



Community for Children

April 2017

Dear Colleague:

The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley School of Medicine is offering the elective in social justice advocacy and leadership development, **Community for Children**. Open to upper level medical students, residents, and fellows, the elective has been extremely well-received by participants who have come from all over the country to participate since 2007. **Block rotations for 2017-2018 are: >October 2-October 27, 2017 and >February 5- March 2, 2018.**

Community for Children is a four-week, field-based rotation located in the distinctly international setting of the Texas/Mexico border in South Texas' Lower Rio Grande Valley. Key components of the curriculum include: the rights of the child; social determinants of health; cultural humility; ethical issues in global health; the impact of poverty, immigration and violence; preparing for advocacy; fostering a culture of compassion and professional development. These topics are addressed through didactics, community outreach, advocacy training and projects, tailored Spanish language lessons, and individual development counseling. Participants leave the familiar clinic setting to explore the sources of health, disease and healing in the community on the Texas/Mexico border. They work with public health officials, pediatricians, policymakers, psychologists, social activists, lay community health leaders (promotoras), and families.

Community for Children is committed to fostering compassion for the poor. Participants are mentored throughout the rotation, as they encounter immigrant and refugee families closely. They are mentored as they experience the suffering of families and frustration of physicians when healthcare is inaccessible for the most vulnerable of our children. Our partnership includes over 40 faculty from the United States and Mexico. Applicants should clearly understand that this type of elective is atypical and should only be selected if there is a serious commitment to address health disparities and a willingness to leave the comfort of standard medical education.

We have curtailed participant travel across the border because of the drug violence in Mexico. Instead, participants have the opportunity to do intensive advocacy work, tailored to community needs, as well as personal and professional interests. For example, students have worked with local community partners and the families they serve to identify and address health needs in the colonias which are impoverished, unincorporated rural settlements on the border lacking one or more basic infrastructure elements. They have also had the opportunity to work with unaccompanied immigrant children from Central America. The participants have found their advocacy experiences deeply rewarding and transformative. All participants are required to develop an abstract and give an oral presentation about their work. Some of the abstracts have been accepted for presentation or poster at national meetings. We will continue to monitor the situation in Mexico and hope to resume work with our esteemed partners in the future.

Community for Children is a great opportunity for you to offer a structured advocacy elective to your medical students, residents, and/or fellows. Please help us communicate availability by distributing the enclosed fact sheet and encouraging them to visit <http://www.communityforchildren.org>. Those interested should email CommunityforChildren@gmail.com.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Marsha Griffin'.

Marsha Griffin, MD
Director, Division of Child and Family Health
Co-founder, Community for Children
Department of Pediatrics, UTRGV

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Robert Nelson'.

Robert Nelson, MD
Professor and Chair, Department of
Pediatrics



CfC Community for Children

Community for Children is a signature program of the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley School of Medicine in South Texas. It is designed to prepare future physicians to provide compassionate, effective leadership within community collaborations. Application is open to upper level medical students, residents, and fellows. **There are no tuition fees.**

During this 4-week elective, participants explore the sources of health, disease and healing on the border. They study with international public health experts, physicians, community leaders and activists, promotoras (community health workers), immigrant and refugee health experts, and families. They work hand-in-hand with community members to address problems that communities have identified. They meet with community leaders who are legends in fostering changes to improve the lives of others, especially those most vulnerable. The CforC curriculum is addressed through didactics, community outreach, advocacy projects, tailored Spanish-language classes, and individual development counseling. CforC faculty mentor participants during the rotation and beyond, providing tools and support for professional development.



UTRGV partners include UTHSCSA Department of Pediatrics, UT School of Public Health-Brownsville, Hospital Infantil de Tamaulipas and Centro de Salud/Ciudad Victoria, Mexico, and 40 community-based organizations in the Lower Rio Grande Valley.

Housing is approximately \$695, plus one-time \$25 cleaning fee for visiting residents/students for the month. For more details about applying, visit <http://www.communityforchildren.org>.

4-WEEK ELECTIVE CURRICULUM

1. Rights of the Child

- Workshops based on the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child
- Meetings with attorneys and judges working in children's rights
- Interviews with child detainees and officials at U.S. federal detention centers

2. Social Determinants of Disease and Health

- Lectures on social determinants from an international public health perspective
- Meetings with migrant clinicians and promotoras

3. Ethics of Global Health

- Didactics and discussion on ethical issues of care in resource-poor regions
- Global health resources

4. The Impact of Poverty, Immigration and Violence

- Home visits with faculty and lay health educators
- Examination of roots of poverty and immigration issues through interaction with faculty, families, community leaders, organizations and literature review
- Reflections on observations and experiences

5. Preparing for Advocacy

- Community-based advocacy project
- Meetings with community activists and advocates

6. Cultural Humility

- Review of current literature
- Daily opportunities to encounter people whose language, values, affect, economics, religion, norms and politics are personally foreign to participants
- Individualized Spanish-language classes

7. Fostering a Culture of Compassion

- Guided reflection to explore how medical training supports or undermines compassion for self and others
- Reflection on the meaning, causes and repercussions of poverty and our own emotional responses to the poor among us

8. Professional Development

- Correspondence prior to attendance to encourage reflection on personal values, affinities, and the "heart" in medicine
- Private time for reflection on personal meaning, call to action, sense of direction
- Individual development counseling
- Post-elective mentoring

Facilities

Classes are held at the UTRGV Clinical Education Building

Experiential learning is through:

- Community-based field work with community based organizations
- Pro bono legal offices providing services to immigrant children
- Office of Refugee Resettlement licensed care provider shelters for immigrant

Other Benefits

- Individual development counseling
- Mentoring and membership in CfC alumni organization 100+members strong
- Guidance with conference abstract preparations and opportunities for presentations at meetings
- Tailored Spanish-language lessons
- Easy access to South Padre Island National Seashore

Block Rotation Schedule:

- **October 2-October 27, 2017**
- **February 5-March 2, 2018**

Apply ► Please email:

Marsha Griffin, MD

Director, Community for Children

CommunityforChildren@gmail.com