Presents its
2023 Annual Conference

“The Future of New Jersey Public Health: Maximizing Equity for Communities”

Friday, April 21, 2023
9:00am - 1:00pm

Mercer County College Conference Center
1200 Old Trenton Road
West Windsor, NJ
Statement from the Keynote Speaker
Melissa Fox, MHA, FACMPE, FACHE
COO, Acenda Integrated Health

This year's conference theme is both inspiring and instructive. It galvanizes us to pursue and build the future of public health, while ensuring we center health equity as a guiding principle so that everyone - regardless of race, ethnicity, income, gender, or geography - is able to thrive. This is more important now than ever, and I am proud to be part of the voices who are not only celebrating the importance and priority of public health in times of crisis, but also the criticality of a sustainable and strong public health infrastructure when crises subside. Public health IS healthcare.
Welcome to the New Jersey Public Health Association’s 2023 Annual Conference. This year, our conference reflects the resiliency of the public health system in New Jersey. This will be our first in-person conference since 2019, just prior to the beginning of the pandemic, and it is our very first hybrid event. Providing an opportunity for public health professionals and students to come together, network and learn about best practices, while showcasing the talents of New Jersey’s public health system, is also a testament to the dedication of the Association.

None of this would be possible without the commitment of both the NJPHA Conference Planning Committee and the Awards Committee. The time and effort put into this event was exceptional and I thank you all. Attendees will notice, as well, that we are recognizing award recipients representing the last three years, as we wanted to give each honoree the attention they deserve for their exceptional work, as well as an opportunity to accept their award in person.

This year’s conference theme, *The Future of New Jersey Public Health, Maximizing Equity for Communities*, highlights how public health practitioners can collectively move forward in promoting the health of our residents, and also showcases specific efforts to impact the people we serve through governmental agencies, academia and non-profit agencies. These are exciting times, as New Jersey will finally see its own Public Health Institute (PHI) and the impact it will have on the profession, the public and equitable health outcomes across the State. I am thrilled to have Melissa Fox of Acenda Health kicking off our conference with a discussion regarding the ongoing incubation of the nascent PHI and how it will help shape the landscape of public health in New Jersey.

As an organization, we are always striving to improve services to the public and to our members. We urge conference attendees to become an NJPHA member, and to volunteer for organization committees that match your interests. Finally, thank you to the hidden health heroes that have worked tirelessly before, during and after the pandemic to prevent disease, promote health, and protect the lives and safety of New Jersey’s residents.

Thank you for attending – I hope you enjoy the conference!

New Jersey Public Health Association
www.njpha.org
Conference Agenda

8:00 - 9:00  **Registration & Continental Breakfast**

9:00 - 9:15  **Welcome & Opening Remarks**

*Lisa A. Harrison-Gulla, DrPH(c), MPH, MAE*
*President, NJPHA*

9:15 - 9:45  **Keynote: Public Health Institute’s Perspective for the Future of Public Health in NJ: Strengthening Public Health Infrastructure**

*Speaker: Melissa Fox, MHA, FACMPE, FACHE, Chief Operating Officer, Acenda Integrated Health*

* Moderator: Sreelekha Prakash, MD, MPH*
*President-Elect, NJPHA*

9:45 - 10:00  **Break & Networking**

10:00 - 11:00  **Session One Panelists:**

**A. Maternal & Child Health**

*Teri E. Lassiter, PhD*
*Mackenzie Carey, MPH*
*Valerie Pineiro, MPH*
*Cecile Edwards, M Ed*

**B. Community Connections**

*Martha Chavis, MA*
*Dorothy Sanders, Esq.*
*Madeliene Alger, MA*
Conference Agenda

C. Public Health Initiatives I
Jill Patel, MPH, CHES
Hailey Balmos, MPH(c)
Jade Truehart, MPH

11:00 - 11:45  Session Two Panelists:
A. Workforce Development
Rabiah Asif, MPH
Jeanne Herb, MA

B. Disabilities & Equity Initiatives
Peri Nearon, MPA
Rebecca Martin, PhD(c)

C. Public Health Initiatives II
Eva Nelson, MPH
Jennifer Barrett Sryfi, MHA
Iris Novas Cooney, RDH, MAOM

11:45 - 12:00  Break & Networking

12:00 - 1:00  Awards Ceremony
Donald Weinbaum, MBA, Past President, NJPHA
Lisa A. Harrison-Gulla, DrPH(c), MPH, MAE, President, NJPHA

1:00  Adjournment

Please note that evaluation forms will be issued via email to all attendees, and continuing education credits will be awarded upon completion and return of the evaluation.
Melissa Fox, MHA, FACMPE, FACHE

Melissa Fox has over 20 years of experience leading innovations in healthcare operations. Ms. Fox has been featured in numerous publications and as an expert speaker for her work within diverse healthcare environments, addressing the importance of utilizing innovations and community-based collaborations to reduce health disparities. In her role as COO of Acenda Integrated Health, Fox oversees operations for over 100 programs throughout 12 counties in New Jersey. Acenda is a family services agency that provides evidence-based programming in child welfare, prevention, juvenile justice, outpatient mental health, crisis services, substance use disorder treatment and housing. The agency has also been awarded funding to incubate New Jersey’s first Public Health Institute.

