MTSU and the state combine funds for a much-needed new academic building for the College of Behavioral and Health Sciences
New Territory

Even as our college dives into new territory by starting the construction of a new classroom building that will unite a good portion of our disciplines, we remain true to the common theme that binds our six departments together: Criminal Justice Administration, Human Sciences, Health and Human Performance, Nursing, Psychology, and Social Work all work toward and strive for happier, healthier people and healthier communities.

In this issue of the CBHS magazine, Outcomes, you will learn about the new building (scheduled to open its doors in 2020) and how it will be a game-changer for the three departments that will have classroom and lab space within its walls. The lab space that will be available for all of our disciplines will allow an even greater number of our students to participate in groundbreaking research—part of what makes MTSU tops in many fields. One of those top programs is our Industrial/Organizational Psychology program, which just received a No. 1 ranking from the Society for Industrial and Organizational Psychology.

You also will learn about some of our talented alumni and faculty who are making a difference in neighborhoods both big and small. You will see how CBHS can take us from the fashion runways of New York City to studying and teaching Nutrition and Food Science in the farthest reaches of the globe.

The common theme of our college ties our practitioners and professionals together, working toward the greater goal of developing human potential. Our focus areas, each in a uniquely different way, strive for excellence in teaching, service, and research, while making the world a better place. Now, more than ever, the college needs your help to continue these efforts. Join us in supporting our students, faculty, and departments as we strive for even better outcomes for the students of the future. Please feel free to contact the college with questions or observations at 615-898-2000 or via email at kristin.wells@mtsu.edu for our new development director.
MTSU’s Social Work program lends a strong helping hand to efforts to serve Murfreesboro’s homeless population

by Gina K. Logue

The City of Murfreesboro projects its population to grow to 228,000 by 2035. It’s been the fastest-growing city in Tennessee for the last three years and is one of the 15 fastest-growing large cities in the United States.

Such rapid population growth inevitably gives rise to a more somber development—a spike in the number of individuals who can’t afford the high costs of having a place to live. Forty-one percent of homeless individuals in Murfreesboro have been without permanent shelter for less than six months, but 30 percent have been homeless for two years or longer, according to data collected in 2017 by the Murfreesboro Cold Patrol nonprofit organization.

The Murfreesboro 2035 comprehensive plan calls for providing a mix of housing options, including a comprehensive solution to meeting the needs of the city’s most vulnerable citizens. The question local agencies that work tirelessly to serve the homeless population are working to answer is “How do we achieve that goal?”

Last July, MTSU Social Work faculty and students presented a plan to the Murfreesboro City Council that addresses another key component of the local housing crisis—the need for a centralized campus of social service agencies to serve the homeless and those at risk of losing current housing. The campus would remove many of the barriers that individuals and families face in accessing the quality support and services required to regain health and economic self-sufficiency.

The proposed campus—originally the idea of Scott Foster, founder of the nonprofit local outreach center Journey Home—would house satellite offices of agencies that provide assistance to the homeless. One such model investigated by MTSU students is Haven of Hope in San Antonio. That 22-acre campus includes 30 agencies dedicated to providing food, health care, child care, job training, and even pet care.

In addition to preparing the proposal and tailoring it to Murfreesboro’s specific needs, the students gained valuable experience at Journey Home, working 20–25 hours each week with homeless individuals last May–June. All the work put in by then-graduate student Jackie Jones (’17) and two undergraduates, Justin Oliver and Samantha Cantrell, was made possible by a $15,000 grant from the city council.

Ultimately, a city council panel funded a part-time community liaison position in partnership with the decades-old Homeless Alliance of Rutherford County. Jones, now an MTSU alumna with a Master of Social Work degree, holds that position. She is currently funded to work two days a week on the project through this September.

“My role as a community liaison is to continue to build relationships between nonprofits, government agencies, and the community through communication, advocacy, and capacity building,” Jones said.
Through her studies and experiential learning opportunities, Jones understands better than most that homelessness is a complex problem made even more complicated by a lack of affordable housing. She also knows that solutions to the problems homeless individuals face lies in part in greater awareness and involvement by the entire community, including MTSU. Her efforts both while a master's student and now as a graduate are geared toward helping established programs, agencies, and individuals like Foster perhaps better organize and streamline community efforts to affect lasting change. Having MTSU, through its Social Work program, now growing in visibility regarding the local homelessness issue can only serve the greater good.

For Jones, the learning experience has been a rewarding and fulfilling complement to her MTSU education.

