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College2Youth Program Offers Health, College Access Outreach in Delta

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College2Youth Program Offers Health, College Access Outreach in Delta

UM faculty and students organize health and career fairs in Quitman County

AUGUST 9, 2019 BY [NCOLEWILKIN](#)



Recent UM criminal justice graduate Shanda Martin gives in-class and at-home study tips to Quitman County middle schoolers at the College2Youth career fair. Submitted photo

OXFORD, Miss. – An interdisciplinary collaboration among three **University of Mississippi** professors led to the creation of the College2Youth program, an effort to get middle schoolers excited about their educational journey and to teach them healthy lifestyle choices they can share in their community.

What was first intended to be a university-led mentorship program developed into an opportunity to empower Quitman County Middle School students to learn more about their path to higher education and improve their community well-being while training UM students in research methods that can be replicated in communities across the country.

“The program is designed to be an interdisciplinary undergraduate research program with an overarching goal to train these students in a community-based participatory research mindset,” said Georgianna Mann, assistant professor of nutrition. “We would like to see these students use their future professions to help communities.”

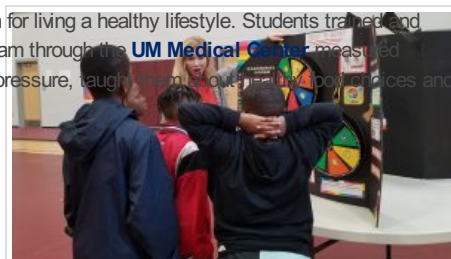
Mann and Kimberly Kaiser, assistant professor of legal studies, joined Annie Cafer from the **Department of Sociology and Anthropology** to launch this project fall 2018, alongside nine undergraduate student researchers, providing an interdisciplinary approach to inform their study.

The project consisted of a health fair and a career fair. The UM team worked with Stephanie Crowell, principal at Quitman County Middle School, and teacher Charles Evers to conduct the fairs.

With support from the Marks Project, a nonprofit organization dedicated to helping residents of Marks and Quitman County, the team offered insights to some 200 local students on continuing their education and adopting a healthy lifestyle, and also helping to spread these goals in communities across the nation.

The health fair provided students with a foundation for living a healthy lifestyle. Students trained and certified in the Community Health Advocate Program through the **UM Medical Center** measured participants’ basic body compositions and blood pressure, taught them about healthy food choices and provided information about physical exercise and healthy lifestyle choices.

“We even had a booth of healthy snacks that the kids could eat,” said Rachael Pace, a rising senior from Brandon majoring in biochemistry on



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Campus Briefs

Donations Sought for 25th Annual Books and Bears Program

OXFORD, Miss. – The University of Mississippi is asking the community to help spread a little joy this holiday season by donating to the 25th annual Books and Bears program. Donations such as toys, books, dolls, bicycles and other children’s play items are being accepted through Dec. 14. All donations will be collected and sorted

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Thank You To Our Donors

Mississippi Excellence in Coaching Fellowship Aims to Build Leaders

OXFORD, Miss. – Twenty-five inaugural recipients of the Mississippi Excellence in Coaching Fellowship – a program hosted by the University of Mississippi School of Education in partnership with the Mississippi Association of Coaches and the Mississippi High School Activities Association – are expected to increase their impact on student-athletes and their communities. The coaching fellowship

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Ole Miss In the News

Clarion-Ledger: New Essay Collection Tells the Story of Meredith’s Enrollment

Essays celebrate 60th anniversary of James Meredith’s enrollment at University of Mississippi By Lauren Rhoades Oct. 1 marks the 60th anniversary of James Meredith’s 1962 enrollment at the University of Mississippi as the school’s first African-American student.

a pre-med track. “There were some students that had never tried a raspberry or a blueberry before; which, when you think about it, if you go to a place like Walmart, those are the most expensive berries, and you get the smallest amount.

Sydney Mitchell, a senior UM biochemistry major from Raymond, teaches Quitman County middle schoolers how to read nutrition labels at the College2Youth health fair. Submitted photo

“If you look at the socioeconomic situation of the rural South, you see little things like that, which a lot of people never notice. That blew my mind.”

The career fair was designed to get the students to think beyond their primary schooling. It included community colleges, area professionals, members of the university’s **Sally McDonnell Barksdale Honors College** and representatives of other UM departments.

The goal of this career fair was not only to recruit students – as most college or career fairs do – but to get them inspired about the possibilities and opportunities of continuing their education beyond high school. The fair was aimed at younger children, fifth through seventh grades, to inspire them to start striving toward their goals.

While the students were learning about how to improve their lifestyles, the undergraduate researchers and Mann’s team were learning about the mindset of these students, gaining insights to improve the program for the future. They also took note of how providing this opportunity would set students up to continue learning about healthy lifestyles after the College2Youth staff was gone.

“The students were the most impacted,” said Shanda Martin, a recent UM criminal justice graduate. “The focus groups were based on their involvement.

“Not only were we trying to find out what issues were the most important to students, but we were also able to get the students to start thinking about what it means to live a healthy lifestyle and to have a healthy diet. Everyone was able to be involved, and the teachers and faculty were also able to see the interests of the students.”

The middle schoolers participating in the program were eager to interact with the UM staff and students, Mann said. They had lots of questions, comments and ideas about their school; however, many felt they were unable to fix their situations.

While changing mindsets and fixing root problems were nearly impossible given the limited time and resources, the program showed tremendous impact for the participants, Mann said. In the future, she hopes the UM students involved continue to help improve the lifestyles of people living in rural areas through community-based participatory research and outreach.

The **School of Applied Sciences**, home to the **Department of Nutrition and Hospitality Management** and **Department of Legal Studies**, offers professional preparation programs that integrate academic study, clinical training, creative research, service-learning and community outreach, leading to the development of leaders whose professional endeavors will improve health and well-being.

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“James Meredith: Breaking the Barrier,” a collection of essays edited by UM professor of journalism Kathleen Wickham, honors this historic milestone with

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