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Salus University and St. Lucy's Day School Pilot Summer Camp for the Blind

Elkins Park, PA – Salus University College of Education & Rehabilitation's Blindness and Low Vision Studies (BLVS) department recently completed its first interprofessional summer camp for the blind in partnership with St. Lucy's Day School for Children with Visual Impairments, in Philadelphia, Pa.

The two organizations joined in effort to offer a one-week summer camp for children who are either blind or visually impaired, with focus on what is known as the expanded core curriculum (ECC). The ECC is a complement to an academic curriculum and refers to specialized concepts and "real life" skills for students with visual impairments.

Sixteen families participated in the camp, which was staffed completely by Salus students and faculty from the department of Blindness and Low Vision Studies. Graduate students from the Teacher of the Visually Impaired (TVI), Low Vision Rehabilitation (LVR), and Vision Rehabilitation Therapy (VRT) programs, including a Salus Occupational Therapy (OT) graduate currently enrolled in the LVR program, came together to plan, conduct, and evaluate the experience under BLVS faculty supervision.

"This experience is a perfect example of what can be accomplished through collaboration," said Dr. Fabiana Perla, chair of the department of BLVS. "I am particularly thankful to St. Lucy's Day School and the families who entrusted us with their precious children and to Salus BLVS students and faculty who worked so hard to meet the families' expectations and needs. It was a very rewarding experience with tons of learning for everyone involved."

Children attending the camp participated in a variety of activities, including obstacle courses, food preparation, arts and crafts, and vocational exploration, among others.

Parent feedback flooded in after the pilot camp session was over. "On behalf of my daughter D., I would like to extend my heartfelt thanks to you and your students for hosting such a wonderful camp last week," one parent said. "D. so enjoyed herself and was also quite engaged with the learning experience. I can only imagine what a logistical challenge it was to put the camp together but I hope you all felt it was worth it and had those feelings affirmed by the enthusiasm of the participants. D. came home talking about self-advocacy and about the expanded core curriculum, something she and I will need to be especially cognizant of as she begins her high school career in a year."

"It was an amazing opportunity for both the graduate students and campers alike," said Sister Lisa Ann Lettiere, principal of St. Lucy's Day School. "The graduates who never have worked with visually impaired before, they had an entire week of hands on learning. Our kids were very excited because they have very few opportunities in the summer to participate in activities geared toward their special needs. It really was an all-around blessing for both sides."

Due to the success of the camp, plans are already underway for next year's session, and students from other programs at Salus may also be involved.

About Salus University

Salus University, founded as the Pennsylvania College of Optometry in 1919, today is a diversified, globally recognized professional academic center of learning that offers a wide range of degree programs in the professions of Optometry, Audiology, Physician Assistant, Public Health, Blindness and Low Vision Studies, Biomedicine, Occupational Therapy and Speech-Language Pathology. Salus operates four clinical facilities in Philadelphia and Montgomery counties that provide highly specialized vision, hearing and balance, and speech-language pathology services. The University has more than 1,200 students, and more than 14,000 alumni worldwide. For more information, please visit www.salus.edu.