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Learning as They Teach

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A commitment to service

The memory haunts Ashlee Weimar ’04. A teenager with a swollen face entered the hospital in Swaziland, Africa, and told of a year of continuous nosebleeds. “This girl has advanced leukemia and I know she will die because there is no chemotherapy in Swaziland,” Weimar thought as she listened.

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Weimar returned to Africa with the January Term class Envisioning Modern Ghana. Although the class did not focus on the health care system, Weimar had the opportunity to meet with a doctor who operated a free clinic supported entirely by donations and volunteer work.

“We was quite amazing to see the communities pull together,” said Weimar.

Most of Africa has an overwhelming need for orthopedics, surgery and general practice, areas Weimar may pursue.

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Weimar was based at the Good Shepherd Hospital in Swaziland, Africa, and told of a year of continuous nosebleeds. “This girl has advanced leukemia and I know she will die because there is no chemotherapy in Swaziland,” Weimar thought as she listened.

She has a very strong drive to succeed at whatever she undertakes, which translates into an unusually positive work ethic,” Wolcott said. Weimar passionately wants to return to Africa, but she is torn about where she will ultimately practice. She believes she could make a huge difference if she practiced medicine in the United States, and donated part of her income to a medical organization in Africa.

She is haunted by the image of that one girl in Swaziland.

“When one person’s suffering is so great,” she said. “It (creates) a good bond.”

Kenton, who has a Spanish minor. “(The elementary students) think it’s cool that someone is willing to talk with them in their own language. I tell them they’re helping me, and they like that.”

Tori Stannard ’07, right, works with 9-year-old Cecilia Ramirez, a third-grader in the class of Wendy (Levig) Autencio ’88, during Power Hour at Memorial Elementary School. Stannard volunteers two hours a week with English Language Learners to help children with their studies and Polish her Spanish skills.

Power Hour is just one of many programs in which Linfield Spanish students provide language assistance. This strong commitment to helping others is encouraged by faculty members such as Violetta Ramsay, associate professor of Spanish.

“I’ve always thought that the one who gives is the one who benefits the most,” Ramsay said. “Giving service to another is key if we are going to improve the world.”

In addition to volunteering after school, Linfield students also translate during conferences and family nights. Their presence is part of a concerted effort by the McMinnville School District to bridge the communication gap between Spanish-speaking parents and the school, Autencio said.

Parents of kids who are Spanish-speaking are shy to come in and ask questions because of the language barrier,” she added. “But we’ve seen an increase in our Spanish-speaking families attending conferences. They’re feeling safe and comfortable coming to functions at our school, knowing someone is here to help.”

Using her language skills to help others is the reason Stannard, a political science major from Logdon, takes part in the program. Although she communicates mostly in English to help the children with their language skills, she sometimes explains elements of the lesson in Spanish so they understand it better.

“I really feel like I’m useful there. My skill is needed,” said Stannard, whose Spanish has been strengthened by the real-world interactions with children who often speak faster and ask different questions than her Linfield professors.

Miranda Kenton ’07, an elementary education major from White City, spends two hours each week in the schools. “I can practice my Spanish skills and help in the community at the same time,” said Kenton, who has a Spanish minor. (“The elementary students) think it’s cool that someone is willing to talk with them in their own language. I tell them they’re helping me, and they like that.”

Tori Stannard ’07, right, works with 9-year-old Cecilia Ramirez, a third-grader in the class of Wendy (Levig) Autencio ’88, during Power Hour at Memorial Elementary School. Stannard volunteers two hours a week with English Language Learners to help children with their studies and polish her Spanish skills.