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Internship Provides Ministry to Cancer Patients

CEDARVILLE, OHIO – Cedarville University's exercise science program stresses the importance of caring for both the physical and spiritual needs of others. One student is living that out with an internship experience.

Erica Campbell, a senior exercise science major from Colorado Springs, Colorado, has spent this semester as an intern at Maple Tree Cancer Alliance, where she's helping to improve the quality of life of cancer patients.

Maple Tree provides free personalized exercise training, nutrition plans and social interaction both during and after a patient's treatment. The organization also provides one-on-one and group prayer support for cancer patients, survivors and their families.

The organization was founded in 2010 by Karen Wonders, Ph.D., professor of exercise science at Wright State University. In addition to its primary location at the Life Enrichment Center in Dayton, Ohio, Maple Tree also operates out of Soin Medical Center and Greene Memorial Hospital.

Wonders moved to Dayton in 2006 after working as an exercise trainer at Rocky Mountain Cancer Rehabilitation Institute (RMCRI) in Colorado, where she witnessed firsthand the positive effect that supervised exercise and proper nutrition can have on the life of an individual being treated for cancer.

"When I moved to Dayton in 2006, I saw a real need for a place like RMCRI and, through the Lord's calling, founded Maple Tree," said Wonders.

Campbell came on board with Maple Tree after learning of the internship opportunity from April Crommett, Ph.D., associate professor of exercise science, who had interacted with Wonders at several professional gatherings.

As part of her internship, Campbell creates exercise training plans for eight patients, who she meets with several times weekly. She works with patients at Maple Tree's Life Enrichment Center, Greene Memorial Hospital's gym and even visits one patient in his own home.

Each exercise routine is tailored to an individual's specific needs and takes into account his or her fitness level and type of cancer treatment. The process consists of four phases, which increase in intensity as the patient regains strength following chemotherapy or radiation treatments.

Exercises with Thera bands are common for the beginning stages of training, and some clients use dumbbells after building up strength. Maple Tree also offers several group classes, such as yoga, which are open to the public.

Campbell has also helped Maple Tree's efforts by volunteering at one fundraiser and passing out promotional materials throughout the region.

"My hope is that I have made a positive impact on my clients," said Campbell. "Each of them seems to have enjoyed the exercises and all have reported positive results, whether that is increased strength or just an overall feeling of general wellness."

Brittany Stout, clinical coordinator for Greene Memorial Hospital, serves as Campbell's internship supervisor, and has been impressed by Erica's work ethic.

"Erica is detailed in her work and communicates effectively with patients," Stout said. "Cedarville really prepares excellent students, and it is my hope that we have the chance to work with more Cedarville students in the future."

After graduation Campbell plans to continue her education by obtaining her doctoral degree in physical therapy from The Ohio State University, with hopes to pursue a career in physical therapy.

Located in southwest Ohio, Cedarville University is an accredited, Christ-centered, Baptist institution with an enrollment of 3,711 undergraduate, graduate, and online students in more than 100 areas of study. Founded in 1887, Cedarville is recognized nationally for its authentic Christian community, rigorous academic programs, strong graduation and retention rates, accredited professional and health science offerings, and leading student satisfaction ratings. For more information about the University, visit www.cedarville.edu.