“The complexity of addressing affordable housing and homelessness is balanced by the many amazing individuals and organizations committed to serving clients and addressing the issues,” Jones said.

One of those individuals is City Community Development director John Callow, who said he sees MTSU’s involvement as a key to reducing homelessness in the city.

“We are sincerely grateful to MTSU for studying ways the city can leverage strengths as a community toward ensuring that housing services are provided in the most effective and efficient manner,” he said. MTSU

Social workers promote human and community well-being; their courses focus on developing competent, ethical professionals with the knowledge, values, and skills for effective practice with individuals, families, groups, agencies, and communities. Guided by an awareness of individuals and their environment, a global perspective, respect for human diversity, and knowledge based on scientific inquiry, social work realizes its purpose through a quest for social and economic justice, the prevention of conditions that limit human rights, the elimination of poverty, and the enhancement of the quality of life for all persons.

MTSU’s undergraduate major in Social Work leads to a Bachelor of Social Work (B.S.W.) degree, which is accredited by the Council on Social Work Education. The program aims to prepare students for beginning professional practice in social work or planning to pursue graduate study. At the graduate level, the department offers a Master of Social Work (M.S.W.) with a concentration in Advanced Generalist Social Work Practice. Applicants with a B.S.W. may be admitted with advanced standing.

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Her final collection for Project Runway, titled “Evolution,” was intended to chronicle her personal journey. It featured shimmering tops and slacks, as well as long gowns, head coverings, and a cream-colored wedding gown with gold accents and a matching headdress and veil.

“I’m so proud of everything,” Ife said in the season finale Nov. 16. “I said I was going to do it, and I did it, and I’m just so happy that I was given this opportunity.”

While the judges consistently lavished high praise on Ife, the top prize went to Kentaro Kameyama, whose Japanese heritage informed his fashion aesthetic.

Ife and the 15 other competitors designed for models ranging in size from 0 to 22, challenging them to create fashions for a variety of body shapes.

Her shimmering silver gown was a talked-about highlight of the season premiere, and during the Aug. 24 episode, when contestants created fashions from recycled materials, Ife won top honors for her newspaper-fabric dress with vinyl fringe and bottle-cap buttons. She and the design were featured in the October 2017 issue of Marie-Claire magazine.

The designer told Marie-Claire that when younger she couldn’t find “cool” clothes that kept her covered in adherence to religious rules. “Growing up, I mostly wore long, loose-fitting, burka-type garments,” He said in the article. “When I entered the working world, I realized that didn’t fit every environment. But I couldn’t find any Western-style clothes with a modest edge, like distressed jeans but lined.” According to Marie-Claire, Ife refused to believe that “modest and sexy were mutually exclusive,” and she began designing pieces that when worn together “would cover the body from head to wrist to toe, but that more adventurous clients could opt to wear separately.”

In another challenge that Ife won on the TV show, she also used unconventional materials—safety items from a Lexus car—which Ife turned into a gown with bright reflective netting.

Ife graduated magna cum laude from MTSU with a bachelor’s degree in Textiles, Merchandising, and Design (TXMD). Her focus was in the Apparel Design concentration.

Lauren Rudd, a TXMD assistant professor in MTSU’s Department of Human Sciences, said Ife’s designs were uniquely well-suited to the Project Runway challenge.

“Her clothing is always wearable and functional, with an edge of creativity and style which speaks to a wide variety of women,” Rudd said of Ife’s work. “Ayana was a wonderful student during her time at MTSU,” added Rick Cottle, an assistant professor in the TXMD program. “Students and faculty both recognized her talent, work ethic, and integrity.”

Ife’s website (ayanaife.com) shows photos of various fashions that cover the entire body. Some of the outfits include head coverings, making them practical and beautiful for women whose religions encourage head-dresses, as well as for women who enjoy wearing scarves.

According to her website, “Ayana Ife is a clothing label offering trendy, ready-to-wear ensembles for modest fashion lovers. While using contemporary design elements, we resolve the No. 1 concern of our modest sisters, which is unnecessary layering of clothing and sizing up to cover specific body parts. By taking this problem-solving approach, we aim to keep our sisters feeling fashion-forward, influential, fearless, and elegant.”

After the TV program ended, Ife went to Italy to take up her place at the Milano Fashion Institute, where she started her master’s degree. MTSU

The Apparel Design program blends a flair for fashion with practical knowledge of all aspects of the business. Students who have a talent for drawing and creating clothes, for themselves or others, can apply their creativity in classes designed to expand their knowledge of the practical side of the multibillion-dollar fashion industry. MTSU, with the only apparel design program at a state university in Tennessee, boasts one of the relatively few such programs in the Southeast and one of the best.

