

News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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September 21, 2012

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Nursing students give back at “Let’s Pretend Hospital”

KOKOMO, Ind. — Aleesia Worden hopes to be a pediatric nurse after she graduates from Indiana University Kokomo. This week, she had hands-on practice interacting with children, at St. Joseph Hospital’s “Let’s Pretend Hospital.”

“It was really fun to talk to the kids, and this experience confirmed that I want to work in pediatrics,” Worden said.

Bridget Whitmore, assistant dean of the pre-licensure Bachelor of Science in Nursing program, said 13 juniors in the maternity/pediatrics class taught about 350 Howard County kindergarteners about hygiene and germs, along with checking their vital signs, as part of the hospital’s program to help them be less scared of medical treatment.

“This is a great opportunity for the nursing students to interact with well children of this age, and learn what it is like to have them as patients,” Whitmore said. “It is also a way they can give back to their community by using the nursing skills they are learning at IU Kokomo.”

About half the nursing students taught students about hygiene, including hand washing and covering a sneeze or cough. The rest took the children’s vital signs, checking blood pressure and heart rates.

The kindergarteners seemed to enjoy the germ lesson, passing a “germ ball” coated in white powder down their row, then looking at their hands under a blue light, showing all the powder “germs” on their hands. The children used baby wipes to wash their hands, while singing “Happy Birthday,” which is the right amount of time to wash all the germs away. A second pass under the blue light revealed much cleaner hands.

Worden, along with classmates Shannon Gustin and Careena Smithly, talked to

kindergarteners, seated two to a wheelchair, about having their blood pressure taken and what they can hear through the stethoscopes. The pairs of children take turns listening to each other's heartbeats, then each get a "hug" from the blood pressure cuff.

Gustin said working with children is "totally different than working with adults, so a nurse has to learn to talk at their level, while not talking down to them."

The student nurses developed a script for what they were going to say in advance, she said, but Worden added it was hard to prepare because "they just say the funniest things."

That is one of the things that attracted her to pediatric nursing.

"Kids have really positive energy. You can put a smile on their faces really easily."

Indiana University Kokomo serves north central Indiana.

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