



CPE Briefing

Readying Students for Professional Success

Elmhurst's mentoring program earns a perfect score and Gold Accreditation from an international professional organization.

The mentoring program at Elmhurst College's Center for Professional Excellence has earned the Gold Accreditation, the highest level possible, from the International Mentoring Association (IMA), a professional organization for the mentoring and coaching fields. Elmhurst's mentoring program, which matches students with professionals from fields of interest to the students, earned 100 out of an available 100 points in the IMA's evaluation.

"This is confirmation that we're doing all the right things for our students, and that we have best practices in place that are recognized," said Julie Gonzales, the mentoring program's coordinator. "Our mentors help students learn what it means to be a professional."

The program is just one part of the College's efforts to prepare students for lives of professional achievement. Starting in their first year, students can gain on-the-job experience through internships, Service-Learning experiences, and more. According to a recent alumni

survey, more than 93 percent of 2012 graduates were employed full time or pursuing an advanced degree within a year of their graduation.

The mentoring program makes more than 200 volunteer mentors available to Elmhurst students each year. About 150 students are participating in the program in

the 2013-2014 school year, Gonzales said. Students meet regularly—some as often as weekly—with mentors who provide advice and insight into ways for students to grow professionally and personally.

"We connect students with mentors of high integrity and good character that model how to be a responsible person in a global professional world," said Larry Carroll,

the executive director of the Center for Professional Excellence. "This fits into the focus we have at Elmhurst on student development and professional preparation. We want students to learn from successful people who are out in the professional world."

Gonzales said that the nature of each mentoring partnership is determined by the student's objectives and needs. Some want to explore possible career paths; others look for advice on networking; still others seek guidance on preparing for specific professional fields.

"Every student is an individual and every mentor is an individual. We try to create the best match, and we are very successful," Gonzales said. "We meet students where they are."

One of the program's volunteer mentors said that tailoring mentoring relationships to each student's particular concerns is the key to the program's success.

"It's about listening to what the protégé needs, because each is different," said Debbie Carey, a senior learning consultant at Advocate Health Care in Downers Grove who has worked with four different Elmhurst students since

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International Mentoring Association
Seal of Accreditation

Junior Eleni Vrettos (left), a participant in the CPE's mentoring program, with the program's coordinator, Julie Gonzales.



TRUE PROFESSIONALS

Established in 1997, the Center for Professional Excellence (CPE) helps deliver the Elmhurst Experience, a framing of liberal learning that helps students determine who they will be and what professional field they will pursue. Students who take advantage of the many services and rich experiences offered by the CPE will be better prepared for their future careers—as well as being effective contributors to society. The CPE is proud to connect mentors and organizations with students from one of the top tier master's universities in the Midwest, as ranked, repeatedly, by *U.S. News & World Report*. It is one of the many ways that Elmhurst College demonstrates its synergy between liberal-arts learning and professional preparation.

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Sharing the Lessons of a Troubled Time

Jessica Mueller grew up dealing with the addictions of her parents. Now she helps teens at Chicago's Mercy Home navigate their own crises.

There was no easy fix for Jessica Mueller's troubles.

She was a high school sophomore struggling at school and at home. She was failing classes, alienating friends and, at the bottom of it all, contending with the destructive consequences of her mother's alcoholism.

"It was emotionally tormenting," said Mueller, now in her second year at Elmhurst, of those high school days.

But Mueller had an idea, a way to help her understand and deal with the difficulties besetting her. And, best of all, her idea would help not just herself, but others in her situation.

Mueller started a support group for students at her high school, Maine West in Des Plaines—students who, like her, were children of addicts and alcoholics. She and a handful of her fellow students gathered weekly at the school, with the help of school social workers, to talk about their troubles, to swap experiences and, most importantly, to listen to each other. "There was this incredible energy of healing," Mueller remembers of the meetings. "It was the most amazing part of my high school experience."

The group proved remarkably durable. Members continued to meet on their own even over summer breaks, gathering at a neighborhood park for outdoor sessions.

