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## Spring/Summer 2022 STAR Community Link



### New Books Feature the Lived Experiences of Women in the HIV Community



Yvette Harris and Jennifer Brier, PhD

Since the beginning of the HIV epidemic, women have had to fight for recognition as a group of people living with HIV (PLWH) in the US. They have also had to fight to be remembered—which is why there are critical efforts underway to document the lived experiences of women in the HIV community through oral histories and memoirs. Creating oral histories and memoirs enables women to record and preserve their life stories. Oral histories not only enrich our understanding of the HIV epidemic; they also help to correct assumptions and stereotypes about PLWH, as well as the larger HIV community. A memoir is a written record of a life, created by the person who lived that life, based on memory and reflection. It may be written near the end of a person's life, or a series of memoirs may be created over a lifetime. It may be written to explain or enhance a collection of documents, to provide an organizing narrative for them, or it may stand alone as the only record of a woman's life.

Two new projects document the lived experiences of women in the HIV community through oral histories and memoir. Both projects involve women from the original Women's Interagency HIV Study (WIHS). The NIH/NIAID-funded WIHS, established in 1993, was the largest and longest ongoing multi-city cohort study of women with and at risk for HIV in the US. Participants were representative of the population of women living within their geographical regions who were either living with HIV or vulnerable to HIV at the time of enrollment. WIHS sites, including Chicago, IL, Brooklyn, NY (at the STAR Program) and Chapel Hill, NC, were following over 2,100 participants, many of whom had been in the study for more than two decades. The study was merged in 2019 with the Multicenter AIDS Cohort Study (MACS) under a unified study comprising a cohort of men and women, known as the [MACS/WIHS Combined Cohort Study \(MACS/WIHS CCS\)](#).

The first project, [I'm Still Surviving](#), is a collaborative digital and print exhibition that launched in December 2020, featuring hundreds of excerpts documenting the stories of 39 women living with HIV in the US, almost all of whom are enrolled in the WIHS. These stories illustrate, in vivid detail, the women's collective experiences—illnesses, violence, and loss alongside joy, growth, and success. I'm Still Surviving is part of the [History Moves](#) project, which seeks to put the public into public history and engage people in becoming historians of their own lives. It was produced by Jennifer Brier, PhD, a professor of Gender and Women's Studies and History at the University of Illinois at Chicago, and Matt Wizinsky, MFA, a graphic designer on the faculty at the University of Cincinnati. Over a period of five years, Brier and Wizinsky worked with these women to interview each other, sorting through transcripts and old photographs, ultimately assembling it all in a series of books based on stories from Brooklyn, Chicago and North Carolina.

The MAC AIDS Foundation provided funding to expand the project out of Chicago and into North Carolina and Brooklyn, where it was led by Susan Holman, RN, MS, HIV Projects Director at the STAR Program. Following some pandemic-related interruptions, an official launch event for I'm Still Surviving was held at SUNY Downstate on May 18, 2022. The book launch featured several of the women who participated in the project at SUNY Downstate, along with Dr. Brier, Ms. Holman and MichelleAnn Joseph. The books are available as print on demand or free PDFs at <https://www.stillsurviving.net/read>

The second project, entitled "My Unexpected Life: An International Memoir of Two Pandemics, HIV and COVID-19," is a memoir by Martina Clark, a participant in the original San Francisco and Brooklyn cohorts of the WIHS, and the first openly HIV positive person to work at UNAIDS in 1996. Published in October 2021, Ms. Clark's memoir takes us on the journey of a woman born in the mid-sixties, diagnosed with HIV in the nineties and surviving COVID-19 in 2020. She describes her challenges living while being HIV positive and a woman. Ms. Clark worked for the United Nations system (including UNAIDS, UNICEF, and the Department of Peace Operations) for more than two decades, advocating globally for the rights of PLWH. Her collaborative work also led to a mandatory HIV In the Workplace program internal to the United Nations system, facilitating platforms for freer dialogue and a more supportive environment for all personnel, including LGBTQ, persons with disabilities, and other

marginally popular. She has traveled to more than 90 countries and conducted condom demonstrations in at least 50 of them. She now teaches writing, critical reading, and global poli-

through the College Now program at CUNY/LaGuardia Community College.

