

# Science & Society

Yale SCHOOL OF PUBLIC HEALTH | MAY 2026



THE FUTURE  
OF PUBLIC HEALTH  
IS **IN COMMUNITY**

## DEAN'S MESSAGE



MARA LAVITT

### “Celebrating what it means to be a community.”

we are equally proud to introduce innumerable other undergraduates to the field through our labs and courses – including both a YC '26 Rhodes Scholar and Marshall Scholar! This issue also celebrates our partnership with our fellow professional schools at Yale. Check out the photo essay, that shows in living color how we've worked with the School of Architecture to build on both the university's robust traditions and a fabulous vision for the future in designing our new YSPH mace.

Here at YSPH, we know that community can be a buzzword – but to us, the word means something much deeper than that. It means listening before doing, staying present even when the work is difficult, insisting on rigor as well as humanism, and, most of all, recognizing that the people most affected by a public health challenge are also its most essential partners.

So, to our students, families, alumni, and friends: thank you for being a steadfast part of our community, and for working together to prove the real meaning of the word. To our new graduates: welcome to the alumni community!

I look forward to the work, together, that is yet to come.

**Megan L. Ranney, MD, MPH**  
 Dean, Yale School of Public Health  
 C.-E. A. Winslow Professor of Public Health  
 Professor of Emergency Medicine

I have two favorite events each academic year: our welcome reception for new students, and the pomp & circumstance of Commencement. I love both of them because they are a chance to celebrate what it means to be a community.

And as I prepare to walk our Class of '26 across the stage at Woolsey Hall, I can't help but think about how the members of this class are extraordinary in many ways – in no small part because of the ways in which they've engaged with our strategic priority of “fostering community.”

What distinguishes the public health leaders we are graduating this year is not only their academic rigor and disciplinary expertise – it is their instinct to lean in. This year's class has proven the thesis that trust is built through presence, that solutions are stronger when they are co-created, and that relationships *are* the work. They've shown that strength and resilience come from partnership, not isolation. They've challenged themselves to step up, to teach each other, and to work with unlikely bedfellows. In a moment when trust in public health and higher education is being tested, this orientation is not just admirable. It is essential.

You'll see in this magazine many practical examples of what that type of community-centered work means for public health. Our story on the work YSPH has done in New Haven's Dwight neighborhood is about transformation at the systems level, ultimately making it more possible for kids to play – a core part of a healthy community! Another story highlights the brilliant “VERENA” data initiative, which intentionally builds a community of academic and citizen scientists committed to tracking future viruses. A YSPH-MAHA Ohio collaboration brings together scientific expertise with community leadership in a partnership that has resonated with the public. An essay by our director of academic affairs explores how we are ensuring that our YSPH classrooms, themselves, can serve as a form of community. Peppy Buadoo, MPH '26, shares how she's come to see that the language we use can be a form of care. And a story about recent donors highlights how our community perpetuates – enabling us to offer scholarships and research support to future generations.

You'll also see how we are fostering community across Yale. We've long had a strong relationship with Yale College, through our five-year BA-BS/MPH program;



YSPH welcomes high school students to Public Health Day on April 11, 2026. Students attend a workshop on Designing Health Technology hosted by the Consumer Health Informatics Lab (CHIL) at Yale.

DANIEL PASSAPERA

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[SPH.YALE.EDU/MAY2026MAGAZINE](http://SPH.YALE.EDU/MAY2026MAGAZINE)

## SCHOOL NEWS

By Jane E. Dee

After Wenyi (Jennie) Jiang, MPH '27, finished speaking at Yale School of Public Health's first Science & Storytelling event, a young girl made her way through the crowd with a question. Jiang's words about New Haven's unhoused residents had stayed with her, and she wanted to know more about how to bear witness to their struggles.

Jiang admired the girl's courage in seeking answers and felt she had reached "my younger self." It was a reminder that the most rigorous science sometimes travels furthest through a single, honest story.

The event, held at East Rock Brewing Company, drew a standing-room-only mix of residents and YSPH community members, all gathered to share personal stories about what public health means to them. In the relaxed, informal setting, the usual boundaries dissolved and everyone blended together as caring community members, proving the power of science storytelling.

# THE FUTURE OF PUBLIC HEALTH IS IN COMMUNITY



DANIEL PASSAPERA

## SCHOOL NEWS

### Students champion community

Students in EHS 544, “Climate Equity and Health Policy Methods,” aren’t just producing research—they’re co-developing actual legislation with community partners—legislation that has been raised by the Connecticut General Assembly’s Public Health Committee.

“This is a crucial model that allows communities impacted by pollution, disease, poverty, and violence to take the leadership role in designing solutions to challenges they have diagnosed, with consistent support from EHS 544 students since 2023,” said Suzi Ruhl, JD, MPH, senior research scientist in Yale’s Child Study Center. Ruhl teaches EHS 544 and is a Yale Center on Climate Change and Health-affiliated faculty member.

The students’ community involvement advances the YSPH strategic plan in meaningful ways. It is a textbook example of the strategic priority to “create pathways for translating outstanding science into local and global health impact,” as well as to “foster interconnected, inclusive, and interdisciplinary public health communities, within and beyond Yale.”

For decades, the East End neighborhood of Bridgeport, Connecticut, has faced the environmental, health, and economic ordeal of the Mount Trashmore waste dump. The community members, supported by their Yale partners, and many levels of government, are securing remediation and transformation of the property into the Mount Growmore Hydroponic Farm, Wellness Campus, and Learning Center.

In addition to vigorous community support, the success of Mount Growmore is driven by the community’s application of Triple Bottom Line Justice (TBLJ), a

framework spearheaded by Yale’s Elevate Policy Lab in the Child Study Center. TBLJ seeks to realize health, environmental, and economic justice by addressing adverse social determinants and root causes of health disparities.

Tania de Jesus Espinosa, PhD ’28, Yale School of Nursing, and an EHS 544 student testified for the bill. “As a nurse, I have seen how health is linked to the environment. However, there are challenges that are often addressed as silos,” she said. “This project changes that by operationalizing the Triple Bottom Line Justice framework, which focuses on the integration of rule of law, evidence-based interventions, and most of all, community engagement.”

Emily Goines, RN, MPH ’26, also testified. “I learned that after three decades of tirelessly advocating for their community, this once heavily contaminated three-story abandoned waste dump is finally being transformed into a dynamic health and wellness campus that provides food security through a hydroponic farm, mental health services, a medical clinic, a learning center, and a safe place for children and families in the community.”

Yanran Zhou, MPH ’27, told the committee, “I cannot stress enough how interconnected the environment and our health are.” While Connecticut has seen a decrease in ground-level ozone and fine-particle pollution, “both still cause nearly 200 annual premature deaths in Connecticut because they can travel from other states,” she said.

The Mount Growmore project demonstrates how YSPH science is being translated into tangible change for a community facing harm. The Public Health Committee has issued a Joint Favorable Report recommending that its Raised Bill HB 5241, An Act Establishing a Triple Bottom Line Justice Demonstration Pilot Program, be taken up by the full General Assembly.



From left: Suzi Ruhl, Kendall Washington, Sylvia Hagan, Connecticut State Representative Andre Baker Jr., Kei Kohmoto, Tania de Jesus Espinosa, Ella Foster, Jenna Fauchoux

MICHAEL DUENAS

### A model collaboration

Three years after a train derailed in East Palestine, Ohio in 2023, releasing vinyl chloride and other hazardous chemicals into the air and water, many residents still have questions about their health and water quality. In response, a new and unusual collaboration has emerged between the Yale School of Public Health and MAHA Ohio, a grassroots health advocacy network, bringing together scientific expertise and community leadership.

The partnership took shape when YSPH Dean Megan L. Ranney connected Dr. Nicole Deziel, PhD, MHS, associate professor of epidemiology, with Elizabeth Frost of MAHA Ohio. Frost invited Deziel, who was working on a research proposal to evaluate the impacts of the derailment, to join her in canvassing residents in East Palestine.

The exchange was immediate and mutual. After talking with residents, Deziel and colleagues reshaped their approach to the research proposal, elevating issues of data access and water quality. Frost, in turn, wrote a letter of support for Yale’s grant application.



NICOLE DEZIEL

“We can do the best studies and identify all these environmental problems, but if it doesn’t lead to any change, it doesn’t matter.”

—Nicole Deziel, PhD, MHS

The MAHA-YSPH collaboration has resonated with the public, as evidenced by the guest essay, “What Happened When a MAHA Activist and a Yale Scientist Worked Together,” published in *The New York Times* in March.

Yale along with local partner Ohio Valley Allies secured \$300,000 in funding for Year 1 to support its contributions to a broader \$10 million National Institutes of Health-funded research program focused on the derailment. Other institutions include the University of Kentucky, which is leading a health study, and the University of Pittsburgh.

Deziel, alongside Yale School of the Environment colleagues Dr. Michelle Bell, PhD, Mary E. Pinchot Professor of Environmental Health, and Dr. James Saiers, PhD, Clifton R. Musser Professor of Hydrology, is surveying residents about water quality concerns and carrying out state-of-the-science modeling of groundwater flow to track how contaminants may have dispersed, and to identify which communities may need greater attention and testing.

