

From the Classroom to the Community: Public Health in Action

Sarah Swofford majored in International Relations at American University with an interest in international development. “When I saw the new Public Health Program at Mizzou,” she says, “I knew that was what I wanted to do.”

Jenny Dills majored in English and Women’s and Gender Studies at MU. She says, “Public health is grounded in social justice and provides me the framework to do violence prevention work in communities.”

Along with the other students in Dr. Julie Kapp’s Applied Epidemiology for Health Systems Management course, Jenny and Sarah were given the assignment to create a Public Service Announcement on a public health topic.

Columbia Public Schools’ administration found Jenny and Sarah’s PSA so compelling that they decided to broadcast it on their television station. According to Kristyn Wright, Communications Specialist for Columbia Public Schools, violence relating to teenagers is usually discussed in the context of bullying. She points out that approximately 25-30% of teenagers are victims of dating violence. In her view, the video Sarah and Jenny made was perfect for Columbia Public Schools to run on its television station, particularly because teenagers are likely to look up to MU students and to listen to what they say about prevention.

“Our use of text messages came out of learning about new ways technology is used as a form of power and control with intimate partner violence and stalking. Texting is also how Sarah and I are communicating these days. Seemed like that was what all the kids were doing, too.”
MPH student Jenny Dills



Right: Jenny Dills and Sarah Swofford

Below: Their PSA Healthy Teen Relationships was chosen for the Columbia Public Schools website by the Columbia Board of Education.

