



Kentucky One Health Awareness Conference

Biographies

“Overcoming Barriers to Healthcare”

March 5, 2025

Michael Blackwell, DVM, MPH

Assistant Surgeon General, USPHS
(Ret.) Director, Program for Pet Health
Equity University of Tennessee
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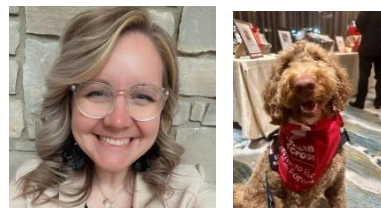
“A One Health Approach for Families, Communities, and Systems”

Dr. Blackwell serves as Director, Program for Pet Health Equity, University of Tennessee. He is the founder and President of AlignCare Health Inc, a One Health interprofessional system that helps underserved families access veterinary care. Previously, Dr. Blackwell served as: Dean, College of Veterinary Medicine, University of Tennessee, Chief of Staff, Office of the Surgeon General of the United States, Deputy Director, Center for Veterinary Medicine, Food and Drug Administration, and Chief Veterinary Officer, U.S. Public Health Service (USPHS).

During 23 years on active duty with the USPHS, he achieved the rank of Assistant Surgeon General and Rear Admiral. Dr. Blackwell's most notable awards include the USPHS Distinguished Service Medal, Meritorious Service Medal, and two Surgeon General's Exemplary Service Medals. He is the 2020 recipient of the Avanzino Leadership Award and the 2021 recipient of the Senator John Melcher, DVM Leadership in Public Policy Award.

Catherine "Katie" Case

Emergency Management Specialist; handler for pet therapy dog
Nala
Owensboro Health Regional Hospital
katie.case@owensborohealth.org



“Therapy Dogs and Mental Health”

Katie Case discovered her passion for emergency management in 2015 and has not stopped chasing her dream since. She is involved in many roles of emergency management both professionally and in the community being the Emergency Management Specialist for Owensboro Health Regional Hospital and an active member of Daviess County Search and Rescue. Katie is an advisor for the Disaster Science Operations Center for Western Kentucky University as well and has worked operations for multiple unique events such as the 2022 USA Special Olympics and the Chicago Marathon. She also volunteers at Crossroads to Hope Homeless Shelter in Owensboro. Katie is married to a barber and has two children. She owns two fur babies, a lab and an Irish doodle, which is trained for Pet Therapy.

Katie and Nala spread as much joy as possible to patients, visitors and team members at the hospital. Additionally, Nala attends community events, when permissible, with Katie to help improve the mental health of the community.

Kenny Garrett

Director, Henderson Emergency Management Agency
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“Military Medical and Veterinary Work in West Kentucky”

Kenny Garrett is an accomplished emergency management director, and technology expert with over three decades of experience in various fields, including computer services, emergency communications, and public service. Currently, Garrett serves as the Director of the Henderson Emergency Management Agency, a role he has held since July 2018. His leadership and expertise in managing crisis situations and coordinating resources have been critical in maintaining community safety in the region.

From 2009 to 2014, Garrett was the Section Emergency Coordinator (SEC) for the Kentucky Amateur Radio Emergency Service (ARES), where he managed the statewide network of volunteer radio operators. Under his leadership, ARES provided essential communication support to local, state, and federal agencies during emergencies, ensuring the continuity of services when traditional communication systems were down. Garrett’s career began in the U.S. Navy, where he served as a Radioman from 1982 to 1998, gaining valuable technical and leadership experience.

An addition to his extensive practical experience, Garrett has continuously pursued further education in information technologies, keeping abreast of the latest developments in the field. With his vast expertise in both technology and emergency services, Garrett has made significant contributions to his community, blending his passion for technology with his commitment to public safety.

The Green River Area Wellness Innovative Readiness Training (IRT) Team will be presenting for this timeslot. This remarkable initiative is a joint-service training mission led by the Air National Guard, in collaboration with the Air Force, Army Reserve, Army National Guard, Remote Area Medical (RAM), and local community partners.

