For get storks and cabbage patches. In the Appalachian hills of southeastern Kentucky, home of the Frontier Nursing Service (FNS), parents have a different way to explain where babies come from. In 1925, when the FNS started, nurse-midwives rode on horseback to deliver babies around the rural region, so “little children were told that babies arrived in the saddlebags,” says DMS student Julie Zitterkopf. She was one of seven DMS students—four M.D. first-years and three Center for the Evaluative Clinical Sciences (CECS) students—who made a one-week spring service trip to Kentucky. They shadowed caregivers at the FNS’s hospital and rural clinics and volunteered in an after-school reading program and a food pantry.

Idea: Sarah Dotters-Katz, a first-year who was born in rural Kentucky, came up with the idea for the trip after doing a summer internship at the FNS. The chorus, founded in 1982 and based in Northampton, Mass., was in the Upper Valley in conjunction with the 2007 Dartmouth Community Medical School course, titled “The New Thinking About Aging: Fostering Health, Coping with Frailty.”

But these feisty singers proved that they were anything but frail as they belted out tunes by groups like Sonic Youth, Radiohead, OutKast, and the Beatles. And they closed each performance by imploring their audiences to—in the words of Bob Dylan—stay “Forever Young.”

STATE-OF-THE-ART CONCEPT

Spirited Pitch About Aging

Calling “My Old Kentucky Home,” for a week

So you grade-school art teacher said you had no artistic talent? Nonsense, says former ICU nurse Kathy Parsonnet, who’s been DHMC’s artist in residence since 2005. In search of an art form that was “affordable, not wasteful, and fairly easy for any patient to use,” she invented Fraglets Art—hand-painted magnetic forms in assorted shapes and sizes that can be arranged and rearranged on a metal “canvas” to create a . . . masterpiece.

“I’m a very frugal artist,” she says. “I like using things over and over.” For more information, see www.fragletsart.com. L.S.C.

STORM WINDOW: Daniel Pluta, a DHMC radiology technician, and his 16-year-old son spent February vacation week with a church group from Hanover volunteering in one of the New Orleans neighborhoods most devastated by Hurricane Katrina.

These seven DMS students spent their spring break not lounging on a beach but volunteering in the hills of rural Kentucky.
For Zitterkopf, it was an exam on a woman in her 32nd week of pregnancy that had the deepest impact. “I had never seen a bimanual exam, let alone performed one,” she says. “As I witnessed a physician skillfully perform a bimanual exam . . . he turned to me and asked, ‘Any questions?’ After [I shook] my head ‘no,’ he handed me a glove and said, ‘Good. Your turn.’ I was very nervous.” But the physician guided her through the process. “I was able to feel the head of the fetus,” she recalls. “It was a feeling I will never forget.”

Static: Maureen Shyu was moved by a prenatal visit, too: “Through the static of a Doppler, I heard the thumping of a baby’s heartbeat. It was loud and rapid, so different from my own. . . . It was my first time hearing a baby’s heartbeat growing hidden inside a woman’s belly. Something shifted in me and I recognized it as a special moment in my life.”

For CECS student Clara Savage, working with the FNS was a “wonderful” experience. “There are a lot of pockets of society in this country that are disenfranchised from proper health care,” she says, “and I think that exists in rural Appalachia.”

Susan Linsey, codirector of Dartmouth Rural Health Programs and coordinator of the Kentucky trip, feels it was a great experience for the students who went. They showed “strong team spirit and good bonding,” she says. And FNS officials were pleased, too, she adds. “Frontier Nursing tells us over and over, ‘Please come back.’”

Matthew C. Wiencke