Textile, Merchandising, and Design majors may pursue a Bachelor of Science (B.S.) degree in either the Apparel Design or Fashion Merchandising concentration.
It Takes a Village

by Drew Ruble

When MTSU Clinical Psychology master’s graduate Caroline Hannah (’96) took a job with Youth Villages in 1995, she didn’t envision she would spend the next 22 years there, or be named (as she was last year) chief operations officer of the private nonprofit organization that helps more than 25,000 emotionally troubled children and their families each year in 13 states.

Instead, she had her eye on a counseling position at a women’s prison in middle Tennessee.

Running the largest provider of behavioral health services to children in Tennessee (and one of the nation’s leading children’s behavioral health organizations) from her Nashville office, Hannah also provides daily leadership and strategic direction to the organization’s work in Alabama, Florida, Indiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, and Oregon.

It’s a lofty executive position compared to the work Hannah did when she joined Youth Villages in 1995 as a family intervention specialist on the frontline, supporting children and families in Nashville and the middle Tennessee region.

Back then, Hannah was one of a handful of young counselors who changed the course of child welfare in Tennessee by providing intensive help to children and families in their own homes.

Along the way, she started the Youth Villages Specialized Crisis Program that evaluates and refers young people experiencing psychiatric emergencies in Tennessee; helped a New York City program begin intensive in-home services; launched Youth Villages Massachusetts; and worked to expand effective programs in states across the country as a regional executive director.

She remembers all of her first cases. The mom who was training to be a Burger King manager. “I’d meet her at the restaurant. Sometimes, I’d help her study. You wouldn’t believe the things restaurant managers have to know!” The
Scholar-athlete Brent Stockstill (’16, ’17) has done more than simply
acted out. He was in residential treatment. Hannah got him home. The boy who turned
18 and whose mom kicked him out of the
house. “I’d drive an hour and a half from my
house to pick him up and get him to school.
He had to be there at 7:30 in
the morning.” Helping a teen
get home to his family after
time in residential treatment.
“I used to give him and his
little brother money to go
out and wash my car while
I talked to his mom. . . . He
called me two years after he’d
completed the program, and
he was a bricklayer. Doing great.”

After a while, Hannah quit waiting on that
other job to come through.
“I pretty quickly caught the bug for advo-
cating for these families,” she said. A banker’s
daughter, Hannah saw poverty up close
for the first time, witnessing children and
families who faced incredible challenges. “I
had never experienced anything like that. It’s
really about advocating for families, fighting
on behalf of people whom everyone else had
written off, proving people wrong.”

In Youth Villages, she now helps lead one of
the first nonprofit organizations to shift its
focus toward strengthening and reuniting
families—preventing children from ever
entering child welfare systems or helping
them come home quickly if out-of-home
placement was needed.
“We moved early, but now the field is with us,”
Hannah said. “The programs that we began
in Tennessee—YVIntercept and YVLifeSet—
proved themselves with better outcomes for
children and families and attracted attention
from other states, from philanthropists. Other
jurisdictions wanted to see if we could get the
same results in their areas, and we could.”

Hannah is most certainly one MTSU graduate
working to make progress in child welfare
and children’s services. MTSU

[Editor’s Note: Significant portions of this article
were pulled from the Youth Villages website.]
Although Brent Stockstill has just three seasons under his belt as starting quarterback of the Blue Raiders, the now redshirt senior’s awards and achievements on the field are nothing short of staggering. But to focus solely on Stockstill’s accolades and accomplishments on the field would be to miss a big part of his story—his academic work ethic—which arguably equals his fierce competitive streak on the football field. Here’s a closer look at Stockstill’s winning formula both on the field and in the classroom—from an anatomical point of view.

**HEAD**

Stockstill completed his bachelor’s degree in Leisure, Sport, and Tourism studies in just 3½ years, graduating in December 2016. Thanks to the department’s Accelerated Bachelor’s-to-Master’s program, he also completed a master’s degree in winter 2017. (In order for students to be accepted into the ARM program and Leisure and Sport Management master’s program, they have to maintain at least a cumulative 3.25 GPA in their undergraduate courses.)

“Having that master’s in hand is going to be huge for me,” he said. “I think having both my quarterback play and my degree is going to be a huge help in the future when I get into the coaching profession.”

