

TO MEDIA:

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PHOTOS:

SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENTS EXPLORE FAMILY MEDICINE AT EXCELA HEALTH

LATROBE, PA, September 2022... Five aspiring family physicians are the recipients of this year's Andrew D. Bagby Family Medicine Scholarship. Each participated in a month-long program this summer through the Excelsa Health Latrobe Hospital Family Medicine Residency Program in which they gained inpatient and outpatient experience, in addition to exploring career options in primary care.

The Bagby Scholarship was established by family and friends in memory of first-year resident Dr. Andrew Bagby, who died tragically in November 2001. The scholarship fund has increased substantially in the 19 years the scholarship has been awarded. It is supported by the Bagby family, as well as private donors, to give opportunities to aspiring family medicine physicians. The scholarship is administered by the Latrobe Area Hospital Charitable Foundation.

Participants include Margaret Mary McMurtry, Valerie Rosborough and Matthew Sanchez, who are enrolled at Lake Erie College of Osteopathic Medicine (LECOM) at Seton Hill University, and Olivia Colon and Colton Hurley, medical students at LECOM-Erie.

For McMurtry, the path to a medical career began at her birth. While the now 24-year-old understandably doesn't remember the particulars of her prolonged hospital

stay at Riley Hospital for Children in Indianapolis, her parents reflect on what was a highly stressful time fondly because of the care the entire family received. Later as a teenager, McMurtry had a chance encounter with the family physician who had attended her as a newborn, and to McMurtry's delight, the doctor greeted her warmly, remembering the circumstances of so many years prior.

McMurtry believes that the experiences children have with their healthcare provider shape how they will relate to medicine as adults. "Those same relationships are built with trust and love, keeping the patient at the center of it all," she said. "Family medicine is about the entire family, often over a lifetime. It excites me that one day I will be able to give back to a family in the same way my family was immersed in care and comfort. I cannot wait to form true connections with patients and maybe inspire some young girl to follow in my footsteps."

Childhood illness also played a role in shaping the future for Sanchez. The 23-year-old North Versailles resident credits primary care providers with helping him reduce the complications of pediatric asthma and ensuring his father lived a full life despite dealing with cerebral palsy. Sanchez's passion for medicine stems from these positive relationships, as well as from his parents who both are social workers.

Continuity is a watchword for Sanchez who remained with his own pediatrician from birth to age 18 by choice, appreciating the way they related to one another. A biology major at Seton Hill University, Sanchez was similarly familiar with LECOM, which made for an easy matriculation to medical school. Such stability within his life is something he hopes for when he becomes a family physician. "For me, family medicine is the foundation and a pathway for people to become invested in their healthcare," he said.

As part of an undergraduate honors capstone project, Sanchez researched the positive effects of educating children about their medical care. He was able to demonstrate that by starting early in life to involve people in knowing the reason behind treatments and resulting outcomes, there would be better patient adherence to medical advice and greater trust in the healthcare provider. "I would love to be that physician who foments a higher 'basal rate' of health for my patients so they are better able to

respond in the event of trauma or serious illness. To do that means investing in their education and being that encourager to live healthier every step of the way.”

Medicine is part art and part science, a duality Rosborough believes is necessary to successful patient care. She’s had the opportunity to see both sides up close as the child of a physician, as a first-year medical student, as a crisis advocate in a domestic violence shelter, and as a patient herself. Empathy with a spark of personality are characteristics she hopes to bring to her own practice of family medicine as well as an innate curiosity about the mind-body connection.

Listening to her father, a nephrologist, talk about what factors could have contributed to a disease, and how they might have been controlled fueled Rosborough’s love of learning anatomy and physiology at Viterbo University in LaCrosse, WI, while her emotional response to a child’s struggling kidneys and a local business owner’s cancer diagnosis keeps her ever mindful of the humanity required to make science meaningful. Rosborough’s own family doctor also demonstrated what it means to be “present in a personal and emotional way,” always taking the time to fully listen without rushing the visit or making a hasty judgment.

The youngest of four siblings, Rosborough, 23, can thank the pandemic for making this convergence crystal clear. To minimize outside contact, she and three co-workers became counselors-in-residence at the shelter. Living in such close proximity to those dealing with substance use disorders honed her listening skills, which are critical to effectively addressing any health concern. She would also practice these skills during a medical mission trip to Ghana. “Medicine is both physical and psychological,” she said. “Despite cultural difference and language barriers, my encounters demonstrate the universal values of empathy and connection that are necessary to practice family medicine.”

Connection for Hurley means taking a hands-on approach when dealing with people, a style undoubtedly learned growing up around his father’s Pittsburgh area Chiropractic practice. The bond of trust forged between physicians and patients will

promote better care and health outcomes he believes, as will lifelong relationships that are typical in the practice of family medicine.

Hurley also remembers observing his mother in action during a Take Your Child To Work Day at the surgicenter where she was a nurse. The situations were different, but helped deepen Hurley's understanding of the various aspects of health care. Clearly his parents provided a strong example for their offspring. Both Hurley and his brother have chosen LECOM for medical school.

As to Hurley's choice of career, the Point Park University graduate says, while meeting a patient's acute care needs is important, he prefers being part of a long-term care plan and ongoing interactions. "A family doctor's scope of practice can be broad and interesting every day when dealing with a panel of patients with new or different needs. Being present to my patients wherever they are in their health journey will be a privilege I will have over a lifetime."

As an animal-loving youngster growing up in upstate New York, Colon would always respond to the question; "who do you want to be when you grow up" with veterinarian. It wasn't until her freshman year of SUNY-Oswego that the biochemistry major enrolled in an emergency medical technician certification class which made her realize how much she enjoying human anatomy, as well as treating and working with human patients.

This experience prompted her to apply to LECOM's early acceptance program during her sophomore year and enroll in a full year of anatomy and physiology during her junior year as an undergrad. It was also during this time that she was discerning which type of doctor she would like to be. As a first-generation college student, she had no family role models to guide the way as they had never attended any form of higher education. It was only after entering medical school that she found clarity for her career.

"I began to realize that my access to healthcare growing up in a small town in the middle of the Catskill Mountains was different from some my peers who grew up in areas with easier access," she explained. "It brought more light to the fact that it was a burden on my family to live in a place which didn't have a single hospital in the entire county, and there was a hour-long drive to a primary care doctor or dentist who

accepted our insurance. It is this revelation, paired with my love for community service and my deep desire to help others, which made me realize that I wish to pursue a residency in family medicine after graduation and go on to practice in a rural or underserved area as a primary care physician.”