

University of Missouri

The Magazine of the Mizzou Alumni Association

MIZZOU

Serving the Underserved

Mizzou alumna starts student-run free clinic in El Paso, Texas.



Jessica Phillips, far right, serves community patients at the Medical Student-Run Free Clinic. Photo by Raul de la Cruz, TTUHSC El Paso.

Story by Kelsey Allen

Published Aug. 13, 2014

Jessica Phillips learned where the pituitary gland is in her biology classes and was exposed to cultural issues facing underrepresented minorities in her psychology classes. She put both into practice as a pre-med student volunteering at MedZou, the School of Medicine's student-operated clinic.

“Mizzou opened my eyes to the strong need for a community clinic and to minority population issues,” say Phillips, BA, BS '12. Now in her third year of medical school at the Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center at El Paso, Phillips helped found the Medical Student-Run Free Clinic. In El Paso, almost one-quarter of the population lives below the poverty line, and more than 80 percent identify as Hispanic. “The clinic not only helps alleviate the medical needs of the area but also serves as a great avenue for medical students to interact with and learn about the border community.”

But Phillips quickly realized that managing a clinic is much different from working in one. She had to write policies and procedures, meet with lawyers, find funding, and figure out how to file patient records. (A lot of the clinic's Hispanic patients have two surnames.)

Phillips also started Diversity in Medicine, a group that works to increase understanding of the diverse backgrounds of the community and to promote a

more culturally sensitive physician workforce.

After doing administrative work since the clinic opened in October 2013, she is eager to be on the patient-care side of things again. Phillips hopes to become an endocrinologist to deal with the high rate of diabetes among underserved populations.

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Published by MIZZOU magazine, 109 Reynolds Alumni Center, Columbia, MO 65211 | Phone: 573-882-5916 | Email: mizzou@missouri.edu

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