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## **MU SUMMER COMMUNITY PROGRAM ENHANCED BY ADDING INNOVATIVE COMMUNITY EXPLORATION PROJECT**

The University of Missouri Rural Track Pipeline Program has enhanced its Summer Community Program by adding an innovative new project, the Community Exploration Project (CEP), which allows students to discover the health and quality of life concerns within rural Missouri while gaining clinical skills. The Summer Community Program is one of the four programs that constitute the MU Rural Track Pipeline Program. Through the sponsorship of local hospitals and physicians, rising second year medical students participating in the program live and work in a rural community for four to eight weeks. NWMO AHEC and MID-MO AHEC assisted in coordinating rotations for students participating in this year's Summer Community Program. During this time students gain clinical experience and acquaint themselves with rural life and rural medicine.

The Community Exploration Project is a voluntary project completed in association with the Summer Community Program. The Project helps students understand, more fully, the needs of rural patients, the resources available to meet basic healthcare needs, and the barriers for patients in accessing the resources available to them. Participating students are responsible for compiling a community resource guide for the community they are assigned to as part of the Program, as well as writing a patient observation reflection paper.

This year, 11 students participated in the Summer Community Program and six of those students participated in the Community Exploration Project including Jessica Snyder and Alexander Finck, both students from rural communities. Snyder, a past NEMO ACES student, completed the program in St. Joseph, Missouri, and said, "The exploration project helped me to better understand the needs of underserved patients and what physicians can do to help them." Alexander Finck chose to complete the program and project in his home town of Mexico, Missouri. Finck stated "The Community Exploration Project allowed me to see the big picture in my community, opening my eyes to the healthcare needs people face. It made me realize how important it is to take the patient's perspective into account when coming up with a plan for their health."

For more information about the Summer Community Program, please visit [www.muahec.missouri.edu](http://www.muahec.missouri.edu).



*Jessica Snyder, Newtown, with preceptor, Dr. Gita Sprague in St. Joseph*

*MAHEC is a partnership of seven locally-governed organizations and three university-based health professions education programs working statewide to increase the numbers of Missouri youth entering stable, high-paying jobs as healthcare professionals and the numbers of professionals caring for underserved populations.*

*The MAHEC partners include:*

- A.T. Still University – Kirksville
- University of Missouri – Columbia
- Saint Louis University
- Northeast Missouri AHEC – Kirksville
- Northwest Missouri AHEC – St. Joseph
- West Central Missouri AHEC – Lexington
- Mid-Missouri AHEC – Rolla
- East Central Missouri AHEC – St. Louis
- Southeastern Missouri AHEC – Poplar Bluff
- Southwest Missouri AHEC – Springfield

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