Meghan Lewis says one of the highlights of her time at UNC was a summer 2011 practicum as a Public Health Leader in Practice with Cabarrus Health Alliance, in Kannapolis, N.C. Lewis worked with Barbara Shepard, the program director of the Healthy Cabarrus Initiative, a partnership certified by the North Carolina Governor’s Task Force for Healthy Carolinians (www.healthycarolini ans.org).

Lewis was part of a state-mandated Community Health Assessment, reporting statistical indicators to a planning council. She was asked to lead discussions about what the indicators meant for the county. After one such presentation, council members began a conversation that led to new funding being allocated to meet a need in the county.

“Being a part of that experience reminded me why I chose public health,” Lewis says. The experience gave her a chance to learn more about the community assessments initiative sponsored by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the important role assessments play in improving health. Her interest in evaluation led her to write a master’s paper about her work in Cabarrus County. “It is my hope that after this research method is piloted in Cabarrus, it will be a useful tool for other counties in the state,” she says.

My training allows me to start conversations, improve the body of knowledge in the field and propose new ways of looking at old data. This ultimately leads to innovative programs that are both effective and efficient in their use of resources. —Meghan Lewis
Camille McGirt

Undergraduate
Health Policy and Management

The girls who participate in “Healthy Girls Save the World” say they enjoy the program. We have reached out to about 60 girls, with the goal of reaching 500 by December 2012. —Camille McGirt

Camille McGirt spent the 2010–2011 academic year as an intern in Washington, D.C. “I met so many inspiring people [at the White House and on Capitol Hill],” she says. “I participated in several service projects and even helped with the First Lady’s ‘Let’s Move’ campaign.”

When McGirt returned to North Carolina, she was motivated to spread the “Let’s Move” message (see www.letsmove.gov). She decided to implement a program in her community, Durham, N.C., to address childhood obesity. “Over the past three decades, childhood obesity rates in America have tripled,” she says. “In North Carolina, the numbers are even more alarming.”

The program she started, “Healthy Girls Save the World,” promotes healthy bodies, healthy minds and healthy relationships for girls ages 8 to 15 in North Carolina. The program provides information about exercise and nutrition and integrates lessons on self-esteem, good study habits, and the importance of respectful and positive relationships.

In November 2011, McGirt was awarded the Robert E. Bryan Social Innovation Fellowship from UNC’s APPLES (www.unc.edu/apples), a program that builds sustainable service learning partnerships. She will use the $1,500 prize to fund more workshops for young women.

Jon Hibbard started out as a mathematician, pure and simple. It’s a subject he loves. But when one of his friends underwent a career change and began to work as a nurse, he was jealous of how fulfilled his friend felt at work and of the positive impact he was having.

“This led me to wonder whether I also could use my training to have impact on health matters,” Hibbard says. “And then I found biostatistics!”

Hibbard says he was thrilled to be offered a place at UNC. “When I interviewed at the school of public health,” he says, “I came away with a flavor of the school’s academic rigor. Since enrolling, I have not been disappointed. I am loving my new direction—and the UNC school of public health!”

Hibbard received a Fryer Fellowship in Biostatistics, established by Diane Fryer Medcalf in 2003 in memory of her late husband, John Fryer, PhD. Dr. Fryer was a research professor of biostatistics at UNC and taught in the department for many years before his death in 2001.