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COM Outlook Winter 2007

College of Osteopathic Medicine

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NOVA SOUTHEASTERN UNIVERSITY

COM Outlook

College of Osteopathic Medicine

Winter 2007

Volume 8, Number 1



ANSWERING THE CALL:

Center for Bioterrorism and All-Hazards Preparedness Expands Scope



Anthony J. Silvagni, D.O., Pharm.D.

Our alumni have always appreciated the education they received at NSU's College of Osteopathic Medicine and its North Miami Beach precursor, the Southeastern College of Osteopathic Medicine (SECOM). Unfortunately, there has not always been a close relationship with the college once they graduated.

Over the past seven or so years, the curricular

innovations that have been implemented to meet our students' needs, coupled with the university's perpetual commitment to upgrading technology and providing support systems, have positively impacted both recent and previous generations of graduates.

Our alumni are now recognizing the intrinsic value of their NSU diploma more than ever before because they know it represents a well-trained physician that institutions covet on their staffs or in their residency programs. Outcomes supporting this trend include the

- increasing application requests from highly competitive residencies for graduates from our program
- rising quality of student applications to the college
- above-average percentage of applicants that accept a seat in the college when offered
- growing requests for faculty positions by practicing clinicians
- mounting amount of donations from alumni, parents of students, and friends of the college

Each of these measures shows support of the forward-thinking course NSU-COM is charting in regard to medical education. As a result, the links to the past and future are coming into sharper focus because more and more alumni are taking pride in being an NSU-COM graduate and realize they have received an exemplary education deemed one of the best in the country.

Over the years, we have worked hard to outreach to those graduates who experienced a sense of disconnect when SECOM merged with Nova University in 1994 to form Nova Southeastern University. One of the ways we chose to accomplish this task was by creating *COM Outlook* magazine in

late 1999. The award-winning publication, which serves as the primary communications source for our alumni to promote their individual achievements and stay abreast of what the college is doing, has helped imbue a sense of pride in our graduates regarding their alma mater and their NSU-COM peers.

Through the efforts of the Office of Alumni Affairs and its associate dean, Dr. Howard Neer, and director, Lynne Cawley, alumni interaction is improving with each passing day. The establishment of *COM Outlook*, along with regional dinner gatherings around the country, the annual alumni reunion in February, and the coordination of alumni luncheons and receptions at the AOA convention and at some state association meetings, provide invaluable opportunities for us to stay in touch with our alumni—and for our alumni to stay in touch with us.

This growth of alumni participation in relation to the college's future also provides a great morale boost to our current students. When students see that alumni are doing things that will benefit them, such as participating in the academical societies, it energizes them to be more successful and more accomplished because of this commitment. It also serves as a stimulus for them to succeed because of the belief the alumni have in the college and in their futures.

As we attempt to further the relationship NSU-COM has with its alumni, we are starting to develop a unique continuing medical education program that will allow us to provide opportunities for graduates and other physicians with education programs not normally available in the traditional continuing medical education paradigm. Proposed topics currently being explored include in-depth procedural seminars, use of standardized patients, and clinical experience involving the cardiopulmonary patient simulator known as "Harvey." Additionally, because of the widespread distribution of our alumni throughout the country, we also hope to establish opportunities for input from our graduates to help us improve the education and training we are providing our students by tapping into the alumni's experiences in actual practice.

The enhanced relationship that now exists between NSU-COM and its alumni is being viewed with great excitement. As a result, our college will continue to develop and implement new ways to further foster this growing relationship by continuing to serve our graduates as we did when they were medical students.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Anthony J. Silvagni, D.O." The signature is written in a cursive style.



Fred Lippman, R.Ph., Ed.D.

Since we are now a state that is home to eight medical schools—NSU-COM, LECOM, University of Central Florida, Florida International University, University of Miami, University of South Florida, and Florida State University—addressing the issue of graduate medical education is more imperative than ever before.

During the multiple conversations I've had with individuals involved in making decisions concerning graduate medical education, I've found that many of them focus solely on residencies and forget all about clinical rotations. That is why I'm so proud that NSU-COM's dean, Dr. Anthony J. Silvagni, is chair of the Council of Florida Medical School Deans, because he is vigilant in making sure everyone knows up front that when we talk about graduate medical education, we're not just talking about residencies. He makes it clear that our third- and fourth-year students, like all third- and fourth-year medical school students, are participating in clinical rotations that are the heart and soul of their clinical competency training.

The fact is that while the number of medical schools in Florida is increasing, there are just so many hospitals and other sites, whether they are community health centers or other similar primary treatment facilities, where you can have a qualified—and quality—clinical rotation for your students. It's a real challenge not only here in Florida but also in the highly intensified medical teaching environments that exist in Chicago, New York, Philadelphia, and many other areas throughout the country.

Of course, the current situation also presents an opportunity for all the Florida medical schools to reach out and be helpful to each other. I'm a firm believer that these new schools are indeed sister schools and that we can all hopefully work together with the state's policymakers and within our various administrations to come to some understanding—and present suggestions to each other—so we all can provide the clinical rotations our students need to complete their medical education requirements.

What you frequently read in newspapers and hear on television is information relative to the fact that there are

not enough doctors in the state of Florida, that there are supposed to be X number of doctors per X number of citizens, that we don't meet those standards, and that explains why all the new medical schools have been created. The media also play up the fact that there aren't enough residency programs in Florida, but you can't get to those residencies before you have completed your clinical rotations.

There is, of course, a big black hole that currently exists in regard to available residencies, and I'm not sure where that's going to be filled from because there are not that many new hospitals being constructed in the state of Florida. New hospitals will eventually be built, and our goal is to have one here on the NSU campus within the next five years.

Why is there a shortage of doctors? Is there a shortage along the Gold Coast or beach areas in the state of Florida? The answer is no. Is there a shortage of physicians 25 miles above the I-4 corridor? Sure there is, because there are not that many hospitals being built in that area, and physicians tend to go to the communities that are more affluent in their medical technology.

When you really look at it, though, the physician shortage is created because of the lack of residencies. Anywhere from two-thirds to 80 percent of all physicians who do their residencies end up practicing within 150 miles of where they complete them. Unfortunately, due to the lack of available residencies, there is a problem as to the issue of retaining doctors in the state of Florida. That's why the doctor shortage is not going to be answered by creating new medical schools or by having us increase our class size. It's going to be solved by having more residencies funded at the hospitals in Florida.

Full-blown graduate medical education programs, which include clinical rotations as well as residencies, need to be created so we can retain physicians who are going to be trained in Florida. If there were an investment by our government by utilizing excess revenues sources such as sales tax or lottery dollars, we would retain more of the future physicians who are being taught in the medical schools, both old and new, in the state of Florida.

Fred Lippman, Ed.D.



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Notice of Accreditation/Nondiscrimination

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16 Upgraded HPD Simulation Lab Provides High-Tech Training

The willingness of the NSU Health Professions Division administration to do whatever is necessary to enhance the education of its students can be witnessed in the division's Simulation Lab, which recently added two new exam rooms and received a total equipment upgrade.

18 Dr. David Thomas Makes Memorable Expedition to Guantanamo

Paying a visit to Cuba's Guantanamo Bay is probably not something most people would jot down on their list of things to do. However, when the U.S. Department of Defense and U.S. Department of Justice asked Dr. David Thomas to accompany several other individuals on a five-day fact-finding mission to Guantanamo last summer, he wholeheartedly embraced the opportunity.

20 Answering the Call: CBAP Expands Scope, Goes National

It's been a rapid rise to preeminence for NSU-COM's Center for Bioterrorism and All-Hazards Preparedness (CBAP), which began as a South Florida taskforce in 2001 and has evolved into an entity charged with providing all-hazards education and training to health professionals and the entire health care workforce throughout the United States.

23 Rapid HIV Testing Relieves Stress for HPD Students

Becoming a health care professional may be a less-risky career choice than that of, say, coalminer, police detective, or construction worker. Still, there are many inherent hazards nurses, physicians, dentists, and other medical professionals must contend with on a daily basis.

24 Drs. Hilda and Joseph De Gaetano Adeptly Merge Careers, Family

When Drs. Hilda and Joseph De Gaetano first laid eyes on each other at college registration in 1985, fireworks and that love-at-first-sight feeling were definitely in the air. More than two decades and two children later, it's readily apparent that this hard-working duo is indeed a match made in D.O. heaven.

29 Sports Medicine Clinic Takes Cutting-Edge Approach to Care

The creation of an enhanced Sports Medicine Clinic at NSU's new University Center is taking the level of care that can be provided to NSU athletes and outside patients to fresh heights thanks to the acquisition of cutting-edge equipment and a significant upgrade in available services and treatments.

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State Rep. Anitere Flores Visits NSU-COM



Pictured at the luncheon are (from left) Bart Whitehead, D.M.D., M.Ed., M.B.A., assistant dean of student services, Dr. Anthony J. Silvagni, Representative Anitere Flores, Robert Uchin, D.D.S., dean of NSU's College of Dental Medicine, and Steven Zucker, D.M.D., M.Ed., associate dean for community affairs and AHEC Program director.

State Representative Anitere Flores of Miami, who serves on the state of Florida's Colleges and Universities Committee, visited NSU-COM on September 14 to speak with the M2 students about issues they may face as future physicians. Representative Flores also met with medical and dental students from the Hispanic Osteopathic Medical Student Association during a noontime luncheon. "This was a wonderful opportunity for our Hispanic students," said NSU-COM Dean Dr. Anthony J. Silvagni. "Representative Flores spoke from the heart about her appreciation for the sacrifice and dedication medical students make, especially when you consider the years of education and training required and the challenges facing today's physicians. Representative Flores shared many insightful comments, but the one that stands out in my mind was, 'You can only be in this profession if you truly want to make a difference in peoples lives.'"

Dana Block Pens Award-Winning Essay



M4 student Dana Block earned third-place honors and a \$2,000 cash award in the AOA Bureau of Osteopathic History and Identity's 2006 essay competition for her entry titled "From Pulp Paper to Laptop Computer: A Reflection on Fundamental Osteopathic Philosophies." The AOA established the competition with the goal of encouraging

the newest members of the profession to learn more about osteopathic medicine's past and, consequently, increase their loyalty to the profession. She also received the Student Osteopathic Medical Association's Humanism in Medicine Scholarship at the organization's October convention held in Las Vegas, Nevada.

Yesenia Arias Receives Minority Scholarship



Pictured at the check presentation are (from left) Dr. Bart Whitehead, Maria Arias, Yesenia Arias, and Dr. Anthony J. Silvagni.

