

Emotional moments during MUSC support sessions on Ukraine

BY HELEN ADAMS

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Irina Pechenaya's words were brief but powerful as she spoke during an online support session hosted by MUSC for people affected by the crisis in Ukraine. "I am from Kyiv. They're bombing my friends and my family," said Pechenaya, a coordinator in MUSC's graduate medical education residency program. She fought back tears as she spoke.

"So I don't think I'm ready to share anything more, but I did want to say thank you for making yourself available," she said to chaplain Frank Harris, manager of Pastoral Care Services at MUSC Health, and therapist Tenelle Jones, who runs MUSC's Resiliency Program. They led the online emotional support session.

"Reach out any time," Jones answered. "If you haven't already, start writing. Maybe that'll help. Sometimes we don't have the words to say verbally. Writing them out can give you a little bit more emotional comfort."

Writing, talking, breathing deeply, focusing on the present, prayer – all techniques for coping with difficult emotions. Jones and Harris tried to give people upset about Ukraine options to help them stay centered.

"When you feel stressed, you want to do as much as you can to minimize the physical effects of that stress on your body. Make a list of things that you can control and that you can do right now," Jones said.

Harris talked about the feeling of grief that can come from being forced to let go of the way things were and the importance of values.

"For a chaplain, you may not be surprised to hear me talk about faith, but it's not just a spiritual or religious faith. I think it is a faith that we bring to the table. It's a faith in the values that we have. It's a faith in the community that we're still connected to. It's the faith that we can lean on one another during difficult times, even

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Celebrating women at MUSC



Photo by Sarah Pack

Department of Public Safety's Maj. Dorothy Simmons is proud to have served more than 33 years at MUSC and stands as the department's first woman to reach a command-level rank.

Patrol commander is a trail blazer for women in law enforcement

BY CINDY ABOLE

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When it comes to taking care of people and ensuring people's safety on MUSC's sprawling 82-acre campus, Major Dorothy Simmons is your woman.

According to her colleagues, for 33 years, Simmons has been a model of integrity, dependability, leadership and dedication within MUSC's Department of Public Safety (DPS), where since September of 2014, she has served as

patrol commander – no. 2 in command.

Simmons has championed Public Safety's mission throughout her storied career, assuring a safe, orderly and secure environment for patients, students, visitors, faculty and staff alike. She joined MUSC as a state security officer in 1988 when the department was a branch of a joint public safety office serving both MUSC and the College of Charleston.

Simmons patrolled on foot for two years, supporting basic campus safety and security – responding to campus

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a role?

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Organ recipient gains
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LGBTQ Summit
Meet Sonya Floyd
Health and Well-Being

MUSC hosts free summit on LGBTQ health care

By **LESLIE CANTU**
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LGBTQ health care isn't the province of a few specialists. It's for all providers. "The vast majority of the LGBTQ community just needs general health care. They don't necessarily need something highly specialized. And so it's a really important aspect of this conversation, which is just raising up general practitioners who are well-versed and comfortable in this sort of care," said Chase Glenn, director of LGBTQ+ Health Services and Enterprise Resources at MUSC.

To help providers become more comfortable, MUSC is hosting a free virtual LGBTQ+ Health Equity Summit in April aimed at health care providers, students, researchers and anyone interested in the issue. The two-day event will feature breakout sessions for deep dives into specific issues as well as keynotes from national speakers, including Assistant Health Secretary Rachel L. Levine, M.D., the first openly transgender person to be confirmed by the Senate.

"Across the two days, there's really something that I think will appeal to everyone. I think there are going to be some really great 'aha!' moments for folks," Glenn said.

The summit is open to all, not just to those with MUSC ties.

"We're in communities across the state, so why not offer this to everyone? MUSC is so integrated into the lives of folks in the communities we serve and looked to as a leader, so it only makes sense that we don't

just keep this internal, but we offer this to everyone," Glenn said. "And why free? We're looking at this as an investment that we're making, not only here at MUSC but in the community to provide the highest quality of care for this community. So free means it's accessible; people can join, and they won't have registration fees as a barrier."

Speakers will come from both within and outside of MUSC. For example, Marty Player, M.D., and Amanda Jones, PA-C, members of the Family Medicine group at MUSC Health, will talk about LGBTQ issues in the context of primary care.

While earning her Master of Public Health degree, Jones studied health disparities that affect the LGBTQ population. Starting with data from a Tri-county survey conducted by the Alliance for Full Acceptance, in 2018, she looked at reasons for delays in care for LGBTQ community members. She found that lack of trust in providers and not knowing which providers would be safe havens led to many of the delays, with additional problems stemming from insurance coverage.

Jones and Player also pointed out that providers across specialties need to be comfortable treating members of the LGBTQ community. Player gave the example of a transgender male patient who was nervous about potential reactions from staff if he were to schedule a colonoscopy and the staff realized his genitalia didn't match his outward appearance. Player made sure to contact the gastroenterologist to alert the doctor and staff to the situation, and the patient went ahead with the important



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preventive procedure.

Other summit speakers will talk about research, mental health, delays in breast cancer care and LGBTQ health in the South.

Glenn said many of the external speakers were excited about the opportunity to participate in an LGBTQ-focused event sponsored by an institution in the Deep South.

"People are interested in being involved. I think they feel like it's a really good thing to be a part of," he said.

He hopes that busy clinicians will look at the schedule and make time to attend the sessions that pique their interests. The beauty of holding the summit in a virtual format means that people can attend as many sessions as their schedules will allow, without having to leave the office. And Glenn hopes that clinicians start to think of LGBTQ care not as the "topic of the moment" but as part of their work.

"I really do think all health care providers can be a part of this work and a part of providing this care," he said. "It's not just for endocrinology. It's not just for primary care. It's really across the board, meeting the needs of this community. And I want folks to maybe attend and get just a little bit more of a sense of how they can be a part of this and what their piece of the puzzle is."

Could leaky blood vessels in brain be a culprit in Alzheimer's disease?

By Kimberly McGhee

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Alzheimer's disease is an enormous problem that, with an aging population, will only become bigger. More than 6 million Americans are living with Alzheimer's disease, and 1 in 3 seniors will die of it, according to the Alzheimer's Association. By 2050, the cost of Alzheimer's disease, currently estimated at \$355 billion, will rise to \$1.1 trillion.

Could one of the causes of such a huge and costly problem be traced back to the cells that line the body's tiniest blood vessels?

A new study published by an MUSC research team in Molecular Therapy suggests that the answer is yes. The team, led by Hongkuan Fan, Ph.D., associate professor in the Department of Pathology and Laboratory Medicine, found fewer of these cells, known as pericytes, in the brains of people who died of Alzheimer's disease. They also found higher levels of Fli-1, a protein most often found in blood cells and thought to govern their development.

When the team blocked, or inhibited, the action of Fli-1 in a mouse model of Alzheimer's disease, the memory of the mice improved. Blocking the protein also stopped immune cells from leaking into the brain and causing the inflammation that is a hallmark of Alzheimer's disease. Blocking Fli-1 could be a promising new approach to treating Alzheimer's disease and other dementias.

"We are really excited by these data because they suggest that Fli-1 could be a new therapeutic target for Alzheimer's disease," said Fan.

