Dr. Theresa Beyerle will tell you unabashedly that she has the best job on campus—giving away money! Dr. Beyerle, Associate Director of the Institute for Teaching and Learning, has over 20 years of active participation with Akron-area non-profit organizations that benefit from her involvement.

Theresa obtained a grant through the Ohio Campus Compact (OCC), titled Pay it Forward: Strengthening Communities through Student-Led Philanthropy. She used the grant as a pilot program competition for two semesters. The first semester involved Ms. Karen Padrutt’s Group Decision Making class from the School of Communication. The class was sectioned into four groups with these rules: choose a non-profit organization, volunteer 15 hours at the nonprofit, develop a presentation focusing on their observation of the non-profit’s needs, and then develop a grant proposal and budget explaining what they would do with grant funds and why their project should be funded. Group 1 chose ACCESS (homeless shelter for women and children), with

Dr. Beyerle: “My job is to work with the faculty and help them incorporate service learning into their teaching. So, instead of just teaching a class, a service project is incorporated as a part of their teaching, the students receive hands-on experience that complements the subject matter and we are serving the community at the same time.”

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The College of Nursing, College of Health Sciences and Human Services and Buchtel College of Arts and Sciences have joined forces to create an enormously challenging interdisciplinary pilot program through a $1 million grant from the W. K. Kellogg Foundation titled Improving Oral Health of Poor and Low Income Pregnant Women, Mothers, and Children Up to Five Years Old: A Pilot Intervention at Urban and Rural WIC Program Sites in Northeastern Ohio.

Dr. Diana Biordi who directs this project is the College of Nursing's Associate Dean for Research and Graduate Programs. She explained the collaborative team of Co-Investigators includes: Dr. Marguerite DiMarco and Dr. Marlene Huff from Nursing; Mrs. Evelyn Taylor, Director of the Nutrition Center; Dr. Deborah Marino, Area Coordinator of Nutrition and Dietetics; Dr. Peter Leahy of the Institute of Bioscience and Social Research; and Ms. Christina Gonzalez Alcala, MPA Doctoral Research Assistant. Diana explained the pilot's goals are to reduce oral health disease in children from 0 to 5 years of age and to provide free fluoride varnishing for at least 4,000 children twice a year over three years. In the first year of the pilot, fluoride varnishing was provided to 1,400 children; currently almost 3,000 children have been treated. Amazingly, 25 percent of the 2 to 5 year olds were already experiencing tooth decay.

Diana stated there is little dental literature about 0 to 3 year old children. While an oral health consultation visit should be made no later than 12 months after the eruption of the first tooth, many mothers, regardless of income, are either unaware or believe their child can wait until age 5 to first see the dentist. They are also unaware that tooth brushing should begin with the eruption of the first tooth and dental decay is recognized as white spots on the teeth.

According to the Ohio Department of Health's Oral Health & Access to Dental Care for Ohioans, 2010, dental care remains the top unmet health care need of children and low income adults. Twenty-three percent of children in third grade and 28 percent of 3 to 5 year old Head Start children have untreated cavities. Thirteen percent of children have had a recent toothache.

Diana and her colleagues explained there have been many studies demonstrating the value of applying fluoride varnish to children's teeth as a means of helping to prevent the incidence of dental caries commonly called cavities. Dentists are partial to the varnishing because it is a safe procedure; it is a clear gel which can be flavored to taste like bubblegum.
According to Dr. Lisa Lenhart, research has shown that by the age of three, children of poverty and working class families have a vocabulary of 13 million words; whereas, children from professional families are capable of knowing and understanding 45 million words. This difference can cause some children to struggle to keep up with their peers.

Dr. Lenhart, Professor of Education and Director of the Center for Literacy, College of Education, received a contract from the Southwest Institute (SWI) for Families and Children for the program titled Say-Tell-Do-Play Vocabulary Intervention, which is a protocol for teaching vocabulary to at-risk children. Karen Burstein, owner of SWI in Scottsdale, Arizona, awarded the contract to Lisa because she was very impressed with Lisa’s success in creating online professional development courses for Ohio teachers. Then in 2007, Lenhart was awarded a grant from ODE for e-Read Ohio. As a result of both grants, as well as other funding resources, twenty modules have been created for Pre-Kindergarten through Grade 9.

