



## Women In Science Scholars Virtual Spring Conference Highlights March 19, 2021

Marilyn Foote-Hudson welcomed everyone, our scholars, GSK mentors and university faculty and staff to the North Carolina GlaxoSmithKline Foundation Women in Science Scholars Program spring conference. She gave a special welcome to Dr. Mandy Cohen.

Marilyn Foote-Hudson highlighted the Women in Science Scholars program as one of the statewide programs that is connecting and supporting women pursuing STEM degrees and careers at the Foundation. The Foundation provided funds to establish endowments at 30 colleges and universities across the state to provide scholarships for two female undergraduates. Annually students are matched with a mentor, a volunteer from GSK. The investment in the Women in Science scholarships year to date is over \$2 million.

### North Carolina GlaxoSmithKline Foundation

Women In Science Scholars	Child Health Recognition Awards
<p><i>STEM program supporting the retention of women in STEM degrees. The endowed scholarships support two female scholars annually at colleges and universities across the state. The 30 scholarship endowments were set up to provide funds for the scholars annually. Each scholar is matched with a volunteer mentor, and program participants annually attend two STEM focused meetings (Spring Conference and Annual Meeting). GSK provides the STEM volunteer mentors for this program.</i></p>	<p><i>Awards recognize and share best practices in the public health arena impacting children while honoring NC public health professionals and public health departments for their innovative work. A NCPHA chosen selection committee selects award recipients. All nominees and award recipients are honored at NCPHA's annual meeting. A booklet compiled with nominees and award recipients is distributed across NC to public health professionals.</i></p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>STEM Volunteer Mentors</b></p> <p>Kathryn Collison, MPH, PMP; Danna Mattocks; Lynn Henson, PharmD; Liz Nulton-Bodiford; Ruolan Wang, MS; Nicole Deschamps, PhD; Billikis Akindele; Melanie Shadoan; Susan Clemmons; Katy Moore, PharmD; Dawn Adsit; Theresa Haughey; Christine Trezza Anderson, PharmD; Kimberly Adkison, RPh, PhD; Stephanie S Harris; April Thompson, PhD; JoAnna Brodie; Lorrie Schifano; Renetta Mills; Dulce Garrido; Leslie Driver, PharmD; Beth Romach Cindy Vavro; Marty St Clair; Lisa Ross, MS; Sara Johnson; Brenda Shafiei; Amy Pierce; Diane Kalendra; Amy Timberlake, PharmD; Cindy Brothers; Michele Brasch; Dawn Beach; Dawn Wilson and Renu Jain</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Nomination Categories</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Local Health Department Recognition Award</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Lifetime Achievement Award</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Public Health Staff Award</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Individual Recognition Award</p>

Marilyn shared that this wonderful opportunity is for our scholars to build a great network and to help them define and achieve their career aspirations. She highlighted the recently added Virtual Networking Sessions are an opportunity to get together with greater frequency and feel even more connected in this challenging time.

In addition to the Women in Science scholars' program, Marilyn noted the Foundation supports the Child Health Recognition Awards. These awards recognize individuals, public health staff and public health departments for the delivery of exemplary health services to children and celebrates the important work of our public health professionals in North Carolina.

## North Carolina GlaxoSmithKline Foundation

Provides approximately \$3 million annually supporting science, health and education grants

Traditional Grants	Ribbon of Hope Grants
<p><i>The Traditional Grant program provides seed funds to advance science, health and education in North Carolina. The grants support educational programs that have a statewide impact and primarily are multi-year commitments and often address inequities in educational opportunities.</i></p>	<p><i>Over 150 Ribbon of Hope grants have benefited citizens in 99 out of 100 North Carolina counties. The Ribbon Of Hope \$25,000 grant program supports activities to establish or expand community-based programs in science, health and education.</i></p>
<p><b>Traditional Grant Examples</b>            The North Carolina Museum of Natural Sciences            Virtual Learning Paleontology Educational Program            North Carolina Arboretum Society            Expanding STEM Educational Programs Across NC            North Carolina Planetarium and Science Center            Statewide Science Festival Expansion</p>	<p><b>Ribbon of Hope Examples</b>            Gates County Community Partnership            Improving Postsecondary Access for Youth            Lenoir Community College Foundation, Inc            Supporting Retention in Education            Richmond Community College Foundation            Expanding Nurse Aide Education</p>

Marilyn continued with the Foundation's two grant programs, Traditional grants with a statewide focus and Ribbon of Hope grants that focus on local community efforts. She noted that these programs allow work with organizations across the state to improve the lives of North Carolinians by advancing science, health and education. She encouraged attendees to visit our website at [ncgskfoundation.org](http://ncgskfoundation.org) to find out more about the work of the Foundation.