In September, M4 student Yesenia Arias received the 2006 Sherry R. Arnstein Minority Student Scholarship Award from the American Association of Colleges of Osteopathic Medicine (AACOM). The award, which included a \$1,000

cash prize, is bestowed upon an underrepresented minority student in good academic standing at an AACOM member college of osteopathic medicine. Arias received the award based on the 750-word essay she submitted concerning what osteopathic medical schools can do to recruit/retain more underrepresented minority students and what she personally plans to do as a student and as a future D.O. to help increase minority student enrollment at a college of osteopathic medicine.

Gayatri Menon Wins Welch Scholars Grant



M3 student Gayatri Menon was the recipient of a \$2,000 Welch Scholars Grant from the American Osteopathic Foundation. The grants, which are awarded annually to provide monetary support to help defray costs during a student's osteopathic medical education, are distributed based on financial need, academic achievement, participation in extracurricular

activities, and commitment to osteopathic medicine.

COMMUNICATIONS

Lynne Cawley, M.S., who has been an NSU employee since 1989 and previously served as associate director of interprofessional and alumni affairs, was named director of alumni affairs in September 2006. In her new role, Cawley will have expanded duties and continue to work closely with Howard Neer, D.O., FACOFFP, associate dean of alumni affairs.

The Council on Education for Public Health (CEPH), the official accrediting body for public health schools and programs, has conferred another seven years of accreditation to the NSU-COM Master of Public Health Program.



To showcase their Halloween spirit, the OPP fellows commemorated the bewitching occasion by dressing up as various OPP faculty members. Pictured (from left) are the OPP fellows along with the names of

the faculty members they impersonated: Melissa Morgan (Dr. Louis Hasbrouck); Stephen Fromang (Dr. David Boesler); Amil Badoolah (Dr. Eric Shamus); Elena Timoshkin (Dr. Elaine Wallace); Renee Marchioni (Dr. Andrew Kusinski); and Alberto Caban-Martinez, M.P.H. (Dr. Mark Sandhouse).

NSU Employee Luncheon Celebrates Longevity

On December 13, NSU held its annual Employee Anniversary Luncheon at the Signature Grand in Davie to recognize staff and faculty members who have reached significant employment milestones. Following are the College of Osteopathic Medicine honorees:



Marysel Sierra

20 Years of Service

Dr. Fred Lippman
Marysel Sierra



Debbi Steinkohl

15 Years of Service

Pattie Murray
Dr. Howard Neer
Joseph Peters
Debbi Cohn Steinkohl



Dr. Neer



Dr. Cohen

10 Years of Service

Ricardo Arriaza
Dr. Peter Cohen
Dr. Kenneth Johnson
Dr. Sandi Scott-Holman
Dr. Margaret Wilkinson



Dr. Scott-Holman



Dr. Wilkinson

5 Years of Service

Dr. Renee Alexis
Georgia Carter
Dr. Rosebud Foster
Dr. Loretta Graham
Kelvin Gross
Dr. Edward Packer
Alina Perez
Sheri Schour
Evelyn Walker



Ricardo Arriaza



Evelyn Walker

Arizona, Tennessee Welcome New Osteopathic Medical Schools

The osteopathic family recently welcomed two new locations to the osteopathic fold. Lincoln Memorial University (LMU) in Harrogate, Tennessee, recently received notification from the AOA Commission on Osteopathic College Accreditation (COCA) that the DeBusk College of Osteopathic Medicine (DCOM) has been granted provisional accreditation. Tennessee's newest medical school is now accepting applications for its inaugural class, slated to begin in the fall of 2007.

COCA also awarded provisional accreditation to A.T. Still University of Health Sciences College of Osteopathic Medicine (ATSU COM-Mesa) in Mesa, Arizona. Students at ATSU COM-Mesa will spend three of their four years in community health centers located in underserved communities through its partnership with the National Association of Community Health Centers. The inaugural class of 100 osteopathic medical students will begin matriculating in July 2007.

Dr. Silvagni Named Chair of FPSC Board



Anthony J. Silvagni, D.O., Pharm.D., M.Sc., FACOPF, who serves as NSU-COM dean, was recently elected chair of the Florida Patient Safety Corporation (FPSC) Board of Directors. Dr. Silvagni has served as treasurer on the FPSC's board since its inception in August 2004.

The FPSC was created by the Florida Legislature in 2004 to serve as a learning organization dedicated to assisting health care providers in the state to improve the quality and safety of health care, to reduce harm to patients, and to promote the development of a culture of patient safety in Florida's health care system. Each seat on the 15-member board is defined within the corporation's enabling legislation. Dr. Silvagni serves on the FPSC board as a representative of the Council of Florida Medical School Deans, which he also chairs.

"Dr. Silvagni brings a broad base of knowledge to the position and will, as chair, offer the other board members and staff strong and thoughtful leadership," said FPSC Executive Director Susan Moore. "With his guidance, I anticipate the corporation making significant contributions to patient safety within Florida's health care delivery system."

Shara Steiner Presents Research in Japan



Shara Steiner poses with a whale shark at an aquarium in Osaka, Japan.

M4 student Shara Steiner presented two research studies at the Movement Disorder Society's 10th International Congress of Parkinson's Disease and Movement Disorders in Kyoto, Japan, which was held October 28-November 3. Steiner's research

focused on "Implementation of the 2006 AAN Parkinson Disease Practice Guidelines as a Teaching Curriculum Improves Medical Student and Resident Evidence-Based Knowledge" and "Perspectives on Movement Disorders Among Medical Students and Residents."

ACOFPP President Discusses Timely Topics



Pictured (from left) are: Glenn Moran, D.O., FAFOPF, clinical assistant professor of family medicine and ACOFP student chapter faculty adviser; Joseph De Gaetano, D.O., M.S.Ed., FAFAP, FAFOPF, associate professor of family medicine and assistant dean of clinical curriculum and GME; Dr. Thomas Told; Emily Sutton, ACOFP student chapter president; Anthony J. Silvagni, D.O., Pharm.D., M.Sc., FAFOPF, NSU-COM dean; and Pablo Calzada, D.O., M.P.H., chair of the Department of Family Medicine.

On October 24, Thomas N. Told, D.O., FAFOPF, who serves as president of the American College of Osteopathic Family Physicians (ACOFPP), visited NSU-COM to speak to family practice residents and medical students. During his stay, Dr. Told attended a luncheon with medical students, residents, and family practice faculty, where he discussed topics such as the pending shortage of family physicians and the benefits a physician-in-training can derive from becoming a family practitioner. NSU-COM is currently ranked fifth nationally out of all U.S. allopathic (M.D.) and osteopathic (D.O.) medical schools in regard to the percentage of its graduates going into primary care—a hefty 77 percent.

SAOG Participates in Range of Activities



Featured (from left) are NSU-COM SAOG President Jessica Fischetti, Dr. Forstein, and Daniel Barkus, D.O., FAFOPF, who serves as chair of the college's Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology.

In November, David Forstein, D.O., FAFOPF, from the American College of Osteopathic Obstetricians and Gynecologists' (ACOOG) Visiting Professor Program (VPROF) paid a visit to NSU-COM to meet with medical students and provide them with insightful

information concerning the OB/GYN specialty.

VPROF's goals are to encourage student interaction with osteopathic role models from different regions and institutions, enhance career choices in obstetrics and gynecology, and allow each college of osteopathic medicine to interact with the visiting professor and discuss pertinent topics related to the discipline. During his visit, Dr. Forstein presented a \$1,000 check to the college that was earmarked for the Student Association of Obstetrics and Gynecology (SAOG).

The club also participated in a number of extracurricular activities that included

- ◆ *Susan G. Komen Race for the Cure* in downtown Miami, where a 20-plus-member SAOG team raised \$555 for the cause.
- ◆ *Lee National Denim Day*, where the club sold breast cancer pins for \$5 each and raised \$700 for breast cancer research. Students, faculty, and staff who purchased the pins were able to wear jeans to school for a day to show unity for fighting breast cancer.
- ◆ *Breast Cancer Bake Sale*, where club members baked and sold cupcakes and pink-ribbon cookies that raised \$570 for several breast cancer foundations.
- ◆ *Operation Get Tested*, which is a program sponsored by a nonprofit organization called Who's Positive that is committed to raising awareness by humanizing HIV and its consequences. Each club was asked to make a poster explaining how HIV correlates to that specific club, so M1 student Laura Martin created one that provided well-researched facts about HIV, complications associated with the OB/GYN field, local contacts for HIV-positive mothers, and useful information about prevention.





During the 111th AOA Convention and Scientific Seminar in Las Vegas, Nevada, last October, M3 student Yvette Tivoli (pictured) presented a poster titled “Chronic Venous Insufficiency: A Case Report and Review of the Literature.” Tivoli

coauthored the project with Camille Bentley, D.O., associate professor of family medicine, and Harold Laubach, Ph.D., dean of the College of Medical Sciences.



To commemorate October as Breast Cancer Awareness Month, the student chapters of the American College of Osteopathic Family Physicians (ACOFP) and the Student Association of Obstetrics and Gynecology (SAOG) coordinated a free breast cancer seminar

featuring a panel comprising several breast cancer survivors. Pictured at the October 30 seminar (from left) are ACOFP president Emily Sutton, guest speaker Inez Rodriguez, and SAOG President Jessica Fischetti.



OPP fellow Alberto Caban-Martinez, M.P.H., made five presentations (one oral, four poster) at the American Public Health Association’s 134th Annual Meeting, which was held November 4-8, 2006, in Boston, Massachusetts. Topics addressed included

“Occupational Segregation and Racial Health Disparities,” “Trends in Health Insurance Coverage in U.S. Worker Groups,” and “Dental Care Access and Unmet Dental Needs of U.S. Workers: The National Health Interview Survey 1997 to 2003.”



M4 student Shannon Hillier helped raise over \$1,700 for the American Cancer Society’s Making Strides Against Breast Cancer 5K walk, which was held last October in Stuart, Florida. Hillier participated in the walk as a tribute to her grandmother, who is a breast cancer survivor.



At the AOA convention, several second-year students took time from their action-packed agendas to join Lynne Cawley, M.S., director of alumni affairs, at the NSU-COM booth. Pictured (clockwise from left) are Lynne Cawley, Alexandra Grace, Justin

Arnold, Doni Rivas, and Jennifer Sears.



NSU-COM’s Association of Military Osteopathic Physicians and Surgeons (AMOPS) student group observed Veteran’s Day by displaying the Blue Star Flag outside the Steele Auditorium and selling Veteran’s Day patriotic pins, which raised over

\$500 for the national AMOPS office.

M2 Lectures Available Online Thanks to Appresso Program



Stanley Simpson, D.O.

NSU-COM is piloting a program called Appresso, which is being used to digitally record the M2 lectures that take place in the Morris Auditorium. The program simultaneously records the lecturer and the PowerPoint slides being presented so the students can hear what the lecturer is saying about the material contained in the slide presentation.

