Leadership

Susan “Sue” Kendig, JD, WHNP-BC, FAANP
Council Vice Chair

Susan Kendig, JD, WHNP-BC, FAANP is a Women’s Health Integration Specialist with SSM Health – St. Mary’s Hospital in St. Louis, Missouri. Prior to joining SSM Health she was a teaching professor at the University of Missouri-St. Louis, where she led the Women’s Health Nurse Practitioner program for almost two decades. Active in public service, she has held appointments to CMS Medicare Evidence Development & Coverage Advisory Committee (MEDCAC) and served on the National Quality Forum Measures Application Partnership (NQF MAP) Medicaid Adult Workgroup and NQF’s Social Determinants of Health Data Integration Workgroup. Statewide she served as an appointee to the Missouri Commission on Patient Safety, the Missouri Health Connection Board of Directors, and the Missouri Task Force on Prematurity and Infant Mortality. Sue served on the Council on Patient Safety in Women’s Health Care (the Council) for seven years and is an active member of the Alliance for Innovation in Maternal Health (AIM) national partners group and Executive Committee. She has significant experience in patient safety bundle development, serving as co-lead in developing the Maternal Mental Health, Post-Partum: From Birth to the Comprehensive Postpartum Visit, and Post-Partum Basics: Maternity Transition to Well Woman Care patient safety bundles. Sue is a member of the Women’s Preventive Services (WPSI) Advisory Panel, which guides a HRSA funded collaborative interdisciplinary effort to develop, review, update and disseminate recommendations for women’s preventive health care services. She is committed to the concept of clinical and community integration as a tool to improve women’s health outcomes, and to optimize the quality and efficiency of health care service delivery. To this end, she has provided technical assistance to integrated primary care medical home/behavioral health home and other value-based care initiatives, and collective impact infant mortality reduction efforts in urban and rural communities. At home in St. Louis, Sue is honored to support local health initiatives through service on the St. Louis City Board of Health and Hospitals, and as a founding member and Board of Directors Chairperson for Generate Health STL, a St. Louis based coalition dedicated to achieving “zero racial disparities“ in birth outcomes.
Women’s Health Council

Central Region

Dr. Karen Edison is an advocate for patient-centered health care having cared for rural, underserved dermatology patients using telemedicine throughout Missouri since 1995. She served as RWJ Health Policy Fellow in the US Senate where she was instrumental in the legislative expansion of Medicare reimbursement for telemedicine services. She has helped lead work with the state on health insurance access, telemedicine policy, and Medicaid data analysis, and has led efforts funded by regional foundations to improve health equity and foster health literacy for all Missourians. She served as clinical lead for Missouri’s highly successful Regional Extension Center and she serves on the Executive Committee of the Missouri Health Connection, Missouri’s state-designated health information organization. Edison’s current titles include Professor Emerita of the Department of Dermatology, Senior Medical Director of the Missouri Telehealth Network & Show-Me ECHO and Senior Medical Director of the Center for Health Policy at the University of Missouri.

Colleen Coble

Colleen Coble is the Chief Executive Officer of the Missouri Coalition Against Domestic and Sexual Violence, a position she has held since 1988. For more than 35 years she has been an advocate for women and their children victimized by violence, and an educator on progressive approaches to community interventions to address violence against women. As a public policy advocate since 1989, Coble has obtained passage of major legislation benefiting abused and raped women: a far-reaching domestic violence arrest statute; adding lack of consent to felony rape crimes; establishment of the crime of domestic assault; criminalization of marital rape and stalking; first-time state funding for domestic and sexual violence services; funding for sexual assault evidence exams; local funding initiatives for domestic violence shelters; custody and visitation changes to protect battered women and their children; protection orders for sexual assault victims; and statewide collection of law enforcement and homicide data on domestic violence crimes. In 2009, Coble was awarded the Diane Reese Award by the National Network to End Domestic Violence for her “outstanding commitment to social justice and advocacy for battered women.” Coble is a founding member of the Missouri Battered Women’s Clemency Coalition and she received the Women’s Justice Award for Citizenship in 2010 (Missouri Lawyers Weekly). That same year, she also served on the Attorney General’s Task Force on Domestic Violence established to review and revise 30 years of Missouri domestic violence laws, with the subsequent 2011 legislation passing in the Missouri General Assembly with a unanimous vote. Coble has been appointed by the Missouri Supreme Court and multiple governors to serve on various statewide bodies, committees and task forces to address gender issues in Missouri. Educated as a journalist at the University of Missouri School of Journalism, Coble covered issues of government and human needs as a newspaper reporter.
Emily van Schenkhof is the Executive Director of the Children’s Trust Fund, Missouri’s foundation for child abuse prevention. Van Schenkhof has a Master of Public Health from the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill, and she earned undergraduate degrees in Journalism and Political Science from the University of Missouri-Columbia. Previously van Schenkhof worked at Missouri KidsFirst, serving as Deputy Director where she successfully advocated and advanced policy and services to strengthen child abuse prevention. Her work also resulted in improved services to support children and families in the child welfare and mental health systems.

