

## SSU Student Helps Set Up Telemedicine Site in Haiti



Sonoma State University student Michelle Kavata recently returned from Haiti, where she helped set up a virtual doctor's office in a rural area of the developing nation--and received college credit for doing so.

Originally from Kenya, Kavata is a student in professor Mary Graves' Social Entrepreneurship class at Sonoma State. As part of the class, she spent two days helping set up the a telemedicine site in Haiti and speaking to Rotary and other groups there about the project.

Kavata gave a presentation last week to the Rotary clubs of Sebastopol Sunrise and Rancho Cotati, which sponsor the SSU Rotaract Club, about the telemedicine site in the earthquake torn area of St. Marc. Working with Rotarian doctors in Haiti, she helped set up a videoconference station in St. Nicholas Hospital.

In the United States, Sebastopol Rotarian and doctor Jim Gude gives a weekly one-hour presentation on a health issue, often bringing in a specialist to answer specific questions from doctors watching in real time across the world. The clubs have also helped set up telemedicine sites in Nigeria, Uganda, Nepal and the Bahamas.

Sonoma State's Rotaract Club helps set up these sites across the globe, but the students bring more than just volunteerism and passion, says Graves, SSU Rotaract advisor and past president of the Rotary Club of Rancho Cotati. "Young people have the energy and the technical skills to get the doctor in there and get them excited about it," she says.

Kavata's introduction to the telemedicine project came in 2014, when she helped start a site on the Bahamian island of Eleuthera as part of a SSU Rotaract group. The Rotaract Club of Eleuthera is now a sister club of SSU Rotaract. She is currently working on starting a telemedicine site in Kenya.

--Nicolas Grizzle

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