Ms. Clark holds a BA in International Relations from San Francisco State University and an MFA in Creative Writing and Literature from Stony Brook University. In addition to her memoir, she writes personal essays and travel narratives. My Unexpected Life is her first book. She is the winner of the 2021 POZ Award for Best Literature. Excerpts of the book, links to podcasts, and an online book launch can be found on her website: <https://martina-clark.com/>

Women's memoirs continue in the twenty-first century to be rare and precious documents. Many women do not have the ability or the opportunity to write their own stories. Many accounts are lost after creation. Too many women still believe that their stories are insignificant and not worth telling. Women need to be encouraged to create oral histories and memoirs of their own lives and of their mothers, grandmothers, aunts and friends. Only by creation of these types of records, and the donation of them to appropriate archives, will the richness and diversity of women's lives be represented in future history-making.



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### STAR Program Presentations at SUNY Downstate's Annual Patient Safety and Quality Fair

STAR Program faculty and staff authored poster presentations at SUNY Downstate's Annual Patient Safety and Quality Fair, held on March 16, 2022:

- "Linkage to Care and Viral Suppression Among People Living with HIV Released from Prison During the COVID-19 Pandemic," (authors: Lamont Bryant, BS, MPS and Jessica Yager, MD, MPH);
- "Provision of culturally aligned interdisciplinary prenatal care to women living with HIV," (author: Jennifer Clarke, CCMA, BS);
- "Using Quality Improvement Tools to Increase Rates of Medication Reconciliation at the STAR Health Center" (author: Lori Hurley, PhD, MPH, MSW);
- "Employing Patient Navigator Education to Mitigate COVID Associated Setbacks in Retention in Care among Persons Living with HIV" (author: Lori Hurley, PhD, MPH, MSW).



W. Marcus Lambert, Ph.D., Associate Vice President for Research Strategy and Operations at SUNY-DHSU

### BATES Youth Conference

The 28<sup>th</sup> Annual Brooklyn Association of Teen Educators (BATES) Youth Conference and Theater Festival was held on May 20, 2022, virtually on Zoom. Over one-hundred youth, service providers and community members attended the event. The theme was ***Reflections of You: Finding and Rebuilding Your Power.***

Participants joined from Albany and Rochester, NY, Atlanta, and Florida. Workshop topics focused on Youth and Mental Health, Healthy Relationships and Consent and LGBTQ Empowerment. The keynote speaker was Dr. Marcus Lambert, Associate Vice President for Research Strategy and Operations for SUNY Downstate Health Sciences University and Associate Professor in the School of Public Health (pictured above). He discussed the importance of youth programming, STEM engagement and community service. Highlights included theatrical performances from International Performers and LGBTQ Activists Jahlove Serrano and Berlin.



### SUNY Global Health Research Symposium

On April 22, 2022, the SUNY Global Center in New York City sponsored a SUNY Global Health Research Symposium. The hybrid in-person/distance meeting provided a forum for the SUNY campuses engaged in extramurally funded global health research to share their programs and explore opportunities for collaboration. The opening address, "NIH funding opportunities in academic global health research, challenges during COVID-19," was delivered by Peter H. Kilmarx, MD, FACP, FIDSA, Deputy Director of the NIH's Fogarty International Center. SUNY Downstate's Jack DeHovitz, MD, MPH, MHCDS, and SUNY Buffalo's Gene Morse, PharmD, FCCP, BCPS, co-founders of the SUNY Global Health Center, moderated a panel of in-country research investigators from Kazakhstan, Ukraine, Georgia, Zimbabwe, Jamaica, and Ecuador. The keynote address, "A Call to Action to Reform Global Health Partnerships," was delivered by the Hon. Keith Martin, MD, PC, Executive Director, Consortium of Universities for Global Health, in Washington, DC. In the afternoon, SUNY campus representatives presented highlights of their on-campus centers/institutes. The program was supported by the Office of the Senior Vice President for Research of SUNY Downstate Health Sciences University, David Christini, PhD.

