PRESS RELEASE
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Murray State University Student Nationally Honored as Major of the Year in Public and Community Health

RESTON, VA, March 16, 2017 --- SHAPE America – Society of Health and Physical Educators will honor Kimberly Whitaker of Murray State University as a Major of the Year during the organization’s 132nd National Convention & Expo, March 14-18, in Boston, MA. The award celebrates outstanding undergraduate students in the health, physical education, recreation and dance professions who are nominated by a faculty advisor or professor. Whitaker will be recognized on Thursday, March 16 during the Major of the Year Awards Ceremony.

“The outstanding achievements of future professionals like Kimberly is integral to the caliber of the individuals SHAPE America is looking for to teach standards-based health and physical education programs to our nation’s children,” says SHAPE America President Jackie Lund of Georgia State University.

Kimberly Whitaker is highly involved in the Public and Community Health program at MSU. Whitaker helped found and is President of the Student Health Educators Association (SHEA), which started out as a student organization for just those in Public and Community Health and has since been opened up to all majors on campus to include anyone that has an interest in improving their health or the health of others. SHEA does a variety of health programs on campus and throughout the community. Whitaker also assisted SHEA is starting a “Take One, Leave One” food program on campus in the residential colleges. This program has containers placed in the residence halls on campus where people can donate
food they do not want or need and those that are hungry can take food if they need it. Periodically, overflow food is taken to the local Need Line organization that helps feed those in the Murray Community. In addition, Whitaker is also a student ambassador for the Applied Health Sciences department and helps recruit members for the Public and Community Health Program.

Through the Public and Community Health Program, Whitaker has assisted in a city-wide “Rethink Your Drink” initiative that encouraged individuals to choose healthier beverage options. Whitaker also presented the research Photovoice Project: Assets and Barriers to Infection Prevention on a College Campus, along with classmates Matthew Allen and Chelsey Delaney, at Murray State University’s Office of Research and Creative Activity Fall 2016 Scholars Week. In addition, Whitaker has been doing research under Program Director Dr. Miranda Terry titled “Health Matters for Students: Mini-Lessons for All Classrooms.” This program provides educators with 5-minute health lesson plans and activities that can be included in all classrooms. Dr. Terry and Whitaker presented the program at the Southern District SHAPE Conference in January 2017.

Whitaker says “It is an honor to receive this award from SHAPE America. Being recognized as someone who is committed to improving the health of others is extremely important to me.”

“I have great students! Kimberly has been a standout student from the program not only because of her high level of academic success but also because of her level of involvement in the program, department, and on campus as well as in research. She is passionate about learning how to improve the health outcomes of our community and takes advantage of every opportunity she is provided and she creates her own too. I love that! It is unique to see that quality in an undergraduate student,” said Dr. Miranda Terry, assistant professor and director of public and community health, Murray State University. In 2017, Kimberly Whitaker will graduate with a Bachelor’s of Science in Public and Community Health.

For more information about SHAPE America’s National Convention & Expo, visit the website at http://www.shapeamerica.org/events/convention2017/convention2017.cfm
About SHAPE America
SHAPE America – Society of Health and Physical Educators is the nation’s largest membership organization of health and physical education professionals. Since its founding in 1885, the organization has defined excellence in physical education, and our National Standards for K-12 Physical Education serve as the foundation for well-designed physical education programs across the country. We provide programs, resources and advocacy to support health and physical educators at every level, from preschool to university graduate programs.

SHAPE America has 50 state affiliates and is a founding partner of national initiatives such as the Presidential Youth Fitness Program, Let’s Move! Active Schools and the Jump Rope For Heart/Hoops For Heart programs. “50 Million Strong by 2029” is our commitment to empower all children to lead healthy and active lives through effective health and physical education programs. For more information, visit www.shapeamerica.org.

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