

Faces of FRONTIER: *FOCUSED ON THE MISSION*



Leah Atkinson, RN

FNU Nurse Practitioner Student, Class 87

Improving the health of rural communities through population-based interventions is a goal that takes passion and dedication; these are two things that Leah Atkinson has demonstrated through her work as a nurse and through her pursuit of becoming a family nurse practitioner. After receiving her master's degree in public health nursing, Leah Atkinson worked as a licensed school nurse in a rural Minnesota school

district for seven years. With a strong public health background, and a desire to continue her education to become primary care provider, Leah made the decision to pursue her MSN at Frontier with the goal of becoming a family nurse practitioner. "I chose Frontier for the school's rich history and strong mission of serving rural and underserved communities, which was in line with my personal mission," Leah states.

Most notably in her career before attending Frontier, Leah wrote a statewide grant for a health improvement program to increase access to nutritious foods and non-motorized transportation, specifically in rural communities. The purpose of the program was to improve the health of targeted rural communities, and to make this happen, Leah led a team of key healthcare players. To enhance non-motorized transportation, the grant allowed for the purchase of three "surreys" which are based on the concept of a covered bicycle where 2-4 people can ride together. The grant also helped to connect local farmers to area schools through a Farm to School program where local produce and nutritious foods were brought in to the schools.

After graduation, Leah plans to work as a primary care provider in a rural medically underserved area. Leah's desire to positively impact rural and underserved communities through large-scale interventions has helped her understand the importance of getting to know key community players and partnering and developing a relationship with them. She understands how to identify the key healthcare issues and locate the necessary resources to facilitate change with the goal of a healthier population. No matter where her career takes her after graduation, Leah is sure to serve as a perfect example of Frontier's mission in action through the future communities she will serve.

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