## NATIONAL RYAN WHITE CONFERENCE ON HIV CARE & TREATMENT

### STAR Program Abstracts

Accepted at **2022 National Ryan White Conference on HIV Care & Treatment**

STAR Program faculty and staff from both sites (STAR-Downstate and STAR-Brookdale) submitted 2 abstracts that were accepted by the [2022 National Ryan White Conference on HIV Care & Treatment](#) (2022 NRWC). The conference will take place August 23, 2022-August 26, 2022.

1. "Innovative Multimedia Approaches to HIV Prevention & Treatment" will be presented as a 90-minute workshop (authors: Tracey Griffith, MHA; Jose Iorio; Magna Robinson, MA, LMHC, CASAC, ICADC, ADS; Kathleen Russell, MPH, JD; Jameela Yusuff, MD, MPH, MSHCDL, FACP);
2. "Closing Linkage-to-Care Gaps for Clients in Ryan White Program Clinics: The SPNS Rapid Start Initiative" (authors: SPNS Rapid Start

**Responsibilities:** Oversee all monitoring, reporting, and quality management activities of STAR-Brookdale projects related to the identification, engagement, and (re)linkage of people with HIV to HIV-related medical care and iART. Directly supervise the Care Manager, Outreach Specialist, Client Navigators, and Data Analyst, conducting ongoing evaluation of staff competency and chart-based reviews to ensure the quality-of-service delivery. Participate in multidisciplinary case conference meetings and other STAR Brookdale meetings, as