The collaboration bridges gaps in trust of environmental data in service of a shared goal: real benefit to real communities. As Deziel said in *The New York Times*, “We can do the best studies and identify all these environmental problems, but if it doesn’t lead to any change, it doesn’t matter.”

East Palestine is the immediate focus, but the collaboration it sparked reflects exactly what YSPH strives to build: a link between science and society, making public health foundational to communities everywhere.

#### Working together

Nicole Deziel and Elizabeth Frost in East Palestine, Ohio



## ADVANCES

### Getting better with age

Older individuals can and do improve over time, and their mindset toward aging plays a major role in their improvement.

Analyzing more than a decade of data from a large, nationally representative study of older Americans, lead author Dr. Becca Levy, PhD, professor of social and behavioral sciences, found that nearly half of adults aged 65 and older showed measurable improvement in cognitive function, physical function, or both, over time.

The improvements were not limited to a small group of exceptional individuals and, notably, were linked to a powerful but often overlooked factor: how people think about aging. “Many people equate aging with an inevitable and continuous loss of physical and cognitive abilities,” said Levy, an international expert on psychosocial determinants of aging health. “What we found is that improvement in later life is not rare, it’s common, and it should be included in our understanding of the aging process.”

*The findings are published in the journal Geriatrics.*



READ THE FULL STORIES AT  
[SPH.YALE.EDU/MAY2026MAGAZINE](https://sph.yale.edu/may2026magazine)

### Dean Ranney models how to talk about trust

Listening, community engagement, and communication are among the most crucial skills for professionals and students in public health today, Dean Megan L. Ranney, MD, MPH, said during a recent visit to the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health.

During the conversation with Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health Dean Andrea Baccarelli, Ranney referenced the YSPH strategic priority to “enhance trust in the science and practice of public health,” while modeling what it means to communicate science with clarity and credibility.

Baccarelli acknowledged an eroding trust in science and public health, asking Ranney how she interacts with “people who may hold different views about our work.”

Ranney said she welcomes the chance to talk with people who may not value public health. She compared it to defending a paper at a conference. When “someone asks us difficult questions, it sharpens our science and our argument.” By framing pushback from skeptics the same way scientists frame peer reviews, she offered students and faculty a constructive way to engage with public distrust.

“I feel the same way about having discussions with people who have different worldviews, different value systems,” Ranney said. “Part of my job as dean is to help shift people’s understanding of what public health is, what we do, and why it matters to the health of communities.”



**Talking about trust**  
 Dean Megan L. Ranney joins Dean of Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health Andrea Baccarelli in conversation.



**Democratizing data**  
 PopHIVE’s co-directors, Dr. Anne Zink and Dr. Dan Weinberger, are working with partners to democratize data.

### Delivering actionable data to communities

The Yale School of Public Health’s Population Health Information and Visualization Exchange (PopHIVE) has partnered with Metopio, a national community health data automation platform, to make health data easier to use where it matters most: in decisions that affect patients, families, and local communities.

This partnership not only connects to the YSPH strategic priority to “shape the future of public health data science & artificial intelligence,” it moves the priority forward. The collaboration isn’t just about producing sophisticated data science — it’s about shaping *how* it’s structured and used. The PopHIVE-Metopio partnership takes population health data out of academic and technical silos and puts it into the hands of local health departments, hospitals, and community organizations. This addresses equity issues: high-quality national data becomes actionable at the community level.

PopHIVE is a public-good platform that provides timely, trustworthy, de-identified population health data. It brings together information from clinical care, public health systems, and other community sources to help people understand what’s happening in their communities and respond faster to health concerns.

By integrating PopHIVE dashboards into a widely used national platform, YSPH isn’t just contributing data — it’s influencing the infrastructure through which community health decisions get made across the country. This influence on how data science tools are built and deployed is a meaningful example of how YSPH leads in this space.

# ADVANCES

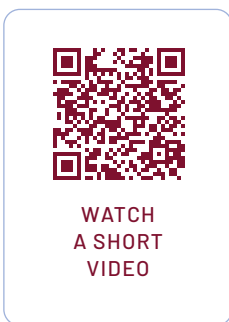
## Health Care Affordability Lab launches

The Health Care Affordability Lab at Yale University addresses the crisis in U.S. health care costs.

“The Health Care Affordability Lab is a bridge between academic scholars and policymakers seeking to slow spending growth without harming quality,” said the lab’s director Dr. Zack Cooper, PhD, an associate professor at Yale School of Public Health.

“To make this happen, we need to do two things at once: Generate world-class research rooted in academic rigor and transparent methods, and translate and deliver

that research to policymakers through communication, engagement, and the development of practical tools that can aid informed decision-making,” Cooper said.

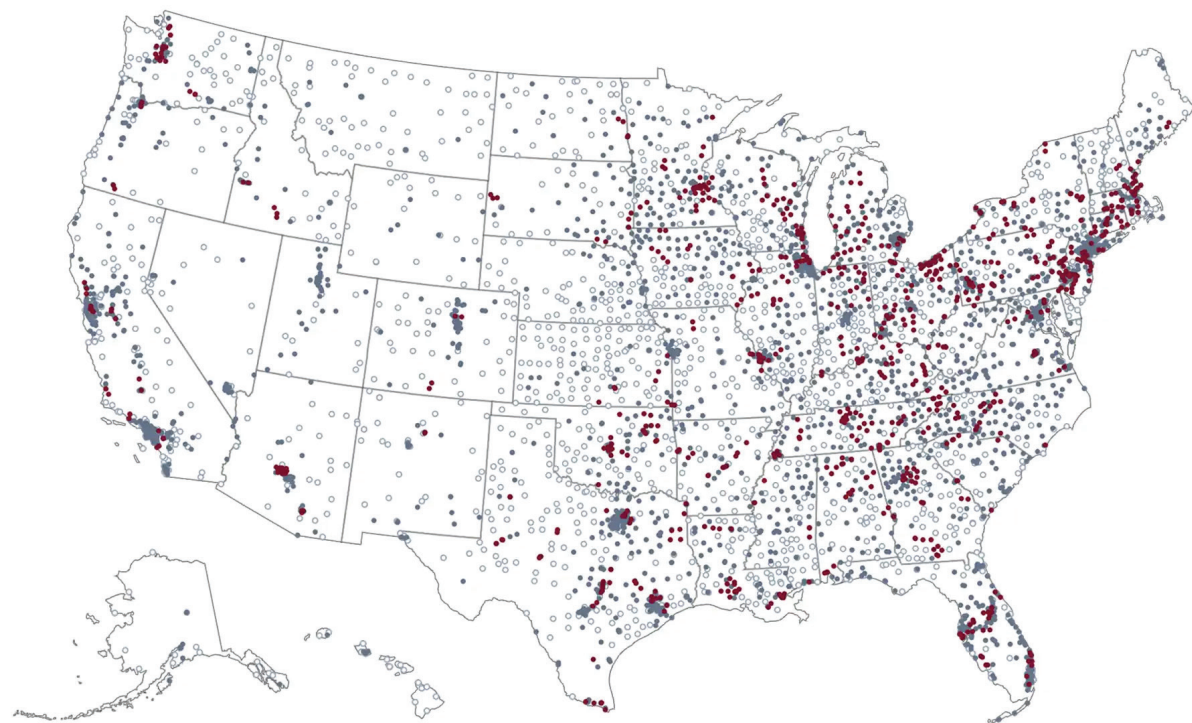


To mark its launch on March 9, 2026, the lab released a hospital markets data visualization tool to help regulators track hospital consolidation in all 50 states over time, as well as a “Just The Facts” memo on Medicare Advantage to provide essential information for policymakers weighing changes to the program.

The new Health Care Affordability Lab is based within Yale’s Tobin Center for Economic Policy in partnership with YSPH.

*Scan code to explore how hospital consolidation has reshaped your community.*

### HOSPITALS INVOLVED IN MERGERS | 2000-2025



- Not Transacted  
Hospitals not involved in a transaction.
- Transacted  
Hospitals involved in a transaction at least once.
- Red Zone  
Hospitals involved in a transaction and met red zone criteria in a local market at least once.

## Forecasting the next pandemic

In the summer of 2019, before most of the world had heard the word “coronavirus,” two postdoctoral researchers at Georgetown University were thinking about the next pandemic.

“We were building models of cross-species transmission using math and machine learning. What people would now call AI,” recalled Dr. Colin Carlson, PhD, assistant professor of epidemiology (microbial diseases) at YSPH.

Then a novel coronavirus emerged in Wuhan, China.



**Forecasting the next pandemic**  
Kristin Dyer, a graduate student at the University of Oklahoma, examines a Mexican free-tailed bat’s wings before collecting samples and attaching a tracking device.

Out of that moment grew the Viral Emergence Research Initiative (Verena) to predict viral threats. Headquartered at YSPH, it is one of the largest pandemic prevention research and training programs in the United States.

What began as a collaboration among postdocs has evolved into an eight-institution network spanning Yale, the University of Oklahoma, Washington State University, Colorado State University, Tulane University, and others. Verena relocated from Georgetown to Yale in 2024, an acknowledgement of both Carlson’s research leadership and Yale’s growing prominence in pandemic science.

