

# Agency Brief

Geisinger  
Commonwealth  
School of Medicine

Information for regional agencies about the community immersion experience

## Community Immersion Experience: *Building healthy, fulfilling lives*

Geisinger Commonwealth School of Medicine's community immersion program connects students with regional communities through partnerships with local service agencies. These partnerships introduce 'Community as Teacher' in a community-based approach to health. The goal of the program is for students to learn the power of collaboration in eliminating health disparities. "They see firsthand how socioeconomic status, the physical environment, discrimination, racism and literacy levels impact the health of individuals and communities. This is done through the lens of service, as students participate in visits to dedicated local community agencies and structured interviews. Group discussions and guided reflective exercises complete the cycle. It is a great partnership for all," says Jennifer Joyce, MD, professor of family medicine.

During the 2016-2017 academic year, students had a close-up look at agencies that provide support to the community for improved quality of life, health education, inclusion for people with disabilities and active senior living.

Keystone Community Resources is a leader in providing community-based services for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities, such as autism. They also provide supported employment for individuals to seek and obtain competitive employment with the help of a job coach. MD2 students Erin Connolly and Shane Zeshonski visited Keystone Confections in Tunkhannock and Rachel Kennett and John Nawrocki visited the La Plume Vocational Center to learn more about supported employment and the constant struggle companies face to maintain funding for these programs.

The bakery, managed by Linda Brown (first row, left) from Keystone Community Resources, provides employment for Karen Frey (first row right) who is very proud of her baked goods. MD2 students are Shane Zeshonski (second row, left) and Erin Connolly (right).

At the La Plume Vocational Center, John Nowrocki and Rachel Kennett, second row, learn about drill pressing and assembly work from Colleen Devine and others in the pre-vocational training program.



## Community Immersion Goals & Objectives

The Community Immersion Experience expands an understanding of healthcare needs by providing opportunities for students, working in teams, to visit with various agencies that provide for family and community health.

### Goal:

Develop clinician-community relationships

### Learning Objectives:

- Discover diverse constructs/models of community
- Interpret community perceptions of healthcare (including myths and misconceptions)
- Relate to local community dynamics:
  - Demographic
  - Economic
  - Political
  - History of land use
  - Migration
  - Occupation
- Discover local environments and their impact on health
- Interpret the isolation of the healthcare community from the community at large
- Demonstrate respect for community integrity, cultural diversity and multiple determinants of health
- Understand health-relevant policy
- Operate from an open-minded position
- Distinguish honest limits of medical care
- Illustrate the responsibility to contribute health expertise to public dialogue
- Demonstrate respect of community leadership
- Relate to the responsibility to work for health of the public
- Connect Community Health Research Project (CHRP) work with other community visits

Geisinger Commonwealth School of Medicine is committed to non-discrimination in all employment and educational opportunities.

# Community Visits

**CEO, Hazleton** has opened my eyes to the daily difficulties that members of my community go through. As a future physician, this exposure will help me to be more open-minded and especially sensitive to the non-medical needs of my patients and their potential hardships.



Agatha Romeiro, MD2

Margaret Dominquez, left, participated in EOTC's community education program on diabetes and helped MD2 students, Sean Farrell, Agatha Romeiro, front and Samuel Mellits, right, understand the challenges of living with diabetes.

**Meals on Wheels of Chemung County** enjoys the student visits! As aspiring physicians we hope they take away a sense of who we are and what we do. We provide a meal and a visit to seniors in our community or send meals on a temporary basis to people of any age at home recovering from an accident or surgery. Perhaps the day will come when these young people will refer us to their patients!



Beverly Dalrymple  
Meals on Wheels of Chemung County

Robert Parajon and Callie Medin, both MD2s, visited Norma Phillips of Pine City, New York, while shadowing Meals on Wheels volunteers during community weeks for the Guthrie Campus.

## STEP, Office of Aging, Williamsport

STEP Office of Aging, the local Area Agency on Aging, works to advance the wellbeing of Pennsylvania's older adults residing in Lycoming and Clinton Counties. MD2 students, John Barnoski and Kristina Borham, were introduced to a variety of community services, ranging from senior centers to meals for homebound adults and supportive services to allow elderly residents to stay in their homes or find appropriate personal-care facilities.

From left to right: Betty Brown, John Barnoski and Kristina Borham, both MD2s; and Tammy Frye, manager, Steps Senior Center.



## FCE Datebook

Information for  
**NEW Families** for  
students in the MD Class of 2021

COMMUNITY WEEK DATES  
Oct. 9-13, 2017  
Jan. 29- Feb. 2, 2018  
March 26-30, 2018

Information for  
**RETURNING Families** for  
students in the MD Class of 2020

TENTATIVE COMMUNITY WEEK DATES  
Oct. 16-20, 2017  
Feb. 12-16, 2018  
April 9-13, 2018

## Overarching Objectives

- Establish meaningful connections to people and communities
- Increase appreciation of cultural differences in diverse populations served by public health and health-services professionals in northeastern and north central Pennsylvania
- Explore issues of culture, bias and stereotyping as related to health and healthcare
- Embrace families and relationships integral to healing

*"Families who volunteer for the FCE program find the experience to be extremely rewarding. They have a direct influence on educating tomorrow's doctors by sharing their experiences. It's an invaluable teaching tool."*



- Jennifer Joyce, MD  
FCE program director

# What is the Family Centered Experience (FCE)?

The FCE program is an important part of Geisinger Commonwealth School of Medicine's patient-centered, community-based curriculum. During the pre-clinical years, first-year students are paired with a patient. They visit their patient three times a year for two years to learn the human aspect and personal family experiences that arise from managing a chronic or serious illness. FCE volunteers are an important resource for our medical students' education.