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	<p>submission of data reports. Ensure coordination of resources and logistics for ongoing staff training. Maintain ongoing communication with STAR Brookdale leadership to ensure coordination and integration of new services within STAR Brookdale and the larger Brookdale community. Act as a liaison with funder project officers and the NYC Department of Health Assess Connect and Engage (ACE) Team and participate in learning collaborative meetings with other grantees. Participate in STAR Program outreach and education efforts regarding HIV, HCV, behavioral health issues, and promotion of services. Contribute insights to local and regional working groups and collaboratives; establish and maintain relationships with agencies providing support services. Participate in the development of presentations and publications related to outcomes of the program evaluation. <b>Minimum Qualifications:</b> Bachelor's degree and at least 3 years of Public Health or direct service experience and 2 years of supervisory experience; master's degree in public health, social work, nursing, or related field strongly preferred and may substitute for 1 year of experience; exceptional interpersonal experience and organizational skills; experience working in multicultural, team-oriented settings preferred; experience managing grant-funded projects strongly preferred. Effective written, verbal, organizational, and interpersonal skills; strong analytical skills, experience using electronic health records and database systems are strongly preferred. <b>Salary Range:</b> \$65,000-\$75,000 annually, commensurate with education and experience. <b>Employer:</b> One Brooklyn Health. To apply, send resume and cover letter with salary requirements to: Jessica Yager, MD, MPH, Medical Director, STAR Program, <a href="mailto:jessica.yager@downstate.edu">jessica.yager@downstate.edu</a></p> <p><b>Behavioral Health Counselor (Counselor)</b></p> <p><b>Responsibilities:</b> Work with patients, families, peer advocates and mental health providers, to develop comprehensive service plans for clients with mental health and substance use disorders. Administer screening tools for mental health substance use, domestic violence, and trauma; provide individual and group counseling for clients both in-person and via telehealth. Refer patients for “wrap-around”/recovery support services such as housing, childcare, vocational, educational services. Coordinate service plans with behavioral health service providers and community-based organizations providing services to clients. Contribute to patients’ care plan development by regular attendance at case conferences. Record session notes and patient follow-up in the electronic health record. Participate in community-based outreach activities. Participate in ongoing quality improvement activities. Opportunities to contribute to the development of abstracts related to program outcomes and to present on these outcomes when accepted by professional conferences. <b>Minimum Qualifications:</b> New York State licensed social worker (LMSW/LCSW) or mental health counselor (LMHC). Minimum of 2 years’ experience providing substance abuse counseling. Experience utilizing solution-focused and cognitive behavioral treatment models. Strong written and verbal communication skills. Proficiency with Microsoft Office Suite and basic understanding and experience documenting in electronic health records (EHR). <b>Additional Preferred Qualifications:</b> Experience in the treatment of trauma. Experience with substance use, harm reduction and relapse prevention counseling. Previous training in Motivational Interviewing and/or Seeking Safety. Experience in the provision of counseling to LGBTQ and gender non-conforming populations. Experience with HIV+ and dually diagnosed populations. Familiarity with buprenorphine treatment protocol and providing supportive counseling for individuals prescribed buprenorphine. Experience with performance-based grant funded programs. Bilingual English/Spanish or English/Creole. <b>Salary Range:</b> \$60,000-\$68,000 annually. <b>Employer:</b> The Research Foundation for SUNY. To apply, send resume and cover letter with salary requirements to: Christopher Jimenez, LMHC, CASAC, Assistant Director, Substance Use Treatment Services, <a href="mailto:christopher.jimenez@downstate.edu">christopher.jimenez@downstate.edu</a></p> <p><b>Case Management Supervisor (Staff Associate SL-4)</b></p> <p><b>Responsibilities:</b> Develop, implement and maintain a comprehensive case management program that is compatible with STAR Health Center-Downstate and funder standards. Review existing case management policies and procedures and update them as needed to reflect current practices. Establish systems to monitor compliance with University Hospital and STAR-Downstate protocols. Direct the day-to-day operation of case management staff. Ensure continued professional development of case management staff through attendance at seminars, workshops and conferences. Ensure appropriate case management coverage. Problem-solve patient care processes and contact Behavioral Health Director as needed. Address patient complaints/in an effective manner to promote positive outcomes. Conduct and maintain records of weekly meetings to provide supervision and professional development. Develop systems to coordinate with other disciplines to effectively implement care plans. Communicate with inpatient staff, UHB subspecialty areas, and other programs to ensure continuity of care. Participate in interdisciplinary service plan development through leading daily case huddles with STAR-Downstate staff. Work with other STAR-Downstate staff to help each patient achieve goals delineated in the care plan. Develop systems to coordinate with other disciplines to effectively implement care plans. Communicate with inpatient staff, University Hospital subspecialty areas, and other programs to ensure continuity of care. Monitor staff productivity and attainment of objectives as projected in the annual HRSA work plan. Develop system to ensure compliance with Ryan White policies related to income requirements, cap on charges and sliding fee scale. Ensure documentation for all patients and coordination with hospital finance. Monitor continuous quality improvement activities for case management services: Routinely check completion and appropriateness of assessments and service plans. Serve as a liaison between STAR-Downstate and the community as needed, through participation in community-based planning committees, meetings, workshops, etc. <b>Qualifications:</b> Bachelor's degree required. Master's degree in social work, public health or related field strongly preferred. Minimum 5 years’ experience working with vulnerable populations such as people with HIV, people with mental health and substance use disorders, as well as LGBTQIA+ populations. Minimum of 3 years' supervisory experience required. Certified Application Counselor (CAC) training required, but may be completed upon employment. Effective written, verbal, and interpersonal skills required. Excellent organizational analytical and problem-solving skills required. Bilingual English/Spanish or English/Haitian Creole preferred. <b>Salary Range:</b> \$65,000-\$70,000 annually. <b>Employer:</b> New York State. To apply, send resume and cover letter with salary requirements to: Michelle Melendez, MS, LCSW, CHC, Behavioral Health Director, <a href="mailto:michelle.melendez@downstate.edu">michelle.melendez@downstate.edu</a></p> <p><b>Licensed Practical Nurse</b></p> <p><b>Responsibilities:</b> Provide direct patient care involving the administration and oversight of medications, vaccinations, buprenorphine inductions and nursing care assessments. Participate in the development and implementation of teaching plan for patient, family, and/or caregivers. Provide telephone and walk-in triage for acute patient problems and make appropriate provider referrals. Identify substance abuse problems; promote patient self-care activities and treatments that facilitate optimal levels of functioning. Assist in coordinating services for new and emerging STAR-Downstate programs related to care, clinical education and research. Provide HIV and HCV counseling and testing for clients and family members; perform phlebotomy according to UHB clinical laboratory guidelines. Participate in SHC outreach activities, including provision of HIV Pre and Post-test counseling as needed. Participate in the development and implementation of multi-disciplinary case managed care (e.g., attending team huddles, transition and prenatal meetings). Participate in quality improvement activities related to STAR-Downstate, including quality improvement data tracking, including development of PDSA cycles. <b>Minimum Qualifications:</b> NYS Licensed Practical Nurse; current American Heart Association Basic Life Support (BLS) Certification. Minimum of one (1) year of clinical experience in an ambulatory care setting; experience with electronic health record (EHR) and Microsoft Office applications. <b>Preferred Qualifications:</b> Experience with HIV and HCV treatment; substance abuse treatment</p>			

