

OCTOBER 2024

# CAAS MPH NEWSLETTER

VOLUME 6 ISSUE 1



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College of Agriculture & Applied Sciences  
UtahStateUniversity

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# A MESSAGE FROM THE PROGRAM DIRECTOR

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Hello,

I hope you're all finding time to enjoy this beautiful fall weather. It's always an exciting time of year for our program as we welcome new students and celebrate the new career opportunities of our recent graduates. We want to wish all of our new students a warm welcome! We have 14 MPH Public Health Nutrition and 7 MPH Veterinary Public Health students who started this fall, with several more admitted for spring of 2025.

We recently submitted a preliminary self-study to the Council on Education for Public Health (CEPH) for accreditation and will be submitting our final self-study prior to our site visit on January 27-28, 2025! This accreditation process has been instrumental in helping us improve the program to ensure students are getting the best training and education to prepare them for leadership positions in the field. Through this process, we obtained valuable input from our students and stakeholders, which was vital for program improvement. Thank you all for your engagement with this process!

We are also excited to share some of our program highlights and current events in this issue. Thank you all for taking the time to read our newsletter. If you have any questions about the CAAS MPH program, please feel free to reach out to me anytime.

Take care,  
Mateja R. Savoie-Roskos, PhD, MPH, RD, FAND



**Dr. Mateja Savoie-Roskos**  
PhD, MPH, RD, FAND  
Associate Professor; MPH Program Director  
Associate Dean for Academic Programs and Student Services  
College of Agriculture and Applied Sciences

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# ZOONOTIC DISEASE CORNER

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## Poisonings Identified at the UVDL Part 2: Cyanide Toxicity

Following on from the last zoonotic disease corner discussion (in the December 2023 MPH newsletter about halogetin toxicity in sheep), I recently had a possible case of cyanide toxicity in a pet that I thought would be interesting to discuss. It is quite rare that we have cases of cyanide toxicity in pets at UVDL. In the case of cyanide toxicity, humans are quite susceptible to it also. I often think of Victorian murder mysteries when I think of cyanide poisoning! However, a recent case reported by CNN illustrates that it is a modern murder method also: <https://www.cnn.com/2024/07/17/asia/cyanide-thai-hotel-deaths-intl-hnk/index.html>. Many people of my age will remember with horror the 1978 mass murder/suicide in Jonestown lead by charismatic leader Jim Jones. Approximately 900 people died due to ingestion of a cyanide-laced drink.

A relatively young dog died quite suddenly with a history of ingesting apricots that had been thrown into the backyard. The owner is not sure how many apricots the dog had ingested. She was an otherwise healthy young dog that died quite suddenly. We necropsied the dog at the Utah Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory and there was no obvious cause of death. In many cases in which a poisoning is suspected, we do find another plausible cause of death on the necropsy. However, not so in this case. Cyanide is found in a variety of plants and other products such as fumigants, fertilizers, pesticides and as residue from mining and electroplating. Plants that have been associated with cyanide toxicity in animals include arrow grass, Johnson grass, and Prunus spp. plants which include apricot and peach plants and also the seeds and possibly leaves of apples. Ruminants such as cattle and sheep are more susceptible than monogastric animals such as dogs. As veterinarians we are taught that the blood will be cherry red in acute cases; however, the reality is that, by the time of necropsy, the cherry red color is no longer evident. Samples collected postmortem for testing must be collected as soon after death as possible and frozen immediately.

In the case of apricots specifically, the pit and possibly the stems and leaves are the toxic part of the fruit. A recent report (Houlton E., et al) describes death of a dog due to ingestion of a 1lb package of ground apricot kernals, a very large dose, and the grinding up of the kernals undoubtedly increased the speed of release of the toxic hydrogen cyanide in the small intestine. Cyanide toxicity has been reported in children due to accidental

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## ZOONOTIC DISEASE CORNER

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ingestion of apricot pit/kernel ingestion (Dalkiran T., et al) and in an adult woman who ingested apricot kernels she had purchased at a health store (for presumed health benefits) (Suchard R., et al).

In the case described here, we were unable to definitively determine that cyanide toxicity was the cause of death in this young dog, but it served as a reminder of the potential danger to humans and animals of ingesting the pits, stems, and leaves of apricots. The fruit itself is safe but the pits must not be fed to animals.

