

# MTSU Center for Health and Human Services Newsletter



*Advancing the health and well-being of Tennesseans through collaborative research and community impact projects, reducing health disparities, and promoting healthy communities*



## CHANGING LIVES THROUGH RESEARCH AND SERVICE

**"ENERGY AND PERSISTENCE CONQUER ALL THINGS."**

— Benjamin Franklin, American inventor, writer, scientist, and statesman

The past several months have been marked by continued progress and growing momentum for CHHS. Following the release of our 2025 Annual Report, which took the place of a spring newsletter, we are pleased to share several updates and developments. Since that time, we have been awarded three new grants, including a rural healthcare workforce grant funded by the **Tennessee Department of Labor and Workforce Development's Rural Works: Healthcare initiative** program. This project will train and place 25 students into entry-level healthcare

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**OVERVIEW** *continued from page 1*

careers in rural communities within 12 months and will support the future development of a multidisciplinary rural health certificate at MTSU.

We have also launched two additional projects funded by the **Tennessee Department of Health: a partnership with the Jennings A. Jones College of Business** to conduct return-on-investment analyses for the **Tobacco Use Prevention and Control Program**, and the development of **mental health resources for coaches working with youth athletes**. These awards reflect both new partnerships and a new funding source for our center, an encouraging sign that our persistence is paying off.

Even within a shifting funding environment, we continue to adapt and move forward. We currently have **11 proposals in development**, including efforts to sustain and expand campus-based mental health awareness training, advance chronic disease prevention building on our earlier Blue Raiders Drink Up initiative, continue funding for our mobile Medication-Assisted Treatment (MAT) opioid use disorder (OUD) program, and support workforce training focused on fetal alcohol spectrum disorder and rural health providers. This robust pipeline reflects our ongoing commitment to expanding impact because the more grants we write and receive, the more Tennesseans we can serve.

A few highlights:

- This spring, **CHHS** released its **inaugural Annual Report**, reflecting a decade of growth and expanding impact, with **12 active projects** and a **\$4.6 million annual budget** serving communities across Tennessee. An excerpt is included in this issue. Explore the [full report](#) to see how this momentum is positioning CHHS to continue emerging stronger.
- Our **CHHS** and **Cedar Recovery** team was invited to present at a national **Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA)** meeting and a virtual national grantee meeting for

four sessions on topics including **data-driven decision-making, reentry and rural justice partnerships, and sustaining Medication-Assisted Treatment (MAT) initiatives**. Learn more about these nationally recognized efforts in the feature later in this publication.

- **CHHS** was selected through a competitive campus process to showcase our work on nine SUD/OUD projects to the **MTSU Board of Trustees** this spring, demonstrating the strength and reach of our efforts across the state. As we continue to build on this momentum, we are not only navigating change, we are emerging stronger, and expanding our capacity to improve the health and well-being of Tennesseans.



Cynthia Chafin, Ph.D., MCHES®, NBC-HWC, CHHS Director

*continued on page 3*

**OVERVIEW** *continued from page 2*

- Our **CHHS team**, in collaboration with **MTSU Public Health Program faculty and student researchers**, earned First Place for a poster on rural MAT research at the **2025 Rural Health Association of Tennessee annual conference**, highlighting findings on stigma and mobile treatment awareness. Read more about this award-winning work and the partners involved in this issue.
- **CHHS**, in partnership with **MTSU University College** and the **Tennessee Department of Health**, continues its statewide **infant death scene investigation training**, reaching **more than 35,000 first responders** over the past 20+ years—including a recent training held at Pickwick Landing State Park where 42 first responders received training.



*Pictured left to right: John Burchfield (University College), Adrian Quinlan (University College - Student), Cynthia Chafin (CHHS)*

CHHS continues to identify collaborators and partners both on and off-campus to be involved in CHHS projects, community impact programs, and research. To learn more about the center and its work to promote better health and well-being

for all through its existing research, projects, and programs with local, state, and national reach, take a look at our [website](#), read more throughout this newsletter and previous editions posted on the website's [publications tab](#), and follow us on social media.

### **CURRENT RESEARCH, COMMUNITY IMPACT PROJECTS, AND PROGRAMS:**

- Rural Communities Opioid Response Program Medication-Assisted Treatment (MAT) Access
- Rutherford, Williamson, and Cannon Counties Opioid Abatement Technical Support – Office of Prevention Science and Recovery
- Infant Death Scene Investigation/Safe Sleep
- MTSU Mental Health Awareness Training
- Safe Stars, Pediatric mTBI, Return-to-Learn and Return-to-Play Evaluation
- Expansion of the MTSU Office of Prevention Science and Recovery
- Recovery Respite Housing
- Recovery Capacity Building and Residential Aftercare
- Rural Health Workforce
- Tobacco Control and Prevention Return on Investment Analyses
- Mental Health for Coaches Working with Youth Athletes

### **RECENTLY COMPLETED:**

- Rural Communities Opioid Response Program Implementation Grant

### **IN PROGRESS:**

- Eleven proposals are in progress as of the time of this publication, focusing on areas to include rural health, workforce development, maternal child health, chronic disease, older adults and social isolation, mental health, and substance use disorder.

**OVERVIEW** *continued from page 3*

With our current and recent portfolio that focuses on substance use disorders, rural health and rural health workforce, tobacco use control and prevention, mental health, injury prevention, and workforce development, we again express gratitude to our many partners who make our work possible as we make a difference in the lives of Tennesseans through initiatives that have state and national reach. CHHS looks forward to continuing to serve the public in these important areas as well as our campus community through our campus-focused grants and continues to identify collaborators and partners on and off campus to be involved in CHHS' work. Look for more updates via this quarterly CHHS newsletter, the CHHS website, and social media.

For those who 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 available and include spotlighted research, projects, and programs, with additional information posted on the website.

## Want to donate to further the work of MTSU's CHHS?

**MTSU CHHS operates primarily through external funding.**

To continue our mission and vision of advancing the health and well-being of Tennesseans, 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 [chhs.mtsu.edu](https://chhs.mtsu.edu), click on Donate Now, and specify that your donation is for CHHS. The site accepts MasterCard, VISA, and American Express.

