

2017: Mofoluwake Adeniyi, Claremont University, Ph.D. Public Health, Community & Global Health

Now in its fourth year, the Dr. Charlena Seymour Scholarship to recognize and reward exceptional women pursuing an advanced degree in Public and/or Environmental Health turned out 25 applicants. They hailed from 18 universities in 11 states; 17 pursuing a Master's and 8 seeking a Doctorate. Degree programs were mostly within Public Health, some with concentrations such as Epidemiology, Global Environmental Health, Environmental Health & Toxicology, Occupational Health, and Gerontology. We at the AEHS Foundation and Dr. Seymour herself were again very moved by the incredible level of qualification of the applicants and their determination to be successful in the public and environmental health fields in order to make the world a better place. Each had her own personal story and history of how she arrived at her choice to pursue an advanced degree in the field, some overcoming great adversity in their lives. All applicants had a strong dedication to high standards both academically and professionally, a commitment to helping her fellow human being, a vision of leadership, unique personal circumstances and experiences, and glowing references. Therefore, it was no easy task for our seven-member national committee to come to a decision.

This year, we proudly award the Dr. Charlena Seymour Scholarship to Ms. Mofoluwake (Foluke) Adeniyi. Growing up in Nigeria, she witnessed a great deal of affliction from HIV and AIDS as well as other health conditions. She knew from age 8 that she wanted to become a medical doctor to break out of poverty and care for others, inspired by her marginalization as a female and the conditions she saw around her. She spent countless nights studying into the night by candlelight, after chores were done and the rest of her 8-member family was asleep. After finishing secondary school at age 15, she began working with her mother selling slippers at the local market. She saved enough money from this business to enroll in medical studies at the University of Lagos in 1997, completing her degree and becoming an MD in 2003. Family and society then pressured her into an abusive and unhappy marriage, but she went against expectations and got a divorce despite its taboo, taking her two children with her. She worked as a Physician with the Lagos State Health Commission and established a nonprofit primary care facility which she ran for 6 years. She also volunteered as the medical manager for Christian ministries through which she conducted free medical programs and health outreaches. She then went to Concordia University in Nebraska, graduating in 2014 with an MPH with specialization in Health Policy and Administration. She transferred to the largest healthcare facility in the largest urban community in Nigeria. In 2015 she was recognized as the best resource person for AIDS Preventative Initiative Nigeria. In 2016 she facilitated refresher courses on behalf of the Initiative. With a total of 15 years as a Physician/Public Health Physician, she is now enrolled in a Doctor of Public Health program at Claremont University where she maintains a 4.0 GPA. Her goals are to "alleviate and prevent diseases and suffering....recommend, lobby, and advocate for advantageous health policies that will improve healthcare equity, quality, accessibility, and outcomes for the communities of the developing world....[and] form partnerships with stakeholders to develop and implement joint public health programs," with an ultimate goal of become Nigeria's future Minister of Health. As one writer of a letter

of recommendation stated, we can all be "confident that [Foluke] will use her skills and education to make the world a better place."

We look forward to awarding this scholarship to more of these exceptional women in the years to come.

Sierra Pelletier, Program Assistant, AEHS Foundation, Inc.

December 29, 2017