

PROGRAM SHOWS STUDENTS ROLE AND IMPACT OF COMMUNITY GROUPS

Participating in Pediatric Links with the Community (PLC) as a student, **Meghan Aldrich, RN-BC, MS**, discovered it was more than a requirement – it was a gift. Now, as a clinical nurse specialist, she finds her experiences in the community serve her well on the job.

PLC, started by **Jeffrey Kaczorowski, MD**, and **Laura Jean Shipley, MD**, in 1996, teaches pediatricians-in-training how to partner with community-based organizations (CBO) to provide care for children and families at risk due to economic and social conditions.

“The question eventually came up: Why aren’t we training pediatric nurse practitioners [PNP] in the same way as the pediatric residents so they can lead together to improve care?” said **Sue Bezek, PNP-BC**, assistant director of the Sovie Center for Pediatrics at Golisano Children’s Hospital at Strong. She and **Pamela Herendeen, MS, RN, PNP**, senior associate and specialty program director of the Care of Children and Family Nurse Practitioner program at the School of Nursing, wrote a grant for funding – which they received – from the Halcyon Hill Foundation.

In 2005, PLC expanded



Pediatric nurse practitioner Meghan Aldrich (shown second from right with her coworkers) found that her experience with Pediatric Links with the Community provided a new perspective on her patients as well as the organizations in Rochester that serve at-risk populations.

to include PNP students. Approximately 20 School of Nursing students have completed the program, which requires 16 clinical hours in each of two semesters across a sampling of 10 to 15 different placements, providing exposure to the impact of poverty on children. One day may involve teaching dental health at ABC Head Start; another may feature a lecture on dating violence.

“We really have a lot we want students to learn from this,” said Bezek. “The experience should allow students to move beyond the ‘snapshots’ of

patients that they see within the context of a clinic visit and enable them to expand to a broader picture of how the individual patients and families fit into the community, as well as what resources the community has to offer them.”

All of that was imparted to Aldrich, a 2008 graduate who works as a clinical nurse specialist in the Pediatric Surgical Suite at Strong Memorial Hospital.

During one of her shifts, Aldrich encountered a patient she had met at one of the CBOs. “I realized that this is a person who has a life and a personal experience beyond the

time I might see them in a hospital,” she said.

Aldrich benefited in other ways. She said she is better equipped to share knowledge of CBOs that might be appropriate when a patient asks for resources. Also, she said she is more appreciative of the effort that CBOs put into serving populations in need.

PLC funding for PNP’s ends in May 2009. Bezek and Herendeen are working to obtain funds to continue it seamlessly. “Students have told us that PLC really enriches the education we provide and makes nurse practitioners better prepared to do their jobs,” said Bezek.

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