Lisa’s work with children has its background in a 2003 grant from the Ohio Department of Education (ODE) entitled Reading First-Ohio Center. The Center was created through a consortium that included The University of Akron, The Ohio Department of Education, Cleveland State University and John Carroll University with the primary goal of helping Kindergarten to Grade 3 teachers acquire the knowledge and skills to provide effective reading instruction. Reading First, part of No Child Left Behind, was a Congressional mandate with over six billion dollars provided to states to improve early literacy instruction. UA’s role in the consortium was to create online professional development courses for Ohio teachers. Then in 2007, Lenhart was awarded a grant from ODE for e-Read Ohio. As a result of both grants, as well as other funding resources, twenty modules have been created for Pre-Kindergarten through Grade 9.

The Say-Tell-Do-Play Vocabulary Intervention program is a strategy to build vocabulary designed as an intervention for those children who have the smallest vocabulary; group size is limited to two or three children. A typical lesson could center on the word “wheel.” Once the word wheel is learned, the children will also learn the word “axle.” The teacher will say the word axle, ask the student to repeat or tell the word axle to the teacher and their fellow classmates, talk about the word axle, perform an activity such as removing a wheel from an axle using a wrench (this is the “do” part), introduce the word axle in a story, identify the word with a word card and then play a game using the word.

Lisa further explained that courses are developed by specialized vendors who use state-of-the-art multimedia such as flash animation and interactive avatars. Completion of each module is dependent upon the number of components contained in the module. Lenhart said this is not a static online course agenda where one has no feedback or contact with coaches or a supervisor. These are very interactive simulations which involve teachers who are supervised daily by literacy coaches; video sessions demonstrating the proper method to teach;
Dr. Qin Liu, Professor, Department of Biology, College of Arts and Sciences, is the subrecipient of a grant titled Signals Regulating SAG (Statocoustic Ganglion) Development from Indiana University and the National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders.

Dr. Liu’s “…primary research interest is to understand the molecular mechanisms underlying fundamental cellular processes in vertebrate neural development.” Dr. Liu chose to study zebrafish, which in recent years has become one of the most important animal models for studies of vertebrate development. His specific research focus is on the expression and function of cadherin cell adhesion molecules in the development of the zebrafish nervous system. Qin’s scope of focus is to examine the function of the cadherin molecules in zebrafish as it pertains to hearing. He explained “…with cadherin-23, for example, if the function is blocked at the critical stages of development, it causes deafness in zebrafish and interestingly produces the same exact outcome in humans.” To better understand Qin’s science The Cadherin Resource, explains “Cadherins mediate cell adhesion and play a fundamental role in normal development.”

Zebrafish have been used since the early 1970’s when it was discovered that they would make a wonderful research model because embryonic development of zebrafish and humans are very similar. Zebrafish, (Danio rerio), are tropical freshwater fish, originally found in slow streams and rice paddies in the Ganges River in East India and Burma. The inner ear of the zebrafish is similar to humans, as they both use the inner ear for hearing and balance.

The reason zebrafish are used, according to Qin, is because their small size makes the fish easy to maintain and observe in the lab. However, the important feature is that the embryo develops outside the mother’s body and it is transparent, making it easy to perform experimental manipulations. Observed under a microscope, the embryo develops quickly from a single cell to a recognizable tiny fish in 24 hours. He explained there is a disadvantage of using other vertebrates, such as mice, because the mice are more costly and their gestation period is much longer.

Qin stated the fish are fairly inexpensive and will breed continuously year round. A male and female have the ability to produce over 200 embryos in 24 hours and the embryos can reach reproductive stage in about three months.