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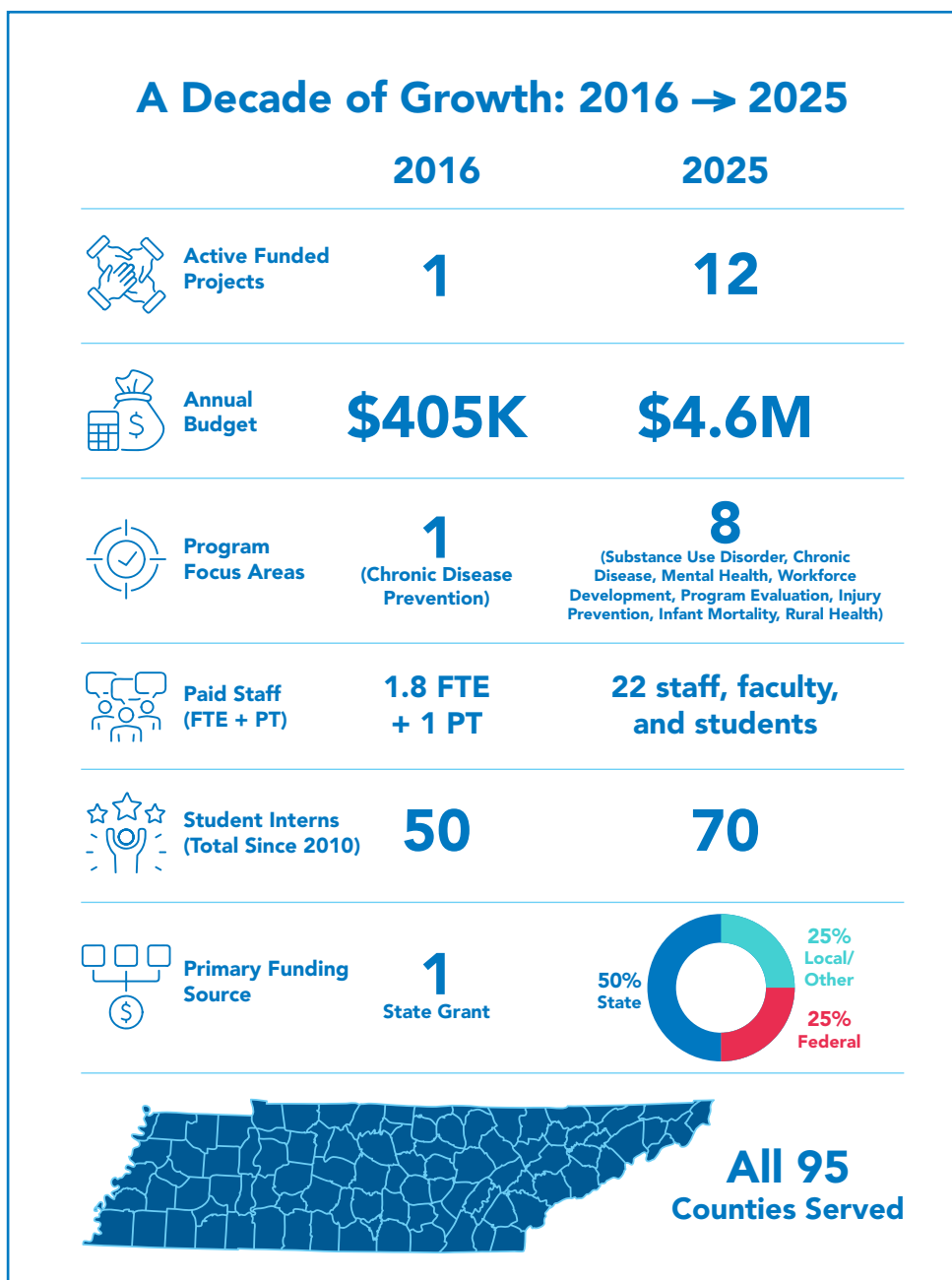
*"We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence, then, is not an act, but a habit."*

Will Durant, American historian, philosopher, and Pulitzer Prize-winning author, paraphrasing Aristotle

# A look at our 2025 Annual Report

The following excerpt from our Annual Report provides a snapshot of CHHS' transformation over the past decade. As shown in the "A Decade of Growth" chart, our expanding budget, team, and program areas reflect a significant increase in statewide impact.

The full report is [available](#) on our website.



# CHHS Initiative Featured at MTSU Board of Trustees Spring Meeting

CHHS was selected through a competitive campus process to present a poster at the MTSU Board of Trustees spring meeting, highlighting **TN Strong: Uniting for Opioid Prevention, Treatment, and Recovery**. This \$13.5 million initiative, supported by federal, state, and local funding, brings together nine coordinated projects addressing opioid use disorder (OUD) through prevention, treatment, and recovery strategies across Tennessee.

The initiative includes a mobile Medication-Assisted (MAT) unit serving six rural communities, respite housing with wraparound services, needs and gap analyses, stigma reduction efforts, and targeted interventions that have supported thousands of Tennesseans and possibly saved lives. More than 30 students in Public Health and Data Science have contributed to this work, gaining hands-on experience in data collection, evaluation, communications, and program implementation. This effort reflects the strength of multidisciplinary collaboration across CHHS, MTSU faculty, and community partners.

This work was selected through a campuswide nomination process recognizing excellence in research, service, and community engagement and made possible through strong collaboration and grant development leadership. Special thanks to **Sarah Gwinn** who was instrumental in securing funding that enabled this work and to **Kahler Stone and the MTSU Public Health program, Keith Jacks Gamble and the MTSU Data Science Institute, and more than 30 students** who have supported these efforts over the past five years.



Pictured left to right: Sarah Gwinn, Tess Swastek, Cynthia Chafin, Kahler Stone, Anakarina Lorenzana De Witt

This nine-project initiative is funded by multiple federal, state, and local grants totaling \$13,559,340, and focuses on opioid use disorder (OUD) prevention, treatment, and recovery. Projects include a mobile unit serving six rural TN communities, respite housing facilities, residential aftercare and support services, needs/gap analysis, stigma reduction, and county resource allocation.

The Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) provided financial support for two of these projects. The awards provided 100% of total costs and totaled \$1,000,000 and \$2,921,726. The contents are those of the authors. They may not reflect the policies of HRSA, HHS, or the U.S. Government.

## New Project: Building the Rural Healthcare Workforce—Grant Supports Student Training and Development of Multidisciplinary Rural Health Certificate

The MTSU Center for Health and Human Services (CHHS) has been awarded its first grant from the **Tennessee Department of Labor and Workforce Development** through the **Rural Works: Healthcare initiative** program, marking an exciting step forward in addressing healthcare workforce needs across rural Tennessee.

In its first year, the initiative will focus on placing students into entry-level healthcare roles in rural communities while they complete their degrees, alongside planning and development of a **multidisciplinary Rural Health Workforce Certificate** at MTSU.

Through the program, students will receive workforce-focused training, earn industry-recognized credentials, and participate in supervised practicum experiences early in their academic careers. These opportunities will allow students to gain hands-on experience in roles such as patient support, telehealth navigation, and community health outreach all while progressing toward their degrees.

At the same time, CHHS, with faculty engagement and support, will begin developing a Rural Health Workforce Certificate designed to integrate workforce preparation into a traditional bachelor's degree pathway. Once implemented, this stackable credential will equip students with job-ready skills before graduation, supporting earlier entry into the workforce and long-term careers serving rural communities.

The initiative responds to ongoing workforce challenges in rural Tennessee, including provider



shortages and limited pathways connecting students with rural employers. By addressing both immediate workforce needs and long-term pipeline development, the project creates sustainable solutions for communities across the state.

“This initiative allows us to support students in gaining real-world experience while also strengthening the healthcare workforce in rural areas,” said Cynthia Chafin, director of CHHS. “We are building a pathway that benefits both students and the communities they will serve.”

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**NEW PROJECT** *continued from page 7*

The project brings together partners from across the region, including the **Rutherford County Job Center**, the **Northern Middle Tennessee Workforce Development Board**, the **Rural Health Association of Tennessee**, **Primary Care and Hope Clinic**, **Workforce Essentials**, and the **Rutherford County Health Department**.

In addition to training and placement, the program will help reduce barriers to entering healthcare careers by covering costs such as certification exams, background checks, and other workforce-entry requirements.

## IMPACT SNAPSHOT

- **Year One Focus:** Student placement in rural healthcare roles, certificate planning and curriculum development
- **Workforce Pipeline:** Students gain paid, real-world experience while completing their degrees
- **Expanded Career Pathways:** Development of Multidisciplinary Rural Health Workforce Certificate
- **Practical Experience:** Students support patient care, telehealth services, and community outreach initiatives
- **Reduced Workforce Barriers:** Assistance with certification costs, background checks, and entry requirements
- **Rural Healthcare Impact:** Strengthening the healthcare workforce across rural Tennessee



## Project Spotlight and Community Partner: Rural Communities Opioid Response Program (RCORP) Medication-Assisted Treatment (MAT) Access Grant

CHHS has partnered with [Cedar Recovery](#) the last three years to establish medication-assisted treatment (MAT) access points in six rural Tennessee counties. CHHS received a **\$2.9 million dollar grant** from the **Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA)** as part of the **Rural Communities Opioid Response Program (RCORP)**. The initiative is aimed at reducing morbidity and mortality of substance use disorders. We are actively applying for grants to extend this project and the services it provides beyond August 2026.

Cedar Recovery specializes in treating opioid use disorder with medications such as buprenorphine and/or naltrexone. Currently, there are 12 locations in Tennessee and Virginia as well as a robust telemedicine platform that provide care to approximately 4,000 patients each month.

While Cedar Recovery provides direct services, MTSU's Center for Health and Human Services provides coordination and support services throughout the life of the grant.

The MTSU MAT Access project serves these rural Tennessee communities – **Franklin, Lawrence, Marshall, Giles, and Hickman counties** – and delivers patient care through a mobile unit provided by partner Cedar Recovery through an evidence-based approach to addiction recovery that combines medication-assisted treatment, behavioral therapy, care coordination, and recovery support. Additional services are provided at a live site in **Claiborne County**.



The CHHS and Cedar team has been successful in building and strengthening the local drug prevention and addiction treatment coalitions in these target communities. and leading professional development opportunities.

Read more about this project later in this newsletter and in previous editions of the Center for Health and Human Services [newsletters](#) and on the CHHS [website](#).

The MTSU MAT Access Team is pleased to have been a part of this important work in partnership with Cedar Recovery for the last three years, and is excited about pending grant applications to continue this project which has impacted hundreds of rural Tennesseans.

This project is supported by the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) as part of a financial assistance award totaling \$2,921,726 with 100% funded by HRSA/HHS and \$0 amount funded by nongovernment sources. The contents are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily represent the official views of, nor an endorsement, by HRSA/HHS, or the U.S. government. For more information, please visit [hrsa.gov](http://hrsa.gov).

PROJECT SPOTLIGHT *continued from page 9*

## NEW STIGMA REPORT RELEASED

### Rural Health and Stigma around Opioid Use Disorder (OUD) and MAT:

What does it take to reduce stigma around opioid use disorder in rural communities? This new report, developed in partnership with the **MTSU Public Health** program as part of our MTSU Center for Health and Human Services Medication-Assisted Treatment (MAT) Access grant with partner **Cedar Recovery** and funded through the **Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA.gov)** takes a closer look. This project, now in its third year, supports six rural Tennessee communities through a mobile treatment unit and limited fixed site locations.

#### Here's what we're seeing:

- 80% agree OUD is a disease.
- 75% say medication-assisted treatment (MAT) is essential.
- Yet 62% still show signs of stigma, especially around safety and social distance

That disconnect is where the real challenge and opportunity lie.

#### A few insights that stood out in this research:

- People with lived experience report lower stigma.
- Community outreach matters—those who recall campaigns are more likely to know about available services.
- Trusted local voices are key to shifting perceptions.

As we continue expanding access through mobile MAT services, reducing stigma remains just as critical as increasing availability. We are grateful to our partners at the MTSU Public Health program—**Kahler Stone, Dr.P.H.**, and **Sara Rodriguez Molina**—for leading this work and helping bring these insights forward.