Better therapies for Alzheimer's disease are urgently needed. Most existing Alzheimer's therapies just treat the symptoms and do little to address underlying causes.

It has long been known that people who have vascular issues, or problems with their hearts or blood vessels, are at increased risk of developing Alzheimer's disease and other dementias. These include people who have had a heart attack or who have diabetes or high blood pressure or cholesterol.

That's not surprising, since the brain is hungry for oxygen. When it doesn't get enough, because the flow of blood is inadequate, its cells don't function as well and can begin to die.

Lining the walls of tiny blood vessels

known as capillaries, pericytes make sure the brain's energy and waste-elimination demands are met.

"The capillary is where all the action is," said Perry Halushka, M.D., Ph.D., Distinguished University Professor of Cell and Molecular Pharmacology. "It is the place where all these exchanges really take place."

Pericytes also help to make up the blood-brain barrier that prevents impurities and immune cells in the blood from reaching the brain. They also help to remove amyloid-beta, known to be a culprit in Alzheimer's disease, from the brain.

When pericytes are lost, immune cells and impurities begin to leak into the brain, causing it to become inflamed and eventually leading to cell death and declining mental function.

"Pericytes may play a much more important role in dementia than people originally thought," said Halushka. "This is especially true in the aging population, where vascular dementia is going to become a bigger problem."

With funding from the South Carolina Clinical & Translational Research Institute, the MUSC team looked at the brains of people who had died of Alzheimer's disease, drawing on the resources of the brain bank at the Carroll A. Campbell, Jr. Neuropathology Laboratory.

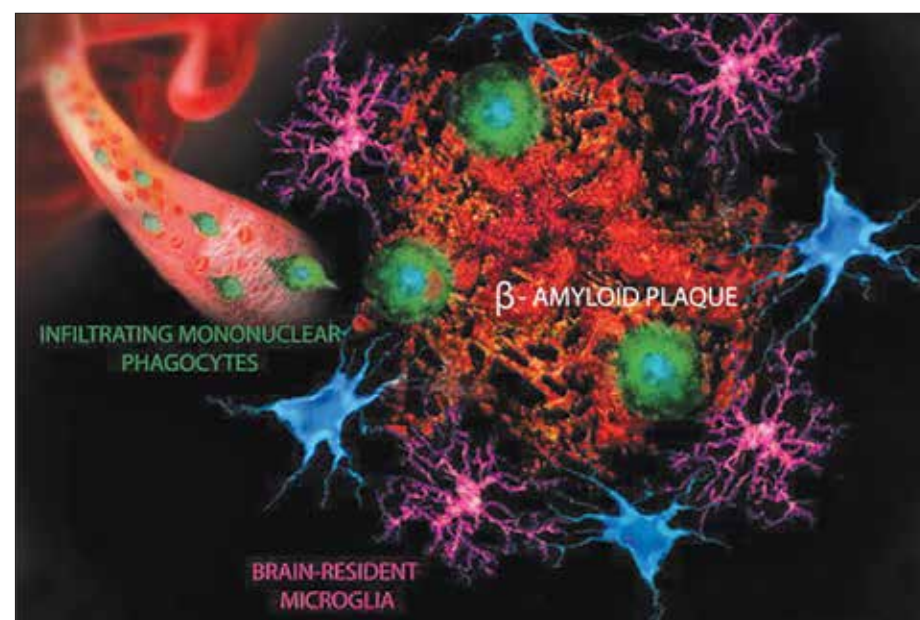
"The opportunity to study the human brain is an extraordinary asset for the institution and for the study of all types of brain diseases, not just Alzheimer's disease," said Halushka.

The MUSC team found that the brains of people who died of Alzheimer's disease had 34% fewer pericytes than healthy brains in their hippocampus, a part of the brain associated with learning and memory. The remaining pericytes had much higher levels of Fli-1.

The team then showed that an animal model of Alzheimer's also showed pericyte loss in the hippocampus, increased Fli-1 and impaired memory. Blocking Fli-1 improved the mice's performance on behavioral tests meant to assess memory.

"The most exciting finding is that the Fli-1 inhibitor actually improved cognitive deficits in the animal model because, in the end, that's the only thing that matters," said Halushka.

The team also found that blocking Fli-1



A schematic representation showing some of the main players in Alzheimer's disease.

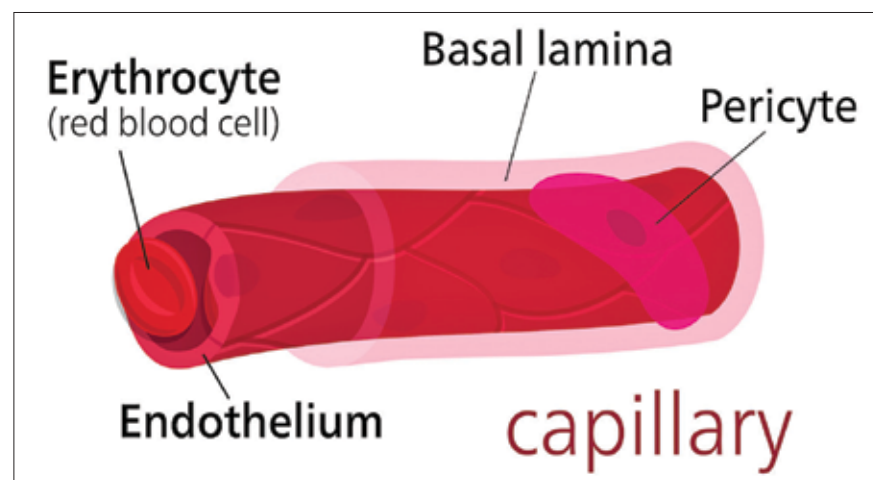


Diagram of a capillary.

in the mice helped to prevent pericyte loss and preserve the integrity of the blood-brain barrier as well as reduce the build-up of amyloid-beta.

"We didn't expect such a profound effect in the mice, but to our surprise, the inhibitor really worked," said Fan.

The next step for the MUSC team is to develop an RNA that could silence Fli-1 and so reduce the brain inflammation that leads to cell death in Alzheimer's disease. The goal would not be to do away with Fli-1, as it serves important roles in the body, but to

maintain it at healthy levels.

"What's exciting is that this could be a new way to think about treating Alzheimer's disease, which has never been thought of before," said Halushka. "This research opens up a whole new area for potential targets, not just Fli-1 but the pericyte itself."

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Hollings researcher's upcoming TEDxCharleston talk to explore exciting advances in cancer research

Staff Report

It's not every day that a possibly life-changing discovery is made in a lab. For MUSC Hollings Cancer Center researcher Steven Rosenzweig, Ph.D., an accidental lab discovery led to an amazing finding that he will present at an upcoming TEDxCharleston event.

A grassroots initiative, TEDx features local speakers who share "ideas worth spreading," bringing the spirit of the international forerunner TED — technology, entertainment, design — Talks to local communities around the globe. This year's TEDxCharleston will be held in person on March 23, at the Charleston Music Hall, from 12:30 to 5:30 p.m.

Rosenzweig will be joined by an Olympian, a former professional athlete and other influential community members at the event.