MD2 students John Nawrocki and Chunya Huang met with Cathie-Jo Langan of Olyphant and her mother, Cathy London, to develop a student-patient relationship during their first two years of medical school. Cathie-Jo was born with the genetic disorder, thalassemia or Colley's anemia. Since age three, her life has depended on advanced medical treatments, blood transfusions, medications and often more than 15 medical appointments a month.

Cathie-Jo and her family also lost her brother to this genetic disease. For her and her mother, the biggest challenge was trying to help him commit to the treatment needed to save his life. "Just getting out of bed in the morning to keep up with the day is a daily challenge," Cathie-Jo says. "My mother and I work hard to keep a positive attitude, get the medical care I need and fight for it, if necessary."

Because Cathie-Jo does not look sick or disabled, she often faces judgment about her health status, she says. For example, parking in a handicapped spot can sometimes produce unwelcome comments from strangers. As a child in school, other parents were afraid to have their children near her for fear of a contagious disease. Unfortunately, she says, "in second grade, students were encouraged stay away from Cathie-Jo."

"By working with Cathie-Jo, I find that I am better able to place myself in the shoes of those for whom I hope to care for in the future, which is an invaluable perspective to maintain as a physician. It has taught me the importance of extending my capacity to care and learn far beyond that of the classroom or office," says John Nawrocki.

"Family Centered Experience is more than simply early clinical exposures. It challenge us, as aspiring physicians, towards becoming exceptional doctors, by pushing us to listen to patients' concerns and value their input," says Chunya Huang, MD2.

From Left to Right:  
Chunya Huang, MD2,  
Cathy London,  
Cathie Jo Langan  
and John Nawrocki,  
MD2.



## How the FCE Program Works

Each volunteer family is matched with two first-year medical students at the beginning of the academic year and the matched students follow the volunteer family throughout the next two years. A regional coordinator contacts the volunteers and shares information about the matched students and invites the family to a "welcome event" in each region where everyone is introduced.

## Why We Need You

The experience of meeting patients, families and caregivers with chronic illness is eye-opening for students. Students learn about disease processes through textbooks and lectures, but watching how patients deal with real life circumstances to cope with chronic illness can change the way a student approaches a patient.

## How to Get Involved

If you or someone you know would be a good fit for this role and are interested in applying to become an FCE participant, please contact one of the regional campus managers listed below. A regional community week coordinator will contact you personally about the program, qualifications and information needed to become a family volunteer.

## Regional Coordinators

### Regional Campus Manager, North

Nora Alu 570-207-3681  
NAlu@tcmc.edu

### Regional Campus Manager, South

Jackie Castanzo 570-825-7245  
JCastanzo@tcmc.edu

### Regional Campus Manager, Central

Tammy Button 570-327-6080  
TButton@tcmc.edu

### Regional Campus Manager, Guthrie

Nancy Pease 570-887-4434  
Pease\_Nancy@guthrie.org



# Agency Partners 2017---Thank you!

## South Campus:

Alzheimer's Association  
Area Agency on Aging  
CEO - Hazleton Food Pantry  
Commission on Economic Development  
Cori's Place  
Day Development Program  
Kingston Active Adult Center  
Maternal Family Health Services-WIC Programs  
PA Link  
Reach Food Pantry  
ReDCo Group  
Victims Resource Center  
Wyoming Valley Children's Association  
Wyoming Valley Alcohol &  
Drug Services

## Guthrie Campus:

Meals on Wheels  
Sayre Senior Center  
PA Representative Tina Pickett's Office  
Sayre Library  
Salvation Army  
Hospice  
Greater Valley EMS  
House of Hope  
Food Bank of Southern Tier  
RPH Safety Committee  
Bradford/Sullivan Early  
Intervention  
Nurse-Family Patnership  
Early Intervention Services  
Trinity  
The Bridge  
Main Link



*"Community Week is our medical students' first exposure to both real world medicine AND to the communities that our medical school serves. It provides first-and second-year students with opportunities to explore how our medical community provides care and support for our neighbors. Most importantly, it allows students to take an early step in their own personal development from being a patient to becoming a physician. They learn that it is ultimately our patients who teach us."*

*-Jim Caggiano, MD  
Assistant Director of Pediatrics*

## North Campus:

The Advocacy Alliance  
The ARC of NEPA  
Catherine McAuley Center  
Community Intervention Center  
EOTC  
Friends of the Poor  
Keystone Community Resources-LaPlume & Tunkhannock  
LIFE Geisinger  
Mended Hearts Support Group  
Mountain View Care Center  
NHS Human Services  
Penn State Extension  
Pocono Alliance-Bridges out of Poverty Program  
Scranton School for the Deaf  
St. Joseph's Center  
Telespond Senior Services  
The Center for Independent Living  
United Cerebral Palsy of NEPA  
United Neighborhood Center  
Wayne County Behavioral and Developmental Programs

## Central Campus:

AIDS Resource  
Agency on Aging (STEP)  
Albright Life  
American Rescue Workers  
BLAST CIU (Children with Disabilities)  
Central PA Food Bank  
Children's Development Center  
Family Promise of Lycoming County  
Hope Enterprises  
The Learning Center (Adult Literacy)  
Roads to Freedom:  
Center for Independent Living  
Saving Grace Homeless Shelter  
Shepherd of the Streets  
West House  
YWCA