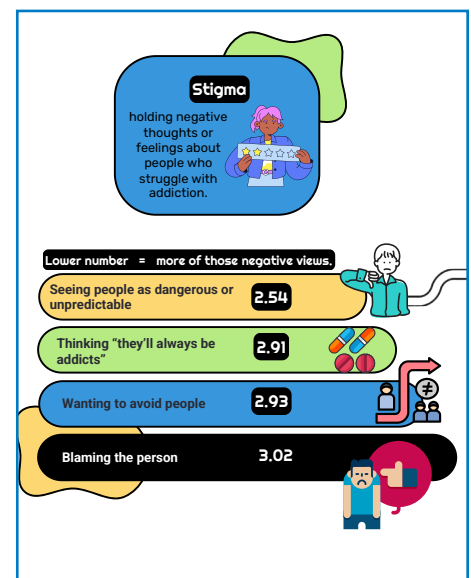
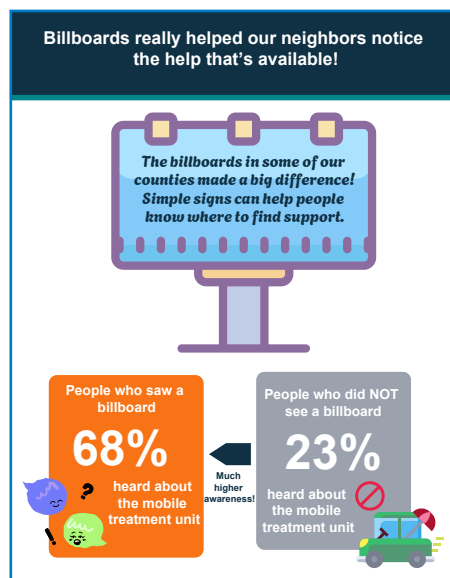
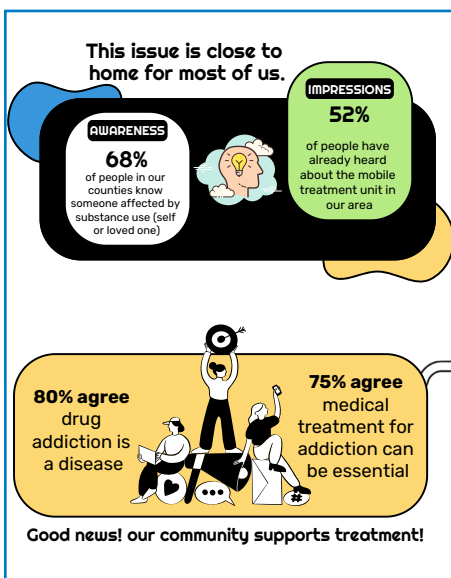
If you're working in public health, behavioral health, or rural communities, we would love to connect and hear your perspective!



Kahler Stone, Dr.P.H.



Sara Rodriguez Molina, MPH



**PROJECT SPOTLIGHT** *continued from page 10*

**MTSU CHHS AND CEDAR RECOVERY TEAM SELECTED FOR FOUR NATIONAL HRSA PRESENTATIONS AND SESSIONS AT 2026 REVERSE SITE VISIT AND VIRTUAL GRANTEE MEETING.**

CHHS and its partners at Cedar Recovery were selected to contribute to four national sessions at the 2026 HRSA Reverse Site Visit in Washington, DC and a virtual grantee meeting, reflecting recognition of our collaborative work in rural Tennessee addressing substance use disorder (SUD) and medication-assisted treatment (MAT).

**Panel: Overcoming Common Data Challenges**

**Speaker:** Judy Tsai (Cedar Recovery)

This panel focused on strategies for collecting, managing, and using RCORP data effectively. Panelists shared lessons learned, common challenges, and practical approaches to making data meaningful for program improvement and reporting.



*Pictured left to right: Paul Trivette (Cedar Recovery), Lauren Su (HRSA), Michelle Sterlingshires (CHHS), Judy Tsai (Cedar Recovery), Christina Byrd (CHHS)*

**Panel: Working with Jails Within the Rural Justice System**

**Speaker:** Paul Trivette (Cedar Recovery)

This session highlighted innovative, cross-sector partnerships to address opioid use disorder within rural justice systems, with a focus on strengthening reentry supports, improving recovery outcomes, and reducing overdose deaths through collaboration.

**Breakout Session: MAT Access II Sustainability Focus Group**

**Participant:** Christina Byrd (MTSU)

Selected as one of a small group of grantees nationally, this focus group explored strategies for sustaining RCORP-funded activities beyond the grant period and will help inform future program design and technical assistance efforts.

**Virtual Grantee Showcase: Data Use & Visualization**

**Speakers:** Michelle Sterlingshires (MTSU), Judy Tsai (Cedar Recovery)

This session discussed how the team uses data to further grant objectives, help the communities served, and assist in continuing these efforts, as well as how and why these data are communicated to stakeholders and communities.