Dr. Melissa Terry is a full-time practicing OB/GYN physician at the University of Missouri in Columbia, MO, currently serving as the Associate Division Director for the General OB/GYN Division, Associate Director of Inpatient Obstetrics and an Assistant Professor in Clinical OB/GYN and Women’s Health. She graduated from the University of Missouri School of Medicine in 2000 and immediately went on active duty in the U.S. Army, completing her residency in OB/GYN at Madigan Army Medical Center in Tacoma, WA. Her first duty assignment after graduating from residency in 2004 was to the 212th MASH in Miesau, Germany, and she deployed to Pakistan in support of Operation Enduring Freedom in 2005. She left the U.S. Army in 2015 after serving for 15 years and achieving the rank of Lieutenant Colonel. During her military career, she served as the Chief of Obstetrics and Gynecology at both Fort Belvoir Community Hospital and Eisenhower Army Medical Center, as well as an Assistant Professor in OB/GYN at the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences; and she was awarded the Defense Meritorious Service Medal, as well as the Army Meritorious Service Medal (x2). She returned to the University of Missouri in 2015, passionate about training future OB/GYN physicians and improving healthcare for all Missouri women.
Wendy Doyle

Wendy advances all women’s economic and civic leadership using evidenced-based research and policy solutions to make meaningful change in the Midwest. Wendy’s nonprofit career began as a national major gifts officer with the National Kidney Foundation, Inc. She worked as a nonprofit consultant who focused on board development and strategic planning. She later served as the Executive Vice President of Catholic Charities of Northeast Kansas.

Wendy earned a B.A. from Rockhurst University in Kansas City, Missouri, and she serves on the Missouri Women’s Health Council, the Missouri Foundation for Health’s Missouri Opportunity Incubator, a Junior League of Kansas City Missouri’s C3KC Advisor, the University of Missouri – Kansas City Starr Education Committee, and Park University Civic Advisory Council.

Bridget McCandless, MD, MBA, FACP

Dr. Bridget McCandless is a retired physician. She previously served as the President and CEO of the Health Forward Foundation which focused on leadership, advocacy and provision of resources to eliminate barriers and promote quality health for uninsured and underserved residents in the Greater Kansas City area. The Foundation made more than $300 million in investments for healthy communities, safety net and mental health services. McCandless currently serves on the Missouri Medicaid Oversight Committee. She recently served on the Healthy KC Commission, the Urban Neighborhood Initiative and the American College of Physicians Health and Public Policy Committee. McCandless received an MD from the University of Missouri-Columbia School of Medicine, completed her residency in Internal Medicine at the University of Virginia and received an MBA in Health Care Leadership from Rockhurst University. She has a special interest in advocacy, chronic disease management, poverty medicine, health policy and population health. Prior to joining the Health Forward Foundation, she served as founder and Medical Director of the Shared Care Free Clinic.
Eboni January, MD