## A simple TB test

A saliva-based test could improve tuberculosis (TB) detection worldwide, reducing delays in diagnosis that allow the disease to spread and make treatment more difficult.

Improving TB detection is one of the most important steps toward controlling the disease. “If we can diagnose TB with something as simple as a saliva sample, we could dramatically expand access to testing and reach people who might otherwise go undiagnosed,” said Dr. J. Lucian (Luke) Davis, MD, associate professor of epidemiology (microbial diseases) at YSPH and of medicine at Yale School of Medicine.

Tuberculosis testing has long relied on sputum, or phlegm, the mucus coughed up from lower airways, which can be difficult for people to produce, Davis said.

Tuberculosis remains one of the world’s leading infectious disease killers. In 2023, an estimated 10.8 million people developed

TB, and roughly one quarter of cases went undetected. Delays in diagnosis allow the disease to spread. The new results suggest that saliva testing could help close that diagnostic gap.

Among 190 participants included in the analysis – 95 patients with confirmed TB and 95 without – the saliva test demonstrated 90.5% sensitivity and 95.8% specificity, meaning it correctly detected TB in most infected individuals while

accurately ruling it out in others.

Oral swabs, by comparison, detected about 72% of TB cases, making them significantly less sensitive than saliva samples.

*In addition to Davis, co-authors of the study include Dr. Lauretta Grau, PhD, YSPH; Dr. Beatriz Ferro, PhD, Universidad Icesi. And from CIDEIM research institute: Dr. Jairo Palomares, PhD; Dr. Alejandro Vargas, PhD; and Dr. Alvaro Martinez, MD.*



**Partnering for a simpler TB test**  
Researchers from Yale and Colombia’s Universidad Icesi and its Centro Internacional de Entrenamiento e Investigaciones Medicas (CIDEIM) are working together to improve TB detection.

# Public health's biggest names visit New Haven:

## Mic drop moments from our Leaders in Public Health speaker series

By Kayla Steinberg

**"I'm here to motivate more of you to do what I do and do it better."**

**Dr. Mike Varshavski, DO**  
Board-certified family medicine physician and a content creator with over 30 million followers

FEBRUARY 10, 2026

**"Around the world, most people start their health journey online."**

**Dr. Garth Graham, MD, MPH '01**  
Director and Global Head of Healthcare and Public Health at Google Health/YouTube

DECEMBER 4, 2025

**"If there's one issue that shouldn't be partisan in our country... it is health."**

**Mr. Chris Klomp, MBA**  
Director of Medicare and Deputy Administrator of Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services; Chief Counselor of the Department of Health & Human Services

APRIL 11, 2026

**"A rising tide lifts all boats — if you have a boat."**

**Dr. Mary-Ann Etiebet, MD '03, MBA '03, BA '96**  
President and CEO of Vital Strategies

JANUARY 22, 2026

**We need "good data and better stories."**

**Dr. Moupali Das, MD, MPH**  
Vice President for Clinical Development, HIV Prevention, and Virology Pediatrics and Head of HIV Prevention at Gilead Sciences

NOVEMBER 6, 2025

**"We have to hold on to hope and the belief that we can make a difference."**

**Dr. Peggy Hamburg, MD**  
Former U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) Commissioner

OCTOBER 1, 2025

**"Well, I'm a scientist, and I'm now in diplomacy. I think I'll promote science diplomacy."**

**Dr. Roman Macaya, PhD, MBA**  
Former President of Costa Rica's Public Health Care System and Costa Rica's Former Ambassador to the U.S.

APRIL 7, 2025

**"People need to know that you care before they care what you know."**

**Dr. Jerome Adams, MD, MPH**  
20th Surgeon General of the United States

JANUARY 19, 2025

**The policy process is "about people, at the end of the day. It's about our families, about our friends."**

**Alexander Urry, MPH '19**  
Senior Policy Advisor to U.S. House of Representatives Minority Leader Hakeem Jeffries

SEPTEMBER 11, 2025

**"It was a feeling like our foreign policy was opening a new dimension."**

**Dr. J. Stephen Morrison, PhD, BA '77**  
Senior Vice President at the Center for Strategic & International Studies

FEBRUARY 5, 2025



PHOTOS BY: EPHEMIA NICOLAKIS, KAYLA STEINBERG, EMMA BEBARTA, YASMIN HUNG

# Yale researchers address heat inequities in New Haven

By Nick Faggio

## COOLING DWIGHT



**Cooling Dwight**  
Neighborhood children playing, and keeping cool, at Kensington Playground.

**The Dwight Urban Heat Study is more than a research project—it's YSPH's strategic vision of linking science and society, made real.**

Children wedging T-shirts into a splash pad drain to stay cool, a husband with multiple sclerosis hospitalized by neighborhood heat, families seeking refuge in air-conditioned grocery stores and buses are the lived consequences of decades of disinvestment in a community's built environment.

When Yale School of Public Health (YSPH) researchers partner with New Haven's Dwight neighborhood residents to document these realities and translate them into policy recommendations, they are intervening in cycles of harm that have compounded for generations, and developing systems-level solutions for a healthier society.

### ESCAPING EXTREME HEAT

During the hottest summer days in the Dwight neighborhood, the kids at Kensington Playground improvise a way to stay cool—wedging T-shirts along the splash pad drain to hold the water back, forming a makeshift pool.

Kensington Playground is one of the few places in the Dwight community where residents can escape extreme heat. A cluster of trees shades the play area, lowering temperatures by as much as 5 degrees Fahrenheit, enough to offer respite during sweltering afternoons. "By far, it's the coolest place in the neighborhood," said Pat Wallace, a

“Being able to take recommendations directly from community members and share them with policymakers empowers the neighborhood and leads to solutions shaped by those who live here.” —Alix Rachman, MPH '23



Dwight Neighborhood Map

longtime Dwight community advocate. “No matter how hot it is, you feel a sense of relief.”

Outside the playground, temperatures rise quickly. The Dwight neighborhood lies just west of downtown New Haven and is adjacent to Yale University. Much of the community is encompassed by the Dwight Street Historic District, recognized for its 19th- and early 20th-century residential architecture. The community consists largely of modest homes and multi-family buildings with occasional restaurants and small neighborhood convenience stores mixed in.

The blocks surrounding Kensington Playground have high building densities, few green spaces, and no bodies of water. These conditions trap warmth and amplify the heat.

“The infrastructure of the neighborhood is just not built to help people adapt,” said Alix Rachman, MPH '23, climate change program administrator at YSPH. “Extreme heat is a public health equity issue,” Rachman said. “And structural barriers prevent effective adaptation.”

## HEAT ISLAND EFFECT

The Dwight study didn't begin with researchers deciding what the neighborhood needed. It began with listening. Rachman helped lead YSPH's Dwight Urban Heat Study, collecting input from 270 residents and 36 focus group participants to inform future heat-mitigation efforts. Three out of four survey participants identified hot weather as a major concern. Nearly half reported that their homes became extremely hot.

The interdisciplinary study was supported by a Yale Planetary Solutions seed grant and led by the Yale School of Public Health's Center on Climate Change and Health (YCCCCH), in partnership with the Yale Urban Design Workshop (YUDW) at the Yale School of Architecture.

Funding was provided through Yale Planetary Solutions' Climate Impact Innovations Fund, supported by generous donors and now called the Three Cairns Climate Impact Innovation Fund. It serves as a catalyst to encourage Yale faculty and the broader Yale community to focus their research, scholarship, and expertise on climate solutions.

Members of the design workshop brought decades of experience working with Dwight residents, including the Dwight Central Management Team and the Greater Dwight Development Corporation. Together, YCCCCH and YUDW reached out to residents to ensure their experiences and ideas shaped the project.



Supporting the Dwight community  
Alix Rachman, MPH '23

Extreme heat poses significant health risks for community members. Seventy percent of survey participants reported at least one physical symptom on hot days — fatigue, headaches, dizziness, or nausea — while focus group members described emotional strain, including heightened aggression, anxiety, and exhaustion. The City of New Haven's Extreme Heat Protocols activate when temperatures exceed 90 degrees for two to three days or longer, triggering the opening of city cooling centers. “The neighborhood infrastructure compounds health risks,” Rachman said, particularly for older adults, children, people with medical conditions, unhoused individuals, and menopausal women, whose hormonal changes can make it harder to regulate body temperature. Limited shade at bus stops and heat trapped in older buildings amplify these risks.

For Wallace, the danger of extreme heat became apparent when she and her husband moved to Dwight about 40 years ago. Their building lacked air conditioning, and the thick brick walls allowed cool air to slip out and heated air to slip in. “It was incredibly hot,” she said. Her husband has multiple sclerosis and is highly heat sensitive. “The heat in this neighborhood put him in the hospital,” said Wallace, who still lives in the building.

## COMMUNITY-DRIVEN SOLUTIONS

Rising energy costs and limited cooling options add to Dwight residents' struggle to cope with extreme heat. Forty percent of survey participants reported having no air conditioning; among those who did, many said it provided little relief or was too expensive to use. One renter noted that their landlord provided only a box fan.

