MPH Alumni Spotlight

We interviewed RaeAnn VanGundy who graduated with her MPH, specializing in Health Services Management. RaeAnn currently works at the Kendall County Health Department.

Why did you choose the NIU MPH program to further your education?

There are several indicators that aided my decision in choosing NIU for my Masters in Public Health degree. It is an accredited program that best fit my career goals and academic interest. The online classes allowed me to balance working full time, getting my girls to all their activities; all while advancing my education and career. The ability to participate in eight week courses allowed me to accelerate through the program. And most of all, it was affordable.

Since you’ve graduated, what are your plans for the future?

Quickly after attaining my MPH, I was promoted to the Operations Administrator of a local health department. The MPH solidified my eligibility for this position and many more in the realm of public health.

As a working professional, how much time did you have to put into courses?

Each week I had to block approximately 8-10 hours per class to complete the readings and homework or papers that were due. I often found myself reading in the car as I waited for a practice to be done or over my lunch hour at my office. The advantage of taking an online class is that it can be done “anywhere.”

What advice would you give to current MPH students?

This is an achievable program. With strong organizational abilities and time management skills, anyone can complete this program. My advice would be to thoroughly review each syllabus early in the class to ensure you plan ahead for all projects and papers. Lack of planning will cause unnecessary duress that may have been avoided.

What advice would you give to prospective MPH students?

A Masters of Public Health degree will bring a tremendous value to whatever field you decide to pursue. Public health is public safety, and in the era of healthcare reform, the opportunities are bountiful. Get your degree today! It is possible.

MPH Application Materials

✓ Online application via College Net
✓ Transcripts for all higher learning institutions attended
✓ Satisfactory scores on the GRE
✓ Statement of purpose
✓ Two letters of recommendation

For more information, visit:
http://www.niu.edu/grad/admissions/application-materials-masters.shtml

Apply Today!
MPH Application Deadlines
Spring 2017: December 10
Summer 2017: June 1
Fall 2017: July 15

E-Newsletter – Fall 2016
Faculty Highlights


This is a collaboration resulting from both the PI Academy and the CDC Population Training-in-Place program that Dr. Sarah Geiger completed in the summer of 2016.

Public Health News

DeKalb, IL, SEPTEMBER 15, 2016 — DeKalb County Community Gardens (DCCG) and its partners, in DeKalb, IL have been selected as one of 50 members of the HealthyCommunity50 in the Healthiest Cities & Counties Challenge to receive a $10,000 community seed award. By participating in the Challenge, DCCG is in the running to receive a prize that will support their local program, the Grow-mobile.

The Challenge, a partnership between the Aetna Foundation, the American Public Health Association and the National Association of Counties, launched in April during National Public Health Week. The Challenge will award $1.5 million in prizes to small and mid-sized cities, counties and federally-recognized tribes that are able to show measurable change over the course of several years working with cross-sector partnerships to implement health innovations and data-driven solutions. Hundreds of city governments, local municipalities, health departments, educational institutions and other public/private entities applied to be a part of the Challenge.

The HealthyCommunity50 were chosen based on plans to improve the health of their communities in at least one of five domains: Healthy behaviors, community safety, built environment, social/economic factors and environmental exposures.

Through the Challenge, DeKalb County Community Gardens and its partners will implement a pop-up food market and education center called the Grow-mobile. The project comes at a critical time for DeKalb County, as many of its residents live in food deserts and face food insecurity.

DCCG is pursuing this project in support of the following community partners: Northern Illinois University, KishHealth System — a part of Northwestern Medicine, Voluntary Action Center of DeKalb County, The DeKalb County Community Action Office, The DeKalb County Health Department, Live Healthy DeKalb County, and The City of DeKalb.

“At the Aetna Foundation, we’re seeking to reward innovation for communities implementing new ways to improve health outcomes,” said Dr. Garth Graham, president of the Aetna Foundation. “We want the Healthiest Cities & Counties Challenge to serve as a catalyst for collaboration in local communities around the country working to move the needle in combating health disparities.”

All selected HealthyCommunity50 members will be visited by an expert judge panel to answer questions, understand the community’s approach to the project first-hand and speak with the members of the cross-sector team and key stakeholders. At the conclusion of the Challenge, the programs most able to show measurable change will be eligible for prize awards from $25,000 to $500,000. Participants will be judged on their own progress and will not be competing against each other. For more information, visit www.healthiestcities.org.
Public Health Experience Abroad

As told from Lizeth Galarza, Master of Public Health candidate

As an undergraduate I took advantage of all the study abroad opportunities that were given to me such as a spring break in Nicaragua and a semester in Australia. Fast-forward almost five years later, I am a twenty-seven-year-old full-time student with a very demanding full-time job. I never imagined that I would be given the opportunity to study abroad again until I was introduced to the Global Environmental Health (GEH) Lab. GEH Lab, a part of the Public Health and Health Education Programs at Northern Illinois University, has as its mission to promote and support safe and healthy environments on a local, regional and global scale through conducting collaborative public health-related research, scientific engagement and capacity-building activities.

Three other GEH Scholars and I helped to carry out this mission this summer in Mandalay City, Myanmar. We carried out capacity-building activities for two local universities: Yadanabon University and Mandalay University, under the mentorship of Dr. Tomoyuki Shibata and Heidi West. (Dr. Tomoyuki Shibata is an Associate Professor at NIU in the Public Health and Health Education Program.) In addition, we assisted with the ground work of an interdisciplinary public health research partnership. This research partnership not only gave me an opportunity to apply the skills and knowledge taught to me in the Master of Public Health Program at NIU, it also allowed me to experience firsthand the feeling of accomplishment that comes with empowering people with knowledge. Through this knowledge, my GEH peers and I have contributed to the creation of healthier and more sustainable communities for the people of Mandalay, Myanmar.

Along with my educational experiences in Myanmar, I was able to experience Burmese culture and food. Myanmar is not a common tourist destination and was for the most part untouched by western influence. It was unlike any other travel experience I had in the past. Myanmar offered a unique combination of ancient history indicated in the Pagoda temples that adorned its land and a glimpse into a blooming future reflected in the Modern Inwa Bridge built across the Irrawaddy River. Overall, this was an amazing experience and through GEH Lab I look forward to growing a deeper partnership with the local universities of Mandalay, Myanmar.

To explore options on studying abroad, visit the study abroad website at http://www.niu.edu/studyabroad/aboutus/index.shtml

Upcoming MPH Webinars

November 17
December 8

Learn more about the MPH program at NIU by joining staff during a live 30-minute webinar. Topics covered include application process, overview of courses, tuition rates and answers to your questions!

To register for an upcoming webinar, contact Melissa Edwards at mphonline@niu.edu.