Rosenzweig's passion for cancer research stems from personal loss from the disease. His mother died when he was just 9 years old, and his father died 10 years later. Ever since, Rosenzweig has been focused on research that would lead to better outcomes and survival for cancer patients. "Losing both parents in such a short time period was devastating," he said. "I wouldn't want anyone to endure that kind of pain."

As associate director of Shared Resources at Hollings, Rosenzweig has had the opportunity to work with a wide array of Hollings cancer scientists, who are in the lab diligently looking



Photo by Clif Rhodes

Dr. Steven Rosenzweig practices his upcoming presentation on the TEDxCharleston stage.

The March 23 TEDxCharleston tickets are available online at <https://events.r20.constantcontact.com/register/>.

drug delivery system. Rosenzweig will be describing how new drugs, new treatment strategies and drug delivery systems are helping to move cancer from a death sentence to a chronic disease. He also plans to explain how nanotubes, a drug delivery tool, can be loaded with chemotherapeutic drugs that can be used to target cancer cells.

"I'm planning to tell the story of a novel scientific discovery, which led to something that may have benefit to cancer patients," Rosenzweig said.

Part of the story involves capturing the beauty of how science happens.

Rosenzweig, along with other researchers, was trying to develop an inhibitor to block the growth of cancer cells. One of the proteins they were using in their studies had a mistake in it, and that mistake led to a unique discovery that gave researchers a new way of delivering drugs to tumors. Some drugs, for instance, don't penetrate the brain, and Rosenzweig is exploring the idea that these drugs could be loaded into the nanotubes and targeted to the brain.

Clinical studies will not likely start for another few years, but Rosenzweig believes that this discovery could lead to advances in treatment for pancreatic and brain cancer as well as dementia.

"Everyone should embrace the unexpected, as things don't always go the way you anticipate or expect. You have to be prepared for that, and that requires perseverance," Rosenzweig said. "It puts a smile on my face to say that all the work leading up to that discovery was essential and part of a collaborative discovery."

for a cure to cancer. What is fascinating, in addition to the science, is the creativity and perseverance that they bring to the tasks, which he'll be exploring in his talk.

The goal of the TEDx Talk is to use easily understandable language to convey complex scientific terms and be able to make a speech understandable to an eighth-grade audience; this is something that Rosenzweig has found challenging, given the scientific nature of the subject. Speakers are all assigned two TEDx coaches. In addition to individual rehearsals and practices, speakers spend at least one hour a week with their coaches to prepare for their speeches.

"The biggest hurdle is toning down my language to be nonscientific, and that's been an uphill battle," Rosenzweig said. "I'm talking about a scientific project, and it's really a challenge not to use your typical words in that discussion."

That said, he wants to foster interest in science in an accessible way. Rosenzweig will be speaking about insulin-like growth factor, also known as IGF, which plays a pivotal role in development from birth to adulthood. But Rosenzweig said IGF also can help to fuel and facilitate tumor growth.

His talk will cover an accidental discovery in his lab that resulted in new findings involving an IGF1 inhibitor that led to a precision



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Clinical & Translational
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TRANSLATIONAL
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The power of listening: How a journey initiated by one is transforming the scientific and clinical landscape for millions

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Time: 8:30 am - 2:00 pm
Virtual Format

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More Information & Registration:
Visit SCTR's Translational Research Day webpage
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Keynote Speakers:

Russell "Chip" Norris, PhD
Professor
Department of Regenerative Medicine
and Cell Biology

Sunil Patel, MD
Professor and Chairman
Department of Neurological Surgery





MEET SONYA



Sonya Floyd

Department and how long at MUSC
MUSC Health Managed Care; 29 years

How are you changing what's possible at MUSC

Credentialing the facilities and providers with each payor to ensure reimbursement for services and provide for future growth projects

Family and Pets

Husband, Mike; twins, Will and Kaitlyn; dog, Macy (Labrador) and cat, Tigger

Meal you like to cook *I enjoy cooking a huge Sunday dinner!*

March is Women's History Month; Name three women who inspire you.

Laura Bush: She's classy, elegant – I love her passion to teach and help others; Karyn Rae: She's intelligent, graceful, a critical thinker and softhearted; and my grandmother: She taught me to have a true heart

Best thing about living in Charleston
Saltwater – it never gets old going for a boat ride.



Employee –
Nichole Wandrey,
MUSC OurDay Change
Champion

Transplant, Nephrology
and Hepatology, ICCE
operations manager

What is the hardest part about a change like this?

The hardest part about this type of large-scale change is effectively communicating downstream to all end-users, considering each end-user's needs through design and providing appropriate training.

Change Champions are here to spread the good news, aid in helping end-users to see this change as a positive opportunity for MUSC and provide assistance for end-users within their scope. I agreed to become a Change Champion mostly because I want to be as aware as possible of any changes coming down the pipeline so I can effectively communicate those changes to others.

For more information or questions about OurDay, visit <https://horseshoe.musc.edu/everyone/ourday> or email ourdayquestions@musc.edu.

Editor's note: OurDay Change Champions are part of a group of 50+ MUSC employees from across the enterprise who have volunteered to advocate for the new platform and share information with their teams.



Join us for the 2022
Joseph I. Waring
Lecture featuring
Harvard Medical
School's Sabine
Hildebrandt, M.D.

6 p.m., Tuesday,
March 22

The 2022 Joseph I. Waring Lecture will be held on March 22 and virtually on Zoom. Sabine Hildebrandt, M.D., Harvard Medical School and Harvard College, will present, "Books, Bones and Bodies: Anatomy in Nazi Germany and its Legacies for Medicine Today."

Hildebrandt is an associate professor of pediatrics at Boston Children's Hospital, a lecturer on global health and social medicine and Harvard Medical School Center for Bioethics member.

For more information and registration visit <https://bit.ly/Waring2022>. This event is free and open to the public.

SAVE-THE-DATE

2022 MUSC Septima P. Clark Poetry Contest

While We Breathe, We Hope.

Submissions open
Mid-January to
Mid-March 2022

Poems will be accepted
 from elementary, middle,
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 from across the state
 of South Carolina

<https://musc.libguides.com/spcpoetrycontest>

Making the invisible visible during Women’s History Month

By HELEN ADAMS

adamshel@musc.edu

Edith Williams, Ph.D., believes good old-fashioned footwork combined with science-based care can change the lives of people with lupus. “A mantra of mine is making the invisible visible, and I feel like my work has done that in a number of different ways,” said the associate professor in MUSC’s College of Medicine.

We’re profiling Williams during Women’s History Month to highlight all she has done to elevate and address the concerns of women suffering from lupus, which has been called an invisible illness. The chronic disease causes the immune system to attack healthy tissue.

Williams’ efforts began more than 20 years ago with the Buffalo Lupus Project, which explored cases of lupus and other autoimmune diseases near a hazardous waste site. These days, her work involves a study looking at whether women with lupus can help each other improve their health through culturally tailored peer mentoring.

But Williams didn’t set out to become a trailblazer in her field. Growing up in Rochester, New York, she had a different path in mind. “My father is a physician. He’s an obstetrician. I really thought I would follow in his footsteps. That’s how I began my college experience, with the expectation that I was going pre-med and would apply for medical school.”

