

# Human Ecology

COLLEGE OF HUMAN ECOLOGY · CORNELL UNIVERSITY · VOLUME 46 · NUMBER 2 · FALL 2018



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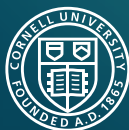
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## INSIDE: HUMAN ECOLOGY'S IMPACT

Regional, national and international influence



College of Human Ecology

# TELEMEDICINE

Laura Stokes '13 impacts women's health through Pacify work



Making health care not only widely accessible but downright fun may seem like a tall order. But that is exactly what Laura Stokes PAM '13 hopes to accomplish at telemedicine startup Pacify.

Founded in 2014, the company applies the model of on-demand availability – popularized through ride-sharing services such as Lyft – to maternal and child health. Subscribers download the Pacify app onto their smartphones and connect to nurses, nutritionists and lactation consultants for live video consultations around the clock, in English or Spanish.

A Policy Analysis and Management major with minors in global health and inequality studies, Stokes serves as Director of Public Health Programs and forges partnerships with government agencies and non-profit organizations to bring Pacify's services to low-income families around the country. Some 8,500 women have signed up for free access through five Medicaid and ten public health partnerships.

"I decided to join the Pacify team because I wanted to play an active role in integrating cutting-edge technology into the services that are provided to underserved communities," said Stokes, who became the startup's fourth employee in early 2015 – bringing with her an understanding of the barriers and the scalable potential of large, established institutions from first-hand experience as a public servant.

"The fieldwork I did in Tanzania as a global health student motivated me to enter the field of public health after graduation," Stokes explained, noting that she became a public health associate with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) shortly after graduation.

There, Stokes worked with partners to implement policies that promote the health of children and families. She quickly identified lack of support for new and expecting parents as a major public health challenge.

Stokes frequently drew on her Cornell coursework. "In PAM, we learned the practice of zooming out and considering the broad implications of interventions and policies," she said. "This is an essential skill for anyone in the field of public health."

When she learned about Pacify from a friend, she took a chance and sent a message directly to the CEO. "I told him a bit about my work with CDC and asked if he would be open to piloting the app in low-income communities," Stokes said.

The first state-wide Pacify program in Mississippi is one of Stokes' proudest accomplishments and proved that app-based services could improve health outcomes in a convenient and cost-effective manner. The state's department of health reported a ten percent increase in exclusive breastfeeding rates at three and six months just nine months after implementing the project. According to additional pilot studies, the app may produce \$875 savings per birth due to prolonged breastfeeding, as well as 96 fewer emergency room visits per 1,000 enrolled moms.

"The opportunity to work with people at all levels of the public health system is very rewarding, as is feedback we get from parents explaining how a Pacify provider 'talked them off a ledge,'" Stokes said. "I hope that Pacify shows how technology can be used to fill gaps in care and deliver services in a way that is enjoyable for both patients and providers."

– Olivia Hall



"We learned the practice of zooming out and considering the broad implications of interventions and policies. This is an essential skill for anyone in the field of public health."

– Laura Stokes PAM '13



Infant Health: There's an app for that

Provided