Dr. Liu has been doing research with zebrafish for fifteen years. While he does not consider the fish pets, he explained “After the fish are beyond their reproductive years, I let the fish enjoy retirement and expire naturally.”

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Ms. Patti Purcell, MSN, RN, CNS, is the Distance Education Coordinator for the College of Nursing, and a certified American Association of Colleges of Nursing Palliative and End-of-Life Care Trainer. She and Dr. Kyle Allen (representing Summa Health System) are co-Principal Investigators of a FirstMerit Foundation award titled Development of an Early-Stage Palliative Care Training Program for Community-Based Care Providers.

The grant-funded training program is an offshoot of the PEACE trial project, (Promoting Effective Advance Care for the Elderly), which is a collaborative effort involving The University of Akron, Summa Health System, Kent State University, Northeastern Ohio Medical University and the Uniontown Area Agency on Aging. The PEACE trial targets low income, chronically ill adults enrolled in Ohio’s Medicaid waiver program known as PASSPORT. As Patti explained, “The focus of the grant is to provide training to care managers so they are able to assess complex elderly patients within the home setting in order to organize the resources needed to provide support, maintain their independence, and address symptoms.”

Palliative care is an interdisciplinary intervention team approach for patient care. This team involves the patient’s primary care provider, other physicians, nurses, pharmacists, dietitians, social workers and anyone else necessary to provide symptom relief for pain, shortness of breath, nausea, stress, fatigue, and anxiety. The palliative care team is not limited to symptom relief—it also involves communication, emotional support and family/caregiver support. There is much emphasis placed on communication between the patient, the patient’s loved ones, and the health care providers so that the patient is comfortable that his/her decisions and requirements are met. Emotional support is directed towards the whole person, not just their illness, and concentrates on the patient’s social, psychological, emotional or spiritual needs.

Patti stated that palliative care provides some relief from the symptoms of chronic illness, and should be initiated as soon as the patient is diagnosed. She said, “People are frightened when the words ‘palliative care’ are mentioned. Frequently they say ‘No, I don’t want that’ when in reality, if it is explained properly, I can’t imagine anybody saying ‘I don’t want my symptoms addressed.’ If you are having pain or shortness of breath we are going to give you medications or prescribe appropriate therapies to help you cope with the symptoms that are bothering you.”

Family/care givers also suffer stress, fatigue, anxiety, and depression; however, by being involved in the communication process, the family/care givers are better able to understand and deal with the anticipatory grief for their loved one.

Ms. Purcell is very passionate about palliative care and she stated “No matter what particular patient population the faculty are dealing with, whether pediatric, geriatric or middle-aged population, they are excellent in teaching our students how to provide appropriate end-of-life care. The University of Akron College of Nursing made history by becoming the first university, nationally, to train the entire faculty in ELNEC (End-of-Life Nursing Education Consortium), the American Association of Colleges of Nursing program focusing on palliative and end-of-life care.”

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Dr. Tracy Riley is passionate about nursing and establishing interprofessional opportunities for students to work together. That desire resulted in a grant titled: Development of an Akron-Region Interprofessional Area Health Education Center (ARI-AHEC), originating with the Northeast Ohio College of Medicine (NEOMED) through the Health Research and Services Administration (HRSA), unit of the US Department of Health and Human Services. Principal Investigator, Dr. Tracy Riley is Associate Professor in the College of Nursing Instruction and Co-PI, Dr. Evelyn Taylor, is Director of the Department of Family & Consumer Sciences. The grant enabled Dr. Riley to hire Ms. Greta Lax to lead the efforts as the ARI-AHEC Center Director.

ARI-AHEC’s mission mirrors the National AHEC Organization’s mission which is “to connect students to careers, professionals to communities and communities to better health.”

As the Center’s Director, Greta explained, “Since ARI-AHEC was created in 2010, my job has been to learn about the organizations that exist in our community that are interested in serving the underserved populations and to develop relationships with health care related organizations.” One of ARI-AHEC’s primary activities is developing new community-based education experiences for health profession students in Summit and Portage counties. Health programming for veterans is another priority area. Specific examples of ARI-AHEC programming and activities that support these goals include The University of Akron Pre-Nursing Club, the Nursing Center for Community Health, and MEDCAMP.

