

2024 Public Health Learning Forum: Workforce Development in Action Speaker Biographies

Mayela Arana, MPH, Senior Program Manager, Workforce Development, PHF



Mayela Arana joined the Public Health Foundation (PHF) in February 2023 as the Senior Program Manager, Workforce Development. In this role, she supports the development of workforce development resources as well as the Council on Linkages Between Academia and Public Health Practice and its initiatives. Prior to joining PHF, Mayela served as the Associate Director of the Health Resources and Services Administration-funded Region 2 Public Health Training Center, where she collaborated with academic and practice partners in the region to ensure that the current and future public health workforce is adequately trained to address the emerging challenges of their communities.

Mayela holds a Master of Public Health from Columbia University

Mailman School of Public Health and a Bachelor of Arts in Psychology from the University of San Francisco.

Sonja Armbruster, MA, Performance Improvement Expert, PHF



Sonja Armbruster, MA, is on the faculty of the Wichita State University Public Health Science program, and recently served as Director of the Center for Public Health Initiatives at Wichita State University's Community Engagement Institute. There she leads a team that provides training and technical assistance to the state health department as well as local health departments and other health services agencies across the state. Previously, she worked at the Sedgwick County Health Department where she served in a number of administrative roles, including health promotion program management, development of the strategic plan and performance management system, supervision of the quality improvement and accreditation preparation efforts, and leadership of MAPP (community health assessment and improvement

planning). She occasionally serves as adjunct faculty for the University of Kansas Master of Public Health program.

As a consultant for the Public Health Foundation, Sonja has provided training and technical assistance for state, local and tribal health departments in the areas of performance management systems development, workforce development, quality improvement since 2011. Sonja served as a past chair of the National Association of County and City Health Officials MAPP Workgroup. She chaired her community health improvement coalition, the Wichita Health Alliance for six years and still serves on the leadership team. She has served as a site visitor for the Public Health Accreditation Board since 2012.

Sonja is an author of *Collaborative Performance Management for Public Health: A Practical Guide*, published in June 2020. Her formal education includes a Bachelor of Arts in secondary education and a Master of Arts in communication, both from Wichita State University.

Les Beitsch, MD, JD, Performance Improvement Expert, PHF



Leslie Beitsch, MD, JD, has retired from full time academic and public health practice. Dr. Beitsch's public health practice roles included tenure as the Commissioner of the Oklahoma State Department of Health. His time in Oklahoma was preceded by a dozen years of local and state service in Florida, where he twice was appointed Deputy Secretary of the Florida Department of Health. He remains affiliated with Florida State University College of Medicine where he has served in several capacities since 2003, most recently as department chair for Behavioral Sciences and Social Medicine, professor of health policy, and director of the Center for Medicine and Public Health.

Dr. Beitsch is a member of the Public Health Foundation board. He is past chair of the Board of Directors of PHF and was awarded the Public Health Foundation's 2008 Theodore Erwin Award for his contributions. Dr. Beitsch has been active in a number of other public health organizations including the Public Health Accreditation Board's Board of Directors, where he also served as chair. He was also formerly chair of the Public Health Leadership Society. He has been on a number of public health journal editorial staffs and boards. Dr. Beitsch was the recipient of the Association of State and Territorial Health Officials' 2007 Alumni Award.

Christine Beluk, MPA, Academic Health Department Manager, Massachusetts Department of Public Health



Christine Beluk is the Academic Health Department Manager at the Massachusetts Department of Public Health. A Massachusetts native, Christine has spent her career to date in higher education, where she supported students in the pursuit of becoming active citizens. Most recently, she served as a Cooperative Education Faculty member in the College of Social Sciences and Humanities at Northeastern University. Prior to that, she served as the Assistant Director for Service and Leadership at the Center for Student Life at New York University. Christine holds an undergraduate degree in Sociology and Human Services from Northeastern University and a master's in Public Administration from NYU's Wagner School of Public Service.