Dr. Eboni January is a board certified Obstetrician/Gynecologist from East St Louis, Illinois. She graduated with a Bachelor of Science degree in Biology with a minor in Chemistry and Anthropology from the University of Missouri-Columbia. She went on to participate in the Medprep post baccalaureate program at Southern University of Illinois-Carbondale. From there she received her Medical degree in 2010 from Wright State University-Boonshoft School of Medicine in Dayton, Ohio. She completed her residency training at Mercy Hospital-St. Louis. January has a strong interest in adolescent care, preventative medicine, mentorship and fitness. She established a “text coaching” fitness program in 2016 in an effort to decrease obesity amongst her patient population. This program is now available to the general public and was recently featured in Gazelle Magazine, The St. Louis Argus, Fox 2, and on KTSP.com. In June 2017 she was featured in Delux Magazine’s “50 Most Intriguing Women in St. Louis.” January’s passion is youth mentorship. She has been mentoring for over 10 years. In spring 2017 she launched her “Mobile Mentoring” program, where students get daily tips via text on how to become successful both inside and outside the classroom. January is the co-CEO of Pavlov’s Wellness Firm, a company focused on instituting health and wellness in small businesses and large corporations. In 2015, January helped promote a childhood obesity campaign alongside Olympic gold medalist, Jackie Joyner Kersee. Her health and wellness podcast, “The Wellness Wheel” at CBS Radio, aims to introduce all communities to a holistic approach to wellness by inviting celebrity guests to discuss different areas of wellness.

Katherine Mathews, MD, MPH, MBA

Dr. Katherine Mathews works with the Department of Obstetrics, Gynecology, and Women’s Health at Saint Louis University as the Research Division Director. As an obstetrician-gynecologist with a background in public health, international work and health care administration, she has dedicated her career to improving community health and the delivery of high quality, evidence-based and cost effective health care with a focus on low-income and minority populations. For 10 years she served as full-time faculty at the Washington University School of Medicine. During the early 2000s, she built the Siteman Cancer Center’s public health programs to improve access to cancer screening and care. She served four years as Chief Medical Officer at St. Louis ConnectCare, the specialty care organization of the region’s safety net and was co-director of Washington University’s Center for Community Based Research. She also served as Director of Clinical Services at Casa de Salud where she oversaw clinical operations, student internships and education and research partnerships. She is currently the Research Division Director for the Department of Obstetrics, Gynecology, and Women’s Health at Saint Louis University, and she continues to work on a variety of initiatives with a focus on improving pregnancy outcomes.
Mary McLennan, MD

Dr. Mary McLennan has had the privilege of being a physician for 36 years. Her medical school training was at the University of Queensland, Australia. She initially trained as a family physician and practiced in a small county town. Most of her practice involved the care of women and children. Thus on moving to the U.S., she decided to pursue training as an obstetrician and gynecologist. During her training she developed an interest in the treatment of incontinence and pelvic floor disorders and completed a fellowship in Urogynecology. Most of McLennan’s career has been spent in academic medicine, with the past 21 years at Saint Louis University. Most of this time was focused on treating patients and being the residency program director. For the past five years, she has been the Chair of the department. As such, her interests have diversified into establishing programs across the spectrum of both obstetrics and gynecology, providing access to all patients, promoting academic development for the faculty and training for the residents and students. Her department sees a large volume of underserved patients, and one of the greatest challenges is how to provide interval and gynecological care to this group. St. Louis has a higher than the national average rate of perinatal mortality, so McLennan and her team face many challenges.

Denise Wilfley, PhD

Dr. Denise Wilfley is the Scott Rudolph University Professor of Psychiatry, Medicine, Pediatrics and Psychological & Brain Sciences and Director of the Center for Healthy Weight and Wellness at Washington University. She has been awarded more than $60 million in National Institutes of Health (NIH) funding and published more than 300 scientific articles. Wilfley is an international authority on the causes, prevention, and treatment of obesity and eating disorders, and the integrative approach she employs has resulted in transformative research in both fields. She has established effective interventions that help children and families improve their eating and activity behaviors, as well as psychosocial and weight outcomes. She has made substantial contributions to establishing the clinical significance of binge eating disorder, developing effective treatments for individuals suffering from eating disorders and obesity, such as interpersonal psychotherapy, and developing innovative and cost-effective methods for early intervention and prevention including a comprehensive digital platform for individuals across the eating disorders risk and diagnostic spectrum. Wilfley has held numerous prominent roles including serving as a member of the American Psychological Association’s Guideline Development Panel for Obesity, President of the Eating Disorders Research Society, and Chair of the Pediatric Obesity Section of The Obesity Society. She currently serves as a member of the NIH Center for Scientific Review Advisory Council, Advisor to the American Academy of Pediatrics Institute for Healthy Childhood Weight, and Vice-Chair of the Missouri Eating Disorders Council. Her awards include NIH career awards, the Missouri Eating Disorders Association Founder’s Award, and The Obesity Society’s Oded Bar-Or Award for Excellence in Pediatric Obesity Research.
Denise Willers, MD

