



TCMC Agency Brief

Information for Regional Agencies About the Community Immersion Experience

Summer 2015

Community Immersion Experience: TCMC Students Visit Cori's Place

As part of TCMC's Community Weeks curriculum, known as Community Immersion, several per-clinical students from the South campus visited the Adult Training Center, Cori's Place, located in Hanover Township, Luzerne County.

"My experiences at Cori's Place and other community agencies during community weeks this past year were an eye-opening experience for my classmates and me. We were allowed to become integrated in agencies who make a difference in the lives of their clients on a daily basis. It was a great experience to see the impact these agencies can have and how we as future physicians can help impact the lives of our patients, not just in terms of their health but in terms of their lifestyles as well," says Rachel Polinski, M1.

Cori's Place was founded by George and Therese Gwilliam in honor of their daughter Cori, who needed to find a place to continue to learn and grow after high school. The mission of Cori's Place is to help individuals with disabilities create a better life.

According to Jennifer Joyce, MD, TCMC's professor of Family Medicine, "TCMC's Community Immersion program connects our students with regional communities through partnerships with local service agencies. These partnerships introduce 'Community as Teacher' in our community based approach to health. Our goal for the program is for students to learn the power of collaboration in eliminating health disparities. Through the program, students reflect on the dominant and complex relationships between health and biology, genetics, environment and individual health behaviors. TCMC students 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."

Cori's Place staff and students, from L to R, are:

- Rachel Polinski, M1,
- Joey Bubblo,
- Cori Gwilliam,
- Travis Ziedonis,
- Therese Gwilliam and
- George Gwilliam,
- founders.



Community Immersion Goals & Objectives

The Community Immersion Experience expands an understanding of health care needs by providing opportunities for students 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 health care (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 health care 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

TCMC is committed to non-discrimination in all employment and educational opportunities.

TCMC's Agency Partners

SOUTH REGION

Area Agency on Aging, Luzerne/Wyoming Counties
Commission on Economic Opportunity
Choices Recovery Program
Greater Wilkes-Barre Association for the Blind
Maternal & Family Health Services
Wyoming Valley Children's Association
Victims Resource Center
Kingston Active Adult Center
Cori's Place
Wyoming Valley Alcohol & Drug Services, Inc.
Day Development Program
The RedCo Group
White Haven Center
Family Service Association

Thank You!

South Student Perspective

Appreciating the Time Spent with Agencies



Michelle Piehl
Class of 2018

"At Choices Recovery Program, an addiction treatment center, I sat in on group counseling sessions and heard heartbreaking stories of abuse, neglect, poverty, and violence, which led users toward drug abuse. I also learned of the important role that physicians play in the responsible prescribing of addictive medications. In another agency, Victims Resource Center, I learned about dedicated people who council inmates who turned to drugs, crime, and violence often due to struggling with these same traumas. Trauma from sexual abuse, violence, or domestic violence can contribute to addiction and incarceration. These community agency experiences helped me to better understand some of the underlying causes of these complex societal concerns so that, as a physician, I can approach these challenging topics and patients in a more mindful, respectful, and compassionate manner."

South Family Perspective

The Family Centered Experience (FCE) program is an important part of TCMC's patient-centered, community-based curriculum. Each year during the Community Week Experience, first year students are paired with a patient, and visit the 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. This year, Billy Francis III and his mother Diana Morris Smaglik shared their challenges of dealing with a serious seizure disorder.

Billy Francis from Hazleton enjoys baseball, his pets, fishing and Dr. Who. He plays on a challenger division baseball team and volunteers with his brother for Meals on Wheels. When a major 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 different."

TCMC students Elizabeth Helwig, M1, and Michael Bedrin, M1, 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 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."



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

If you or someone you know is interested in applying to become an FCE participant, please contact TCMC's Regional Campus Office at 570.504.9067 or email rcr@tcmc.edu.