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PHILLIPS BETH ISRAEL HONORS CLASS GOES ON LEARNING EXPEDITION TO THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

May 25, 2010 -- Six students of Phillips Beth Israel School of Nursing volunteered to spend their Spring break observing and assisting in two hospitals in the Dominican Republic. Amy Duenas, Noel Edme, Jaime Gold, Leticia Klaiber, Airy Quiros and Jennifer Wiler – all Level II seniors, were accompanied by nurse educator Luz Maria Davila, RN.

“This is the second year that PBISN students have volunteered to give their time in service to others and also gain valuable, life-changing insights,” said Dean Janet Mackin, RN, EdD. “The goal is for the students to share their knowledge of healthcare in the Dominican Republic with classmates as part of a presentation when they return. Their real life stories will help others to become more sensitive to issues of diversity.”

The focus of the trip was on maternal-child health. This volunteer project, partially supported by Phillips Beth Israel, included visits to Villa Fundacion Municipal Hospital and Bani Provincial Hospital in Santo Domingo.

In preparation for the trip, the students enrolled in an honors course, International Nursing: the Dominican Republic. One of the course presenters was Mayor Alex Blanco of Passaic, NJ, the first Dominican American elected to head a city in the U.S. He gave the class insight into his native country’s culture during a special lecture in November. Mayor Blanco shared personal stories and described how his experience enriched his training and practice as a podiatrist.

“Many times when you're in a different country you see things that may seem so foreign or unorthodox to you, but you have to realize that different people have different ways of doing things especially when working in a country that has much less resources. One learns to be open-minded and respectful of different cultures,” said Jennifer Wiler, a PBISN senior who also traveled with first batch. “It can be amazing to see what solutions they have come up with to get by. The one thing that remains the same is the care and compassion of the nurses.”

The current school year is the first time the honors course in international nursing has been offered at PBISN. It is taught by Obstetrics Professor Abigail Howe-Heyman, MS, RN, and Visiting Professors George Contreras, MPH, and Rachel Breman, MSN, MPH, RN. The course explores nursing practice in different areas of the world as gleaned through published literature.