Sara Jo Best, President, Kentucky Health Departments Association and Director of Lincoln Trail District Health Department



Sara Jo obtained her Masters of Public Health from Western Kentucky University. She began her employment at Lincoln Trail District Health Department in March of 2002 as a community health educator. In 2003, she obtained the position of Director of Public Health Preparedness and Planning. After Hurricanes Katrina and Rita in 2005, Sara Jo served Kentucky on a public health strike team and deployed to Mississippi to serve 6 counties affected by the storm in linking medical resources to those in need. Sara Jo is a 2006 graduate of the Kentucky Public Health Leadership Institute. Her team was acknowledged for their work in public health workforce development at the American Public Health Association Conference that same year. In July of 2008, she became responsible for the oversight of financial and program standard compliance for environmental health services as the Environmental Director. She has been a member of the administrative team for Lincoln Trail District Health Department for 20 years, participating in activities such as strategic planning, the budget process, accreditation readiness, and policy development. She currently serves as the Public Health Director of Lincoln Trail District Health Department. Sara Jo has been active in the Kentucky Public Health Association (KPHA) serving as both the Vice President and President, as well as planning the association's annual conference in 2018. Sara Jo is also an active member of the Kentucky Health Department Association (KHDA) having served as the District Health Department Representative and the Western Kentucky Representative. She has been serving as the KHDA President since July of 2020. She has assisted with work on Advocacy, Red Tape Reduction, and Local Health Department/Department for Public Health Memorandum of Agreement committees as well as the KHDA Mentoring program for new public health directors. In 2016, Sara Jo was awarded the Kentucky Health Department Association Trail Blazer award for her work as a new public health director. She was the 2022 recipient of the Department for Public Health Commissioner's Meritorious Award, and 2022 Kentucky Health Departments Association Director of the Year. In February of 2018, Lincoln Trail District Health Department obtained national accreditation from the Public Health Accreditation Board (PHAB) becoming the 14th health department in Kentucky to receive this recognition.

Ron Bialek, MPP, President and CEO, PHF



Ron Bialek is President and CEO of the Public Health Foundation (PHF). Under his leadership, PHF has focused its efforts on developing and implementing innovative strategies for improving performance of public health agencies and systems. Initiatives include developing performance management and quality improvement tools and training for public health professionals; developing the consensus set of Core Competencies for Public Health Professionals through the Council on Linkages Between Academia and Public Health Practice; creating the Nation's most comprehensive public health learning management system – TRAIN – linking together 26 states, 3 tribes, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the Veterans Health Administration, the U.S. Medical Reserve Corps, and other organizations; and developing consumer oriented county health profiles – the Community Health Status Indicators initiative – for all counties in the U.S. Ron served as one of the editors

and chapter authors for the new book Solving Population Health Problems Through Collaboration and Public Health Quality Improvement Handbook. Ron received his B.A. in Political Science and his M.P.P. in Public Policy from the Johns Hopkins University.

Leslie Ann Dauphin, PhD, Director, Public Health Infrastructure Center, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention



The Public Health Infrastructure Center serves as the connection point between the agency and state, local, and territorial jurisdictions; tribes; and CDC's public health partners. Dr. Dauphin leads a team of experts that set the strategic direction for the center to ensure that our country's public health infrastructure has the people, services, and systems needed to promote and protect health in every U.S. community (including all 50 states, the U.S. territories, tribes, and freely associated states).

Dr. Dauphin has served in a number of leadership roles across CDC. Most recently, she served as director of the former CDC Center for Surveillance, Epidemiology, and Laboratory Services. Dr. Dauphin's leadership was instrumental to CDC's response to laboratory safety events in 2014 and in the creation and successful stand up of the Office of Laboratory Science and Safety, where she served as deputy director. Previously, she served as acting Director for the Office of Science and Deputy Associate Director for Laboratory Science within the National Center for Emerging and Zoonotic Infectious Diseases. A trained laboratory scientist, Dr. Dauphin specialized in bioterrorism and emerging threats as a research microbiologist and response team coordinator for CDC's 24/7 laboratory response to bioterrorism threats in the U.S. and abroad. Dr. Dauphin also served in leadership roles on CDC's COVID-19 response.

