The Next Best Thing to House Calls

Vanderbilt School of Nursing’s Faculty Practice Network (VNFPIN) has opened a nurse-managed, community-based clinic. The new Senior Health Center, which opened in February, offers family practice, mental health and women’s health services.

The clinic is located in Hermitage, a Nashville suburb, at McKendree Village, a progressive living community for seniors with cottage homes, apartment-style living quarters, and housing for residents in need of assisted living, rehabilitation and nursing-home facilities. The center will serve nearly 400 potential clients. McKendree Village has been part of the Vanderbilt family of related institutions for several years. Recently, McKendree’s physician services ended and the School of Nursing moved in to provide health care for the facility’s senior residents.

“Older people have a greater demand for health-care services, but may not be able to get out whenever they need to, so this is a huge convenience for them,” says Bonnie Pilos, senior associate dean for practice management. “Senior women often don’t seek gynecological or breast care perhaps because of embarrassment or because they’re no longer reproductive-active, and that can be detrimental to their health. They face serious risks, particularly from cancer. By providing targeted GYN services, for example, we’re making an important preventive health program readily available.”

The Senior Health Center brings to nine the number of clinics run by nurse practitioners in the Vanderbilt School of Nursing’s Faculty Practice Network. However, two of its three Jane McEvoy School-Based Health Centers, which serve neighborhoods with a high need for easily accessible health care for children and families, could be faced with closing soon unless additional support is found to replace funding that is expected to be gone by the end of the school year.

Seeds of Change

Freddie Haddox came into land in a most unusual way, so it’s fitting that he has a most unusual dream for that land. In the 1800s a farm near Franklin, Tenn., was owned by a man named Samuel Winstead who also owned nearly 70 slaves. When Winstead died, he bequeathed the entire farm to his former slaves instead of to his own family. The Winstead family contested the will, but the Tennessee Supreme Court ruled in favor of the former slaves.

Haddox, a 55-year-old Vanderbilt divinity student, is a direct descendant of those slaves. His stepfather has farmed the property for the last 50 years. Now, despite weekly offers from land developers who claim Haddox is “hinder ing progress,” the divinity student is using part of the land to launch the Just Crumbs hunger-relief initiative. Volunteers from the Divinity School and elsewhere have planted seeds, built fences, constructed a new entrance to the farm, and bottle-fed baby goats.

The initiative has started an entrance to the farm, and seeds, built fences, constructed a new entrance to the farm, and bottle-fed baby goats. Twenty-four-year-old divinity student Will Connelly has embodied the Just Crumbs initiative, raising funds for farm equipment and other supplies. “We believe it’s a basic right to have nutritional food,” he says. This April through October, Connelly is trading his urban life for the life of a farm hand on the land.

Instead of added fertilizers, pesticides and other “unnatural” growth stimulators, proponents of the method say a small area can produce large amounts of produce. Harvest from the Just Crumbs initiative will be distributed through the Society of Saint Andrew, an ecumenical Christian ministry established by United Methodist pastors.

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We share the hope that we can feed one person, then one day make a big dent in the hunger problem — divinity student Freddie Haddox

The Senior Health Center...

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Drug Improves Outlook for Suicidal Patients

The antipsychotic drug Clozaril has received the Food and Drug Administration’s first indication for reducing the risk of recurrent suicidal behavior in people with schizophrenia or schizoaffective disorder. The decision, announced in December, was due in large part to an international clinical trial led by Vanderbilt’s Dr. Herbert Meltzer, director of the Division of Psychopharmacology, that compared Clozaril to the more commonly prescribed drug Zyprexa.

“Treatment with clozapine reduced suicidal events by up to a quarter over and above an established and effective antipsychotic,” said Meltzer. “There would be 10,000 fewer suicide attempts and 20,000 fewer hospitalizations annually, with greatly reduced costs for treatment and, of course, suffering to the individuals and their families.”

The study could lead to clinical trials of Clozaril to prevent suicide in people with bipolar disorder, a disease that affects as many people as schizophrenia but carries twice the rate of suicide deaths. It also has gained the attention of the American Psychiatric Association, which will soon publish new guidelines for treating suicidal patients in all diagnoses.

The Kids Are All Right

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It Seemed Like a Good Idea at the Time

Vanderbilt’s spring jonquils weren’t the only things popping up all over campus the week after spring break. Chancellor Gordon Gee was all over the place, resplendent in his trade-mark bowtie, reassuring students in the flesh that, contrary to the front-page story in a bogus issue of the Vanderbilt Hustler, he was alive and well.

“GEE DEAD” read the headline in what first appeared to be the March 11 issue of Vanderbilt’s student newspaper, complete with advertisements. Front-page stories told of Gee’s death from a heart attack and detailed his accomplishments as chancellor. Some students were in tears while others immediately saw through the hoax. For one thing, Hustler was misspelled in the masthead—deliberately, it turns out. Gee’s office moved quickly to issue a good-natured press release and campus-wide e-mail statement reassuring the Vanderbilt community that he was still around.

