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Dr. Vivien Suttorp to receive U of L’s Friends of Health Sciences award

For her incredible and consistent commitment to University of Lethbridge public health students, the Faculty of Health Sciences is pleased to recognize Dr. Vivien Suttorp with this year’s Friends of Health Sciences award.

As lead medical officer of health for South Zone with Alberta Health Services, Suttorp’s role is a busy one. She’s also an occupational health consultant and medical lead for infection prevention and control in South Zone. In addition, she has supervised more than 16 U of L practicum students since 2011, alongside a bevy of graduate and medical students from other institutions.

“Dr. Vivien Suttorp is someone who fully exemplifies the values of her profession and who teaches the principle that everyone owns public health,” says Dr. Robert Wood, dean of the Faculty of Health Sciences. “We are delighted to acknowledge the immense investments Dr. Suttorp has made in health care, to our public health students and to our faculty.”

“I am delighted and honoured to receive this award, but simultaneously, all the team efforts of those who supported students need to be acknowledged,” says Suttorp. “I will accept the award on behalf of all the great teams that I have the privilege to work with in public health and other programs who support our students in learning applied public health.”

The diversity that comes with working in public health appeals to many students. From emergency disaster management and disease and injury prevention to health promotion, health status and surveillance, students have opportunities to see the public health theory they learned in the classroom applied in real-world settings.

“South Zone is small as far as population goes, but it has great diversity,” says Suttorp. “We have some very unique populations and cultures and needs, even from a health equity perspective.”

When she arrived in southern Alberta in July of 2008, Suttorp worked for the Chinook Health Region. Less than a year later, Alberta Health Services was created and her territory expanded to include the southern swath of the province from British Columbia to Saskatchewan, with Granum, Brooks and Oyen defining the northernmost points.

“Because of the diversity of areas, I also have a diversity of undergraduate and master’s in public health students, as well as medical students and residents,” she says.

Suttorp is a regular guest lecturer at the U of L. She ensures students learn about how public health theory is applied by bringing actual scenarios into the classroom. She also provides lectures on risk assessment, risk management and risk communications. Then, in a subsequent lecture, students apply the theory to current scenarios.

“In medicine, we learn through case presentations,” she says. “That’s what’s exciting and what makes it stick. I think it creates energy and enthusiasm in the class and helps to apply basic theory into practice.”

Along with teaching and mentoring students, Suttorp is a member of the advisory committee for the U of L’s public health program and conducts research with faculty members. Beyond that, the University is a key stakeholder in emergency planning and response from a community perspective.

Originally from Holland, Suttorp immigrated to Canada as a child. If medicine hadn’t won out as her career, she might well have become a teacher or professional musician, her two other loves. Her primary job throughout undergraduate studies at the University of British Columbia was teaching music and she also enjoyed playing in the university band. Now, she plays music with her twin girls.

The 2019 Friends of Health Sciences Award will be presented on Thursday, Oct. 10 at a reception and dinner in the U of L’s Markin Hall atrium. Tickets are \$50 each or \$400 for a table of eight. Tickets can be purchased [online](#).

This news release can be found online at [2019 Friends of Health Sciences](#) award.

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