

# Advancing Students' Educational Experiences With Interdisciplinary Service-Based Learning: Impacting Special Needs Community

Stephanie Herrick Kays, M.Ed., MSN, FNP-C- First Author

Pamela Love, PhD, MSN, RN, CNE- Second Author

## Background and Introduction

The MedFest sports physical events created by the Special Olympics are designed with the purpose to provide medical screening to athletes from low income areas. By partnering with Special Olympics, an interdisciplinary service-based learning project was enacted by a private Christian university in Phoenix, AZ. Students from undergraduate and graduate health care programs along with healthcare professionals from the community donated their time and skills to provide sports physicals for free to the athletes in need.

## Purpose of the Project

The purpose of the project was to provide education about service-based interdisciplinary learning. Service-based interdisciplinary learning is a type of learning experience where two or more healthcare programs work together to meet the needs of the community. Through participation,, undergraduate and graduate healthcare students from a private Christian university in Arizona were able to donate 374 sports physicals to Special Olympics athletes in two separate events in 2018.

## Clinical Questions

How does one create a meaningful interdisciplinary learning experience for healthcare professions students in undergraduate and graduate settings?

How does one effectively provide medical screenings to the vulnerable population of Special Olympic athletes from low income areas?

## Theoretical Framework

By utilizing principles of Knowles theory of andragogy, students were able to participate in transformative, active, interdisciplinary service-based learning experience. Knowles theory of andragogy is based on the premise that the adult learner must be actively involved in the learning process, know that their experiences are the foundation for future knowledge to be gained, knowledge gained is relevant and impactful, and through learning something new, the learner is solving a problem. In this case, the problem is how to provide medical screenings to vulnerable populations and structure a meaningful learning experience for student participants.

## Data

### Methods of data collection

Data will be collected in future events in a qualitative method with pre/post event surveys to see if participation in event increased interdisciplinary role understanding.

## MedFest Event Considerations

The first event of 2018 was hosted in a facility for individuals with special needs. Vital sign screening were completed in a gymnasium and drapes were placed in a secondary room to provide a semi-private space for athletes to have physicals completed.

The second event was hosted by a private Christian university in Phoenix, AZ in a newly developed nurse practitioner clinical suite, which provided privacy for athletes. The private rooms allowed for providers to conduct detailed physical exams and gather findings that might have been missed in a less private setting. The university was able to have an additional use of space intended for students, to provide a need for the community.

## Results

### Results specific to numbers:

- In 2017, there were 400 athletes registered and 238 attended.
- In 2018, there were 300 registered and 308 were provided medical screenings and 70 did not receive screenings due to various issues.
- Schools were arriving that did not pre-register or brought additional athletes than initially thought.
- Athletes did not like longer than expected wait times due to increased numbers.
- Volunteers did not have the needed time to take a break during the day.
- In 2018, there was a second event to provide screenings for the 70 athletes who did not receive screenings initially.

### Student participants:

- were provided an environment not only to practice the skills they learn in the classroom setting, but also to learn about their future roles and understand how different healthcare professions work together to meet the needs of the patient.
- were able to network with individuals in their future career settings to have a personalized understanding of healthcare careers.
- had the opportunity to work with a vulnerable population and see conditions that they might never see except in textbooks.
- were able to assess the athlete's physical limitations and understand how these limitations affect the athlete's ability to participate in sporting events.
- were able to have a compassionate understanding of the barriers that the Special Olympics athlete faces by understanding how these limitations changed the athlete.
- gained confidence in their ability to perform skills as well as pride in making a difference in the community they reside.

