



Center for Appalachian Research in Environmental Sciences (UK-CARES)

NEWSLETTER SPRING/SUMMER 2025

Addressing the Environmental Health Research Needs of Appalachia

In this edition, UK-CARES shares exciting updates from our members, recaps recent events, and previews what's ahead as we continue our commitment to Environmental Research and community impact across the region.

Dr. Jason Unrine Shares Research Supported by NIEHS



Watch the [video series >here](#)
from Research Communications

As an environmental toxicologist and chemist, [Dr. Jason Unrine](#) is supported by NIEHS and his research focuses on the environmental fate and toxicity of trace elements, engineered nanomaterials and disinfection byproducts in water and ecosystems. He studies how these substances transform, accumulate and impact organisms, strongly emphasizing drinking water safety in Kentucky. “NIH-funded infrastructure helps to make sure that we have the cutting-edge instruments, laboratories and expertise that is needed to measure potentially toxic chemicals in water, soil, air, and food,” said Unrine. “My hope for the future of research at UK is that we can develop tools and approaches to prevent Kentucky’s children’s exposure to potentially harmful chemicals & give them the best possible start in life.”

UK-CARES EHS Seminar Series

The May 1st **Environmental Health Sciences Seminar Series** featured visiting speaker, [Dr. Yang Liu](#), PhD, Chair and Gangarosa Distinguished Professor, Rollins School of Public Health, Emory University, who offered an in-depth look at “The Multi-faceted Health Impact of Wildfires.”



UK-CARES Early Stage Investigators had the opportunity to connect and converse with [Dr. Yang Liu](#) over a networking luncheon.

Pictured L-R: Yisi Liu, Tianjun Lu, Yang Liu, Cetewayo Rashid, and Ketrell McWhorter



Celebrating the Success of the 2025



JOHN P. WYATT, M.D.
Environment and Health Symposium

Held on Earth Day, the **2025 John P. Wyatt MD Environment & Health Symposium** was a resounding success, becoming an annual cornerstone event! It brought together leading universities, researchers, policymakers, faculty, students, and community members to explore the most pressing issues facing the **Environment + Health + Policy**

- Over **200** registered, with **8 participating Universities** across Kentucky
- **30+** attendees representing **government agencies & health departments**
- **10** students selected to showcase their research in **3-minute Lightning Talks**



2025 Awardee & Keynote

Keynote Speaker, [Ellen Hahn, PhD, RN, FAAN](#) was awarded the 2025 John P. Wyatt, MD Environment and Health Award for outstanding contributions to the environment and health. The award was presented by [Kacy Allen-Bryant](#), LFUCG Commissioner of Dept of Social Services, and special guest, [Barbara Wyatt](#).

Pictured L-R: Shavonne Carthens, Ryan Salzman, Kacy Allen-Bryant, Ellen Hahn, Barbara Wyatt, Erin Haynes, Natasha DeJarnett.

Photo Courtesy of Jeremy Blackburn | UK Research Communications

environmental health and policy in a discussion titled “Moving Research to Policy.” Pictured L-R, [Dr. Ryan Salzman](#), Project Director of OneKYAlliance, Shavonnie Carthens, UK Assistant Professor of Law, and [Dr. Ellen Hahn](#) Keynote & Awardee. [Dr. Natasha Dejarnett](#), Associate Professor of Medicine at the University of Louisville, moderated the discussion.

Photo courtesy of Jeremy Blackburn | UK Research Communications



Research Lightning Talks

10 students were selected to present their research through **3-minute/3-slide lightning talks**, illustrating the impact of their work on environmental quality, human health, and/or policy.

