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Fairfield hosts regional school nurse training

By: Kevin Boozer, Staff Writer

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Mac Russell speaks to the nurses about the CATCH program.



Gervonder Brown teaches Zumba and dance to the group.



Dr. Michelle Myer conducts a nursing assessment at the training event.

WINNSBORO — School nurses from Richland, Chester, York, Lancaster and Fairfield counties gathered for professional development training Oct. 14 at the Fairfield County School District Office. Sponsored by the Upper Midlands Rural Health Network, the event was open to Midlands area school nurses.

Trina Stewart from A.R. Rucker Middle School in Lancaster said the nurses learned a lot about the dangers of tooth decay, including that if the condition went unresolved it could lead to death. Though she knew of the morbidity risks from systemic infections, she said learning just how fast such an incident could occur was eye opening.

Another nugget of knowledge they gained dealt with homeless students. The nurses learned of an immunization exemption for homeless children and of health resources available to assist children in those difficult circumstances.

According to the presentation, “homeless” means the children could be living in hotels or on couch or with someone who is not their parent or guardian for whatever reason. Warning signs of homelessness include a child wearing the same clothes to school each day, dirty clothing, poor hygiene, hunger, excessive tiredness or a high number of absences.

Crystal Nichols with the York School District said it helped to hear from colleagues about a job that is as much nurturing as it is nursing, if not more so.

“When you see the children in your office each day (in elementary school especially) you realize you may be the only hug or I love you a child can get that day,” Nichols said.

FMH dietitian Mac Russell explained the merits of the CATCH program aimed at healthy eating habits and lifestyle choices not only in children but for their parents. She mentioned the importance of the school nurse as being a CATCH role model as well.

The development day included presentations on oral health, physical activity, the Vento Homeless Act, lunch and wellness initiatives, Chester telemedicine and common infection diseases in a school setting. As part of the physical activity presentation FCSD employee Gervonder Brown led the group in Zumba and dance instruction.

This program is sponsored by Upper Midlands Rural Health Network (UMRHN). The mission of UMRHN is to improve health in Chester and Fairfield counties through a collaboration of a diverse group focused on access to care, health promotion and education.