



# Office of Equity and Inclusion Newsletter

April 8, 2024



## A Message from Dr. Keith Johnson, Vice President for Equity and Inclusion

**“Protecting, Connecting and Thriving:  
We Are All Public Health”**

Dear Friends,

The title of this month’s message is the annual theme for the 2024 National Public Health Week (NPHW) celebration. NPHW is an annual observance in the United States that aims to raise awareness about the importance of public health and promote initiatives to improve health outcomes for all. Held during the first full week of April, NPHW provides an opportunity to spotlight critical public health issues, including health disparities, and recognize the efforts of organizations and institutions dedicated to advancing public health. This thought explores the significance of NPHW, delves into data on health disparities, and highlights the impactful work conducted by the College of Public Health at East Tennessee State University (ETSU).

Health disparities refer to differences in health outcomes and access to healthcare among various populations, often linked to social, economic, and environmental factors. These

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***“Diversity serves unity; unity  
celebrates diversity.”***

***~Andrew Wilson~***

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## Continued ~ Message from Dr. Keith Johnson

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disparities can manifest in various forms, including variations in disease prevalence, mortality rates, healthcare access, and health behaviors. Research has shown that marginalized communities, including racial and ethnic minorities, low-income individuals, and rural populations, are disproportionately affected by health disparities.

Across the United States, numerous studies have highlighted the prevalence and impact of health disparities. For instance, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), racial and ethnic minorities experience higher rates of chronic diseases such as diabetes, hypertension, and obesity compared to their white counterparts. Additionally, disparities in healthcare access and quality persist, with minority populations facing barriers such as lack of insurance coverage, limited healthcare facilities in their communities, and implicit biases in healthcare delivery.

At East Tennessee State University, the College of Public Health is at the forefront of addressing health disparities and promoting public health initiatives within the region and beyond. The College's commitment to education, research, and community engagement plays a pivotal role in improving population health and reducing health inequities. Several key initiatives undertaken by the College include:

**Community-Based Research and Intervention Programs:** The College actively engages in community-based research projects aimed at understanding and addressing the root causes of health disparities. These projects often involve collaboration with local stakeholders, healthcare providers, and community organizations to develop targeted interventions that address specific health needs within underserved populations.

Faculty, students and administration, including Dr. Randy Wykoff, the dean within the College advocate for policies that promote health equity and address social determinants of health. Through research-informed advocacy efforts, the College seeks to influence policy decisions at the local, state, and national levels to create environments that support health for all.

**Training the Next Generation of Public Health Leaders:** The College offers comprehensive education and training programs in public health, equipping students with the knowledge and skills to address complex public health challenges, including health disparities. Through coursework, field experiences, and research opportunities, students are prepared to become effective advocates and practitioners in promoting health equity.

## Continued ~ Message from Dr. Keith Johnson

Community Outreach and Health Promotion: The College organizes various outreach activities and health promotion campaigns to raise awareness about health disparities and promote preventive health behaviors. These initiatives often target vulnerable populations and aim to empower individuals to take control of their health.

National Public Health Week serves as a reminder of the importance of collective action in addressing health disparities and advancing public health initiatives. At East Tennessee State University, the College of Public Health plays a vital role in this effort through its commitment to education, research, and community engagement. By addressing the underlying determinants of health disparities and promoting health equity, the College contributes to the creation of healthier communities and a more equitable society. As we reflect on NPHW, let us recommit ourselves to the pursuit of health equity and the promotion of well-being for all individuals and communities. As a university, we believe in the following mission:

- PEOPLE come first, are treated with dignity and respect, and are encouraged to achieve their full potential;
- RELATIONSHIPS are built on honesty, integrity, and trust;
- DIVERSITY of people and thought is respected;
- EXCELLENCE is achieved through teamwork, leadership, creativity, and a strong work ethic;
- EFFICIENCY is achieved through wise use of human and financial resources; and
- COMMITMENT to intellectual achievement is embraced.

Sincerely,

Dr. Keith V. Johnson



**Protecting, Connecting and Thriving:**  
*We Are All Public Health*  
APRIL 1-7, 2024



<https://nphw.org/>

# Embracing the Spectrum

## April is recognized as World Autism Awareness Month, but how much do we truly understand about autism and its causes?

Autism spectrum disorder (ASD) is a neurodevelopmental condition characterized by challenges in social interaction, communication, and repetitive behaviors.

It is referred to as a spectrum because the symptoms and severity can vary widely among individuals.

People with autism may have difficulties understanding social cues, making eye contact, or engaging in typical conversation. They might also exhibit repetitive behaviors like hand-flapping, rocking, or repeating phrases. Sensory sensitivities are common, where certain sounds, textures, or lights can be overwhelming.

