



Learning THROUGH SERVICE

COMMUNITY HEALTH COURSE SHINES LIGHT ON THE NEEDS OF RURAL NEIGHBORS

DR. AMY BEASLEY, Community Health Course Leader

The core values at the Capstone College of Nursing are excellence, professionalism, innovation, inclusivity, integrity, caring and student-centered learning. At CCN, students in their fourth semester of upper division courses take a required course called Community Health Nursing that embodies many, if not all, of those core values.

The community health nursing course provides opportunities for students to apply knowledge to

improve the health of a population through health promotion, risk reduction, and disease prevention for individuals, families, and communities. Through theory and hands-on clinical experiences, students work to understand the environment where patients live and how it impacts health outcomes. Additionally, the community health nursing course allows students to understand how health disparities play a role in the health of a population.

One of the clinical components that is utilized within the community health course is a community project. Student groups are tasked with completing a windshield assessment and obtaining health statistics within an assigned geographical area. After determining potential health needs of the target population within the community, the student group partners with a community organization to plan and implement a project addressing the identified need. The project allows students to apply their nursing knowledge and skills to promote the health of the selected population.

In recent years, we have expanded the community project outside of Tuscaloosa and into many rural communities in surrounding counties. This has been impactful for students to see smaller communities and learn how to adapt nursing to fit the environment. For example, students created an exercise guide for middle school students who did not have access to green spaces or gym equipment.

In addition to the community project, faculty in the community health course have partnered with rural community organizations and schools to create clinical opportunities that impact the health of those living within rural communities. These activities have included school health screenings, community health fairs, educational sessions, COVID vaccination clinics, and blood pressure screenings.

Because of these partnerships, relationships with these communities have flourished, even leading community partners to reach out to faculty when a health need arises. For example, in the spring of 2022, a rural middle school principal identified a need for a mental health talk. A CCN faculty member and group of community health students provided a hands-on activity and presentation on managing mental health in middle school.

Community health nursing has played a large role during the COVID-19 pandemic with the increased use of telehealth, and managing more patients with serious illness within their homes. Community health can bridge the gap of closing hospitals and limited healthcare services for rural patients. A small number of our students will work in rural settings; however, many of our students will work in urban environments while caring for patients who reside in rural communities.

Using the opportunities within the community health nursing course, we are confident that our students have the skills to impact those living in both urban and rural communities for years to come.

OPPOSITE PAGE: Community Health students participated in a Health Promotion event at a grocery store in Woodstock and (TOP RIGHT) Eutaw, Ala. **CENTER RIGHT:** Community Health students provided a bicycle safety class for elementary and preschool students. **BOTTOM RIGHT:** Fifth semester students at a Bibb County Health Fair.