That afternoon staff members of the Slant, a student-run humor magazine, acknowledged responsibility for the prank. “It was a bad idea, and we got wrapped up in it,” says sophomore Slant editor-in-chief David Barzelay. Only the magazine’s senior staff members were involved in the counterfeit issue, which was a year in the planning and included a couple of real advertisements that they said helped foot the $350 cost of printing approximately 3,000 copies.

Following the prank, Barzelay’s student peers on the board of directors of Vanderbilt Student Communications—the corporation that owns the Hustler, the Slant, and other media outlets at Vanderbilt—voted to remove him as Slant editor, but he has continued as an active contributor to the magazine.
Health-Care Construction in a Brave New World

Vanderbilt School of Engineering has developed a new construction project management graduate program including specialization in health-care construction. Currently, only a handful of civil and environmental engineering departments in the nation provide graduate training in building health-care environments. Engineers graduating with the necessary expertise to build health-care environments capable of meeting these complex challenges are in short supply. “Health-care facilities are challenging by new threats and new public expectations,” says David S. Kosson, chair of Vanderbilt’s Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering. “What is required is a new approach to design that will create environments that mitigate threats and optimize healing.”

The new Vanderbilt program will incorporate latest developments in construction technologies, advanced engineering design, and management principles with other disciplines. Post-Sept. 11 construction considerations include blast barriers that separate public roadways from the hospital area, reinforced materials, strong supportive bafles, and overpressure releases built into the roofs. Pre-wiring facilities so they can be quickly converted from public spaces to treatment areas allows improved emergency response. Management of the flow of hospital personnel and patients is important in dealing with highly contagious diseases and large numbers of patients. Advanced ventilation systems are needed to reduce the spread of infections.

Research: Good for the Economy

Research and development activities at Vanderbilt are responsible for more than 5,700 jobs in Middle Tennessee, according to a report based on statistics from the U.S. Department of Commerce. Those jobs constitute about 43 percent of the more than 13,300 employment opportunities supported by research and development activities at colleges and universities statewide. Nationally, the number of jobs resulting from academic research totaled more than 1.08 million, according to data for 2000, the most recent year for which complete statistics are available. The federal data, collected by the Association of American Universities, consider grant money received at academic institutions. The expenditures come from all sources of funding, including federal, state and local government, industry and institutional funds.

Vanderbilt’s research expenditures of $171.9 million in the 2000 fiscal year directly and indirectly supported an estimated 5,759 jobs in Middle Tennessee. “University research is one of the best investments we make as a country,” says Chancellor Gordon Gee. “While creating new knowledge, developing cures for diseases, inventing new technologies, and improving understanding of the world around us are primary missions of research, a rewarding offshoot is the creation of thousands of jobs.”

“The results of research often take years to have an impact on society,” he adds. “But the thousands of jobs that sustain this enterprise have a real and tangible effect on the local economy.” The AAU noted that a report published by a University of Pennsylvania professor in 1991 concluded that the average annual rate of return to society from academic research was 28 percent. That means that society gets back 28 cents every year from every dollar invested in academic research.

Ready for Their Close-Ups

“ER,” “St. Elsewhere,” “Marcus Welby, M.D.,” “Ben Casey.” America just can’t get enough of TV docs. And now, coming soon to a living room near you, is a program tentatively titled “Young Meds”—a 13-episode series told through the eyes of Vanderbilt University Medical Center residents and fellows. Set to debut on the Learning Channel this fall, the series will offer viewers a comprehensive look at what it takes to be a physician in training in today’s highly-specialized, highly competitive environment. A production crew from New York Times Television, the electronic bureau of the New York Times, began filming the series at VUMC in January. Vanderbilt’s medical center was selected over several other top academic medical centers for the series based on strength, size, and diversity of its graduate medical program. It has hosted film crews for New York Times TV on several other occasions. Several episodes of “Trauma: Life in the ER” and “Maternity Ward,” both programs produced for the Learning Channel, have been filmed at Vanderbilt.

Consortium Exploits Vanderbilt’s Brazilian Ties

Vanderbilt and Howard universities are joining with two Brazilian institutions to help prepare their nations’ next generation of scholars, government officials and corporate executives for the challenges of a global economy. A grant of $450,000 from the U.S. Department of Education’s Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education and the Brazilian Ministry of Education’s CAPES program will help establish a consortium among Vanderbilt, Howard, the Universidade de Sao Paulo, and the Universidade Federal do Bahia. Faculty from all four schools will develop an interdisciplinary curriculum allowing students to explore themes of race, economic development and social inequality in both the United States and Brazil. In addition to faculty and student exchanges between the U.S. and Brazilian universities, the program will allow students to earn a graduate-level certificate recognizing their concentrations.

Student exchanges will begin in the 2003–04 academic year, and students who complete certain courses and study abroad will receive a certificate in international studies from Howard University or a certificate in Latin American studies from Vanderbilt.

Vanderbilt has one of the largest concentrations of specialists in Brazil in the United States and has a long and distinguished history in Brazilian studies, dating to 1947 when Chancellor (Harvie) Branscomb established the Institute for Brazilian Studies, says Jane Landers, principal investigator of the Vanderbilt effort and associate dean of the College of Arts and Science.

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