**HEART**

Allstate Insurance Co. and the American Football Coaches Association (AFCA) announced last September that Stockstill was on its list of college football players named to the 2017 Allstate AFCA Good Works Team. The 11 selected Football Bowl Subdivision players were recognized at halftime of the Jan. 1 Sugar Bowl national semifinal between Clemson and Alabama. This award shines a spotlight on the incredible stories of selflessness and community service displayed by student-athletes and honors their dedication to volunteerism and enriching the lives of others. Stockstill is involved with numerous community organizations and activities, including Special Olympics, Murfreesboro City Schools, Boys to Men Mentoring, Reading Raiders, Military Veterans Hospital, Camp Ability for special needs kids, Boys and Girls Club, and the Broadmore Senior Citizens Rally, and as a youth camp volunteer.

Olympics, Murfreesboro City Schools, Boys to Men Mentoring, Reading Raiders, Military Veterans Hospital, Camp Ability for special needs kids, Boys and Girls Club, and the Broadmore Senior Citizens Rally, and as a youth camp volunteer. Just a sampling of other character awards Stockstill has won through the years includes being named a 2017 Arthur Ashe Jr. Sports-Scholar Award winner and earning the male student-athlete True Blue President’s Award at the 2017 Raiders Choice Awards.

**ARM**

Stockstill’s career at MTSU started with a bang. As a freshman, he fell just 53 yards shy of breaking Jameis Winston’s NCAA freshman passing record (4,057 yards). His 327 completions that year set a new NCAA freshman completions record. But he didn’t stop there. Through just three of his four eligible seasons, he is already the school’s all-time leader in touchdowns (77), 300-yard passing games (14), 400-yard passing games (two), passing yards per game (288.7), and completions (729). Any school passing record he hasn’t yet broken he is likely to break in 2018. He currently ranks 15th nationally among active players in career passing yards, sixth in passing yards per game, 15th in total offense, and 16th in passing efficiency.

The Department of Health and Human Performance (HHP) offers students opportunities to prepare for professional careers as teachers of health and of physical education, as directors in industry and social agencies, as recreation and leisure service professionals in a wide range of settings, and as health and fitness professionals in schools, industry, and allied areas. Undergraduate programs in the department lead to the Bachelor of Science degree with majors in Athletic Training, Exercise Science, Community and Public Health, Leisure, Sport, and Tourism Studies (LSTS), Physical Education, and Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology. Students majoring in LSTS may specialize in Recreation Administration, Outdoor Recreation, Sport Studies, or Tourism Studies. Minors are available in Athletic Coaching and Officiating, Driver and Traffic Safety Education, Health, Health and Physical Education, Health and Human Performance, Recreation, and Somatic Movement Education. At the graduate level, HHP has Master of Science majors in Exercise Science, Health and Human Performance (concentrations in Health and in Physical Education), and Leisure and Sport Management (concentrations in Recreation and Leisure Services and in Sport Industry). The department also awards the Ph.D. in Human Performance with specializations in four areas: Exercise Science, Health, Leisure Studies, and Physical Education.
MTSU and the state combine funds for a much-needed new academic building for the College of Behavioral and Health Sciences

from staff reports

"One of the primary centers of our new building will be a simulation fusion center that will offer students opportunities in homeland security operations, emergency management operations, and responses in disaster relief operations. These are areas of increasing importance and will increasingly provide employment opportunities for our graduates."

—Lance Selva, Criminal Justice chair

MTSU will soon construct a $38 million new academic classroom building for MTSU’s College of Behavioral and Health Sciences.

The MTSU building, which previously ranked No. 1 on the higher education priority list by the Tennessee Higher Education Commission, was among $74.8 million in capital outlay projects that Tennessee Gov. Bill Haslam recommended for the state’s universities, community colleges, and technical colleges in his 2018-19 budget.

The building will bring together the college’s departments of Criminal Justice, Psychology, and Social Work, which offer highly related, integrative programs now located in multiple buildings across the campus, to allow for greater collaboration. The dean’s office will move there as well.

It will also provide critically needed classrooms, offices, and lab space for CBHS and its programs (EEG, Eye Tracker, and Whisper Rooms for neuroscience, sensation and perception, and cognitive research; dedicated labs for collecting questionnaire and other data; and computer labs specifically for teaching undergraduate and graduate stats, as well as data collection).

The building, to be located between the Student Union Building and the Tennessee Livestock Center, is scheduled for completion by the Fall 2020 semester.

The recommendation actually provided $35.1 million in state funding, therefore requiring the University to raise $2.9 million through other sources.

