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Students Host “Virtual Dementia” Experience

CEDARVILLE, OHIO – Cedarville University nursing students will host a community presentation called “Decoding Dementia” at the Madison County Senior Center in London, Ohio, on Wednesday, Dec. 6, at 1 pm. It is free and open to the public.

The group has spent six hours each week since October at the center taking part in a variety of activities, from exercise classes to serving a meal to the seniors.

The event, which will culminate their experience and research, will include a health education presentation on dementia, as well as a unique “virtual dementia” experience through a mobile bus run by the Dublin Retirement Village. This experience is used to simulate the daily struggles one goes through when suffering from dementia. And it’s not just for those who are part of the center, but is a community event.

“Dementia is one of those topics that is taboo because it’s very embarrassing for a person to admit to someone else that they are experiencing a mental deficit,” said clinical instructor Jennifer Pond. “If we talk about it more openly, then maybe people will be willing to seek help earlier rather than hide it. We want to provide education on dementia for the whole community.”

For the students, this is a required component of their class on public health nursing, but for Pond it’s much more personal. Pond’s mother was diagnosed with dementia over the summer.

“I feel like it’s a ministry for me,” said Pond. “To the students, to the seniors and to my mom.”

In addition to the highly personal connection to the training, spending time at the Madison County Senior Center is a return to Pond’s own nursing training. Pond, a 1996 Cedarville graduate, visited there Vfor a clinical when she was a nursing student.

While the students’ role may not fit the traditional understanding of nursing, Pond said it is an incredibly important learning experience.

“The purpose of this class is to teach students not to just look at one person lying in a hospital bed but to rather look at a population as a whole,” said Pond. “It teaches them how to use nursing as a ministry and to be Jesus’ hands and feet in the community.”

Located in southwest Ohio, Cedarville University is an accredited, Christ-centered, Baptist institution with an enrollment of 3,963 undergraduate, graduate, and online students in more than 150 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.