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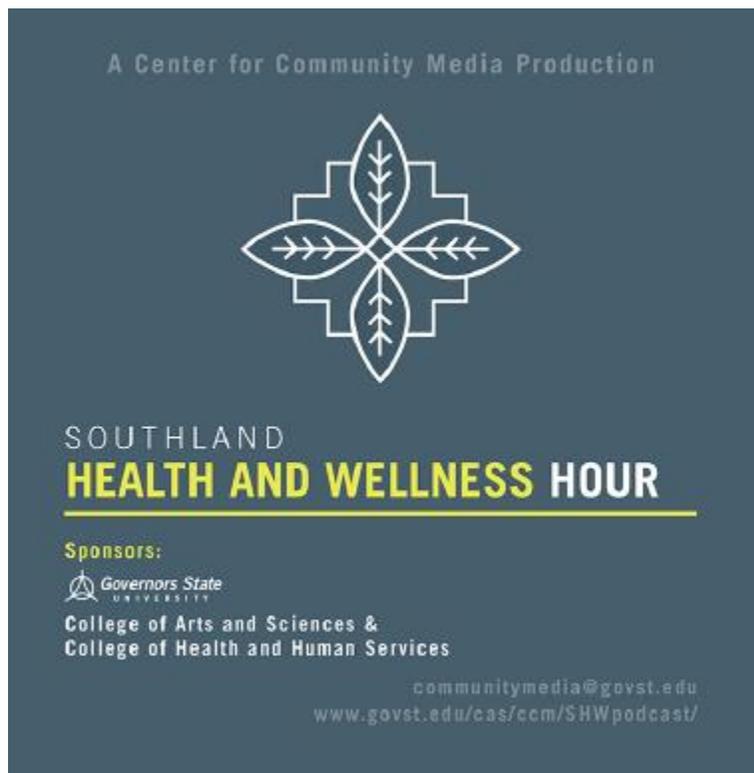
A Southland Health And Wellness Podcast Launches

Office of Marketing and Communications

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A Southland Health And Wellness Podcast Launches



A culturally tailored podcast that connects Southland residents with health care professionals is the latest addition to a long list of outreach projects hosted by the [College of Health and Human Services](#) (CHHS) at [Governors State University](#) (GSU) to help the community deal with COVID-19.

Initial episodes of “Southland Health and Wellness Hour” were recorded in August. Headed by [Dr. Tonya Roberson](#), each of the 20 episodes will begin with a “real-world” story from someone who has overcome an obstacle by incorporating health and wellness into their lives or with the help of a community resource. Dr. Roberson will then explore the topic with medical experts and community leaders, covering science, social trends, community impact, holistic health, and prevention behaviors. Speakers will respond to questions and reflections from the community.

“In the end, our conversation will come full circle for a wrap-up analysis, providing listener take-aways,” Roberson said.

The podcast is just one of several strategies CHHS has engaged help the community cope with the pandemic, which has brought the problems of health disparities into view. “CHHS faculty, staff, and students have all responded by springing into action on multiple fronts,” said [Dr. Catherine Balthazar](#), Dean of CHHS.

- **Sharing PPE**

In March when the pandemic first hit, the school shared personal protective equipment (PPE) with local medical professionals at a time when the materials were scarce. In June and July, Governors State partnered with Sisters Working It Out, Project Brother HOOD, University of Illinois Cancer Center, Susan G. Komen and the Village of University Park, to host pop-up shops in the two areas where the COVID-19 pandemic had a disproportionate impact due to racial and health disparities. [To date, Governors State has hosted a dozen pop-ups.](#)

- **PopUp Events**

“There’s been a snowball effect. We’re now giving cancer and COVID information at these popups and we’ve had testing sites made,” Roberson said. “On Aug. 29, we also gave boxes of food away. Those are things we are doing to impact some of the lack of access and the disparities in certain communities, lack of access to testing and PPE and food deserts.”

- **Listening Sessions**

Serving the community is also at the heart of “listening sessions” hosted by Governors State. On Sept. 9 from 5:30 to 7 p.m., the Chicago Area Patient-Centered Outcomes Research Network (CAPriCORN) will facilitate a free virtual event, “Elevating the Patient Voice in Research Project.” GSU adjunct faculty and project consultant Earnest Davis said the idea is for the team to hear the priorities of and from the community it seeks to serve. This session will give faculty members, students, and area residents a chance to help researchers understand which issues need to be studied to improve health outcomes in underserved communities.

VIRUS TRACKING



- **Contact Tracing Courses**

An innovative effort to help the community battle COVID-19 has come in the classroom. The third cohort of an [online course in training contact tracers](#) (or contact tracing investigators) began Aug. 31.

“It’s culturally tailored to ensure it’s highly impactful,” Roberson said. “People in these communities are afraid and they have a lot of questions. Many have lost their jobs or they’re essential workers. We’re teaching students how to be culturally sensitive, transparent and nonjudgmental, and teaching interviewing skills. The CDC said contact tracers are a part of the multi-prong approach to end the virus. Contact tracers have to be trustworthy so these individuals will give their personal info to them.”

The university also provides scholarships for this course, she said.

- **Expanding the Literature**

Governors State faculty have contributed to research efforts as well. Five Asian countries that were the first hit by the corona virus took steps that significantly halted the spread of COVID-19 — measures that led to death rates of five per million compared with 169 million in the U.S. as of late April, according to [Professor Ning Lu](#), who chairs GSU’s [Department of Health Administration](#); [Professor Kai-Wen Cheng](#); and [Professor Nafees Qamar](#). The case is outlined in an article in an upcoming issue of [American](#)

[Journal of Infection Control](#) authored by GSU faculty along with Kuo-Cherh Huang of Taipei Medical University and James A. Johnson of Central Michigan University.

The broad reach of CHHS is important during the pandemic, Balthazar said. “An important part of our mission is to infuse our programs into community partnerships for the health, well being and economic development of the region. In the age of COVID-19, this focus has become more important than ever.”

Faculty and graduates work on health issues in hospitals and clinics, but also in schools, nursing homes, government agencies, and service organizations, she said. “Our faculty specialize in community health, health education and prevention, social determinants of health, quality of life, rehabilitation, social justice and health policy. Our graduates serve in careers devoted to improving the lived experiences of people with disabilities and their families, individuals with elevated risk for disease, and others who have many barriers to overcome in order to live a healthy life.”

Governors State has continued to teach CHHS students safely during the pandemic. “Our field instructors and program coordinators have devised creative ways for students to get clinical and other kinds of experiences, and we have taken every opportunity we could to give students the necessary hands-on experiences whenever we could do so without compromising safety or compliance with public health guidance,” Balthazar said.

“This ensures that we continue to serve our community by preparing qualified professionals to live and work in this region and address the shortages of health professionals and services.”