

Spotlight on Queen's Community Development Placements

On July 7, 2008, the Queen's Community Development Forum was held to spotlight the work completed in student community development placements.

Each Occupational Therapy student at Queen's completes a project-based community development placement as their final fieldwork placement. Students are matched with community agencies, mostly in the Kingston region, in January. In conjunction with OT 861 (Community Development Applied to Occupational Therapy), they meet with the agency to discuss their needs and priorities for a project that addresses an occupational issue or need of the community that they serve. The agency and the project then become the focus of the assignments for the course, which serve to both apply the concepts learned in the course and begin the planning for the placement. Students are placed in pairs for the community development placement, which runs for five weeks.

In the final week of the placement this year, a Community Development Forum was held. Agency representatives were invited to attend to see and hear their own students and to learn more about other projects in city agencies. Each pair of students prepared a poster to present the agency and the community it serves, and to present the project completed. Students also delivered a ten minute oral presentation about their project, with emphasis on how it illustrated community development or used a community development approach. The poster and presentation formed the final assignment for OT 861. Some students chose to do their community development placement in the distant north or internationally. This year twelve students did distant placements. These students complete a written assignment because they are unable to attend the Community Development Forum.

This year, the Community Development Forum featured fifteen posters and presentations. Some examples of the placements and presentations included:

- Southeastern Ontario Community-University Research Alliance in Intellectual Disabilities: consulted with families of adolescents with ID to explore optimal after-school program models,
- Southeastern Ontario Palliative and End of Life Care Program: collected narratives from individuals receiving palliative care to illustrate its value for their education and publicity
- Providence Care Mental Health Services: developed a proposal for a college-based peer mentor training program for people who have experienced mental health problems,
- Limestone District School Board, School to Community Class: developed a cooking resource book in words and symbols that highlighted nutritional information and developed an "exercise wheel" that allowed students to identify how much exercise was needed to "burn off" calories from various fast food meals.

This is the first year of enhanced integration of the academic course and the community development placement, and the first year for the Community Development Forum. Judging from the success, it will become an annual event.