Nonetheless, the community copes in creative ways. During focus groups, residents said when they are indoors on hot days, they wear lighter clothing, turn off appliances, and eat foods that don't require cooking. When indoor spaces become unbearable, many head outside or to public buildings, such as a local library. Wallace noted, “If you walk around this neighborhood in the summertime, everybody is out on their porches or out and about. Inside is hot, hot, hot.”

Many people said they also seek relief on air-conditioned buses or in grocery stores, though they are sometimes asked to leave if they linger too long.

New Haven has eight cooling centers, but none are located within Dwight. The nearest facilities are a half mile away, exceeding the maximum distance recommended by researchers. Over two-thirds of survey respondents said they would use a cooling center if one were in their neighborhood.



YCCCCH Team  
Rachman at a lawn party with members of the YCCCCH team



ASHLEY JOSEPH / NEW HAVEN INDEPENDENT

**Caring for their park**  
Trees lower temperatures for generations.

YSPH researchers embarked on the Dwight project to help residents document the impact of urban heat. The researchers worked closely with community members in conducting the study and later, in identifying community-informed solutions to the problem, Rachman said.

“Meeting residents where they are, rather than pushing what we think they need, is the most equitable way to guide adaptation strategies,” Rachman said. “Being able to take recommendations directly from community members and share them with policymakers empowers the neighborhood and leads to solutions shaped by those who live here.”

## RECOMMENDATIONS TO REALITY

The interventions residents identified – more trees, shaded bus stops, water play areas, cooling centers, energy bill assistance – are not luxuries. They are the basic infrastructure of a livable neighborhood, protecting residents against heat exposure. Data show that such exposure can cause heat exhaustion, worsen cardiovascular health, and exacerbate chronic diseases.

Trees planted today lower temperatures for decades. Shaded bus stops make public transit more viable,

The interventions residents identified – more trees, shaded bus stops, water play areas, cooling centers, energy bill assistance – are not luxuries. They are the basic infrastructure of a livable neighborhood.

reducing car dependence and emissions. Cooling centers keep vulnerable people out of hospitals. Each intervention, implemented at scale, reduces the burden on health systems while improving quality of life in ways that ripple across generations.

In April, Rachman spoke up for the community in support of Dwight residents. In testimony to New Haven’s Board of Alders Finance Committee, Rachman cited the study’s findings and the evidence showing that heat exposure can negatively impact human health, urging officials to continue funding the city’s Office of Climate and Sustainability.

Turning the study’s recommendations into reality requires coordinated policy and resources, she said. “The biggest factor is funding. Implementing any solution, even at a local level, really requires public investment,” Rachman said.

Equally important is landlord engagement: many landlords have little incentive to improve their properties, and tenants cannot make changes themselves, or access programs intended for homeowners. “Finding that middle ground to require landlords to make changes is essential,” Rachman added.

YSPH is working with Dwight community organizations to distribute their Community Report to residents and policymakers. “We hope this will stimulate action, which must arise from the community, not from researchers,” said Dr. Robert Dubrow, MD, PhD, professor emeritus and senior research scientist, and the founding faculty director of the Yale Center on Climate Change and Health at YSPH. “However, we will be there to provide support in the form of consultation and testimony.”

“We do the research, but we also need to act as translators – making our findings digestible and useful,” Rachman said. “We must speak up when possible – providing testimony during legislative sessions and encouraging residents to engage in policy discussions.”

What YSPH is building in Dwight is not just a cooler neighborhood. It is a model for how academic public health institutions can serve as genuine partners in community resilience, now and as climate change makes extreme heat an increasingly urgent threat to human health everywhere.

For residents like Pat Wallace, other families across Dwight, and the children at Kensington Playground, the opportunity to stay cool during the hottest days will be a welcome relief.

*The study was conducted by Saket Malhotra and Andrei Harwell of the Yale Urban Design Workshop at the Yale School of Architecture; Alixandra Rachman, Carmen Muñiz-Almaguer, and Robert Dubrow of the YSPH Department of Environmental Health Sciences and the Yale Center on Climate Change and Health; and Annie Harper of the Department of Psychiatry at Yale School of Medicine.*





# One Marshall Scholarship

ISABEL RANCU

## TWO YSPH-TRAINED YALE STUDENTS

By Hannah Mark

# One Rhodes Scholar

AUGUST RIOS



**They came to YSPH to do the work, and the world noticed.**

**T**wo senior undergraduate students at Yale, each of whom conducted extensive research in labs at the Yale School of Public Health (YSPH), were recent recipients of prestigious awards for postgraduate study.

August Rios, who studied housing justice, policy, and tenant housing conditions in the Housing and Health Equity Lab, was awarded a Rhodes Scholarship in November. Isabel Rancu, who applied computational methods to understand the transmission and evolution of drug-resistant tuberculosis (TB) in the Ted Cohen Lab, was awarded a Marshall Scholarship in December.

Both Rios and Rancu are from South Carolina and knew each other before attending Yale. “When August won the Rhodes, I was like, ‘Oh my gosh, no way!’” Rancu said. “He told me, ‘OK, you got this,’ and then I won the Marshall.”

**“It has been one of the most rewarding experiences of my time at Yale to be part of the [YSPH] lab.”** —Isabel Rancu

## CROSS-SCHOOL COLLABORATION

Rios and Rancu exemplify the impactful research that results from cross-school collaboration at YSPH, reflecting the strategic priority to build resilient public health communities in our school, at Yale, and beyond, and to create pathways for translating that science into local and global health impact.

Rios is a Yale College senior majoring in urban sociology who has been involved in housing justice work since his first year at Yale. He serves as a commissioner on the New Haven Affordable Housing Commission and co-founded a student organization at Yale to provide free legal information to Connecticut residents in small claims court. Rios also obtained a real estate license and worked with first-time home buyers, all while completing his undergraduate courses.

Given his passion for housing justice, Rios’ adviser connected him with Dr. Danya Keene, PhD, professor of public health (social and behavioral sciences) in the fall of 2024. Rios enrolled in Keene’s Social Justice and Health Equity course and became involved in the Housing and Health Equity Lab the following semester.

Members of Keene’s lab mentor students across YSPH and Yale College. Keene said over a dozen Yale College students have worked with her lab in recent years, either as paid research assistants or as students using data for an undergraduate thesis. In addition, her lab has worked with undergraduate and doctoral students from other universities, and even high school students.

In Keene’s lab, Rios used existing qualitative data from low-income tenants in New Haven to analyze how they experienced and navigated housing conditions. “He found so many interesting things that we decided we should do a whole new project about housing conditions,” Keene said.

Over the summer of 2025, while also working at two different internships, Rios developed a qualitative research protocol for the study and interviewed 15 tenants from an existing cohort study called project ReSIDE. With Keene as his adviser, Rios developed the qualitative interviews into a thesis project.

Keene said Rios’ passion for housing justice and his skills as a researcher have made his thesis exceptional. “He’s just such a wonderful interviewer; he’s just so thoughtful and such a good listener. And so that resulted in a lot of really rich data.”

Rios’ thesis uncovers new insights into how living in poor housing conditions affects tenants beyond physical health. “It’s not just asthma and lead paint; it’s about the psychological burden of living in housing that’s really not up to code, and all the ways that tenants are exerting their agency and navigating these conditions,” Keene explained.

She is excited about the impact his research will have. “I think it’s going to be really important for the field and for advocates in the housing space,” Keene said.

At Oxford, Rios will pursue a two-year Master’s in Philosophy in comparative social policy with a concentration in housing policy.

## A FIRST FOR RANCU AND THE COHEN LAB

When Isabel Rancu learned she had won the Marshall Scholarship, Dr. Ted Cohen, DPH, MD, MPH, was one of her first calls. A Yale senior studying molecular biophysics and biochemistry with a data science certificate, Rancu joined Cohen’s lab as a first-year student.

Because the Cohen Lab’s infectious disease research requires a strong computational and computer science background, it’s rare for undergraduate students to join. In fact, Rancu is the first undergraduate student to ever work in the lab, said Cohen, professor of epidemiology (microbial diseases). He described how Rancu would spend several hours each week in the lab learning skills that were not taught in her undergraduate classes. “She’s incredibly personable, easy to work with, and smart, asks a ton of questions, and is willing to go away and try things and come back,” Cohen said.

Despite being the only undergraduate in a lab populated with doctoral, post-doctoral, and master’s students, Rancu said she felt incredibly supported. Lab members offered strong mentorship, involving her in lab meetings, and

helping her develop research skills. “The group culture has been so good to a young undergrad scientist because it just totally was all about: how can we help each other; how can we support each other?” Rancu said.

During her four years in the lab, Rancu worked on many projects from modeling tuberculosis (TB) transmission to investigating how the TB genome can be sequenced directly from sputum samples. She led a project focused on using genomic data from TB to understand transmission patterns of the disease within communities in Moldova in Eastern Europe. The paper was recently published in a peer-reviewed journal. Rancu’s senior thesis research focused on the bacterial genomics and the bioinformatics behind TB.

As a Marshall Scholar, Rancu will pursue a Master of Research in bioinformatics and theoretical systems biology

at Imperial College and a Master of Science in applied infectious disease epidemiology at University College London. Though she isn’t sure of her exact career path, Rancu knows she wants to work at the intersection of public health-oriented infectious disease research, teaching, and clinical care.