Ms. Fox is a member of the American College of Healthcare Executives, the National Association of Health Services Executives and the Medical Group Management Association. She has served as an expert speaker for many organizations, including the National Healthcare for the Homeless Council, National Nursing Centers Consortium and the American Public Health Association. Ms. Fox is a Board Member of numerous groups, including the Root Cause Coalition, Population Health Alliance, Camden Coalition of Healthcare Providers, Urban Affairs Coalition, Financial Wellness Institute and Gloucester County NAACP. Ms. Fox also serves as an adjunct faculty member for Health Administration at Wilmington University.
Cecile Edwards, M Ed

Cecile Edwards has a passion for maternal and child health and family wellness, and believes it is a cornerstone to a well society. Ms. Edwards is a postpartum doula, maternal equity consultant, maternal mental health and wellness advocate, and a perinatal/postpartum family coach, assisting individuals, families and organizations in facilitating conversations and creating systems that improve maternal wellness.

Ms. Edwards has been an educator and member of Advocates for Children of New Jersey’s Parent Leadership Council for over 16 years. She was a proud member of the New Jersey Birth Equity Funders Alliance’s Community Advisory Committee and is happy to continue her work as the new Senior Manager for the New Jersey Birth Equity Funders Alliance. Ms. Edwards looks forward to working with philanthropic organizations and community organizations to build capacity for community work. She lives in Somerset, New Jersey, with her 15-year-old daughter, and loves to hike and travel.
Valerie Pineiro, MPH

Valerie Pineiro currently works as Quality Improvement and Planning Coordinator at the Partnership for Maternal and Child Health of Northern New Jersey. In 2020, she obtained her Master of Public Health degree from Drexel University in Philadelphia, where she majored in community health and prevention, and minored in maternal and child health.

In her present role with the Partnership, Ms. Pineiro is responsible for interpreting public health, clinical, socioeconomic and demographic data to create written reports and presentations for both internal use at the Partnership and external use for collaborating regional hospitals and birthing centers. Though new to the role, Ms. Pineiro has proven to be adaptable and resourceful in her role of analyzing data at the Partnership. In her free time, Ms. Pineiro enjoys exercise, cheering for Philadelphia sports teams and exploring new area restaurants.
Mackenzie Carey, MPH

Mackenzie Carey is Quality Improvement and Planning Manager at the Partnership for Maternal and Child Health. She has a Master of Public Health degree from Rutgers University, with a concentration in epidemiology. Ms. Carey’s quality improvement team supports member hospitals and birthing centers, analyzes electronic birth certificate data and creates region-wide annual data reports. In addition to her work with the Partnership for Maternal and Child Health, Ms. Carey volunteers at the Glen Ridge Volunteer Ambulance Squad, where she has been an EMT for over 10 years, and works on quality assurance and improvement projects.
Rabiah Asif, MPH

Rabiah Asif is a first-generation college graduate with a Bachelor of Science degree from Rutgers University and a Master of Public Health degree from Drexel University. Ms. Asif is presently a mobile testing supervisor with the Philadelphia Department of Public Health, and has over five years of experience in healthcare and community relations at the local and state levels. In 2021, Ms. Asif was nominated for the *Drexel Magazine* 40 Under 40 list, and in 2022, she was named among the Top 25 Drexel University Dornsife School of Public Health alumni.

Ms. Asif serves on a health advisory board in New Jersey and a health equity committee in Philadelphia. She is also a member of the APHA, the American College of Healthcare Executives and the National Association of Health Services Executives. Ms. Asif hopes to continue her work at the national and international levels, and one day wishes to provide underserved communities with equitable access to healthcare resources.
Dr. Teri E. Lassiter is the Assistant Dean of Diversity and Inclusion and an Assistant Professor at the Rutgers University School of Public Health. In her work, Ms. Lassiter helps ensure that the curriculum attends to the public health challenges faced by all populations of New Jersey and the United States. Dr. Lassiter works with the Director of Student Affairs to create systems that support student learning and success that attend to the diversity of student life experiences with regard to gender identity, race, ethnicity, culture, sexual orientation and nation of birth.

Dr. Lassiter is a member of the Rutgers Biomedical and Health Sciences (RBHS) Diversity Leadership Council and a member of the Anti-Racism Task Force, for which she co-chairs the committee on Conversation on Racism. Dr. Lassiter is a member of the RBHS Strategic Planning Steering Committee and co-chairs the sub-committee on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion. She also serves as a member of the RBHS Interprofessional Education Case Development Committee. Nationally, Dr. Lassiter is a member of the Association of Schools and Programs of Public Health’s Task Force on Zero Tolerance for Discrimination, Harassment and Racism in Public Health. Dr. Lassiter received her Master of Public Health degree from the Rutgers School of Public Health and was conferred her PhD by the Rutgers School of Nursing.
Dorothy Sanders, Esq.

Dorothy Sanders is Local Health Outreach Coordinator (LHOC) with the Township of West Orange Health Department, in accordance with a NJ Department of Health Strengthening Local Public Health Capacities grant. Recently, Ms. Sanders conducted a public health assessment for the Township and developed a plan for targeted outreach and prevention, partnering with health professionals and community leaders.

Ms. Sanders serves on the NJ Age-Friendly Statewide Collaborative Steering Committee, is a member of Age-Friendly North Jersey, is a core team leader for Aging Well West Orange and is a leader in the Township’s Mayor’s Wellness Campaign efforts. In all these roles, Ms. Sanders works closely with the Township’s Director of Senior Services to advance age-friendly endeavors in improving health and wellness throughout the community. Previously, as Senior Livability Coordinator, Ms. Sanders spearheaded the municipality’s designation as an Age-Friendly Community.

