

The Bare Bones of Health and Wellness



Linda Pellico with New Haven public school students during a 'Have Bones Will Travel' presentation.

Normally, the sight of a tent full of human body parts, skulls and bones spread across linoleum covered tables and spilling out onto the New Haven Green would send one running for cover, but when that tent is manned by the Pellico team, families just keep coming for more.



YSN students and faculty volunteers at the 2003 International Festival of Arts and Ideas

Thigh, spine and rib bones, hearts, lungs and intestines set the stage at New Haven's International Festival of Arts & Ideas on the weekend of June 14–15, when Linda Pellico, along with about two dozen YSN volunteers, brought "The Heart of the Matter" to the New Haven community. For the entire weekend, from noon to 6 p.m., YSN students and faculty educated the public on the wonders of the human body. They could be found blowing up pig lungs, teaching the basics of x-ray interpretation, solving the human skeleton puzzle, and putting organs where they belonged. The Pellico team had 4 table presentations going at once, and when the number of participants wishing to hold a fake brain-cauliflower or to try on the skeleton costume grew too large, the arts and craft projects were moved onto the lawn. The Heart of the Matter has been a major attraction of the Festival for the past several years. "Each year we keep getting bigger and better," said Linda Pellico, who coordinates the event. "We are already thinking about the new activities that we will incorporate into our presentation next June."

Involvement in the Festival is part of a broader YSN community outreach initiative lead by Linda Pellico, known as "Have Bones, Will Travel." Linda started the program in 1997 with the goal of firing up schoolchildren's enthusiasm for science, as well as inspiring them to consider nursing as a possible future profession. Her presentations in area public schools, which Linda tailors to fit the age and education levels of the youngsters, cover basic human anatomy while emphasizing how the children can keep their own bodies safe and healthy. At every presentation, which can run from 45 minutes to over an hour, schoolchildren look in amazement as Linda pulls out the three-dimensional objects she brings to the schools to illustrate her lessons.

If you were to find yourself in Linda's office, you would discover a number of potential "props" scattered throughout the room. "One of the things that inspired me to start the program is that we have access to all these wonderful objects at YSN that children can learn from," says Linda, who also coordinates an anatomy class for YSN students. "There is no better way for children to learn than to use their own senses—to touch, see, feel and smell what they are learning about. Seeing the real organ, bone or devise up close makes more of an impression than simply looking at pictures or diagrams."

According to Linda, the skull, pig lungs, and sheep brain are among the most popular attractions, never failing to get the attention of her young audience members. However, Linda uses more than bones and brains to demonstrate the workings of the human body. She lets the students use the stethoscope to listen to their own heartbeats, and plays tape recordings to

Dear Mrs. Pellico,

You taught me a lot! Now that you came I will put on suntan lotion every time I go outside. I thought I knew a lot about the body, but I was wrong. Now that you've come I feel like I got a master's degree in nursing school. You're very very smart. I'm thinking of being a nurse myself.

Your future nursing student,
Carly L.

Dear Mrs. Pellico,

Thank you for coming in. I never knew anatomy was so fun. I never knew that smoking made the lung look like that. My dad's friend smokes, and I think she told him about that. I had a great time Once again thank you.

Your friend,
Vanessa V.



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compare the rhythmic beat of a healthy heart with the irregular beating of an ill heart. Linda also teaches the children about good nutrition and hygiene, as well as the importance of making healthy decisions.

Linda brings the program to approximately one area school per week, but has sometimes visited as many as three schools weekly. She is usually accompanied by YSN students or faculty, and is quick to share the credit with them for much of the program's success. “I will never get tired of bragging about the remarkable students and faculty who participate in this program,” she says. “They are incredibly skilled at engaging the schoolchildren, and the children find their enthusiasm for the subject matter contagious.” According to Linda, her fellow presenters help make the event so much fun that the children don't realize while the “show” is going on that they are being taught. “That's the trick,” she says. “With the right amount of enthusiasm, the help of fun props, and a participative approach, children develop knowledge that is reflective understanding rather than mere memorization. It is evident from the letters we get from these students and their teachers following our visits how much important health and wellness information they have retained.”

“Linda Pellico and her Yale School of Nursing volunteers provide a great service to our community,” said New Haven Mayor John DeStefano. “The ‘Have Bones Will Travel’ program is an important part of this city's effort to educate schoolchildren about health and wellness, and about the dangers of alcohol and drugs.”

“This program provides an opportunity for the public to see nurses doing something independently, conveying knowledge, but also having fun,” says Linda. “I think this helps to heighten their expectations of what nursing is all about. My hope is to educate all participants, the children, parents, school teachers, general public and administrators about the wonders and dynamic nature of the human body and the profession of nursing.”

Primed for success at
Howard University



Two Career High School juniors, Isobo Erekecosima and Chaoxia Lu (featured above with their instructor, Minna Kaufman) were awarded scholarships to participate in the Summer Nursing Immersion Program (SNIP) at Howard University this past summer. During the six-week residential program, 20 students were exposed to enhanced academic and scientific survival skills to foster their interest in the nursing profession.

The theoretical basis for the design of SNIP has been formed, in part, by the success of the Yale Howard Scholars Program. “Our experience with the Yale-Howard Scholars Program has taught us that commitment to research careers as evidenced by graduate school enrollment and perception changes can occur through a six-week residential immersion program,” said SNIP coordinator, Dr. Carolyn J. Harris. She identified the program's four basic dimensions: (1) academic and scientific strengthening; (2) nursing career exploration and identity formulation; (3) socialization to college; and (4) cultural expansion and social bonding.

Students had extensive preceptor experiences with professional nurses in the clinical, educational, research, or policy arena. These experiences were complimented by classroom instruction, as well as socially and culturally enriching activities, such as field trips to the National Institutes of Health, Capitol Hill, Kings Dominion, and the American Folklife Festival.

“It was a really great experience for me,” said Chaoxia. “Spending these weeks at Howard has improved my understanding of nursing and my academic skills. It has helped me become more focused as I continue to explore my career options.”

“The SNIP experience has made me more convinced that I want to go into the nursing profession,” said Isobo. “By being a nurse, I will know that what I do can make a difference in people's lives, and that's a good feeling to have at the end of the day.”