Pictured L-R: **Erin Haynes**, Center Director, **Hannah Brown** (3rd Place Peoples Choice), **Reagan Witt** (1st Place Peoples Choice), **Meredith Swallom** (1st Place Lightning Talks & 2nd Place Peoples Choice), **Marissa English** (2nd Place Lightning Talks), **Katie Christensen** (3rd Place Lightning Talks), **Dr. Jason Marion**, Moderator

Photo courtesy of Jeremy Blackburn | UK Research Communications

[Learn more](#)

UK-CARES Represented at Numerous Regional and National Scientific Events

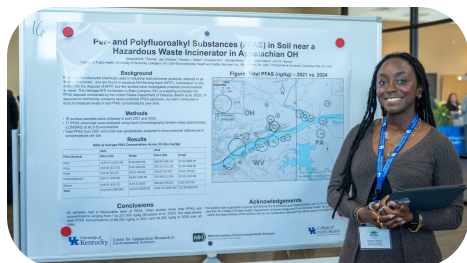
Laura Gregory Recognized at the 2025 Appalachia Research Day in Corbin, KY



[Laura Gregory](#), Kentucky Waterways Alliance, was selected as the winner of the **2025 UK-CARES/CERH Community Engagement Award**. Laura was recognized for her outstanding achievement and commitment to improving environmental health in Appalachia at the **2025 Appalachian Research Day**.

Gregory was nominated for her longstanding dedication to clean water education and outreach. Through partnerships with the Daniel Boone National Forest and Friends of Red River, she implemented the Red River Watershed Restoration Plan, identifying impaired streams that feed Kentucky's only federally designated Wild & Scenic Red River. Her grassroots work led to septic assistance for 20 low-income families and the creation of the annual Make a Splash Water Festival, educating Wolfe County 6th graders on water quality since 2018.

Gregory also founded the annual Wild & Scenic Red River Fest to raise awareness and celebrate clean waterways. A volunteer with KY Watershed Watch and member of the Wolfe County Sanitation District Board, Laura helped secure over \$3 million for wastewater improvements in Hazel Green. In 2024, she co-directed *River Cowboys: Keepin' it Wild*, a film highlighting the Red River's beauty and conservation



Alexandria Thomas, MS, UK College of Public Health PhD student, presented *Per and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances (PFAS) in Soil near a Hazardous Waste Incinerator in Appalachian OH*.

Kelly Owens, Director, Southern Kentucky AHEC, UK-CARES Community Engagement Core (CEC) Stakeholder Advisory Board (SAB) presented *Advancing Radon Awareness: Leveraging Citizen Science, Health Coalitions, Library Loan Programs, and Targeted Mass Outreach to Engage Communities*.



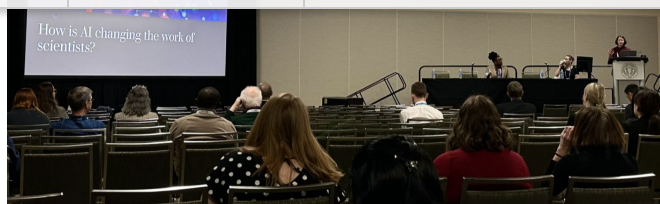
Craig Wilmhoff, Professor, Hazard Community College and UK-CARES CEC team member, won first place in the poster contest. His poster, *Engaging Youth Citizen Scientists in Genetic Testing of Rural Appalachian Streams*, was a UK-CARES funded community engagement grant that he led along with faculty member, Dr. Scott Berry.

Elliot Bloomer, MHA, UK-CARES Project Manager brought home the biggest win of the day as 1st prize raffle winner; award presented by the Center of Excellence in Rural Health.



Drs. Hollie Swanson, Cetewayo Rashid, and Patrick Hannon Attend the 64th Annual Society of Toxicology (SOT) Meeting & ToxExpo in Orlando, Florida

UK-CARES was well represented at the **64th Annual Society of Toxicology (SOT) Meeting & ToxExpo** in Orlando, Florida, this March with UK-CARES Deputy Director, [Dr. Hollie Swanson](#), along with [Dr. Cetewayo Rashid](#) and [Dr. Patrick Hannon](#). The event linked students, professors, mentees, mentors, colleagues, industry leaders, and representatives from pharmaceutical and business sectors across the globe, with the shared commitment of advancing toxicological sciences. **Congratulations to UK grad students** who presented their research! All five represented UK with their outstanding abstracts and exceptional research presentations, showcasing the remarkable talent and dedication within the UK student community. [>Learn more](#)