This educational enhancement is beneficial to the students because they are able to hear the lecturer’s comments while they review the slides when studying for exams or just beginning to learn the material. The lectures, which add a new dimension to the student’s note service, are accessible from any computer lab on campus from an HPD server.

“At first I was concerned about having my lectures recorded,” said Stanley Simpson, D.O., associate professor of family medicine. “How would I look? Would I say something I shouldn’t? But after thinking about the process, I realized it not only helps the students, but by reviewing my own lectures and being able to hear and see myself, I can become a better presenter. I welcome this technology and expect to self improve as a teacher with its use.”

SNMA Members Attend Regional Conference

By M2 Student *Monica R. Rider, M.P.H.*
SNMA Region IV Premedical Liaison to the South



Chloe Evans (right) learns how to perform a lumbar puncture.

On November 17-19, 2006, members of the NSU-COM chapter of the Student National Medical Association (SNMA) attended the 42nd Annual SNMA Region IV Medical Education Conference in Mobile, Alabama. The theme of this year's event was *The Minority Report: Making History, Saving Lives,*

Improving Our Communities. The conference's host chapter was the SNMA chapter of the University of South Alabama College of Medicine.

This year, the activities included a research symposium, a medical student panel for premedical students, a residency panel for medical students, as well as plenary sessions with topics ranging from "Business Smarts in Medicine" to "Women in Medicine." Also featured were clinical skills workshops in "Lumbar Puncture and Joint Injection." During one of these workshops, physicians from the University of Alabama School of Medicine-Selma Family Medicine Residency Program taught NSU-COM SNMA Chapter President Chloe Evans how to properly administer a lumbar puncture (a.k.a., spinal tap).

Monica Rider, SNMA Region IV premedical liaison and NSU-COM chapter member, conducted a session for premedical students regarding interviewing skills that provided attendees with the helpful hints needed to give an effective and successful interview. Rider also participated in the medical student panel and was able to provide information regarding osteopathic medicine to both premedical and medical students.

However, the conference was not all work as the planners made sure that visiting schools were able to get a taste of what Mobile, Alabama, has to offer. A party was coordinated in scenic downtown Mobile, and the closing gala was decorated in Mardi Gras paraphernalia—a reminder that Mardi Gras in the United States actually started in Mobile.

The next "road trip" the NSU-COM SNMA chapter plans to take will be to San Francisco, California, for the National Medical Education Conference in April 2007. For further details regarding the national conference or the Student National Medical Association, please visit www.snma.org.

AACOM Board of Deans Retreat

On November 30-December 2, the American Association of Colleges of Osteopathic Medicine (AACOM) held its annual Board of Deans Retreat at NSU-COM. In addition to attending various administrative meetings, the participants were invited to a lavish reception and dinner in the Terry Building and taken on a relaxing evening boat cruise.



COM deans and other individuals in attendance (from left) included: Don Peska, Texas College of Osteopathic Medicine; James W. Cole, D.O., Arizona College of Osteopathic Medicine; Gary Slick, D.O., Oklahoma State University College of Osteopathic Medicine; Kendall Reed, D.O., FACOS, Des Moines University College of Osteopathic Medicine; Kenneth J. Veit, D.O., M.B.A., Philadelphia College of Osteopathic Medicine; Ray E. Stowers, D.O., DeBusk College of Osteopathic Medicine; Silvia M. Ferretti, D.O., Lake Erie College of Osteopathic Medicine; Philip C. Slocum, D.O., FACOI, FCCP, FCCM, A.T. Still University Kirksville College of Osteopathic Medicine; Boyd Buser, D.O., University of New England College of Osteopathic Medicine; Stephen C. Shannon, D.O., M.P.H., American Association of Colleges of Osteopathic Medicine; William D. Strampel, D.O., Michigan State University College of Osteopathic Medicine; Anthony J. Silvagni, D.O., Pharm.D., M.Sc., FACOF, Nova Southeastern University College of Osteopathic Medicine; Michael B. Clearfield, D.O., Touro University (California) College of Osteopathic Medicine; Douglas L. Wood, D.O., Ph.D., A.T. Still University College of Osteopathic Medicine – Mesa; and Thomas A. Cavalieri, D.O., University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey School of Osteopathic Medicine.



AACOM personnel in attendance (from left) included: Nancy C. Cioffari, vice president for finance and administration/CFO; Michael J. Dyer, J.D., vice president for government relations; Beth Martino, manager of meetings and events; Stephen C. Shannon, D.O., M.P.H., president/ chief executive officer; Linda Heun, Ph.D., vice president for medical education; Anna M. Naranjo, executive assistant to the president; Wendy Bresler, vice president for communications and marketing; and Tom Levitan, vice president for application service and research.

Omega Beta Iota Student Honor Society Rewards Political Activism

By M4 Student Dana Block



It is through the vision, initiative, and diligence of early leaders that the osteopathic profession originally gained credibility, and eventually recognition, by the U.S. government. Today, the osteopathic profession is engaged in important political struggles that include proper physician reimbursements,

international recognition of the osteopathic profession, and improved health care for all Americans.

Osteopathic medical students are a vital component of the profession's political agenda, not only by helping determine some American Osteopathic Association priority issues (e.g., student loan repayments), but also by participating in political processes such as D.O. Day on the Hill. Osteopathic medical students who elect to be exceptionally politically active throughout medical school will now be rewarded by becoming eligible for the distinction of induction into Omega Beta Iota—the new national osteopathic political action honor society.

Omega Beta Iota is an affiliate organization of the Student Osteopathic Medical Association (SOMA). The society's goals, aside from rewarding osteopathic medical student political involvement, include establishing a more politically conscious and active osteopathic constituency. Fostering teamwork, discussing issues, and sharing common political goals will help create a network of osteopathic physicians who are united in a political sense. This, in turn, will further strengthen and facilitate the future success and growth of the osteopathic profession.

The inaugural induction ceremony for Omega Beta Iota is scheduled to occur in conjunction with D.O. Day on the Hill in late April 2007. Applications must be postmarked by March 15, 2007. For applications and additional information, including induction requirements, please visit the political affairs section of the SOMA Web site at www.studentdo.com or contact Dana Block, SOMA national director of political affairs, via email at dblock@nsu.nova.edu.

Multifaceted Agenda for AHEC

■ NSU-COM Area Health Education Centers (AHEC) staff members, especially Steve Bronsburg, M.S., M.H.S.A., have been working closely with the college's Center for Bioterrorism and All-Hazards Preparedness to develop a series of regional training programs for school nurses and administrators focusing on bioterrorism and disaster preparedness. In December 2006, the first training session in this series took place in Lee County for over 50 school health nurses and administrators. Several other programs will be coordinated during the coming months in Brevard, Holmes, Leon, and Miami-Dade counties.

■ Rosebud Foster, Ed.D., M.S., and Steven Zucker, D.M.D., M.Ed., made a poster presentation at the American Public Health Association 134th Annual Meeting and Exposition, which was held last November in Boston, Massachusetts. Their presentation, entitled "Racial and Ethnic Health Disparities: Barriers to Health Care Access Among Minority Populations in Florida," was based on statewide research findings examining a broad range of health care access issues.

■ The AHEC Program is collaborating with the HPD Colleges of Osteopathic Medicine, Pharmacy, Dental Medicine, Optometry, and Allied Health and Nursing to actively support multidisciplinary community-based student clinical training rotations in underserved areas throughout the region. In the past year, over 900 HPD students provided over 200,000 hours of services while receiving AHEC training in rural and urban areas in over 20 South and Central Florida counties.

■ AHEC has teamed up with six medical residency programs of the NSU-COM affiliated Consortium for Excellence in Medical Education to bring medical services to underserved communities. These include the family medicine residency programs at Palmetto General Hospital, North Broward Hospital District, Sun Coast Hospital, and Florida Hospital East Orlando; the pediatric residency program at Palms West Hospital; and the preventive medicine residency program at the Palm Beach County Health Department.

COMMUNICATIONS

Since July 1, 2000, 12 grants, contracts, and endowed gifts have been obtained by the Department of Education, Planning, and Research thanks to the leadership of Associate Dean Leonard Levy, D.P.M., M.P.H. These include one contract (Florida Department of Health), two endowed gifts (Burnell and Kenyon), and nine Health Resources and Services grants.

M4 students Ann Duskin and Ryan Chauffe had a case report entitled "Pneumothorax Secondary to Acupuncture" published in the November 2006 issue of the *Southern Medical Journal*.



Arnold Melnick, D.O., M.Sc.

I can't remember what meeting it was—it seems to me that it was not an osteopathic meeting. It was in Washington, D.C., in 1983, and the speaker was Cherry Tsutsumita, then the director of the national office of Area Health Education Centers.

Tsutsumita was an excellent administrator. She could be tough when she had to be,

but if you did things the right way, she was always helpful and kind. That afternoon, she gave a beautiful explanation of AHEC and its purposes, administration, and values. I sat astounded, then jealous, then curious.

What was my confusion? SECOM had already begun its rural medicine rotations, fulfilling a promise we made at the outset to teach rural medicine and to try to help Florida citizens who had inadequate medical care. We had already set up alliances with several rural clinics, and the program was in operation. I and several other staff members took turns going to Belle Glade, Clewiston, and other rural spots to supervise the program.

I was flabbergasted. What to do? What to say to Tsutsumita? I didn't even know the question to ask. Embarrassed, I sat through the question-and-answer period without opening my mouth. Finally, when it was over, I cornered her alone and asked the frankest question I could, realizing it could kill our prospects. "Miss Tsutsumita, we are already doing almost everything you described, and our program is in place," I explained. "So how do we go about getting some AHEC funding?" She was just as straightforward, telling me to, "Write an application as though you are going to do it when you get the funds."



Dr. Stan Cohen, our education guru, was asked to write the grant. We received a paltry couple hundred thousand dollars. There were no other applicants from Florida, and to us it seemed to say, "Here's a couple of bucks until the major schools want to take part." But we accepted it as serious: We wanted to get in the game with—or without—the big boys.

A few months earlier, a young man had visited us looking for a job because his mother had moved to Miami Beach. He was working and knowledgeable and doing a splendid job—where else?—in an AHEC program in Virginia (serendipity again?). We were impressed with him but had nothing to offer at the time. But when our AHEC grant came through, Dr. Steve Zucker was immediately hired as our AHEC administrator.

He grew with the program—or rather he grew the program for us. Today, he has become associate dean for community affairs, as well as continuing to be director of the college's AHEC Program—a program that has received many millions of dollars from AHEC, its affiliated programs, and Florida offshoots. And we now include many cooperating schools and institutions, including our sister schools of pharmacy and optometry, as well as several other colleges—thus providing even more service to Florida communities.