“It’s going to be a huge loss for us when she graduates, but we’re so proud of her,” Cohen said.

Rancu said she hopes that more undergraduates will get involved in research at YSPH. “It has been one of the most rewarding experiences of my time at Yale to be part of the lab,” Rancu said.

And to principal investigators like Cohen who are considering taking on an undergraduate student, Rancu joked, “Maybe they’ll just end up as Marshall Scholars!”



**Research at YSPH**  
Yale College seniors Isabel Rancu and August Rios (in foreground) with YSPH’s Danya Keene and Ted Cohen on the YSPH campus.

NYLE JONES

## A public health leader takes her place in Yale history

By Yasmin Hung

# A CENTURY LATER

## 葛成慧

Yale School of Public Health's official records memorialize Dr. Chenghui Ge (葛成慧 also known as Zen Way Koh) as having earned an MPH in 1924 and DrPH in 1926, noting that "he is the first known public health student from China." However, that record was incorrect. Dr. Ge was not the first male student to receive that distinction from the then-Department of Public Health at Yale School of Medicine (YSM).

**She was the first Chinese woman.**

This discovery, uncovered in 2025 by two Yale students — Qi Yan, a PhD student in the Department of Cellular & Molecular Physiology at YSM, and former visiting medical student Dr. Sunny (Xuezhu) Wang, MD — does more than fix a clerical error. It sheds light on how gender inequities have shaped not only access to education, but how history remembers those who worked in and contributed to the fields of medicine and public health.



Qi Yan and Dr. Sunny (Xuezhu) Wang, MD

Correcting the error, and doing so transparently, signals that the Yale School of Public Health (YSPH) is willing to examine its records and set them right—an example of trust-building in practice—explicit in the school’s strategic plan.

The misclassification traces back to Ge’s attempt to overcome systemic gender barriers. As an aspiring health practitioner, she enrolled in Jiangsu Province’s government-sponsored overseas study examination. Aware of the discrimination women faced, she made a strategic decision to leave the “gender” field on her application blank. She secured the scholarship and formal admission on her own merits. Although government officials learned about her gender identity after her acceptance, Yale’s official records classified her as male—a record that remained unchanged for nearly 100 years.

Ge’s accomplishments reflect other YSPH strategic priorities, including its commitment to educate generations of public health leaders, like Ge. She went

on to teach as well, writing textbooks in clinical bacteriology, public health, and midwifery, and later served as president of the Zhejiang Provincial Maternity School. During the Second Sino-Japanese War, Ge relocated to Chongqing and contributed to national efforts in medical education.

Even during times of war, she remained committed to creating pathways to tangibly improve societal wellbeing—an enduring commitment and strategic priority at YSPH. Recognizing the burden on women of balancing personal and work responsibilities, she founded a kindergarten and home economics program. In 1947, she founded Jiading District Central Hospital in her hometown.

Correcting Ge’s record—and telling her story—is an act of building the inclusive community YSPH envisions. Her story also underscores the cost of exclusion: when women are erased from history, the field loses both role models and a full understanding of its own roots.

## MEANINGFUL WORK

Yan and Wang’s rediscovery of Ge’s story emerged through their student-led research, which was sparked by an opportunity to contribute to an issue of Yale Journal of Biology and Medicine (YJBM) on the topic of “history of medicine.” Yan and Wang, who met at Yale, decided to write about Asian women at YSM.

While conducting their research, Yan saw a post about one of the first groups of Chinese women who studied in the United States. She was intrigued by the name of a Yale student she had never heard of, especially because she was familiar with many of the “first” Asian women in medicine at Yale. This curiosity about the mystery Chinese woman prompted her to further investigate. The variations in the romanization of Ge’s name across institutions, combined with her gender misidentification, made her story particularly hard to trace. But by cross-referencing Yale archival documents with Chinese newspapers from Ge’s hometown, Yan and Wang confirmed what was undocumented in English sources and possibly unknown to Yale.

For Yan, an Asian woman in medicine, every chapter of Ge’s life is deeply inspiring. “I want to be someone like her,” she reflected, emphasizing how Ge’s resilience and legacy resonated on both a professional and personal level. She emphasized that through the paper she co-wrote with Wang, Ge became part of a larger collective. Like the other Asian women featured in their work, Ge demonstrated remarkable strength navigating a field where female leadership was scarce. The pair’s research

is a bridge between history and the present that not only celebrates the achievements of women who came before them but underscores the ongoing need for progress.

Ge’s story, while extraordinary, is not unique. For generations, women in medicine have had to navigate exclusion, conceal their identities, or see their contributions diminished or misattributed. Their achievements were recorded under male names or insufficiently documented.

Correcting Ge’s identity on Yale records is not just about accuracy. It is a belated recognition of an ambitious woman working in public health and medicine. It allows us to fully celebrate pioneers like Ge not only for their professional achievements, but for the barriers they overcame to attain them. This long-overdue correction restores Ge to her rightful place in history as a brave trailblazer who left an incredible legacy.

In bringing Ge’s story to light, Yan and Wang hope to inspire others to continue the work of sharing overlooked histories and honoring each person who has shaped the fields of medicine and public health as we know it today.

“Ge remained committed to creating pathways to tangibly improve societal wellbeing—an enduring commitment at the Yale School of Public Health.”





# A Sense of Purpose

STUDENT ESSAY

By Peppy Buadoo, MPH '26

Communication has such an importance in public health. As future public health leaders, we are taught about topics ranging from biostatistics to epidemiology. Learning about languages for data science, such as SAS and R, gives us yet another understanding of the information available to us. However, the caveat emphasized by many of my YSPH professors is that there is a lack of accessibility to such knowledge due to language barriers. It is one thing to discover a new evidence-based implementation; it is another to disseminate its importance effectively to communities. Information can be easily gated inside academia. This understanding stayed with me as I applied for the Student Association of Yale School of Public Health (SAYPH) communications chair role, with the goal of bridging silos and expanding accessibility.

Being a part of SAYPH gave me a sense of purpose in doing exactly that. My work became less about sharing information and more about cultivating connections within the YSPH community. Innovation was central to this process. I independently developed and launched the SAYPH website, Instagram, and Linktree, while also contributing to the creation of a centralized Google event calendar. Managing multiple communications channels was at times overwhelming, but it ultimately deepened my commitment to the work. Each platform became a different avenue for reaching people, ensuring that no one felt excluded from the community we were building.

Some of the most memorable moments came from the spaces where communication became something deeply human. Creating the YSPH Candy Grams for Valentine's Day, for example, was a long and detailed process, but one that I will always carry with me. Reading the messages

students wrote to one another revealed an incredible level of care, gratitude, and warmth within our community. It reminded me that communication is not only about information dissemination, but also about fostering belonging and emotional connection.

Similarly, working on Humans of YSPH on the SAYPH website allowed me to engage with the individual stories that make up our school. Highlighting these narratives gave me a deeper appreciation for the diversity of experiences, motivations, and passions that students bring into public health. These stories transformed communication into something more intimate and reflective, creating space for people to feel seen and understood.

My collaboration with the Office of Communications expanded my understanding of the field itself. While my coursework introduced me to the importance of clear and accessible messaging, this experience allowed me to actively participate in it. I was no longer just learning about communications—I was practicing it, contributing to it, and understanding its real-world impact.

Through SAYPH, I came to see communications not just as a tool, but as a form of care. Whether through promoting events, sharing stories, or facilitating small moments of connection, I found fulfillment in helping build a more inclusive and engaged community. This year affirmed for me that effective public health work begins not only with knowledge, but with the ability to connect, listen, and make others feel they belong.

*Peppy Buadoo, MPH '26*, is the communications chair for the Student Association of Yale School of Public Health.

“Communication is not only about information dissemination, but also about fostering belonging and emotional connection.”

# Eating Well, on Purpose

A Q&A WITH KATHLEEN O'CONNOR DUFFANY, PHD  
By Jessica M. Scully



**M**any of us know that fruits and vegetables are good for our health. Less well understood is that they can be prescribed to prevent and treat chronic diseases. Food as Medicine describes food-based nutritional interventions that are integrated into health systems to promote food security, and advance health equity.

Dr. Kathleen O'Connor Duffany, PhD, associate professor of public health, works with local, state, and national partners to design, implement, and evaluate Food as Medicine programs. Duffany is director of research and evaluation at the Community Alliance for Research and Engagement (CARE) and co-director of the Yale-Griffin Prevention Research Center and its Food as Medicine Hub, which recently led or partnered on four such programs in Connecticut.

In an interview, Duffany discusses how Food as Medicine improves the public's health.

**Q: What do Food as Medicine programs look like in practice?**

**A:** They can be medically tailored meals and groceries or produce-prescription programs that allow providers to prescribe fruits and vegetables to patients who are at risk for or have a condition like diabetes or heart disease. Programs also address food insecurity, which puts people at risk for chronic diseases.

Patients can redeem these prescriptions – funds for fresh fruits and vegetables – at the grocery store, farmers market, or health care clinic. Our studies show that a huge barrier to eating fruits and vegetables is the high cost of groceries. Programs also provide nutrition programming for patients.

