Students receive hands-on experience at CCK

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WKU nursing professor Beverly Phelps (far left) stands for a photo at the Center for Courageous Kids. (SUBMITTED)

In her own words, Western Kentucky University nursing professor Beverly Phelps “fell in love” with Scottsville’s Center for Courageous Kids.

So much so that she has made it a requirement that her students volunteer with the organization for its weekend programs, something she said gets “rave reviews” from those in her classes.

“They had no idea anything like this existed,” she said. “They had no idea that it was so close either — and so it’s very eye opening for them, and they get amazing pediatric experience.”

CCK is an organization in Allen County that provides camp-style programs to children who have special needs. Kids attend the camp for free and participate in activities like archery, swimming and horseback riding.

Phelps was first introduced to the program a few years ago when she took her grandson to participate one weekend.

“We had an absolutely amazing time,” she said. ” … He was crying because he didn’t want to go home. He just wanted to live there.”

In the years immediately following the COVID-19 pandemic, Phelps began requiring her pediatrics and obstetrics students attend the camp as volunteers. She said often times, her students have to “fight for spots” as volunteers.

For Phelps, this helps her students understand “the big picture.” This includes getting to know children and patients on a personal level, and learning how to communicate with patients and their families.

“We can teach them so much in a classroom and in a lab and in simulation, but there’s nothing like seeing it and experiencing it,” she said.

Fifty seven students are enrolled in Phelps’ classes this semester, and the first volunteers will head to the camp this weekend, with more going every weekend through the end of the semester.

On occasion, she said, some students will go back for additional weekends or during the summer for CCK’s week-long camps.

“Once you’ve been there, it’s like going to Disney, and you just want to keep going back,” she said.