Students’ Perceptions of a Community-Based Service-Learning Project Related to Aging in Place

CLAUDIA E. OAKES
Department of Health Sciences and Nursing, University of Hartford, West Hartford, Connecticut, USA

NANCY W. SHEEHAN
Department of Human Development and Family Studies, University of Connecticut, Storrs, Connecticut, USA

This article describes a service-learning project that was designed to help undergraduate health professions students understand the complexities related to aging in place. The service-learning project also incorporated a research component to expose the students to the research process. Students’ reflections regarding the benefits that they derived from the experience suggest that they value learning about older adults through one-on-one interactions more than they value the opportunity to participate in the research project. Implications for undergraduate health professional education are discussed.

KEYWORDS aging in place, attitudes, health care students, gerontology higher education, older women, research training, service-learning

The aging population in the United States is increasing and along with it the need for health-care professionals to work with older adults (Institute of Medicine, 2008). Early exposure to the aging population can help students in the health professions to learn about older adults, confront stereotypes about aging, and consider the possibility of working with that population (Guthiel, Chernesky, & Sherratt, 2006). Engaging students in service-learning projects...