Green River Area Wellness provides medical troops and support personnel with hands-on readiness training, helping them prepare for future deployments while also delivering direct and lasting benefits to our community. Their efforts were focused on the people and pets of Henderson County, Kentucky, as well as the five surrounding counties—Webster, McLean, Daviess, and Posey (Indiana).

Jon Geller, DVM, DABVP emeritus, MPH

Founder/Leader, The Street Dog Coalition
Project Co-Leader, Worldwide Vets
Instructor, Colorado School of Public Health
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“One Health Mobile Outreach”

Dr. Geller is an emergency and shelter medicine veterinarian with an Executive MPH in Public Health Practice, that owns and manages several hospitals in Colorado. He founded The Street Dog Coalition in 2015, which is a nonprofit that provides medical care to the pets of those experiencing homelessness in 50 US cities and to refugees and residents in Ukraine. Additionally, he is an instructor at the Colorado School of Public Health and has authored several publications about veterinary street medicine, drug

abuse in the veterinary field and other topics. Dr. Geller obtained his Board Certification in Canine and Feline Practice in 2010 and has received various awards including becoming a Distinguished Fellow of the National Academy of Practice in 2023.

Donna Glandon Grigsby, MD, FAAP

Professor of Pediatrics, University of Kentucky College of Medicine
Medical Director, Pediatric Mobile Clinic
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“Breaking Barriers: The Journey and Impact of the Pediatric Mobile Clinic at UK Healthcare”

Dr. Grigsby has spent her 35-year career in General Pediatrics at the University of Kentucky, after arriving to complete her pediatric residency in 1986. She has been involved in numerous clinical and educational roles, most recently as the division chief in the division of Academic General Pediatrics. Throughout her career, she has been committed to providing care to underserved populations, which included participation in regional outreach clinics early in her career. She has been the medical director of the Pediatric Mobile clinic since 2024. In addition to her clinical work, she has been the medical director of Reach Out and Read Kentucky, an early childhood literacy program, since 2007, which has helped to increase access to books and early literacy counseling in primary care offices across the state, many of which are in underserved areas where literacy levels are low. She has served on numerous boards and committees of organizations serving children and families in Lexington, throughout Kentucky and nationally, as well. Her role as a clinician and leader in the mobile clinic has allowed her to continue to focus on providing care to underserved patients and families.

Angela Hopson, JD

SOAR Initiative
soarinitiative@gmail.com

“Pets: Barriers to Human Health, or Tool for Improved Patient Access & Engagement?”

Angela Hopson is the founder and Executive Director of SOAR, an Indianapolis headquartered non-profit that serves humans experiencing medical and mental health crisis, substance abuse disorder, homelessness, experienced violence, and other instability. SOAR utilizes the bond humans have with their pets, and partnerships with hospitals, treatment facilities, human service agencies and interventions, law enforcement, shelters, and animal welfare agencies to help humans and animals access the health services they need with the goal of improving both human and animal health and reducing the trauma they experience through crisis.



Nathan L. Vanderford, PhD, MBA

Associate Professor of Toxicology and Cancer Biology
University of Kentucky (UK) within College of Medicine
nathan.vanderford@uky.edu

“Taking ACTION to Reduce Cancer Disparities in Appalachian Kentucky”



Dr. Nathan L. Vanderford is an Associate Professor of Toxicology and Cancer Biology at the University of Kentucky (UK) within College of Medicine. He holds several administrative positions including being the Director of the National Institutes of Health (NIH) funded Youth Enjoy Science R25 program titled the Appalachian Career Training in Oncology Program, Director of Administration for the NIH funded Center for Cancer and Metabolism, and Assistant Director for Pathway Programs and Student Success for the Markey Cancer Center, an NIH funded Comprehensive Cancer Center. In these positions, he works to facilitate cancer research and education initiatives across the university. Dr. Vanderford has expertise and interests in cancer disparities research, cancer education, and community outreach and engagement. Dr. Vanderford earned his BS in Agricultural Biotechnology and his PhD in Biochemistry from the University of Kentucky, completed postdoctoral training at Vanderbilt University, and earned an MBA from Midway University.