Dr. Mary Agnes Kendra explained the UA Pre-Nursing Club was originally started in 1987 by (now emeritus) Ms. Susan Stearns and continued for 20 years at Akron’s Lincoln Elementary School. Currently, Dr. Kendra continues the tradition with fourth and fifth graders from Leggett (formerly Lincoln), McEbright and Mason Schools. These schools represent the most economically disadvantaged areas in the Akron community. She further explained that to be part of the Pre-Nursing Club, the children must show a consistent interest in nursing as a career and come to weekly meetings where special activities are introduced that relate to the nursing field. UA students in the College of Nursing’s Accelerated Program meet once a week with the children who are introduced to different lab simulation stations and learn through hands-on experience by listening to a heartbeat,

Dr. Riley: “The goal is to recruit students into the health profession, train and educate them, and in turn hope they will take their training and education and go back and practice in those under-represented low socioeconomic communities.”

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Shared, unbridled enthusiasm for their work, this describes the attitudes of Ms. Pamela Spinner, Director of Student Teaching & Field Experience and Mrs. Barbara Jenkins, Director of Outreach & Professional Learning, as they described a pilot grant they received from the Martha Holden Jennings Foundation titled Allen Elementary: Developing a Professional Development School.

The idea of a Professional Development School (PDS) was born as a result of various discussions between Pam, Barb Jenkins, and Ms. Marcia Cussen, Canton City School’s Chief of Teaching & Learning. Pam states there is no roadmap for creating a PDS, only guidelines from the National Association for Professional Development Schools (NAPDS). Per the NAPDS website it “… is the only national organization in the United States dedicated to promoting school/university partnerships in support of teacher education, P-12 student achievement, educational research, and professional development for pre- and in-service school and university-based educators and teacher educators.”

Students aren’t the only ones to receive a report card for their performance. A Local Report Card (LRC) is assigned to every school in Ohio based on measures of performance for reading, mathematics and science as determined by Ohio Achievement Test scores. There are six designations in all, with the highest being Excellent with Distinction followed by Excellent, Effective, Continuous Improvement, Academic Watch and finally Academic Emergency. Canton’s Allen Elementary is a PDS urban school working tirelessly to upgrade their LRC which has been in an Academic Watch from 2005-2010. The Ohio Department of Education’s LRC database website for 2010-2011 upgraded Allen from Academic Watch to Continuous Improvement. Pam explained, “The Allen School staff is establishing a reputation for being a group of professional and caring educators who are dedicated to helping each student achieve his or her personal best.”

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a proposal to paint the residents’ rooms; Group 2 chose the Boys and Girls Club and proposed the creation of a reading corner and art room for children participating in after-school programs; Group 3 chose Safe Landing Youth Shelter and proposed purchasing food and supplies for teen mothers with new babies; and Group 4 also chose ACCESS, with the intent of establishing a computer lab to be used as a homework resource for children and an employment resource for adults.

Community leaders and representatives from development and local foundations were recruited by Dr. Beyerle as competition judges. The judges were extremely impressed and excited about all the presentations and announced Group 1 as the winner for best presentation, due in part to their securing a $1,500 donation of paint and supplies. However, there was a twist—instead of Group 1 receiving the $4,500 grant, they received $2,600 with Group 2 receiving the remaining $1,900.

As Theresa explained “It was so cool because Groups 1 and 2 were now both winners and while Groups 3 and 4 didn’t technically win, they were also winners because the presentations were so well received that one judge gave Group 3 $1,000 and another judge donated computers to Group 4. So a $4,500 grant translated into $13,000 worth of projects!”

The second semester, Dr. Deborah Marino’s Community Nutrition II class from the School of Family and Consumer Sciences participated in the pilot project. Again, Dr. Beyerle worked closely with Dr. Marino to incorporate the philanthropy component into the syllabus. This time, different judges participated and again the concept of the presentations was overwhelmingly received.