The schematic design for the new, three-story building is presented here. The appointed designer is Bauer Askew, the College’s general contractor for the project.

The Department of Social Work is looking forward to our new, cohesive home. Due to the greater number of classrooms available, we will have more flexibility in scheduling classes, which will benefit student schedules and faculty workloads. Students will have more better access to spaces outside of class that will facilitate their interaction with each other and with faculty, and give them a better opportunity to be comfortable as they meet, read, study, and relax before and between classes. The new, interconnected location of the Department of Social Work and the faculty offices will make it easier for students to be familiar with and locate their professors in order to access us for help with coursework and professional advising."

— John Sanborn, Social Work interim chair

"Dedicated lab space and labs in the same building will allow for more research, which means more undergraduates and graduate students involved in research."

—Greg Schmidt, Psychology chair

"The higher education priority list by the Tennessee Higher Education Commission, was among $74.8 million in capital outlay projects that Tennessee Gov. Bill Haslam recommended for the state’s universities, community colleges, and technical colleges in his 2018-19 budget."

— Lance Selva, Criminal Justice chair
ONE-MAN GANG

MTSU's Criminal Justice faculty boasts a national expert on gangs

by Gina K. Logue
In colleges and universities, gangs’ use of technology, organized crime, international and domestic terrorism, and employment in the criminal justice professions. Street gang membership increased in about 49 percent of law enforcement jurisdictions between 2012 and 2014, according to the 2015 National Gang Report from the Federal Bureau of Investigation. The same report states that 50 percent of jurisdictions had increased gang-related crime during that period. About a third of jurisdictions report an increase in gang threats to law enforcement. Smith has appeared on the History Channel’s Gangland series. He most recently authored Gangs and the Military: Gangsters, Bikers, and Terrorists with Military Training (2017).

The book is based on personal experiences, historical documents, government reports, and current events. In addition to historical connections in the area, such as the land pirates who traveled the Natchez Trace after the Revolutionary War, Smith chronicles other stories of national interest. “Congress has mandated an annual report on street gang, outlaw biker, and extremist terrorist activity in the military every year since 2008,” Smith said. “Only the Army conducts an annual assessment, and they appear to do little to analyze the problem . . . and potential solutions.”

Three times in his career, MTSU’s Carter F. Smith has won one of his profession’s highest honors. A lecturer in the Department of Criminal Justice, Smith again received the Frederick Milton Thrasher Award from the Journal of Gang Research at the International Gang Specialist Training Conference in Chicago in 2016. The Thrasher Award was established in 1992 to honor and recognize superior scholarship, leadership, accomplishments, and service contributions in dealing with public safety issues like that posed by gangs.

Smith is retired from the U.S. Army Criminal Investigations Command (commonly called CID), where he served for more than 22 years, including 15 years at Fort Campbell on the Tennessee-Kentucky border near Clarksville. At Fort Campbell, he identified the growing problem of street gangs and military connections in the early 1990s and later started the Army’s first gang and extremist investigations team. He also provided and directed security of several U.S. Army bases, supervised multinational fraud and theft investigations and conducted various criminal and cybercrime investigations in Germany, South Korea, Panama, and the U.S. Smith’s areas of expertise include street gangs, spontaneous gang formation, military-trained gang members, gangs in the military, gangs...
Rare clinical opportunities at MTSU help launch one recent alum to elite audiology status serving Tennessee veterans

by Carol Stuart

When Dr. Erika Knox ('01) entered medical school at prestigious Washington University in St. Louis, she stood out in her class because of previous experience at the unique university speech-audiology clinic open to MTSU undergraduates. “That was a big advantage over everyone else in grad school—they had never been in anybody’s clinic, seen any type of equipment, interacted with a patient,” she said.

After working briefly at Harvard University’s Massachusetts Eye and Ear Infirmary upon earning her Doctor of Audiology, Knox is now one of two Tennessee audiologists who specialize with cochlear implants for veterans. Employed with the Veterans Affairs (VA) Tennessee Valley Healthcare System in Murfreesboro, she also focuses on tinnitus—ear ringing that plagues veterans from combat.

“You can have normal hearing, but with tinnitus, they used to turn you away and say there’s nothing we can do for you,” said Knox, who created a program at the VA in 2010. “There are things that can be done. . . . You have patients coming back from active duty wanting to commit suicide because the ringing is so loud. You can’t turn them away and say there’s nothing you can do.”

