

Nursing Students Provide Health Services to Children in Texas



Mennonite College of Nursing students at Marianna's Kitchen in Texas.

A report from Instructional Assistant Professor David Jansen

Mennonite College of Nursing students participated in a transcultural experience May 13-17 at the Children's Wellness Center (CWC) in Texas.

Texas weather is known to be hot and dry, but the locals note the land appears greener than most years at this time. The weather seems like Central Illinois in late July. The fruit stands are active along the highway. The corn is about 4-feet tall, but growing areas are scarce. There's lots of scruffy short trees, cactus blooming, and beautiful wildflowers scattered everywhere in Austin, Texas.

Our transcultural experience engaged students in the healthcare of Latino youths in a low socio-economic district. Our base is the Children's Wellness Center the Del Valle School in Austin Texas. The clinic is just a few minutes from the Austin airport on the edge of town. I am told most of the Latino population is located east of the airport. Students were to engage in a clinic by giving immunizations to middle school children as well as infants and toddlers. Students will also perform school sports physicals for older children in the district.

Day 1: May 13, 2013



MCN students hard at work in Texas.

Our first day was an immunization clinic at the Ojeda middle school. That morning the students hit the ground running and responded very well to a large number of injections that needed to be given, as well to the stress that played upon the the middle school students. Fears and tears were a regular occurrence, but the MCN students were well prepared with creative distraction, empathetic responses, and alert teamwork.

After a stressful morning we found a little family restaurant, Marianna's Kitchen, to sample the local Mexican fare for lunch. After lunch we performed school athletic screenings at

Ojeda middle school as part of a team of local volunteer nurses and nurse practitioners, plus physicians. Students performed height percentiles, weight, Snellen eye tests, blood pressure percentiles, and a 2-minute orthopedic exam as part of screening for sports physicals.

Our students were cheerful and enthusiastic throughout the day. Their work was excellent.

At the end of a hard day, we all went out for some down-home cookin' Texas style at famous Treadwell's. Later, we walked to the Congress Bridge to see the nightly exodus of millions of bats in flight at dusk.



Bats in flight on the Congress Bridge.

Day 2: May 14, 2013

We began our day by assessing the Del Valle school district. Catherine McAvoy, the public health nurse from CWC, guided us around the area as we did our windshield assessment. We were able to observe the housing and environment where some of the CWC clients live.

After our assessment we were able to meet with Dr. Nancy Guillet and learn about the Latino culture. She gave us tips on how we can provide more culturally competent care to our future clients.

After lunch we headed off to Del Valle middle school to assist with school sports physicals.

We look forward to working with more of the children from CWC. — Rachel Montgomery and Angela McCrary

Day 3: May 15, 2013



The MCN team in Texas.

We spent the day at Dailey middle school administering immunizations and performing sports physicals. Two of the girls were able to follow the nurse practitioner at the children's wellness center.

Major event of the day: A boy seized due to high levels of stress and fear of pain of receiving his immunizations. Stephanie Zitella and Rachel Michaels handled the situation very calmly and cared for the boy until paramedics arrived. He was transported to a local hospital, but seemed to recover fully.

The CWC staff gave us a lunch of real Texas BBQ and presented the students with small gifts. The CWC staff is wonderful and really appreciated.

After work, we visited the University of Texas campus apparel store (which was three floors) and ate at a popular college restaurant. - Stephanie Zitella and Rachel Michaels

Day 4: May 16, 2013

Today was a lovely day! We continued to learn, grow in our knowledge of the Del Valle culture, serve our clients, and enjoy one another's company!

In the morning we went to Del Valle Middle School where we participated in a similar shot clinic as we did in the other middle schools earlier this week. In total, our group was able to give immunizations to over 150 students at the three different middle schools. This experience was truly invaluable. Most of us entered this trip with very little experience in giving shots, but after the three shot clinics we all feel much more comfortable and confident with drawing up and giving immunizations.

In the afternoon, we went to Del Valle High School for our last day of sports physicals. Considering the amount of athletes at the high school, the clinic was expecting a large turnout and estimated that we might have up to 150 students. However, we ended up only serving around 80. This was largely due to the fact that many students who showed up to get their physicals did not have their forms signed by the parents. Thus, the afternoon ended up being substantially less busy than anticipated. We all still worked hard, though, and left tired and ready to rest for our day tomorrow in San Antonio!



The Texas team outside the Children's Wellness Center

—Teresa Finegan

Day 5: May 17, 2013

To conclude our marvelous journey we, “The Magnificent 7,” decided to go to San Antonio on a day trip. The beautiful city is filled with a rich history, a huge Mexican market, and tons of restaurants and shops. We first started out exploring San Antonio’s famous Alamo. The history was very interesting and we enjoyed the visit there. Then, we all marched to the gorgeous and famous River Walk. A river flows through the city with restaurants and shops on the sides. Walking next to the river was peaceful, cool, and the perfect way to end our week.

After strolling through the River Walk, many of us either ate, shopped, or enjoyed the boat ride through the river. Our next stop was to the enchanting Mexican Market filled with any types of Mexican goodies you could imagine. It felt like a “little Mexico,” and everywhere we went was a new little shop to enjoy. We each indulged on a few unique gifts and then headed off to a small town called Gruene, Texas. This old time Texas town also has a rich history with the oldest dance hall in the state of Texas. We were able to enjoy how “country” this town was and ate at a delicious restaurant.

—Chloe Benejam

Day 6: May 18, 2013



The MCN team says farewell to Texas.

Overall, our journey to Texas was both fulfilling and full of excitement. We helped 484 kids with vaccines and sports physicals. This experience made us all more comfortable with our nursing skills and helped us work closer to our goals of graduating and becoming excellent nurses. We visited the cities of Austin, San Antonio, and Gruene during our stay and ate at a variety of different foods both Texan and Latino. We explored a different culture, and got a taste of what life is like for a different group of people. In addition, we all learned a little bit about ourselves and the other students we were traveling with, and formed new friendships.

—Emily Cantwell