



MPHA Announces Two APHA Award Winners

September 11, 2024

The Mississippi Public Health Association (MPHA) is pleased to announce that we have two members who will be receiving national awards at the upcoming American Public Health Association (APHA) Annual Conference during the Council of Affiliates luncheon on October 26, 2024, in Minneapolis, MN. The two award recipients are Dr. Tanya Funchess and Dr. Kina White.



APHA Council of Affiliates Award for Excellence

Dr. Tanya Funchess is the recipient of the APHA Council of Affiliates Award for Excellence. She is an Assistant Professor of Public Health, College of Nursing and School of Health Professions at the University of Southern Mississippi. Prior to her current position, she served in leadership roles at the Mississippi State Department of Health for 17 years. She has been a member of the MS Public Health Association (MPHA) for more than 15 years. She has served on several committees and most recently served as President (2023). She was instrumental in starting the MPHA Health and Racial Equity Committee and has served as its chair since 2021.

Dr. Funchess' visionary leadership, service and engagement with the affiliate partners and members throughout the state has strengthened the affiliate's work in health and racial equity at a time when many others are unable to continue to openly do work in this area. Beginning with the change in the state's flag in 2021, and continuing until now, she has worked tirelessly and unapologetically to promote racial healing and health equity in Mississippi. This Award for Excellence is to acknowledge her work in health equity aligned with the values of APHA.

Dr. Funchess holds a bachelor's degree in business administration from the University of Southern Mississippi (USM); a master's degree in management from Belhaven University; a master's degree in public health from USM; and a doctorate in health administration from the University of Phoenix, Arizona.



APHA Council of Affiliates Innovation in Public Health Award of the Year

Dr. Kina White is the recipient of the APHA Council of Affiliates Innovation in Public Health Award of the Year. Dr. White serves as director of the Office of Community Health Improvement at the Mississippi State Department of Health (MSDH). Dr. White is the Principal Investigator for multiple federal grant programs, and the State Lead for the Age-Friendly Public Health Systems Initiative (AFPHS) with Trust for America's Health (TFAH). Dr. White serves on the National Rural Age-Friendly Initiative Interest Group. Strategic efforts are underway for age-friendly communities, universities, and health systems to advance the development of an age-friendly ecosystem now recognized as "Age-Friendly Mississippi." She currently serves as Regent of the American College of Healthcare Executives (ACHE) of Mississippi, an ACHE chapter.

With more than 20 years of healthcare leadership experience, Dr. White is an equity strategist with a sincere passion for improving the health and well-being of communities. Dr. White has applied this leadership with her work with MPHA for the past four years in a sequential and phased approach to making Mississippi an Age-Friendly state. She engaged with MPHA for the primary logistical association for the phases because of her belief that healthy aging is a public health issue and because of her long-standing commitment to MPHA as her public health professional organization. Because of her leadership, other states are now looking to

Mississippi as a model state for ensuring that healthy aging is a part of the public health agenda.

Dr. White is board certified in healthcare management as an ACHE Fellow and is a graduate of the Mississippi Economic Council's Leadership Mississippi program. She holds a BS degree in business administration from The University of Southern Mississippi, a Master of Health Services Administration degree from the University of Arkansas and a DrPH degree in health policy and management from Jackson State University.

“Having two MPHA members and leaders to receive these prestigious national awards at APHA is outstanding. It indicates that we have individuals in our state who are willing to work to make the health of Mississippians better. We are so proud of these two impressive women” said Dr. Kaye Bender, Executive Director of MPHA.

“ I look forward to representing MPHA as President at the upcoming APHA Annual Conference and to seeing these two MPHA members receive these awards. I hope that all MPHA members will join me in congratulating them on these honors”Karin Thurman, MPHA President 2024.

Founded in 1937, the Mississippi Public Health Association (MPHA) is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization whose current mission is to promote health and equity through public health leadership, advocacy, and education. MPHA is an official state affiliate of the American Public Health Association (APHA). For additional information, see www.mspha.org