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<p><b>weekends. <u>Salary Range:</u></b> \$45,000-\$55,000 annually. <b><u>Employer:</u></b> The Research Foundation for SUNY. To apply, send resume and cover letter with salary requirements to: Weda Lewis, MHA, ACHE, Operations Manager, STAR-Downstate, <a href="mailto:weda.lewis@downstate.edu">weda.lewis@downstate.edu</a></p> <p><b><u>Medical Office Assistant, One Brooklyn Health/Brookdale Hospital Medical Center (Job 3410)</u></b></p> <p><b><u>Duties:</u></b> Under physician supervision, assists with all medical/laboratory procedures; performs venipuncture, EKG's; takes vital signs, assists in all office medical and surgical procedures, retrieves laboratory results for physicians. Performs front desk clerical duties if assignment requires. Receives and escorts patient to exam room. Takes and records vital signs, prepares patient for medical exam and assists physician during exam and minor procedures. Performs venipuncture, completes forms, places specimen in correct container for laboratory. Ensures that patients receive timely and appropriate care within the delivery system. Demonstrates initiative and competency in the utilization of Health Information Technology to perform essential job functions, which include, but are not limited to: 1) documentation in the Electronic Health Record (EHR) of required patient information, (2) transmission of Electronic Health Information (EHI), and (3) retrieval of EHI. Facilitates internal and external referrals in collaboration with the RN/LPN or Medical Provider on duty. Demonstrates a commitment to maintaining a supportive work environment that fosters collaboration and communication between all health care team members. Projects a positive image to the communities we serve and demonstrates respect for the cultural and religious diversities and needs of patients, families and care providers. Maintains exam rooms and stock supplies. Provides for the safety of the patient. Monitors the integrity of equipment and promptly reports malfunctioning, missing or damaged equipment to clinic leadership in accordance with established procedures. Performs other duties as assigned. <b>Required Qualifications:</b> <b><u>Education:</u></b> High school graduate or equivalency required. Graduate of an Accredited School for Medical Assistant. Certificate from accredited/approved MOA program. Basic Life Support (BLS). <b><u>Experience:</u></b> Minimum one (1) year experience, preferably in a physician's office or in ambulatory setting. <b><u>Knowledge and Skills:</u></b> Good interpersonal skills. Ability to fully utilize BHMC's electronic record systems, equipment and other healthcare and billing systems relevant to this position. Ability to speak, read and write in English. Thoroughly understands knowledge of all equipment, report malfunctions. Understands routing slips and transmission of same. <b><u>Physical Requirements:</u></b> Possible exposure to hot and cold. Possible exposure to infectious bacteria and blood borne pathogens. Position may require prolonged periods of standing, reaching, walking throughout the working day. Position will be required to talk effectively, stoop, bend, lift, and carry items weighing or exerting force up to 35 pounds. <b><u>Hours:</u></b> Varies. <b><u>Salary Range:</u></b> TBD. To apply, send resume and cover letter to Hillary Farmer, Manager, STAR-Brookdale, <a href="mailto:Hfarmer@bhmcny.org">Hfarmer@bhmcny.org</a></p>			

**FACULTY AND STAFF UPDATES**

**Meredith Barish, CNM**, joined STAR-Downstate in February 2022 as the Midwife for both the Multicenter AIDS Cohort Study (MACS)/Women's Interagency HIV Study (WIHS) Combined Cohort Study (MACS/WIHS-CCS) and the Family-Focused HIV Health Care Program (FFHCP). Ms. Barish is a graduate of the University of California at Berkeley (BS, Environmental Science) and Columbia University (BS, Nursing; MS, Midwifery). Prior to joining STAR, she worked for many years providing comprehensive prenatal and gynecological care to families throughout New York City, most recently for the Brooklyn Birthing Center and Jazz Birthing Center in Manhattan.

