

RURAL

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to serve the people who need some help, they need to learn why it's important, and how to listen to the people they're trying to serve."

For many of the interns, living and working in poor communities is a stark dose of reality.

"We're talking about people who are some of the most highly, formally educated people, often white, and often of upper-middle class, even upper class, backgrounds," Bader says. "And we're talking about bringing them to working class, Eastern North Carolina — a mostly rural, mostly African-American community—, and it's just a leap."

Courtney Smith was compelled to join the Coalition after she participated in a fall trip to the communities it serves in Eastern North Carolina.

"I grew up in North Carolina and my father is a physician. Seeing [the conditions] really changed the way I look at North Carolina," Smith says. "It really shook me up."

For medical students, working in the monthly clinics provides hands-on experience working with rural populations — experience they wouldn't otherwise get until their third year of medical school, if ever.

Introducing medical students to rural health care also encourages them to go into fields that would help these regions, say funders of the program.

"These activities result in improved basic health care to selected populations, as well as greater numbers of medical students entering the specialty of family medicine and practicing in under-served, rural areas," says Judy Bunn, programs coordinator for the North Carolina Academy of Family Physicians Foundation. David Tong, a second-

year medical student at Duke, volunteered for the Coalition as an undergraduate.

"It's changed what I see as career options for the future," he says. "Now, I'm really considering going into primary care, which I don't think I would have done otherwise."

Encouraging more people to work in health-related fields doesn't just involve transporting medical and undergraduate students to rural areas to volunteer.

Responding to an interest in the communities, the Coalition worked with the area-wide Health Committees to develop a Pre-Health Career Internship program. The program, just completing its fourth year, is designed to encourage teenagers in rural communities to pursue careers in health care.

"The intern we have now, when he went up to Duke, he was so excited," says Doris Hall, of the Fremont Health Committee. "He said, 'That's

what I'm going to do.'"

Of the 42 students who have been involved with the program, all have graduated from high school and are acquiring health care training. Almost all of those former interns are at four-year universities.

As a part of the internship, students travel to university campuses, where they tour the medical facilities and meet with doctors and nurses. To qualify for the trip, each intern must first help out at four health clinics. Upon completion of a research project, participants are awarded a certificate at a special banquet.

The North Carolina Student Rural Health Coalition was started in 1978 by William Dow, who was at UNC as a part of the year-long Clinical Scholars Program sponsored by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.

The aim of the program was to

increase access to and improve the delivery of health care in rural North Carolina. Dow had previously worked in rural Tennessee, where he established community health clinics as a part of the Tennessee Health Coalition at Vanderbilt University. When he came to UNC, he used the grant from the Johnson Foundation to create a Health Coalition in North Carolina.

Keeping the clinics running is difficult. But students and community members know the importance of their work.

"You constantly have to keep something out there so people won't lose sight of what you're doing," says Hall, who is the sole staff member of the Fremont Committee. "It's exhausting, but it's worth it. [Learning to take care of yourself] isn't something you do if you have the time, it's something you need to take the time for if you want to be healthy."

JOB

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speech pathology]; she's seeing it in action."

Bill Pittard, who is working for the Trident Community Foundation in Charleston, S.C., is excited about the opportunity to learn while on the job. He has been working on a grant from the Lincoln Filene Center at Tufts University to broaden the audience base for a forthcoming documentary, "America's War on Poverty."

Pittard credits an economic theory class he took at Wake Forest with helping him understand some of the economic and social issues he has been working with. And he has found that talking with people living in poverty puts a human face on the theoretical issues he studies during the year.

"It's neat to talk to neighborhood representatives and people struggling with poverty and get a human perspective on this — to talk with the people who are so often left behind," he says.

Allowing students to experience working in nonprofits is likely to encourage them to explore careers in the nonprofit sector after they graduate, says Ruth Heffron, Pittard's supervisor and the director of the Trident Community Foundation.

In addition, she believes programs like Spires help create a stronger nonprofit sector.

"Most of us working in the nonprofit sector didn't even know about it when we were young, and to be able to learn about this while your idealism is still high, is a terrific opportunity," she says. "The point is, there might be more really bright, well educated people from all races and eco-

nomie backgrounds who might consider a career in nonprofits."

This summer's other six interns are: Gabrielle Ponzi, working in the Goldsboro Head Start program for underprivileged children; Kimberly Magee, working with the Chicago-based Strive Organization, which runs after-school activities and a summer camp for inner-city children; Hank Kennedy, working in the Whitman Walker Clinic Inc. in Washington, providing HIV testing and AIDS counseling; Jennifer Fowler, working as a case worker and analyzer for the Department of Family and Children Services in Columbus, Ga.; Ursula Baker, working with the Joint Orange-Chatham County Action, a nonprofit community-based organization serving low-income families; and Shawntae Ferguson, working with the NAACP in New York City.



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