But things didn’t go as planned during her time at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. “I got to my fourth chemistry class, and I was like, ‘You know, I am not enjoying this at all.’ I decided to switch my major to psychology. I also had taken a social and preventive medicine course and fell in love with the concepts of epidemiology and social and preventive medicine.”

In graduate school at the State University of New York, she got involved with the federally funded Buffalo Lupus Project. “As an African American female graduate student, they thought it would be perfect for me to be the person who actually went into the community and spoke with the participants about their experiences with the disease, because they were looking at a largely African American side of Buffalo, where this study was taking place.”

The work was career defining. “I learned about lupus and how these ladies and their families were affected in a very real way, how they managed the disease within their own families and their roles as mothers and wives and community advocates,” she said.

“Hearing more detail about their experiences during these in-home interviews really confirmed for me that this was where I wanted to focus my work.”

She knew she wanted to improve the lives of people with lupus and launched some self-management programs for the women she’d met. As she built on that, she became a faculty member at the University of South Carolina, won a Pfizer fellowship, received a National Institute for Arthritis and Musculoskeletal Disorders Mentored Research Scientist Career Development Award and moved to MUSC, where a mentor was building a public health program.



Photos by Sarah Pack

Dr. Edith Williams has made helping people suffering from lupus her life’s work.

“Not only am I working to make the issues that African American women with lupus face more visible, more meaningful – I’m trying to make other experiences of women more visible.”

Edith Williams, Ph.D.

That mentor, John Vena, Ph.D., chaired the Department of Public Health Sciences. “We recruited her to continue her important studies of lupus in the African American community with a dual appointment in the Department of Public Health Sciences and the Division of Rheumatology in the Department of Medicine. Dr. Williams has shown herself to be intelligent, diligent, careful and insightful.”

He isn’t the only one taking notice. Williams was recently named one of the great women behind great lupus discoveries. And she’s thinking big. “Not only am I working to make the issues that African American women with lupus face more visible, more meaningful – I’m trying to make other experiences of women more visible.”

She pointed to a phenomenon known as the Superwoman Schema. “That’s what they call it in scientific literature. We care for children. We care for elders. We care for other generations of children that aren’t ours. So we have a lot of grandparents who are now in the role of parents and particularly a lot of marginalized women,” Williams said.



In a photo from 2019, Dr. Williams, left, talks with Glenda Davis-Allen, who has lupus, about being a mentor to other women with the disease.

“Underrepresented women face a lot of these different roles. They put their own care on the back burner and then end up in pretty bad shape. I want to make those circumstances visible as well, and let women know that it’s OK, it’s even best, that you take some time to care for yourself.”

See **ADVOCATE** on page 15

Nurse researcher tracks innovation in school, public health setting

BY LESLIE CANTU

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Kasey Jordan knows the stereotypical image of a school nurse — overworked, underpaid and, over the past two years, often on the front lines of controversial COVID policies.

And while those things are true, they aren't the complete picture, she said.

"We don't always present them as these strong, capable expert professionals that they are," she said.

The same could be said for nursing in general — or for any traditionally "female" job. But Jordan sees the power in the interpersonal connections that nurses build with their patients and, from that, their capacity to create community change.

"If we're serious about having better patient outcomes for society, then it's areas in which the traditional nursing role can lead that really, I think, have a lot of potential to make a big difference. Things from communication to health promotion to what happens outside of that time when people are sick," she said.

Jordan's work, then, on innovation management to support the development of health-promoting community spaces, is particularly relevant during this year's Women's History Month. The theme for Women's History Month 2022 is "Providing Healing, Promoting Hope," celebrating women as caregivers and healers.

The possibilities inherent in nursing have inspired Jordan ever since she accidentally ended up in a nursing class in high school in rural Georgia.

"In high school, there were vocational classes that we took with all the other classes, and I wanted home ec, but I got stuck in health occupations against my will. Well, it stuck, and it really resonated with me," Jordan said. "I ended up including those classes as part of my program of study, and I did an apprenticeship program with a local family practice and just never looked back."

Even with the limited work that a high school apprentice could take on, she felt a meaningful engagement with patients and saw the role that the nurses played in their

patients' health journeys.

Jordan went on to study nursing with the expectation that she would be a bedside nurse, but by the time she finished her program, she knew she wanted to be in public health. Her first nursing job was in the cardiothoracic unit at Duke University Hospital to gain experience. Then she worked at the health department for a time before taking a job in the emergency department so she could complete an internship while earning her master's degree.

Through the public health department, she spent a year and a half as a school nurse in Durham, North Carolina, at five alternative schools, each geared toward a different student population that needed extra attention.

"Every school had its own flavor," she recalled.

Yet she also started to see constraints in the system.

One small example: The alternative schools were well-connected to mental health and behavioral resources for the students. But Jordan saw that some students weren't having truly basic needs met, like good nutrition, decent sleep and adequate physical movement. Jordan approached an administrator about this, and the answer was, "Well, there's no grant funding for that."

"It was like, there's all these high-level treatments that are so valuable. But then there's also these basic processes that are so impactful on our outcomes. And it was sometimes harder to work on those things," she said.

In both public health and school nursing, Jordan found herself surrounded by "incredibly smart people with great ideas" who faced numerous obstacles in bringing those ideas to fruition.

"That core challenge is really what led me to go back for my Ph.D. and what, in different ways, I've tried to explore since then," she said.

Now an assistant professor in the College of Nursing at MUSC, Jordan focuses on innovation management. She especially values how school nurses and other health



Photo by Sarah Pack

Dr. Kasey Jordan outside the College of Nursing at MUSC.

"There's good evidence that school nurses are a great return on community investment, but I think there is more to tell about the community resilience they are building that is outside the traditional expectations of what school nurses have done."

Kasey Jordan, Ph.D., R.N.

care providers find ways to develop resilience in communities and address disaster risk.

"What I'm most excited about is nurses and health professionals finding ways to make our communities more resilient to disaster. School nurses are incredible change-makers, and so are our students," she said.

For instance, students in the accelerated Bachelor of Science in Nursing classes are learning the change-making skills that school nurses often learn, by necessity, on the job, Jordan explained.

Innovative projects the ABSN students have tackled recently included a podcast geared toward mental health challenges during the pandemic and support for educators to understand how COVID-related

changes could affect student health.

BEING PREPARED

Jordan noted, too, that local disaster response requires flexibility to adapt to specific circumstances, and that's where she's interested in seeing who's doing what.

"If you consider disaster response, there's this piece of improvisation that is in it. It's such a fascinating area, and school nurses have been on the ground improvising to meet these needs," she said. "It's really inspiring — and important to understand."

"So much of responding to disaster is locally driven," she continued. "So understanding what professionals in community spaces need is important."

Jordan said she loves seeing school nurses who understand how comprehensive the role can be and are pushing expectations of what they're there to do.

"One of the amazing gifts of school nursing practice, because you are outside the traditional system, is there is so much freedom and independence," she said.

On the other hand, that requires skills that nurses don't necessarily come equipped with. Unlike nurses in a health care setting, school nurses may need to be more entrepreneurial to "sell" innovations related to health.

