Medical students craft blankets for families without housing

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Medical students are passionate about providing care to the masses, but that care can take on many forms. For Taylor Marks, a second-year medical student at Midwestern University Chicago College of Osteopathic Medicine, it meant offering her time to help patients who are economically or socially marginalized find a little bit of comfort.

Marks organized an event with her fellow medical students to create tied fleece blankets for Chicago HOPES for Kids, a nonprofit that helps families without housing in the region.

“Families experiencing homelessness in Chicago face difficulty in obtaining food and a proper education for their children—the same as in any other city. But on top of that, they are living in a very harsh and unforgiving winter climate,” Marks said. “I spoke with the Chicago HOPES for Kids donation coordinator about this event in the early stages of planning, and she said that blankets are highly requested items from families.”

Learn how medical students are helping people without housing stay safe from COVID-19.

Meeting family needs

Marks obtained the material to make the blankets with a grant from the AMA, through its Medical Student Outreach Program. About three dozen of Marks’ classmates and numerous faculty members helped make the 36 tied fleece blankets for donation.

“We intentionally made large, double-layered fleece blankets with the thought that they can keep entire families warm rather than a single person,” Marks said. “This is also something that a child can’t really outgrow, unlike winter clothing. So it is something that will continue to help them and their families in the long run, as well as this coming winter.”
Marks has been service-minded since long before medical school. She said that theme is prevalent among her classmates as well.

“This service is part of what sparked my interest in medicine in the first place, so, to me, service is the literal catalyst to my medical training,” she said.

This project may offer a glimpse into the populations Marks hopes to serve when she pursues a residency position in emergency medicine.

Emergency departments often provide care to patients who are experiencing homeless or otherwise economically or socially marginalized, Marks noted. Her exposure to that care environment “made me more aware of the different kinds of adversity that these populations face.”

Read about seven other remarkable medical students who moved medicine in 2021.

About the Medical Student Outreach Program

The grant awarded to Midwestern University Chicago College of Osteopathic Medicine came from the AMA Medical Student Outreach Program, a peer-to-peer recruitment program that promotes AMA membership to first-year medical students. It also provides training and recruitment resources to encourage the incoming class of medical students to join the AMA.

For those looking to get involved, the AMA is offering a nine-month leadership opportunity for second-year medical students who exhibit excellent leadership, strong organizational skills and a desire to build their professional network.

As a Student Outreach Leader, you will lead AMA membership outreach efforts at your school as you continue to build your professional network.