"Knowing we were so committed to each other created a sense of stability that most of us lacked in our home lives," Mueller said. Four years later, with Mueller graduated and gone on to college, the group is still going strong—and still helping high school students get through their most difficult times.

The experience helped Mueller right her own life. There was nothing easy about it, and starting the support group was only part of her growing process. But things did get better. Her mother began treatment. Mueller got serious about her studies. And she applied to Elmhurst College, a school that she now describes as "a place where I could thrive."

She has indeed thrived at Elmhurst. She earned a perfect 4.0 grade point average in her first year. She joined the College's acclaimed Honors Program. And during her first year at Elmhurst, Mueller realized that others might

As a first-year student, Jessica Mueller started a support group for children of addicted parents at Mercy Home. As a sophomore, she's studying and volunteering in India.



benefit from her high school experience. So when she heard that the College was asking students to suggest service projects to benefit Mercy Home, a Chicago school for troubled children, Mueller acted. She drew up a proposal for a student support group, modeled on the one she had launched at her high school. Her plan impressed just about everyone who reviewed it.

"My first reaction was, 'Wow, to have a first-year student with that kind of insight is special,'" said Mick Savage, Elmhurst's director of Service-Learning. "When she described what she wanted to do, it wasn't about her. It was about others."

There were obstacles to be overcome, having to do with Mueller's relative youth, the sensitive nature of her project, and the legalities surrounding discussions of personal health matters. But with help from Katelyn Dollard, coordinator of post-secondary options at Mercy Home, and from Dr. Mary Kay Mulvaney, director of Elmhurst's Honors Program, Mueller convinced the staff at Mercy Home to give her proposal a chance. She secured funding from Elmhurst's Center for Professional Excellence and Illinois Campus Compact, a group that promotes civic

students," she said. "They've helped me see what I'm doing well and what I can improve on."

Mercy Home has asked Mueller to start a similar group at their South Side campus for girls. And she is eager to rejoin the boys' group as soon as she returns from overseas.

In the meantime, she's soaking up Indian culture and studying macroeconomics, Indian classical dance and the faith traditions of India—and preparing to spend Spring Term studying in Sydney, Australia.

Mueller said she was drawn to the spiritual life she has found in India, where she is volunteering at a Sikh langar, a community kitchen that follows the Sikh practice of serving free meals to all visitors, regardless of race, caste or religion. She has already learned to make chapati, the flatbread that is a staple of Indian food. "It's interesting to see the ways religion affects everyday life here," she said. "This has been just totally different for me, and I think Australia will be very different, too."

In October Mueller traveled to the Netherlands, where she joined a team of faculty and staff from Elmhurst's Center for Professional Excellence to present at the International Honors Conference at Rotterdam University. Mueller,

"I wanted to use my experience and my personal background to share what I had learned about coming to terms with a parent's addiction. ... I'm most happy when I'm creating something positive that can impact someone else's life." — JESSICA MUELLER

engagement among college students. And in early 2013, Mueller got the go-ahead to launch a support group for children of addicted parents at Mercy Home's West Side campus for boys.

"I wanted to use my experience and my personal background to share what I had learned about coming to terms with a parent's addiction," Mueller said recently via Skype from Delhi, India, where she is spending the fall semester in a study-abroad program. So she began making the trip from Elmhurst to the Mercy Home campus on Chicago's Near West Side, where, along with therapists from the school, she met with a small circle of high schoolers going through many of the same experiences Mueller herself had navigated.

She doesn't pretend that she has answers for the boys. "This is something that takes years to process and understand," she said. "You're not going to make dramatic progress in five or six sessions."

Yet she saw encouraging signs. She was surprised at the boys' willingness to speak openly and honestly about their lives. The Mercy Home therapists were surprised, too, at the progress made. And Mueller, who aspires to someday manage a group home for troubled youths, took her own lessons from the sessions. "The therapists from Mercy Home have been a great example of how to interact with

speaking before a multinational audience of educators, outlined her proposal for Mercy Home and explained how the College had helped facilitate it as a Service-Learning experience.