Ms. Sanders is an alumna of Douglass College at Rutgers University, and earned her Juris Doctor from Boston College School of Law, Ms. Sanders is passionate about health equity and social justice.
Jeanne Herb, MA

Jeanne Herb is Executive Director of the Environmental Analysis and Communications Group at the Rutgers University Bloustein School of Planning and Public Policy. Ms. Herb’s work intersects health equity with social determinants of health, environmental sustainability, state and local public policy and inclusive, participatory decision-making. Ms. Herb’s work includes studying public health capacity in New Jersey, supporting the Division of Disability Services’ Inclusive Healthy Communities program, co-facilitating the New Jersey Climate Change Alliance, and chairing a National Academy of Sciences Workshop Planning Committee on the topic of Communities, Climate Change and Health Equity.

Prior to joining Rutgers University in 2010, Ms. Herb spent 20 years at the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection, where she led programs related to environmental health, environmental justice, sustainable development and climate change. Ms. Herb is a member of the Healthy New Jersey 2030 Advisory Council, the New Jersey State League of Municipalities Education Foundation Board of Trustees and the Reinvestment Fund’s Building Healthier, More Equitable Communities initiative. She is a graduate of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation’s Culture of Health Leaders Program and the Rutgers Leadership Academy.
Rebecca Martin, PhD(c), MSW, MDes

Rebecca Martin is a PhD candidate at the Rutgers University School of Social Work. Ms. Martin’s research interests include othering, belonging and bridging, particularly when centering disability as an intersectional identity; cross-discipline problem solving; developing research methodologies to reflect changing identities; and coalition-building between underrepresented groups.

Ms. Martin is a graduate assistant working with the New Jersey Inclusive Healthy Communities grant program, administered through the Edward J. Bloustein School of Planning and Public Policy. She is a Licensed Social Worker in New Jersey and holds a Master of Social Work degree from Rutgers University with a certificate in Aging and Health, a Master of Design Practices degree from the Hong Kong Polytechnic University and a Bachelor of Arts degree in media arts and design from James Madison University. Any pronouns may be used to refer to Rebecca.
Eva Nelson, MPH

Eva Nelson is Five Minutes to Help Outreach Coordinator at the New Jersey Department of Health’s Office of Emergency Medical Services. In this capacity, Ms. Nelson manages Five Minutes to Help, which trains first responders to address the mental health needs of opioid overdose patients. Ms. Nelson has been published in Preventive Medicine Reports regarding the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on food insecurity. In collaboration with faculty at Boston University, Ms. Nelson writes articles for publication on several public health issues including vaping, hunger and practice-based teaching in public health education.

Ms. Nelson earned a Master of Public Health degree from Boston University and a Bachelor’s Degree in public health and international studies from Muhlenberg College. As an undergraduate, she spent time studying global health issues in Kenya. Ms. Nelson is passionate about health equity, ending the opioid crisis and solving public health issues.
Martha Chavis, MA

Ms. Chavis has over 48 years work experience with nonprofit organizations providing health education, employment, and social services. As Camden Area Health Education Center’s CEO and Workforce Director of its Community Health Worker Institute (CHWI), Ms. Chavis has worked to increase the recognition and respect for community health workers; establish a meaningful community health worker labor market; and provide skills, standards and accessible CHW training resources.

In 2014, Ms. Chavis completed the Women’s Health Leadership Institute’s CHW trainer workshops. As an expert trainer for the Women’s Health Leadership Institute, Ms. Chavis trains CHWs to utilize their leadership skills in developing and implementing community action programs in their local areas. In 2020, Ms. Chavis became Co-Chair of the Outreach, Recruitment and Retention Committee of the NJ Department of Health - Division of Family Services’ Collette Lamothe Galette - Community Health Worker Institute. Ms. Chavis is a passionate proponent of ‘a healthier quality of life,’ which she believes everyone is deserving of.
Jade Truehart, MPH

Jade Truehart works as Program Manager with the Center for Asian Health at Temple University’s Lewis Katz School of Medicine. Ms. Truehart received her bachelor’s degree in health and human services from St. John’s University, and her Master of Public Health degree, with a concentration in epidemiology, from Temple University. Her research interests include social determinants of health and adolescent health.
Hailey Balmos, 4+1 MPH Candidate

Hailey Balmos is a senior in the 4+1 MPH program at The College of New Jersey, which provides students an opportunity to earn their Master of Public Health degree with just one additional year of academics beyond their bachelor’s degree requirements. Ms. Balmos is also pursuing a psychology minor.

Ms. Balmos has spent time as a health literacy intern with the Parkinson’s Foundation, and has also been an intern at the NJ Department of Health’s Maternal and Child Health Project. On the College of New Jersey campus, Ms. Balmos volunteers as a health and wellness peer educator and as research assistant in a social epidemiology laboratory. In her future career, Ms. Balmos has special interest in improving health equity and the present state of healthcare systems.
Iris Novas Cooney, RDH, MAOM

Iris Novas Cooney initiated her clinical career in healthcare as a registered dental hygienist in 1998. Ms. Novas Cooney’s experience in patient care fueled her passion for global public health, specifically in community health science. Ms. Novas Cooney earned a Master of Health Care Administration degree, with a concentration in community health science, in 2011. Ms. Novas Cooney continued work in health services as a clinician and expanded her experiences in public health research at the NYU School of Medicine’s Department of Population Health.

