

Cedarville University School of Pharmacy STEPS Up to the Plate to Bat for Their Savior, Jesus Christ, and for Their Profession

by Juanita A. Draime¹, McKenzie R. Shenk², Kara M. Bobka³

¹BSPS, MA, PharmD, Health Outcomes Fellow ²BSPS, PharmD, ³BS in Biology, PharmD Candidate 2018

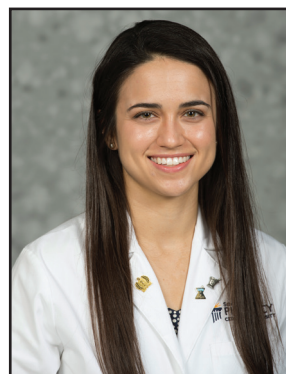
For pharmacy students, the community surrounding our school becomes our home for 4 or more years. We live at the local coffee shops, we have our favorite pizza place on speed dial (increasingly more during finals), and we make late night runs to the grocery store to find the one ingredient missing for cookie dough. And yes, we do study. Our lives are centered in the local community; and while we are in that place, we have an opportunity and a call from Christ to serve.

STEPS (Students Teaching Educational Plans for Success) Initiative

We currently attend Cedarville University School of Pharmacy (CUSOP) which is located near Dayton, Ohio. As a Christian university, one of the values of CUSOP is “to equip graduates for service locally, regionally, nationally, and internationally, maintaining a particular sensitivity to the underserved.” Thus, students from CUSOP partnered with Boonshoft School of Medicine (BSM) at Wright State University (WSU) to form an interdisciplinary, student-led organization known as the Students Teaching Educational Plans for Success (STEPS) Initiative. STEPS began when several fourth-year medical students from BSM not only identified health disparities among the local homeless population in Dayton, but also sought to be part of the solution. What initially began as a partnership between BSM and CUSOP has grown to involve the nursing school at WSU, the School of Professional Psychology at WSU, and the physician assistant programs at Kettering Hospital and University of Dayton. Students from these various disciplines engage with underserved residents at the St. Vincent de Paul Gettysburg Gateway Shelter for Men and for Women and Families; and recently, they also began seeing residents of DayBreak (another homeless shelter in Dayton) on a weekly basis. The STEPS Initiative serves multiple roles: to improve the health of people who are homeless, to expose future medical professionals to health disparities and other barriers that homeless patients face, and to provide a unique opportunity of interprofessional collaboration for students. For CUSOP students, this gives us an opportunity to answer the call from Christ to serve others, as outlined in Matthew 25:31-46.



Juanita A. Draime



McKenzie R. Shenk



Kara M. Bobka

STEPS seeks to address two important problems facing the Dayton community: the lack of access to healthcare and the lack of preventive health services for a vulnerable population (homeless men, women, and children). Student volunteers work in interprofessional teams, allowing students from each profession to showcase their strengths with each participant. These teams utilize motivational interviewing to encourage participants to set attainable health goals and to promote healthy lifestyle behaviors. Participants often struggle with chronic physical and mental disease(s) or disorder(s), face food and shelter insecurity, and lack a support system. These factors can negatively impact the health and well-being of the participants. In addition to the health interview, STEPS provides blood pressure, body mass index, and glucose screenings, as well as information about medications and immunizations. At each session, students also provide a healthy snack for the participants. Not only is the recipe provided, but also information on why the snack is healthy. After a session, students spend time debriefing with a faculty member. They review the session, learning from each other ways to improve their interviewing skills and sharing relevant information from their respective discipline.

To further assist the shelters, materials have been developed such as a list of current healthcare services available to homeless patients. These include medical, dental and mental health services, and health education handouts that cover relevant topics such as smoking cessation, stress management, and personal hygiene.



