



## Nursing Students Diagnose, Treat a Community

The diagnosis for the small, 125-year-old west Houston church might have been “failure to thrive.” Not anymore; not since the historic Addicks United Methodist Church, or AUMC, community got an assessment and a high-tech, social media shot in the arm from a group of University of St. Thomas School of Nursing students. Currently boasting a 15 percent increase in attendance, the prognosis for AUMC is good, and sustainably so.

The successful return to a healthy church ministry, which serves as a lighthouse to the community, was supported through a collaborative outreach project that was created and executed by a group of 15 nursing students.

Students used a holistic approach. First, they evaluated the surrounding neighborhoods for population demographics, analyzed the data they gathered and presented it to church leaders. From that information, they prioritized needs such as technology, transportation, healthcare and homelessness.



Next, it was important for the community to be empowered through AUMC’s website to quickly locate available services. But there was a problem—the church website was antiquated and completely inadequate.

Enter again UST’s student nurses. With no prior knowledge in Web development, they stepped in to fill the gap, taught themselves to write HTML code, and produced a fresh, top-performing site.

Beth Moreno, one of the group leaders for the health project, said the hardest part of the assignment was discovering how to find the resources needed to build a website from scratch.

“I learned that the harder a project is, the more accomplished and rewarded you feel when you’re done,” Moreno said.



Perhaps that attitude became an unspoken mantra for the group.

The group’s faculty facilitator, Dr. Pamela Hodges, associate professor of nursing and a member of AUMC, said the group met the project grading requirements and then went 10 times beyond.

“They were energized by the difference they could see they were making, and they would text me at midnight asking for opinions,” Hodges said. “They did this project and kept up with all of their other classes. These nursing students made an incredible impact and soon will be able to make a valuable contribution to the nursing profession.”

The project was conducted as a major part of a course titled Holistic Nursing: Caring for the Community and is an excellent example of service learning. The course was developed with funding from a U.S. Department of Education Title V grant.

“Our project brought to life what we were learning in the classroom—that nursing is a healing ministry,” Moreno said, “and the community as a whole can be the focus for nursing care.”

And this healing ministry will endure.

“We plan to continue this faith-based partnership with AUMC and build on it further with the future class next spring,” Hodges said.