Dr. Dauphin is a veteran of the U.S. Army, where she was a paratrooper under the 18th Airborne Corps. She received the Southwest Asia Service Medal and the National Defense Service Medal for her service in Saudi Arabia during the first Gulf War, Operation Desert Storm.

Dr. Dauphin received her doctoral degree in microbiology from North Carolina State University.

Grace Davis, Project Associate, Workforce Development, PHF



Grace Davis joined the Public Health Foundation (PHF) in January 2022 as an intern and has since become a Project Associate. In this role, she provides support for activities related to the Council on Linkages Between Academia and Public Health Practice, Core Competencies for Public Health Professionals, and other workforce development projects. Grace received her B.S. in Public Health at the Arnold School of Public Health from The University of South Carolina in 2023, and is currently pursuing a Master of Public Health from The George Washington University.

Denise Fair Razo, MBA, MPH, FACHE, Chief Public Health Officer, Detroit Health Department



Denise Fair Razo serves as Chief Public Health Officer for the Detroit Health Department, appointed by Mayor Mike Duggan in September 2019. In this role, she directs strategies to protect the health and wellbeing of residents through a variety of various public health programs. Over the last several months, Ms. Fair Razo and her team of more than 250 employees have been responsible for leading efforts in the COVID-19 pandemic to keep Detroiters protected. Prior to leading Detroit's Health Department, Ms. Fair Razo served as a group practice director at Henry Ford Health System, providing executive oversight for primary care clinics and multi-specialty medical centers. She also served as senior consultant and program administrator for Trinity Health System prior. Ms. Fair Razo also currently serves on the state's Public Health Advisory Council, appointed by Gov. Whitmer to represent local public health officials. She is also on the boards of the Public Health Foundation and Detroit Authority. She obtained her Bachelor of Arts degree from The University of Michigan at Ann Arbor, a Master of Public Health from The University of California at Berkeley, and a Master of Business Administration from the Mike Ilitch School of Business at Wayne State University. She also is board certified in healthcare management from the American College of Healthcare Executives.

Joe Finkbonner, RPh, MHA, Chair, PHF Board of Directors; Former Executive Director, Northwest Portland Area Indian Health Board



Joe Finkbonner is the former Executive Director of Northwest Portland Area Indian Health Board (NPAIHB). Prior to holding that position, Mr. Finkbonner was the Director of the Northwest Tribal Epidemiology Center (The EpiCenter) at the NPAIHB. The EpiCenter is one of 12 epidemiology centers nationally that focuses specifically on American Indian/Alaska Native health status. Mr. Finkbonner began his work in Indian health for the Lummi Tribe as the Health Director/CEO and was very active at State and Federal levels in his efforts to heighten the awareness of disparities of the AI/AN population and to assist with focusing action toward improving the health status through policy development. His efforts were through his membership on the Washington State Board of Health, participation in the Washington Public Health Improvement Plan, and miscellaneous workgroups for the Indian Health Service. Mr. Finkbonner also is Immediate Past Chair of the Public Health Accreditation Board.

Mr. Finkbonner began his work in healthcare delivery as a pharmacist at Providence Medical Center in Seattle and Overlake Medical Center in Bellevue. He holds a Master of Health Administration and a Bachelor of Science in Pharmacy, both from the University of Washington. He is a member of Lummi Nation. Mr. Finkbonner is a member of the clinical faculty at the University of Washington and Oregon Health & Sciences University.

Rebecca Gillis, Division of Public Health Protection and Safety Director, Kentucky Department for Public Health



Rebecca Gillis is the Director of Public Health Protection and Safety at the Kentucky Department for Public Health and Principal Investigator for Public Health Infrastructure Grant (PHIG). Ms. Gillis was hired in public health in the months following September 11, 2001 and has spent more than 20 years working in Public Health Preparedness and other Foundational Health programs. Kentucky is in the top 10 for Presidentially-declared disasters in the nation and her experience includes serving as Incident Commander for the State Health Operations Center during numerous statewide emergencies and health events, such as 2009 swine flu pandemic, 2012 tornado events, and 2020 COVID19 pandemic. Ms. Gillis oversees eight branches in the Division with approximately 150 employees and works closely with local, state, and federal partners in areas such as environmental health, workforce development, harm reduction, emergency management and health policy.