Dr. Denise Willers is an Associate Professor of Obstetrics and Gynecology at Washington University in St. Louis. Willers has been caring for patients and teaching students and residents at Washington University since 2004. She serves as the Medical Director of the Barnes-Jewish Hospital OB/GYN Resident and Nurse Practitioner Clinic, which serves as a safety net for women from St. Louis and surrounding urban and rural areas. Willers is also a staff physician for The SPOT (Supporting Positive Opportunities with Teens), a free medical clinic affiliated with Washington University, providing care for adolescents. Willers is passionate about helping women of all ages advocate for themselves and their families to make the best choices for their health and in their relationships.

Rachel Winograd, PhD

Rachel Winograd, PhD, is an Associate Research Professor at the University of Missouri St. Louis - Missouri Institute of Mental Health. She received her doctorate in clinical psychology from the University of Missouri, Columbia, and completed her doctoral internship with the VA St. Louis Healthcare System. Her clinical, research, and program development interests revolve around alcohol and drug use, consequences, and treatment. Dr. Winograd is the Project Director of Missouri’s State Opioid Response grants and the Missouri Heroin-Opioid Prevention and Education (MO-HOPE) Project. She also serves in evaluative and consultant roles on other addiction-focused projects spanning the St. Louis region and state of Missouri. Grant partners include the Missouri Department of Mental Health, Department of Health and Senior Services, Washington University Medical School, the St. Louis County Department of Public Health, the St. Louis City Circuit Attorney’s Office, and multiple health-related associations and non-profits in the region. Her primary focus is on expanding access to medical treatment and harm reduction strategies for those most in need of evidence-based care for opioid use disorders in Missouri.
Sheryl Lynette “Ms. Sherry” Maxwell

Sheryl Lynette Branch-Maxwell, affectionately and respectfully known throughout the state of Missouri as “Ms. Sherry”, is a long-time community servant with a passion for helping children, youth and teens. Over the past 30 years, Maxwell has been an anchor, innovator and pillar of strength for Missourians in the Southeast Region of the state. Maxwell’s history of community service began in 1979 when she started her career in early childhood education working in daycare facilities and Head Start programs. As a result, Maxwell began directing summer food programs while she simultaneously initiated and developed numerous partnerships with community, local and state organizations for the direct benefit of the Bootheel. She currently works for Lincoln University Cooperative Extension Charleston Outreach Center in Charleston, Missouri. Maxwell provides leadership through program development and outreach for at-risk youth and their families. Her achievements include founding programs for children and families throughout the Southeast Missouri region, from Kids’ Beat, Kiddie Kidz and Kidz of Distinction, Reel Fathers-Real Men, The Beat Goes On, and B.A.T.T.E.R. U.P. These programs reach children of all ages, as well as their parents and families and include senior citizens in The Beat Goes On program. Maxwell has also served on several gubernatorial boards and commissions for the State of Missouri. She was appointed by the late Governor Mel Carnahan to serve on the African-American Task Force, by former Governor Bob Holden to serve on the Missouri Commission for Volunteerism, and most recently, by former Governor Matt Blunt, where she served as a member of the Missouri Children’s Trust.