She further explained in the fall of 2011 UA received a $10,000 grant from the United Way of Summit County to continue the Pay it Forward program. From August 2010 to November 2011, 17 classes including 362 students invested an estimated 3,620 hours in local nonprofits as a part of the Pay it Forward initiative. In addition, UA students distributed $13,500 ($9,000 from OCC) to 32 different organizations. This past spring semester, an additional $8,000 was distributed to 3 classes bringing the totals to 444 students investing 4,440 hours, distributing $23,500 to approximately 35 different organizations.

**Dr. Beyerle stated “Really amazing things are happening with very little resources. The local funders and foundations love this project because this grant brought outside funding into our community. Service-learning and specifically philanthropy are intended to benefit everyone who participates. Students learn more, community organizations increase their capacity, and those served by the organizations benefit.”**

Dr. Theresa Beyerle uses field trips to help faculty better visualize ways to incorporate service learning into their classrooms. To learn more, contact Dr. Beyerle at tsb4@uakron.edu, 330-972-2154, or her cell 330-697-6982. Click here to view the new and ongoing Service-Learning Projects associated with many Akron businesses and organizations.
Diana explained low-income and minority groups, due to their limited resources, often do not have oral health benefits. The WIC parents typically understand the importance of oral health for their children but often do not obtain care for themselves or their children because of fear or cost. While Medicaid will pay for dental services, it isn’t free; a simple dental visit can cost $50. There is also a significant shortage of dentists who will accept Medicaid to treat children, in part due to Medicaid’s reimbursement policies.

To learn more, contact Dr. Biordi at Biordi@uakron.edu, 330 972-5164 or anyone from the Kellogg Oral Health Team co-investigators.

Recently, Lisa explained, online modules were created for the Akron Public School system. She has partnered with Akron Summit County Action, the agency for Head Start, and currently there are four Akron Head Start sites that use the Say-Tell-Do-Play program. Also, a pilot program was conducted in the Boston Public Schools. Lisa further explained that her department participates in many, many Ohio conferences to present the Say-Tell-Do-Play program and while it is hard work, it is showing much promise.

Lisa is very proud of her team, “We really work well together and respect each other; this is an incredible team.”

Contact Dr. Lenhart at lenhar1@uakron.edu or 330-972-6664.

Because of the many experimental advantages such as ease of maintaining breeders, transparency of the embryos, rapid growth and fully sequenced genome, the species is attractive for the purpose of studying cellular and molecular mechanisms underlying animal development. Zebrafish reproduce for two years, living approximately four to five years.

Dr. Liu explained his next project, in collaboration with Dr. Richard Londraville, Professor, Department of Biology, will be the expression and function of cadherin molecules in zebrafish retinal development. He further explained the retina as part of the central nervous system, has difficulty recovering from central nervous system injuries. His studies have shown when the zebrafish optic nerve is damaged, the fish completely recovers within a few days and the optic nerve regenerates, coinciding with a greatly increased expression of cadherins; however, in humans if there is similar damage the vision will be impaired or blindness will occur. Liu hypothesizes that one of the main reasons human optic nerves cannot regenerate is because humans cannot increase the cadherin production necessary for advanced regeneration.

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According to Ms. Purcell, care managers confided they were not comfortable with select topics including answering questions about the difference between palliative care and hospice care; how to help identify and seek assistance for symptoms of depression; and how to address whether the patient has an Advanced Directive such as a Living Will or a Power of Attorney.

The Training Program originated as a result of feedback and concerns by care managers. The focus is on the patient coping with chronic illness and the goal of preventing unnecessary hospitalizations, thereby allowing them to remain in their own home surrounded by loved ones. The specific aim of the Program is to “Develop a standardized marketable community-based palliative care and end of life training program that can be used to educate nurse and social worker care managers about palliative care concepts delivered in a community setting at Area Agencies on Aging throughout the State of Ohio.”

