degree.
Fri, Dec 11	Last day of fall semester classes
Mon, Dec 14 - Fri, Dec 18	Final examinations
Sun, Dec 20	Conferral date for Fall 2026 degrees
Wed, Dec 23	Semester grades due at 4 pm
Fri, Jan 4	Last day for Degree Audit in the Office of the Registrar to receive Plan B master's students approved Report on the Final Exam form. Final exam must be taken before the semester ends.

DEPARTMENT NEWS

YOUR DOSE of Public Health

Bi-Weekly Newsletter

Your Dose of Public Health connects you with individuals, programs, and ideas shaping public health at UConn. Each issue features student stories, faculty research, program updates, and industry insights, providing an insight into learning, leadership, and impact in the field.

SUBSCRIBE TODAY!

Department Retreat

A big thank you to our department for a thoughtful and productive retreat. It was great to come together, reflect on our accomplishments, share ideas, and look ahead to the year ahead.

Thank you!

New Video Series | Mixed Methods

Introducing Mixed Methods, a new video series featuring public health professionals sharing their perspectives, current work, the challenges they've faced, and what keeps them motivated.

In this first episode, Dr. Doug Brugge sits down with research associates **Jen Sussman and Janice Vendetti**, whose combined 60+ years span community prevention, program evaluation, and moving evidence-based practices into real clinical care. They get into what people misunderstand about their jobs, why harm reduction is so often misread, what it felt like to accidentally delete half a data set, and whether coffee counts as a public health intervention.

Watch the video now!

What Can Global Research Teach Us About Improving HIV Care in the U.S.?

Dr. Youngji Jo Awarded NIH K01 to Advance Chronic Disease Care

Dr. Youngji Jo, Assistant Professor in Public Health Sciences, was awarded a K01 titled "Evaluating the Impact of Integrated and Differentiated HIV–NCD Service Delivery through Mathematical Modeling." The project develops a behavior- and systems-aware model to evaluate integrated service delivery for multimorbidity management. Drawing on the Center for Infectious Disease Research in Zambia (CIDRZ)'s large NIH-funded trial dataset (TASKPEN), the work will inform highly effective and cost-effective intervention approaches under the health-system constraints — capacity and budget — that must be addressed for integrated service delivery to scale.

This setting provides a unique, accelerated opportunity to study multimorbidity patterns, care-delivery challenges, and outcomes of integrated care models directly relevant to older adults living with HIV in the United States. With 54% of U.S. people living with HIV now aged 50 or older and an estimated 60–80% experiencing multimorbidity, this work will inform integrated care for Ryan White clinics and other safety-net systems, where strengthening chronic disease coordination is a national priority.

Healthy Schools, Stronger Outcomes: Why IAQ Matters

A newly published review article co-authored by **Misti Levy Zamora**, along with first author **Hannah Cooke** and **Jess Hollenbach of Connecticut Children's Medical Center (CCMC),** examines an important but often overlooked component of healthy school environments: the relationship between indoor air quality, student achievement, and educator well-being.

Research on school indoor air quality (IAQ) has historically focused on its effects on children and student health. While these impacts remain critical, educators spend much of their working lives in the same environments and can also experience the consequences of poor IAQ. The new review draws attention to this gap, emphasizing the importance of considering educator health alongside student outcomes when evaluating the quality of school environments.

Together, these findings demonstrate that improving IAQ in schools is about more than maintaining buildings. Creating healthy indoor environments is an important public health strategy that supports the people who teach and learn in them every day.

By bringing student achievement and educator well-being into the same conversation, the review underscores the need to view school indoor air quality as a fundamental component of effective teaching, learning, and healthy school communities.

Read the full review article to learn more about the relationship between school IAQ, student outcomes, and educator well-being.

Dr. Jenn Cavallari Awarded Funding to Strengthen Workplace Health

Dr. Jenn Cavallari, Professor in Public Health Sciences and Co-Director of the Center for the Promotion of Health in the New England Workplace (CPH-NEW), a NIOSH Total Worker Health® Center of Excellence, has received a supplemental sixth year of funding for the five-year "CPH-NEW IV" grant. The supplemental award provides an additional to extend the Center's work in partnership with collaborators at the University of Massachusetts at Lowell and the University of Connecticut on this award. CPH-NEW IV is a multi-project center grant focused on advancing the science, practice, and policy of Total Worker Health® (TWH), an approach that integrates protection from work-related safety and health hazards with promotion of worker well-being.

