

# Hands-on learning

## ETSU summer camp explores careers in medicine

By Carmen Musick • ink@timesnews.net

Alex Foster has always had an interest in medicine. In fact, a career in obstetrics and gynecology has been on the Volunteer High School senior's list of potential career paths for quite some time.

This summer, it jumped to the top of her list — thanks to a hands-on camp experience that provided students a sneak peek of both the classroom and real-life application of a career in the medical field.

"I've always been sort of interested in the medical field," Alex said. "The camp gave me a good opportunity to get some hands-on experience and to see what it would be like."

Hosted by the East Tennessee State University Department of Family Medicine, the Rural High School Medical Summer Camp gives students like Alex a glimpse of medical school and encourages them to consider a career that previously may have appeared out of reach.

The camp is held annually at the James H. Quillen College of Medicine on the campus of East Tennessee State University. Participation is limited to 22 students per session. Dobyns-Bennett's Cherxi "Casey" Zhu and Mary Catherine "MC" Weaver also attended this year.

During the camp, students from throughout the region spend a week living in Governors Hall, where they return each day after a packed calendar of events designed to give them a taste of what it's like to be in medical school. Medical school students and staff serve as chaperones throughout.

In addition to the hands-on activities, campers visit other colleges housed in the ETSU Division of Health Sciences and spend time shadowing physicians and other medical professionals in nearby hospitals.

"The best thing, for me, was probably getting to job shadow at Johnson City Medical Center. I got to be on the OB-GYN floor, which is what I'm interested in, so I got to see what they did in the nursery and everything. It was just a great opportunity to experience something that I've always wanted to do," Alex said.

There were lots of other hands-on experiences, too.

During the camp, students got to intubate a "patient" in the human simulator lab, undergo training to screen patients for diabetes, view a cadaver and learn how to identify organs, and practice suturing.

"[Intubating the 'patient'] was nerve-racking. Because it wasn't a real person, you didn't know if you were hurting them or not. But, of course, that's the point. It's a way for you to learn without hurting someone," Alex said. "But I'd have to say the hardest part was the suturing."

When the time came to view the cadaver, it didn't take Alex long to realize that pathology probably wouldn't be high on her specialty list.

"No, definitely not," she stressed.

The technology in the labs at ETSU was a real eye-opener for participants, Alex said, and reminded students that they didn't have to go far from home to get a quality education in the medical field.

Living in a dorm on campus for a week with students from different schools and different backgrounds also provided a realistic sneak preview of what it'd be like in college.

"It really gave you a feel for what campus life would be like," Alex said.

And, for those students who think they're interested in a career in the medical field, the camp is almost certain to provide answers.

"It's a really good opportunity for people who want to be in the medical field to try it out. It shows you a lot of different fields and helps you decide



Alexis "Alex" Foster from Volunteer High School (top photo, left) and Mary Catherine "MC" Weaver from Dobyns-Bennett High School as well as Cherxi "Casey" Zhu from D-B (above) participated in the Rural High School Medical Summer Camp at ETSU. Among the procedures they tried was suturing.

what you want to do," Alex said

Or, in some cases, not do.

"For me, it made the interest even stronger, definitely," said Alex. "Now, I'm pretty sure I'm going to ETSU, and I hope to follow up there with med school. I'd like to try to get my residency at JCMC and stay here in the area to practice medicine."

High school students interested in rural medicine and the camp can mark their calendars now for 2011. Funding permitting, the camp will be held June 19-24, and applications will be available online beginning in January. The cost is \$175 per person and the application deadline for the camp is March 15.

For those who don't want to wait until next summer, ETSU's College of Medicine will host its high school career fair on Thursday, Oct. 21.

"We take 200 students for the career fair," said Rural Programs Coordinator Carolyn Sliger.

The purpose of the career fair is to provide information and encouragement to rural high school students interested in pursuing careers in the health professions. The one-day fair offers students an opportunity to learn about all five colleges of health sciences at ETSU.

"They get to do some hands-on activities in each of the five colleges. We feed them lunch and, afterwards, they can tour the campus or see more of the buildings. It's a full day of fun stuff," Sliger said.

Interested students should contact their guidance counselors or health occupations instructors as soon as possible to register for the high school career fair.

Online registration for the event, which must be done by either the guidance counselor or health occupations instructor, opens Thursday.

To learn more about either program, visit the ETSU College of Medicine at [www.etsu.edu/com](http://www.etsu.edu/com) and click on Rural Programs. From there, look for "Pre-Medical Experiences."

## SPEAK OUT

**Q:** What's the biggest high school sports rivalry in the region and what makes the rivalry so intense?

To Speak Out on this topic, e-mail your answer to the question, along with your name, age, grade, school and a recent photo of yourself (optional) to [ink@timesnews.net](mailto:ink@timesnews.net). You can also return your answer to any INK advisory board member or mail it to Kingsport Times-News, Attn: Carmen Musick, P.O. Box 479, Kingsport, Tenn. 37662. Be sure to include a phone number (for verification purposes only). Answers must be received by Friday, Sept. 24.