



FCE Community Brief

Information on the Family Centered Experience of The Commonwealth Medical College Summer 2015

What is the Family Centered Experience?

The Family Centered Experience (FCE) program is an important part of TCMC'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 medical students and their education.

Coping with a Chronic Condition

Billy Francis from Hazleton enjoys baseball, fishing and Dr. Who. He plays on a challenger division baseball team and volunteers with his brother for Meals on Wheels. When a severe seizure disorder struck him at age 4, he and his family faced countless hospital stays, weeks of physical and mental rehabilitation, several brain surgeries and countless doctor appointments over the past 25 years.

His mother Diana Morris Smaglik says, "When you are a caregiver of a special needs loved one, you have to be an expert in the health care system, intellectual disabilities system, educational system and community services. They all have their own language and the coordination of services is very different."

TCMC students Elizabeth Helwig, M2, and Michael Bedrin, M2, have been visiting Billy and his family as part of TCMC's Family Centered Experience over the past year. The goal of the program is to expose medical students to the personal struggles of a patient and caregiver facing a chronic condition.



Billy Francis, center, and his Mother, Diana, right, display several of his recent stained glass projects with Elizabeth Helwig, M2.

"Billy and his family opened their home and their personal lives in order to share how they function with chronic medical problems, maintaining their version of 'normal,' even if that includes hospital visits, multiple medications, and 24 hour care," Elizabeth says. "Most importantly, visiting with Billy has taught me to always be an advocate for my patients, including referring them to helpful community agencies, keeping up to date on therapies, and simply treating my patient with respect."

FCE Datebook

Information for **NEW Families for Students in the MD Class of 2019**

COMMUNITY WEEK DATES

October 11, 2015 - Meet & Greet
 October 11 - 16, 2015
 January 24 - 29, 2016
 March 20 - 25, 2016

Information for **RETURNING Families for Students in the MD Class of 2018**

COMMUNITY WEEK DATES

October 18 - 23, 2015
 February 7 - 12, 2016
 April 3 - 8, 2016

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 health care
- Embrace families and relationships integral to healing

The Family Centered Experience

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. TCMC's FCE 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.

FCE PROGRAM MANAGER CONTACT INFO

Regional Campus Manager, North
Nora Alu
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Jackie Castanzo
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Regional Campus Manager, West
Tammy Button
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Regional Campus Manager, Guthrie
Nancy Pease
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North Family Perspective



Anna Loshakov
Class of 2018

"The FCE was a unique experience that gave me a new perspective on chronic illness. Someone opening their home to you and choosing to share their story is so different from someone seeing you for help in a doctor's office. The dynamic of the conversation is changed, and you get to hear an account of the illness in the context of the volunteer's life. I think our family volunteer was comfortable sharing her story, and we got to meet her husband and daughter to see how her health has affected them, as well. They were very candid with us about her medical team (what worked and what didn't, what they wish a doctor would have done differently), which I hope I will remember in the future."



"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

West Family Perspective

Advocating for an Elderly Parent

West campus students Kyle Foley, M1, and Kyle Gleaves, M1, understand more about the challenges of caring for an elderly loved one. Through meetings with Beth Kelchner and her 85 year old mother, Alma Bieber, they heard first hand about multiple hospital stays, insurance regulations and the demands of 24/7 care.

"I hope I am helping them see the patient and talk to them, not just look at the chart," says Beth. "Sometimes a health care professional will talk to me because of my mother's age, says Beth, but my mother will tell them, I'm right here!"

Alma has arthritis and has been through several rehabilitation stays to regain strength and mobility. She says, her health problems leave her frustrated and feeling useless after tending to the animals on her Watsonstown farm for 40 years.



Kyle Foley and Kyle Gleaves with Alma Bieber and her daughter, Beth Kelchner.