When the University of Miami (UM) decided to apply for a startup AHEC grant the following year, we helped and even endorsed the application, with Dr. Zucker serving as an unofficial consultant to UM. Several years later, Tsutsumita called and asked me to speak to the then dean of the University of Florida College of Medicine about requesting a grant and becoming part of the Florida AHEC Network. He essentially told me on the phone, "Don't call us, we'll call you." Ultimately, the University of Florida applied for and set up a fine program in the northern part of the state. Today, the director of that AHEC program is the new dean of the school.

Thanks to the work and coordination of Dr. Zucker, Florida now has a network covering the entire state, with a myriad different programs—and all four medical schools work together cooperatively and cordially.

The general rule of AHEC was to have one school run an AHEC program in each state. But SECOM, and Dr. Zucker, set the pattern for a program that pulled all four schools together, with the single objective of helping those Floridians who need medical help, both in cities and rural areas.



Dr. Arnold Melnick is the founding dean of Southeastern College of Osteopathic Medicine (the precursor to NSU-COM). His pithy columns serve as a humorous and insightful bridge to the past—and remind us of how far our college has come in a relatively short period of time.

Student Government Association Report



By Kathryn Rooth, SGA President

SGA 5k Race to Fight Childhood Obesity



The SGA and the MILES Committee are working together to put on a 5k race and a one-mile fun run for kids. The goal of the race,

which will be held April 14, 2007, is to raise awareness about childhood obesity. All proceeds will go toward fighting childhood obesity. Following the event, there will be tables set up where attendees can learn about healthy eating and lifestyles for children. In addition, there will be local fitness centers present to calculate BMIs and educate children about the importance of exercise. Race applications will be available online at the SGA Web site. The SGA is also looking for additional volunteers to assist with the event.

Student D.O. of the Year Award

This prestigious award is in its 14th year and continues to evolve and grow in significance. The award's primary focus is to acknowledge students' commitment to their school, their community, and the osteopathic profession. All osteopathic medical students are eligible for nomination. The Student D.O. of the Year winner will be notified in mid-March 2007. The winning student's application will also be forwarded to the national Council of Osteopathic

Student Government Presidents (COSGP) Selection Committee for consideration of the National Student D.O. of the Year Award. This is the first time a National Student D.O. of the Year Award will be given. In addition to a plaque, the national winner will receive a \$1,000 scholarship.

AOA Convention COSGP Meeting

The COSGP conference was held just prior to the AOA convention in Las Vegas. The meeting had several guest speakers, including the chair of the NBOME and AOA President John Strosnider, D.O. NSU-COM is on the Med-Ed and Research Committee this year. We are currently gathering information on each school's curriculum, and once this data is compiled, we will try to find areas of strengths and weaknesses within each school. The AOA convention brought over 10 students to Las Vegas for various events such as SOMA and Sigma Sigma Phi.

Club of the Month

The SGA has taken on a new initiative involving voting for Club of the Month. October's Club of the Month was the Student Association of Obstetrics and Gynecology. SAOG sponsored

Breast Cancer Awareness Month by coordinating a jeans day and having breast cancer survivors come and speak with the students. November's Club of the Month was Sigma Sigma Phi. Sigma hosted the Rotation Luncheon at the Renaissance Hotel in Plantation, which allows third-year students to come back and speak about their various experiences at their rotation sites.

Research Corkboard

The SGA recently dedicated a new corkboard by the HPD Library for students to post any research they may have worked on in the past year. The board is available for all the different health professions to post their work to share with the rest of the school.

Clinical Educator of the Year

The SGA has taken the initiative to start a Clinical Educator of the Year Award for third- and fourth-year students. During their two years of clinical rotations, students will be able to nominate an exemplary physician who also takes the time to comprehensively educate them. The award will be given to a physician from each of the core rotation sites in the third year.



COSGP members pose in front of an Elvis Presley statue outside the Las Vegas Hilton.



Stephen Bowen, M.D., professor and co director of the Behavioral Health Promotion Program, added another notch to his professional resume by accepting the newly created position of director of graduate education. In this additional role, Dr. Bowen is responsible for the supervision of the development, coordination, implementation, and

evaluation of all NSU-COM non-doctoral graduate education programs through interaction with the individual program directors. However, Dr. Bowen will continue to serve as co director of the Behavioral Health Promotion Program.



Renee Alexis, M.D., assistant professor of obstetrics and gynecology, performed the first-ever Essure minimally invasive hysteroscopic sterilization procedure at Fort Lauderdale's Broward General Medical Center. The procedure promises to be a safer and more effective form of permanent sterilization. Dr. Alexis is the first OB/GYN faculty member to

perform the Essure procedure and will be responsible for training other physicians at Broward General Medical Center on how to perform the technique.



Michael Patterson, Ph.D., professor and assistant chair of the Department of Osteopathic Principles and Practice, penned an editorial titled "Mechanisms of Change: Animal Models in Osteopathic Medical Research" that appeared in the October 2006 issue of the *Journal of the American Osteopathic Association (JAOA)*. Dr. Patterson

currently serves as an associate editor of the JAOA.



Joseph De Gaetano, D.O., M.S.Ed., FAAFP, FACOFP, associate professor of family medicine and assistant dean of clinical curriculum and GME, was inducted into the AOA Mentor Hall of Fame during the organization's 111th Annual Convention and Scientific Seminar. In addition, he had an article entitled

"Self-Regulated Learning: A Model to Employ in Medical Education" published in the November-December 2006 issue of *Osteopathic Family Physician News*.



Cecilia Rokusek, Ed.D., R.D., executive director of education, planning, and research and project manager of the Center for Bioterrorism and All-Hazards Preparedness, was elected vice president of the International Society of Czechoslovak Arts and Sciences, which is an international group of academicians and scholars with Czech or Slovak ancestry. The

society, which has over 5,000 members worldwide, is committed to promoting Czech and Slovak culture worldwide, establishing a worldwide network of scholars, artists, scientists, and other professionals, and fostering worldwide cooperation between scientists, artists, and other professionals.



Naushira Pandya, M.D., CMD, associate professor and chair of the Department of Geriatrics, served as a featured speaker at the Best Care Practices in the Geriatrics Continuum symposium held October 20-22 in Orlando, Florida. During the conference, which was jointly sponsored by the

Florida Medical Directors Association and the American Medical Directors Association, Dr. Pandya discussed the topic "Basic Training for New Health Care Practitioners and Those New to Long-Term Care." She was also featured in a November article on geriatrics in the *South Florida Sun-Sentinel* and provided lectures on "Diabetes in the Elderly," "Stroke Risk in Elderly Patients," "Type 2 Diabetes Treatment and Adrenal Insufficiency," and "Microvascular Complications of Diabetes" at the local, statewide, and national level.



Robert Hasty, D.O., assistant professor of internal medicine, presented a lecture on "Antithrombotic Update 2006" at the 31st Annual Convention of the SW Florida Osteopathic Medical Society in Sanibel on November 3 and discussed "Cardiovascular Update 2006" at the inaugural Louisiana Osteopathic

Medical Association meeting on November 4. In addition, Dr. Hasty appeared on the milestone 200th episode of the Health Professions Division cable TV program *Dateline Health*, where he discussed "Advances in Medicine," and made a presentation to participants in the Medical Explorers Program on October 30 in an attempt to foster interest in high school students about pursuing a career in medicine.



Howard Neer, D.O., FACOFP, professor and associate dean of alumni affairs, earned a prestigious honor in October when he received the Distinguished Service Award from the American Osteopathic Association's Board of Trustees. The award, which was presented to Dr. Neer during the opening session of the 111th AOA Convention

and Scientific Seminar in Las Vegas, Nevada, is the association's highest award and is granted to deserving members for their accomplishments in scientific, educational, or professional affairs.



Monica Warhaftig, D.O., assistant professor of geriatrics, earned third-place honors in the Florida Medical Directors Association's Best Caring Practices in the Geriatrics Continuum 2006 symposium poster contest, which was held in October in Orlando, Florida. Dr. Warhaftig's poster, which was coauthored with Naushira Pandya, M.D.,

CMD, was entitled "Development of an Interdisciplinary Falls Clinic." Diane Sanders, D.O., who is a fellow in the Department of Geriatrics, received honorable mention for her poster entitled "Hypomagnesaemia in Long-Term Care."



Stanley Cohen, Ed.D., professor and vice provost for educational support for the Health Professions Division, was elected to the Association for the Behavioral Sciences and Medical Education Board of Directors at the organization's national convention last October. He also presented a lecture on teacher/learning styles called "I'm a

Tree, I Can Bend" at the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator regional convention in November and at an NSU-COM grand rounds session in December.

Barbara Arcos, D.O., assistant professor of family medicine, presented a lecture on "Spirituality and Medicine" at WPBT Channel 2's Fourth Annual Speaking of Women's Health Conference, which was held November 18 at the Signature Grand in Davie.

Daniel Shaw, Ph.D., associate professor of family medicine, presented a paper entitled "Humor: Using Inviting Humor to Facilitate Teaching" at the 23rd Annual World Conference of the International Alliance for Invitational Education in Asheville, North Carolina, last September.



NSU-COM Dean Anthony J. Silvagni, D.O., Pharm.D., M.Sc., FACOFP, was inducted into the American Osteopathic Association Mentor Hall of Fame during the organization's 111th Annual Convention and Scientific Seminar, which was held last October in Las Vegas, Nevada. The Mentor Hall of Fame honors members

of the osteopathic family for providing outstanding mentorship and support to osteopathic medical students, interns, residents, and new-in-practice physicians while also promoting the spirit of osteopathic philosophy, principles, and practice.



Jennie Q. Lou, M.D., M.Sc., professor of public health and director of medical informatics, had her article entitled "Cognitive Challenges: Getting the Help You Need" published in a recent issue of *MS Focus*. In addition, she coauthored a presentation on "Change of Physician Order Behavior Through the Implementation of Computerized

Order System" at the American Medical Informatics Association Annual Meeting in Washington, D.C., in November 2006. She also coauthored a presentation on "Access to Oral Health Among the Homeless Population in South Florida" at the 134th Annual Meeting and Exposition of the American Public Health Association last November in Boston, Massachusetts.



K.V. Venkatachalam, Ph.D., associate professor of biochemistry, served as program chair for the Chemical Sciences Symposium of the South Florida Section of the American Chemical Society. During the symposium, which was held November 18, 2006, at NSU's Health Professions Division, Dr. Venkatachalam presented a lecture on

nucleotides entitled "3'-phosphoadenosine 5'-phosphosulfate, PAPS: The Universal Sulfonate Donor of Sulfotransferase Reactions."