**Siham Bennis, OTR/L** joined STAR-Downstate in December 2021 as a Clinical Supervisor working on the NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (NYCDOHMH) funded Be InTo Health (BN2H) Program to establish a new standard of care to reduce fall risk within the HIV community. She holds an MS in Occupational Therapy from SUNY Downstate and is excited to integrate evidence-based practice to promote healthy and productive aging.



**Jean Bijou** (pictured at left) who worked for more than 15 years as a Phlebotomist at One Brooklyn Health/Brookdale Hospital Medical Center, passed away in April 2022. His colleagues at STAR-Brookdale miss him greatly.

**Gregg Bruckno, BA**, joined STAR-Downstate in December 2021 as the Project Manager for the NYCDOHMH-funded BE Into Health (BN2H) Program. Prior to joining STAR, Mr. Bruckno worked for Gay Men's Health Crisis (GMHC), the world's first not-for-profit organization dedicated to ending AIDS, where he oversaw all programming for older adults living with HIV, including the Buddy Program and Hub for Long-Term Survivors. He holds a dual Bachelor's degree in Secondary Education and Teaching from Hofstra University and plans to begin graduate studies in public health this fall.

**Nadav Brumer, BS**, joined STAR-Brookdale in March 2022 as a Data Analyst in the Enhanced Data to Care (eD2C) Program, helping to connect patients to continued care at STAR. Prior to joining STAR, Mr. Brumer was a Research Assistant at the Swedish Neuroscience Institute, analyzing the relationship between cognitive decline and hearing loss in the aging population. He graduated from the University of Washington in Seattle, WA with a BS in Psychology.

**José E. Diaz, PhD**, joined STAR-Downstate in February 2021. Dr. Diaz is a fellow in the Research Education Institute for Diverse Scholars (REIDS) program at Yale University. His current research interests center on understanding and reducing the resurgent stimulant use epidemic and related health disparities among Latinx sexual minority men. He is currently assisting with an intervention study aiming to improve HIV care outcomes among stimulant-using sexual minority men living with HIV in the U.S. His ongoing work also includes the use of national data to examine substance use and mental health disparities through an intersectionality framework, and the examination of multi-level correlates of behavioral health outcomes among sexual minority men in New York City. He holds a BA in Psychology from Wheaton College in Massachusetts and earned his PhD at Columbia University's Mailman School of Public Health.

**Nickisha Elliott, BA**, earned a Bachelor's degree in Health Management from the University of Phoenix.

**Kanis Fatema, BS**, joined STAR-Downstate in November 2021 as a Clinical Research Associate in the Multicenter AIDS Cohort Study (MACS)/WIHS-Combined Cohort Study (CCS). Ms. Fatema received her Bachelor of Science in Psychology from City College of New York. She is an experienced case manager and coordinator assistant. In her former position at Alliance Lower Eastside Harm Reduction, she did administrative work, syringe exchange, and assisted clients with chronic illnesses and drug overdoses.

Director of Systems Change for Outreach, Prevention, and Engagement (SCOPE) at STAR, overseeing multiple STAR-Downstate programs related to HIV/HCV diagnosis, linkage, and prevention. For the last three years, Ms. Fields has been a critical team member at the STAR-Brookdale site. She joined the team in 2019 as the Program Manager for the Gilead FOCUS Program; since then, she has also taken on management of STAR’s HRSA Special Project of National Significance (SPNS) grant focused on rapid start of antiretroviral therapy (ART) for those who are newly diagnosed and out of care, and management of a recent PHS grant called Enhanced Data to Care (eD2C), using data systems to track and link individuals to care. Ms. Fields will provide programmatic leadership and oversight to the new Downstate Gilead FOCUS Program, expanding routine HIV and HCV testing and linkage to care throughout Downstate, and Playsure 2.0, which will significantly expand provision of comprehensive HIV prevention, STI testing, and linkage services using an equity-focused, client-centered model.

**Charles Francillon, MPH**, Patient Navigator within the Care Coordination Program at STAR-Downstate, earned a Master of Public Health in Health Policy and Management from SUNY Downstate Health Sciences University. His thesis was entitled “A culturally tailored intervention to increase retention in care and viral load suppression among Afro-Caribbeans living with HIV in New York City.”