"She did a fantastic job," Savage said. "People were captivated by her candor, by her willingness to share."

Mueller said presenting at the conference was unlike anything she'd ever done before.

"I was really stressing about it. I was so intimidated, this student presenting at this ritzy conference," she said. She prepared extensively, practicing her presentation with Mulvaney during a long Skype conversation. And when her moment arrived, she said, she was put at ease by the attention paid by her audience. "People told me that it was inspiring. So now that I know I can do it, that's a good reason for me to do more."

Mueller is remarkably forthright about her family's struggles. Talking honestly about what she has learned, she figures, might help others. "I have no secrets," she said. She will tell you what it's like to grow up as she did, an only child of a single mother working to overcome her problems. And she'll tell you what she has learned from her father, a motivational speaker in California active with Alcoholics Anonymous and other addiction-recovery

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Were Are They Now?

These young Elmhurst alumni work in diverse fields, but they all prepared for success at the Center for Professional Excellence.

The four young Elmhurst College alumni profiled here are following diverse professional paths, and each has a unique set of talents. But they all have one thing in common: They got a head start on success by working with Elmhurst's Center for Professional Excellence. There they found the mentors, the internships, the service-learning experiences and the career guidance that prepared them for lives of achievement. We asked each of them about the work they are doing now, and about how Elmhurst helped get them ready.



Hannah Wahlen

CLASS OF 2011

ATLANTA

FIRST-YEAR LAW STUDENT,
EMORY UNIVERSITY SCHOOL
OF LAW



"I want to work to make it possible for all students to pursue an excellent education, not just some students."

PHILOSOPHY AND THE LAW: "Law school is a steep learning curve. I was fortunate to have majored in philosophy at Elmhurst, because you get a lot of practice reading complicated texts and finding your own way to understanding that text. It's not just a matter of reading, outlining, closing the book, and your work is done. You have to grow with the text, through discussions in class and with your professor."

HOW ELMHURST PREPARED HER FOR LAW SCHOOL: "One of the best classes I had was a capstone philosophy class with President [S. Alan] Ray and [Associate Professor] Russell Ford called Formation of the Self. We read Foucault and it taught me how to go through challenging material. We were building on our own knowledge, and that's where real learning happens."

A CAPITOL INTERNSHIP: With the help of the CPE, Wahlen landed an internship with Congressman Paul Ryan (R-Wisc.) in Washington, D.C. She also attended the 2008 Republican National Convention, as part of the Washington Center internship program. "I got to see things behind the scenes that really taught me how politics works. At the time, I thought I wanted to go into politics, but I saw that it's not always the most efficient institution."

AFTER ELMHURST: She spent two years teaching first-graders at Cotton Elementary School in San Antonio, as part of Teach for America. "I've been really fortunate to have

great teachers and to have gone to great schools. I wanted to know what we meant when we talked about an education crisis. I'd read about it, but I wanted to experience it. My students were mostly from low-income families. They needed educational assistance, but to teach children to read you first have to make sure they have a home, a bed to sleep in, three meals a day."

LEARNING TO TEACH: "The moment you step into a school from Teach for America, it's an acknowledgment that the school is underperforming. Principals and administrators are excited to have you there, but the other teachers may not be. I came in with the attitude that I wanted to learn from the other teachers, not to teach them. I leaned on them and their experience."

MAKING A DIFFERENCE: Wahlen developed a classroom chart to help her students visualize their own reading progress. "They loved it. It was fun for them to have that motivation." Soon, every first-grade teacher in the school was using a similar chart.

PLANS AFTER LAW SCHOOL: "I want to work to make it possible for all students to pursue an excellent education, not just some students."

HOW LAW SCHOOL IS LIKE TEACHING FIRST GRADE: "As a teacher, I was trying to make complicated things really basic. That's what I'm doing in law school, too. The content is different, but the process is similar. Only now, I'm not making silly faces so much."