Osteopathic Medical School Family Expands Again

On December 9, Touro College of Osteopathic Medicine, New York received provisional accreditation from COCA and was accepted to membership in AACOM by a vote of the Board of Deans' Executive Committee on December 11. Martin Diamond, D.O., will serve as the college's dean.



Kenneth Johnson, D.O., FACOOG, associate professor of obstetrics and gynecology and director of NSU's Women's Health Center, presented a lecture on the new vaccine Gardasil that helps prevent cervical cancer at the WPBT Channel 2 Fourth Annual Speaking of Women's Health Conference held November 18 at the

Signature Grand in Davie. He was also appointed as chair of the Quality Review Committee at Broward General Medical Center in Fort Lauderdale. In this capacity, Dr. Johnson will review all quality events of the hospital's OB/GYN physicians and make recommendations to the chief of staff.



Edward Packer, D.O., FAAP, FACOP, associate professor and chair of the Department of Pediatrics, lent his time and expertise to a health fair held at the David Posnack Jewish Community Center in Davie. He also played an integral role at the American College of Osteopathic Pediatricians' fall meeting in Las Vegas, Nevada, where he moderated

a day's worth of sessions and served on a panel that discussed "Children's Responses to Disasters."



Jose Arrascue, M.D., clinical assistant professor of internal medicine/nephrology, was installed as president of the Palm Beach County Medical Society at its annual gala held November 4 at the Kravis Center in West Palm Beach. Dr. Arrascue, who has been a Palm Beach County Medical Society member for 26 years,

is one of the founding members of both Project Access and the Emergency Department Management Group.

Three faculty members from the Department of Internal Medicine—Robert Hasty D.O., Gary Hill, D.O., and Samuel Snyder, D.O.—served as presenters at the 66th Annual American College of Osteopathic Internists Convention held October 18-22 in Phoenix, Arizona. Following are the lectures they gave at the symposium:

- *Dr. Hasty* - "Antithrombotic Update 2006"
- *Dr. Hill* - "Health Care Disparities 2006"
- *Dr. Snyder* - "Cardiorenal Syndrome"

Faculty Presentations

111th Annual AOA Convention
and Scientific Seminar

October 16-20, 2006

Las Vegas, Nevada

"Bioterrorism/All-Hazards Preparedness"

James Howell, M.D., M.P.H., Leonard Levy, D.P.M., M.P.H., and Anthony J. Silvagni, D.O., Pharm.D.

"Children's Unique Issues in Bioterrorism and Other Disasters"

Edward Packer, D.O.



In November, representatives from the Florida AHEC Network attended a planning meeting at NSU's Health Professions Division to discuss an array of issues. Pictured (front row from left) are: Anne Maynard, University of South Florida AHEC Program; Dr. Barbara Richardson, University of Florida AHEC Program; Carole Todini, University of Miami AHEC Program; and Dr. Cindy Selleck, University of South Florida AHEC Program. Pictured (back row from left) are: Debbie Hawkins, University of Florida AHEC Program; Dr. Art Fournier, University of Miami AHEC Program; Dr. Fred Lippman; and NSU-COM AHEC Program personnel Dr. Rosebud Foster, Dr. Steven Zucker, and Steve Bronsburg.



During a recent suture clinic coordinated by the Student Osteopathic Surgical Association, David Thomas, M.D., J.D., professor and chair of the Department of Surgery, explains a specific technique to M1 student Emmie Barford.



Upgraded HPD Simulation Lab Provides High-Tech Training to Students and Residents

The willingness of the NSU Health Professions Division administration to do whatever is necessary to enhance the education of its students can be witnessed in the division's Simulation Lab, which recently added two new exam rooms and received a total equipment upgrade.

The lab, which is used by NSU-COM to conduct objective structured clinical examinations (OSCEs) for its medical students and residents, is now equipped with cutting-edge digital recording technology that eliminates the need to record individual videotapes for every student. More importantly, the numerous renovations are providing a significantly superior learning experience for all involved.

"One of the reasons we needed this upgrade was that the equipment we were using was fairly old," explained Loretta Graham, Ph.D., assistant professor of internal medicine and medical education specialist. "Often, when students would come to us to review a video, there was no sound or the picture quality was bad. Expanding from 10 to 12 rooms was also important because we had a class of about 180 students

when I started here over five years ago. Today, we have over 230. Trying to accommodate the increased number of students in a reasonable amount of time with only 10 OSCE stations had become very difficult. By adding two rooms, it's amazing how many more students we can examine in a shorter period of time."

Because the OSCE process is now captured via digital technology, audio and video glitches are rare. "The digital recordings are stored on a server, so we no longer have to accumulate hundreds of videotapes in boxes, which we had to search through to find a particular student's video," she stated. "We also have two digital cameras per room, which allows us to film from two different angles, plus sensitive microphones in the center of the rooms that can actually pick up whispers."

The welcome upgrades have also eliminated the laborious process of using a TV/VCR and fast forwarding through an OSCE videotape to view a particular section. "What I appreciate so much about the new system is that if I need to go over a case with a student, I can sit at my desk and pull the video up on my computer, have the student come in, and we

Upgraded Sim Lab Provides Top-Notch Training



can look at it together in mere seconds,” Dr. Graham explained. “I can also bookmark a section of the digital video and pinpoint the portion we need to review, which saves so much time. Students can now go to three

different computer labs within the Health Professions Division and look at their own videos as long as they bring a set of headphones with them. Another benefit is that faculty members are now able to sit at their desks and watch the examinations live.

“The new system also affords us the ability to accurately time each OSCE station because the computer system makes automatic announcements rather than having one of us, in a very stressful situation, try to keep time and make all these announcements throughout the day,” she added. “Now, when we start an exam at 8:00 a.m. and say it will be over at noon, it is timed precisely.”

A newly created control room allows a camera operator to monitor all 12 rooms at the same time and manipulate the camera positions when needed. “During the interview portion of the exam, the students may be sitting. Once they start the actual physical, however, they move around the room. When they move, we need to switch cameras so we can get a better view of the physical exam,” Dr. Graham explained. “The control panel is pretty amazing because, in addition to showing all 12 rooms, one can also tell how many minutes are left at



Dr. Loretta Graham discusses an upcoming OSCE with some of the participating standardized patients.



Standardized patient Linder Berman (left) reviews a case with Janet Hamstra, Ph.D., assistant professor of internal medicine and medical education specialist, and Dr. Graham.

each station, which cameras are recording, and when the next announcement will be made because all this information is displayed on the computer screen.”

The monitoring room has also undergone a series of upgrades that have streamlined the OSCE process for the training staff. “We used to have 10 monitoring stations, but now we only have four,” she stated. “Each monitor is capable of viewing any of the 12 rooms and can display four rooms at once on the same screen. If you’re trying to look at a specific case and you have four patients doing the case who are in different rooms, you can have all four visible to you at that time. With a few clicks of a mouse, you can also be listening to any one of the four.”

Given the high-tech nature of the new equipment, Dr. Graham takes solace in the fact that assistance is only a quick phone call away when a problem arises. Thanks to the wonders of today’s technology, the Philadelphia-based company that installed the cutting-edge OSCE apparatus can actually access the equipment from its home office and repair the problems online.

In the past year, NSU-COM students rose from sixth to third place in regard to ranking in the COMLEX-PE portion of the exam—and with the new upgrades, Dr. Graham foresees the college’s students challenging for the rankings’ summit in the very near future. “The students I have spoken with have been thrilled with the excellent quality of both the audio and video of the new system,” she affirmed. “As a result of these enhancements, we are providing our students and residents with the most progressive training possible.”

Dr. David Thomas Makes Memorable Expedition to Guantanamo Bay

By Scott Colton, Director of Medical Communications



Paying a visit to Cuba's Guantanamo Bay is probably not something most people would jot down on their list of things to do. However, when the U.S. Department of Defense and U.S. Department of Justice asked David Thomas, M.D., J.D., to accompany several other individuals on a five-day fact-finding mission to Guantanamo last summer, he wholeheartedly embraced the opportunity.

"I was one of four people invited to go to Guantanamo Bay to evaluate the conditions of confinement at the detainee facility, which is home to less than 500 persons," said Dr. Thomas, who served as director of health services for the Florida Department of Corrections before accepting a position as chair of NSU-COM's Department of Surgery in 2003. "I was asked to evaluate the existing medical conditions and access to health care at Guantanamo, while the three other team members were there to evaluate administration, security, and other areas."

However, when the fact-seeking foursome arrived at Guantanamo to accomplish its mission, the participants quickly discovered that unrestricted access to the facility was not going to be provided voluntarily. "When we arrived, we were given a typical press/VIP tour," said Dr. Thomas, who is a member of the American Correctional Association Board of Governors. "But we didn't interact with any of the detainees, and we weren't even permitted to see any of them."

"After the first evening, I got together with the other team members and told them the situation was not acceptable because we were seeing only what the military personnel wanted us to

see," he added. "We talked to Navy Rear Admiral Harry Harris and told him we couldn't effectively evaluate the conditions unless we truly saw what was going on. After that discussion, we had total, complete, and virtually unfettered access."

Because the detainee population at Guantanamo currently consists of individuals deemed "enemy combatants," many of who are alleged al-Qaida operatives from Afghanistan who detest Americans and everything they stand for, special care has to be taken when evaluating them and their living conditions. "In order to evaluate a correctional system, you have to understand other correctional systems," Dr. Thomas explained. "They had several detainees who were on hunger strikes, which is something that happens in any correctional system. However, the way the hunger strikers were handled at Guantanamo was significantly better than the way we dealt with them in the Florida Department of Corrections, where we couldn't intervene medically until a prisoner passed out."

"At Guantanamo, when detainees say they are not going to eat, they are allowed to go on a hunger strike but are told they are going to have a nasogastric feeding tube placed down their throats," said Dr. Thomas of the procedure that is moderately unpleasant but not particularly uncomfortable. "Once they were informed of this, the number of hunger strikers dropped from 89 to 2."

Interestingly, the military personnel at Guantanamo Bay are extremely respectful of the detainees' fervent religious beliefs. In fact, the detainees pray about five times a day and are permitted to do so without intervention as they read from the Koran—the holy book of Islam. "One of the early U.S. military chaplains at Guantanamo was a Muslim, and he made the determination that infidels should not touch the Koran," Dr. Thomas explained. "All Americans are considered infidels, so even if we were converted Muslims, according to that interpretation, we would still be infidels."