Community health promotion was the focus of her undergraduate training and her background includes service at state and local health departments as well as other non-profit community organizations, boards and agencies in a variety of roles including working in property management, substance abuse prevention, domestic violence initiatives and senior care. Ms. Gillis holds a Master of Public Health degree with concentration in Chemical Abuse Dependency and Counseling, is a Certified Health Education Specialist, a FEMA qualified Master Exercise Practitioner and a Registered Environmental Health Specialist. Ms. Gillis is a lifelong Kentuckian and grew up in the Appalachian Mountains of Eastern Kentucky. Ms. Gillis has been married for 19 years, has two children, four dogs, five fish, a turtle, a bearded dragon and a new kitten.

Jennifer Harmon, MPA, Engagement Manager, TRAIN Learning Network, PHF



Jennifer Harmon joined the Public Health Foundation in July 2022 as the TRAIN Learning Network Engagement Manager. In this role, she supports TRAIN Learning Network affiliates, course providers, and learners in using TRAIN for workforce development. Prior to joining PHF, Jennifer served as the Director of the Learning Management Center at the New Mexico Department of Health. During her tenure with the New Mexico Department of Health, she served as the Administrator of TRAIN New Mexico and led several department-wide initiatives relating to workforce development and policy development. Jennifer's background includes many years in organizational learning and development, as well as IT project management. Jennifer holds a Master of Public Administration degree from the University of South Dakota and a Bachelor of Business Administration degree from Chapman University.

Shelley Hearne, DrPH, Director, Lerner Center for Public Health Advocacy, Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health



Dr. Shelley Hearne brings an extensive track record of leadership, policy impact, and teaching in health advocacy. At the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, she is the Deans Sommer & Klag Distinguished Professor of the Practice for Public Health Advocacy and director, Lerner Center for Public Health Advocacy. Previously, Dr. Hearne was the president of CityHealth, which catalyzes city policies for healthier living; founder of the Trust for America's Health, a national organization dedicated to preventing epidemics, protecting health, and the managing director of The Pew Charitable Trusts' Health group, which included its biomedical research, food, pharmaceutical, and financial security programs. She has also led the Big Cities Health Coalition, which represents the thirty largest cities' health officials, served as the acting director of NJ's pollution prevention program, and was the executive director of the Pew Environmental Health Commission.

She is experienced running advocacy campaigns that successfully helped pass and implement important public health policies, such as the model N.J. Pollution Prevention Act, Nationwide Environmental Public Health Tracking Network, the Credit Card Accountability, Responsibility, and Disclosure Act, and the U.S. Food Safety Modernization Act. She has served in numerous national leadership positions, including chair of APHA's executive board and vice president of the Council on Education for Public Health.

She has been widely covered in the press, covering topics ranging from pandemic preparedness, public health infrastructure, ranking systems for states and cities on public health issues, including obesity, emergency response, and key policy issues, such as early education, tobacco control, healthy food procurement, earned sick leave policies, and financial security. She has substantial experience testifying before and engaging with policymakers at the federal, state, and local level.

Shelley has received numerous awards for her advocacy efforts, including the Senator Lautenberg Award for lifetime achievement in public health, the APHA's Executive Director Citation, and Bowdoin College's Common Good award. She received her B.A. in chemistry and environmental studies with honors from Bowdoin College and a DrPH in environmental health science from Columbia University's School of Public Health.

