UW-Parkside students make a real difference for the Women’s Resource Center

UW-Parkside's Professor Penny Lyter partnered with the Women's Resource Center in Racine (WRC) for her Women's Health Issues course to make the curriculum more relevant for her students and to help a community organization that addresses a critical issue in women's health. For a second year in a row, this class provided services designed to assist the needs of this organization. Three months after the start of this year's project, the students not only presented workshops for clients and staff at WRC and collected undergarments and clothes for the women and children who have left their homes with only the clothes on their backs, but also secured funds including a substantial grant for the organization from the Webb Foundation. On Tuesday, December 13, students in Health Exercise and Sports Management (HESM 321) course presented the WRC with a check for $12,250 in addition to the many donations of undergarments, clothes, and computers that they received and purchased.

Founded in September of 1977, the mission of the Women's Resource Center is to provide crisis intervention, advocacy, education and prevention services for a diverse population of victims or individuals at risk of domestic abuse and/or sexual assault, by promoting positive changes for individuals served and the broader community in Racine County. Over the past 35 years it has grown to provide a continuum of safety services, emergency shelter and a permanent housing project in rural Racine County. WRC provides a place in the community where victims, day and night, can confidently turn when facing a crisis specific to abuse and/or assault. As the only domestic abuse shelter serving the entire Racine County area, WRC has provided refuge to thousands of women and children with potentially life-saving programs since 1977.

HESM 321 Women's Health Issues course is one of dozens of community based learning courses offered each year by UW-Parkside in which over 1200 students engage with community organizations by applying what they are learning in the classroom to real life situations. The students in this year’s course broke into four groups, each responsible for a different aspect of the project. Two groups provided a healthy meal and workshops for clients and their children on an aspect of self-care and well-being. Another group presented an in-service for WRC staff on wellness for working women in stressful careers. The fourth group conducted an undergarment drive and fundraiser reaching out to the UW-Parkside campus, individuals and local businesses for donations. Jockey International, Inc. was one of the local business who donated a significant number of undergarments to the project. In addition, one student was so moved by the WRC's mission and what she experienced while visiting the sites that she and Dr. Lyter worked with the WRC to request a grant from a local family foundation for a donation to the organization. The Webb Foundation responded positively with a generous donation to the Women's Resource Center. In total, the class project brought in over $13,000 worth of funds and resources; all of which will be used to help meet a significant need for local women and children in crises.