Outreach Core: The Outreach Core advances TWH science, practice, and policy through professional and pre-professional education; communication and dissemination of TWH research findings and evidence-based tools; and capacity-building activities that support organizations in adopting, implementing, and sustaining TWH approaches. Total Teacher Health Core: The Total Teacher Health Core pilots and evaluates the Educator Well-being Program, a TWH approach that empowers educators to identify and address organizational conditions that affect health, well-being, and retention, while strengthening capacity for sustainable, systems-level improvements.

SHIFT Core: The Safety and Health through Integrated, Facilitated Teams II (SHIFT II) project is a participatory TWH project that empowers healthcare workers to identify and address workplace conditions affecting safety, health, and well-being through the Healthy Workplace Participatory Program and worker leadership training.

The Department of Public Health Sciences is pleased to share news of two recent faculty promotions, approved by the Academic Affairs Subcommittee and the Board of Directors.

Dr. Greg Rhee has been promoted to Professor with tenure.

Dr. Natalie Moore has been promoted to Associate Professor.

Both promotions recognize their outstanding contributions to public health research, teaching, and service. Please join us in congratulating Dr. Rhee and Dr. Moore on this well-earned recognition!

Community Donation Drive Success!

We were proud to support three impactful initiatives dedicated to serving CT residents: **Hands On Hartford, Connecticut Institute for Refugees and Immigrants, and Community Service Officer Jim Barrett's Homeless Outreach Program.**

This summer, the department conducted a Summer Donation Drive which primarily focused on collecting essential items, including non-perishable food items, personal care and hygiene products, baby supplies, clothing, gift cards to fast-food restaurants, and bus passes. Access to basic necessities is critical to a person's health and quality of life.

Our team has donated a total of 1541 essential items to support individuals and families in need through Hands On Hartford and the Connecticut Institute for Refugees and Immigrants (CIRI). While 792 items were donated to CIRI, including toothbrushes, toothpaste, and floss, Hands On Hartford received 749 items, including food, personal care products, and baby supplies.

In addition to these 1541 donated items, 187 clothing and household items will be delivered to Center Church to support members of the community in need. We have also delivered over $600 in food gift cards to Officer Jim Barrett, who works closely with community members in need and will help get these resources into the right hands.

That gives us a whopping total of 1728 items donated!

We are grateful to everyone who contributed and helped make the drive a success. Every donation, every share, and every act of support helped make this drive a success. Together, we can continue to support our communities and demonstrate that public health is, at its heart, about people and the communities in which they live.

MPH Health Outreach

This year, Taline Norsigian is visiting Farmers' Markets across Connecticut to connect with residents, learn which health topics matter most to them, and make vital information more accessible.

At each market, she sparks curiosity with interactive activities, fun trivia, and memorable takeaways that inspire healthier living. Her goal? To design impactful, tailored events throughout the year that address the community's unique health needs and concerns.

Community Green Infrastructure & Plant Propagation Initiative

The Community Green Infrastructure & Plant Propagation Initiative brings together the Keney Park Sustainability Project, Hartford Public Schools, the Hispanic Health Council, and community partners to improve food access, promote environmental sustainability, and engage youth in community health leadership.

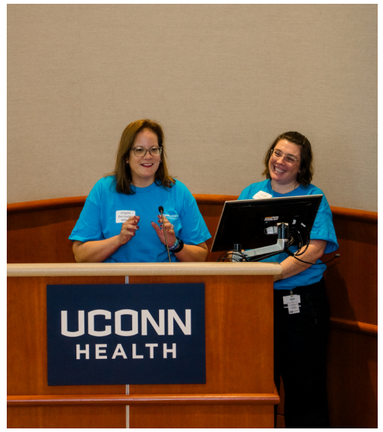
By combining urban agriculture, environmental health education, and community partnerships, the initiative helps build healthier, more resilient neighborhoods in North Hartford. The project will provide residents with practical resources and knowledge to support healthier, more sustainable households while creating opportunities for youth to participate in meaningful community-based environmental health activities. Through collaboration with schools, community organizations, and neighborhood partners, KPSP will help strengthen connections between environmental sustainability, food access, public health, and community well-being.