In 2015, Ms. Novas Cooney joined the Horizon Blue Cross Blue Shield (BCBS) Department of Member Advocacy and Community Outreach Transformation’s team. In her present role as Manager of Community Health Education, Ms. Novas Cooney has focused on health education development and health promotion initiatives, with the overarching objective of establishing and sustaining member and community partner relations, while expanding Horizon BCBS reach and influence on health and wellness promotion in New Jersey.
Madelienne Alger, MA

Madelienne Alger is a Research Coordinator at the Walter Rand Institute for Public Affairs (WRI) at Rutgers University – Camden. In her role at WRI, Ms. Alger leads, manages and facilitates research projects across southern New Jersey in areas including social service delivery, education and population health. Ms. Alger made significant contributions to WRI’s work coordinating the evaluation of the Pascale Sykes Foundation’s Strengthening Families Initiative, and she directed evaluations of the Child Connection Center’s programming and the Family Strengthening Network’s family advocacy initiative.

Most recently, Ms. Alger’s work has been integral to the 2022-2024 AtlantiCare and Inspira Health Network Community Health Needs Assessments. She currently supports the Clayton Model evaluation, a statewide school-based social emotional learning program, and is leading an initiative focused on the social determinants of health of low-income families in Cumberland, Gloucester and Salem counties, which is funded by the South Jersey Institute for Population Health.
Peri L. Nearon, MPA

Peri L. Nearon was appointed Executive Director of the New Jersey Department of Human Services’ Division of Disability Services in 2019, where she manages the daily operations of the lead state agency for individuals with physical disabilities and traumatic brain injuries, and serves on the executive management team for the NJ Department of Human Services. Prior to her appointment, Ms. Nearon was Director of External Affairs and Strategic Initiatives for Community Health and Wellness at the NJ Department of Health. Under her leadership, the Department coordinated ShapingNJ, a public-private partnership of more than 230 organizations working together to promote healthy eating and active living in early care and education centers, schools, worksites, faith-based organizations and communities.

Ms. Nearon’s state service has included policy, planning and program implementation for children, adolescents, older adults and individuals with disabilities. In 2003, Ms. Nearon was appointed as the first Director of the Office on Women’s Health, and in 2008, she was appointed as the first Director of the Office of Nutrition and Fitness. Ms. Nearon has an undergraduate degree in psychology with a minor in women’s studies, a Master of Public Administration degree and over 36 years of experience in state government.
Jill Patel, MPH, CHES

Jill Patel has served as the Program Specialist II for the Office of Tobacco Control and Prevention at the New Jersey Department of Health (NJDOH) for three years. At the Department, Ms. Patel assists in program planning, implementation, management and evaluation of all initiatives funded under the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s National Tobacco Control program. The focus of her work includes collaborating with statewide partners in tobacco prevention and cessation, and reducing tobacco-related disparities in the LGBTQ+ community.

Ms. Patel, a Certified Health Education Specialist (CHES), received a Master of Public Health degree from the Rutgers University School of Public Health, with a concentration in Social and Behavioral Health Sciences.
Jennifer Barrett Sryfi, MHA

Jennifer Barrett Sryfi helps develop, implement, evaluate and obtain funding for healthcare quality improvement and community-based projects for the Health Research and Educational Trust of New Jersey, a nonprofit affiliate of the New Jersey Hospital Association. Over the years, Ms. Barrett Sryfi has managed initiatives related to healthcare access, veteran healthcare, efficient healthcare services utilization, chronic disease management, and disparities in health and healthcare.

Ms. Barrett Sryfi received a bachelor’s degree from Brown University and a Master of Health Administration degree from the Tulane University School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine. Prior to joining the New Jersey Hospital Association in 2000, she served two years in Morocco as a maternal and child health education volunteer with the Peace Corps.
NJ Public Health Association
Annual Award Ceremony
Paul D. Roman, AA, NREMT, NCEMSEd, CLBHM

Paul Roman was first appointed to the Borough of Shrewsbury Board of Health in 1977. For most years through 2021, Mr. Roman served as President of the Board and for the past 45 years, he has served as the Borough’s representative to the Monmouth County Regional Health Commission, a local health department serving a consortium of municipalities in Monmouth County. During his years on the Commission, Mr. Roman served as Chairman of the Personnel Committee, followed by a few terms as Vice President, and ultimately as President for 27 years.

In 1992, Mr. Roman helped found the New Jersey Local Boards of Health Association (NJLBHA), and served as its President from 2001 – 2007, a post to which he was re-elected in 2022. Mr. Roman is a permanent member of the NJLBHA Executive Committee and chairs the Association’s Committee on Advocacy and Legislation. He also serves as the NJLBHA’s principal representative to the Public Health Associations’ Collaborative Effort (PHACE), which represents the leadership of New Jersey’s six recognized public health associations.

