

News Release

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Nursing students give back to area veterans

KOKOMO, Ind. — Indiana University Kokomo nursing students serve those who have served their country, providing free health screenings to veterans.



Fifteen seniors in the community nursing class participated in the Veterans of Foreign Wars Post #1152 Stand Down, an event that links veterans with resources they need, including food, housing, medical or employment assistance.

The student nurses helped the veterans complete detailed health histories, checked blood pressure and vision, and checked body mass index. They could then provide referrals for medical services if they identified potential health

problems.

It was more than just a chance to practice nursing skills, however.

“We can serve them, in appreciation for their service to our country,” said Ashleigh Ledford, from Kokomo. “Because we are here at the post, rather than in a hospital, we can help the veterans in a setting comfortable and familiar to them.”

Nursing student Kara Fike, Bunker Hill, said because Howard County has a large number of homeless veterans, these services are of critical importance.

“Veterans, especially in Howard County, are a vulnerable population,” she said. “This is care many of them are not getting, and we are making it accessible.”

That is exactly what Joyce Hollingsworth, clinical assistant professor of nursing, wants the students to gain from their experience in her class.

“This is the community nursing class in action, applying what we teach in the classroom to real-world circumstances,” Hollingsworth said. “We are teaching our future nurses how they can use their skills to make the world a better place, and help those in need.”

Ken Fisher, Post #1152 commander, contacted Hollingsworth to invite her class to participate. He anticipated more than 130 veterans would participate, and appreciated IU Kokomo’s assistance.

“The nursing students give our veterans access to basic medical care, without having to schedule an appointment, or spend a day at a VA medical center,” he said. “If they identify potential health issues, the veterans can then seek help at a medical center, or with their own doctor.”

In addition to volunteering at Stand Down, students also assisted at Jackson Street Commons, an apartment complex opened by the Family Service Association of Howard County to provide housing for chronically homeless veterans.

With an IU Applied Learning Grant, they purchased first aid kits for each resident, and taught them how to use the supplies. They also provided instruction about health directives, which allow patients to make their health care wishes known, and about disaster preparedness.

Indiana University Kokomo serves north central Indiana.

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