



Medical Advocacy & Outreach

PRESS RELEASE

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MAO CHIEF EXECUTIVE PASSES THE BATON TO INTERIM CEO

MONTGOMERY, ALABAMA, January 20, 2022 – In the fall of 2021, Medical Advocacy and Outreach (MAO) embraced yet another milestone moment in the life of a not-for-profit – the departure of a much admired leader, in this instance, the resignation of Michael R. Murphree, LICSW, from the role of Chief Executive Officer (CEO). As much for his eight-year tenure as CEO as his service to the agency in various roles from 1994 to 2010, Murphree leaves an indelible mark on MAO. This sentiment is clearly underscored by remarks released by MAO’s Board Chair, Frank Gitschier, who served on the agency’s Board during its formative years and rejoined the Board during MAO’s 30th anniversary. *“I knew Mike for many years before I rejoined the Board of MAO in 2017. Mike has always given his utmost to MAO and steered the agency through both difficult and successful times. His leadership and heart will be missed at MAO. I wish Mike much success in his future endeavors.”*

For Murphree, who grew up in MAO’s core service region, providing a voice for the rural people of South Alabama, particularly about their specific wellness needs, socioeconomic and cultural differences, fueled much of his career. He was, and will no doubt continue to be that voice outside of MAO, as during his time with the agency, his reputation and experience resulted in three speaking engagements at The White House, hundreds of training program presentations, and countless invitations to serve on panels for the State of Alabama and others formed to improve care models.

MAO became a national and state leader, advocate and pioneer of using telemedicine technology in direct practice care under Murphree’s leadership. As a result, MAO was removing barriers to rural care and serving clients spanning 18,675 square miles long before the COVID-19 pandemic made discussions around the use of telehealth mainstream. This was, however, by no means, Murphree’s greatest contribution to **MAO’s mission of supporting the overall health and wellbeing of individuals needing MAO’s services, including those living with HIV and substance use disorders, by delivering comprehensive healthcare through medical treatment, behavioral health services, social services, and health and civic education.** Murphree drew heavily on his experience as a lifelong resident of Alabama and as a Licensed Independent Clinical Social Worker (LICSW) to nurture MAO’s holistic approach to care, giving way to far-reaching advancements in consumer involvement, social service supports and behavioral health services. Working tirelessly in collaboration with MAO’s Board and professional teams, Murphree nurtured a reputation for MAO of compassion, understanding, quality professional care, and innovation.

While working with Murphree to prevent common pitfalls of leadership transition from impacting the not-for-profit, MAO’s Board of Directors immediately began assessing the leadership potential of others. Ashley M. Tarrant, MPH, MAO’s Chief Operations Officer (COO), was appointed Interim CEO effective January 1, 2022. Speaking directly to MAO’s appointment of Tarrant, Gitschier observed, *“Ashley has been Mike Murphree’s COO for the last six years. She has had his unwavering trust and support...His faith in Ashley’s ability to run the agency following his retirement made it an easy decision for the Board to approve Ashley’s role of Interim CEO. The Board is looking forward to Ashley imprinting her leadership mark on the agency.”* Prior to his New Year departure, Murphree shared a testimonial in Tarrant’s favor.

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“I am very happy that Ashley will be leading the agency into our 35th Anniversary year. As I move to new missions in my life, I can leave MAO with peace of mind that someone who understands the purpose of MAO is in place to guide the work of this incredible not-for-profit,” heralded Michael Murphree.

Much of Tarrant’s life story exemplifies why her favorite quote is by Margaret Mead – *“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed it’s the only thing that ever has.”* She brings a wealth of training and experience to her new role as Interim CEO as well as an intimate familiarity with the inner workings of MAO. An Alabama native, Tarrant graduated from The University of Alabama in 2007 with a Bachelor of Science Degree in Biology and obtained a Masters of Public Health Degree (MPH) with focuses in Maternal and Child Health, and International Health and Global Studies from the University of Alabama – Birmingham in 2009. However, her passion for working towards the improvement of the health status of adolescents, minorities, women, and disenfranchised populations grew while she spent the Fall of 2009 working with the North East Regional Health Authority (NERHA) in Ocho Rios, Jamaica conducting community HIV/AIDS education and outreach activities. After working internationally in the field of HIV/AIDS, Tarrant returned to the U.S. and began working with MAO in 2010.

She served MAO in various positions including Ryan White Programs Administrator, Chief Programmatic Officer, and Compliance Officer spanning a period of five years from 2010 through 2015, before becoming Chief Operations Officer in 2016. In 2017, Tarrant bolstered her professional knowledge by participating in the Johnson & Johnson Healthcare Executive Program at the UCAL Anderson School of Management (Los Angeles, CA). Then, in 2021, she completed the Executive Program for Senior Executives at the American College of Healthcare Executives (Chicago, IL) and the New Strategies Symposium offered by Georgetown University McDonough School of Business (Washington, DC). Tarrant has contributed to more than thirteen academic publications and presentations since 2018 in addition to having served on grant and abstract review committees for such recognizable institutions as the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, and the Florida Department of Health. She also routinely presents on topics of HIV Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) for industry and academic continuing education programs. Tarrant continues to be a professional voice for change through organizational memberships, including The American College of Healthcare Executives (ACHE).

Outside of MAO, Tarrant stays equally busy as a member of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Incorporated®–Beta Nu Omega Chapter and The Junior League of Montgomery, for which she has served in multiple leadership positions. She has also been a dedicated volunteer for the Center for Pediatric Onset Demyelinating Diseases (CPODD) Family Retreat, Hope Inspired Ministries, and Birthwise Midwifery School, among others.

“As we enter 2022, I would like to express my excitement in taking on the role of Interim CEO for MAO. I look forward to working in this new role as MAO enters its 35th year of existence, while also ensuring that MAO continues to provide excellent service to all of the individuals that we serve throughout our 28-county service area.” – Ashley Tarrant, MPH.

About Medical Advocacy and Outreach (MAO) – (800) 510-4704 – MAOI.ORG - [@MAOofAlabama](https://www.instagram.com/MAOofAlabama) (Social Media)

Founded in 1987 as a 501(c)3 not-for-profit, MAO provides: culturally competent, specialized medical and behavioral care, including PrEP, STI testing/treatment, and counseling for substance use disorder; social services; and wellness education to the residents of South Alabama and surrounding areas. Clinical services benefit more than 2,000 people affected by chronic illnesses, including HIV, each year. Through risk reduction education, including FREE HIV testing in community and institutional settings, MAO also elevates the lives of 4,500 other Alabamians, and more than 1,000 care professionals through hosted continuing education programs annually.

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