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VCOM students offer flu shots

New college partnering with faith-based groups

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Spartanburg's new college of medicine might have just opened its doors this autumn, but its students already are trying to help the community.

Students from the Edward Via College of Osteopathic Medicine are partnering with local faith-based organizations to deliver free flu shots to low-income people in Spartanburg.

The local branch of the Department of Health and Environmental Control donated 400 doses of flu shots to the college. Seventeen students have volunteered to administer the shots at the Church Builders Tabernacle and the Carpenter's Table Community Outreach Center.

The 161 students in VCOM's inaugural class are in their first semester at the new college; many are new to Spartanburg.

"As soon as we've gotten comfortable in the community, we've tried to move forward with

Flu shot sites

♦ **11 a.m. – 1 p.m. today:** Church Builders Tabernacle at 127 E Fremont Ave.

First 200 adults and children ages 3 and older.

♦ **9 a.m. – 12 p.m. Dec. 3:** The Carpenter's Table Community Outreach Center at 5957 Reidville Road.

First 200 current recipients of Carpenter's Table aid, adults and children ages 3 and older.

these projects," said Mary Margaret Kanoy, 25, a VCOM student who has volunteered to give flu shots. "It's about us reaching out to the community and making our presence known and making a difference at home before we make a difference anywhere else."

James Rutledge, senior pastor at Church Builders, said the partnership opportunity arose when a Church Builders volunteer met Timothy Kowalski, vice dean for academic affairs at VCOM, at a social event.

Representatives from the college have been looking for ways to partner with community

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organizations that aid the medically underserved.

For a group such as the Carpenter's Table, which has received a grant from the Spartanburg Regional Foundation to deliver health screenings, the partnership with VCOM is a welcome addition to a broad network of charitable foundations, nonprofits and faith-based groups already working in the community.

"It gives us an opportunity to offer services; in this case, the flu shots to members of our community who are at risk for so many reasons," said Joann Smith, board chairwoman at the Carpenter's Table Community Outreach Center.

VCOM's mission is to develop community-focused doctors who can improve the health of people living in Virginia, North Carolina and South Carolina. The college plans to continue outreach in 2012 with monthly free health screenings.

College administrators also are looking for more partnership opportunities in the community.

"We will assess what the community needs, and if they have any suggestions, we would really like to hear from them and try to work with them to deliver health care to people who are underserved," said Dr. Petra Warren, who leads VCOM's underserved care department in South Carolina.