Mr. Roman has served 54 years as a volunteer EMT with national and state credentials, and has served in state and local emergency management coordinator positions. Mr. Roman has also held a number of leadership positions with the American Red Cross. Mr. Roman is recipient of several awards for his efforts to sustain and fortify the public health system.
2021 - 2023 NJ Public Health Association
Dr. Ezra Mundy Hunt Award

Chris T. Pernell, MD, MPH, FACPM

Dr. Chris T. Pernell is a dynamic physician leader and social change agent. In her public health practice, she focuses on health justice, community-based advocacy and population-wide health promotion and disease prevention. Previously, Dr. Pernell worked at University Hospital in Newark, New Jersey as the first Chief Strategic Integration and Health Equity Officer. Her office was responsible for launching health equity strategy development and for integrating diversity, equity, inclusion and antiracism initiatives across all system operations.

Dr. Pernell is recognized as a leading voice in preventive medicine and public health. In 2022, NJBiz chose her as one of the Best 50 Women in Business. ROI-NJ named her a ROI Influencer in their Women in Business roster, as well. Dr. Pernell is recipient of the American College of Preventive Medicine 2022 Volunteer of the Year Award and the Ron Davis Special Recognition Award in 2021, and NJBiz named her a Public Health Hero in 2020. She is a frequent contributor across television, radio and print media, leveraging her expertise as a public health physician and health equity champion.

Dr. Pernell graduated sum laude from Princeton University before attending the Duke University School of Medicine. She received her Master of Public Health from the Columbia Mailman School of Public Health and completed the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health General Preventive Medicine Residency. Dr. Pernell is a fellow and Regent-at-Large for the American College of Preventive Medicine, and holds an appointment as a Clinical Assistant Professor at the Rutgers New Jersey Medical School.
Jeanne Herb, MA

Jeanne Herb is Executive Director of the Environmental Analysis and Communications Group at the Rutgers University Bloustein School of Planning and Public Policy. Ms. Herb’s work intersects health equity with social determinants of health, environmental sustainability, state and local public policy and inclusive, participatory decision-making. Ms. Herb’s work includes studying public health capacity in New Jersey, supporting the Division of Disability Services’ Inclusive Healthy Communities program, co-facilitating the New Jersey Climate Change Alliance, and chairing a National Academy of Sciences Workshop Planning Committee on the topic of Communities, Climate Change and Health Equity.

Prior to joining Rutgers University in 2010, Ms. Herb spent 20 years at the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection, where she led programs related to environmental health, environmental justice, sustainable development and climate change. Ms. Herb is a member of the Healthy New Jersey 2030 Advisory Council, the New Jersey State League of Municipalities Education Foundation Board of Trustees and the Reinvestment Fund’s Building Healthier, More Equitable Communities initiative. She is a graduate of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation’s Culture of Health Leaders Program and the Rutgers Leadership Academy.
Stephanie A. Navarro Silvera, PhD, MS

Dr. Stephanie Silvera is a Professor of Public Health and Graduate Program Coordinator of the Master of Public Health program at Montclair State University. Dr. Silvera has a multidisciplinary background that includes training in epidemiology, structural inequalities and health disparities, nutrition and dietary assessment. She holds a bachelor’s degree in biology and a master’s degree in nutritional sciences from Rutgers University, and a PhD in epidemiology from the Yale University School of Public Health.

Dr. Silvera worked as a nutrition educator with WIC Paterson and the NJ SNAP-Ed/EFNEP programs before joining the faculty in Montclair State University’s Department of Public Health. At the University, Dr. Silvera’s work has focused on exploring and elucidating patterns of health behaviors, particularly among limited-resource, racialized women, with the ultimate goal of elucidating root causes of health disparities and social inequities. Dr. Silvera’s work has demonstrated her firm belief in the imperative that insights gained through research be translated into public health messages and resources that are clear, applicable and available to the populations at risk.
Kimberly Lewis, BS

Kimberly Lewis is a Certified Lean Six Sigma Green Belt working to obtain her Certified Professional in Healthcare Quality (CPHQ) credential. Ms. Lewis received her bachelor’s degree from The College of New Jersey (TCNJ), majoring in public health and communications. She was inducted into Lambda Pi Eta, the Communications National Honor Society.

Ms. Lewis has worked at Bergen New Bridge Medical Center for three years, having started as an intern in the Quality and Patient/Resident Safety Department. She then worked at the Bergen County Community College COVID-19 testing center in the laboratory, and did data entry work with COVID-19 vaccines. Ms. Lewis subsequently became an office assistant at the TCNJ COVID-19 testing center from January 2021-May 2021, helping the team complete about 71,000 tests. She is currently the Performance Improvement Coordinator in the Bergen New Bridge Medical Center’s Quality and Patient/Resident Safety Department.

Ms. Lewis is committed to providing high quality, compassionate care that is accessible to those in need. She is a Certified Lean Six Sigma Green Belt Performance Improvement Coordinator, and has experience in quality improvement, Lean principles and workshops, and data analysis.
Sarah W. Kelly, MPH, CPH

Sarah W. Kelly is Program Director at the Rutgers School of Public (SPH) Health’s Office of Community Engagement and Public Health Practice. Ms. Kelly’s professional and academic career started at Rutgers University, and she has continued to serve the University ever since. Ms. Kelly earned her bachelor’s degree in Women and Gender Studies and a Master of Public Health degree with a concentration in Health Systems and Policy and Environmental and Occupational Health, and is presently a candidate for an EdD in Education, Culture and Society. In her current role with the SPH Office of Community Engagement and Public Health Practice, Ms. Kelly provides curricular oversight to the practicum and practicum capstone experiences. She also co-directs a summer interprofessional education program and is staff liaison to the Dean’s Leadership Council.