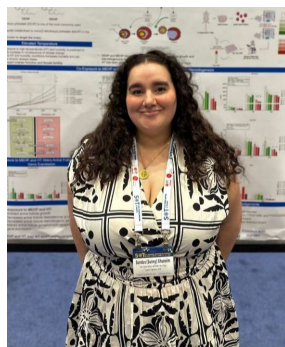
Dr. Hollie Swanson presents AI's impact on science at a SOT symposium



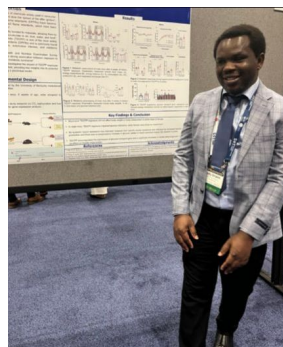
Dr. Kelly Oriakhi, Postdoc, and **Krystal Sewell**, PC Student with their mentor, **Dr. Cetewayo Rashid**



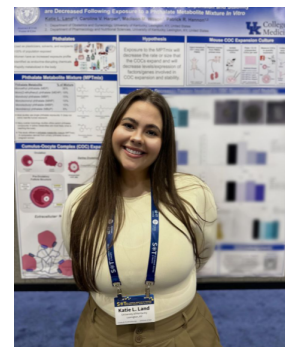
Brittany Williams, 3rd place winner, Reproductive & Development Toxicology Specialty & **Dr. Patrick Hannon**



Sundrus Ghuneim, SOT Graduate Student Travel Award & Arab Toxicologists Associate Best Abstract



Dr. Kelly Oriakhi, Postdoc Rashid Lab



UK Hannon Lab, **Katie Land**, Presenter

Member Publications

Lu T, Kim SY, Marshall JD. High-Resolution Geospatial Database: National Criteria-Air-Pollutant Concentrations in the Contiguous U.S., 2016-2020. *Geosci Data J.* 2025 Apr;12(2):e70005. doi: 10.1002/gdj3.70005. Epub 2025 Apr 7. PMID: 40256251; PMCID: PMC12007897. [>View publication](#)

Kim C, Hilbert TJ, Brunst KJ, Mangino AA, Christian WJ, Parsons PJ, Palmer CD, Landero J, Westneat S, Papautsky I, Dietrich KN, Haynes EN. Impact of manganese and metal mixtures in blood, hair, and soil on child adaptive behaviors in Southeast Side Chicago. *Environ Res.* 2025 Aug 1;278:121637. doi: 10.1016/j.envres.2025.121637. Epub 2025 Apr 16. PMID: 40250593; PMCID: PMC12124939.

*in collaboration with Mt. Sinai's NIEHS P30 Center [>View publication](#)

Land KL, Ghuneim SM, Williams BA, Hannon PR. IMPACT OF REAL-LIFE ENVIRONMENTAL EXPOSURES ON REPRODUCTION: Phthalates disrupt female reproductive health: a call for enhanced investigation into mixtures. *Reproduction.* 2025 Jan 9;169(2):e240117. doi: 10.1530/REP-24-0117. PMID: 39555988; PMCID: PMC11969576. [>View publication](#)

REMINDER

Cite UK-CARES in publications that can be connected with P30.

"This publication or project was supported by UK-CARES through Grant P30 ES026529. Its contents are solely the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official views of the NIEHS."

Recognizing Member Success
Congratulations on Outstanding Accomplishments!

