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Stroke Support Group: An ASPIRE! Mentorship Project in a Rural Setting

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Title: Stroke Support Group: An ASPIRE! Mentorship Project in a Rural Setting
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Overview of Learning Outcomes
- Explain the purpose of the ASPIRE! program at the University of Wyoming
- Emphasize the importance of the support group model in a rural setting
- Describe the Laramie Stroke Support Group

University of Wyoming ASPIRE! Program
- Established for all Health Sciences Majors
- Mentorship program with faculty
  - Research
  - Community involvement
  - Education about Speech Pathology and Audiology as professions
- Eligibility
  - Full-time undergrad
  - Communication Disorders major
  - 3.0 GPA, ACT score of 23
- Personal Experience
  - Community involvement via Laramie Stroke Support Group with Lynda Coyle, 2014-2016
- Benefits
  - Builds professional and practical knowledge skills
  - Tailored to individual interests in the fields of slp/aud
  - $500 scholarship annually for up to 3 years
  - 1 regional ntl conference funded by ComDis department/Dean of College of Health Sciences
  - NSSLHA national membership
  - Personal relationship with faculty and staff

Importance of Support Groups in Rural Areas
- Living in rural Wyoming presents unique access challenges for support groups such as:
  - Accessible, knowledgeable professionals
  - Available resources
  - Proximity to others with the same experiences
- Rural Area
  - Population less than 50,000
- Support Groups: Why do people attend?
  - Bridge between formal healthcare and informal self-help
  - Social support, shared experiences
• Support for affected individual AND caregiver is important

**Laramie Stroke Support Group**
• Serves academic community at UW for potential research
  o Therapy programs
• Activities and Special Speakers/Events
  o EMS/Fire Department recognition of stroke
  o Bowling
  o Music Therapist
  o Managing medications
  o Group activities (thanksgiving bingo)
  o Summer Barbeque
  o Artwork/art therapy
  o Permanent artwork in college of Health Sciences
• Mission
  o Provide support, safe environment for discussion, speakers, activities for survivors and caregivers
• Highlighted individuals
• “Pay it forward” through education of stroke and other neurological disorders

**Main takeaway from the ASPIRE! program & community involvement**
• It is important to not only be an excellent professional, but also leader and visionary in the broader community.

**Resources:**


Rotherham, A., Howe, T., & Tillard, G. (2015). “We just thought that this was Christmas”: perceived benefits of participating in aphasia, stroke and other
groups. *Aphasiology*, 29(8), 965-982 18p.
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