

News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Media Contact –Danielle Rush

March 26, 2013

Communications Specialist
2300 S. Washington Street
Kokomo, IN 46904-9003
(765) 455-9414
darush@iuk.edu

Volunteering gives nursing students real-world experience

KOKOMO, Ind. — Vanetta Hatcher has read about caring for young children in her Indiana University Kokomo nursing classes.

Recently, she put what she’s learned into practice, as a volunteer for the Kokomo-Center Head Start enrollment screenings.

“I don’t always know what to expect from children, because I don’t have any,” Hatcher, 54, said. “You learn about it in class, and you can read about it in a book, but it’s better to experience it in person. You learn more about it from doing it, rather than just reading about it.”

The health screenings are just one of the many ways IU Kokomo’s nursing students not only practice their skills, but give back to the community. Students in the community health nursing class also have taught food preparation safety at the Open Arms shelter, provided health education at the Kokomo Rescue Mission, and taught first aid to Sts. Joan of Arc and Patrick School teachers.

“These activities open their eyes to they way they can serve their communities as nurses,” said Joyce Hollingsworth, lecturer in nursing. “We hope that after they graduate, they will join the many professional nurses who volunteer.”

Twenty seniors worked with 3, 4, and 5-year-old children, measuring their height and weight, taking their blood pressure, and checking their vision, as part of the process to enroll in the free preschool program. Hollingsworth said this is the first time the campus has been invited to send nursing students, and they were happy to participate.

“It gives our students the opportunity to apply the skills they have learned, while also benefitting our community,” she said. “Today, they are learning skills they will need to work with children, as well as their parents.”

Hatcher, from Kokomo, and classmate Careena Smithly used a stadiometer to measure children's height during the screenings. Hatcher patiently helped a squirmy little boy stand in just the right place so she could measure him. She coaxed him to stand up straight, and gently scooted him back against the stadiometer. She slowly adjusted the arm on the measuring device down to the top of his head, and then read his height to Smithly, who wrote it down on his enrollment card.

Smithly, from Marion, said she's learned about the resources available to people in the community.

"As a nurse, this will help me guide people to where they can get help if they need it," she said. "By volunteering, we are becoming better nurses."

Amy Hudson, Peru, guided children and parents through the screenings, and helped convince some reluctant little ones to participate in vision screenings. She was glad the services were available to the children, so they can get a healthy start in school.

"I was also happy to finally put our skills to use out in the community, rather than just practicing on dummies in the simulation lab," she said.

Maria Pineda, Logansport, checked children's blood pressure, and said all of her small patients had been very good.

"Some of them were scared at first, but we worked through that," she said. "This is a great chance for their parents to have all of these services in one place, rather than making multiple appointments. I am happy we can be part of making that available to them."

Indiana University Kokomo serves north central Indiana.

-END-