### References:

Dalkiran T., et al. 2020. Role of hemodialysis in the management of cyanide intoxication from apricot kernels in a 3-year-old child. *Pediatric Emergency Care* 36 (10).

Houlton E., et al. 2024. Cyanide toxicity secondary to apricot (*Prunus armeniaca*) kernel meal ingestion in a canine. *Toxicon* 245 (107764).

Suchard JR., et al. 1998. Acute cyanide toxicity caused by apricot kernel ingestion. *Annals of Emergency Medicine* 32 (6).

Gfeller RW. And Messonnier SP. *Handbook of Small Animal Toxicology & Poisonings*. 1998, Mosby, Inc, St. Louis, Missouri. Pages 120-121.

Kahn CM, editor. *The Merck Veterinary 10 th Edition*. 2010 Cyanide Poisoning. Merck & Co., Whitehouse Station, New Jersey. Pages 2550-2553.



**E. Jane Kelly, DVM, MS, MPH,  
DACVPM, DACVM**  
**Veterinary Diagnostician and Microbiologist**  
**Central Utah Branch of the**  
**Utah Veterinary Diagnostic Lab**  
**Clinical Professor**

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## FACULTY/STAFF HIGHLIGHT

Savannah Daines is the MPH program assistant and graduate program coordinator. She is also the executive director of the International Health and Early Programs (iHelp) Foundation, a Utah-based nonprofit committed to improving health in several communities across Africa and Central America. Earlier this year, Savannah spent five weeks in Uganda working on various public health and medical projects. She shares a few highlights from her experience below.

Malnutrition Program: The iHelp Foundation trains Village Nutrition Workers (VNWs) to lead malnutrition programs in their communities. VNWs visit malnourished children every two weeks to deliver nutrient-dense food, conduct health assessments, educate caregivers on health practices, and help them engage with our co-op programs that foster sustainable food and economic resources. During my time in Uganda, I trained several VNWs and provided health education to caregivers. The struggles and hardships of families in the program were heart-wrenching to see, but it was incredibly moving to witness the children's resilience and see hope begin to take root among caregivers.



*Teaching VNWs how to conduct malnutrition assessments*



*One of the children in the program that has made exceptional progress*



*Listening to a mother share how she used the education we provided to help her sick child*

Co-op Groups: The iHelp Foundation provides support to several co-op groups in Uganda through initiatives focused on gardening, food preservation, animal husbandry, health education, safe water, entrepreneurship, and leadership development. These co-ops allow community members to pool their resources and skills together in a way that can have a more profound impact on health and well-being. One of the most rewarding aspects of my trip was learning from the co-op leaders, who consistently demonstrated innovative problem-solving despite limited resources. For example, one food-insecure co-op had an area in the village that often filled with rainwater and was swampy (which attracted a lot of malaria-carrying mosquitos). The co-op repurposed the area by constructing a fishpond to raise tilapia to eat. The tilapia fed on the mosquito larvae. However, this

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## FACULTY/STAFF HIGHLIGHT

was not a sufficient food source for the fish, and the fish were not growing well. Co-op members ingeniously turned to collecting garbage and using maggots from the garbage to feed the fish! Their creativity and determination was a powerful example of how local solutions can drive meaningful health improvements.



*A family in the co-op listening to our lesson on nutrition and child development*



*A co-op member teaching me how to catch tilapia from Lake Victoria*



*Co-op members gathering for our lesson on how to plant and care for a garden*

Clinical Work: Some of my time in Uganda was spent working alongside medical providers at a hospital and community health center. This experience offered valuable insights into how cultural beliefs shape health outcomes. For instance, many Ugandans associate eating vegetables with poverty, which discourages much of the population from including vegetables in their diet. This, of course, has numerous health impacts and profound implications for both approaches to individual patient care and community-wide interventions. Finally, at the conclusion of my trip, a 15-person volunteer medical team from the iHelp Foundation joined me for five days of medical outreach clinics to rural villages. We were able to see about 1,500 patients in these clinics, many of which had never visited a healthcare provider before.



*Working with a team of midwives at a USAID-supported hospital to teach a breastfeeding and postnatal care workshop*



*Patients waiting to be seen at an iHelp-led medical outreach clinic, some patients walked for several days for the clinic*



*Posing with the nursing and community health team after teaching a TB workshop for community health center staff*

# SUMMER GRADUATE HIGHLIGHT



**Dantona Leger**

**Master of Public Health - Nutrition**

## **What are you up to since graduation?**

Currently, I am a doctoral student at Michigan State University pursuing my PhD in Human Nutrition with goals to meet the requirements to become a registered dietitian.

