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## **Dr. Celeste Philip, interim state surgeon general, to be honored for her dedication and commitment to public health**

**Tampa, FLA (March 30, 2016)** – The [University of South Florida College of Public Health](#) has named Celeste Philip, MD, MPH, the 2016 Florida Outstanding Woman in Public Health.

Earlier this month Dr. Philip was appointed interim state surgeon general, Florida Department of Health (DOH) -- only the second woman to lead the department. She is president-elect of the American Heart Association's Greater Southeast Affiliate and serves on the Health Initiatives Committee Advisory Group to the Florida Board of Governors.

The College bestows the award each year to a woman whose career accomplishments and leadership contribute significantly to the field of public health in Florida. **Dr. Philip will receive the award in a ceremony at 9 a.m. on Wednesday, April 6, at the USF College of Public Health, 13201 Bruce B. Downs Blvd. in Tampa.**

“She has frequently been the voice of reason, often when there have been few such voices. She has demonstrated herself to be a strong leader, one with extreme dedication and service for the improvement of public health,” said Dr. Leslie Beitsch, professor and chair of the Department of Behavioral Sciences and Social Medicine, Florida State University Center for Medicine and Public Health.

Dr. Philip most recently served as the deputy secretary for health and deputy state health officer for Children's Medical Services at DOH. Previously she served at the DOH in Volusia County as assistant director for public health and interim chief for the Bureau of Communicable Diseases, as well as interim director for three county health departments.

Gov. Rick Scott said, “Dr. Celeste Philip has dedicated her career to improving the health and wellness of our state so Florida can be the healthiest place for all our families and visitors. I congratulate her for receiving this important award.”

As medical director for the DOH in Polk County, she chaired the Polk Health Care Alliance Infrastructure Committee and served on the board of Lakeland Volunteers in Medicine, where she provided primary care to uninsured patients. She was also previously a board member of the Early Learning Coalition of Flagler and Volusia and a steering committee member of the Department of Juvenile Justice Circuit 7 Disproportionate Minority Contact Initiative.

While Dr. Philip has held various positions in public health, her contributions are not limited to Florida. She officially launched her public health career in 2006. For two years, she served as an epidemic intelligence service officer for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in Atlanta. In this capacity, Dr. Philip oversaw maternal and child anemia projects in the Philippines and Niger, as well as a nutrition surveillance system in the Dominican Republic.

In 2014, Dr. Philip was awarded a Lifesong Award from the Healthy Start Coalition of Flagler and Volusia Counties, Inc. for her efforts to address infant mortality disparities. In 2010, she was recognized with the Outstanding Unit Citation from the U.S. Public Health Service Commissioned Corps for her role in the H1N1 flu response. Among numerous honors and recognitions, she has also received a Prudential-Davis Productivity Award, the Mac Kenzie Foundation Award and the Selma Andrews Award in Public Health.

“She is a wonderful role model to all women, particularly those of us in public health,” said Shannon Hughes, president of the Florida Public Health Association. “She often encourages staff to pursue an advanced degree in public health, because she believes in what we do and understands the importance of a qualified and competent public health workforce.”

Dr. Philip graduated from Howard University magna cum laude, with a bachelor’s degree in English and Spanish. She later earned a master of public health degree in maternal and child health and a doctor of medicine degree from Loma Linda University in California. She is board certified in family medicine, as well as preventive medicine and public health.

The Florida Outstanding Woman in Public Health Award was initiated by USF in 1988 and nominations are solicited from public health practitioners across the state. [Past honorees](#) include Lillian Stark, PhD, MPH, retired director of virology at the Florida Department of Health Tampa Branch Laboratory; Lora E. Fleming, MD, former epidemiologist at the University of Miami; and Lisa Ann Conti, DVM, MPH, deputy commissioner and chief science officer of Florida’s Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services.

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