

Collin College & Plano Independent School District

Health Science Academy students apply life-saving lessons

CALM IN THE MIDST of her mother's frightening brush with death in the family's own living room, high school sophomore and Health Sciences Academy student Mia Mainville took vitals, assessed her mother's condition, called 911, and prepared to administer CPR.

As she struggled with the inner conflict of whether her role in the crisis was that of daughter or healthcare provider, Mainville remembered a lesson Karrie Newby, Collin College professor at the Plano Independent School District academy, stressed to her class.

"She told us there's going to be a question on our final that said 'Who is a healthcare provider?,' and that if we put anything other than 'I am,' it would be considered wrong," Mainville recalled. "So that's the mentality I kept in the situation."

It was information from that course and skills gained from her introductory academy lab last semester that Mainville emphatically attributes to saving her mother's life.

The Health Sciences Academy is a new dual-credit partnership between Collin College and Plano ISD, which offers selected students a head start on careers in healthcare, starting as early as ninth grade. The majority of students in the academy aspire to healthcare careers that range from nursing to surgery and drug research.

After the evening of her mother's scare, she considers the lessons she and her peers learn in their Williams High School classroom vital information.

"It's important to everyone," Mainville said. "It's things you need to know, not only for other people's health, but for your own as well."

Collin College District President Cary Israel said he agrees with Mainville. Students in the academy are learning invaluable information and applicable skills that contribute positively to both

their own lives and their communities.

"The shortage of healthcare professionals is an enormous obstacle for our nation, and the need for well-training individuals is escalating," Israel said. "As a college, we believe in collaborating to educate committed

of their clinical concentrations.

"When you come out of high school with a phlebotomy or EMT certification, you're eligible for jobs literally the day after you graduate," Mainville emphasized.

Dr. Sherry Schumann, the Vice



Mia Mainville demonstrates proper technique. Photo courtesy of the PISD

young people early and fill these needs for our community. As a result these students can also establish a stable income directly out of high school even as they pursue other endeavors that improve our community."

While Mainville looks forward to attending college, she understands post-secondary education can get very expensive. Consequently, the monetary value of successfully continuing the academy also holds significance for her.

Following the completion of coursework and clinical hours, which the first group will begin next year, students who are over the age of 18 can end their senior year with certifications reflective

President/Provost of Collin College's Central Park Campus overseeing health science programs, noted in addition to workforce certifications, academy students take the same courses offered on Collin College campuses and can therefore earn up to 50 college credits while still in high school.

"This is remarkable news for students who want to continue on for their Associate of Applied Science degree at Collin College or pursue pre-medical studies at four-year institutions," Dr. Schumann said.

Professor Newby said Mia and the other students in the academy are amazing, talented and brilliant.

“When I walk into my classroom, the energy is palpable,” Newby said. “This semester, I am teaching Introduction to U.S. Healthcare. The students are hungry for knowledge and excited about the opportunity to question and debate.”

Plano ISD Superintendent of Schools Richard Matkin described the program as an excellent example of strong community partnerships working for the betterment of the whole.

“This has been an incredible inaugural year for the Health Sciences Academy,” Matkin said. “In addition to the instructional leadership and support of Collin College and Dr. Israel, our corporate partners, civic organizations and the premier healthcare facilities in our area provide amazing support through funding and volunteer resources.”

Beyond the hands-on experience students in the academy gain through skill development and introduction to healthcare ethics, law and career options, students receive frequent exposure to different health careers through industry professionals who come to speak.

“I learn something every time I go to class,” Mainville said. “Professor Newby’s class is a lot of debate about healthcare reform and shortages of healthcare professionals. We also talk about things like Medicare and Medicaid. In Professor Da Cruz’s pathophysiology class, we learn about diseases and microorganisms, how the body works, diseases progress and how they relate to the world in pandemics. I have three little brothers who are always getting sick, so it’s good information for me to know.”

Dr. Schumann said academy students have the perfect opportunity to learn skills for not only their future in academia or career, but also situations they encounter on a daily basis.

For Mainville the academy is more than just engaging coursework or credits that will help her graduate.

“If I hadn’t known what I know, my mom could have died in my house, right in front of me,” Mainville emphasized. “But because I chose to enroll in the academy and learned the skills I needed, she’s alive today.” ■