**Karen Green-Hubbard** joined STAR-Brookdale in January 2022 as an Outreach Specialist with the Enhanced Data to Care (eD2C) Program. Prior to joining STAR, Ms. Green-Hubbard was a Care Coordinator Manager with Wyckoff Medical Center’s Positive Health Management Program, providing PLWHA with access to housing, insurance, food pantries, mental health and substance abuse services, and LGBT advocacy. She also worked for NYC Health + Hospitals as a COVID-19 Contact Tracer providing information and completing intakes for people who contracted COVID-19.

**Gabriela Hernandez, BS**, joined STAR-Downstate in June 2021 as a Medical Lab Technician in the Multicenter AIDS Cohort Study (MACS)/WIHS-Combined Cohort Study (CCS) Program. Ms. Hernandez received her Bachelor of Science in Biology from the City College of New York. She is an experienced Certified Medical Assistant and academic tutor. In her Medical Assistant position at ODA Quality Health Center, she obtained and recorded patient vital signs, documented required CDSS alerts in the eClinicalWorks (ECW) database, addressed patients’ concerns with providers and participated in patient education. She demonstrated proficiency in taking medical histories, as well as performing over 100 venipunctures, ear irrigations, nebulizer treatments, diagnostic procedures and ancillary tests.



**Sabina Hirshfield, PhD**, Visiting Associate Professor of Medicine, was featured in the SUNY Downstate President’s Bulletin in February 2022, for her work on reducing HIV risk behaviors with technology and e-messaging campaigns. Dr. Hirshfield has been working to reduce HIV transmission risk behaviors with web, video, and message-based interventions as part of her federally funded work in the STAR Program. Recently, she and her colleagues developed and tested the efficacy of an HIV prevention messaging app that offers access to free HIV test kits and prevention services for HIV-negative and HIV-positive diverse sexual minority men (SMM). The research-based app, called HealthMindr, was developed at Emory University. The CDC-funded study found that prevention practices, including HIV testing and uptake of pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP), increased among those who used the app. A version of HealthMindr is currently under development for healthcare providers, health departments, and community-based organizations. In addition to several mHealth HIV prevention studies that Dr. Hirshfield is involved with, she is co-leading an NIH-funded national mHealth intervention (START) to reach 350 SMM living with HIV and who use stimulant drugs such as cocaine or crystal methamphetamine. The goal of START is to encourage men to take their HIV medication more consistently, regardless of whether they are seeking formal substance use treatment. The START study app was launched this spring.

**Luis Lopez** joined STAR-Downstate in January 2022 as a Staff Assistant. He initially joined SUNY Downstate in 2016 as a Radiology Registrar and transitioned to Patient Finance in 2019, handling inpatient denials. Prior to joining STAR, Mr. Lopez worked at University Eye Center of SUNY College of Optometry as a Patient Accounts Supervisor. He has extensive experience in front and back-end clinical operations. He is bilingual and is currently pursuing a degree in cybersecurity.

**Michelle Lopez** joined STAR-Downstate’s BE InTo Health project as a Patient Navigator in May 2022. In that role, Ms. Lopez provides mental health and substance use screenings, brief interventions, referrals, and educational workshops for aging LGBTQ clients with HIV. As a long-term survivor, she has decades of experience facilitating access to care for HIV and at-risk clients, including seniors and Black LGBTQ populations. Her tireless advocacy on behalf of the HIV community has been recognized locally and nationally and she is well-versed in health disparities, homophobia, racial injustice, and immigrant health needs.

**Ralph Pierre, BA**, joined STAR-Downstate in January 2022 as a Patient Navigator with the Care Coordination Program. Prior to joining STAR, Mr. Pierre worked for Public Health Solutions. He is excited to bring his experience and passion for diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) to his work with clients and coworkers alike. He holds a BA in Anthropology-Sociology from the Faculte d’Ethnologie at the Université d’État d’Haïti.

