

Students shine spotlight on important issues with annual events

Early in their medical education, many Wright State students are already demonstrating a strong commitment to public service. Despite the demands of their workload and class schedule, students are often eager to step up to support a good cause, and this spring offered two perfect opportunities when second-year students organized a pair of special events in the city of Dayton.



AIDS Benefit Walk

On March 29, the Wright State chapter of the American Medical Students Association (AMSA) hosted the third annual AIDS Benefit Walk. The 5K race took place in Wegerzyn Gardens MetroPark, a 1,000-acre park in north Dayton known for its numerous formal gardens and scenic nature trails.

The race drew more participants and raised more money than in years past, according to Megan Chambers, a co-organizer of the event.

“It was a huge success, and such a beautiful location,” Chambers said.

She had worried that moving the race away from campus might diminish its appeal, but medical students and faculty still turned out in strength. In fact, student Josh Ordway won the race with a time of 15:53, while associate professor of physiology and biophysics Dan Halm, Ph.D., came in 14th overall and took first place in his age group.

Donations from community sponsors covered the costs of hosting the race, which enabled AMSA to give the bulk of the proceeds to Miami Valley Positives 4 Positives and AIDS Resource Center Ohio, local organizations dedicated to HIV/AIDS prevention, education, counseling, and advocacy.

Students tend to embrace the event to support a worthwhile cause, Chambers believes, but they also see it as a way to show gratitude for the opportunity to work with HIV/AIDS patients in the community as part of their education.

“The reason why we do this every year,” she said, “is to raise HIV awareness, show our support, and give back to a population we train with.”

Global Health Symposium

Just over a week later, on April 7, students of the Global Health Initiative (GHI) hosted the third annual Global Health Symposium, which also took place off-campus for the first time and drew a record number of participants.

More than 100 people attended the evening program at the historic Old Court House in the heart of downtown Dayton. Guest alumna speaker Katharine Conway, M.D. ('05), who is chief resident in family medicine at Case Medical Center/University Hospitals, described some of her experiences working in Guatemala.

The keynote speaker for the event, Victor W. Sidel, M.D., among many other distinctions, is a founder and past co-president of International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War (IPPNW), an organization that received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1985. Sidel based his presentation in part on GHI's mission to expose students to medical issues facing people in other countries and to inspire greater compassion, social justice, and empathy.

The symposium also highlighted the experiences of Wright State students who have served and learned abroad with the support of GHI. In 2007 alone, the group helped send more than 40 students to 14 countries. Many returned with items they donated for a silent auction to raise funds for future GHI trips. Popular items included handcrafted necklaces made by widows in Swaziland, bottles of Lebanese wine, and pillows from India.



Students shared images from their travels for a photo contest, with winners announced at the symposium. Jeff Robinson's "Fishermen at Sunset" was selected as the top landscape photo, while Jonathan Slaughter's "Darfur" earned first place in the people category (see pages 26-27).

"I think GHI is just a great opportunity for students to see what medicine is really about," said Mada Helou, a GHI board member and co-chair of the symposium. "It's definitely about having accurate scientific knowledge, but it's also about making a strong connection with the person you're treating, not only on a personal level, but a cultural level."