STEPS serves as an avenue to expose future medical professionals to people who do not have access to adequate healthcare. From the initial group of medical students and our inaugural class of pharmacy students, students from CUSOP have been key contributors to the growth of STEPS, which has grown to include three shelters and multiple health professions. Although faculty from the various schools serve in a professional advisory capacity at each STEPS session, STEPS is proud to be a student-led organization. It is governed by a student-led executive board that meets monthly to discuss volunteer feedback, to evaluate productivity and effectiveness, to foster new projects, and to address problems facing the organization. Each member has a designated role and commits to a one-year term. Currently, STEPS is funded by donations and small grants within the partner institutions and the local community; and members from the organization have shared the initiative at conferences. The organization also has received national recognition: in July 2015, CUSOP was one of four national schools to receive the AACP Student Community Engaged Service Award. CUSOP believes that the mission and goals of the STEPS Initiative align with the mission, vision, and values of the school, creating an excellent opportunity for students to serve the underserved.

STEPS and Faith

Juanita A. Draime: Being involved in STEPS has provided me with opportunities not only to build my skills in leadership, but also to be humble and grateful as I work with the homeless population. A saying that has been shared over the years with me is this: “People don’t care how much you know until they know how much you care!” My hope when I work with participants at the shelters is that I show them the love of Christ and that I actually care for them. I want them to see that I value them for more than just the healthcare knowledge I have to impart with them. One of the major values of pharmacy is caring for the patient and doing so in a compassionate and confidential manner. As a student pharmacist, I wanted to make positive social changes in the community. Many people ask themselves what they can do, as one person, to change a situation. The answer is that they can do something by (1) caring and (2) thoroughly accepting the challenge to be an agent of change, pursuing social justice and helping others. One of my favorite quotes is from Albert Einstein: “It is every man’s obligation to put back into the work at least the equivalent of what he takes out of it.” For me, being involved in STEPS for 4 years has been an experience that I will treasure in the time to come. This experience has enabled me to look beyond a person’s current situation and see them for the beautiful soul that Christ loves. Connecting with people in need and seeing the difference that my efforts made has also blessed me with a new perspective and sense of purpose. These experiences have helped to increase my desire to help others both locally and around the world, answering the call of Christ.

McKenzie Shenk: Most people who pursue a career in healthcare are morally good people with a desire to help others. As Christians, we have a higher motivation. Jesus called us to go and make disciples, living in such a way to pull others along in our journey as we follow Him. We must apply this to our personal and professional lives. In a culture that divorces faith from all aspects of secular life, it is easy to mask our motivation for serving as pharmacists. I have to struggle against my tendency to hide my light under that pressure from society, which is one of the reasons why I joined STEPS. I wanted the opportunity to practice integrating my faith in a professional, secular environment. It is one thing to talk about integrating my faith with my pharmacy practice in the classroom, but it is quite another to practically live it out among patients and other professionals. I did not know what to expect when I walked up to the men’s shelter

that October morning, but I did not anticipate what was about to happen. Although my job was to conduct a health interview with Bill (not his real name), God had an additional role for me to play. The conversation led in a direction that I was not prepared for, so I prayed hard and tried to actively listen as Bill shared his heart-wrenching life story with me. During the conversation, he briefly mentioned that he came from a Christian background; however, he continued with his story so I couldn’t ask him to elaborate. At the end of our conversation, all I could think to do was ask Bill if I could pray with him. In the middle of a crowded hallway, I got to pray for this new friend. I have not seen Bill again, but this experience motivates me to look for opportunities to be the hands and feet of Jesus to the participants and fellow members of STEPS. When I think about this encounter, I am reminded to pray that God opens doors for conversations about His grace and goodness. I want to be motivated by the Spirit to speak and to act in such a way that honors Christ and builds up my patients and my co-workers. I wrestle with what it means to be bold for the sake of Christ and to not be ashamed, but I am thankful that God patiently walks with me and provides opportunities to faithfully glorify Him.



