

Country Roads and Urban Streets: Developing a Service-learning Elective Focused on Social Drivers of Health

Selected Quotes from Student Reflection – Autumn 2025

“ While I have always had a passion for helping underserved populations, I did not ever see myself working long-term in a rural setting. I more so envisioned myself working with populations that lack health resources and financial support in a more urban setting. However, after exploring Athens and seeing the different health systems in southeast Ohio, I am much more open to exploring career opportunities in these types of settings. Because of this new perspective I am planning on exploring more ways I can get involved with rural healthcare as a PharmD student. This trip also served as a valuable addition to my PharmD experience in that it gave me direct experience with interacting with and serving rural populations. If I choose to orient my career towards rural healthcare, this trip has given me many different”

“ After this experience I learned that I am interested in rural populations and how medicine differs there. I am starting to consider rural APPE rotations that I would have not considered doing not been a part of this service learning experience.”

“I think I would recommend it because I got to increase my ability to talk to patients about hard subjects and really gain confidence in my counseling technique. I believe anyone with the interest in learning about rural pharmacy or who just wants to gain more independence in their pharmacy skills should take this class.”

“One moment that stood out to me started with my birthday. I will always remember the night we were at the restaurant having a barbeque and I was pleasantly surprised with cupcakes and singing. On the surface, it seems obvious why this moment mattered to me. However, afterwards I reflected on the day and I realized how we as a group of pharmacists and friends can come together not only for me but for the community as well. It was genuinely such a beautiful moment and it made me realize how we brighten so many lives in the field of pharmacy, and that our connection to people is more than medications.”

“Spending the afternoon with Dr. Burwinkle and the O’Bleness pharmacy staff reminded me of the importance of lifelong learning and putting a why behind what I’m doing. In class, it can be so easy to get caught up in the constant new information that is being thrown at us, getting into the specifics of how drugs work, learning about different disease states, etc. but I need to take the time to step back and re-center the focus on why I am taking the time to learn and master this information.”

“Again, thank you for all that was put into planning this trip, I feel closer to both my personal and professional community because of it.”

“Understanding and realizing that I do not know everyone’s situation, so treating everyone with patience is something that is indispensable as a pharmacist. This trip has also taught me that the role of the pharmacist does not just stop at medication. Connecting patients to resources and filling in healthcare gaps when necessary are just a couple of the many things a pharmacist can do to help their community members.

“The project and the time spent at Rising suns helped me gain an understanding that in these rural communities the people are already knowledgeable in managing most of their health but there might be other barriers that keep them from implementing recommendations from healthcare like cost, stigma, economic barriers, or social barriers.”