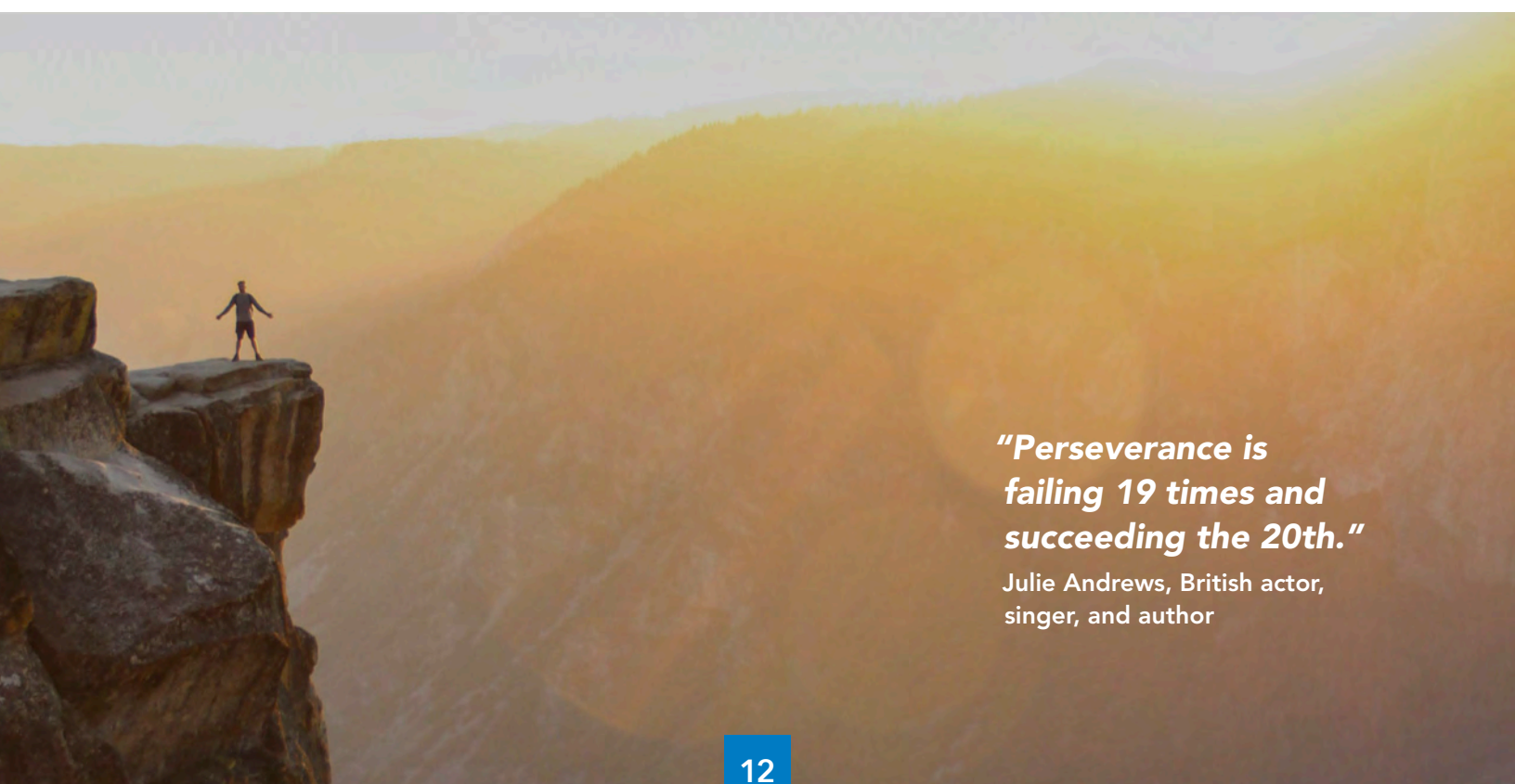
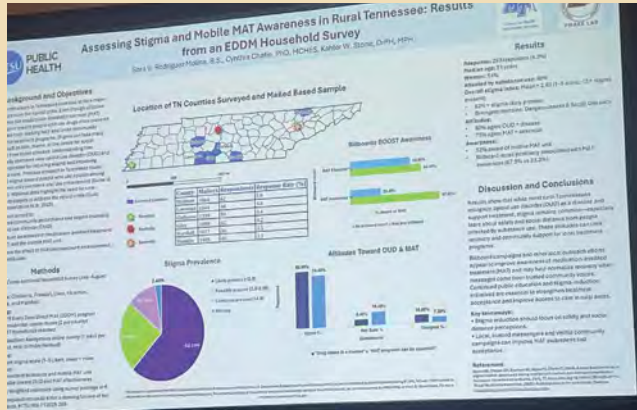
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These invitations—made through a competitive and recommendation-based process—underscore the impact and leadership of MTSU CHHS and Cedar Recovery in advancing rural health solutions.

## FIRST-PLACE POSTER HIGHLIGHTS RURAL MAT RESEARCH

CHHS is proud to share that the poster **Assessing Stigma and Mobile MAT Awareness in Rural Tennessee: Results from an EDDM Household Survey** received First Place for National Rural Health Day at the Rural Health Association of Tennessee 2025 annual conference.

Funded by the **Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA)** through **RCORP** and conducted in partnership with **Cedar Recovery**, the project examined stigma and awareness of mobile medication-assisted treatment (MAT) in rural Tennessee communities. The research team was led by **Kahler Stone (MTSU Public Health)**, with **Sara Rodriguez Molina** and **Cynthia Chafin (CHHS)** as co-authors. Rodriguez Molina also played a central role in the research and poster development. A publication is in progress.



*“Perseverance is failing 19 times and succeeding the 20th.”*

Julie Andrews, British actor, singer, and author



## Project Update: MTSU Mental Health First Aid and QPR

### QPR Suicide Prevention Training

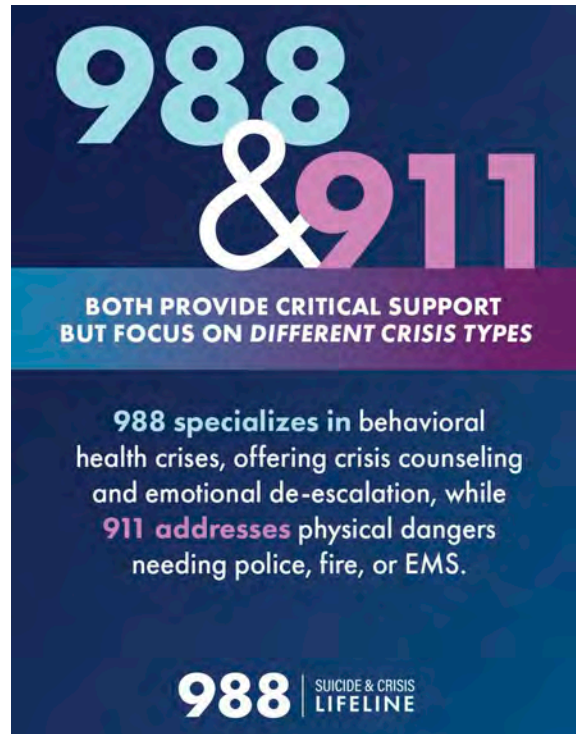
Since 2018, the Center for Health and Human Services at MTSU has provided

Mental Health Awareness training through grants awarded by the **Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)**. The original offering, **Mental Health First Aid (MHFA)**, was very popular on campus, particularly with faculty and advisors, who are often in contact with students experiencing periods of elevated life stressors. Over time, MHFA became a staple for several departments' programs for students achieving majors in their fields, either through requiring certification prior to mental health practicums or as extra credit in behavioral health related courses.

