

# IGNITE CHANGE. GO GREEN.

## **Faculty Spotlight:**

**Ruth McDermott-Levy, PhD, MPH, RN Associate Professor;  
Director, Center for Global & Public Health, Villanova  
University College of Nursing**

In this interview series we bring you inside the world of Villanova's faculty and explore how their work relates to creating a sustainable future. In this issue we hear from Dr. Ruth McDermott-Levy, an associate professor in the College of Nursing.

### **What is your academic background?**

I received my undergraduate degree in nursing from Wilkes University. Later I attended Villanova University for my masters and doctorate in nursing education. My dissertation is titled "The Lived Experience of Arab-Muslim Female Nurses Studying in the United States". Lastly, I graduated from University of Massachusetts, Amherst with a master's in public health, focused on environmental health and global health.

### **How long have you been teaching at Villanova?**

I started at Villanova in 1996 as a part-time faculty member. Since 2002 I have been working as a full-time faculty member in the College of Nursing.

### **In your own words, how would you define sustainability and why is it important to you?**

To me, sustainability means, living within your means. Specifically, being conscious of your purchasing, energy, transportation, food, & social choices and the impact those choices have on future generations.

### **Why is sustainability important to you?**

As a health care professional, scholar and activist, I see a direct link between the way we live and the health of people and the planet.



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## **What is your current research focused on?**

I am currently in the second phase of a community based participatory research project focused on communities in Northeastern PA that are undergoing natural gas development. Gas development influences the energy choices we make - it also influences the local environment (air quality, water quality, community stress) and the global environment (greenhouse gas emissions). In phase one I identified the health concerns of people living in these communities. The major concerns were air quality, water quality and stress. In phase two, I am working with community members and health professionals who understand the health risks of gas development to identify what educational materials will address the community member's environmental related health concerns.

## **Do you collaborate with others on your research?**

I have not had the opportunity to partner with others on my research, but I hope to in the future.

## **Have you been able to incorporate sustainability into your course work?**

Yes, because climate change has been shown to cause health impacts I have included sustainability in the courses NUR 3122 Imperatives for Global & Public Health - a required undergraduate course, and NUR 7081 International Health.

## **If you could create any course, what would it be?**

I would like to teach two courses- the first would be an Environmental Public Health course that included policy and advocacy to support health promoting regulations with a service-learning component where the students worked with communities on environmental justice as it relates to environmental health. The other course would focus on policy makers and their staff – using a seminar structure to address scientific evidence regarding the health impacts of clean air, clean water, energy choices, sustainable food, and climate change. Learning objectives would include how to read scientific literature and incorporate health in all policy. As I have visited legislators to discuss environmental policies, I know there is a low level of understanding regarding environmental justice and public health.

## **What are your favorite outside of the office activities?**

I am fond of anything outside- hiking, biking, reading, camping and hanging out with my family.