## Recommendations for Hosting MedFest Events

- Recommendations for Special Olympics Medfest events include continued use in a private clinic setting at the private Christian university in Phoenix, AZ. The simulated clinic setting provided private rooms for athletes and convenient location for volunteers and staff. University student volunteers and staff were able to come and go as their schedules allowed due to the location on campus.
- In addition to utilizing healthcare students, it would be important to include students from other disciplines like college of education and business. Students from college of education would have the opportunity to provide education to students about healthy lifestyle habits and college of business could help with the organizational structure and management of the event.
- It would be ideal to have enough family nurse practitioners present to provide clinical hours for family nurse practitioner students. Due to one-to-one clinical rules, clinical hours were not provided to participants for the 2018 events.
- Utilization of two days for events to occur allows for smaller numbers which provides participants with opportunities to interact with the athletes personally and for the providers to feel less rushed while conducting assessments.
- It would be advantageous to reduce the number of athlete participants by utilizing individual name registration before the event occurs.



## Conclusion

Special Olympics athletes in Phoenix, AZ received medical screenings in order to participate in sports events and screen for other medical conditions.

The Special Olympics athletes screened were from low-income areas where they might not have otherwise received the medical screenings.

Special Olympics athletes who were provided these screening were allowed to participate in the sporting events for the 2018-2019 season.

Participation in the Special Olympics has shown to increase athlete self-esteem and self-confidence.

Healthcare student volunteers were able to learn about the profession they are going into; refine the skills under professional supervision; and learn interdisciplinary relationships all while making a difference in the lives of Special Olympics athletes.

Participant volunteers were able to ensure screenings were offered to a community that might not have had screenings due to financial limitations.

With the utilization of Knowles theory of andragogy, undergraduate and graduate healthcare students were able to address the needs of the community while learning more about their future professions

## Future Recommendations

- Future recommendations for Special Olympics Medfest events include continued use in a private clinic setting at the private Christian university in Phoenix, AZ.
- Explore how to include other colleges from the university in participation of event
- Promote of healthy lifestyle education to athletes while they wait for the screening to occur
- Examine community volunteer perspectives regarding the event

## References

- Brown, K., & Bright, L. (2017). Teaching caring and competence: Student transformation during an older adult focused service-learning course. *Nurse Education in Practice*, 27, 29-35.
- Castaneda, G., Islam, S., Steelen, N., Black, E., & Blue, A. (2017). What's in it for me? Perspectives from community participants in an interprofessional services learning program. *Journal of Interprofessional Education and Practice*, 6, 15-21.
- Isbel, D., Bennington, L., Boshier, M., Stull, S., Blando, J., & Claiborne, D. (2018). Building interprofessional student teams for impactful community service learning. *Journal of Interprofessional Education and Practice*, 12, 83-85.
- Jones, A., Li, T., Zomardi, M., Broadhurst, R., & Weil, A. (2018). Straddling care and education: Developing interprofessional collaboration through a hotspotting service learning project. *Healthcare*, 6, 108-109.
- Kurwaski-Burt, A., Evans, K., Baugh, G., & Utzman, R. (2017). A community-based interprofessional education fall prevention project. *Journal of Interprofessional Education and Practice*, 6, 1-5.
- Morin Fraile, V., Sancho Agredano, R., Galimany Masclans, J., Guiz Comellas, E., Estrada Masllorens, J., Vazquez Archilla, M., Rubio Serrano, L., & Escofet Roig, A. (2017). Service learning and health education. *Innovation in nursing education. Procedia- Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 237, 956-961.
- Special Olympics. (2018). Health focus: Welcome to Slovenia's inclusive summer health camp. Retrieved from: <https://www.specialolympics.org/stories/impacthealth-focus-welcome-to-slovenias-inclusive-summer-health-camp>
- Weiss, D., Hajjar, E., Giordano, C., & Joseph, A. (2016). Student perception of academic and professional development during an introductory service learning experience. *Currents in Pharmacy Teaching and Learning*, 8, 833-839.

## Acknowledgements

I would like to personally thank Dr. Love for all the support she has given me on this project. I would like to thank the volunteers and participants for the MedFest events, without their help this would not be possible. I would like to thank Amanda Metcalf for all she does for Special Olympics and MedFest. I would also like to thank Grand Canyon University and the College of Nursing and Healthcare Professions for the volunteers provided and utilization of simulation space for the event to occur in. Without all these people, this event would not happen.