



SIUE School of Pharmacy supplies free flu shots in East St. Louis

by Doug McIlhagga

December 17 2018 3:57 PM

EDWARDSVILLE - Southern Illinois University Edwardsville School of Pharmacy (SOP) students have provided free influenza vaccine and flu education to underserved residents of St. Clair County at the [St. Vincent de Paul](#) Community Center in East St. Louis. On both Friday, Nov. 16 and Wednesday, Dec. 5, vaccines were provided at no cost through funding from the Southern Illinois Area Health Education Center ([AHEC](#)) Network.

Lakesha Butler, PharmD, clinical professor in the SOP Department of Pharmacy Practice, was the project leader. “Our students touched more than 50 lives through administration of the flu vaccine or through education and dispelling the myths associated with the vaccine,” she said. “Most of the patients served did not have a primary care doctor and were at high risk for flu. Therefore, we were able to impact the community in a great way.”

Flu season is from October through April-May with peak activity between December and February. According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention ([CDC](#)), everyone six months and older is encouraged to receive the flu vaccine.

Third-year SOP student Rebeca Mier y Leon, of Effingham, thoroughly enjoys community events that positively impact patients’ lives. “Providing flu shots at a homeless shelter is such a valuable experience, because it seems that one of the major barriers to accepting the flu vaccine is the common misconceptions,” she said. “I learned that it would be beneficial to have more educational outreach in the community to help prevent the flu.

“Being able to provide access to care to the homeless community was extremely rewarding. We had the opportunity to educate homeless patients about the flu, and we were able to administer free flu shots to patients who normally don’t have access.”

Mier y Leon said not all patients were interested in receiving flu shots, but most were open to discussion. “This was a good opportunity to educate them about the flu, ways to prevent the infection, and dispel myths and misconceptions about the vaccine,” she said. “Meanwhile, patients who received the flu shot were appreciative of the service.”

This was the first SOP community outreach initiative in which students and pharmacists provided flu vaccinations under a physician standing order. Immunization certified pharmacists and pharmacy students, who are under the direct supervision of a licensed pharmacist, can provide vaccinations to persons 14 years of age.

The St. Vincent de Paul Center offers free meals, free showers, laundry facilities, job and educational resources among other services for those in need.

“The School of Pharmacy plans to continue this new partnership with St. Vincent, and provide additional healthcare services and education in the near future,” Butler said. “Serving the underserved aids students in developing empathy, a necessary attribute of healthcare professionals.”

Today’s pharmacists improve patients’ lives through the medication and education they provide. Dedicated to developing a community of caring pharmacists, the [SIUE School of Pharmacy](#) curriculum is nationally recognized as a model that offers students a unique combination of classroom education, research, community service and patient care. The School of Pharmacy’s areas of excellence include a drug design and discovery core; pediatric practice; chronic pain research and practice; and diabetes research and practice. As the only downstate Illinois pharmacy doctorate program, the SIUE School of Pharmacy is addressing the growing need for highly trained pharmacists in a rapidly growing field.