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Cultural Awareness and Community Health Education

In 2005, when Dr. Liu gave a presentation at a health fair organized by students at nearby Valley High School, she was impressed with their enthusiasm. "So I asked the faculty if they would be willing to work with me to expand the curriculum," she recalls.

The collaboration blossomed into the Cultural Awareness and Community Health Education (CACHE) Program, which teaches students the value of embracing their cultural roots. As juniors, they form groups based on their ethnic background, survey their medically underserved community to identify a top health concern, and develop culturally-sensitive educational material. One year the African American group focused on HIV/AIDS, the Filipino students chose diabetes, and the Hmong group targeted hypertension.

Dr. Liu recruits TPMG physicians to work with the students to develop presentations they will deliver in their communities as public health ambassadors during their senior year. The students research the health topic, and increase their skills in teamwork, organization, and public speaking. Their communities benefit from the medical knowledge students share, and the physicians gain cultural competencies to enhance their practices.

Dr. Liu and her colleagues also experience the joy of helping students discover careers they might otherwise not have considered. For example, one of the 2010 graduates of the CACHE program is in her first year of pharmacy school. Another student who will graduate in 2013 writes, "The program influenced me to pursue my goal of becoming a physician and opening my own hospital to help underserved communities."

“Working with the kids on their community health projects helps me remember why I went into medicine in the first place.”