Taban Herrington, MA, Chief of Staff, Kentucky Department for Public Health



Taban Herrington serves as the Chief of Staff for the Kentucky Department for Public Health (KDPH). Taban's professional background and master's degree is in risk and crisis communications. Prior to becoming Chief of Staff, Taban served as the Functional and Access Needs, Medical Reserve Corps and Crisis Communications Coordinator for the Emergency Preparedness and Response Branch of KDPH. Before joining KDPH in 2020, Taban worked for the Fayette County Division of Emergency Management where she oversaw the division's communications and exercise planning for the Chemical Stockpile Emergency Preparedness Program. Taban has taught several communications courses at the University of Kentucky and was involved

in research efforts surrounding crisis communications response strategies, risk perception and messaging, health communications campaigns, and the use of culturally tailored messaging in health and emergency preparedness and response communications. Prior to moving to Kentucky, Taban lived in Orlando, Florida, where she worked for the Walt Disney World Company.

Joneigh Khaldun, MD, MPH, FACEP, Vice President and Chief Health Equity Officer, CVS Health



Joneigh S. Khaldun, MD, MPH, FACEP is a nationally recognized healthcare executive, health policy and public health expert who currently serves as the Vice President and Chief Health Equity Officer for CVS Health. In this role she leads the company's data-driven strategy to decrease health disparities and address social drivers of health. Previously, she served as Chief Medical Executive for the State of Michigan and Chief Deputy Director for Health in the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services, where she oversaw public health, Medicaid, behavioral health, and aging services. She was the lead strategist guiding Michigan's COVID-19 response and in 2021 was appointed by President Biden to the COVID-19 Health Equity Task Force.

Dr. Khaldun has spearheaded the design and implementation of several system-changing projects at the intersection of public health and clinical medicine. Prior to her role in the State of Michigan she led the Detroit Health Department, where she spearheaded programs to address infant mortality, launched new community-based clinical and outreach programs, and led Detroit's response to the largest hepatitis A outbreak in modern U.S. history. Dr. Khaldun also previously served as Chief Medical Officer of the Baltimore City Health Department and worked in the Obama-Biden Administration's Office of Health Reform.

Dr. Khaldun is an elected member of the National Academy of Medicine. She has received multiple awards and recognitions, including the George Washington University Monumental Alumni Award; 2020 Crain's Detroit Newsmaker of the Year; The Detroit News 2021 Michiganiaan of the Year; 2022 USA Today Woman of the Year; and the 2023 Fierce Healthcare Most Influential Minority Executives in Healthcare. She is a board-certified practicing emergency medicine physician at Henry Ford Hospital in Detroit.

Carol Moehrle, RN, BSN, Vice President, Programs, PHF



Carol serves as VP Programs at the Public Health Foundation. Prior to working with PHF she served for 32 years as the District Director for Public Health – Idaho North Central Idaho. Carol serves on the Board of the National Association of Counties (NACo) where she holds leadership positions in Public Health, Healthy Counties and Resilient Counties subcommittees. She has been active in NACCHO since 1991 and served as President of NACCHO 2010-2011. She served on the Public Health Accreditation Board and was Chair of PHAB 2011-2013. Her Public Health District has been accredited since 2016, and re-accredited in 2023. She shares her passion for Public Health with numerous public, private and nonprofit organizations.

Judy Monroe, MD, President and CEO, CDC Foundation



Dr. Judith Monroe, president and CEO of the CDC Foundation, has dedicated her career to protecting people and saving lives. She joined the CDC Foundation in February 2016 as president and CEO, following her role as a deputy director of the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and director of CDC's Office of State, Tribal, Local and Territorial Support. In her work at the CDC Foundation, Dr. Monroe advances priority programs that improve the health of people across America and around the world. The CDC Foundation mobilizes philanthropic and private-sector resources to extend the lifesaving work of CDC and the public health system, managing hundreds of programs in the United States and in nearly 80 countries.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the CDC Foundation supported the work of CDC, U.S. public health departments and low- and middle-income countries. Under Dr. Monroe's leadership, the CDC Foundation provided support to disproportionately affected populations; procured personal protection equipment for frontline health workers; supported critical research; hired more than 4,000 surge staff; and provided technical assistance and grants to more than 350 community-based organizations.