"School nurses really have to build their teams and raise whatever kind of capital is needed — social or financial — to see their changes move forward," Jordan explained.

While there's general agreement that addressing health and physical needs will

A ‘drive-through’ the world of Alice Edwards

BY BRYCE DONOVAN

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Probably the biggest irony of Alice Edwards’ job is that she spends the majority of her workday in a place she doesn’t want others to ever have to come.

As MUSC Health–Charleston Division’s chief ambulatory officer, Edwards is responsible for the operation of all 120 of the hospital’s outpatient clinics in the Charleston area. That’s more than 1,200 employees, serving roughly 1.8 million patients per year.

“The main goal of ambulatory is to keep patients out of the hospital,” she said from her Calhoun Street office, situated on the edge of MUSC’s downtown campus. Not completely, obviously. People will always get sick or have chest pains or break bones – even she can’t control that ... though she tries. Instead, Edwards’ focus is on reducing the number of sick or injured people needing to go to the hospital as well as improving their experiences in the clinics.

“It sounds simple, but sometimes the simplest problems require the most thought,” she said.

Edwards is a self-proclaimed morning person. “That’s when I do my best thinking,” she said. Coffee in hand. Phone silent. Spreadsheets on monitors in front of her. But the most important thing is what’s not present: meetings. The beginning of the workday is sacred to the Georgetown native.

“I try to block time on my calendar every morning so I can follow up on emails, analyze data, work on whatever needs my attention,” she said. “A little quiet can go a long way,” admitted the mother of two, with a knowing smile.

But all good things must come to an end. And so once that time is over, the rest of the day gives way to meetings and more meetings. “Not to brag, but I’ve gotten pretty good at video conferences,” she laughed.

FISCAL TO FEEL-GOOD

At the age of 25, Edwards moved to Charleston and enrolled at MUSC, where she would eventually earn her Master of Health Administration from the College of Health Professions. Before she graduated, she landed an interview with the then-administrator of ambulatory services at the hospital. Little did she know it was a job she would inherit and transform years later.

Upon graduation, she was offered a job as a process engineer with MUSC Physicians. It was in this role that she got her first taste of how quality data and feedback could lead to a better, more efficient clinical space. As the years went on, her job changed. Soon she was heading up special projects for the CEO, handling business development, being entrusted with ways to run things more efficiently. It was this last task



Photo by Sarah Pack

As a kid, Alice Edwards always thought she wanted to be a dentist like her dad. That is, until she went on a home visit with him and saw a particularly bad abscessed tooth. “Yeah, then I was out,” she said.

“When COVID came along, everything changed ... But with the drive-through collection site, where time was so critical, Alice was the person that moved the roadblocks. She got all the right people in the room and things happened fast.”

Eric Modrzynski

that allowed her to shine her brightest, taking a somewhat fragmented organizational structure and transforming it into one that was more centralized with streamlined leadership – one that she would eventually be tapped to lead.

She’s been in the current role of chief ambulatory officer for a little over five years now, and she’ll tell you she still enjoys the challenge of the job as much as she did the very first day. In addition to finding ways to make patients’ experiences more pleasant, Edwards is responsible for all long-term strategies as well as finances for all of MUSC Health–Charleston Division’s 120 outpatient clinics. From the bottom line to the waiting room, fiscal to feel-good, she is intimately connected to all of her locations. But it’s probably the most unexpected of all those locations that fills her with the most professional pride.

In 2020, as the world was beginning to come to grips with a relentless virus, Edwards and her team hatched a plan to create a drive-through site for people who suspected they

might be COVID-positive. In March of that year, MUSC Health, under the direction of Edwards, opened the West Ashley drive-through COVID specimen collection site outside of Citadel Mall.

“When COVID came along, everything changed,” said Erik Modrzynski, ambulatory environmental health and safety and emergency manager for MUSC Health. “In order to stay in front of this virus, we needed to move quickly on things – and for obvious reasons, that’s not usually the way health care works. But with the drive-through collection site, where time was so critical, Alice was the person that moved the roadblocks. She got all the right people in the room and things happened fast.”

Over the next 13 months, MUSC Health would serve hundreds of thousands of patients during a time of tremendous uncertainty. Though “we were building the plane as we were flying it,” she’ll say, in the end they got it so very right. In fact, it was so successful that almost immediately other hospitals across the country were asking Edwards and her team for help with replicating it.

Her calm, decisive leadership, when stakes were at their highest and nerves at their rawest, earned her tremendous respect from her colleagues and leaders. Her many contributions during this time led to her being recognized during Women’s History Month. The national 2022 theme “Providing Healing, Promoting Hope,” is, according to the National Women’s History Alliance, “both a tribute to the ceaseless work of caregivers and frontline workers during this ongoing pandemic and also a recognition of the thousands of ways that women of all cultures have provided both healing

See **LEADER** on page 13

MUSC transplant specialist-turned kidney recipient relates to patients like never before

By KELLY RAE SMITH

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As a transplant specialist at MUSC Health's Transplant Center, Kevin Carson is accustomed to playing an important role in a patient's transplantation team. But it wasn't until he became an organ transplant patient himself that he would come to understand every facet of what many transplant patients experience, from diagnosis to dialysis to surgery.

Every transplant patient's experience is unique, to be sure. But much of their stories – the discomfort and limits of everyday life, anxiety over the future, the long wait for an organ match – overlap, and Carson can relate to it all.

For a while, Carson knew something wasn't right. His normal workouts, and even casual, brisk walks, began to leave him exhausted. "It was very weird," he said. "I would get really short of breath and tired." He's also a Baptist minister, and his deteriorating health would cause him to cut his sermons in half. "I had to, just so I wouldn't pass out," he said. "Preaching was really, really hard for me."

Originally from Branchville, South Carolina, the now-Summerville resident was diagnosed with end-stage renal disease (ESRD) in 2018. ESRD is a condition in which an individual's kidneys go into permanent failure, prompting the need for long-term dialysis or a kidney transplantation in order to prolong his or her life.

The news hit Carson hard. He'd seen firsthand the difficulties patients in need of a transplant go through.

"I was in denial," he said. "When they started talking about dialysis, it really hit me. I couldn't believe this was actually real."

By the end of 2019, Carson had no choice but to begin hemodialysis. This process involves a strict treatment schedule of connecting a patient to a machine that filters waste from the blood, since the kidneys can no longer do this job on its own. But this treatment wasn't sustainable for Carson, whose body was left too exhausted to function. This option was also time-consuming, requiring Carson to go to the clinic for three to four hours a day.

Between his love for the gym and his church and working two jobs – he's also a customer service manager at Walmart – Carson's lifestyle required more than a hemodialysis regimen allowed. He was all too eager to switch to something less limiting: a peritoneal (PD) catheter. And while the two filtration processes are different, once the PD catheter is placed inside the abdominal cavity, it does a similar job of removing toxins from the body, only it allows for more mobility and no daily visits to the clinic. This would be a huge win for this active 32-year-old.

With the PD catheter inserted, Carson was able to connect to it at night, remove the tube after a full night's sleep and go about his life as close to normal as possible. Still, it was time-consuming to set up and remove, ensuring everything is clean. "There's a lot that you have to do to prepare for it or get off of it," he said.