**Q: How do Food as Medicine programs improve health? What has research shown?**

**A:** Research, including our own, consistently shows that these initiatives help patients eat more fruits and vegetables and improve health outcomes, including self-reported health and biometrics such as patients' average blood sugar levels. We're also seeing decreases in blood pressure and improvements in food security.

Investing in Food as Medicine can yield a strong return – both in patient health and in health care spending. In a 2022 simulation study by researchers at the Friedman School of Nutrition Science and Policy published in *JAMA Network Open*, providing medically tailored meals (10 meals per week for 8 months) to eligible patients with diet-sensitive conditions and functional limitations was projected to be associated with net health care savings of more than \$13.6 billion per year.

**Q: How do you partner with communities, and who are your additional partners?**

**A:** These interventions are, by their nature, community-connected and must center on the patients, their community, and culture. We co-design programs with this patient-centric approach to ensure we include patients' perspectives and preferences.

Partners include staff at the clinics we work with, physicians, dietitians, and clinic administrators. We also partner with organizations for nutrition programming including SNAP ED. Here in New Haven, we have strong partnerships through Fair Haven Community Health Care, Yale New Haven Health, and CitySeed. We are interested in better understanding the role and impact of teaching kitchens that provide people with hands-on experience and the confidence and skills to cook,

consume, and enjoy eating fruits and vegetables. Finally, we partner with food systems with the long-term goal of clinics and individuals having access to locally produced fruits and vegetables through these programs, which builds the local and state economies.

Our projects are currently funded through grants, but our eventual goal is for Medicaid, Medicare, and other insurance providers to cover these programs. We are looking for Connecticut to seek an 1115 demonstration waiver to allow use of funds to scale Food as Medicine programs, as Massachusetts, New York, and Rhode Island have done. Through ongoing studies, we aim to address key challenges, positioning the state to implement and scale programs in a way that is equitable, respectful, and impactful.

**Q: Describe the four programs the center has recently led or partnered on.**

**A:** Food4Moms, led by Dr. Rafael Pérez-Escamilla, partners with the Hispanic Health Council to provide pregnant women \$100 each month on a Fresh Connect card for 10 months to purchase fruits and vegetables at two food retailers. The women also receive nutrition programming. We have seen outcomes that have the potential to impact mother and child health long term.

The Griffin Hospital PRx, led by Beth Comerford, is a rigorous, randomized control trial to provide evidence on health outcomes. Patients at risk for diabetes or who have diabetes received \$40 a month on a Fresh Connect card for 6 months, with additional funds for larger households. Patients receiving the produce prescription program showed significant improvements in consumption patterns and health outcomes.

In Produce4Life, in partnership with Hartford Hospital and Hispanic Health Council, we're looking to identify strategies to increase use of the card and to increase consumption. The project is a randomized controlled trial in which one group has support from a community health worker trained in Food as Medicine behavior change, while other groups don't have this support. And in partnership with Fair Haven Community Health Care in New Haven, we recently completed a PRx feasibility study to assess integration

of a produce prescription program and to better understand and pilot options for engaging with the local food system.

Across our studies, we see high patient engagement and meaningful outcomes, including changes in food security. Our next steps include finding opportunities to continue these programs and integrating strategies that lead to even stronger outcomes for the patient and their families. In local communities and statewide, we seek to drive systems-level integration of food as medicine programming across health care centers and with the local food system.

**Q: How do Yale public health students participate in these initiatives?**

**A:** We typically engage at least two students each year, but we only have one student currently due to a cut in funding. Students typically stay with us through their master's program and sometimes longer. The students integrate as part of our staff, engaging in program development, data collection, analysis, and reporting. A few of our students have gone on to work full-time in this field.

**Q: How does Food as Medicine support the Yale School of Public Health's strategic priority to "foster interconnected, inclusive, and interdisciplinary public health communities within and beyond Yale"?**

**A:** Successful Food as Medicine initiatives require so many different interconnected disciplines – medicine, nutrition, community engagement, food systems, economics, health policy, and climate change – and offer an opportunity to break down the silos we often see in academia.

In addition to our partners at Yale and the local community, we have many partners across Connecticut and nationally, including implementers, policymakers, and researchers at institutions including Southern Connecticut State University and Emory University in Atlanta. The food as medicine community is very collaborative and inclusive – we work together to ensure we move this field forward with a health equity focus, addressing health outcomes and food security.

**"The food as medicine community is very collaborative and inclusive – we work together to ensure we move this field forward with a health equity focus."** –Kathleen O'Connor Duffany, PhD

# Reimagining classrooms as communities of learning

FIRST-PERSON ESSAY

By Mike Honsberger, PhD

A familiar scene is unfolding in classrooms: laptops open, AI prompts are refined, and paragraphs appear—polished, plausible, and often impressively composed. Students are using the tools available to them, as any professional-in-training would. The question facing educators is not whether these tools should exist or if students should use them. The question is how educators adapt to tools including AI so that reasoning, judgment, and communication remain central and observable.

One of the enduring propositions of higher education is that learning collectively is different from learning alone. If graduate education were only about acquiring facts, students could increasingly do that work independently at home, given the abundance of information available to them. What a graduate school education offers is the opportunity to learn in relationship with peers with diverse experiences and backgrounds.

Students do not come to the Yale School of Public Health as blank slates. They arrive with lived experiences, having studied different things in college, and with distinct ways of seeing the world. A classroom that treats those differences as background noise misses its greatest asset—but a classroom that is structured so that students encounter, test, and build on those differences becomes something more than a course. It becomes a community of learning.

That shift does not happen by goodwill alone. “Community” is not a vibe; it is a design choice. When students have structured opportunities to speak with one another, such as paired interpretation, small-group

problem solving, and strategies that elevate quieter voices, they practice the core public health skill of communicating across differences, which requires active listening and is essential for engaging diverse communities.

Over time, students also develop more general social capacities: how to disagree without dismissing, how to ask clarifying questions, how to notice whose knowledge is being treated as authoritative, and how to translate ideas for someone outside their own training. These are not soft extras. They are the daily work of public health. Graduate public health education should be at the

forefront of teaching how to communicate person to person. This is not a new course to add to an already full curriculum. It is a skill woven into every classroom.

At the same time, the foundations of traditional evaluations have shifted. Many common graduate-level assessments, such as papers, projects, and take-home exams, rest on an implicit assumption that a high-quality product signals internalized learning. With AI in the mix, that inference is no longer dependable. This is not an argument against technology. It is a call to update what we treat as evidence of learning. If products can be generated, refined, or assembled in ways that circumvent

the learner’s cognition, educators must make room for learning that is harder to outsource: reasoning made visible through dialogue, iteration, critique, and decision-making under constraint.

Active learning strategies do exactly that. When students interpret data together, justify an analytic choice, respond to a counterargument, or co-design an intervention for a real public health problem, their thinking becomes observable to both instructor and students. That visibility, however, comes with risk. Active learning asks students to speak before they are certain, to reveal confusion, and to test ideas that might



#### Classroom Engagement in Action

Kaakpema “KP” Yelapaala, MPH ’06, lecturer and senior fellow in public health, leads a class discussion.

EPHEMIA NICOLAIS

“A stronger sense of belonging increases a student’s willingness to take the risks that authentic learning requires.”



ALL PHOTOS: EPIHEMIA NICOLAKIS

#### Classroom as Community

Top row left to right: Hena Yakoob, MPH '26, Elise Sang, MPH '26; Bottom row left to right: Shuhan Sun, MPH '26, Dylan Schnur, MPH '26

not hold. Without an intellectually safe space, the safest move is silence, or performative participation. Here, community-building matters not as a feel-good add-on, but as a condition for rigor. A stronger sense of belonging increases a student’s willingness to take the risks that authentic learning requires.

I recently observed a YSPH course where these practices were on display. While it’s true that active learning takes time away from course content, what it adds is immeasurable. I watched as students worked together to apply a concept they had just learned. As the activity was drawing to a close, I saw students letting their guard down, being vulnerable, and laughing. While I can’t attest to whether these students learned

the concept they were applying, I feel confident that during the rest of their time in this course they will be more willing to engage, to publicly try out new ideas, and collectively learn more than they could alone. If we want graduates who can lead amid complexity, we must build classrooms where learning is communal, visible, and real.

*Mike Honsberger, PhD, is director of YSPH Academic Affairs. The author used Yale’s Clarity Platform to support the writing process, including refining wording and editing for clarity and concision. The ideas and framing are the author’s, and the author reviewed and revised the final text.*

## The Work That Matters

# Four donors on their commitment to public health



#### KATHE P. FOX, PHD '81

*Kathe Fox is president of the Association of Yale Alumni in Public Health, a position she has held for six years. Her term ends on July 1, 2026. Her gift supports students and researchers.*

#### What first drew you to public health?

I was raised in a family committed to health and community. But I didn’t understand what a career in public health looked like. After college, I worked in health services for seniors, which was when I figured out that I should get an advanced degree in public health.