## **Tell us a about your Applied Practice Experience**

My Capstone Project was "Improving Food Safety Issues and Nutrition-Related Outcomes of Children Under 5 in Ibadan Metropolis, Nigeria" and I was supervised by Dr. Abiodun Atoloye.

The first project was an infographic regarding "Household Food Safety and Nutritional Challenges among Children Under 5 in Abadan Metropolis, Nigeria". This was visual representation of existing food safety barriers among children under 5. To create this infographic, current survey data on food safety issues, focusing on environmental structures, food safety knowledge and behavior, and financial/food insecurity from the E-FAR lab were analyzed. The infographic visually highlights key areas of need and the consequences of food

safety issues using concise texts, graphs, and figures. This approach makes the research findings more engaging and memorable for the audience.

The second project was a Policy Brief: "Addressing Structural and Environmental Barriers to Proficient Food Safety and its Impact on Childhood Malnutrition in Ibadan Metropolis, Nigeria". This highlights the structural and environmental barriers influencing proficient food safety and its impact on childhood malnutrition among the target populations (children under 5 and their caregivers in Ibadan Metropolis, Nigeria). The brief provides evidence-based recommendations to inform and guide policymakers on possible solutions to address the structural and environmental issues of proficient food safety and its impact on childhood malnutrition. Current data on food safety structural and environmental factors that can translate to hazardous health conditions (e.g., foodborne illness, food poisoning) were analyzed. The policy brief is concise, evidence-based, and digestible offering compelling support for policy recommendations and interventions.

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## SUMMER GRADUATE HIGHLIGHT

### Share your Applied Practice Experience

For my APE project, I was able to work with Create Better Health at USU Extension. Specifically, I helped with their Create Healthy Gardens curriculum within their refugee program. I was able to work with Habiba Nur and assisted her in the gardening program throughout the summer and was also able to help adapt some of the curriculum and handouts to be more targeted toward the Somali population. It was amazing to learn from many strong Somali women and to hopefully help the sustainability and effectiveness of this program in the future.

### What are your plans now?

I am currently finishing up my required supervised practice hours through the CAPD program at USU. I will be done at the end of this semester and then will be eligible to sit for the Registered Dietitian exam! My husband just recently got a job in Boston so I will then move out there to join him once I finish my clinical internship hours in December!

### Any other Program Highlights?

I have been doing the CAPD program at the same time and have loved my cohort. We are completing our hours at the same time so we have gotten to know each other and leaned on each other when needed, they are awesome! I have loved my professors and preceptors and have learned so much throughout the past few years of my life. I love being an Aggie!



**Avery Haslam**  
Master of Public Health –  
Nutrition



# STUDY ABROAD OPPORTUNITY



**STUDY IN  
CRETE, GREECE**

## Mediterranean Diet

May 19 to May 28, 2025

Study traditional culture and cuisine in Crete, Greece! Gain a firsthand understanding of Mediterranean diet concepts with hands-on experience including visits to regional food markets, food production facilities, and cooking classes, while also exploring the terrain of Crete and its wild, edible flora.

### FEE DEADLINES

- 2 to 4 weeks after acceptance: \$500 deposit
- February 15: Program fee remainder (TBD) and insurance
- University deadline: Tuition

### ACADEMICS

- 3 credits in NDFS 4900/6900

### PROGRAM LEADERS/CONTACT:

Lacie Peterson, Clinical Associate Professor  
lacie.peterson@usu.edu

Paula Scott, Professor and EFNEP State Director  
paula.scott@usu.edu

**APPLY BY  
JANUARY 15**



# STUDY ABROAD ITINERARY

## Mediterranean Diet Itinerary

(Subject to Change)

DATES	PLACES	TRIPS/EVENTS
5/19	Heraklion	Arrival & orientation Welcome meze
5/20	Heraklion	Minoan Palace of Knossos Heraklion Archaeological Museum & cooking class
5/21	Heraklion	Organic/biodynamic farm tour Walking tour of Archanes
5/22	Heraklion	Herbal medicine, beekeeping Cooking class & Cretan music
5/23	Heraklion	Botanical hike & cooking class
5/24	Vamos	Travel to Vamos & free time at coastal town Tour of Vamos & meze
5/25	Vamos	Walking tour & garden visits Cooking class
5/26	Vamos	Olive grove, vineyard, & chef's garden tour
5/27	Vamos	Discussion & farewell meze
5/28		Return to United States

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# VETERINARY PUBLIC HEALTH OPEN HOUSE

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An open house providing information regarding the Master of Public Health in Veterinary Public Health will be held via Zoom on Wednesday, October 23, 2024, from 5:30-6:30 p.m. Mountain Time.