Kara Bobka: Ever since I was little, I have longed to help people, which is why I chose to pursue a career in healthcare. At first I wanted to become a doctor, thinking the most rewarding job would be to help “cure” people. Yet after I started volunteering with various organizations during my undergraduate education, something inside me changed. As a volunteer with Hospice of Dayton, I often visited with elders who had limited time left on God’s beautiful Earth. In particular, there was a lady who suffered from Dementia with Lewy Bodies. Because of the disease, her mental status came and went; but what always remained was her faith in God. We would often talk about her days as a nurse during the wars. Then one day, all she said to me was that “life is a dreadful blessing.” For a while, I could not quite understand what she meant since I found it to be contradictory. It was not until I began re-reading my Bible with her that it started to make sense. I was finally able to understand where she was coming from: She felt that life is dreadful because of all of the pain and suffering she had endured through her years, especially recently... but it’s also a blessing because she knew that she was right with God, and therefore she would soon be welcomed at His gates and invited into His home. Ever since then, I have made it a point to continue to honor God and to praise Him every day, regardless of how tired or busy I am. It was at that time when I also realized that I no longer wanted to “cure” people, but rather to help “prevent” disorders or illnesses. For that reason, I chose to focus on diet, nutrition, and medicine, where I hope to one day combine all of these facets to help people live healthier lifestyles. My lifelong



goal is to teach them – especially those who are less fortunate due to lack of resources, motivation, or support – to take control of their health and/or situation. I want to help people alleviate and prevent future complications simply by taking their medications properly and sticking to a balanced, nutritious diet and exercise regimen. This is why I chose to apply for the nutrition chair of STEPS last year. Seeing people get excited over the healthy snacks I prepare has made me feel like I am finally serving God in the way He has wanted me to serve. He has blessed me with creative baking and cooking skills, as well as the experiences and resources to realize this purpose. Without God and the gifts He gave me, my heart would not be overwhelmed with love the way it is when I watch someone get excited about my flourless, sugarless, paleo granola bar! Thus, my lifelong goals as a Christian pharmacist are to continue to praise God daily (like my friend with dementia), to honor God in the way He conveys to me; and to serve those who need help but are unable to seek or obtain it on their own.

We are thankful for the success of STEPS. We hope to expand the number of various health professionals present at the sessions and increase access to more underserved populations in the Dayton area. CUSOP students are committed to this initiative and will continue to engage in this project. STEPS helps us to answer God's call to serve our community and models the example of Christ, "For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45, ESV).

Juanita A. Draime:

Juanita Draime is currently in her second year of a Health Outcomes Fellowship at Cedarville University School of Pharmacy. She graduated with her Doctorate of Pharmacy from Cedarville University in its inaugural class in 2016. As a pharmacy student, she served as the Vice-President of

her class council and was Co-Chair of STEPS. She is a member of Phi Lambda Sigma Delta Upsilon and the President-Elect of the Miami Valley Pharmacist Association. During her free time, Juanita enjoys spending time with her husband and two girls.

McKenzie R. Shenk:

McKenzie Shenk is a first year Pharmacy Practice Resident at Eskenazi Health in Indianapolis, IN. She graduated from Cedarville University School of Pharmacy with a Doctorate of Pharmacy and completed her undergraduate degree at Cedarville as well. As a pharmacy student, McKenzie served as a past Co-Chair of STEPS and as a participant advocate for the Executive Board. During her time at Cedarville, she also went to Honduras and Arizona for missions trips and worked with two girls with special needs as their "buddy" during church services. When she has free time, McKenzie enjoys hanging out with family, yoga, reading, and exploring her new city.

Kara M. (Bobka) Lish:

Kara Lish is a fourth year pharmacy student at Cedarville University School of Pharmacy. She graduated from Wright State University with a Bachelors of Science in Exercise Biology and completed a certificate in African-American Studies and Gender Experiences in Medicine. As a student, she is the current Co-Chair of STEPS, but has also served as the nutrition chair for STEPS in the past two years. In addition to completing her rotations, Mrs. Lish works as a pharmacy intern for Customer, Value, Service (CVS pharmacy). When she is not studying or working, you can find her spending time with her husband, kitten, family and friends or baking or babysitting to help support her education.