Patti explained, “The Program provides the care managers with tools to comfortably address the patient’s issues. We don’t skirt any issue, we want to bring those issues to the forefront. The goal is to keep people out of the hospital, which equates to financial savings. We want to ‘activate the patient.’ Patients should not be told how to live their lives. They should be provided with options so that they feel a sense of control over their decision making.”

One outcome of the FirstMerit grant is based on the feedback from the care managers, which resulted in 55 videotaped scenarios filmed at The University of Akron Z-TV studio. All of the scenarios are embedded in the training program, and include both “right” and “wrong” practices that lead to discussion about what could have been done differently to achieve a better outcome.

One scenario involved a physician speaking to two daughters about the condition of their elderly, gravely ill mother who has emphysema and pneumonia. One daughter, who lives out of town, wanted the physician to do everything possible to keep her mother alive. The other daughter, who lives close to her mother and regularly visited, disagreed. Because the mother didn’t have an Advanced Directive and is comatose, it would be up to the sisters to determine what course of action to take.

The flip side to this scenario has the physician explaining to the two sisters that their mother needs a breathing machine and life support. Both sisters then explain that their mother has made it clear she does not want life support and extraordinary measures taken when it is clear it will not help her.

The interdisciplinary palliative care team approach involves discussing the patient’s symptoms. Everyone on the team is encouraged to contribute to the discussion. For example, someone who resides in a two-story home, and is experiencing severe shortness of breath upon climbing stairs inevitably becomes a prisoner of the home’s first floor. The team’s physical therapist would suggest a stair glide that enables the person to “ride on a seat” to the second floor. Another example could be a patient who experiences dizziness when taking prescribed medication. With the team approach, the pharmacist would suggest substituting or adjusting the medication regime and reassessing the patient’s health status to determine if the new medication therapy alleviated the symptoms.

Ms. Purcell emphasized, “People are confused by the terms palliative care and hospice. A patient can still obtain treatment while receiving the benefit of palliative care. Palliative care can be initiated at the onset of symptoms. Hospice care continues to address symptom relief during the last months of a patient’s life. Those who are providing care to the patient need to be taught how to deal with an actively dying patient. There are many ways to provide comfort to the patient and loved ones. I have seen professionals who are uncomfortable and don’t know what to say or do. Closing a door to give loved ones privacy is not an option. There is a real need for education pertaining to end-of-life issues.”

The following two links will guide you to excellent websites that will provide additional information, resources, and videos pertaining to Palliative Care and Hospice. Hospice care involves a family-centered approach to meet a patient’s physical, emotional, and spiritual needs near the end of life. An interdisciplinary team works together in order to control symptoms and provide support to both the patient and their loved ones. Hospice care neither

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hastens nor postpones death and is focused on the belief that quality of life is as important as length of life. Hospice can be provided in the patient’s home or in a dedicated setting.

The goal of the interdisciplinary team that worked with Patti is to expand the Training Program throughout Ohio. Rural areas do not have access to the resources currently found in Akron, Canton, and Cleveland. Members of the FirstMerit Foundation Project Team hope, that in time, the program will be expanded. Patti reinforced, “Empowering patients living in their home setting to address their symptoms instead of immediately calling 911 and incurring multiple visits to the Emergency Department will reap huge financial savings. These savings can be staggering.”

Contact Ms. Patti Purcell at pp21@uakron.edu, or 330-972-6840.

Inspiring Grade School Children to Pursue Career Goals in High School

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taking temperature and blood pressure via computer, learning how to care for a wound, listening to lungs, learning about healthy babies and babies with special needs, and learning how to handle emergencies. The UA student gains experience in the underserved population while the elementary children receive exposure to different health professions. With this exposure, the children bring back to their families the basic health education they learned in the Pre-Nursing Club as well as ideas on future career goals.