The Zoom link will be emailed to anyone who registers 24 hours prior to the start of the open house. A recording of the event will be shared with anyone who is not able to attend the event live.

Please visit the [program website](#) for more information. You can also contact Savannah Daines ([savannah.daines@usu.edu](mailto:savannah.daines@usu.edu)) with any questions before or after the open house.

Click [here](#) to register.



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## ORGANIZATION HIGHLIGHT

# UTAH CHAPTER OF THE SOCIETY FOR PUBLIC HEALTH EDUCATION

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The Utah Chapter of the Society for Public Health Educators (USOPHE) is a professional membership organization for undergraduate and graduate students and public health education professionals. USOPHE is a member-based organization with over 85 public health educators across the state. The board of directors includes student and professional health educators and strives to provide support to all Utah health educators.

USOPHE aims to improve the health of Utahns by promoting the advancement of the health education profession and the employment of health educators in the public and private sector. They do this by partnering with other associations and nonprofits, helping to process CHES credits, hosting an annual conference highlighting public health education, offering internship opportunities, and providing scholarships for outstanding public health education students.

USOPHE offers a variety of engagement opportunities for members such as attendance, networking, and presentation at the annual conference, the opportunity to attend and/or present professional development resources, and engagement with the board. USOPHE is a great way to connect with like-minded professionals and students and learn about what is happening in Utah relating to public health education.

How to get involved with USOPHE:

- To become a member, visit <https://usophe.app.neoncrm.com/np/clients/usophe/login.jsp> and click "create account" at the bottom of the page. Annual memberships are \$35 for professionals or \$20 for students. Membership provides discounts to our annual conference and regular communication about events and opportunities to network and grow your public health education career.
- Join a board committee: We have multiple board committees and are always seeking input from students, faculty, and health education professionals. If you are interested in learning more about our committees and how to be involved, contact John Stuligross at [john.stuligross@imail.org](mailto:john.stuligross@imail.org)
- Attend our conference - November 7, 2024!
  - Details here: <https://usophe.org/2024-conference/>

If you want to learn more or become more involved, contact John Stuligross at [john.stuligross@imail.org](mailto:john.stuligross@imail.org) or visit the [USOPHE website](#).



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## UPCOMING EVENTS

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### American Public Health Association Annual Meeting and Expo

Theme: Rebuilding Trust in Public Health and Science  
October 27–30, 2024 at the Minneapolis Convention Center

### Utah One Health Symposium

Theme: One Health Storytelling: Tales from Science Communicators  
November 6, 2024 at the Viridian Event Center in West Jordan, UT

### Utah Chapter of the Society for Public Health Education 2024 Conference

Theme: Scaling New Heights in Health Education  
November 7, 2024 at the Viridian Event Center in West Jordan, UT

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## UPCOMING EVENTS CONTINUED

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### Southern Utah UAND Conference

Theme: Empowering Dietitians for a Healthier Tomorrow!

November 8, 2024

Held at the Intermountain Cancer Center in Saint George, UT

### Rural Health Association of Utah

### 2024 Conference

November 13-14, 2024

Held at the Dixie Convention Center in Saint George, UT

### Utah Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics Annual Conference

March 27-28, 2025 at the Viridian Event Center in West Jordan, UT

### Utah Public Health Association Conference

April 2-3, 2025 at Weber State University, Ogden UT

Call for Abstracts information

A webinar regarding preparing abstracts will be held October 17  
at 12 PM MST. Meeting ID: 870 5569 4215

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## FOLLOW US ON SOCIAL MEDIA

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Be the first to hear about everything public health related by following our social media handles! This is a great way to stay up to date on program changes, accreditation updates, public health events, job openings, project/internship opportunities, and more!



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