Marilyn noted that she was delighted that our keynote speaker today is Dr. Mandy Cohen and highlighted parts of her bio: *Dr. Cohen was appointed to the role of Secretary of the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services in January 2017 by Governor Roy Cooper. Secretary Cohen and her team work tirelessly to improve the health, safety and well-being of all North Carolinians. She and her team manage 17,000 employees and an annual budget of \$20 billion. Under her direction are state programs that include NC Medicaid, Public*

*Health, Mental Health, State Operated Hospitals and Facilities, Economic Services, Adult and Child Services, Early Childhood Education, Employment Services, and Health Services Regulation.*

*Dr. Cohen is also an Adjunct Professor in Health Policy & Management at the UNC Gillings School of Global Public Health. As an internal medicine physician, Dr. Cohen has experience leading complex health organizations. Secretary Cohen graduated from Cornell University and received her medical degree from Yale School of Medicine and a Master's in Public Health from the Harvard School of Public Health. She is the recipient of many honors and awards. We have come to know her through her leadership as she guides our state's efforts to respond to and recover from the COVID-19 pandemic.*

**Mandy K. Cohen, MD, MPH**

**Secretary, North Carolina  
Health and Human Services**



Dr. Cohen started the conversation sharing that she is a mother and a parent of girls in the Wake County School System. She is a wife and her husband is a health care regulatory attorney. She highlighted the ways in which their work complements one another's and has been a source of support throughout the past year. Dr. Cohen is originally from New York and that is where her family continues to live. She looks forward to seeing her parents in the coming days after over a year without in-person visits due to COVID. Her parents have been vaccinated and she shared that vaccines equals hugs.

Dr. Cohen shared that she was influenced early on by her mom, who she sees as a trailblazer. Her mom worked as a nurse practitioner for forty years. Hearing her mom's stories

about patients and the many hardships they faced helped her see many of the broken issues in healthcare.

In college Dr. Cohen spent a semester in DC and worked on Capitol Hill for the late Senator Kennedy. This opportunity helped to grow her interest in how government shapes policy and healthcare. This is where she really saw the intersection of policy and medicine and what comes out of congress, and how it impacts everyone. She saw the lack of physicians there influencing health care policy. This experience helped shape her decisions related to her career goals between science, medicine, and policy. She wanted to be a connector -- a bridge-builder between policy, health care and administration.

Dr. Cohen highlighted her experiences while seeking her medical degree from Yale School of Medicine, included working as a community health worker in Africa. At the same time she was perusing her medical degree, she completed her Master's of Public Health from Harvard School of Public Health. She shared the value of these experiences to grow and expand her network of mentors, professors and colleagues in these programs. As she finished her medical degree, she went into residency training in Internal Medicine at Massachusetts General Hospital in Boston.

Her first role after leaving residency was with the Veterans Administration (VA). She was focused on women's health at the VA and helped focus and meet the needs of this new population of women seeking care as veterans. After a year, she moved to another part of the federal government and worked in the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services. Her work here helped implement Obama Care and bring about new ways to access health care for adults.

The 2013 crisis around the Healthcare.Gov website impacted her, and while it was a crisis, ultimately it turned into an opportunity for Secretary Cohen. She notes she will always remember October 1, 2013 as the day she had the opportunity to step-up and lead the Call Center. She shared that doing a great job – even if it is not what you trained for – will allow you other opportunities down the road. The position was focused on insurance and technology and was not something that she had specifically trained to lead. When President Obama was preparing to leave office, that meant her job was ending and she began contemplating her next move.

Dr. Cohen was looking for leadership opportunities when the call came from NC Governor Roy Cooper to become the Secretary of Health and Human Services. Over the past several years she has had the opportunity to see the broader portfolio of government. This role has her leading programs impacting insurance, public health, mental health, and human

services including child protective services and work opportunity programs. She is excited that the work under Governor Coopers' leadership and tenure has improved the health of North Carolina citizens.

Dr. Cohen highlighted the COVID crisis has turned everything upside down in our personal and professional lives over the last year. She believes that her previous experiences and training gave her the needed expertise to lead during this pandemic, but she never dreamed she would be leading a global pandemic. Dr. Cohen noted that she is a very values-driven leader and she sees that as critical to get work accomplished in the right way, especially during a crisis. The seven values she highlighted:

- People Focused
- Teamwork
- Transparency
- Belonging
- Proactive Communication
- Stewardship
- Joy

Dr. Cohen emphasized that leading in crisis with the values of transparency and communication are the most important. She encouraged the audience to think of their own career and how trusting and knowing themselves would be key to finding the work they want to do.

Dr. Cohen talked about the value of trusting and knowing yourself, and to make sure you are in touch with things you are good at and bring you joy. Think about how you can make a positive change in the world. You need to really know yourself. Knowing your strengths and your weakness will help you lead. Recognize if you are an introvert and acknowledge that you can be a quiet leader. Dr. Cohen shared that she was not a great public speaker but after 182 press conferences in the last year she has built that skill. Practice, practice, practice and keep yourself open to lots of opportunities. Put yourself out there and take some risks.

Additional tips:

- You need people in your life that tell you “you are smart enough; you are good enough and capable enough” and then say this to yourself.
- Remember to take one day at the time, get rest, you need it.
- Go back for the next day even if you want to quit. Take it one day at a time.
- Remember no leader is perfect.
- Make sure you are making tangible goals.
- Listen to your gut – even if it means not taking the advice of a mentor.
- Take a chance and remember you don't have to be perfect.

- Be visible with your work. What are the ways that allow you to be visible without volunteering for busy work.

Marilyn Foote-Hudson and the attendees thanked Dr. Cohen and everyone noted their appreciation for all of her efforts across North Carolina and serving as a great role model to all women.

Marilyn closed the conference and encouraged the scholars to take full advantage of the opportunities the Women in Science program offers to build and strengthen your network of supporters and advocates. She encouraged participants to watch for details regarding logistics for our Fall Annual Meeting.

## North Carolina GlaxoSmithKline Foundation



[www.ncgskfoundation.org](http://www.ncgskfoundation.org)

[@ncgskfound](https://twitter.com/ncgskfound)

Marilyn's ending words were to take care, stay safe and let's each do our part to help keep each other safe!