Luckily, the search for a kidney match had already begun. Carson kept up his nightly dialysis routine at home while awaiting good news.

When the call finally came last fall, Carson was overwhelmed with relief to hear that MUSC had found a match – that of a deceased donor.

As much as he anticipated receiving the new kidney on Oct. 28, the first date he most looked forward to was Oct. 27: his final day of dialysis.

Since his kidney transplant, life has gotten a lot brighter and busier for Carson, and he loves sharing his experience to comfort and enlighten the patients he works with on a daily basis.

"I'm able to talk to the patients much better now," he said. "People have so many questions. They want to know what having a transplant is like, and now I'm able to actually answer that question."

When patients feel as though they are completely depleted of energy, Carson understands. "If I need to talk to them after dialysis and they don't feel like talking, I get that," he said. "I know that you do get tired after that; I understand and will call them back at another time."

One patient's wife was nervous about a physician's PD catheter recommendation –



Photo by Emma Vought

Branchville native Kevin Carson was the recipient of a donated kidney on Oct. 28, 2021.

"How was I going to continue living without this kidney? Now I feel much better – I can walk up a flight of stairs without gasping for breath. I can take walks. I can go to church with no problem."

Kevin Carson

Carson's calm assurances helped. "So I let her know that I did PD dialysis, and that it's not bad – you just have to keep everything clean so you don't get an infection," he said. "After that, she felt a lot better. It just helps to hear from someone who has already experienced this."

As for his own experience as a patient, Carson had no fears going into something he was familiar with. He knew what was to come and felt at ease in the hands of his colleagues. Many, in fact, came by to see him after the surgery.

His advice for other potential transplantation candidates? "MUSC is a great

facility of providers, who work for you. They walk you through the whole process," he said.

"You just have to do the homework, and you'll be great. Be in contact with your transplant team: the nurse coordinator, a transplant specialist and a transplant assistant. There is always somebody there to talk to."

One last round of people he'd like to talk to is his donor's family. If he had the chance, he'd hug the mother first. "I want her to know her child saved my life," he said. "Things were going really bad for me. How was I going to continue living without this kidney? Now I feel much better – I can walk up a flight of stairs without gasping for breath. I can take long walks. I can go to church with no problem."

Carson's favorite thing post-operation? Swimming.

"I couldn't swim with the PD catheter," he explained. "I couldn't submerge myself in water, so it may sound strange, but it's little things like that I've missed the most."

As Carson continues to rebuild his strength and share his story, he hopes that others will consider organ donation. "It's the gift of life. It's the best thing you can do," he said. "You never know who you may help."

Learn more about the MUSC Health Transplant Center at muschealth.org/medical-services/transplant.

SCHOOLS *Continued from Page Seven*

ultimately help with academic outcomes, Jordan said, the rub is the school nurses actually have to negotiate to get what's necessary to address that health. That's where those skills of teambuilding in a multidisciplinary environment come into play.

"There's good evidence that school nurses are a great return on community investment, but I think there is more to tell about the community resilience they are building that is outside the traditional expectations of what school nurses have done," she said.

In follow-up to a previous study she conducted, Jordan is currently looking at how school nurses are leading resilience-promoting change in school settings.

Since coming to South Carolina, Jordan has been working with the South Carolina Association of School Nurses to determine what subject areas need more research to help nurses in schools. That's how she came to do an analysis of continuing education needs for school nurses, which led to her examining how school nurses are leading resilience-promoting change in school settings.

Throughout her journey, one fascinating thing that she has discovered is that



Photo by Sarah Pack


Dr. Jordan, left, observes as College of Nursing student Jackson Parra puts a blood pressure cuff on student Lily Folgate during a nursing lab at the MUSC Health Care Simulation Center.

innovation can come from anywhere. "There's not a single profile of an innovator," she said. "It's something that happens in all parts of an organization. But definitely there are skills we can learn to make it more effective."

INNOVATION WEEK

April 25 through 29

- Live, virtual & recorded events.
- Panel discussions.
- Practical recommendations.
- Awards & celebrations.
- Poster sessions.
- Shark Tank competition.
- And more!



musc.edu/innovationweek

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Celebrate a world of flavors for National Nutrition Month

It's time to celebrate National Nutrition Month and embrace an invitation to healthy eating and lifestyle habits. This year's theme is Celebrate a World of Flavors!

Incorporating flavors from cultures around the world is a tasty way to nourish ourselves and appreciate our diversity. Smells and tastes from familiar cultures may provide a sense of comfort and bring back fond memories. Experimenting with other foods from around the globe celebrates diversity and is an opportunity to evoke your senses with new smells, flavors and textures.

Eating globally doesn't have to mean eating out. In fact, preparing your food at home offers a more immersed experience, helps to control the budget and allows you to have some nutrition control — think less salt, lower fat. Mainstream groceries now offer a variety of international food choices or consider visiting your local international food market to get you inspired locally, to eat globally.

Need more inspiration? Try some of these globally inspired ideas to add more flavor and nutrition to your diet:

- ❑ Top your salad with sliced jicama and serve with a lime vinaigrette dressing (Mexican).
- ❑ Serve tzatziki sauce as a dip with your vegetables (Greek).
- ❑ Spoon fruit chutney into your oatmeal or onto your whole grain toast (Indian).
- ❑ Add grilled pineapple as part of a chicken shish kebab (Middle Eastern).
- ❑ Trade your traditional side salad for a cactus salad (Latin American).
- ❑ Bring succotash to the next pot luck (Native American or Southern U.S.).
- ❑ Trade out your traditional rice for couscous (African) or quinoa (Latin American).
- ❑ Switch your rice and beans for rice and dal (Indian).

Regardless of your food choices, registered dietitians encourage you to focus on a balanced plate when planning your meals. Fill half of your plate with fruits and vegetables and split the other half with lean proteins and whole grains. Add calcium-rich foods such as fat-free or low-fat milk, yogurt, cheese or calcium-fortified nondairy beverages for a

MUSC Health & Well-Being

By Susan L. Johnson, Ph.D.,
MUSC Office of Health
Promotion



well-rounded, nourishing meal.

In celebration of National Nutrition Month on March 19, the MUSC dietetic interns will be packing meals with Mission of Hope, a nonprofit organization that provides meals to children in Haiti who have limited access to nutritious foods. Most of the foods in these meals are purchased from Haitian farmers to support their local economy. Every \$6,000 raised will provide 20,000 nutritious meals.

The interns will be fundraising and gathering volunteers for this event, if you would like more information about or to pack bags at the March 19 event, please email purifoyk@musc.edu.

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Photo by Robbie Jack

MUSC Innovator Awards applaud teams, individuals

Staff Report

The Office of Innovation is proud to recognize the following individuals and teams as the March 2022 recipients of the “I am an MUSC Innovator” award.

Tatiana Davidson, Ph.D., associate professor and clinical psychologist, College of Nursing

Problem — Firefighters face numerous occupation stressors that are known to increase the risk of a wide range of behavioral health problems, such as anxiety, depression, post-traumatic stress disorder and substance abuse. More than 25% of firefighters will need assistance at some point in their careers; however, more than 70% of those needing help will not seek it. Since 2011, we have partnered with the National Fallen Firefighters Foundation to improve firefighter behavioral health and overall well-being by bringing technology-based, freely available, best-practice interventions to firefighters and their families.