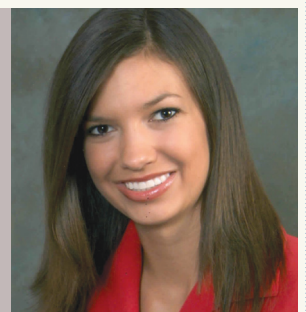


Kendal Cross

CLASS OF 2010

LA GRANGE

FINANCIAL ANALYST, BMO
HARRIS BANK



"The people who are good at this job ask, 'Why?' And then, 'Why?' again... They take the initiative to dig deeper."

WHAT SHE DOES: Cross underwrites loans in the bank's Diversified Industries group, which means she works with a wide range of companies — "everything from pork producers to landscapers to oil refineries and toy companies. I look at the companies and try to figure out if they will be a good investment for the bank."

WIDE-AWAKE MANAGEMENT: “You learn about a lot of different kinds of companies and what makes them successful. One thing that successful companies have in common, whatever their industry, is that they’re looking ahead at what’s coming next and how it will affect them. You don’t want sleepy management.”

WHAT IT TAKES TO SUCCEED: “The people who are good at this job ask, ‘Why?’ And then, ‘Why?’ again. And then, ‘Why?’ again. They take the initiative to dig deeper.”

WHAT SHE LIKES ABOUT HER WORK: “I like to get out from behind my desk and meet with CFOs and executive management. It’s a great experience at a young age, to go out prospecting and tell companies what’s unique about BMO Harris.”

HOW THE CPE HELPED PREPARE HER: “It was the CPE that brought BMO Harris to campus for interviews! Being able to use all the communication skills I developed at Elmhurst helped get me in the door in the interview process. That broad liberal arts education really helped.”

SERVICE: Cross was active in Elmhurst’s Habitat for Humanity chapter and led a student Alternative Spring Break trip to Hilton Head. She still participates in local Habitat building projects, and tutors third-graders in Chicago schools through a BMO Harris service program. “The students are pretty inspiring. They have such a passion to learn and to read. It’s nice to have a chance to be a role model for them.”

HOMECOMING: Cross now recruits for BMO Harris at Elmhurst and mentors Elmhurst students. “It’s a competitive world, and it can be discouraging, so we all need help sometimes. I had people who mentored me, so I want to do what I can to encourage students.”



Rich Dastice

CLASS OF 2011

BERWYN

HEAD SCOUT COORDINATOR,
NCSA ATHLETIC RECRUITING



“I’m proud that we set a positive example for the successful classes that have followed.”

WHAT HE DOES: “We work with athletes and their parents to get their information out to coaches and help them find a quality education at a college that is a good fit for them.” NCSA, listed among the top 50 fastest-growing companies by *Crain’s Chicago Business*, connects student-athletes with a network of more than 42,000 coaches at 1,700 colleges. The company has helped more than 60,000 student-athletes receive an average of more than \$19,000 in scholarships.

WHAT HE LOVES ABOUT HIS WORK: “The give-back. I was fortunate to have a great college experience at Elmhurst. I like that I can help athletes through the complicated recruiting process so that they can get to a college that is great for them.”

BLUEJAY DAYS: A safety for Elmhurst’s football team, Dastice was a member of the 2010 team that defeated Augustana College—the first Elmhurst squad to do so in 32 years. “I’m proud that we set a positive example for the successful classes that have followed.”

WHAT HE LEARNED PLAYING FOOTBALL: “The importance of being accountable. In football, you have 90 teammates depending on you to do your job. You don’t want to let them down.”

HIS PROUDEST MOMENT: Being elected to the team’s leadership council, voted on by coaches and players to help set team rules and policies. “It was a huge honor because it showed that my teammates respected my work ethic. I always tried to be 10 minutes early for meetings, for lifting, for practice. I tried to be the first one there and the last to leave.”