Unfortunately, because the detainees are programmed to do whatever is necessary to carry out the wishes of their malevolent leadership, some have hidden items, such as medications, in the bindings and spines of their Korans that were later used to help



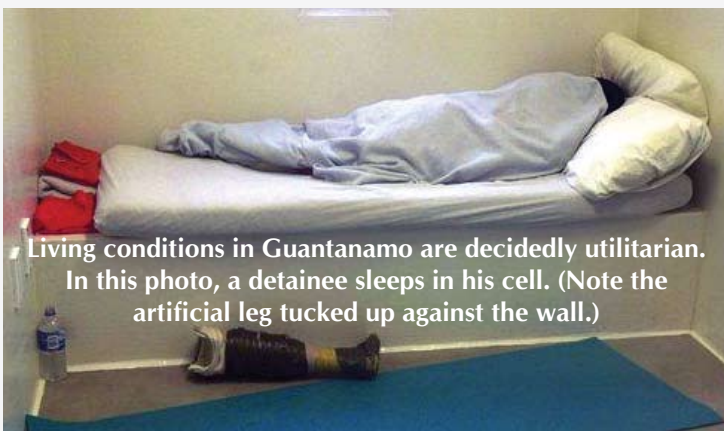
Fact-Finding Mission at Guantanamo Bay



them commit suicide. “Our four-person team felt very strongly that this was absurd, that this, just like any other prisoner’s or detainee’s property, ought to be searched,” Dr. Thomas stated. “However, Admiral Harris pointed out that while he understood why we felt very strongly about this, it was important to realize that how the Koran was treated in Guantanamo would ultimately determine whether people live or die.

“It may not be determined in Guantanamo, but someplace in the world, people will live or die because of the way we treat the Koran,” he added. “I hadn’t personally thought of those ramifications, so you can understand the enormous responsibility the military personnel have to assume at Guantanamo. If you want to search the Koran, the current procedure is that you bring in an interpreter who is native-born of the Islamic religion, and that individual will search it.”

Routine medical procedures conducted at Guantanamo also had to be handled differently—and with considerably more caution—due to the extreme fanaticism of the detainees. “I happen to be an expert on directly observed therapy because I initiated it at the Florida Department of Corrections,” Dr. Thomas said. “In a U.S. prison setting, you have to watch the detainees take their medication because pills can be sold to other prisoners or stored and taken at a later time to overdose. The normal way you do directly observed therapy is with a tongue depressor and a flashlight. I suggested this to the medical staff at Guantanamo, but Admiral Harris told me that



Living conditions in Guantanamo are decidedly utilitarian. In this photo, a detainee sleeps in his cell. (Note the artificial leg tucked up against the wall.)

wasn’t possible because he feared the detainees would bite the fingers off the U.S. health care personnel.”

During his assessment of the detainee facility, Dr. Thomas found the level of medical care to be quite exceptional. Access to that care, however, was another issue. “There was some misunderstanding on the part of the army about the quality of medical care, which is outstanding, and the access to it, which is a different issue. So I made some specific recommendations that would bring them in line with American correctional facilities,” he explained. “For example, if a detainee wanted to access medical care, the individual usually just spoke to one of the enlisted personnel that guard the area.

“In most correctional systems, that would not be acceptable,” he added. “In Guantanamo, your only way to access medical care would be to go to a correctional officer, who may have just had to manhandle you to get you out of or into a cell. As a result, most correctional systems also have a separate cadre of low-level medical personnel who make rounds periodically and ask if you want to see the nurse or the doctor. Since our visit, I believe they have implemented that suggestion.”

When asked to summarize his impressions of his historic trip to Guantanamo Bay, Dr. Thomas expressed his gratefulness for having had the opportunity to participate in such an informative and eye-opening experience. “I was very pleased to find that our country is treating the detainees far better than they treat us, and that the level of care is probably, in many ways, better than what American prisoners experience in the United States,” he said. “On a personal note, I have a greater appreciation for the depth of the irrational hatred these people have toward us. I don’t think we can ever have a meeting of the minds, which is why I think Guantanamo is a necessary situation.”

A Quick Gander at Guantanamo



Naval Base Guantanamo Bay is on the front lines of the battle for regional security and protection from drug trafficking and terrorism as well as protection for those who attempt to make their way through regional seas in un-seaworthy craft. During the past few years, Guantanamo Bay has become host to the Detainee Mission of the War on Terrorism following the 9/11 terrorist attacks.

The base has a unique posture in the western hemisphere in that it is the oldest U.S. base outside the continental United States and the only one in a country that does not enjoy an open political relationship with the United States. Located in the Oriente Province on the southeast corner of Cuba, the base is about 400 air miles from Miami, Florida.



CBAP

NSU-COM Center for Bioterrorism and All-Hazards Preparedness Goes National

By Scott Colton, Director of Medical Communications

It's been a rapid rise to preeminence for NSU-COM's Center for Bioterrorism and All-Hazards Preparedness (CBAP), which began as a South Florida taskforce in 2001 and has evolved into an entity charged with providing all-hazards education and training to health professionals and the entire health care workforce throughout the United States.

When the center was officially established on August 23, 2002, plans were already underway to solicit grant funding that would allow the CBAP to expand its educational scope into an array of areas. However, no one could have predicted how rapidly the nascent center would emerge as a statewide and national player on the bioterrorism and all-hazards preparedness front.

Chronicling CBAP's Ascension

The acquisition of a \$400,000 supplemental grant in September 2006 from the Health Resources and Services Administration

(HRSA) to expand CBAP programming to a national echelon was just the latest in a series of significant accomplishments that have been achieved by the center in its short yet rich existence. In 2005, the CBAP received two HRSA grants totaling \$4.8 million that targeted interdisciplinary all-hazards preparedness curriculum development and continuing education.

"It was a big coup for NSU-COM to get these grants because there were only 19 awarded in the country," said Cecilia Rokusek, Ed.D., who serves as executive director of education, planning, and research and CBAP project manager. "It's also important to note that in 2005, only three universities received both a center grant for continuing education and a curriculum development grant, and those were the University of Hawaii, Yale, and NSU."

The three-year, \$4.2 million continuing education grant is helping NSU-COM train practicing health professionals and

Answering the Call: CBAP Expands Scope

paraprofessionals that are located throughout Florida and represent a variety of health care disciplines. To accomplish this important task, NSU-COM partnered with neighboring Broward Community College through a subcontract to provide additional training to health professionals that require two years or less to earn their health professions degrees.

“With this partnership, we became major players in the provision of education for health professionals in training and health professionals in practice,” said Leonard Levy, D.P.M., M.P.H., who serves as director of the college’s CBAP and associate dean for education, planning, and research. “As a result, we are helping health professionals at all levels to better prepare to react to acts of bioterrorism and other catastrophes such as hurricanes, tornadoes, and other natural disasters. This is a major responsibility, and we don’t accept it lightly.”

The second grant, which encompasses curriculum development, is enabling the center to plan, develop, and provide a curriculum that prepares health professional students to work as a coordinated team in major disasters and public health emergencies, including acts of terrorism, natural disasters such as hurricanes and tornadoes, or other catastrophes, both manmade and natural. To accomplish this task, students are provided the requisite knowledge and skills through discussions provided by experts in the field, case studies, and responses to events simulating actual occurrences. To assure students achieve identified competencies, they are evaluated through the use of a series of scenarios employing trained people who—in a standardized way—simulate casualties that could occur in the event of terrorist acts or natural disasters.

In addition to NSU-COM students, curriculum development involves the education of other NSU Health Professions Division students who are studying to become dentists, optometrists, pharmacists, nurses, public health professionals, occupational therapists, physical therapists, audiologists, and physician assistants. “Now that we are designated as a national center, the curriculum we develop for students in our programs can be replicated in other schools and universities across the country, free of charge,” Dr. Rokusek explained.

CBAP Goes National

With its reputation clearly on the ascendancy, NSU-COM’s proposal to become a national CBAP was accepted by HRSA, which selected 5 from the pool of 19 existing centers to expand their scope to a national level. Other recipients of

CBAP Mission Statement



“NSU-COM’s Center for Bioterrorism and All-Hazards Preparedness is a national center focused on interdisciplinary training, information dissemination, and technical assistance related to all-hazards preparedness in a global society.”



the \$400,000 supplemental grant were Columbia University School of Public Health, University of South Carolina School of Medicine, Yale-New Haven Medical Center, and Mather Lifeways in Chicago, which is affiliated with Rush Presbyterian Hospital and St. Xavier University.

The five aforementioned centers now comprise a collaborative entity called the National Education Strategy Team (NEST), which is a compilation of HRSA Bioterrorism Training and Curriculum Development Program supplemental awardees that will link together by sharing resources. These institutions have been awarded funds to develop, pilot test, and evaluate training programs for all community-based health care providers in the nation to respond to a large-scale public health emergency or mass-casualty incident. At the completion of the one-year project period, NEST will share lessons learned, recommendations, and the results of the pilot tests with HRSA. The evaluation work done and recommendations made will be important at the national level as future and ongoing training is planned.

The supplemental national grant is being overseen by James Howell, M.D., M.P.H., chair of the Department of Rural Medicine, who is serving as the project’s director, while Dr. Levy is responsible for developing a training template that will permit the CBAP preparedness programs to be implemented and utilized at sites throughout the United States.

“Our job is to develop a national template for all-hazards education preparedness for all health professionals and all those involved in the health care workforce,” said Dr. Rokusek. “We’re actually a little bit ahead of the game in this regard because the focus in our grant was to develop an online curriculum that would be available for all health professionals and health care workers, from the individual working in housekeeping to a hospital administrator.”

To accomplish this goal, the center is developing a four-tiered program that will include basic awareness, intermediate, advanced, and executive/hospital administration levels. The

Answering the Call: CBAP Expands Scope



basic awareness-level program has already been developed and is currently available online for four continuing medical education credits to health care professionals everywhere at no cost. “Our program is unique because it’s free,” stated Dr. Rokusek. “Most companies are selling all-hazards continuing education credits for thousands of dollars to hospitals and businesses.”

The courses, which will be available in English and Spanish, can also be accessed in a variety of formats, including online, face-to-face, on a CD, or in a blended approach. In addition, more than 45 health professions disciplines have received continuing education approval for these courses.

“This program is so important because the federal government and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention have realized that all-hazards means more than bioterrorism or a hurricane,” she added. “It also encompasses a manmade or natural disaster that affects a country, state, or small region. This can include everything from tornados, earthquakes, mudslides, hurricanes, fires, tsunamis, and blizzards to something sinister like someone sprinkling toxic chemicals on our nation’s supply of fruits and vegetables. The objective is to have people prepared at all levels so that what happened during and after 9/11 and in New Orleans during and after Hurricane Katrina doesn’t happen again.”