Impact — My team and I developed a suite of technology-based tools designed specifically to address firefighter behavioral health needs, including post-traumatic stress, depression, suicidal thoughts and behaviors and alcohol use problems. These tools have proved successful in helping firefighters to help themselves and their peers and in preparing clinicians to provide best-practice interventions.

Acknowledgements — I wish to acknowledge the Center for Firefighter Behavioral Health; our partners — the Lowcountry Firefighter Support Team and the National Fallen Firefighters Foundation — and add special thanks to Ken Ruggiero, Ph.D., Angela Moreland, Ph.D., and Tonya Hazelton.

Lisa Kerr, Ph.D., director, Office of Humanities, and professor, Center for Academic Excellence/Writing Center

Problem — Effective communication facilitates higher quality and safety in health care, and relationship-centered care is associated with better patient outcomes. Yet, health science students in the U.S. often receive limited education on how to attend to the patient’s personal narrative; consider the multiple contexts — social, cultural, historical, political, structural, etc., — that affect health and health care; or communicate effectively and meaningfully with the “whole person.”

Impact — The Office of Humanities is in its fifth year. In recent years, the office has developed several new programs: the “Communicating Compassion” Student Leadership Program; the Health Humanities Scholars Program; SHARE Grants funding; and, in partnership with Patient- and Family-Centered Care, writing workshops that prepare patients and families to teach MUSC students with their stories. These programs are designed in different ways to foster innovations that ultimately promote knowledge, attitudes and skills associated with effective, compassionate communication and

relationship-centered care.

Acknowledgements — I have many key partners and only wish I could name them individually. These partners include the members of our Humanities Program Leaders Committee, who lead their own health humanities initiatives across campus; the faculty and staff who contribute their expertise to the “Communicating Compassion” program; and the faculty and staff of the CAE/Writing Center, my “home base.” Truly, none of what I do is possible without all of these invaluable relationships or the support of our provost, Lisa Saladin, P.T., Ph.D., who established the Office of Humanities.

Kelli Garrison, Pharm. D., associate CIO, Information Solutions; **Pat Wagstaff, R.N.**, senior technical business analyst and manager of COVID Operations, Information Solutions; and **Terri Ackerman**, process owner for growth and expansion and COVID team lead, Information Solutions

Problem — At the start of the COVID pandemic, there was a need to provide IT solutions for testing, data for tracking and trending and solutions for providing vaccinations. The solutions needed to be mobile so that MUSC could reach all communities in the state. This required equipment, networking and mobile applications that would connect reliably with our Epic electronic medical record (EMR). At the beginning of testing, most of the workflows existed outside of Epic, which caused many back-end processes.

Impact — There has been a dedicated IS team that continues to build/configure the solutions for both testing and vaccinations. The team has created mobile options that allow COVID operations to provide testing and vaccinations across our South Carolina communities. With each new community testing/vaccination site, the team prepares the scheduling/registration and supports the operational teams with any IT issues.

For vaccines, the work of this team allowed MUSC to be the first to vaccinate communities in the state, including pop-up tent/community events and now the MUSC Health FastVax mobile RV.

For testing, MUSC was the first to stand up a drive-through testing site in only one week in March of 2020. The team had to provide power and wireless capabilities, along with equipment, and Epic access for registration and testing. Then, the team built a mobile platform that would allow for mobile community-based testing. For over a year, most of the community workflows patient registration was on a non-Epic platform integrated with Epic; however, last year, the team developed an Epic-based mobile solution for both PCR and rapid testing. This solution allows online scheduling and on-site registration through Epic. This solution has removed a large portion of manual back-end processes for lab, registration and billing.

Both of these solutions allow for notification of results to patients and mobile vaccinate verification/documentation in the patient portal (Epic MyChart).

Acknowledgements — The dedicated COVID IS team has

varied throughout the two years; however, we would like to recognize the following: Jac Teppersmith, Audrey Baugh, Jarrod Russell, Billy Culbertson, Richard Bowers, Keith Miller, DJ Guarino, Ethan Walworth, Kim Berendt, Pam Clifton, Vergelia Davis, Travis Drawdy, Caitlin Engelke, Amy Etheridge, Holly Griffin, Pauline Meyer, Kimberly Nowocin, Rose Rodriguez, Steve Caparossi, Carrie Westin, Emily Batten, Tony Boone, Melody Dean, Kate Foster, Dan Gracie and Mary Riddle.

2022 Innovation Week will take place April 25 through 29

This year’s Innovation Week theme is “Innovation in Action.” Programming will include live events, as well as recorded content, and more than 200 individuals and teams will display posters in the poster session on Tuesday, April 26 (Charleston). Tracks for the week include Investing in You and Your Ideas, Addressing the New Health Care Paradigm, Improving and Solving Equitable Access to Care, Creating and Collaborating and Focusing on Wellness. For event updates visit muscedu/innovationweek.

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**For more information contact
Rick Pulcino at (843) 345-7100**



Photo by Sarah Pack

Edwards, center, addresses MUSC Health staff members on the morning of the very first day of the West Ashley drive-through COVID specimen collection site in March of 2020.

LEADER *Continued from Page Eight*

and hope throughout history.”

Modrzynski, who used to be a firefighter added: “Over the years I’ve worked with some great leaders — there were some really great fire chiefs along the way — and in many ways,

Alice is no different. There’s a trust there. Because of that, she’s always open to trying new things, which is exactly how innovation happens.”

Edwards does not take this recognition — or her contributions during the pandemic — lightly.

“As I look back, it’s probably one of the most profound things I’ve done in my career,” she said. “Fortunately — I hope — it was a once in a lifetime experience, but it was truly amazing to see it all come together, to see MUSC be so nimble. Everybody came together to make that happen. But I pray we

never have to do it again.”

If we do, rest assured Edwards will be there — early in the morning, coffee in hand — figuring out ways to deal with it. And odds are she’ll figure it out, too. Most certainly in a meeting.

MARCH IS WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH!



Scan the QR code to enter a Women's History Month trivia contest and test your knowledge.

MUSC Libraries



DALSPIZZA.COM WORD SEARCH

GET ORGANIZED

This is the word search puzzle for the third week of March.

Find the words hidden vertically, horizontally, diagonally, and backwards.

WORDS

ALPHABETIZE	DESK	MESS
ASSIGNMENTS	DONATE	ORGANIZE
CATEGORIZE	DRAWERS	PROFESSIONAL
CHORES	FILING	RECYCLE
CLEAN	GARAGE	SHELVING
CLOSET	GARBAGE	SORT
COORDINATE	HOUSEHOLD	SYSTEM
CULL	LABEL	

L	T	B	G	T	C	L	E	A	N	U	L	E	B	A	M	I	T	T	E
E	W	E	A	T	T	I	U	H	D	L	R	F	L	D	H	G	G	D	F
B	O	Z	R	V	Y	I	B	Y	V	A	Z	I	C	C	L	B	H	L	I
A	E	I	A	S	B	R	O	L	D	S	D	O	S	S	T	C	I	E	L
L	Z	R	G	D	T	A	E	T	R	O	S	H	R	I	Y	V	A	I	I
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B	L	H	L	O	L	L	K	C	Z	R	N	R	I	E	L	S	O	N	T
I	T	C	C	S	L	O	M	P	B	O	L	T	L	N	F	D	U	R	N
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SIMMONS *Continued from Page One*

emergencies and providing support to those affected. Once the department broke away to form its own force, Simmons rose through the ranks and earned her stripes – from patrol corporal to patrol commander. She was the first woman in the department’s history ever to reach a command-level rank.

