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Nursing Students and Urban Poor Learn From Each Other

CEDARVILLE, OHIO -- A group of seven senior Cedarville nursing students have the opportunity to step away from their education in the cornfields and enter into the real world of public health nursing within inner-city Dayton.

These students partner with Dayton Life Enrichment Center (LEC) to complete their seven-week clinical studies as a part of the Nursing Care of Population clinical course. This partnership has been established for six years, initiated by Prof. Marsha Swinehart in 2013, former assistant professor of nursing. Dr. Chu-Yu Huang, professor of nursing, became involved in 2014, and Dr. Beth Delaney, associate professor of nursing, took over the partnership in 2016.

“The LEC is an inner-city community center, and we serve the underserved in the city of Dayton,” Jeff Sorrell, executive director of the Dayton LEC said. “Each person comes with a unique set of challenges and problems and so our goal is to come alongside people, find out exactly what their needs are and how we can help them overcome and end up with changed lives.”

Cedarville students have come alongside the LEC in many different ways with both short-term and long-term projects during the past six years.

There are a series of classes that are offered at the LEC, and Cedarville students either teach or assist others in attending those classes on a weekly basis, Delaney said. For instance, Cedarville students are currently helping develop and teach a class called “Simple Ways to Feel Better,” which teaches information on diet, exercise, conflict management and the importance of spiritual health.

There are also service-learning opportunities for Cedarville students, such as the Choice Food Pantry, where students sort, inventory, shelf donated nonperishable foods, and assist shoppers. Last year, Cedarville students provided a literature review regarding an exchange model which could be implemented at the pantry. LEC clients earn points by attending activities, which they can use on a shopping trip in the Choice Food Pantry. The Choice Pantry has additional items available such as vegetables, fruits, meat, eggs, cleaning supplies and feminine hygiene products.

Students are gaining invaluable experience through these hands-on opportunities in the community.

“Right before their very eyes, they can understand that nursing can be far more than taking care of someone in a hospital,” Delaney said.
Through their interactions with the clients, they are able to impact a group of people with whom they may not have regular interactions.

“The thing that I really like about the Cedarville students is that they bring their faith with them,” Sorrell said. “They’re praying for people and interacting with people and pouring out their love for God. They don’t shy away because someone lives under the bridge, is homeless and has hygiene problems.”

Although nursing students are able to impact clients, these students also learn a different perspective on healthcare.

“My favorite thing about the LEC is building relationships and learning to understand the perspectives of those who have different life challenges,” Abigail Pullins, a senior nursing student in the program, said. “It’s amazing how the LEC provides not only physical resources, but also a spiritual community.”

Located in southwest Ohio, Cedarville University is an accredited, Christ-centered, Baptist institution with an enrollment of 4,380 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, including the Master of Science in Nursing program, strong graduation and retention rates, accredited professional and health science offerings and high student engagement ranking. For more information about the University, visit www.cedarville.edu