

Child and Family Studies

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Families—they come in many shapes and sizes, and everyone experiences them in one way or another! At MTSU, Child Development and Family Studies offers opportunities to learn about individuals that make up families, starting with conception and going through old age—how they develop socially, physically, emotionally, and intellectually. With a focus on experiential learning, dynamic faculty members provide guidance in settings outside the classroom that allow students to observe and be involved with children and families. Internships and field placements help prepare students for their careers by providing real experiences with people of all ages.



Fighting hunger one backpack at a time

Some people think of doing things for others when all is going well for them—that's not true of Jennifer Austin. She was a nursing major in 2006 when an automobile accident left her paralyzed and wheelchair bound. "I knew I wanted to continue in a field of helping others, but I wasn't sure where to turn," Jennifer says. Finally returning in 2009, she found a "new home in the Human Sciences Department." Through a Family Centered Community Building class, Jennifer got involved with the BackPack Program, which provides backpacks filled with non-perishable, child-friendly, nutritious food to insecure children before weekends and holidays. Recognizing the vast need, Jennifer later entered an internship with Universities Fighting World Hunger and organized a campaign—Feed a Child, Feed a Dream—netting more than \$1,300 for the backpack effort. "This was by far my most rewarding experience at MTSU! I felt as though I was truly making a difference in the lives of those around me."



A special spot at a special place

Kacy Plunkett ('12) changed her major four times before settling on Child Development and Family Studies. "I chose CDFS because it encompassed my passion: helping others!" She does exactly that at Special Kids, Murfreesboro, a faith-based, nonprofit organization serving children with special needs. A 100-hour field placement first took Kacy to Special Kids, but she stayed as a volunteer; she later returned as an intern and was hired on her last day. Kacy is over TEAMM (therapeutic education and medical monitoring), a new program that involves typical kids as peer models for special needs children. Not only is Kacy enthusiastic about her major, she is grateful for help received in the advising center and has a keen awareness of the benefits of classwork, internships, and field work. "I never expected to leave MTSU with so much experience and hands-on work that would truly shape my career and my life."