In the wake of the success of MHFA, the center determined the need for training that focused specifically on suicide prevention skills that could be delivered in less than 90 minutes. The shorter class time allows for the potential for greater numbers of people to be trained, especially learners who could not commit to an all-day training, like MHFA. So, in January 2025, CHHS began offering **QPR (Question, Persuade, Refer) Suicide Prevention Training** on campus.

### Campus Participation

Over 1,094 participants have been trained in the evidence-based Mental Health First Aid program since CHHS launched the second multiyear grant in 2023, with 120 in the first six months of this grant year alone. As of the end of April 2026, there have been 496 participants certified in QPR since its launch date of January 28, 2025. We also have provided training to six college campuses across the state through this grant: Belmont University, Cumberland University, Columbia State



Community College, Rhodes College, Cleveland State Community College, and University of Tennessee–Southern.

### Interested?

QPR Suicide Prevention Training is provided at no charge to participants; all costs related to the training are grant-funded by SAMHSA. If interested in providing QPR Suicide Prevention Training to your student group or department, please contact Linda Williams at [lindad.williams@mtsu.edu](mailto:lindad.williams@mtsu.edu).

For more information about QPR and other CHHS initiatives at MTSU, please visit [chhs.mtsu.edu](http://chhs.mtsu.edu).

For more information about the QPR Institute, please visit [qprinstitute.com](http://qprinstitute.com).

This project is supported by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) as part of a financial assistance award totaling \$497,899 with 100% funded by SAMHSA/HHS and \$0 amount funded by nongovernment sources. The contents are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily represent the official views of, nor an endorsement, by SAMHSA/HHS, or the U.S. government. For more information, please visit [www.samhsa.gov](http://www.samhsa.gov).

**PROJECT update** *continued from page 13*

### Suicide Prevention Walk

On a beautiful Sunday afternoon, there were 54 caring individuals walking together as a reminder that no one has to face their darkest moments alone. Suicide prevention matters because every life has value, every voice deserves to be heard, and even small acts of support can help someone keep going.

CHHS' Linda Williams, along with social work student and CHHS' Spring 2026 intern Courtney Allison, organized a team of 54 walkers to support suicide prevention, with almost \$3,600 raised for the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention.

CHHS is grateful for a community that shows up, speaks up, and stands together for hope!



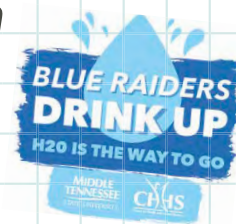
## MTSU Mental Health Awareness Seeking Continuation Funding

CHHS is actively seeking funding to continue CHHS MTSU Mental Health Awareness Training beyond the end of September, which is when the current grant from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) ends. There are several possibilities and CHHS is eager to continue to offer this program that has been so well received by our campus community. Stay tuned!





# BIG HYDRATION ON CAMPUS



Thanks to the Blue Raiders Drink Up program and support from the Tennessee Department of Health, Project Diabetes Initiative 20 brand-new water refill stations were installed across campus over the last six years!

These stations made it easier than ever for students, faculty, and staff to stay healthy and hydrated – while also reducing plastic waste.

Together, we've helped prevent an estimated **281,687** plastic water bottles from ending up in landfills. This figure also reflects thousands of decisions to choose water often instead of a sugary beverage. ♻️

Want to download the MTSU water refill station map? Scan this QR code!

