

The doctors and nurses of ‘Harvest U’



Harvest is generally all about food, nutrition, and feeding hungry Manitobans today. What most people don’t know is that Harvest brings more than food to the table, including offering training programs like ‘Harvest U.’

Harvest U

Nothing Harvest does is ‘fancy,’ and this classroom is no exception. What happens here is exceptional.

Every student who attends Harvest U becomes a high-level, hands-on, lifelong asset in the fight against hunger. They become better informed and more inspired, and over the course of their chosen careers, they will help far more Manitobans than those who sign up for Harvest hampers. Actually, sooner or later, they help all of us, including you.

If you want to be a doctor or nurse in Manitoba...

To get your degree in Manitoba, the Max Rady College of Medicine at the University of Manitoba requires that every student must come to Harvest for special training. With food and nutrition as a focus, ‘Harvest U’ makes our whole medical system stronger in its ability to recognize health issues linked to food insecurity. Nursing students also elect to do practicums at Harvest too.

Meaghan Erbus is the manager of advocacy and impact at Harvest. She’s a teacher and an expert in the effects socio-economic issues can have on nutrition-related health issues.

She educates all our soon-to-be physicians and nurses about the links between food insecurity and health, broadening their understanding beyond nutrition and diet. Her students participate in original research but, most of all, they learn to better understand and serve people suffering from the effects of hunger and insecurity with all its associated causes and outcomes. As doctors and nurses, they’ll spend their whole careers caring for people with their ‘Harvest U’ expertise.

Doctor lessons

Medical students learn about population health through the lens of nutrition, food security, cultural influence, social status, individual nutrition and health.

Sometimes part of the prescription isn’t

a diet or a pill. One of the cures for food insecurity is finding ways to become self-sufficient and having the resources and ability to acquire food. That can include securing employment, but often those who are food insecure have underlying conditions that prevent them from maintaining regular employment.

Looking after these patients requires special training, which is where Meaghan and Harvest U come in. There are a lot of resources available to help people get back on the path to health and wellness, but only if they know about them.

Harvest U students are taught where and how to access these services. They combine their medical knowledge with what they learn in Harvest U.

Now, instead of just a phone number, they can give their patients access to the exact help they need from a province-wide network of existing specialists and services. Patient morale and a sense of well-being can surge when getting this extra level of care and assistance. Coming full-circle, Harvest will be one of the services they recommend.

Nursing learning

Fourth-year U of M nursing students also become conduits of help, assisting patients in connecting with and navigating the same resource network as the doctors. They also learn to incorporate culturally appropriate, non-medical solutions to fighting food insecurity.

One stream includes gardening as an option that grows food, confidence and independence. Nursing students do fundamental, grass-roots research. They recently completed 900 calls for Harvest Voices, a project that tracks the evolving health, needs, conditions and prospects of community members experiencing food insecurity.

The chain reaction of smiles

It turns out that nourishing our community requires more than food hampers. It includes strategies and resources to address the causes of hunger-based illness. Just as when they get that first food hamper, that extra level of caring sparks smiles of hope and confidence in people. That is the lesson and purpose of Harvest U.

For more information on Harvest Manitoba and its programs, visit www.harvestmanitoba.ca



Supplied photo
Meaghan Erbus is the manager of advocacy and impact at Harvest Manitoba. Harvest U has been running for 16 years.

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