

## Field of dietetics wide ranging and challenging

Somewhere between long hours in hair nets and celebrated chefs opening new restaurants, or releasing their latest cookbook, are the folks who are quietly dedicated to making food make a difference. And to help them on their way are the forces behind the Department of Family and Consumer Sciences at the University of Tennessee at Martin.

Students who choose that degree with a concentration in food and nutrition could find themselves in any one of the following pursuits:

- Researching and developing new food and beverage products and/or improving the quality of existing products,
- Planning school or university lunches and supervising the staff that creates them,
- Providing workshops to help community members make wise food choices for themselves and their families, budget and shop for groceries,
- Interviewing, hiring, training, and overseeing the food services staff in a fine dining restaurant or a fast food franchise,
- Overseeing a summer feeding program,
- Providing nutrition and health care information and services to low-income women and children.

A career in Dietetics could take the form of Clinical Dietitian, Administrative Dietitian, Nutritionist, Food Service Director, Food Research Specialist, Consultant, Nutrition Columnist/Media Spokesperson, Sales and Marketing Representative, Sports Dietitian, WIC Nutritionist, Public Health Nutritionist/Dietitian or Public Policy Specialist.

Whatever the position, the curriculum that will ensure they have what's needed includes courses in nutrition, food science, food systems management, biology, chemistry, business administration

and liberal arts.

While the completion of the Food and Nutrition concentration does not qualify an individual to become a Registered Dietitian (RD), for students aspiring to become one, the concentration is a starting point, followed by completing specific criteria, and then consideration for entry in the Didactic Program in Dietetics (DPD).

The mission of the DPD is to prepare students for supervised practice leading to eligibility for the credentialing exam to become registered dietitian nutritionists.

To become a registered dietitian nutritionist, the first step is to complete undergraduate Dietetics Coursework. Next is to apply for Dietetic Internships during senior year. Accredited dietetic internships require the completion of a minimum of 1200 hours of supervised practice.

Only 50 percent of those applying for internships are matched to an internship during the national match that occurs in February of each year. A GPA of 3.5 or higher is recommended to increase the chance of being accepted into an internship. Additionally, work and volunteer experience related to dietetics helps students be more competitive.

Dietetic Internships typically last about one academic year. Many dietetic internships are associated with master's degree programs with graduate coursework completed prior to starting the internship. As a result, students should plan to spend an additional two years after the completion of a bachelor's degree to complete the requirements necessary to be able to sit for the national registration examination to become a registered dietitian nutritionist.

Once a dietetic internship has been completed, a national registration

SEE DIATETICS PAGE B4



**FEEDING THE HUNGRY** — London McDonald (left), a sophomore at Westview High School, and Alyssa Brooks (far right), a Martin Middle 8th grader, are part of the group Shardè Lofton, a program assistant at the Martin Enrichment Academy, is helping to learn life skills. Their efforts will benefit the community when they transform the Tom and Ann Stuart Community Center kitchen into a soup production center using fresh vegetables grown as part of the Martin Housing Authority's after school and summer program.

## Garden-to-table soup project to be launched in April

By KAREN CAMPBELL Press Reporter

The students knew the story of "stone soup" — which should make their teachers proud.

As soon as the participants in Martin Enrichment Academy's Student Culinary Council heard the discussion of the possibility of using the food grown as part of the after school program to then make soup that would be served to "whoever is hungry" among their neighbors, they made the comparison.

In the folk tale, hungry strangers convince the people of a town to each share a small amount of their food in order to make a meal that everyone enjoys. If all goes well when the program is launched on Global Youth Service Day, April 12-14, neighbors in need will enjoy fresh batches of seasonal soups come harvest time.

Shardè Lofton, a program assistant at the Martin Housing Authority's

learning enrichment center, serves as the coordinator for the student group who will help take the fruits of the labor of younger children and their friends and create dining experiences at the Tom and Ann Stuart Community Center. Lofton also works with Sodexo on the UT Martin campus so she is familiar with serving large groups. In fact, she's hoping that her efforts with the after school group may lead some of them to pursue a career in food service as well.

"The Student Culinary Council teaches culture [related to food], food safety and recipes to help prepare them for the real world," she said.

A garden has been part of the Monday through Friday offerings at the Crossroads Teen Center on Jackson Street for some time. As part of the full array of Science, Technology, Engineering and Math options that make up the summertime curricu-

lum at the MHA-sponsored program, it also helps the children learn responsibility. They are assisted by Samantha Goyret of the Northwest Tennessee Local Food Network, who will also be part of the garden-to-table endeavor this year.

Currently, they have a pool of about 10 young gardeners and six cooks and servers who are in middle and high school who will do the preparing and serving of the soup.

Robert Nunley, the director at the Center, says that in the years of the program the harvested food was usually sent home with the children. The distinction this year will be the invitation to "eat from our bounty," he said. "The overall goal is to learn by doing with the carrot on the stick at the end of the project of seeing the benefits of their labor and sharing with the neighborhood."

Alyssa Brooks, a 14-year-old Martin Middle 8th grad-

er, will be among the cooks and servers. She started the culinary classes offered by Lofton last November and went from knowing how to prepare simple items like eggs and macaroni and cheese, to now having added chicken Alfredo, other proteins, greens, peas, rice and even sushi to her menus. She is looking forward to the experience of preparing the seasonal soups and working alongside friends like London McDonald, 16, a sophomore at Westview.

McDonald says she joined the group to learn to cook for when she is older and "can't call my mom every time I need to know something." The upcoming cooking project has shifted her focus however.

"I realize there is a real problem. Kids are going to sleep with growling stomachs, hungry. I don't want to be doing better than someone else and not do something to help," she concluded.





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