



Alumni Spotlight

Kevin Dixon '81

'Ville Alumnus Kevin Dixon '81 is a "True Public Servant"

By Mary Miller '22

Kevin Dixon '81 has had a full career: he is currently a lecturer for the College of Social Work at The Ohio State University and a member of their curriculum redesign team. He was responsible for initiating a wide range of programs and services for underserved populations. He has been described by "The Columbus African American News Journal" as a "true public servant," and has met with celebrities and nationally renowned leaders. But his favorite job was as a talk show host for WDAS radio, a career that ties back to his early experiences in radio at Millersville University.



Dixon graduated in 1981 and received his bachelor's degree in secondary English education: radio, television and film. During his time at the University, he was station manager, AM program director, production manager, and DJ for the campus radio station, WIXQ 91.7.

"I only realized the value of a mentor when I got to college," he says. "I met the esteemed Dr. Ralph Anttonen, a.k.a. 'Doc Roc,' WIXQ's advisor, who along with Millersville vice president Gary Reichard saw something in me that I did not see in myself."

"While in college, I was introduced to a WDAS community service radio pioneer Mattie L. Humphrey, J.D., who remained my young adult mentor for many years," he continues.

After graduating, Dixon worked at WDAS in Philadelphia for eight years where he co-hosted and produced weekend talk shows and interviewed the likes of musicians James Brown and Grover Washington Jr., activist Al Sharpton, and former Black Panther Bobby Seale. He also covered swimmer Jim McGowan's historic 1986 English Channel Swim in Dover, England.

After his time at WDAS, Dixon moved to Columbus when his wife, Melanye, accepted a faculty position at Ohio State, where he began his 34-year-long career at the Alcohol, Drug, and Mental Health Board of Franklin County. Dixon was responsible for developing initiatives to address a wide range of behavioral health issues within the community while earning a master's degree and Ph.D. under the mentorship of renowned scholar Dr. Edwin Nichols.

"As Vice President for Community and Cultural Engagement, I was responsible for initiating a wide range of programs and services that addressed the needs of underserved populations," Dixon explains, noting that the ADAMH Board was statutorily responsible for planning, funding, and the evaluation of behavioral health services for the county through 35 partner agencies.

In the 90s, the organization received a grant to host a series of national conferences focused on the needs of African Americans, Appalachian, Asian, Latino and Native American populations. These conferences were the first of their kind to focus on cultural competence in alcohol, drug and mental health. Notable participants in these conferences include activist Dick Gregory, Harvard psychiatrist Alvin Poussaint, and poets Maya Angelou and Nikki Giovanni. Participants attended from the U.S., Canada and the Caribbean.

“This is critical work to ensure the health and wellness of underserved and marginalized communities are best addressed by culturally appropriate prevention, early intervention and treatment services that reflect their cultural realities,” Dixon says.

During the span of his career with the ADAMH Board, Dixon was instrumental in launching various school-based programs, refugee and immigrant services, senior faith-leader support and other key initiatives focused on helping his community.

“When systems of care disregard the cultural needs of diverse populations we see misdiagnoses, over-medication, over-hospitalizations and the under-utilization of community-based systems,” Dixon says, explaining why his work is so important to him. “The health and financial costs are enormous – impacting a wide range of health and quality of life outcomes, as identified by the social determinants of health.”

After retiring in January 2021, Dixon spent a semester teaching and continuing to serve on various boards and advisory committees. He is also working with a team to develop a cultural competence certification program at The Ohio State University College of Social Work that can have international implications.

“My inspiration comes from those who dared to be different in the service of others,” Dixon says. “Those included pioneers, advocates, inventors, scientists, historians, public servants, entertainers, faith leaders and others who I have had the pleasure to meet and work with during my career.” The Ancient Egyptians taught us, “We are not just in history, we are history, and given that, every day we make a donation to eternity; even one hour is a contribution to our future.”



Above: Dr. Ralph "Doc Roc" Anttonen, Judy "Mama" Anttonen and Kevin Dixon visit together in 2021 in Columbus, Ohio.



Above: Kevin Dixon at a 1995 event for the Afrocentric Training Project of the Franklin County Alcohol, Drug Addiction & Mental Health Services Board.