At MTSU, Knox majored in Accounting her first two years. But she learned about a job at MTSU’s Speech-Language-Hearing clinic (see sidebar) from a Kroger co-worker and ended up switching to then-major Communication Disorders. Knox later decided on audiology as a career when a child she worked with had his hearing problem misdiagnosed by a private provider. “It hit me to the core, to where I wanted to change the world,” she said.

For her year-long residency, Knox found one in her hometown at the VA Medical Center in Murfreesboro, where her mother retired after 30 years as a nurse. “I loved it here, and I love helping the veterans,” she said. When she left her residency in May 2006 for the opening at Harvard, Knox pinned her resume to a wall at the VA, called weekly, and got her current position six months later when two part-timers left. “I love what I do, I really do, and I’m so grateful. People come to work and they hate their job,” Knox said. “But this is like my peace—it takes me away from whatever’s going on in my life. . . . There’s nothing like having a passion for what you do.”

Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology Lab marks 50th anniversary in new home

An MTSU program that has improved the quality of life for numerous people and educated thousands of professionals marked its 50th anniversary in new quarters.

The Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology Lab debuted its new lab space on the first floor of Alumni Memorial Gym in October with an open house, hosted by the Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology program. Made possible by a grant from the Christy-Houston Foundation and major donors, the clinic’s new home has more than 1,000 more square feet than its previous location.

The clinic features nine therapy rooms, three large observation booths, a student workroom and kitchenette, offices, and a new, top-flight audiology booth.

Clients, who pay for services on a sliding scale, range from the very young to the very old. The clinic, currently part of the Department of Health and Human Performance, assists people with autism, Down syndrome, intellectual disabilities, articulation disorders, language disorders, and hearing difficulties.

“Whether helping a child who stutters or an adult with a hearing loss, the Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology program (formerly Communication Disorders) in the Department of Health and Human Performance offers students the opportunity to learn about human communication, speech, language, and hearing disorders, and intervention methods for children and adults experiencing communication problems. As a national leader offering an undergraduate pre-professional degree, MTSU’s program helps prepare students for graduate study in speech-language pathology and audiology.”
MTSU CONTINUES TO MAKE NATIONAL WAVES WITH ITS UNDERWATER SPINAL CORD INJURY RESEARCH

by Allison Gorman

WHERE OTHERS FEAR to TREAD
Outcomes reflect what seriously injured people typically defy that prognosis. According to Stevens, those remarkable strides have been made possible because of research participants, propelling that person’s feet forward with hers on a treadmill. It usually isn’t long before participants are unassisted again. But with her help, they routinely defy that prognosis.

Stevens, an Exercise Science assistant professor, spends much of her time in a bathing suit, armpit-deep in a tank of water behind a research participant, propelling that person’s feet forward with hers on a treadmill. It usually isn’t long before participants are taking those underwater steps by themselves. Most of them go on to take independent steps on dry land too.

According to Stevens, those remarkable outcomes reflect what seriously injured people can do given safe, ongoing opportunities to improve even after their conventional therapeutic options—and usually their insurance—are exhausted.

“The evidence is pretty consistent that if you allow someone to be chronically exposed to activity, their body adapts, regardless of the level of injury or impairment. To whatever extent they have the capacity to improve, they will,” she said. “But nobody is going to get stronger if they sit in a wheelchair all day.”

For people suffering from chronic painful conditions like arthritis or recovering from orthopedic injury, the treadmill is a conventional rehabilitative tool. But for people who can’t walk because of permanent neurological damage, treadmill therapy has always seemed inherently unsuitable.

Stevens and her research team have turned that logic on its head. For people suffering from chronic painful conditions like arthritis or recovering from orthopedic injury, the treadmill is a conventional rehabilitative tool. But for people who can’t walk because of permanent neurological damage, treadmill therapy has always seemed inherently unsuitable.

Stevens and her research team have turned that logic on its head. For people suffering from chronic painful conditions like arthritis or recovering from orthopedic injury, the treadmill is a conventional rehabilitative tool. But for people who can’t walk because of permanent neurological damage, treadmill therapy has always seemed inherently unsuitable.

Stevens and Stevens’ work has put MTSU on the map for therapeutic research. Paralyzed people have traveled from places like Chicago and Atlanta to participate in her studies, and she’s had significant success winning highly competitive grant funding.

The National Institutes of Health, which typically favors research in medical settings, has funded two treadmill studies at MTSU. The first involved children with cerebral palsy; the second, now wrapping up, involves people with incomplete spinal cord injuries—that is, some sensory or motor function below the level of the injury.

