Dr. Erik Storholm is a passionate researcher and clinical psychologist who has spent decades honing skills to serve marginalized communities through health and behavioral interventions, specifically among people at risk for, or living with HIV. As a CSU alumnus, his breadth of research and clinical skills to work at RAND Health, a think tank in Santa Monica, where he spent the last 5 years leading several NIH-funded projects focused on HIV prevention. He has multiple capacities. He serves as an adjunct professor and as a member of the Graduate School of Public Health (GSPH)/University of California San Diego (UCSD) Preventive Medicine Residency.

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, Dr. Wooten and SD HHSA leveraged strategic partnerships with local government, schools, businesses, and community-lead-based organizations to build capacity for COVID-19 education, outreach, and prevention. Dr. Wooten has navigated difficult situations with local, state and federal government officials, including an unexpected amount of vitriol from some County residents in regards to mask mandates and other public health interventions. Nonetheless, the urgency of the pandemic has not stopped her from continuing a number of important health initiatives around Hepatitis C, Tuberculosis, HIV and Opioid use and Perinatal Equity.

Dr. Wooten continues to serve SDSU SPH in multiple capacities. She serves as an adjunct professor and as a member of the Alumni Feature

Dr. Wilma Wooten

Dr. Wilma Wooten, Public Health Officer and Director of Public Health Services in the County of San Diego Health and Human Services Agency (HHSA), is being honored by the SDSU, with our first annual alumni award for her immense contribution to public health across San Diego over the years and during the global COVID-19 pandemic. Although she has served in her current role with San Diego HHSA since 2007, she became a household name when the San Diego Union-Tribune voted her 2020 San Diegan of the Year, navigating our communities through the political, emotional, and logistical challenges of COVID-19. Dr. Wooten will be honored in a ceremony that will take place Friday, April 9 at 3pm.

Dr. Wooten, who grew up in rural Alabama, dreamed of becoming a physician. When she attended Spelman College, she started in a work-study program that taught her the value of hard work and while paying for her tuition. She went on to receive professional degrees from the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, then residency training at the Georgetown/Providence Hospital Family Practice Residency Program in 1989. She was also an alumna of the joint San Diego State University (SDSU), Graduate School of Public Health (GSPH)/University of California San Diego (UCSD) Preventive Medicine Resident.

“2020 San Diegan of the Year,” navigating our communities through the political, emotional, and logistical challenges of COVID-19. Dr. Wooten has navigated difficult situations with local, state and federal government officials, including an unexpected amount of vitriol from some County residents in regards to mask mandates and other public health interventions. Nonetheless, the urgency of the pandemic has not stopped her from continuing a number of important health initiatives around Hepatitis C, Tuberculosis, HIV and Opioid use and Perinatal Equity.

Dr. Wilma Wooten, Public Health Officer and Director of Public Health Services in the County of San Diego Health and Human Services Agency (HHSA), is being honored by the SDSU, with our first annual alumni award for her immense contribution to public health across San Diego over the years and during the global COVID-19 pandemic. Although she has served in her current role with San Diego HHSA since 2007, she became a household name when the San Diego Union-Tribune voted her 2020 San Diegan of the Year, navigating our communities through the political, emotional, and logistical challenges of COVID-19.

Dr. Wooten was excited to join the San Diego State University School of Public Health because he always knew he wanted to rejoin the California State University System to continue his work in sexual and reproductive health. He has multiple capacities. He serves as an adjunct professor and as a member of the

Dr. Erik Storholm

Dr. Storholm is a passionate researcher and clinical psychologist who has spent decades honing skills to serve marginalized communities through health and behavioral interventions, specifically among people at risk for, or living with HIV. As a CSU alumnus, his journey in academia began while working toward his Bachelor degree at San Francisco State University, where he took a "Psychology of Social Justice" course, which sparked a passion for working with marginalized communities. Storholm served the LGBTQ+ community by volunteering with San Francisco STOP AIDS Project, providing sexual health outreach for LGBTQ+ individuals and later with Project Angel Food - a food-delivery service for individuals living with HIV or terminal illnesses in Los Angeles. Motivated to do more, he continued on to earn his Masters in Psychology at California State University, Long Beach during which time he conducted harm reduction counseling and research with persons who were experiencing homelessness as part of a homelessness service use, and engaging in sexual work at a community research center/homeless bank in downtown Long Beach where he provided sexual health counseling and STI testing.

This experience fostered a longing for clinical training, pushing Storholm to pursue his PhD in Psychology at New York University. During his doctoral studies, he worked on a longitudinal cohort study following over 600 sexual minority men as they transitioned into adulthood, tracking both protective and risk factors in relation to health outcomes for this population. He then completed a two year postdoctoral fellowship in substance abuse treatment research at the University of California, San Francisco before taking his breadth of research and clinical skills to work at RAND Health.
Anah Esquerio is a 1st year Masters in Public Health - Epidemiology student. For her undergraduate degree, Anah received her Bachelor of Science in Global Health from University of California, San Diego (UCSD) in June 2020, where she was the recipient of a Chancellor’s Associates Scholarship. While at UCSD, Anah was the Co-Director of Student Promoted Access Center for Education and Services (SPACES), a student-led program that focuses on resource access and school retention, particularly for underserved students. Anah also was co-chair of the Native American Student Alliance and Native Retention Coordinator at SPACES.

After beginning her MPH program SDSU in the Fall 2020, Anah was recruited to serve on a team with UCSD researchers for the California American Indian Tobacco Initiative Evaluation (CAITIE), which is evaluating the impact of funding aimed at reducing tobacco use in Native American communities. While Anah had served as an intern for CAITIE since February of 2020, she took the new role as a program survey worker in August 2020. In this role, she built systematic approaches to contacting Native American leaders and communities, and conducted qualitative interviews with these contacts using a code book she created using Native American literature and research.

In 2021, Anah has been selected to join the competitive ASPPH Student Leadership Institute (SLI). SLI is an honor for students nominated by faculty to join student leaders from across the U.S. in leadership skill-building and networking.

Sandhya is expanding her research experience by joining Dr. Kristen Emory on a qualitative study on health in the sex trade industry in Zambia. Sandhya also hones her leadership skills by serving as the Co-Chair of Fundraising for the Student for Public Health student organization, where she has successfully raised $500 to be donated to ICU Nurses, Making Strides against Breast Cancer, and the UCSD Medical Center. During the fall semester of 2020, Sandhya interned at the County of San Diego’s Live Well San Diego, where she developed and led listening sessions with community partners and youth groups. She even hosted an event called “Let’s Hear from Youth! Engaging Youth Voices at San Diego County” at the annual Live Well Advance Conference in 2020.

Sandhya plans to pursue a Masters in Public Health in Epidemiology, with the hopes of becoming a community health specialist or an epidemiologist. With much of her program ahead, Sandhya is looking forward to upper divisional courses and field placement learning opportunities to solidify her future goals. In her spare time, Sandhya is an activist for movements addressing health disparities such as Black Lives Matter, They can't burn us all (Asian-American movement against hate crimes), and Farmer Protests in India.

The School of Public Health will be celebrating its 40th Anniversary on April 5 to April 11, 2021, all events will be taken place remotely. Please see our website for the agenda and exciting details, including our anniversary video roll-out!