HOW THE CPE PREPARED HIM: “The CPE offered all kinds of important training, in interviewing for jobs and creating effective resumés, even business etiquette. But the internships made a really huge difference for me. I knew I wanted to work in sports in some way. So I did an internship at the Bulls/Sox Academy in Lisle, which was a great experience. Internships can help make you more mature, so that you’re ready for work right out of school.”



Katie Kailus

CLASS OF 2009

CHICAGO

ASSOCIATE EDITOR, MAHER
PUBLICATIONS, PUBLISHER OF
DOWNBEAT AND MUSIC INC.
MAGAZINES.



“I was a little bit of an internship freak...All those experiences helped me find out what I wanted to do.”

WHAT SHE DOES: Kailus writes, edits and assigns stories for the feature section of Music Inc. magazine, a publication for the musical instrument trade. One of her recent stories was on the trend toward green products (like recycled cymbals) in music.

WHAT SHE LOVES ABOUT HER WORK: “I love meeting people and hearing their stories. As a writer you get to turn that into something that other people can benefit from.”

ON THE ROAD: “One of the most awesome parts of the job is the travel. I go around the country visiting all kinds

of different retailers and going to the trade shows.” Her favorite destination is the annual trade show she attends in Southern California in January.

ALL THAT JAZZ: Kailus learned about Maher Publications and *DownBeat* magazine in a jazz studies class at Elmhurst taught by Director of Jazz Studies Doug Beach. With the help of Holly Coffin at the CPE, she approached the company for an internship. “This is a magazine of national scope that has been around for 75 years. I was a little intimidated. But it turned out to be a great fit for me.”

HER MOST MEMORABLE STORY: “I remember my first cover story, about a family-owned piano dealership. This was right after I’d been hired, and I was so determined to get

everything just right that it was really nerve-racking. But it made me appreciate everything I’d learned at Elmhurst that helped me get this opportunity.”

HOW THE CPE PREPARED HER: Kailus did three internships as an Elmhurst student: one at Maher Publications, one at the CPE, and the third with an Arlington Heights high school district. “I was a little bit of an internship freak.” She also did a shadowing experience at WGN-TV. “All those experiences helped me find out what I wanted to do.”

ADVICE: “I would tell students to sample a little bit of everything and see what feels natural to you. You might as well enjoy what you do.”

[‘READYING STUDENTS’ CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1]

2009. “I’m there to serve.”

Carey said that students come to her prepared to ask relevant questions about her typical work day and why she enjoys her job. “They’re getting perspective, and the more perspective you can gain, the better prepared you are. It’s phenomenal that a small liberal arts college offers such a wealth of opportunities,” she said.

One student who has participated in the mentoring program said she appreciated the opportunity to learn from working professionals. Eleni Vrettos, a junior secondary education and English major from Cicero who plans to become a high school teacher, worked with mentor Katie Jaeger ’10, a teacher at Burnham Middle School in Cicero. Vrettos said that Jaeger helped her formulate a philosophy

of teaching and pointed her toward thought-provoking books about education. Vrettos said that she was so impressed with Jaeger that she wrote about her in a scholarship application essay describing teachers she admires.

“Her creativity and willingness to learn impressed me,” Vrettos said. “She is always looking to grow and helping me to grow.”

Gonzales said that similarly enriching experiences are waiting for students who get involved in the mentoring program.

“There is an unbelievable amount of experience among our mentors,” she said. “It’s really mind-boggling how much they have to offer. Students who do this are making a great investment in themselves.”

[‘SHARING LESSONS’ CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3]

groups. Though Mueller says he was not around for much of her childhood, he now supports her activities.

Mueller, who says she has not struggled with addiction herself, has learned to be independent. Eager to move on from her childhood home, she has lived on her own for the past year, though she has at times depended on family and friends to house her over school breaks. She has worked a series of jobs—swimming instructor, concession-stand cashier, student-worker at the College’s Office of Graduate Study, among others—to support herself. But it’s her work at Mercy Home that has taught her an enduring lesson.