**Christine Rucker, MA**, Director of the STAR Program’s Adolescent Education Program (AEP), completed the Sexuality Education Initiative Program sponsored by Columbia University’s Teacher’s College. The cohort completed courses on Reproductive Global Trends, Life Planning Concepts and Identity Formation Research. The Certificate Program focused on reframing traditional pregnancy prevention and family planning approaches through the lens of Reproductive Identity Formation. The Sex Education Initiative (SEI) was formed in 2017 with the mission to reform current sexual health education to include the missing dimension of reproductive wellbeing. Elizabeth Smith, the AEP’s Personal Responsibility Education Program (PREP) Project Health Educator, completed the Certificate Program in 2020. The program is sponsored by the Edlow Family Foundation and Teacher’s College.

**Garnett Shambo, BA**, joined STAR-Brookdale in February 2022 as a Patient Navigator in the Enhanced Data to Care (eD2C) Program. Prior to joining STAR, Mr. Shambo was a pharmacy technician in the Pharmacy Department at Brookdale Hospital Medical Center. He graduated from John Jay College of Criminal Justice with a BA in Forensic Psychology.

subspecialty clinical training in infectious diseases as well as an NIH-funded post-doctoral fellowship in Behavioral HIV Research at Columbia University. He also served as the Site Medical Director for East Jersey State Prison from 2015 to 2017. His research, advocacy and clinical work focus on enhancing engagement in services for the prevention and treatment of infectious diseases among marginalized populations. He is excited to serve as clinical lead for status-neutral LGBTQ+ services at the STAR Program.

SELECTED PUBLICATIONS

Peters BA, Moon JY, Hanna DB, Kutsch O, Fischl M, Moran CA, Adimora AA, Gange S, Roan NR, Michel KG, **Augenbraun M**, Sharma A, Landay A, Desai S, Kaplan RC. [T-Cell Immune Dysregulation and Mortality in Women With Human Immunodeficiency Virus](#). J Infect Dis. 2022 Feb 15;225(4):675-685.

Norin AJ, Mendoza R, **Augenbraun M**, Das B. [HLA B53 is associated with a poor outcome in black COVID-19 patients](#). Hum Immunol. 2021 Oct;82(10):713-718.

Kikvidze T, Butsashvili M, Kamkamidze G, Kajaia M, **DeHovitz J**, McNutt LA. [HIV and STI Risk Factors Among Georgian Youth](#). Georgian Med News. 2022 Jan;(322):7-12.

Curtis KA, Rudolph DL, Pan Y, Delaney K, Anastos K, **DeHovitz J**, Kassaye SG, Hanson CV, French AL, Golub E, Adimora AA, Ofotokun I, Bolivar H, Kempf MC, Peters PJ, Switzer WM. [Evaluation of the Abbott ARCHITECT HIV Ag/Ab combo assay for determining recent HIV-1 infection](#). PLoS One. 2021 Jul 1;16(7):e0242641.

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**AEP/THEO Alumni Spotlight: Kevin Golding, MEd, CHES; Teens Helping Each Other (THEO) Class of 1991**



**Kevin Golding, MEd, CHES**, is a Behavior Consultant for the Tulare County Office of Education located in the Central Valley of California. Prior to his consultant work, Golding spent over twenty years working in the “trenches,” as a teacher, dean of students, and as an assistant principal. He has earned a reputation for his leadership in significantly improving student outcomes in Massachusetts, Texas and California, especially among low-income students, children with special needs, and students of color. Golding completed his Master of Education in School Administration from Cambridge College and his post-graduate work at Pennsylvania State University in Applied Behavior Analysis. Golding continues to work with school districts, health care professionals and administrators on Applied Behavior Analysis, Precision Teaching, effective practice methods, Individualized Education Program (IEP) consultation, and other measurable educational programs. As an educator, Golding is passionate about learning, teaching and sharing experiences for

## COMMUNITY PARTNER SPOTLIGHT: Re-Charge

(<https://recharge.support/>)

Re-Charge offers a range of individualized services for those who use crystal meth. Re-Charge was specifically designed for men who have sex with men and individuals of trans experience who have sex with men. Re-Charge is committed to the practice of harm reduction, which means that one can continue to use meth while accessing services. Re-Charge meets clients where they are and helps them to reach their health and wellness goals. For more information, text to (929) 370-1491, or email [a.bonfrancesco@housingworks.org](mailto:a.bonfrancesco@housingworks.org).

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