Dr. Annette Sues Mitzel, Director for the Nursing Center for Community Health, located in the College of Nursing, explained that since 1982, the Center has provided health care services for the underserved population. The Center’s mission is to provide nursing services to vulnerable populations in the local community by staffing it with undergraduate and graduate nursing students, medical residents and students, nursing faculty, nurse practitioners and volunteer physicians who share in interprofessional opportunities.

Greta explained “MEDCAMP is a NEOMED program and it is a wonderful opportunity for these young students. It gets them excited and interested and it gives them a goal to work towards in their high school years.”

MEDCAMP is a three-day intensive experience designed to stimulate students’ interests in the basic sciences and medicine and to expose them to career opportunities in those fields. The program is designed to provide hands-on experi-

ences in biomedical sciences via student participation in workshops involving research, clinical problem-solving and an introduction to the field of clinical medicine. First consideration to attend is given to underrepresented students who have completed the eighth grade with a science and math grade of “B” or above, and who live in Summit, Stark or one of twelve surrounding counties.

MEDCAMP begins with an overview and orientation to the clinical environment. On the second day the students attend laboratory sessions on anatomy, diagnosis, physiology, etc., and join professors, graduate students, medical students and physicians in laboratory experiences. The students are given a case history, symptoms, and lab results of a fictitious patient and they are expected to present case presentations on the third day to their peers, families, teachers, medical students and faculty. In the end they are awarded a “Beginning Doctor Certificate.”

Greta stated “What I have learned is we are living in an amazing place and time. Public, private, large and small organizations in Akron are coming together and there is this great collaborative mode going on and UA is a big part of that.”

Contact Dr. Tracy Riley, triley@uakron.edu, 330-972-7557.

Contact Dr. Evelyn Taylor, etaylor@uakron.edu, 330-972-5548.

Contact Ms. Greta Lax, glax@uakron.edu, 330-972-6957.
The school was recently physically rebuilt accommodating approximately 360 children in grades K-6. When the school board made the decision for Allen to become a PDS, the school no longer existed as its former self. Based on Allen’s specific goals and backed by the teachers union, all teachers had to reapply for their jobs and only those who demonstrated strong teaching skills and were willing to work in this collaborative relationship were rehired to work at Allen. The pilot affected many: students, teachers, student teachers, staff members, district administrators, parents and community stakeholders. The agreement for the rehired/new teachers would be to use University of Akron student teachers and field experience student teachers as co-leaders in their classrooms, and all would be involved in professional development.

Both Pam and Barb stressed this pilot was all about building relationships. “You can’t bring two large entities, a school district and a university, together and expect everything is going to work without taking the time up-front to build relationships and trust,” according to Pam. “We just assumed that everybody else would believe us and trust us—we had to prove our trustworthiness and it took time. The families were concerned their children were going to be nothing more than guinea pigs for university research.”

To build the bridge for a positive relationship with the parents, then-Interim Dean of UA’s College of Education, Dr. Cynthia Capers, was invited to Allen to discuss the merits of a PDS school to the parents. And, the best kind of professional development came about from inviting Dr. Eleanor Rene Rodriguez, co-author of What Is It About Me You Can’t Teach? An Instructional Guide for the Urban Educator, for an evening with the parents. Afterwards the parents were more comfortable about Allen as a PDS since they better understood the roles of the teachers, student teachers and school administrators. Dr. Rodriguez’s dynamic energy involved bringing all the teachers together at the end of the day to discuss what was working and what was not working. She came back several more times to see evidence that what she had taught was actually being put into practice in the classrooms.

As part of the collaborative work they engage in, sixth grade students in Allen receive instruction from Barb and Pam throughout the year on how to set goals as well as how to begin now to prepare for college. Because the students completed a program aimed at setting goals and being an active participant in their school, they were treated to a trip to the UA campus. Click this website to open the video Allen Elementary School (Canton) Students Get Excited About College.

Ms. Pam Spinner can be reached at ps52@uakron.edu, 330-972-7987. Mrs. Barb Jenkins can be reached at bmj@uakron.edu, 330-972-2777.