

Public Relations and Public Health through Community Engagement

WCU & the Good Samaritan Clinic: Aligning Public Relations Campaigns and Public Health

Faculty Scott Eldredge (saeldredge@wcu.edu), in conjunction with his WCU Public Relations Campaigns Capstone Course collaborated with Rebecca Mathis (rebeccamathis.goodsam@gmail.com) of the Good Samaritan Clinic of Jackson County to expand donor support and create access to health care in Western North Carolina. Five students from Dr. Eldredge's senior Public Relations Campaigns course worked with the Executive Director of the Good Samaritan Clinic, Rebecca Mathis, to coordinate and publicize the Good Samaritan Cycle. For this event, Western Carolina University's Catamount Biking club cycled through the community in a loop that highlighted how the Good Samaritan Clinic partners and collaborates with other organizations to provide healthcare to their neighbors. Cyclists rode in honor of the 627 patients served by our clinic in 2015. The student team worked directly with the clinic to engage the WCU biking club, to develop all promotional materials, to establish the biking route, to recruit and coordinate volunteer support, to execute a social media campaign, to shoot a promotional video, and to write all press releases and press stories for use in the media relations effort.

About this collaborative project as an example of community engagement, Assistant Professor Eldredge said, "Public Relations is both a theoretical and applied discipline within the broader field of Communication. Because of this, it is important for students to have opportunities to apply what they are discussing in the classroom. Community engagement is essential to helping our students develop the skills needed to succeed beyond their university experience, while also providing a valuable service to our partners in the western North Carolina community."

If you would like your community engagement work recognized through the STAR Engagement Projects program, please submit your proposals through the [Community-based Activities Faculty Survey](#) administered annually in the spring semester from early April – late May.