When not performing public health work, Ms. Kelly may be found spending time with her daughter, fiancée and stepson, enjoying arts and crafts, and exploring the outdoors. Ms. Kelly also volunteers with her local Board of Health, providing input on COVID-19, a comprehensive sex ed curriculum, racism as a public health issue and more. She spends her remaining free time working on her dissertation, which evaluates a restorative justice program for sexual violence at Rutgers University.
2021 - 2023 NJ Public Health Association
President Award

Naseema Uddin, BS

Naseema Uddin is Infectious Disease Preparedness Generalist (IDPG) with the Lawrence Township Health Department, a position she has held since August 2021. She previously served this agency as Vulnerable Populations Outreach Coordinator (VPOC) and COVID-19 Generalist, and hopes to become the department’s Local Health Outreach Coordinator.

Ms. Uddin’s special interest are the outdoors, animals and making her family proud. Born and raised in Trenton, New Jersey, and currently residing in Lawrence Township, Ms. Uddin is a proud first-generation Afghan American. She earned her bachelor’s degree in public health from the College of New Jersey in 2020 and has focused on expanding her responsibilities and career in public health.
Kyle Hioki, MPH

Kyle Hioki received his bachelor’s degree in public health and a Master of Public Health degree with a focus on epidemiology and health analytics from The College of New Jersey (TCNJ). Mr. Hioki has worked at the Bergen New Bridge Medical Center for almost three years, starting as a Community Health Testing Coordinator for the TCNJ COVID-19 testing program. While at TCNJ, Mr. Hioki coordinated the COVID-19 testing program, working with the Bergen New Bridge team to complete about 71,000 COVID-19 tests from January 2021 through December 2022. Presently, Mr. Hioki works in the Behavioral Health Department as a Clinical Integration Analyst.

Mr. Hioki is a member of the American College of Healthcare Executives (ACHE) and is committed to provide compassionate, holistic patient care while serving as a dedicated team member. His goal is to become a healthcare executive. In his free time, Mr. Hioki loves to travel with his family and play basketball.
2021 - 2023 NJ Public Health Association President Award

Paul D. Roman, AA, NREMT, NCEMSEd, CLBHM

Paul Roman was first appointed to the Borough of Shrewsbury Board of Health in 1977. For most years through 2021, Mr. Roman served as President of the Board and for the past 45 years, he has served as the Borough’s representative to the Monmouth County Regional Health Commission, a local health department serving a consortium of municipalities in Monmouth County. During his years on the Commission, Mr. Roman served as Chairman of the Personnel Committee, followed by a few terms as Vice President, and ultimately as President for 27 years.

In 1992, Mr. Roman helped found the New Jersey Local Boards of Health Association (NJLBHA), and served as its President from 2001 – 2007, a post to which he was re-elected in 2022. Mr. Roman is a permanent member of the NJLBHA Executive Committee and chairs the Association’s Committee on Advocacy and Legislation. He also serves as the NJLBHA’s principal representative to the Public Health Associations’ Collaborative Effort (PHACE), which represents the leadership of New Jersey’s six recognized public health associations.

Mr. Roman has served 54 years as a volunteer EMT with national and state credentials, and has served in state and local emergency management coordinator positions. Mr. Roman has also held a number of leadership positions with the American Red Cross. Mr. Roman is recipient of several awards for his efforts to sustain and fortify the public health system.
Claire Brown serves as Assistant Director of Student Support Services at the Rutgers School of Public Health. In her position, Ms. Brown has led efforts to create the school’s first formal Office of Career Services. She has designed, developed and facilitated career advising, exploration and training programs tailored to the diverse professional pathways of thousands of public health students and alumni.

Ms. Brown brings over nine years of research and practice experience in the fields of student support, school mental health and college health promotion. At the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, Ms. Brown co-led the Rutgers School of Public Health’s student-focused response efforts, and ultimately worked to help hire the first 1,000 contact tracers in the NJ COVID-19 Community Contact Tracing Corps.

Ms. Brown earned her bachelor’s degree in classical civilization from Boston University, and received her Master of Public Health degree, with a concentration in Social and Behavioral Health Sciences, from the Rutgers University School of Public Health in 2019. Ms. Brown is a member of the Delta Omega public health honorary society and was presented with the annual Goldstein Award for achievement in her concentration of studies. In 2022, she received the Rutgers School of Public Health’s Distinguished Staff Award and was recognized as one of Rutgers Magazine’s 12 Under 40 Alumni.
Adriana Todorov, BS

Adriana is Social Media Coordinator at Church and Dwight, bringing her experience to the New Jersey Public Health Association and working to grow the Association’s social handles. Ms. Todorov’s work includes growing a base of followers, increasing engagement, creating relevant content, tracking analytics and improving social strategies. Ms. Todorov received her bachelor’s degree from Rutgers University.
2021 - 2023 NJ Public Health Association President Award

Caroline Dziedzic

Ms. Dziedzic is a rising senior at Rutgers University in New Brunswick, majoring in communications with a concentration in public relations, and minoring in political science. Ms. Dziedzic is currently co-running the New Jersey Public Health Association's social media accounts, and her goal is to work in corporate communications for a pharmaceutical company.
Grace T. Ibitamuno, PhD, MD(c)

Grace Ibitamuno is a scientist and physician-in-training with a focus on serving underserved populations. Dr. Ibitamuno has worked in support of improving maternal health outcomes for pregnant women of color and lower socioeconomic status for the New Jersey Department of Health, and at Merck for Mothers. Dr. Ibitamuno’s original research identified disparities in outcomes in children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) toward informing policies that support their care. She was part of the groundbreaking RV144 trials, which identified the first efficacious HIV vaccine, and has advocated for the rights of children with ASD and other special health care needs on Capitol Hill. Dr. Ibitamuno continues to combine her public health research, hands-on clinical care and advocacy to serve patients and communities.

