

2025–2026

Defiance County Health Department – Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP)

McMaster Fellows

Dr. Olivia Lozar, Assistant Professor of Exercise Science

Dr. Jeanna Tran, Assistant Professor of Exercise Science

McMaster Scholars

Repeat Scholars: Addy Allen, Addison Martinez, Alex Jung, Alex Moritz, Anna Emswiler, Carter Sudhoff, Connor Gephart, Emma Rodgers, Kate Suter, Maddie Guggenbiller, Payton Switzer, Riley Keeran.

First-Time Scholars: Alya Ibrahim, Blake Beaulieu, Haley Hammer, Jackie Vanderpool, Reagan Camp, Ryan Neff, Ryan Reckner, Taylor Craft, Zander Culbertson.

This McMaster initiative expands on the work completed during the 2024–2025 academic year, when scholars analyzed the most recent Youth Health Assessment and generated school-level reports for all ten middle and high schools in Defiance County. Having identified local strengths and challenges, the focus of the 2025–2026 project shifts toward implementation of the Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP) in direct partnership with the Defiance County Health Department.

Throughout the year, McMaster scholars will engage in hands-on delivery of evidence-based programs designed to address three priority areas across multiple age groups. For youth, students will complete training in the *Catch My Breath* program and provide classroom presentations aimed at preventing vaping and tobacco use. For adults, the team will design and distribute nutrition education resources grounded in the USDA's *MyPlate* framework, encouraging balanced food choices and healthy lifestyles. For older adults, students will complete certification in the *Matter of Balance* program and co-lead workshops at the senior center to reduce fall risks and promote functional independence.

In addition to these targeted interventions, scholars will expand their impact by exploring modern outreach strategies and developing accessible resources for the community. Students will research social media algorithms to determine how to maximize visibility and engagement with public health messages, ensuring that evidence-based information reaches residents where they are most active. They will also design and share low-impact, at-home exercise guides, offering practical options for individuals across age ranges who may face barriers to traditional fitness programs.

By moving from analysis to action, the 2025–2026 project gives McMaster scholars the opportunity to not only apply their classroom knowledge but also to make a tangible difference in the lives of people across Defiance County. Their work strengthens collaboration between the college and the health department, provides valuable community health resources, and prepares students with skills in program delivery, leadership, and professional communication. In turn, the initiative advances the county's long-term health goals by ensuring that the data collected through the Community Health Assessment is translated into meaningful change.