#### How has your relationship with YSPH shaped your understanding of public health?

I studied Health Services Administration at YSPH, and was trained in sociology, economics, and political science. Today, YSPH has a much more quantitatively based scientific approach to education and research. However, that approach must be connected to an infrastructure

that understands community, context, implementation, and results. That is why public health is so fascinating and what keeps me engaged.

#### What do you hope your gift will make possible?

First and foremost, economic security. No one can do their best work while under financial pressure. I want to reduce that burden so students can flourish, unhindered. For researchers, doing the work moves knowledge forward. Making funds available helps ease this process.

#### Why make this commitment at this moment in public health?

The COVID pandemic laid bare weaknesses in public health. There’s a need for more transparency and communication around public health decisions. And key organizations—the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and National Institutes of Health (NIH)—are being dismantled. However, YSPH is flourishing as Yale’s newest independently operated school. I’m motivated to support YSPH knowing my contributions are going directly to the school and are under its sole discretion.

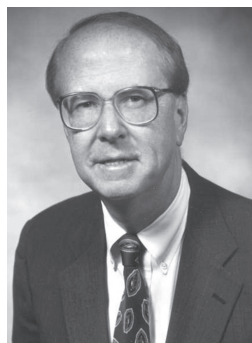
#### What would you say to someone considering a gift of their own?

I believe in giving back. I use what I learned at Yale every day, and I want the next generation to have the same opportunity. I also want Yale to attract and retain the strongest students and faculty possible. I struggled financially at Yale and nearly withdrew because I could not afford to pay my tuition. My commitment, and the commitment of other graduates, should be to guarantee success for future generations—to help them as we were helped.



### CHRIS AND MOLLY MALLOY

*Chris and Molly Malloy's gift supports YSPH's firearm injury prevention program. Molly Malloy serves as a board member of the Massachusetts Coalition to Prevent Gun Violence.*



#### What first drew you to public health?

Issues related to public health have been a constant in our lives for many years. Molly has been involved with public health for over a decade as an activist and volunteer around gun violence prevention. I was exposed

to public health by my father, James Matthew Malloy, MPH '67, a former hospital executive and professor of public health who was honored to receive YSPH's Distinguished Alumni Service Award in 2004.

#### How has YSPH shaped your understanding of public health?

At the end of his career, my father was very interested in trying to extend health care to underserved communities in the rural South, including Jackson, Mississippi. He always credited his training at YSPH for helping him tackle difficult problems effectively.

#### What do you hope your gift will make possible?

YSPH's mission is to educate and equip the best public health scientists. Our gift to an endowed scholarship in my father's name will support a student's training, so they learn best practices in equitable, scalable, health care delivery.

#### Why make this commitment now?

Gun violence in the United States is a public health crisis and the leading cause of death for children and teens. It is an issue we care deeply about, and we are hoping that our gift to support Dean Megan Ranney's Firearm Injury Prevention initiative will enable researchers at YSPH to provide more empirical evidence on the costs and benefits of various commonsense gun violence prevention measures.

#### What would you say to someone considering a gift of their own?

We feel that YSPH, under Dean Ranney's leadership, is poised to make a huge impact on society in the coming years. Yale University is one of the rare institutions in the U.S. where your gift can have an exponential impact due to the university's incredible reach and resources.

### DR. SHOSHANA UNGERLEIDER

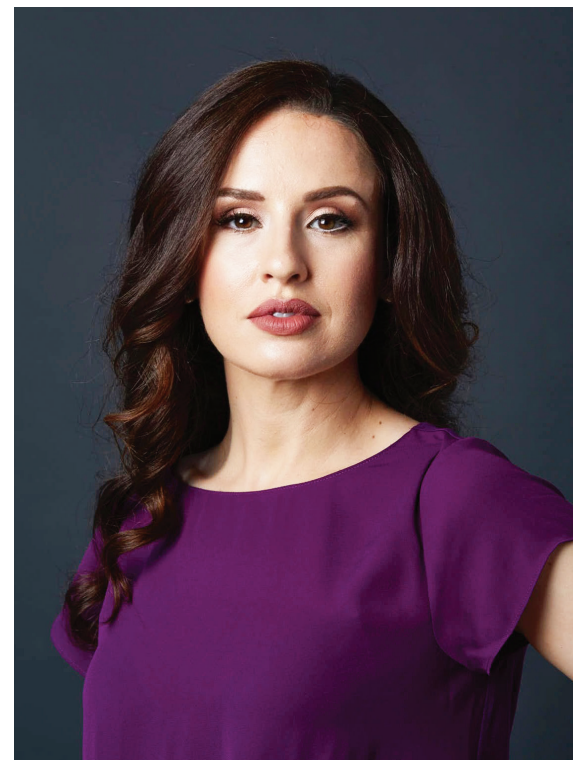
*Shoshana Ungerleider, MD, is a board-certified practicing internist, the host and producer of TED Health, and founder and president of End Well, a nonprofit focused on making end-of-life part of life. Her gift supports PopHIVE.*

#### What first drew you to public health?

I was taught to focus on the individual patient, but it became impossible to ignore how much of what I was seeing was shaped by forces beyond the exam room: access, environment, education, policy. Public health allows us to create conditions for health in the first place.

#### How has your relationship with YSPH shaped your understanding of public health?

Science must translate into real-world impact. The school's mission to educate and equip public health scientists feels especially meaningful. We need people who are not only technically excellent, but who can think across disciplines, communicate clearly, and stay grounded in the communities they serve. YSPH is cultivating that leadership; it gives me hope.



#### What do you hope your gift will make possible?

I think about possibility. The questions we ask today will shape our response to future challenges, whether climate, aging, emerging diseases, or health systems. My hope is that this support provides the freedom – and the responsibility – to think boldly and stay connected to the work's human impact.

#### Why make this commitment at this moment in public health?

The pandemic brought a deeper appreciation of the field – and a clearer view of its vulnerabilities. At the same time, advances in data, technology, and interdisciplinary research are opening doors that didn't exist a decade ago. The question is, will we continue investing in the people and institutions that do that work? Supporting an independent school of public health like YSPH is a way of affirming the work matters.

#### What would you say to someone considering a gift of their own?

I would simply say that it's one way to help extend the reach of this work. But more broadly, public health is something we all participate in, whether we realize it or not, and there's a role for everyone in strengthening it.

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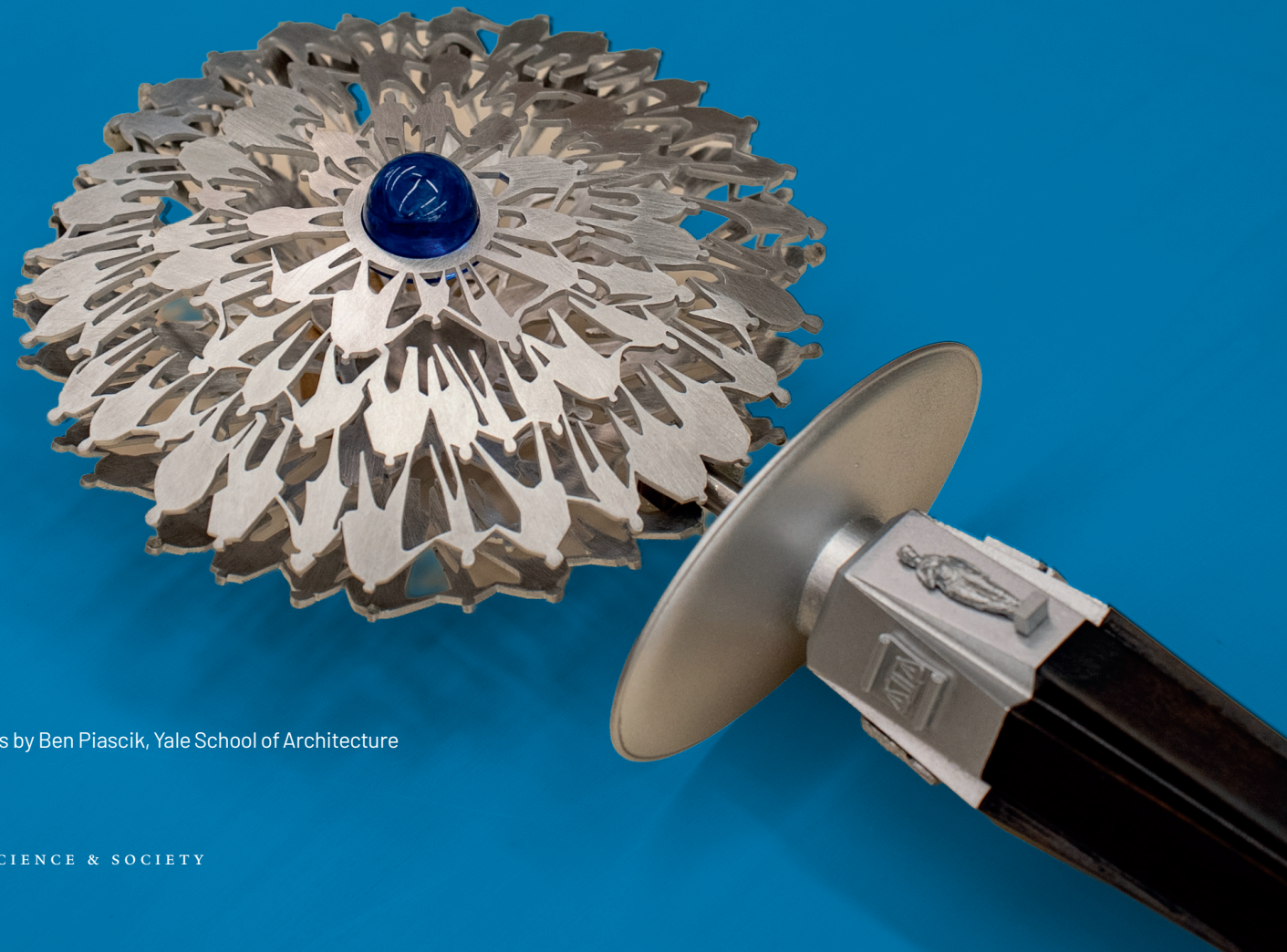
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# SCIENCE & SYMBOL