Participants in that second study receive about four months of therapy, just enough time to make tantalizing progress, Stevens said. So she won a separate grant to extend their therapy for two more years, to see just how far it can take them. She also has secured funding to work with people with complete spinal cord injuries. Even those participants, who come to her lab totally paralyzed below the injury, typically end up taking steps on their own.

“Every one of Stevens’ 50 participants so far has regained some ability to walk independently.”

She’s convinced that her success is less about the treadmill than about restoring people’s hope that they can walk again—and giving them an opportunity to try.

“We have people who make incredible progress in the first two or three days,” she said. “That can’t be a training effect. . . . I think it’s just that somebody’s walking the journey with them.”

MTSU faculty member Sandy Stevens gives people their lives back, one step at a time. She also gives them hope—something they’ve often lost before they hear about the amazing things that happen in her lab. Participants in her research come to her in wheelchairs, paralyzed by spinal cord injuries and having completed the prescribed medical treatment and physical therapy. They have been told that they’ll probably never walk again. But with her help, they routinely defy that prognosis.

Efforts are underway to expand MTSU’s Aquatic Therapy and Rehabilitation Center, a state-of-the-art research and therapy facility on the campus of MTSU. Plans include additional underwater treadmills and an indoor therapy pool, along with educational, testing, training, and clinical spaces. This expansion would support multiple clinical programs and trials to accommodate many more individuals who are looking for hope and would also support the study, research, and training of the next generation of exercise science innovators.

The long-term objective is not only to expand the use of underwater treadmill therapy to a variety of populations with impaired mobility (e.g., cerebral palsy, spinal cord injuries, Parkinson’s disease, stroke, traumatic brain injury, muscular dystrophy, obesity, and aging), but also to develop practical ways of extending this water-based therapy into clinical public settings such as community fitness centers and outpatient clinics.

Utilizing limited space and equipment, remarkable strides have been made by a small team of faculty and their research assistants at MTSU to improve walking ability, health conditions, and quality of life for study participants. The success of these efforts generates hope for millions of people worldwide paralyzed by spinal cord injury, especially if program expansion can be achieved.

Financial support provided to the MTSU Aquatic Therapy and Rehabilitation Center will fund cutting-edge research to improve the health and daily physical function of persons with disabling conditions living throughout the world.
Sandra Poirier, a Nutrition and Food Science professor, brings a world of experience to her position

The lesson of Sandra Poirier’s life, if MTSU students dare to listen, can be summed up in a few words. Participate. Always learn. And say “yes.”

“There are so many opportunities in this world,” Poirier said. “About 90 percent of success is participating.”

The oldest of three, Poirier enjoyed cooking the family dinner at the ripe old age of 8 at her childhood home in Florida. At 18, her father’s Veterans Affairs job moved them to the Philippines, where she attended her first year of college as one of eight Americans at a 26,000-student university.

“I learned a lot and met some fascinating people,” she said. That experience whet her appetite to meet new people and learn about cultures. Now, it’s hard to think of a country or city that Poirier, a Nutrition and Food Science professor, hasn’t experienced.

In high demand as a speaker on global issues affecting nutrition and education, she has lectured in Malaysia, India, Poland, Austria, Germany, Puerto Rico, Switzerland, and more. Lack of time is the only reason she might turn an invitation down. And she often takes MTSU students to regional and national conferences to help them network, a skill she admits that her extroverted-self loves. Their success is imperative to her.

“I encourage my students to participate and get involved,” Poirier said. “If not, they will shortchange themselves.”

Currently, she is working on two important collaborative research projects, one of which she will present at the United Nations in 2018. Also, her name is on a submitted grant for MTSU to develop a master’s in Nutrition.

Poirier has always embraced the work. After earning her bachelor’s degree in Family and Consumer Sciences from Florida State University, she taught science at a predominantly African-American school in Florida in 1969, an experience that she said opened her eyes to society’s needs.

“I was able to see perceptions about life and saw that many of these students needed more opportunity,” she said.

She and her husband moved to Arizona, where they had two children, and where she taught Mexican-American children in a Head Start program and started on her master’s degree. The couple would later move to Edmonton, Alberta, living north of the border 11 years, where she developed curricula and taught youth for Canada’s Department of Agriculture and continued working on her master’s.

“We had 3 feet of snow on the first of June,” she said, recalling picnics at 30 below zero.

