

Kaitlin Carnes: At the Heart of Health (2009 Graduate)

Lipscomb senior Kaitlin Carnes knows the value of helping others optimize their physical and mental health. Through her career choice and her volunteer efforts, she assists people in rehabilitation, breaking out of a sedentary lifestyle and making exercise a regular part of life. With a major in exercise science and a minor in biology, Carnes understands the impressive benefits available through recreational exercises and rehabilitation therapies.

“When I was in high school, I tore my ACL playing basketball. I had to go to physical therapy for rehabilitation before I could participate in sports again. The therapy helped me to see exercise and fitness in a new way. Exercise science turned out to be a field I am really interested in. I’ve stuck with it ever since my own injury and rehabilitation,” said Carnes.

For three years, Carnes has served as the assistant coach for the girls’ basketball team at David Lipscomb Middle School. She works with 6th through 8th graders at practices and games to improve their skills and guide them through conditioning techniques that will hopefully be the beginning of a lifelong fitness goal.

“It’s very rewarding to work with these girls on the basketball team. There’s a lot I hope to teach them about basketball, but I also hope I impact their lives outside of the sport, too,” said Carnes, who has also volunteered and been employed with STAR Physical Therapy in Nashville. STAR Physical Therapy works closely with physicians to provide comprehensive physical therapy, occupational therapy, and sports medicine to patients of varying ages. Through her work with this organization, Carnes worked directly with physical therapists experiencing what their daily routines involved and exploring the career she hopes to enter after completing her education.

Through High Hopes Inclusive Preschool and Pediatric Therapy Clinic in Brentwood, Tenn., Carnes volunteered to assist in equipping children with the skills necessary for future physical and educational success. High Hopes offers a specialized approach for educating children with and without special needs by combining speech, occupational, and physical therapy into the educational setting of the preschool classroom. At High Hopes, Carnes worked with children with Down syndrome, cerebral palsy, autism, speech and language disorders, and other developmental delays as they played and learned alongside their typically developing peers.

“There are a lot of areas to specialize in through my field of study. With High Hopes, I worked with a wider range of children and a wider range of developmental delays than I had in other settings. It was interesting to interact with the therapists there. They had to be very creative and very patient when they worked with the children. We wanted to make their therapy seem fun. The work there was challenging, but it was very rewarding,” said Carnes.

She has explored other service and career options through mission work with the Ciudad de Ángeles, a Christian children's home on the island of Cozumel, just off the Yucatan peninsula of Mexico, and through a medical mission trip to Peru that exposed her to work in a clinic set up in a local church. In Peru, she assisted the physicians with dispensing of medication. She also shadowed the doctors to observe the process of examining, diagnosing and treating the patients.

Carnes’ class work has opened the doors for service-learning activities through many local organizations. For one Lipscomb class, Carnes worked with Lakeshore, a continuum care facility (assisted living, nursing home, skilled unit) providing healthcare services to the elderly. She and other classmates gathered the residents and led them in an exercise class which offered an enjoyable opportunity for the residents to maintain their independence and mobility and gave the students practical teaching experience.



The department of kinesiology at Lipscomb University is dedicated to serving its students by integrating Christian faith and practice with academic excellence while preparing students for careers in exercise science, health and physical education and coaching. The exercise science program meets the program recommendations established by the American College of Sports Medicine (ACSM) and the National Standards for Undergraduate Exercise Science Programs established by the National Association for Sport and Physical Education (NASPE). Students pursuing an exercise science degree typically enter careers in the health and fitness industry or pursue graduate work in exercise physiology, cardiac rehabilitation or other health science areas such as physical therapy, occupational therapy, therapeutic recreation, chiropractic medicine, nursing, exercise physiology, cardiac rehabilitation or others areas of interest.