



STUDENT-TO-STUDENT:
**AWAKENING A
PASSION FOR**

SCIENCE

The little boy was so excited, he couldn't stop squirming. His hand shot up every time she asked a question about a different part of the body. "He always had an answer before anyone else. And, he was usually right," second-year medical student Jennifer Shoenfelt recalls with a laugh. "When I pointed to my trachea and asked, 'How does air get into your lungs?' he was so cute. He jumped up and started going 'Ta-ta-, ta-ta-,' and we encouraged him. Finally, he yelled out, 'Tarantula!'"

Jennifer and her partner Deanna Lantz were presenting "The Human Body" to a third grade class as part of Student-to-Student, an organization of medical students who present health education classes to students in kindergarten through 12th grade each year. The majority of the second-year class actively participates in the program, which started in 1987.

In "The Human Body," medical students help the children don latex gloves to hold and explore human organs provided

through Wright State's Anatomical Gift Program. The students say they've found that a close examination of a blackened lung is worth more than a thousand words about the dangers of smoking. A cirrhotic liver tells the story of alcohol abuse better than a dozen stern lectures.

"Student-to-Student is really unique," Jennifer says. "There's a huge need for programs that get kids excited about science and the human body, and this program does that. Most kids are never going to see the actual parts of a

Jennifer Shoenfelt, Year II, is giving “The Human Body” talk to a local sixth grade class. *Photo courtesy of Lynne Sobel.*

human body anywhere else. They see a liver and say, ‘Oh my gosh! Your liver is that big?’ Or, they’re amazed at the weight of the brain. It doesn’t matter if you’ve seen it in books. It’s not the same thing at all. We always explain that the organs we bring to class are gifts from people who gave them to us so we could learn about the human body and so we could teach them as well. Most kids have never heard of this. When they realize how we learn about the human body, it is a sobering thought. They gain a real appreciation for our donors.”

“Student-to-Student has been an enormously successful program,” says Paul G. Carlson, Ph.D., associate dean for student affairs and admissions. “It’s good for our students because they’re giving something back to the community. The topics are handled sensitively, and our students take it seriously. The program is very popular with the schools as well. It serves a community need.”

“The kids see Deanna and me as role models,” Jennifer says. “I always tell them how I got here. Deanna entered medical school

programs. If it weren’t for Student-to-Student, many of the children would never be exposed to interactive medical science. We are able to have an impact on their self-esteem and their ability to think, ‘Yeah. When I grow up, I can do that,’” he says.

“The program has been challenging for me as well. Every presentation I’ve done has generated at least one new thought-provoking question. Many times I’ve had to think twice before answering.”

—Robin Suits

“Student-to-Student establishes a direct connection with the community.”

“The Human Body” is one of the most popular Student-to-Student presentations, especially with younger audiences. Other popular talks include “How 2 B an M.D.,” which offers practical advice about getting into medical school, and “Kids ’n Docs,” which helps younger children feel more comfortable about what goes on in a physical exam.

“Many of our talks—like ‘AIDS,’ ‘Teen Pregnancy,’ ‘Alcohol,’ and ‘Drug Abuse’—cover delicate subjects some parents are afraid to deal with at home,” says second-year medical student Jon Kryman, who coordinates the group along with Max Clark II. “Student-to-Student offers an outlet for students to ask questions they may be curious about and learn prevention education in a nonthreatening environment.”

right out of college, while I took a less traditional path. I was a physical therapist for 14 years, and I really loved it. But, I decided about a year out of college that I wanted to be the person at the helm of the health care team,” she recalls.

“I tell the kids I hated science when I was their age, but I love it now. When they see that different kinds of people can grow up to be scientists and doctors, it makes it easier for them to imagine doing that themselves. We actually had a teacher write us to say two 12-year-old girls in his class decided they wanted to be scientists as a result of our presentation.”

“Student-to-Student establishes a direct connection with the community,” Jon says. “Many of the schools we go to have limited resources and underfunded science



Robert Baltzer, Year II, presents “How 2 B an M.D.” to students at South High School in Springfield.