Sandra Jackson, EdD, LCSW, BCD

Dr. Sandra Jackson is a licensed clinical social worker with board certified diplomat status. She received her master’s in social work from Fordham University in New York City, New York and doctorate of education from Nova Southeastern University in Fort Lauderdale, Florida. Jackson has been the Local Recovery Coordinator at John J. Pershing VA Medical Center in Poplar Bluff, Missouri since June 2007. She also serves as the Local Evidence-Based Psychotherapy Coordinator and a national consultant for Prolonged Exposure Therapy for PTSD. Jackson serves as Chair of Missouri Department of Mental Health Advisory Council on Alcohol and Drug Abuse. Prior to joining the VA, Jackson held both clinical and administrative duties in various settings including community mental health, residential care and public school systems. She has dedicated her life to helping individuals, groups, couples and families to develop better ways of managing emotional stress, recovering from trauma and resolving conflict. In addition to direct clinic work, Jackson is a college instructor.
Karlyle Christian-Ritter attended University of Missouri-Kansas City’s six-year combined BA/MD program. Her pediatric residency was completed at Creighton University and her Neonatal Fellowship at Cardinal Glennon Children’s Hospital in St. Louis. She and her husband moved to Springfield, Missouri in 1994. Christian-Ritter practiced at St. John’s Mercy for three years and then had the opportunity to join the faculty at University of Nebraska/Creighton University, working with medical students and residents at an Assistant Professor Level in a quaternary care clinical setting. In 2002, she and her family moved to Cape Girardeau. With one other neonatologist, Christian-Ritter opened the only Level III Neonatal Intensive Care Unit between St. Louis and Memphis as well as the NICU transport system/team. Today the NICU is a thriving unit caring for the infants of Southeast Missouri, Southern Illinois, Western Kentucky, and Northern Arkansas. She is the Director of Cape Neonatology and the Medical Director of the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit at Saint Francis Medical Center. The unit fosters medical advancement and has made great strides in antibiotic exposure reduction, reduction in pharmacotherapy for the treatment of NAS and has received the Aim for Excellence Award from the Missouri Hospital Association for necrotizing enterocolitis reduction. Particular clinical interests of Christian-Ritter include Pulmonary Hypertension, Antibiotic Stewardship, Infant Safe Sleep Practices and Infant Mortality Reduction.
Paula Baker

Paula Baker is President and Chief Executive Officer of Freeman Health System, providing vision and direction for the three-hospital, 460-bed health system headquartered in Joplin, Missouri. Baker previously served as Chief Executive Officer of Ozark Center, Freeman’s behavioral health division, where she was the guiding force behind the development of the Bill & Virginia Leffen Center for Autism. She continues to provide executive leadership for the autism program. Honors include the Missouri Hospital Association Visionary Leadership Award; Joplin Citizen of the Year; Pittsburg State University Outstanding Alumni; Pittsburg State University Meritorious Achievement Award; Making a Difference to Women Award; 2008 Women of Distinction; Hero in Healthcare Award; Ten Most Influential Women; recognition by the Missouri House of Representatives for distinguished leadership in behavioral health care and designation as 2014 PAC Champion for Missouri Hospital Association Southwest District. Most recently, Baker received the Grassroots Champion Award from the American Hospital Association. Additionally, Baker was appointed to the Task Force for Examining Statewide Medicaid Delivery Models, the American Hospital Association Regional Policy Board and the Missouri Commission on Autism Spectrum Disorders. She serves on the Pittsburg State University Foundation Board of Trustees and on the boards of Ronald McDonald House Charities of the Four States, Arvest Bank, Connect-2-Culture, Joplin Regional Prosperity Initiative Advisory Council, Landmark Hospital-Joplin, Missouri Hospital Association, Healthcare Services Group, Vizient Mid-America and Mid-America Service Solutions, LLC. Baker holds a bachelor’s degree in secondary education and a master’s in clinical psychology from Pittsburg State University.

Katie Towns, MPH

Katie Towns graduated with a Bachelor of Science in Sports Medicine/Athletic Training and later a Master’s of Public Health from Missouri State University. After many years’ experience in public health and health care, Towns currently serves as the Assistant Director at the Springfield-Greene County Health Department in Springfield, Missouri. In this role, Towns has assisted in leading the department through PHAB accreditation as well as an unprecedented effort to develop a regional Community Health Needs Assessment and Community Health Improvement Plan in partnership with local health care systems. This effort has prompted a new community effort to drive cross-sectoral work that develops systems and policies that incorporate health as an element of developing Springfield’s infrastructure and culture.