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## News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **Community health nursing students gain pediatric care skills as volunteers**

**KOKOMO, Ind.** — Stickers are the currency of pediatric medical treatment.

That is just one of the lessons Indiana University Kokomo nursing student Staci Veverka learned as a volunteer at the Kokomo Schools Head Start Health Fair.

Veverka and 19 of her classmates in the community health nursing class took temperatures and blood pressures, measured heights and weights, assisted with dental exams, and listened to heart beats of hundreds of three, four- and five-year-olds, preparing them to attend the free preschool program at Darrough Chapel Early Learning Center in the fall. They also gave out lots of stickers, rewarding the children for participating in the examinations.

Not only did they gain practice with pediatric patients, but also they used their nursing skills to serve their community.

“Being part of the community, that’s what nursing is all about,” said Veverka, an Urbana resident.

Nursing goes beyond patient care in the hospital, and this class teaches that, said Joyce Hollingsworth, lecturer in nursing.

“We try to give them a 360-degree view of what a nurse does in a community setting, not just bedside,” she said. “They don’t get a lot of opportunities to work with pediatric patients in hospitals, so this is also a chance to learn about how working with children is different than adults.”

Tiffany Ploughe speaks softly to one reluctant little girl, who sobs when it is time to have her temperature taken. The child buries her face in her mother’s shoulder, and

Ploughe gently places the thermometer in her ear and quickly reads her temperature, before rewarding her with a sticker.

“They’re more apprehensive than an adult would be, so you just can’t say you’re going to stick the thermometer in their ears,” she said. “You have to say you’re going to touch their ears. The sticker helps. As long as I stay calm, that helps too.”

Cari Cochran worked in childcare for 15 years, but providing medical care for children is a different experience.

“You have to communicate differently with them,” she said, like telling a child you are going to hug his arm when taking his blood pressure.

Those techniques help keep the children calm for treatment, said Shane Vore, who helped with dental exams.

“Going to the dentist can be stressful for a kid,” he said. “We wouldn’t usually have a clinical rotation with a dentist, so this has been a good experience for us, too.”

The Health Fair helps Head Start parents comply with health care requirements to be part of the program, so the student nurses’ help is greatly appreciated, according to Director Julie Worland.

“We love partnering with IU Kokomo to have their nursing student help us, and they gain experience in the field,” she said. “We couldn’t do this, and offer it for free, without our community partners.”

*Indiana University Kokomo serves north central Indiana.*

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