Ambitious Agenda Awaits CBAP

When the center received its \$4.2 million continuing education grant in 2005, there were a number of topics it wanted to address, with a focus on vulnerable population groups in Florida topping the list. “Our grant was unique in that we focused on vulnerable populations,” said Dr. Rokusek, who served as dean of the College of Education at Winona State University in Minnesota before joining the NSU-COM team. “In Florida, there are 13 populations the state has identified as vulnerable populations. I’ve studied all 19 of the grants, and none of the others has done what we’ve done in this area. As we look at these vulnerable populations, we’re going to find out more about their ability to respond and what their needs are. We also need to do more research in this area, such as how do the elderly deal with an all-hazards event when they just moved to Florida from South Dakota where they’ve had no experience with hurricanes?”

As it evolves, Dr. Rokusek foresees a day when NSU-COM’s

CBAP Partners with Florida Dept. of Health



The comprehensive CBAP was also awarded a six-year contract totaling more than \$1 million from the Florida Department of Health to provide all-hazards training to school nurses and others responsible for the health and safety of children in public and private schools throughout Florida. CBAP is in the fifth year of this project, which has provided training from Pensacola to South Florida with funds derived

from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Each two-day seminar provides discussions and small-group training workshops focusing on the nature and potential impact of various all-hazards events. Discussion also centers on the critical importance of communication within the schools and with community stakeholders and the development of a plan that includes frequent drills. Program faculty includes public health physicians, pediatricians, family physicians, nurses, legal experts, public safety officials, and representatives from the Florida Department of Health.

CBAP will be perceived as a multifaceted resource for all people looking to enhance their knowledge of all-hazards preparedness. “We want people to realize that this truly is a comprehensive center they can contact or visit to obtain important, no-cost information. Our staff is also available to provide customized presentations to the community on preparedness issues ranging from pandemic flu and school safety to various manmade and natural disasters.

“All-hazards preparedness is going to continue growing in need and importance in the future because our country will not take anything for granted anymore,” she concluded. “It puts Nova Southeastern

Targeting Florida’s Vulnerable Populations

- The Frail Elderly
- Children
- Rural Populations
- Persons Who Abuse Substances
- Non-English Speaking Residents
- Individuals with
- Cognitive Impairments
- Mental Illness
- Developmental Delays
- Physical Handicaps
- Sensory Impairments
- Homeless
- Migrant and Seasonal Farm Workers
- Seasonal Residents/Tourists/Visitors

University College of Osteopathic Medicine in a prime position to make a significant difference in the curriculum here in Florida and in the country. More importantly, it positions our CBAP to have a major role in prevention education to deal with all-hazards preparedness in the country—and perhaps the world.”

To learn more about the center’s activities or to register for free CME credits, please visit www.nova.edu/allhazards.

Rapid HIV Testing Relieves Stress for HPD Students

By Scott Colton, Director of Medical Communications



Becoming a health care professional may be a less-risky career choice than that of, say, coalminer, police detective, or construction worker. Still, there are many inherent hazards nurses, physicians, dentists, and other medical professionals must contend with on a daily basis.

One of the most-common dangers is needle-stick or other sharp-instrument exposure, which can be a frightening experience for health care workers who are fully cognizant of the way blood-borne viruses such as HIV and hepatitis are transmitted and spread. That's why NSU's Student Medical Center implemented an in-house rapid HIV-testing program that helps allay fears by providing test results in a mere 20 minutes.

When an exposure incident occurs in one of the on-campus clinics, the source patient and student immediately visit the Student Medical Center, where the source patient is screened using the OraQuick Rapid HIV Test. "Ninety percent of the time, source patients have never been tested for HIV, so we do rapid HIV testing on them, and the information is available within 20 minutes to assure prompt post-exposure prophylaxis for the student if needed," said Sandi Scott-Holman, assistant professor of family medicine and director of the Student Medical Center.

"Once a student gets pricked by a needle, he or she asks the source patient to come to the Student Medical Center. The majority of patients are nice enough to come for testing, although some refuse," she added. "We draw the source's blood and immediately

perform the in-house HIV test. The purpose of this, of course, is to know whether we need to treat the student and immediately put him or her on prophylactic medications. The source is also screened for hepatitis B and C through an outside laboratory."

However, if the exposure incident involves an HIV-positive patient who has revealed his or her status prior to receiving dental or medical care, the student or employee is instantly placed on prophylactic medication. "Let's say the worst-case scenario occurs, which is when a known HIV-positive source is involved," Dr. Scott-Holman explained. "We find out what medications the HIV-positive source is currently taking and, depending on the history, either a two- or three-drug regimen is recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. This is done to hopefully prevent or decrease the viral replication, and that's why you want to do it as soon as possible after the exposure incident, hopefully within two hours."

When students do have blood-to-blood contact with HIV-positive patients, a range of tests are done over a period of time to stay abreast of the students' overall health. "If you're going to be put on prophylactic medications, you have to have a significant amount of blood drawn up front because we have to check your liver function and other body systems the medication can affect," she stated. "Initially, your baseline numbers are established, and then we check again in 72 hours to see how you're doing because the majority of patients feel very nauseous and some get full body rashes."

Dr. Scott-Holman said the majority of needle-stick exposures occur in the dental clinic, where students are working in the cramped confines of a patient's mouth, whereas medical students most often experience their exposures during suturing procedures. Thankfully, no student has converted to HIV-positive status in the follow-up screenings.

"Implementation of the rapid HIV test has really decreased the amount of mental stress on the students," Dr. Scott-Holman admitted. "Knowing the facts can also put some fears to rest. For instance, your likelihood of contracting HIV through a finger stick is just .3 percent, even if it's through a known exposure. For hepatitis C, there's a 3 percent likelihood of contracting the virus, while there's a 30 percent chance of getting hepatitis B through an exposure.

"That's why I feel so strongly about hepatitis B vaccination prior to starting in a health professions program," she added. "All students should have their hepatitis B surface antibody checked following completion of the hepatitis B vaccination series."



Drs. Hilda and Joseph De Gaetano Adeptly Merge Careers, Marriage, and Parenthood

By Scott Colton
Director of Medical Communications



When Drs. Hilda and Joseph De Gaetano first laid eyes on each other at college registration in 1985, fireworks and that love-at-first-sight feeling were definitely in the air.

More than two decades and two children later, it's readily apparent that this hard-working duo is indeed a match made in D.O. heaven. And while they came from decidedly disparate backgrounds, with Hilda's Jewish childhood contrasted by Joe's catholic upbringing, the twosome eventually formed a tight-knit bond that extends to the multifaceted careers they enjoy today at NSU's College of Osteopathic Medicine.

Hilda's Osteopathic Odyssey

In many ways, Hilda De Gaetano, D.O., FAAP, FACOP, who serves as director of systems curriculum, was the sort of child every parent dreams of: conscientious, well behaved, focused, and studious. "I was a very good kid who never did anything wrong," said Hilda, who was born in Brooklyn, New York, but grew up on the south shore of Long Island. "I was very focused on my studies from the day I started first grade. In fact, my mother would often tell me to 'stop studying' because I always had my nose buried in a book."

Because both her father and uncle were D.O.s who shared a practice in Brooklyn, it may have seemed predestined for Hilda, who is the third of four siblings, to follow in their illustrious footsteps. And while she did indeed become a D.O., her familial history and the glut of popular medical shows that populated the T.V. landscape in the 1970s both played a key role in her decision. "I wanted to become a doctor because my dad was," she admitted. "But it was also because I was fascinated by ambulances and all the great medical shows I used to watch."

As she grew older, her thirst for knowledge intensified. Consequently, while many of her childhood peers showcased a palpable aversion to academics and homework, Hilda relished them. "One time at a family gathering, my aunt commented on my study habits and asked me, 'Is it really worth it, all the hard work?' And I looked at her and said, 'Yes, it is.' And I still feel that way. When my kids come home from school now, I don't understand why they're not rushing to the books to do their homework. I had to know everything, and it gave me such a feeling of accomplishment.

"I've always been a high achiever," she added. "Even today, if I think of something I don't know at 11:00 at night, I'll get out of bed to look it up. I won't wait until the morning. I could never rest knowing only 70 percent of the material. The great thing is my parents never pushed or put pressure on me. Until the day I went to medical school, my dad said to me, 'If you don't want to do this, you don't have to. You do what you want to do.'"

When it came time to choose a medical school, she decided the best course of action was to pursue a curricular program that best fit her competitive and highly driven personality—a seven-year accelerated program that seamlessly merged undergraduate and postgraduate education. "I always wanted to go to medical school, and I discovered there were programs where you could be accepted right from high school into college and medical school."

In 1985, Hilda's osteopathic journey began in earnest when she was accepted into the seven-year program that would commence at New York Institute of Technology and conclude at New York College of Osteopathic Medicine (NYCOM). It would also lead her to the man who would go on to become her soul mate and husband in 1992.

A Career Programmed from Birth

Unlike his bride to be, Joseph De Gaetano, D.O., M.S.Ed., FAAFP, FACOFP, assistant dean of clinical curriculum and graduate medical education and executive director of the Consortium for Excellence in Medical Education, had a distinctly different upbringing that revolved around stringent rules and adamant expectations concerning his becoming an osteopathic physician. "I grew up in an Italian catholic family

Faculty Profile: Drs. Hilda and Joseph De Gaetano

where the emphasis was 100 percent placed upon academic performance,” explained Joe, who grew up in East Northport, New York, which is on the north shore of Long Island. “Everything else was considered secondary. My parents were all about going to school, maximizing your time in school, getting good grades, studying, and working.”

Becoming an osteopathic physician was also something Joe’s father, who was a pharmacist, expected he and his two brothers to become—which they did—even though the De Gaetano family did not have any sort of storied D.O. lineage. “My father always had the ambition that his children would be physicians,” he explained. “My father had a lot of pharmacist friends who decided they wanted to go on and become doctors. The reality was that, at that time, M.D. schools would not accept someone who had another profession, but osteopathic schools did. So my father transposed this ambition onto his children.”

While Hilda acquired her amazing work ethic naturally, Joe’s nose-to-the grindstone philosophy was instilled at a very young age by his parents. “My father, who owned his own pharmacy, was a workaholic,” he stated. “I grew up in a very traditional home where my father had his responsibilities and my mother had hers. As a result, they expected us to work very hard as well.”

In addition to doing household chores, Joe quickly learned the value of a dollar—and some valuable life lessons—when he began working in his father’s friend’s pharmacy at the age of 15. “When I worked in the pharmacy, I did everything,” said Joe, who continued working there until he graduated from medical school in 1992. “I balanced the cash register, acted as the janitor, filled prescriptions, stocked the shelves, and did the payroll. It was probably the best training I ever had. In fact, much of what I do as a doctor today is based upon what I learned when I worked in the pharmacy. I was a painfully shy kid, so I really learned how to talk to and relate to people.”

After graduating from high school, Joe continued to layout his future by selecting



Hilda, age 14 months, in 1968.