Autism is not a singular condition but rather a diverse range of conditions, often co-occurring with other issues such as anxiety, depression, or ADHD.

It's important to recognize that every person with autism is unique, with their own strengths and challenges.

Embracing neurodiversity and promoting acceptance and inclusion are crucial for creating a supportive environment for individuals with autism to thrive.



World Autism Awareness Day



[Read More](#)

For more detailed information, you can explore resources provided by the World Health Organization ([World Health Organization \(WHO\)](#)), Mayo Clinic ([Mayo Clinic](#)), and Autistic Self Advocacy Network [ASAN](#)

## Introducing our newest addition: The Disability Courtesy Shuttle!



We are happy to share the news of the Disability Courtesy Shuttle. This golf cart is specifically designed to support people with mobility limitations. The cart is equipped with a ramp and can transport an individual in a wheelchair.

As campus construction began on South Dossett Drive where we now have the boulevard, there were a great many questions and concerns from persons impacted by the construction and the moving of disability parking spaces. The Disability Issues Committee took these concerns in hand and began investigating how other schools with largely pedestrian campuses accommodate those with mobility limitations. Based on the information gathered a recommendation was ultimately made to the President's Office. President Noland agreed with the recommendation and the Disability Courtesy Shuttle was purchased.

Use of the shuttle is eligibility-based as determined by Disability Services. Parking Services manages the cart and provides the actual transport.

This has been a collaborative effort to meet the needs of students, faculty, and staff with disabilities. If you are interested in how you can access this support, please contact Disability Services at **423-439-8346**.

# Highlights of the NSBE 50th Annual Convention 2024



The ETSU National Society of Black Engineers (NSBE) has been recognized as the **"Most Consistent Small Chapter"** at the recent NSBE Region III Awards ceremony.

NSBE is one of the largest student-governed organizations based in the United States.



Shown Above: NSBE ETSU Student Executive Committee



# Upcoming Events

April 2024				
Sunday	Apr.7th	Pride Prom	6:00 - 8:00pm	Culp Center Ballroom
Monday	Apr.8th	Diversity Scholars Banquet	6:00 - 8:00pm	Culp Center, East TN Room 272
Tuesday	Apr.9th	Living Library	11:00 - 2:00pm	Culp Center, Cave
Tuesday	Apr.9th	Presentation Night	4:00 - 7:00pm	Pride Center
Wednesday	Apr.10th	Unity Fest Showcase	11:00 - 4:00pm	The Multicultural Center University Commons
Wednesday	Apr.17th	Healthy Relationships	12:30 - 1:30pm	<a href="#">Via Zoom</a>
Thursday	Apr.18th	Summit Award	7:00 - 9:00pm	Culp Ballroom 316
Thursday	Apr.18th	Ice Cream Social	4:00-6:00pm	MCC Lobby
Friday	Apr.19th	Art Show Reception	5:00 - 7:00pm	MCC Lobby
Monday	Apr.22nd	Coffee and Conversation: Burnout with Michelle Hurley	11:30-12:30pm	Culp Center, Room 219
Tuesday	Apr.23rd	Colorful Snow Glob creating with the Counseling Center	3:00-4:00pm	Pride Center
Thursday	Apr.25th	Sparkly Globe Craft	3:00-4:00pm	Pride Center
Tuesday	Apr.30th	Final de-stress activity (arts, crafts, pizza)	4:00-6:00pm	WGRC

YOU'RE CORDIALLY INVITED TO

## MULTICULTURAL CENTER CELEBRATION

WEDNESDAY, MAY 1ST, 2024  
7:00 PM - 9:00 PM  
CULP BALLROOM

EMAIL: [ETSUMC@ETSU.EDU](mailto:ETSUMC@ETSU.EDU) / CALL: (423)439-4844

  
EAST TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY  
Mary V. Jordan Multicultural Center

## Upcoming Events~ continued

THE MARY V. JORDAN MULTICULTURAL CENTER AND BLACK AFFAIRS ASSOCIATION PRESENT:

**FOOD**  
**ENTERTAINMENT**  
**GAMES | GIVEAWAYS**

**SHOWCASE CULTURAL ATTIRES, FOODS, AND TALENTS!**

**UNITY FEST SHOWCASE**

**WEDNESDAY, APRIL 10, 2024**      **TIME: 11 AM - 4PM**

**Venue: University Commons**

**BRINGING CULTURE S TO LIFE**

**E EAST TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY**  
Mary V. Jordan Multicultural Center

FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT [ETSUMC@ETSU.EDU](mailto:ETSUMC@ETSU.EDU) OR 423-439-4844



Faculty and Staff are invited to participate in Safe Zone 1 training. Training scheduled for Wednesday, April 17, 2024, 1:00-4:00 pm online via Zoom

You must register in advance on our webpage:  
<https://www.etsu.edu/equity/safezone/trainers.php>

Please email [safezone@etsu.edu](mailto:safezone@etsu.edu) with questions

ETSU Safe Zone is a community of LGBTQ allies on ETSU campus who have all undergone an orientation to being an LGBTQ ally and signed the ETSU Safe Zone pledge.



