

City school nurse earning global degree

Shane Allison is participating in a project that will take him on three international trips.

By Meagan Engle
Staff Writer

Shane Allison has taught nursing, led health classes and coached academic teams and athletes.

But the Middletown City Schools nurse isn't stopping there.

Allison is one of 150 educators worldwide accepted into the first year of the Global Field Program from Project Dragonfly and Miami University.

Allison is earning his master's degree through the program with online courses and three international trips to study conservation.

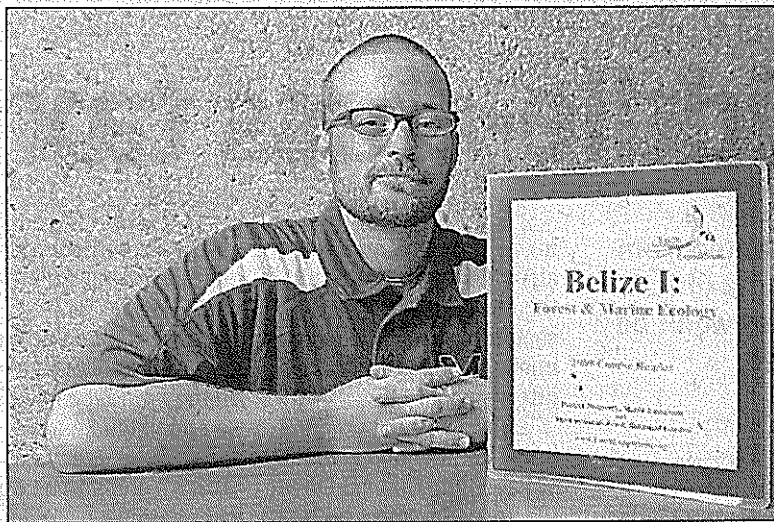
"It's an opportunity for me to one day diversify my role," he said.

Allison, one of two male school nurses in the state, plans to use the degree in his efforts to be a model of a different and highly active school nurse.

"My entire life's mission over the next 30 years is to change what people think about their school nurse," he said.

Allison recently traveled to Belize in Central America for a 10-day exploration with scientists there to study community conservation of harpy eagles and jaguars, as well as manatee and sea turtles.

During the year, the Carlisle High School graduate will continue to



Shane Allison, a school nurse in the Middletown school district, sits with a field guide from his recent trip to Belize for Project Dragonfly Global Field Program. Staff photo by Nick Graham

study health-related barriers to education as he develops a lesson plan that will allow teachers in Belize to do vision screening of the students. Allison hopes his tool will make a difference in the lives of children, who could struggle in school simply because of vision problems.

"They'll go their whole lives without intervention and that's sad, because it's a really easy thing to do," he said. "You could potentially change that child's life and that's a worthwhile thing."

Allison's work also could have an impact here in Middletown.

"He'll find a way to talk to the kids about it, too, so it will have a very impressive impact on the younger children in particular," said Susan Combs, Middletown's

director of student services.

Combs said she hired Allison last year for Amanda Elementary, Central Academy and Middletown High School. This year, he will work at Rosa Parks Elementary and the high school. He'll also again advise the academic quiz team.

"Shane is just willing to do anything you ask him to do," Combs said.

Allison will continue his travels in the next two summers, with the chance to study cheetahs in Namibia, research the world's last wild horses in Mongolia, tag leatherback sea turtles in Trinidad, explore tropical rainforest ecology in Costa Rica, and research marine and terrestrial

ecosystems in Baja, according to the program.

"I'd be a worse person if I hadn't done it and I get to do it two more times," he said.

Earth Expeditions has been offering the trips for several years, but the master's degree program is a newly created venture with Miami University and the Cincinnati Zoo & Botanical Garden, said Chris Myers, Miami professor of zoology and director of Project Dragonfly.

"I don't know really of any other program that does what this program does, which is one of the exciting things about it," Myers said.

"It's just exceeding all of our expectations," Myers said. "One of the neatest things about the program is looking at the potential of this group of global environmental leaders and what they'll be doing. People are doing fantastic things already all over the globe."

Allison said he feels very fortunate that he was accepted into the program.

"It's such a big world out there and there's all these amazing things," he said.

"We take so much for granted. I don't think we realize how lucky we really are," Allison said.

"There's somebody somewhere who doesn't have access to food or clean water and has a scorpion in their bed," he said.

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School nurse expands role with global master's degree

By Meagan Engle
Staff Writer

When it comes to school nurses, Shane Allison is about as rare as a child who doesn't fear needles.

The Middletown City Schools employee is one of just two male school nurses in the state.

Allison is working to change what people think about his profession. He's earning a master's degree and aiming to expand his role in the schools.

"It's very important to me to change people's view of what a school nurse does," he said.

Seeing a man in the job is "wonderful role model for children to see there's all kinds of options," said Susan Combs, Middletown's director of student services.

"What people see as typically a female job is not so," she said.

Allison doesn't just want people to see him as a male in the position, but as an active, different and intelligent professional.

He isn't just staying in his office, taking temperatures or distributing bandages.

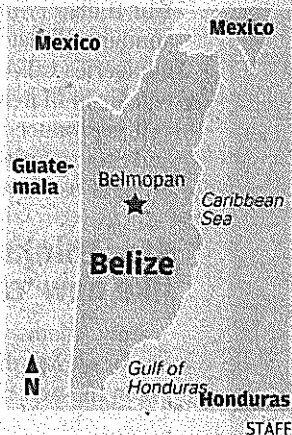
"I want to get into the classroom ... to get involved in kids' lives overall."

Allison is one of just 150 educators now enrolled in a global master's degree program that will have him take three trips to other nations to study conservation. He recently completed a 10-day trip to Belize, his first through the Global Field Program — a joint venture by Miami University, the Cincinnati Zoo & Botanical Garden and Earth Expeditions.

Allison explored conservation programs for harpy eagles, jaguars, manatees and sea turtles.

"It really challenged me as a school nurse to expand my role out of the four walls of my clinic," he said. "It helped me realize how important what I do is and to be innovative in my practice."

»» **School nurse earning global degree** Article on A4



Shane Allison works with students at La Democracia School near Belmopan, Belize, in Central America. Contributed photo