Misti Allison was recognized for her Public Health Advocacy. As an East Palestine resident and current Columbiana County Health District Board member, Misti was recently nominated for a **2025 Community Engagement Award in Environmental Health Award in Environmental Health Sciences**. [>Learn more](#)



Pictured L-R: Juan Canedo, Hisashi Sawada, Cassandra Gipson-Reichardt, Lindsey Fay, Nicholas Teets. Photo courtesy of UK Office of Undergraduate Research

[Dr. Cassandra Gipson-Reichardt](#) and [Lindsey Fay](#) were honored for their **Excellence in Undergraduate Research Mentoring**. Presented each year by the [Office of Undergraduate Research](#), this student-nominated award recognizes UK faculty members who demonstrate an outstanding commitment to mentoring undergraduate researchers, providing exceptional undergraduate research experiences, as well as supporting and promoting undergraduate research initiatives on campus. [>Learn more](#)

Media Moments

Our Members in the News

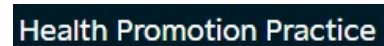


LEXINGTON HERALD LEADER

25 to Watch in 2025: Dr. Loka Ashwood

UK-CARES member, [Dr. Loka Ashwood](#) is a sociologist and professor at the University of Kentucky. She is one of the Herald-Leader's **25 People to Watch in 2025**. [>Learn more](#)

Pilot Project Funded by UK-CARES Draws Wide Media Coverage



Exploratory pilot study engages community health workers to test drone-based package delivery system for personal protective equipment in high-risk Appalachia's population. The pilot study was a collaborative effort between the University of Kentucky's Center of Excellence in Rural Health (CERH) in Hazard, Kentucky, the U.S. Drone Port and Kentucky Homeplace, a community health worker (CHW) program part of CERH. [>Learn more](#)



Dr. Fran Feltner, Former Director of CERH



Community health workers,
Chyna Smith and Carole Frazier

Have a Success Story?

UK-CARES is excited to celebrate you! Share your amazing achievements and impactful research to be featured in our newsletter. Inspire others in our communities with your success stories! Email us at: UKCares1@uky.edu

Disaster Response

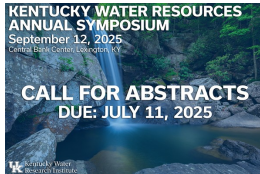
May 2025 KY Tornado Relief Information



Several Appalachian communities in the state of Kentucky were tragically impacted by an EF4 Tornado on May 15-16, 2025.

In an effort to spread awareness and to help these communities, the ATRN Communications Committee has compiled a list of resources and services. **Find out how you can donate or help today!** [>Learn more](#)

UPCOMING EVENTS



The **Kentucky Water Research Institute (KWRI)** invites abstract submissions for platform or poster presentations describing recent or ongoing water-related work (e.g., research, practice, education). Deadline to submit to kwri@uky.edu by July 11, 2025. [>Learn more](#)



The **2025 Joint Annual Meeting of the International Society of Exposure Science and the International Society for Environmental Epidemiology** will be held in Atlanta, Georgia, August 17-20, 2025. Late breaking abstracts for *e-poster presentation* can be submitted [here](#). Deadline: June 30, 2025.



The **Santiago Exposome Symposium** will be held September 25-27, 2025, in Santiago, Chile. Themed "Integrating Environmental Exposures into Aging, Alzheimer's Disease and ADRD Research," the symposium will bring together leading scientists in Alzheimer's Disease and Related Dementias (ADRD), Environmental Health, and Exposomics. [>Learn more](#)



UK-CARES will be hosting the next annual meeting of the **National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences (NIEHS) Environmental Health Science Core Centers (EHSCC)**. This annual meeting is for leading environmental health professionals from over 20 academic institutions and leading scientists from institutions who conduct research on the critical connection between environmental exposures and human health.



UK Center for the Environment will be hosting the next annual **2026 John P Wyatt MD Environment & Health Symposium** on April 22, 2026, Earth Day, at the UK Gatton Student Center [>Learn more](#)



UAccel +I-Corps Program offers professional development and an experiential learning opportunity to innovators who are interested in learning the best commercialization path for their solutions. Virtual program runs 3x a year: Spring, Summer, and Fall. Fall applications open in August. [>Learn more](#)



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Outreach Support

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- Epidemiology & Public Health Methodologies

[Research Support Portal](#)

Prospective UK-CARES
Members must demonstrate a
commitment to the
Center mission & vision
and participate in Center events.

[To Learn More or Apply](#)

We recognize the National Institute
of Environmental Health Sciences
(Grant P30 ES026529) for their
generous support.

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