News Release

Nursing class goes to Haiti for alternative Spring Break

KANSAS CITY, Mo. (Mar. 28, 2013) – Students in the “Global Health Issues” class opted for an alternative to the traditional spring break trip this year. They went to Mirabalais, Haiti, where they lived in an orphanage and conducted clinics. Professor Kathleen Brewer and Assistant Professor Laurie Brooks team-teach the course and organized this trip as part of the class curriculum at Saint Luke’s College of Health Sciences. Saint Luke’s Foundation provided money for plane tickets and each person paid for their food and lodging at the orphanage.

“This trip was so different from ones I’ve been on before. Our students traveled to remote areas to set up clinics and actually practice nursing. We didn’t go just as observers,” said Dr. Kathleen Brewer, professor and director of graduate programs.

The orphanage hosting them has 87 children including six infants and 12 deaf children. It is operated by Global Vision Citadelle Ministries which operates out of Port Saint Lucie, FL. Many of the children living in the orphanage had parents who died in the 2010 earthquake or in the 2011 hurricane.

Half of the children were placed there by parents who could no longer afford to care for them. Nursing student Laura Foust Heiserman explained why parents have difficulty feeding their children, “A man will be paid $6.25 a day for doing manual labor, but a bag of rice is $40 and a jar of peanut butter is $14.”

Nursing students took day-trips in the surrounding region to hold clinics sometimes traveling for two hours in the back of a pick-up truck to get there.

At one clinic in the mountains they met families who rotated eating meals so that everyone could eat. “Siblings would trade off eating maybe every other day or even every three days,” Heiserman said.

On the weekend students participated in the orphanage tradition of cleaning on Saturday and playing with the children on Sunday. “We brought card decks for games and to teach children their numbers and colors. Global Vision representatives also told us to bring Frisbees because the children love playing with them,” said Brooks, assistant professor.

It was a short, seven day trip and nursing student Michael Berard had mixed feelings about leaving. “It was hard to leave not knowing if the people we treated would ever be able to get follow up care.”

This trip confirmed for nursing student April Freeman that this could be a career path for her. “This is the first medical mission I’ve been on and I would love to go back. In fact, I’d like to do this professionally when I graduate.”
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