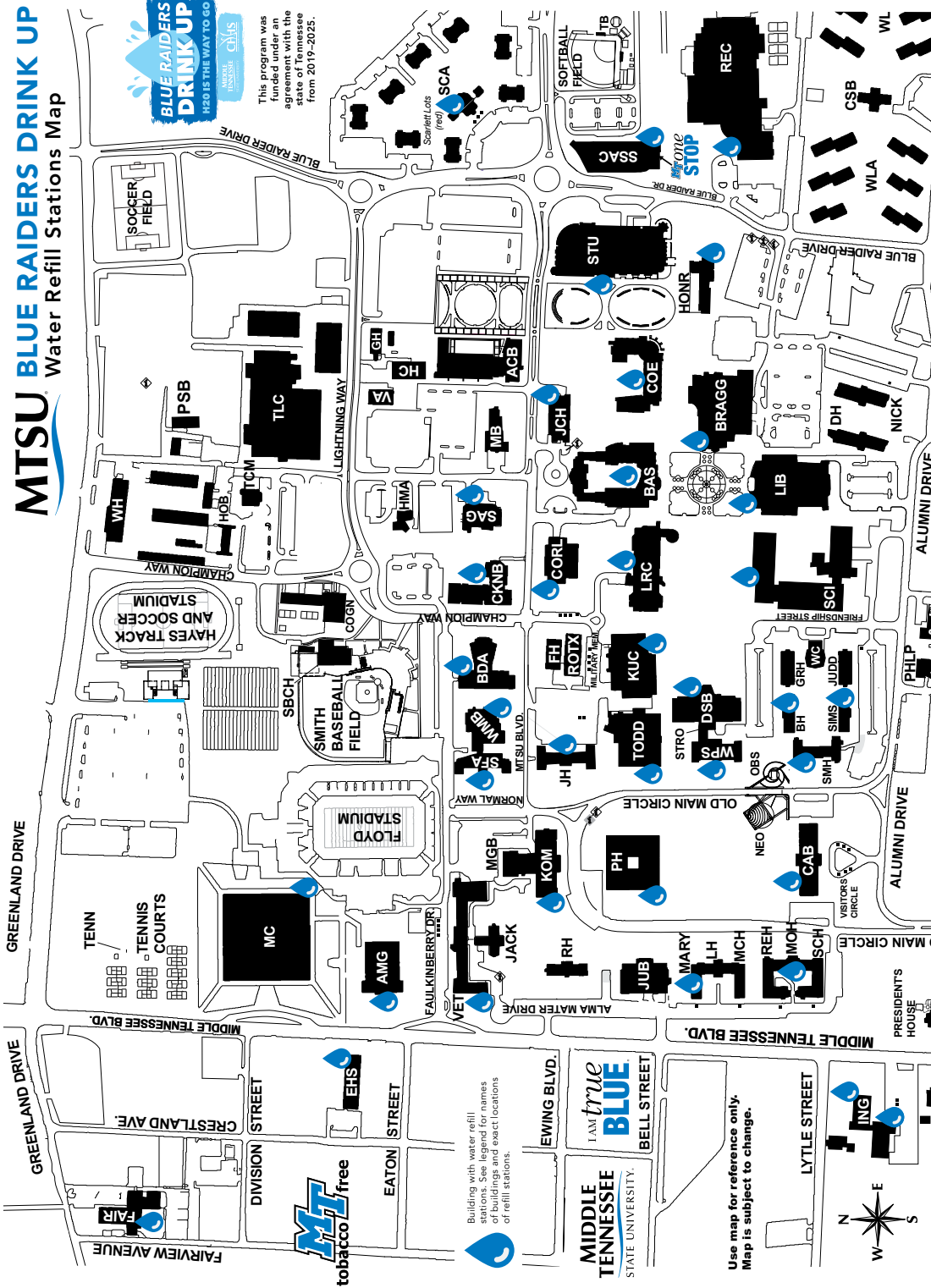


*While the Blue Raiders Drink Up six-year grant funding has ended, the water refill stations are still here and ready to serve our campus community with water as a healthy beverage of choice for many years to come!*  
Blue Raiders Drink Up was funded by the Tennessee Department of Health, Project Diabetes Initiative.

**YOUR WATER STATION MAP  
IS ON THE NEXT PAGE!**

# Trying to drink more water?

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



# MTSU BLUE RAIDERS DRINK UP

## Water Refill Stations Map

\*funded by Blue Raiders Up



<b>AMG</b>	Alumni Memorial Gym 1-First Floor, 3-Second Floor*	<b>LRC</b>	Ned McWherter Learning Resources Center 1-First Floor*
<b>BAS</b>	Business and Aerospace Building 1-First Floor, 2-Second Floor*, 2-Third Floor*, 1-Fourth Floor*	<b>MC</b>	Murphy Center 4-First Floor*
<b>BDA</b>	Boutwell Dramatic Arts Building 1-First Floor, 1-Second Floor	<b>MOH</b>	Monohan Hall 1-First Floor*
<b>BH</b>	Beasley Hall 1-First Floor*	<b>PH</b>	Peck Hall 1-Second Floor
<b>BRAGG</b>	John Bragg Media and Entertainment Building 1-Second Floor	<b>REC</b>	Health, Wellness, and Recreation Center 1-First Floor, 1-Second Floor
<b>CAB</b>	Cope Administration Building 1-First Floor, 1-Second Floor	<b>SAG</b>	Stark Agriculture Center 1-First Floor
<b>CKNB</b>	Cason-Kennedy Nursing Building 2-First Floor*, 1-Second Floor*	<b>SCI</b>	Science Building 1-Second Floor
<b>COE</b>	College of Education Building 1-First Floor	<b>SFA</b>	Saunders Fine Arts Building 1-Second Floor, 1-Third Floor*
<b>COR</b>	Corlew Hall 1-First Floor*	<b>SIMS</b>	Sims Hall 1-First Floor*
<b>DSB</b>	Davis Science Building 2-First Floor	<b>SMH</b>	Smith Hall 1-First Floor*
<b>EHS</b>	Ellington Human Sciences Building 1-First Floor	<b>SSAC</b>	Student Services and Admissions Center 1-First Floor, 1-Second Floor
<b>FAIR</b>	Fairview Building 1-First Floor	<b>STU</b>	Student Union Building 1-Second Floor
<b>HONR</b>	Paul W. Martin Sr. Honors Building 1-Second Floor	<b>TODD</b>	Andrew L. Todd Hall 1-First Floor*, 1-Second Floor
<b>ING</b>	Sam H. Ingram Building 1-Garage Level, 1-First Floor	<b>VET</b>	Voorhies Engineering Technology 1-First Floor
<b>JCH</b>	Jim Cummings Hall 1-First Floor*	<b>WMB</b>	Wright Music Building 1-First Floor, 2-Second Floor*
<b>JH</b>	Jones Hall 1-First Floor, 1-Second Floor*	<b>WPS</b>	Wiser-Patten Science Hall 1-First Floor
<b>KOM</b>	Kirksey Old Main 1-First Floor		
<b>KUC</b>	Keathley University Center 1-Second Floor		
<b>LIB</b>	James E. Walker Library 1-First Floor, 1-Second Floor		



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

This program is funded under an agreement with the State of Tennessee.

I AM **trueBLUE**

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***"Start where you are.  
Use what you have.  
Do what you can."***

Arthur Ashe, American tennis player,  
humanitarian, and civil rights advocate.  
(Attributed to Arthur Ashe)

# Whom Do We Serve?

The Center for Health and Human Services at MTSU facilitates, through strategic partnerships, collaborative public health research and community impact projects throughout Tennessee to reduce health disparities and promote healthy communities. 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.



(left) Audrey Waite, MTSU Dietetics graduate and former CHHS employee, (center) Christina Byrd, CHHS Senior Project Coordinator, and (right) Hanan Baba, MTSU Dietetics graduate and former CHHS employee

## CHHS Campus Resources

### MTSU Mental Health First Aid and QPR Suicide Prevention Training



CHHS offers QPR training FREE to the campus community as part of a grant from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). Visit the CHHS website Mental Health Awareness Training tab to learn more.

Over 1,094 participants have been trained in Mental Health First Aid since CHHS launched the second multiyear grant in 2023, with 120 in the first six months of this grant year alone. As of end of April 2026, there have been 496 participants certified in QPR since its launch date of January 28, 2025. We will continue to share updates, and we'll continue to serve the campus community with these evidence-based programs. We also have provided training to six college campuses across the state through this grant: Belmont University, Cumberland University, Columbia State Community College, Rhodes College, Cleveland State Community College, and University of Tennessee–Southern.