“I’m most happy when I’m creating something positive

that can impact someone else’s life,” she said. “It’s so important to share things with others.”

That’s one reason why her journey to the Honors conference in Rotterdam meant so much to her.

“It gave me a new appreciation for my education and all the opportunities it’s given me. You don’t have to be super far along in school to make a difference,” she said. “I know now that my experience matters to people in the real world. Even the most negative circumstances can lead to growth.

“I hope that awareness is something that never fades away.”



Measuring the Benefits of Studying Abroad

The Center for Professional Excellence asks students to get specific about the benefits of their international experiences.

Ask Briana Mingus about the semester she spent in London in 2012, and she'll say what a lot of Elmhurst students say about their time abroad: that it was one of the great experiences of her life.

But as a student worker in the College's International Education program whose job includes assessing how students learn from experiences in other countries, she will also admit that her answer isn't quite good enough.

"We want to delve a little deeper," says Mingus, a senior political science major from Moweaqua, Illinois. "We hear so often that it was a great experience, and that's always good to hear, but we want to know why it was so great. It's different for every student."

To help answer that question, Elmhurst's International Education program, part of the Center for Professional Excellence, has been asking students to get specific about their studies abroad. The aim of the multiyear effort is to learn more precisely how studying abroad benefits students. So students are asked to write essays and submit photographic journals based on their overseas experiences. They also complete a standardized assessment called the Global Perspective Inventory that seeks to measure students' cognitive, intrapersonal and interpersonal development. Taken together, these assessment tools translate student experiences into data that reflect the role studying abroad plays in students' growth.

"We get lots of anecdotal evidence about the impact of studying abroad, but this gives us another, objective way of assessing," said Wally Lagerwey, Elmhurst's director of international education. "This allows us to point to concrete data that indicate exactly how students learn and what they learn." Such tangible data, he said, helps convince students of the benefits of studying abroad. It also helps build support for international education.

Mingus has been assisting Lagerwey and Alice Niziolek, associate director of international education, on the student-assessment project. She presented some of the results of the research at the national conference of Alpha Mu Gamma, the foreign-language honor society, at Elmhurst in September. Among the findings: Students who completed the Global Perspective Inventory both before and after studying abroad improved their scores in several areas having to do with social interactions and self-understanding. Student essays were revealing, too. Mingus said that of 159 students who submitted essays between 2006 and 2012, 85 percent mentioned that they gained insights into other cultures, and 65 percent touched

on relationships forged during their time abroad.

The finding that students learn from their time abroad came as no surprise to Mingus. Her own experience in London has turned her into a determined advocate for international study. While studying in London through an Arcadia University Abroad program, Mingus worked as an intern in the office of Roberta Blackman Woods, a Labour Party member of the British Parliament representing the northern city of Durham. Mingus's internship duties included responding to correspondence from constituents and other administrative and research projects. She also found time to attend Prime Minister's Questions, the weekly spectacle in which the opposing Parliamentary parties engage in often-heated verbal battle.

She called her internship "just perfect for someone interested in international politics." After graduation, Mingus will serve in the Peace Corps, possibly in Cameroon, where she would work on health education projects. She hopes eventually to attend law school and is interested in focusing on international law.

In London, Mingus learned first-hand that studying in another country can broaden a student's global perspective. "London is a true global melting pot," she said. "For someone like me from a small town in Illinois it was fantastic to find myself among all these millions of people from all over the world. I got to see an amazing culture and to see what kinds of problems citizens there are facing and how they are trying to solve them."

Part of Mingus's job in the CPE includes spreading the word about the benefits of studying abroad. She visits First-Year Seminar classes to talk about international opportunities and hosts monthly study-abroad workshops for students.

Lagerwey said Mingus's role as a study-abroad ambassador is an important one.

"As a student, she has real credibility with other students," he said. "She has a connection with other students when it comes to their concerns and questions because she has been there."