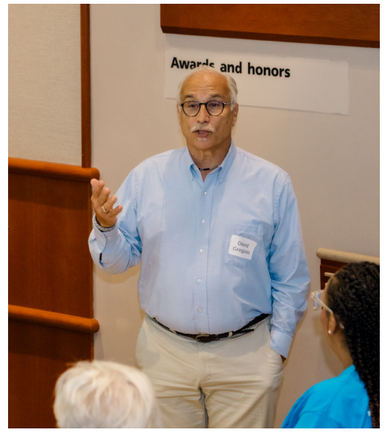
This past August, our students experienced public health in action by helping plant and set up the initiative's new greenhouse. Through hands-on involvement, they gained firsthand insight into the connections between environmental health, food access, sustainability, and community well-being.

PREPARING LEADERS
FOR AHEALTHIER
TOMORROW

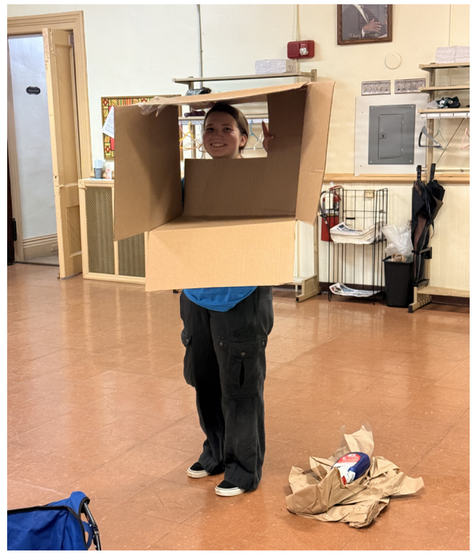
MPH Orientation - Fall 2026

On August 27th 2026, we welcomed our new cohort of MPH stdudents! The day kicked off with a warm welcome and an engaging scavenger hunt. Soon after , students enjoyed presentations, a tour, and reflective activities. Finally, we wrapped up the day with a student success panel that showcased current students and alumni.





Fall 2026 Service Activity



Our Fall ’26 MPH students proved they loved public health, check out their shirts they wore while volunteering at Metropolitan AME Zion Church in Hartford.Together with SAVE (Saving African American Village), they prepared donations for the community store, making essential items available at no cost.

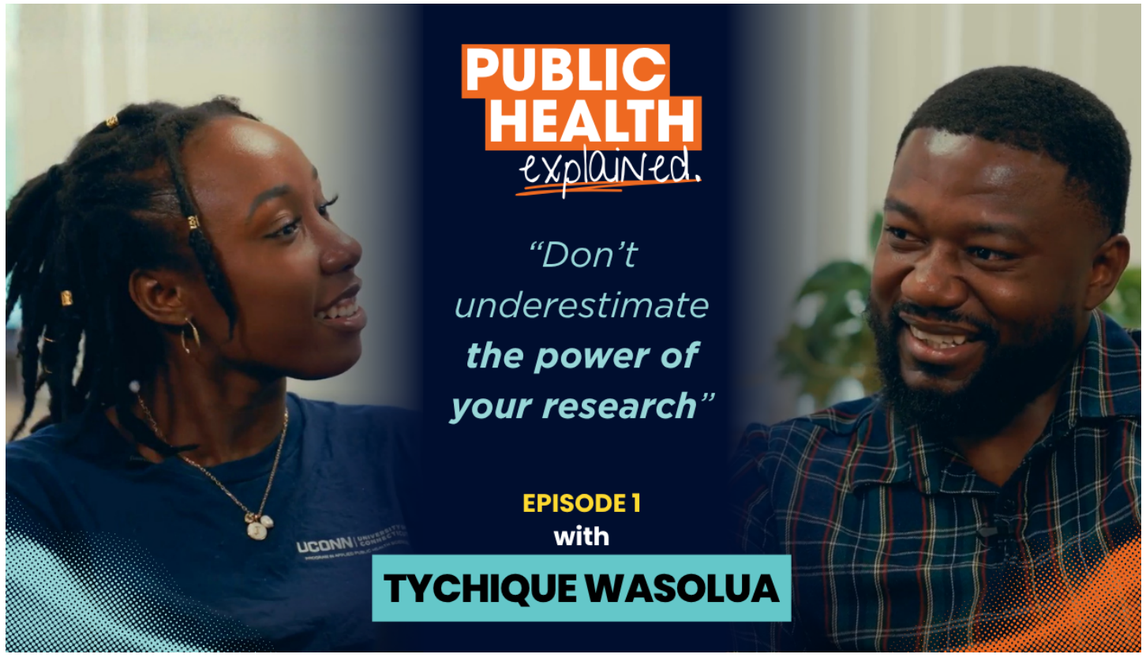
Courage, Resilience, and the Journey to Becoming a Physician