Dr. Ibitamuno recently earned her PhD in Public Health from the Rutgers School of Public Health, with a concentration in Health Systems and Policy. She is presently completing her Medical Doctor (MD) degree at Rutgers University’s Robert Wood Johnson Medical School. Dr. Ibitamuno has authored a novel on human trafficking, has provided a TEDx talk on the topic of resilience and had the honor of co-authoring a book chapter on dynamic woman leaders in the public health space. At home, she enjoys lounging with her husband and seven-year-old son.
Laurent Reyes, PhD

Dr. Laurent Reyes is an assistant professor in the School of Social Welfare, a scholar in the Latinx and Democracy Cluster at UC Berkeley and a member of the UC San Francisco Emancipatory Sciences Lab. Dr. Reyes earned her MSW and PhD in social work from Rutgers University, with a focus on Aging and Latinx communities. She is also a former Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) Health Policy Research Scholar, which is a leadership development program for doctoral students from historically marginalized backgrounds who wish to apply their research to advance health and equity.

As an activist scholar and storyteller, Dr. Reyes leans on qualitative and visual methods to listen and narrate lifetime stories of resistance and solidarity among Latinx and black elders to reimagine civic participation from their perspective and lived experience. The goal of this research is to shift socio-political focus and resources toward the work and solutions that historically oppressed communities have developed in order to survive and thrive in the context of systemic oppression and ethnoracial persecution. In this capacity, Dr. Reyes works with community members, artists and non-profit organizations to weave these stories and support the ongoing movement toward liberation.
Briana Vannozzi, BA

An award-winning journalist, Briana Vannozzi serves as anchor for NJ Spotlight News. She's worked in several capacities since joining the news division in 2012, including interim anchor and senior correspondent after years of general assignment reporting as a multimedia journalist. Vannozzi began her television journalism career with New Jersey Network News, covering New Jersey State House politics. She subsequently worked as a news radio correspondent at FM News 101.9 in New York City.

Ms. Vannozzi possesses a bachelor's degree in journalism from Ramapo College of New Jersey. A Burlington County native, she's honored to be serving and covering her home state.
Lilo H. Stainton, MA

Lilo H. Stainton is an accomplished communications and campaign professional with nearly two decades of demonstrated success as an award-winning journalist, senior-level government communications strategist and advocacy campaign and coalition director. As a journalist, Ms. Stainton has covered New Jersey for more than two decades, much of it with Gannett newspapers. In her work, Ms. Stainton has reported on many topics, including public policy, national political conventions and the 9/11 attack on lower Manhattan.

Ms. Stainton later served as Press Secretary to Governor Jon S. Corzine and led a nonprofit coalition's successful advocacy for federal funding in the wake of Superstorm Sandy. Ms. Stainton joined NJ Spotlight News full-time in 2016 to cover health care and has reported on addiction issues, public health and COVID-19. She graduated cum laude from the University of Vermont in 1992 and earned her Master of Arts degree in Journalism from New York University in 1996.
Lindy Washburn, MS

Lindy Washburn has covered health care for NorthJersey.com, The Record and the USA Today Network-New Jersey for three decades. Ms. Washburn covered the COVID-19 pandemic from its beginning in North Jersey through the vaccine rollout and treatments, and participated in the clinical trial of the Moderna vaccine. She broke news of the unusually high death rate at the New Jersey Veterans Home in Paramus early in the pandemic. Ms. Washburn has written about the policy, science and business of healthcare, always with a focus on the patients and those most affected.

Ms. Washburn has received numerous awards for her work, including honors from the Association of Health Care Journalists, Deadline Club, Society of Professional Journalists, Silurians, Investigative Reporters and Editors, Corporation for New Jersey Local Media and the New Jersey Association for Justice. She was twice named Journalist of the Year by the New Jersey Press Association. Ms. Washburn earned a bachelor’s degree from Oberlin College and a Master of Science in Journalism from the Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism.
Joanna Gagis, BA

Joanna Gagis is an award-winning Senior Correspondent and Guest Anchor for NJ Spotlight News, the nightly news broadcast of NJ PBS. In her work, Ms. Gagis covers New Jersey politics, education, healthcare, the economy and more. She was recently awarded a NJ Society of Professional Journalists award for her coverage of the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on New Jersey students.

Ms. Gagis recently launched an in-depth interview series entitled Her Story with Joanna Gagis, which brings into focus many of the critical issues facing women today. Before joining the news team at NJ PBS, Ms. Gagis helped develop and launch the lifestyle show, Life and Living with Joanna Gagis, a series that highlighted the lifestyle and culture of New Jersey, including restaurants, fashion, the arts, destinations and New Jersey personalities. When she is not providing news to New Jersey’s residents, Ms. Gagis is a mom of two children - by far her most important job.
2021 - 2023 NJ Public Health Association
Dennis J. Sullivan Award

George T. DiFerdinando, Jr., MD, MPH, FACP

George T. DiFerdinando, Jr. is a board-certified general internist who has combined a career in public health and higher education with a sustained professional and personal interest in the impact of behavior on physical health. Dr. DiFerdinando has worked in public health for over 40 years with the CDC, the New York State Department of Health, and the New Jersey Department of Health, for which he served as Deputy Commissioner and Acting Commissioner. Dr. DiFerdinando has also served as director of the New Jersey Center for Public Health Preparedness at the Rutgers School of Public Health.

