Called to Serve

Top academic pharmacy community service projects earn inaugural award

Four student-led community engagement projects and one school of pharmacy will be recognized for their extraordinary commitment to community service during a special awards presentation on Monday, Feb. 23, at the 2009 AACP Interim Meeting in Arlington, Va.

The University of Southern California (USC) School of Pharmacy will receive the 2008–09 AACP Transformative Community Service Award. This award honors a college or school of pharmacy demonstrating a major institutional commitment to addressing unmet community needs through education, practice and research. The award, consisting of a Steuben Beacon of Light and a financial stipend, highlights community service as an important element of the academic mission, and singles out institutions that can serve as examples of social responsiveness on the part of the academic medical community.

Student-led groups from the University of Kentucky, University of Minnesota, University of Missouri–Kansas City and University of Washington will each receive the 2008–09 AACP Student Community Engaged Service Award at the 2009 Interim Meeting. The four groups were chosen for their outstanding programs delivering consumer education about medication use, expanding access to affordable healthcare and improving the public's health. The award is sponsored by Teva Pharmaceuticals.

In addition to receiving a Steuben Star Stream, the winning pharmacy college or school will also receive $10,000 to be used exclusively to support the expansion of the recognized program or new community engaged service projects at the school. Other prizes include a $5,000 financial stipend administered to participating students to be used for enhancing or sustaining the recognized program, or for travel support to attend and present their projects at professional meetings.

Academic Pharmacy Now highlights the incredible work and dedication to community service on behalf of the USC School of Pharmacy and the four student-led groups.

AACP Transformative Community Service Award

School: University of Southern California School of Pharmacy

The Community Pharmacy Group of the University of Southern California (USC) School of Pharmacy transformed the provision of care in safety-net clinics in Los Angeles. The group identified a way to improve health outcomes for some of the neediest residents of LA in a cost effective way. USC did this in an environment that was unfamiliar with the role of the clinical pharmacist on the healthcare team, proving their value to clinic medical directors and administrators who had no previous experience with pharmacists managing chronically ill patients. The group created a new paradigm of care in the seven clinics they serve – expanding formularies, regularly caring for some of the clinics' sickest patients and improving outcomes, while saving precious healthcare dollars. Further, they have embedded this practice setting into the curriculum, training the next generation of clinical pharmacists to meet one of our nation's most challenging healthcare needs.

Student Community Engaged Service Awards

School: University of Kentucky College of Pharmacy

Team leader: Stephanie C. Gombos

Team members: Emily C. Antony, Jordan R. Covvey, Joshua J. Elder, Kyle T. Harris

Faculty advisor: Michelle DeLuca Fraley, Pharm.D.

University of Kentucky pharmacy faculty and students are heavily involved in Faith Pharmacy, a faith-based program that has been providing prescriptions without charge to a needy population of Central Kentucky since September 2000. Three to four pharmacy students give up their Saturday morning each week to staff Faith Pharmacy as interns, part of the college's "Adopt-a-Patient Program." They enroll patients into assistance programs, dispense medications and counsel patients at the pharmacy. Students also organize the pharmacy's annual spaghetti dinner and silent auction fundraiser. The college's goal is to incorporate the program in fall 2009 so that students have the opportunity to provide a continuity of care for their patients over their four-year tenure. Students will not only gain knowledge and experience but will grow through participating in a service-based program.

School: University of Minnesota College of Pharmacy

Team leader: Therese W. Swan

Team members: Maria N. Henriksen, Jennie M. Walby

Faculty Advisor: Robert J. Cipolle, Pharm.D.

Terri Swan, a pharmacy student and the communications chair on the Phillips Neighborhood Clinic (PNC) Board, served as team leader of the project that garnered one of four community engaged service awards for their work with the clinic. The PNC project was started by the Epsilon chapter of the Kappa Psi Pharmaceutical Fraternity with the goal of providing healthcare to the homeless members of the Phillips community. Kappa Psi's members staff the pharmacy at the clinic every Monday night and are responsible for making therapeutic decisions, finding and solving drug therapy problems and ensuring the patient's compliance with the recommended medication regimens. Students not only provide care in the clinic, but they are also involved in outreach, making sure potential patients know about the clinic and how to get there, and handing out free bus tokens. With this award, the college hopes to make several enhancements to the clinic, including expanding the clinic hours, providing immunizations and purchasing new computers.

Student Community Engaged Service Awards

School: University of Missouri–Kansas City School of Pharmacy

Team leader: Kristin G. Fish

Team members: Michelle I. Campbell, Kara Miller, Danielle Nagel, Cassie J. Peters

Faculty advisor: Cameron C. Lindsey, Pharm.D.

The Patient Assistance Program (PAP) at the Jackson County Free Health Clinic has been in existence since August 2000. What makes this program exceptional is the vision of a pharmacy student organization and their faculty advisor over eight years ago, resulting in such an impactful activity that continues today. The clinic serves indigent patients in more than 20 zip codes. The PAP plays a significant role by providing assistance to low income patients who would otherwise go without needed medications to manage their chronic illnesses. Students at the clinic are responsible for obtaining medication histories and completing the necessary paperwork to apply and receive the no-cost drugs. The students plan to expand the program to education and instruction specific to asthma as well. Additionally, seasoned student pharmacists will conduct insulin injection training and glucose meter teaching as well as other device training. Since its inception, more than 300 patients at the clinic have received more than $2 million worth of medication donated by pharmaceutical companies as of December 2007.

School: University of Washington School of Pharmacy

Team leader: Patricia "Petey" Sonnett

Team members: Paul Algeo, Abby Frye, Joanna Ho, Tahnee Marginean, Kim Moody, Luis Ramos, Emily Schulze

Faculty Advisor: Nanci L. Murphy, Pharm.D.

The winning team's projects included immunization clinics at McNeil Island Corrections Center, health-screening programs at Seattle's Aloha House homeless facility, and health-literacy workshops at Seattle's International Community Health Services Clinic, among many others. The program at McNeil Island Corrections Center serves as a prime example of University of Washington pharmacy students' dedication to helping underserved populations and reducing health disparities. During the past several academic years, students have traveled to the facility located more than an hour's drive from Seattle, accessible only by a 20-minute boat ride across the Puget Sound on a facility-run vessel. Under the direction of preceptor Nicole Klosterman, the students provided flu shots, tuberculosis tests and Hepatitis A and B immunizations to inmates. The college plans to expand this project as well as create a community-outreach resource center called Bridges to Health, in honor of Shirley Bridge, a long-time advocate for pharmacy outreach and School of Pharmacy supporter.