Meet Ethan Gasteyer, a UConn medical and UConn MPH student whose journey is a powerful reminder of courage, resilience, and the impact of community.

After being diagnosed with brain cancer as a UConn undergraduate, Ethan continued pursuing his dream of becoming a physician while navigating treatment and the challenges of his diagnosis. Now on medical leave from medical school, he remains determined to use his experience to help others.

Read Ethan’s inspiring story of perseverance, hope, and the support of his fellow Huskies in **UConn Today here**.

New Podcast | Public Health explained.



Introducing Public Health explained, a new video series where we hand the microphone to a total outsider — our own marketing team — to ask the questions everyone wonders about public health but never gets to ask.

In our first episode, Jini Korcz sits down with **MPH student Tychique Wasolua**. He discusses why research matters and how one paper could impact healthcare. Along with, sharing insights about the ketamine and opioid research he has been examining as a graduate assistant within the program.

Watch the video now!

PhD Student Spotlight

This summer, Sandy Doan had the opportunity to intern with the Connecticut Department of Public Health, Health Statistics, Surveillance, and Tumor Registry, where she gained firsthand experience working at the intersection of public health research, surveillance, and population-level data.

Throughout her internship, she worked with cancer surveillance and epidemiologic data, including SEER resources, and contributed to projects examining cancer burden and prevention in Connecticut. One of the most valuable aspects of this experience was seeing how research data can inform public health priorities, programs, and decision-making at the state level.

As she continues her doctoral training in public health, this experience strengthened her interest in epidemiology, health equity, and the use of population-level data to better understand and address preventable health disparities.

She is grateful to the Connecticut Department of Public Health team for welcoming her, sharing their expertise, and providing the opportunity to learn from the important work taking place behind the scenes in public health surveillance.

PHLAME Initiative Presents...

CAREER DEVELOPMENT WORKSHOP

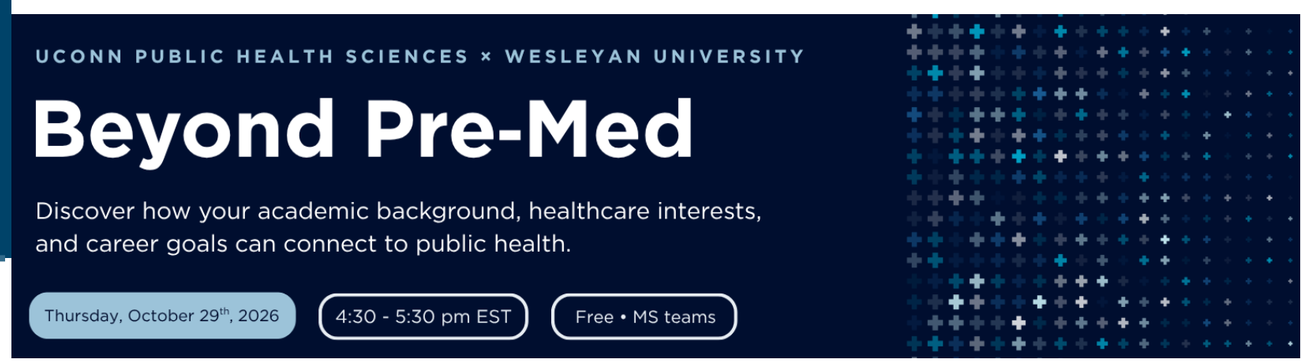
Wednesday, September 30th
Virtually from 12-1 PM
Guided by Kay Gruder

CLICK HERE TO REGISTER

- **Create or optimize your LinkedIn profile**
- **Resume and CV building**
- **Using Linkedin for networking**
- **Mistakes to avoid & how to stand out**

Future Events for Prospective Students

Click below to learn more!



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