THE ETSU GOSPEL CHOIR PRESENTS

# THE ERAS OF GOSPEL

SAVE THE DATE!

## APR 20

ETSU CULP AUDITORIUM  
APRIL 20, 2024  
6:00 PM



EAST TENNESSEE STATE  
UNIVERSITY

Dr. Patricia Robertson  
Pride Center

## *ASPECTS*

### **Aligning Support, Pride, Education, and community for Transgender Students**

**ASPECTS** is a group for students, faculty, and staff who are transgender, non-binary, gender non-conforming, gender expansive, Two-Spirit, or gender questioning, looking for community, and support.

**Spring 2024 meetings are from 3pm-4 pm  
every other Tuesday:**

**February 13 & 27, March 26, April 9 & 23**

**Please email [PrideCenter@etsu.edu](mailto:PrideCenter@etsu.edu)  
for location information.**

# Summer STEM Opportunities for High School Students

## Applied STEM Foundations – June 3 - 21, 2024

Applied STEM Foundation is a **3-week** experiential program that covers, computing, digital media, engineering, and other STEM concepts. The program is for high school students interested in a STEM major. The focus will be on ETSU's programs (new and existing), Mechatronics, Digital Development (TBD), Engineering Technology, Digital Media, and Computing. The three-week programs will expose students to selected STEM-related programs offered at ETSU. Each week students will be given the opportunity to explore areas and careers in STEM through the use of classroom lectures, various field trips, and speaker presentations.

## Environmental Health Lab Experience – June 3 - 7, 2024

Students will work with two of the department's outstanding faculty to explore concepts in environmental and occupational health and safety science. The program offers students the opportunity to conduct, well water simulation and stream water sampling and characterization; measurement of indoor air quality; and other hands-on activities in the lab; as well as learn how environmental health impacts what we eat and drink.

### Program Objectives

- Facilitate students' understanding of the skills needed to succeed in a STEM major.
- Promote student exploration of STEM concepts, careers, and major development in STEM.
- Facilitate students working collaboratively in diverse teams, valuing and leveraging individual strengths to achieve common goals.
- Help students develop personal and professional goals, identifying potential career paths within STEM and mapping out steps to achieve them.

### Scan QR Code to Register



Or at [www.etsu.edu/applied-stem](http://www.etsu.edu/applied-stem)

- \* Cost - \$25/program
- \* Lunch Provided
- \* For more info email:  
Dr. Evelyn Roach - [roache@etsu.edu](mailto:roache@etsu.edu)  
Dr. Keith Johnson - [johnsonk@etsu.edu](mailto:johnsonk@etsu.edu)

# TBR SERS and OER Grant Opportunities

The Office of Equity and Inclusion is now accepting Student Engagement, Retention, and Success (**SERS**) grant proposals for FY2025. Proposals should be received by the Office of Equity and Inclusion/Kim Maturo at [maturo@etsu.edu](mailto:maturo@etsu.edu) by April 8, 2024. The TBR submission deadline for SERS grant proposals is **April 30, 2024 1:00am**.

All information – details, dates, applications - can be found at <https://adgrants.tbr.edu/>

The Office of Equity and Inclusion is now accepting Open Educational Resources (**OER**) grant proposals for FY2025. Proposals should be received by the Office of Equity and Inclusion/Kim Maturo at [maturo@etsu.edu](mailto:maturo@etsu.edu) by March 25, 2024. The TBR submission deadline for OER grant proposals is **April 16, 2024 1:00am**.

All information – details, dates, applications - can be found at <https://adgrants.tbr.edu/>.



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 Instagram and Twitter - [etsu\\_equity](#)

**We would like to  
 hear from you.**

If you have an announcement, event, accomplishment, etc. you would like to have published in the newsletter send them to Kim Maturo at [maturo@etsu.edu](mailto:maturo@etsu.edu).

To add a name to our mailing list, please email Kim Maturo at [maturo@etsu.edu](mailto:maturo@etsu.edu).