The CDC Foundation under Dr. Monroe's leadership also responded to the Zika epidemic as an implementing partner in addition to mobilizing resources; supported the response and recovery from the 2017 hurricane season; and serves as a strategic partner to CDC for global health security.

Prior to the CDC Foundation, Dr. Monroe oversaw key activities and technical assistance at CDC supporting the nation's health departments and the public health system. Throughout the 2014–15 Ebola epidemic she served as senior advisor for the domestic response. During her tenure as the state health commissioner for Indiana she served as president of the Association of State and Territorial Health Officials through the H1N1 pandemic. She envisioned and founded the ASTHO president's challenge in 2008. This leadership platform resulted in initiatives with significant health improvements and focus of ASTHO annual meetings.

Dr. Monroe is a member of the Milken Institute's Public Health Advisory Board and Executive Circle, the COVID Collaborative, the Advisory Council of the Pandemic Action Network and the APHA Alliance for Disease Prevention and Response. She serves as a member of the World Health Organization Foundation's Strategic Advisory Group, WHAMglobal Board, Advancing a Healthier Wisconsin Endowment Advisory Committee, Woman of Impact, Texas Biomedical Research Institute's Strategic Advisory Council and is a member of the Atlanta Rotary Club and International Women's Forum. Additionally, she co-chaired Gov. Holcomb's public health commission aimed at modernizing the public health system in Indiana.

Among her many awards, Dr. Monroe was recognized as one of Atlanta's Most Admired CEOs for 2021 by the Atlanta Business Chronicle; awarded the United Way of Greater Atlanta Woman of Excellence Award; received the Metro Atlanta Chamber of Commerce MAC Heroes of Global Health award; the Indiana Commission on Women Torchbearer Award and APHL Presidential Award. Dr. Monroe received the American Public Health Association's (APHA) Presidential Citation for her work to improve the health and well-being of people around the world, and for her commitment to the future of public health as a mentor to young physicians and public health students.

Dr. Monroe received her doctor of medicine from the University of Maryland and a bachelor of science degree from Eastern Kentucky University. She completed her residency in family medicine at the University of Cincinnati, a rural faculty development fellowship through East Tennessee State University, and a mini-fellowship in obstetrics through the University of Wisconsin. She also participated in the State Health Leadership Initiative at Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government and received an honorary doctorate from Purdue University in Health and Human Services.

Jade Ramsdell, MBA, Performance Improvement Director, Kansas Department of Health and Environment



Jade Ramsdell, MBA, LSSGB, CDP®, is a transformative leader with over 9 years driving impactful projects and enhancing quality improvement initiatives. As Performance Improvement Director at the Kansas Department of Health and Environment (KDHE), she leads state health initiatives with innovative approaches in quality and performance management. Dedicated to advancing health equity and improving outcomes, she addresses workforce challenges, resource constraints, and priorities in rural and diverse communities. Certified as a Diversity Professional and Lean Six Sigma Green Belt, Jade's methodologies set benchmarks in inclusive healthcare systems and resource accessibility. As the owner of a public health strategy consulting business, Jade has supported non-profit organizations, foundations, and healthcare institutions in developing effective public and population health strategies.

Steven Stack, MD, MBA, Commissioner, Kentucky Department for Public Health



Steven J. Stack was appointed Commissioner for Public Health and Chief Medical Officer for the Commonwealth of Kentucky in February 2020, and was subsequently elected Secretary-Treasurer in fall 2020 and President in 2023 of the Association of State and Territorial Health Officials. Dr. Stack is a board-certified emergency physician with more than 20 years of emergency medicine clinical practice and emergency department management experience. Throughout his career, Dr. Stack has served in numerous medical professional association leadership roles. In 2006, he was the first board certified emergency physician ever elected to the American Medical Association Board of Trustees and in 2015 he served as AMA President.