Mental Health  
FIRST AID  
from NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR  
MENTAL WELLBEING

CHHS is currently unable to offer a Mental Health Awareness Training self-pay option to those not affiliated with our campus or another university. Community partners and outside organizations can find trainings/instructors available in their area (or virtual options) at the Mental Health First Aid website or QPR websites. Non-university partners wishing to have a training session just for their group may find local training opportunities using search tools on the websites:

- [mentalhealthfirstaid.org/take-a-course/find-a-course](https://mentalhealthfirstaid.org/take-a-course/find-a-course)
- [qprinstitute.com](https://qprinstitute.com)

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## CHHS Featured Staff

### Kerry Foley

This quarter CHHS is pleased to shine the spotlight on Kerry Foley. Her interview is below.



**CHHS: How long have you been with CHHS and what is your role?**

**KF:** I joined CHHS in August 2025 as the post-award grant coordinator. In this role, I manage post-award grants and contracts, including budgeting, tracking and reconciling expenditures, purchasing and procurement, and recordkeeping. I enjoy being involved in all CHHS grants and having the opportunity to see the center’s impactful work firsthand.

**CHHS: What is your favorite aspect of the job?**

**KF:** What I enjoy most is the camaraderie in the office. Everyone is friendly, supportive, and united in our mission to improve the health and well-being of Tennesseans. As I’ve learned the ropes, my colleagues have been incredibly patient and willing to explain things along the way. The campus community as a whole has made me feel genuinely welcome. It’s wonderful to be part of such a passionate and dedicated team.

**CHHS: How do you use your free time? Hobbies?**

**KF:** I love exploring countries around the world, such as Japan, India, Egypt, Malaysia, and Saudi Arabia, and immersing myself in their cultures. I’m especially passionate about capturing my travel experiences, whether it’s Tokyo’s neon lights, Kyoto’s ancient temples, the Taj Mahal’s shifting colors in the light, the pyramids rising from the desert in Giza, Malaysia’s architectural diversity, or Saudi Arabia’s camels and traditional mudbrick buildings. I’m known to do whatever it takes to get the perfect photo.

**CHHS: What would a movie or book about your life be titled?**

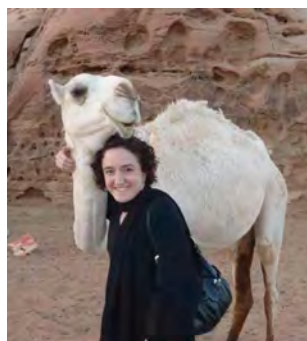
**KF:** *Where in the World is Kerry?*

**CHHS: What advice do you have for incoming MTSU freshmen? Graduating seniors? Or new employees?**

**KF:** To students: Follow Snoop Dogg’s advice to read the syllabus and ask your professor any questions you have.

**CHHS: If you could add one thing to the CHHS office what would that be?**

**KF:** In addition to more office space and a breakroom where we can eat together, I’d love to have a P.O.D. in the CHHS office so we could grab drinks and/or snacks, like MTSU’s famous chocolate milk, without having to leave on a busy day.



# CHHS 2026 Spring and Summer Student Interns

## Courtney Allison, M.S.W. Student, Department of Social Work



My name is Courtney Allison, and I hold a bachelor's degree in Social Work. I'm currently completing my M.S.W. at Middle Tennessee State University while interning with the Center for Health and Human Services. My passion

areas—mental health, homelessness, and child welfare—are deeply personal to me. These issues have grown more complex over the years, and too many individuals still lack access to the care they deserve. I want to be part of the solution by helping bridge those gaps and advocating for services that truly meet people where they are.

During my internship at CHHS, I've had the opportunity to work across several areas of the agency. Since the beginning of my placement, I've been developing a professional project poster for the Mental Health Awareness Training grant, which will be completed by the end of the summer. I've also supported staff in preparing for conferences by assembling name tags, organizing folders, and compiling materials such as forms,

PowerPoints, and informational packets. One of the most meaningful experiences for me was helping with outreach, registration, and day of participation for the suicide prevention walk held on April 19th at Walnut Grove on the MTSU campus. In addition to that, I've been researching conferences and fairs for the agency to attend, as well as studying current event planning trends and comparing them to outdated practices. These tasks have taught me how important it is to dig deep, build connections, and stay informed if you want strong community engagement and successful outreach.

All of these experiences have strengthened my confidence and expanded my skill set in ways that directly support my future as a social worker. They've taught me how to communicate effectively, collaborate with diverse teams, engage communities, and translate research into meaningful action. Most importantly, they've reinforced my commitment to advocating for accessible, equitable care. The work I'm doing now is shaping me into a more informed, compassionate, and prepared professional—one who is ready to step into the field and make a lasting impact.

## Brooke Springer, M.P.H. Graduate, Department of Health and Human Performance



CHHS is pleased to recognize **Brooke Springer**, M.P.H., a spring 2026 graduate of the MTSU Public Health program, on the successful completion of her internship. Springer contributed to the Safe Stars project by developing

targeted social media content for the Tennessee Department of Health, translating program evaluation findings into practical, accessible messaging designed to support youth sports

coaches. She also played a key role in preparing for upcoming focus groups by assisting with survey development and presentation materials aimed at identifying barriers to implementing **Return-to-Learn and Return-to-Play guidelines informed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)** in schools and youth sports settings. In addition to her academic and professional work, Springer serves as a graduate assistant coach for the MTSU volleyball team and brings the perspective of a student-athlete to her work. We appreciate her thoughtful contributions and wish her continued success in her future endeavors.

# CHHS Staff and Faculty Partners

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**Rutherford County Opioid Board**

**Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services  
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**Tennessee Department of Health**

**Tennessee Department of Labor and  
 Workforce Development**

**Tennessee Opioid Abatement Council**

**Williamson County Opioid Task Force**



***"Act as if what you do makes a difference. It does."***

**— William James, American philosopher,  
psychologist, and founder of pragmatism**

**MTSU**

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WILL BE GRANTED GOOD LUCK.

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