Despite their successes and accomplishments, women like Simmons, who work in a man’s world, don’t always make the headlines or get the public recognition they so richly deserve. This is one reason that every year during Women’s History Month, MUSC recognizes women throughout the organization who stand out because of the significant differences they make every single day. This year, Simmons is being included for her leadership, commitment and ability to safeguard and protect the community and department she serves.

The DPS consists of 61 sworn police officers, security specialists, telecommunications specialists and administrative support staff – a team that she’s proud of and helps to manage.

“I’m a people person and love meeting and helping others – it’s the best part of my job,” said Simmons. “I also love working with the officers through mentorship, teaching and collaboration and seeing them grow in their positions and jobs. I give credit to the good support system we’ve built and the teamwork within our department.”

DPS director and chief Kevin Kerley could not be prouder of Simmons’ achievements and her contributions to the department.

“Dorothy has been an asset to our department and the entire university. It’s a testament to her abilities, dedication and work ethic. She’s climbed to the top of the department from humble beginnings and has done an excellent job,” he said.

Simmons has also been key in honing and maintaining campus and interagency

relationships, Kerley explained, as well as professional partnerships in various external agencies. These connections allow officers to collaborate and work with federal, state, county and municipal law enforcement efforts and joint investigations.

“Dorothy ensures that anyone who visits our campus has a safe and enjoyable time. We consider our work in the Department of Public Safety to be 100% customer service-based, and Dorothy takes the lead on that. Her focus is to ensure people feel safe, and that we provide the best customer service for everyone,” Kerley said.

After three decades, she’s been front and center responding to and managing numerous events that affected campus – from Hurricane Hugo in 1989 and 9/11 in 2001, to the Emanuel 9 shootings in 2015.

She also helped in important department milestones, such as the adoption of the Jeanne Clery Act in 1990, which requires U.S. institutions of higher education to publish a public disclosure of campus security policies and an annual crime statistics report, in addition to leading the national accreditation of the department with the Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies in 2002.

“Meeting accreditation standards helped us as a department,” said Simmons. “It provides guidance to our officers of best practices in the industry and outlines what our officers can and cannot do.”

Managing the department during the COVID-19 pandemic and global incidents of racial and social unrest also presented challenges. The department’s approach emphasized personal wellness among officers and personnel. She knew it was a stressful time and would regularly call and check on officers to offer help and support. Later, her team thanked her for doing that.

“I wanted our officers to know that I care about what’s going on with them and their



Photo by Sarah Pack

Mentoring officers is a role that Maj. Dorothy Simmons values. Here, she and Lt. Daniel Schultz exit the Public Safety building on Doughty Street.

“We consider our work in the Department of Public Safety to be 100% customer service-based, and Dorothy takes the lead on that. Her focus is to ensure people feel safe, and that we provide the best customer service for everyone.”

Chief Kevin Kerley

and is training department rank officers to serve as mentors to help guide young officers throughout their careers.

But even with the amount of responsibility she bears at MUSC, there’s much more to Simmons than just her job. Even as a child growing up in the East Cooper area, Simmons seemed destined to lead. The eldest of 13 children, she was surrounded by strong role models – relatives both male and female.

She attended local schools, ran track for Wando High School. She attended Voorhees College in Denmark, South Carolina and played softball and participated in Army ROTC and earned her Bachelor of Science in Business Administration and minor in accounting, before returning home to the Lowcountry.

Over the years, Simmons and her husband, David K. Simmons Sr., added daughters Monique and Tiffany; son, David Jr.; plus 12 grandchildren to their family.

Ever the nurturer, Simmons has plans to retire from MUSC in June. “Mom” hopes to fulfill her dream to travel, volunteer and help out with her church and with the grandkids.

Public Safety administrative colleague Jennie Sirisky has worked with Simmons for the past 20-plus years.

“Having Dorothy – Major Simmons – as patrol commander has been very good for the department and campus. She’s diligent, dedicated, caring and compassionate to all the officers. She cares about them and all the Public Safety personnel and others on campus. She’s always busy checking on things and people to ensure that all is right. Dorothy’s a faith-filled woman who’s active with her church, her community and family. She’s just amazing, and I will miss her,” said Sirisky.

Maj. Simmons, center, joins Public Safety officers to thank MUSC front-line health care workers publicly at a community parade that occurred at the start of the pandemic.



UKRAINE *Continued from Page One*

the folks on this call. So it's just recognizing in the midst of these difficult emotions, what are those things in my life that I can look to and hold on to and that will sustain me through uncertainty," Harris said.

Ilgizar Khairutdinov was watching and listening. He's a Russian medical school graduate now working as a medical scribe at MUSC. "I have many friends from Ukraine. They have relatives in Ukraine, and I'm so worried about them. This is a big catastrophe."

Khairutdinov, who moved to the U.S. three years ago with his wife and child, described what it was like learning that his country had invaded Ukraine. "I felt horrible this day. I understand that from that moment, everything will not be the same as it used to be. And for

several days after that, I felt just crashed and couldn't do anything and depressed," he said.

"Innocent citizens of Russia, they will face the consequences of the devastation of war. And I'm really worried about my parents, my relatives, who are in Russia right now, living in this environment. I know that they are afraid of their future as well."

His own future could be affected, too. "I'm applying for a medical residency. So everything I've done for three years may not go in the direction that I imagined. My chances for matching with a residency decline significantly because I'm from Russia."

But both he and Pechenaya said the kindness of people in Charleston helps. "Everybody who knows me, they provide support. And they're really kind with me and with my family," Khairutdinov said.

getting up in the morning and facing their day and communicating with their families about how they're feeling. We've seen women switch careers, buy homes and start businesses — things they really needed a boost of confidence to do. They've received it from the camaraderie that we've been able to build within these projects that really link ladies together."

ADVOCATE *Continued from Page Six*

That's especially important for women living with lupus. Williams loves watching the changes that can take place when they get the support they need — and feel seen.

"It makes them feel like they can do things they didn't think they could do. It allows them to feel motivated about



The Rev. Frank Harris, left, and therapist Tenelle Jones, upper right, talk with Ilgizar Khairutdinov. Khairutdinov, a medical scribe at MUSC, is from Russia and worries about his family there and friends' families in Ukraine.

In an email after the event, Pechenaya said she feels sadness and anger about what's happening to her country — and gratitude to local friends.

"I have been with MUSC for 7 1/2 years. I have met many amazing people, and

today, every one of them who knows I am originally from Ukraine is reaching out to me, supporting in any ways they can, offering help to me and my loved ones in Kyiv. It is amazing how much support I have received."



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