Born and raised in Cleveland, Dr. Stack graduated magna cum laude in classical studies from the College of the Holy Cross in Worcester, Massachusetts. He completed his medical education and emergency medicine residency at the Ohio State University and his MBA at the University of Tennessee Haslam College of Business.

Matt Stefanak, MPH, CPH, Public Health Ambassador, Kent State University College of Public Health, and Performance Improvement Expert, PHF



More than 35 years of experience in public health leadership and management, with expertise in organizational strategic planning, community health assessment and improvement planning, program evaluation, public health preparedness and emergency response planning, organizational performance management, quality and business process improvement, agency accreditation, workforce development needs assessment, financial performance management and improvement, and public health communications. In the academic public health setting, an educator for public health students and working public health professionals who also provides technical assistance to public health agencies for workforce needs assessment, strategic and financial planning, and community health improvement planning.

Sarah Worthington, MPH, Academic Public Health Manager, Toledo-Lucas County Health Department (OH)



Since earning her MPH in Health Promotion and Education from the University of Toledo in 2022, Sarah Worthington has served as the Academic Public Health Manager for the Toledo-Lucas County Health Department, coordinating all student experiences and strengthening academic partnerships. She also works to increase workforce development efforts by providing and creating training opportunities for staff and volunteering to be a Peer Reviewer for the Public Health Learning Navigator, an initiative of the National Coordinating Center for Public Health Trainings at the National Network of Public Health Institutes (NNPHI) and the Public Health Learning Network. For the last 4 years, Sarah has served as the Vice-President/Secretary of her neighborhood organization and assists in facilitating outreach and collaboration between elected city officials, community groups and other organizations.

Mona Zuffante, PhD, MPH, Chief Public Health Officer, Winnebago Public Health Department (NE)



Mona Zuffante is a member of the Seneca Cayuga Nation of Oklahoma. She grew up in the northwest suburbs of Chicago with her parents and sister. She enjoyed participating in various Pow-Wows in the Midwest, but also various academic opportunities. She attended Northland College and able to complete her BS Degree in Environmental Health in 1998. After she received her BS degree in 1998, she applied for the Environmental Health Specialist (EHS) position in Winnebago and was selected for this in 1998. As the EHS, she accomplished many things within the community.

She wrote, managed and implemented several grants. She learned that she loved learning and being able to work on several projects at one time. Everyday could be a new adventure from car seats to facility inspections to water collection to pet vaccinations. She

was fortunate to receive the Aberdeen Area Sanitarian of the year in 2000. During this time, she also became a part time Emergency Medical Technician and has work for the Winnebago EMS program and am lucky to be apart of this amazing and caring team for the past 22 years.

The Health Director position was vacant and she was promoted into that position about 12 years ago. She wanted to learn more about public health and entered into the Concordia University's Master of Public Health program, where she graduated in 2017. She currently oversee the 18 field health programs within the Winnebago community. She has been able to write, managed and implemented several grants through all the years. She has participated in several projects, where she have learned how to design, implement, and collect data to show outcomes and grant budgetary, financial and program reporting requirements. In 2020, she was accepted into the first PhD Indigenous Health Program at University of North Dakota and graduation in August 2023. This program tested me, but also was what she needed during a Global Pandemic where she was working full time not just as the Chief Public Health Director, but also as a member of the Winnebago EMS program. The lessons she learned from this program have been empowering and truly life affirming as an Indigenous person. She have been able to share many of the lessons and knowledge that she have gained during that time. Her dissertation centered around positive mental health well being among our adolescents and young adults. She has had the privilege of serving on several national boards such as NACCHO and PHF and regional boards such as Buffet Cancer advisory board and the Great Plains Tribal Advisory Board and many others. She had the honor of receiving the UNMC Distinguished Researcher in 2023.

The most important role that she have had is being a mother to 4 amazing children. All that she have been able to do in this life is because of the support from them, but also from her companion. She enjoys in her spare time to bead and sew. She loves working outdoors in the garden and trying to grow some flowers from time to time with the help of the Creator. Her parents have set the foundational road that led her throughout her life and she so blessed to be able to do all of this work.