Mingus tells students that studying abroad may be more affordable than they think and encourages them to explore the possibilities. She advises students to study abroad for a full semester, if possible, in part because semester-long experiences are often easier to finance than January Term or summer trips. "And you will get a fuller cultural experience," she says. "I tell them to start planning and start saving."

Her hope is that every Elmhurst student can have the kind of study-abroad experience she had.

"I'm so passionate about studying abroad," she said. "It was a great experience for me, and I think every student should do it."

Briana Mingus has been working with the CPE in a multiyear effort to learn more about the benefits of studying abroad.



The Power of Listening

How an Elmhurst undergraduate found her professional calling as a social worker.



Stephanie Kyriakopoulos '12 puts her natural listening skills to work as a volunteer coordinator for Passages Hospice.

Stephanie Kyriakopoulos had always been the designated listener in her circle of friends. Whenever they bumped up against one of life's small crises, they would turn to her for a sympathetic ear.

As an undergraduate at Elmhurst College, Kyriakopoulos learned just how valuable her talent for listening could be in the professional world.

Kyriakopoulos, a 2012 graduate of Elmhurst, spent the summer after her junior year working at Senior Home Sharing, a Wheaton-based nonprofit that places older adults in shared suburban homes. The position, which she found with the help of the Center for Professional Excellence, turned out to be a great fit for her.

"I found that I was good at listening, and that I had a skill for defusing conflicts. I could put a smile on people's faces," she said. "That's when it became clear to me that I should be doing social work."

Now that she has graduated, Kyriakopoulos is still putting her natural talents to work as the regional volunteer coordinator for Passages Hospice, a Lisle-based organization that provides end-of-life care for terminally ill patients. She says Passages aims to make patients' final days as comfortable and as peaceful as possible, which means tending not only to their medical needs, but to their social and emotional needs, too. That's where volunteers come in.

The volunteers visit patients in private homes, nursing facilities and senior communities. Volunteers sit with patients, read to them, watch favorite TV shows with them, or simply listen. Such basic human interaction can make a huge difference in a patient's last days, Kyriakopoulos said.

"Some of the patients get lonely," she said. "They really look forward to volunteer visits. It's about meeting their emotional needs."

Kyriakopoulos recruits, trains and oversees volunteers for Passages. One of her first tasks is to prepare volunteers for the challenges of working with the terminally ill. In training sessions, she educates volunteers about such topics as stress, family dynamics and the effects of dementia.

"We don't want to throw volunteers into this unprepared," she said. "We want them to have a realistic picture of what they will encounter. These are terminally ill patients."

What makes the volunteers' job easier, she said, is knowing that they are providing solace and comfort not only to the patients, but also to their families.

"When you get a little bit of praise from the family, that's like hitting a home run," she said. "You really appreciate that."

Since she began working at Passages in late 2012, Kyriakopoulos has managed a number of student volunteers from Elmhurst College, including some from Kappa Sigma, her Elmhurst sorority.

"I like all my volunteers, but the Elmhurst volunteers are especially enthusiastic," she said. "They really want to help, to do anything they can."

Kyriakopoulos credits her Service-Learning and internship experiences at Elmhurst with helping her grow personally and professionally. While she was at Elmhurst, in addition to her internship position at Senior Home Sharing, she also worked at Clearbrook, a service for people with disabilities, at the Head Start child development program, and as a counselor at a summer camp.

"I interned wherever I could," she said. "Those experiences helped me mature. I wasn't always the most amazing student, but those experiences ignited a flame in me; they made me want to do better. I knew that this was what I wanted to do with my life—to be a social worker."

Now that she's enrolled in a master's degree program in social work at Aurora University, Kyriakopoulos is discovering just how well her Elmhurst experience prepared her for advanced studies.

"I feel like I'm leaps and bounds ahead of some of the other students in my program from other schools. It's not just Elmhurst's curriculum; it's the Service-Learning opportunities, the internships," she said. "You learn a lot in the classroom, but what you do in the field is really vital, too."

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