Dr. DiFerdinando is Chair of the Princeton Board of Health and is an Executive Committee member of the New Jersey Local Boards of Health Association. He also serves on the Steering Committee of the NJ Climate Change Alliance, the Mercer County chapter of the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI), the Mercer County Public Health Alliance, and as a youth educator with the Master Gardeners of Mercer County.
2021 - 2023 NJ Public Health Association
Dennis J. Sullivan Award

Perry Halkitis, PhD, MS, MPH

Dr. Perry Halkitis is Dean, Hunterdon Professor of Public Health and Health Equity, and Distinguished Professor of Biostatistics and Epidemiology at the Rutgers School of Public Health. He is also the founder and director of the Center for Health, Identity, Behavior and Prevention Studies (CHIBPS). For three decades, Dr. Halkitis has focused his research on the emergence, prevention and treatment of infectious diseases, specifically HIV, HPV and other sexually transmitted infections, and more recently SARS-CoV-2 and MPV.

Dr. Halkitis has authored several books and approximately 300 peer-reviewed academic manuscripts, and frequently appears on television, radio, podcasts and in print to disseminate knowledge to mainstream media. Dr. Halkitis has been the Editor in Chief of Behavioral Medicine since 2013 and is the Founding Editor in Chief of Annals of LGBTQ Public and Population Health, and two of his books have received the American Psychological Association’s Distinguished Book Award in LGBT Psychology.

Dr. Halkitis has received numerous awards from both professional and community-based organizations. He is an elected fellow of the New York Academy of Medicine, the Society of Behavioral Medicine, the European Academy of Translational Medicine, the College of Physicians of Philadelphia, and four divisions of the American Psychological Association. He also serves on numerous advisory boards and committees for statewide and regional organizations and associations.
**NJ Public Health Association Awards**

**Dennis J. Sullivan Award**
The New Jersey Public Health Association's Highest Award. Established in 1976 and named after Dennis J. Sullivan who was a health officer who dedicated his life to improving the public health of New Jersey.

**Lloyd M. Felmly Award**
Presented to an individual for outstanding contribution in the media to the cause of public health in New Jersey. Established in 1976 named after Lloyd M. Felmly, Editor, of the Newark Evening News and a friend of public health.

**Dr. Ezra Mundy Hunt Award**
Presented to an individual for outstanding service and leadership to the cause of public health. Established in 1995 and named after Dr. Ezra Mundy Hunt, a pioneer in 19th Century public health in New Jersey.

**Ronald Altman Award**
Presented to a student for outstanding work in a health-related course of study. Established in 1995 and named after Dr. Ronald Altman, former New Jersey State epidemiologist.

**Dennis J. Sullivan Award Recipients**

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<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Recipient Name</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Recipient Name</th>
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<tr>
<td>1976</td>
<td>Dennis J. Sullivan</td>
<td>1995</td>
<td>Dr. Parvin Ahmadkhanlou</td>
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<td>1977</td>
<td>Francis J. Mancuso Ungaro</td>
<td>1996</td>
<td>Dr. Ronald Cohen</td>
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<td>Dr. Richard Wexler</td>
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<td>1980</td>
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<td>Dr. William J. McBurney</td>
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<td>Dr. Michael R. Greenberg</td>
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<td>Dr. William J. Dougherty</td>
<td>2002</td>
<td>Dr. Stuart D. Cook</td>
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<td>Roberta Halligan</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>Dr. George G. Rhoads</td>
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<td>Margaret P. Zealand</td>
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<td>Dr. Isabelle C. Guerrero</td>
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<td>Dr. Minnie Campbell</td>
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<td>Dr. Sylvia Hertz</td>
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<td>Dorothy Binder</td>
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<td>Dr. James M. Oleske</td>
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<td>Dr. Terry Zealand</td>
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<td>1994</td>
<td>Dr. Louise C. Mocci Chut</td>
<td>2019</td>
<td>Kevin G. Sumner</td>
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Thank you to our generous sponsors!
Notes
Notes
Conference Acknowledgement

Lisa Harrison-Gulla, DrPH(c), MPH, MAE
President, NJPHA

I would like to thank the Chair and members of the Conference Planning Committee for a quality and extraordinary job in planning this conference and helping with the advancement of the health and safety of New Jersey’s residents. Your hard work, dedication, fantastic attitude and willingness to contribute have really helped the New Jersey Public Health Association to stay at the forefront in advancing the health of the public in our state. On behalf of myself, Executive Board members and the general membership, I thank you and want you to know how much you are valued and appreciated.

Conference Planning Committee

Parvin Ahmadkhanlou, PhD, Chair
Marci Berger, PhD
James Brown, PhD
Elena Cromeyer, DrPH, MPH
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Dennis Zanella, MD, MPH

Awards Committee

James Brown, PhD, Chair
Antonia Lewis, MPH
Kevin McNally, MBA
Paul Roman, NREMT, NCEMSEd, CLBHM
Donald Weinbaum, MBA

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