## YSPH Debuts Ceremonial Mace

By Jane E. Dee



Photos by Ben Piascik, Yale School of Architecture

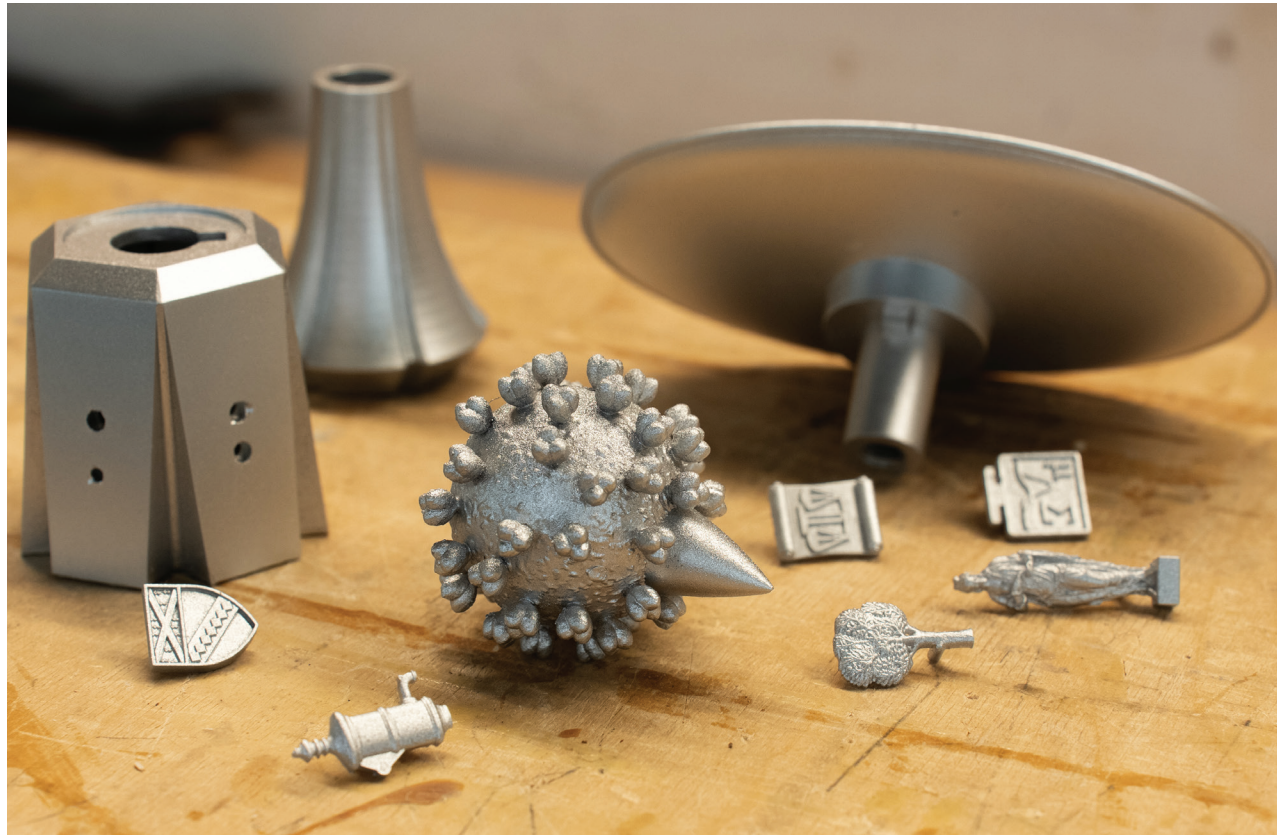


**Y**ale School of Public Health leadership led the design of the school's new ceremonial mace that incorporates deep historical symbolism and celebrates the school's history, vision, and mission, as well as its status as Yale's newest independent school. The new mace will make its debut at Yale's 325th commencement on May 18.

Each time the mace is carried into a commencement ceremony, the Yale School of Public Health's vision of "linking science and society, making public health foundational to communities everywhere," is proclaimed publicly, reminding graduates, families, faculty, and the broader Yale community what YSPH stands for and where it is headed.

Shelley Diehl Geballe, JD '76, MPH '95, professor in the practice (health policy), has been chosen to carry the new mace as faculty marshal in the 2026 Commencement procession. Her two-plus decades on the YSPH faculty and her direction of the Health Policy Practicum place her at the heart of our school's commitment to educate future generations of public health leaders.

YSPH will retire its former mace, a copper globe encircled by a raised metal equator with the words "Health Promotion" and "Disease Prevention."



**Symbols**  
YSPH Shield, Broad Street Pump, Lassa virus, Elm tree, Hygeia, law scroll, and data symbols

## AN ARTIFACT OF THE STRATEGIC VISION

The strategic plan's emphasis on interdisciplinary collaboration is literally built into the mace's form. Ideas generated from a YSPH schoolwide survey guided the initial planning about how to visualize the school's strengths, and each element of the mace was chosen with intentionality. YSPH leadership led the process with collaborators at Yale Architecture and across Yale.

The Yale School of Architecture created a new mace for itself in 2025 that was an inspiration for the new YSPH mace. At the top of Yale Architecture's mace is a model of its brutalist building on York Street, designed by architect Paul Rudolph.

Yale School of Architecture Mace



The architecture team working with YSPH included Timothy Newton, Alyse Guild, and Nathan Burnell. Burnell and Guild are instructors in the school's fabrication labs. Newton is senior critic and director of the fabrication labs.

Guild and Newton designed the head of YSPH's mace, a blue globe surrounded by figures of people, symbolizing how the work of public health is centered in community. It is also a nod to Yale's motto of *Lux et Veritas*, and to the ways in which science and society are inherently intertwined.

Guild cut the head on a Fiber Cell Metal Laser machine from stainless steel. The globe—in Yale blue—was made in the Scientific Glassblowing Laboratory at Yale's Department of Chemistry. It's made of borosilicate glass, the primary material used for high-quality lab glassware, symbolic of the wet lab work that is core to YSPH's past and future.

The head sits on a collar of 3-D printed stainless steel. The collar represents the Bowl of Hygeia. Hygeia is the Greek goddess of health, cleanliness, and hygiene, and the source of the word hygiene—representing how our school is built on the knowledge and traditions of millennia.



**Goddess of Health**  
The top of the mace sits on a collar representing the Bowl of Hygeia

Below the Bowl of Hygeia is a hexagonal collar ornamented with sterling silver charms representing Hygeia; an Elm tree (symbolic of New Haven and Yale); and the Broad Street Pump (an early exemplar of modern public health). There also are charms depicting the YSPH Shield; a law scroll, representing health policy; and the data symbols  $\mu$  and  $\Sigma$  (sigma) next to an epi curve—a curriculum in miniature, reminding graduates of the data science tools and responsibilities they carry forward.

The shaft is constructed of wood from an Elm tree on the YSPH campus that was damaged during a storm. Elm trees have been historically significant to Yale and New Haven, the "Elm City."

The star-shaped shaft references the star of life, the universal symbol of hospitals and emergency medical services. Its six points represent YSPH's current academic departments: biostatistics, chronic disease epidemiology, environmental health sciences, epidemiology of microbial diseases, health policy and management, and social and behavioral sciences.

The handle's extruded star shape takes the form of a herald trumpet communicating the Yale School of Public Health's vision of linking science and society,



**Pommel**  
The Lassa virus

and its mission to "educate and equip the best public health scientists, practitioners, and leaders to develop systems-level solutions for a healthier society."

The pommel is in the form of the Lassa virus that was identified and isolated in 1969 at the Yale Arbovirus Research Unit (YARU) in the Yale Department of Epidemiology, now the Yale School of Public Health.

As a ceremonial object carried into future commencements—crafted from campus wood, scientific glass, and centuries of public health symbolism—the new mace proclaims that YSPH's commitment to linking science and society is not just a statement, but a living tradition.

**BIOSTATISTICS/  
CHRONIC DISEASE  
EPIDEMIOLOGY/  
ENVIRONMENTAL  
HEALTH SCIENCES/  
EPIDEMIOLOGY  
OF MICROBIAL  
DISEASES/  
HEALTH POLICY  
AND MANAGEMENT/  
SOCIAL AND  
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