Poirier returned to south Florida to live with her mom after her father died and while going through a divorce. As a program leader at the University of Florida extension service, she often spoke four times a day on a myriad of nutrition and consumer topics, working with pregnant teens, low-income women, runaways, and other target groups.

Those were 10-hour workdays, while raising two children, working on her Doctor of Education at night, taking courses on the weekend.

“It took me 12 years to get my doctorate,” Poirier said.

A networking opportunity at a conference led to teaching at a university in the United Arab Emirates for the next three years.

“Every minute of the day I was learning,” she said of that experience. “We may wear different dress, have different religions, and eat different foods; but basically everyone wants the same thing out of life—a quality of life, to raise children to be good citizens, to have financial resources, and to put food on the table.”

Poirier left the Middle East for MTSU in 2005. “The diversity of the University was something that attracted her.”

“Ultimately my life experiences affect how I treat students,” she said. “I always give them a second chance, always give them the benefit of the doubt. I’ve been there. I know how difficult it is.”

Her own children have learned well to embrace adventure. Her son, based in Florida, is CFO and CEO of a startup. Her daughter, who lives in California, is creating a superfood product.

Her second husband died in 2009, and Poirier married again in 2014.

“Both of us really enjoy meeting people around the world,” she said.

In addition to Rome, Iceland is also on the 2018 travel agenda.
Kristin M. Wells is the new development director in the College of Behavioral and Health Sciences

Kristin Wells joined CBHS last July following more than 15 years of experience in nonprofit fundraising, with much of that time spent in higher education. Wells, who has a B.A. focused in English and Theatre from the University of Kentucky, will raise major gifts for the college, as well as cultivate and steward past, present, and future donors to MTSU. She has worked in the television industry for PBS and ABC and has been a long-time board member and volunteer for the Genesis House shelter for victims of sexual and domestic violence, Cookeville-Putnam County Chamber, Upper Cumberland Family Justice Center, and many other organizations located in Cookeville. MTSU editor Drew Ruble recently sat down with Wells to discuss the future of CBHS.

Wells: I have always considered myself a facilitator. We have needs on campus both for our students and for our departments. We also have wonderfully dedicated alumni and supporters out there who want to help. My job is to put these two together. If I can help people leave a legacy at this University or give students a scholarship like the one they received when they were here, then I feel like I’m making a difference, too.

Ruble: I often hear people say that giving back to their alma mater is something only really wealthy people do with big donations. Is that your opinion?

Wells: Every gift can make an impact, large or small. We have over 130,000 alumni at this University. Every single one can make an impact.

Ruble: Maybe people do with big donations. Is that your opinion?

Wells: Yes, I think it’s great to have those big donations, but we can do more than that. We have major gifts like endowed scholarships or endowed department funds start at $25,000, and those funds can be established over time and will be here in perpetuity. Those endowments can make a difference in the lives of students long after we are all gone. It will continue to support the things you love at this University. Whether you choose to make a gift today or plan for some time in the future, MTSU CBHS welcomes many types of assets. There are easy ways to make gifts of cash, publicly traded securities, non-publicly traded assets, real estate, retirement plans, life insurance policies, and other possibilities. We want to help you support this college.

Ruble: Thanks, Kristen. Good luck.

[Wells can be reached at 615-898-2417 or kristin.wells@mtsu.edu.]
Did you know you can leave a legacy at MTSU and pre-designate the areas or programs you’d like it to benefit? Consult an attorney, but the language often can be as simple as: “I hereby give, devise, and bequeath to Middle Tennessee State University the sum of $____” or “the property described as . . . .” or “% of my estate.”

Contact Development Director Kristin Wells for more information (Kristin.Wells@mtsu.edu or 615 898-2417).
Nursing Adds Accreditation For Fully In-House Master’s Program

From Staff Reports

Nurses are the health care professionals most people rely on today, whether it’s the nurse practitioner who treats their everyday ills at a walk-in clinic, or the emergency room or critical care nurse who soothes fears while helping save lives. Students who care—about people, about technology, about science, about their colleagues and the community—can join the MTSU School of Nursing’s competitive and robust academic program to develop their commitment to the art and science of nursing.

MTSU’s School of Nursing is the No. 1 Nursing program in Tennessee and offers the Master of Science in Nursing (M.S.N.) degree with a concentration of Family Nurse Practitioner. The Master of Science in Nursing degree at MTSU helps address a critical shortage of Family Nurse Practitioners with high-quality, affordable, and time-efficient studies delivered mostly online. Family Nurse Practitioners deliver comprehensive primary health care services to all ages and help provide health care to underserved populations.

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