

A Clinic for Kristina

Nursing students at CSU, Chico are working to carry on the legacy of service left by their classmate Kristina Chesterman, who was struck and killed September 24, 2013, by an allegedly drunk driver.

Twenty-one-year-old Chesterman was in her fourth year at Chico State and dreamed of providing health care to underserved areas of Africa. Known by many as an exceptionally caring and connected person, her death shook the campus and community to its core.

"It wasn't necessarily what she said to you, she was just so driven and caring herself that just by being around her you wanted to be a better person," says Kayla Kriech, a fourth-year nursing student. Chesterman held a special place in their cohort, Kriech says. She was known for texting the group weekly reminders of homework assignments, and received a "Den Mother" award her first semester.

She also had a heart for service. Shortly before her death, Chesterman had talked with friends about taking a medical mission trip to Africa after graduation, where she felt she could make a significant impact. Nursing professor Darcy Lewis, who was Chesterman's clinical supervisor, says the senior was atypically aware of the difference she could – and should – make in the world. "How many people at 21 realize there's a healthcare crisis in Africa and care enough to do something?" she muses. "There was a different level to how she thought."

To honor Chesterman and carry on her work, a group of students in her cohort have partnered with a team of California-based health care professionals to build a clinic in South Eastern Nigeria. The [Kristina Chesterman Memorial Clinic](#) will be a sister clinic to the Upon This Rock Medical Center in Ozu Abam, built in 2012 by James Umekwe and his organization Clarrion Call.

When completed, the Kristina Chesterman clinic will specialize in women's and children's health services and in providing diabetes care. Beyond providing health care services, however, the students have committed to expanding the clinic's impact by creating a curriculum to help improve the level of service offered by the staff.



"I feel like this honors Kristina because it's the way she did things," Kriech says. "She would have wanted to help the most people possible, not just 300 people or 400 people you can reach on a single service trip. She'd want to know these people know how to take blood pressure, take a temperature, and recognize malaria... It's more sustainable that way."

According to Lewis, who is heading the project, the goal is to send a group of nursing students each semester to continually build on the services offered. "This way, one group of students will assess what needs to be done, the next group can develop the entire curriculum, for example, and each semester the students can build on what the group before does," she says.



An artist's rendering of the Kristina Chesterman Memorial Clinic to be built in Ozu Abam, Nigeria.

if she had lived.

"She died, but it kind of feels like she's going to win," Lewis says. "She's inspired me in a big way. I was perfectly happy working in gestational diabetes and sleeping in my 700-threadcount sheets. Now I do nothing but the clinic in Africa. And I'm happy doing it."

--Quinn Western and Sarah Langford, Public Affairs and Publications

Since the clinic's conception, the students have thrown themselves into fundraising efforts. Umekwe is donating the land, but about \$80,000 to \$100,000 is needed to make the project a reality. Hundreds attended a [walk/run](#) fundraiser on May 4 in Bidwell Park; the students are also selling personalized tiles to be placed in the clinic and planning an endurance horseback ride in September. (Direct donations can be made at [Go Fund Me](#).)

Though a groundbreaking date hasn't been set, Kriech says she hopes to be able to travel to Nigeria during the construction phase "to feel more connected with it." In a way, the clinic project has allowed her remain close to the friend who so inspired her.

"I know it sounds silly, but whenever I'm facing a challenging situation I ask myself, 'What would Kristina do?'" she says. "That's how I push myself to be like her and be the best I can be, because she was such an amazing person."

Lewis echoes those sentiments, adding that the clinic will serve as tangible evidence of the impact Chesterman would likely have had