Joe, cute as a button at age 2.



Their children, Danielle and Jacob.



Joe with his two brothers.



Hilda with siblings Jeffrey and Linda.

colleges that offered combined undergraduate and graduate degrees. During this time, Joe’s dad also encouraged him to pursue a military scholarship to help defray medical school costs. “My father knew the United States Army would pay for my education if I signed up for a military scholarship,” he explained.

When Joe showed up to register for his first slate of college courses at the New York Institute of Technology, which had a combined B.S./D.O. program with NYCOM, his parents’ dream of seeing their son become an osteopathic physician was about to take its first step toward fruition. What Joe didn’t expect, however, was to meet the future love of his life.

Hilda and Joe: Romance Simmers Slowly

Not surprisingly, Hilda can recall with total certainty the day she and Joe first laid eyes on each other: July 24, 1985. “We were the only two students at registration at the time, and I was with my mom and he was with his,” she said. “My first impression of Joe was that he looked really young.”

If you’re wondering what Joe’s initial impression of Hilda was, well let’s just say she left an imprint he would never forget. “I thought she was all hair and mouth,” he said half-jokingly before wisely adding, “I have loved my wife from the moment I saw her.”

So how did this seemingly inauspicious start lead to a rock-solid marriage that has been going strong for almost 15 years? Credit a shared work ethic and thousands of study hours spent together as the impetus. “We started with about 22 people in our class, which eventually trickled down to 17,” said Hilda, who wound up being the only woman in the group when the two other female students dropped out. “We all studied together, but during the first few years, Joe and I were just friends.”

“Essentially, we were in this small group of people, and we spent literally every waking moment together,” Joe explained. “Hilda and I started studying together because we’re both workaholics, and one thing led to another during our first year at NYCOM. Our major challenge

Faculty Profile: Drs. Hilda and Joseph De Gaetano



Pictured with Hilda during a trip to London in 1988 are her brother, Craig, and parents, Belle and Joseph Rothstein.

was that we were from different religions and had come from very different families.”

Military Stint Proves Challenging

By the time the De Gaetanos earned their D.O. degrees from NYCOM in 1992, success was clearly in the offing for both Hilda and Joe, who graduated with numerous honors and finished in the top five percent of their medical school class. However, the next six years would prove to be extremely arduous ones for them as they shrewdly navigated a minefield of personal and professional challenges.

First up was a jam-packed eight-day period in the spring of 1992 that started with their NYCOM graduation on June 2, continued with their marriage on June 8, and concluded on June 10 when they relocated to Georgia to begin their internship and residency training. However, unlike most newlyweds who try to spend every waking moment together, Hilda and Joe barely saw each other during their first few months of marriage.

“We rented a condo at a beautiful golf resort called Reynolds Plantation in Greensboro, Georgia, which was in the middle of nowhere,” recalled Hilda, who had accepted a one-year osteopathic rotating internship at Northlake Regional Medical Center in Tucker, Georgia, while Joe began his family practice internship and residency at Eisenhower Army Medical Center in Fort Gordon. “Unfortunately, we were never together. I had to drive 84 miles one way to get to work, and he would drive 75 miles one way in the other direction.”

During their first month of marriage, Hilda worked from 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m., while Joe, who was doing his E.R. rotation, worked the 2:00 p.m. to 2:00 a.m. shift, which meant they rarely saw each other. “I would leave in the dark, come home in the dark, and be totally alone while Joe worked through the night,” she said. “We would almost fall asleep during our separate drives home, so we gave each other numerous pep

talks on our car phones to help us stay awake.”

Given their druthers, neither Hilda nor Joe would have selected a rural area in Georgia to do their internship and residency training. Unfortunately, it was a decision that was completely out of their control. “Because I was on a military scholarship, I had to go where the army sent me,” Joe stated. “When you apply for a military residency, you do get to select from a wish list of where you would like to go, but in the end, you’re going to be sent where the military wants to send you.”

Adding to their already considerable stress was the fact that Hilda had to secure a residency match in the general vicinity of Joe’s to ensure they could continue living together while completing their postgraduate training. “Hilda wanted to become a pediatrician, and the only quality pediatrics residency in the area was located at the Medical College of Georgia in Augusta,” he said. “But she had to get in—and there had never been a D.O. that had ever trained there before.”

The Medical College of Georgia, which is one of the oldest medical schools in the nation, had a history of sticking to tradition. Consequently, the likelihood of a Jewish female D.O. from Long Island getting accepted into the program seemed a long shot at best. But get in she did, making history in the process by becoming the first osteopathic physician to earn entry into the college’s pediatrics residency.

Parenthood, Texas...and More Obstacles

Because Hilda had opted to do a one-year traditional osteopathic rotating internship prior to gaining acceptance into the Medical College of Georgia’s pediatrics residency, Joe completed his military residency in 1995—a year before Hilda. As a result, a new set of stressors reared their ugly head. “Traditionally, what the army does when you finish your residency is ship you all over the world from a wish list you give them,” Joe explained. “It’s unheard of for a new resident who has just graduated to



During Hilda and Joe’s 1992 wedding, Joe’s parents Vito and Marguerite De Gaetano posed with the happy couple.

Faculty Profile: Drs. Hilda and Joseph De Gaetano

remain on the faculty of an army residency program. That's why I knew I had to go above and beyond what the other residents did academically so I would be deemed good enough to stay on as faculty."

To accomplish this exceedingly difficult task, Joe became a one-man dynamo as he published articles, participated in research projects, volunteered for everything under the sun, earned chief resident status, and became a national Uniformed Services Academy of Family Physicians representative. Fortunately, Joe's diligence didn't go unnoticed by his supervisors, who allowed him to spend the next 18 months serving as the officer in charge of a troop medical clinic located at the Eisenhower Army Medical Center base.

As luck would have it, Hilda was about to join her husband at work for the first time in their marriage. After completing her residency in June 1996, Hilda secured a job at Eisenhower Army Medical Center working as a staff civilian pediatrician and residency faculty member. "I wanted a job that would allow me to start a family, so this was perfect," said Hilda, whose wish came true sooner than even she expected. "Lo and behold, at the end of June 1996, I got pregnant and was sick as a dog for the next nine months, but I still managed to work the entire time."

On March 14, 1997, Hilda gave birth to daughter Danielle, an event she calls, "The best day of my life. If someone had given me a choice and said you could be a physician or a mother but not both, I definitely would have chosen motherhood."

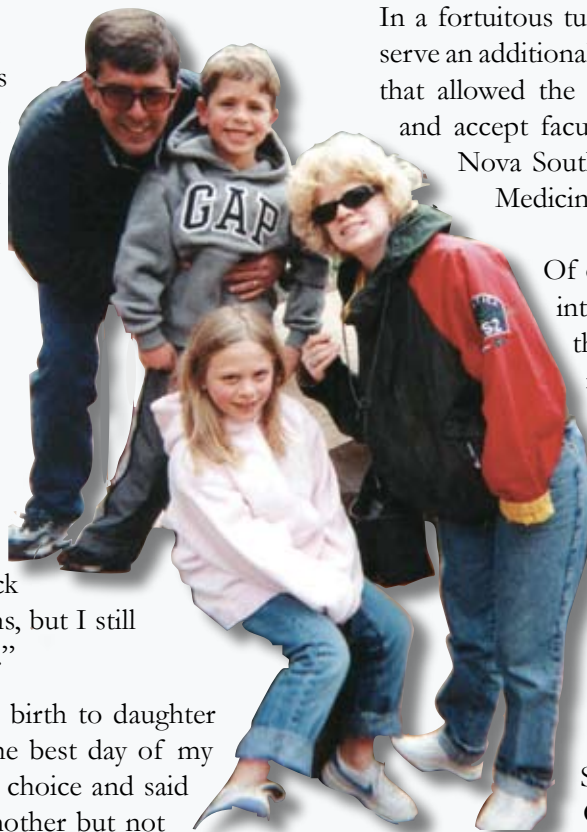
Everything seemed to be falling into place for the De Gaetanos, but in February 1998, Joe received some disconcerting news that would precipitate another series of life changes. "The army decided I had been at Eisenhower for far too long," explained Joe, whose four-year army stint was scheduled to conclude in the spring of 1999. "Not only did the army want me to move, they wanted me to go to Korea for one year to complete my military service. Unfortunately, when you are stationed somewhere overseas for only one year, the army will not pay for your family to move with you."

Understandably distraught at the thought of leaving his wife and newborn daughter behind in the United States for

a year, Joe appealed to his supervisors and proposed a bold compromise. "I told the army I would sign on for an additional year to stay in the United States instead of going to Korea," he stated. "Hilda had become pregnant with our son, Jacob (who was born in October 1998), during this time, so the army agreed to the compromise and sent us to El Paso, Texas, where I was commissioned to work as a staff family physician and establish a family medicine department at William Beaumont Army Medical Center at Fort Bliss. The army basically put us in a car, packed up all our stuff, and shipped us off to what seemed like the ends of the earth in El Paso, where we rented a little house."

In a fortuitous turn of events, Joe ended up never having to serve an additional year in the army thanks to a legal technicality that allowed the De Gaetanos to relocate to South Florida and accept faculty positions at a thriving institution called Nova Southeastern University College of Osteopathic Medicine in the spring of 1999.

Of course, just when the De Gaetanos were deep into planning their relocation to South Florida, the army attempted to toss a mammoth monkey wrench into the proceedings by personally confronting Joe. "One day, the commanding general at William Beaumont came down to the clinic and said, 'You know, you're supposed to be here for another year, don't you?' I explained that I had never signed a contract to this effect, but his reply was, 'Well, you'd better get a lawyer because the army thinks you're supposed to be here for another year.' By this time, we had already bought a house in South Florida and had jobs lined up at NSU-COM. But in the end, there was nothing the army could do about it because I hadn't signed anything," he explained.



Hilda and Joe with their children, Jacob and Danielle.

NSU-COM Offers Personal, Professional Fulfillment

Although the De Gaetanos have been happily ensconced at NSU-COM since 1999, Hilda and Joe seriously weighed their personal and professional options before making the decision to join the NSU team. "Prior to coming to NSU, we debated about going into private practice or choosing some other option," Joe admitted. "We had always been academic in scope, plus Hilda wanted to focus on being a mother and only work part time because the kids were her priority."

During his first few years at NSU-COM, Joe's admirable work ethic quickly earned the administration's respect, which has resulted in his being appointed to several positions of

Faculty Profile: Drs. Hilda and Joseph De Gaetano



During a trip to Phoenix, Arizona, in 2005, Hilda and Joe spent some quality time with their children and Hilda's parents, Belle and Joseph Rothstein, while attending the ACOFP convention.

prominence within the institution. "I started here as a family practice faculty member and spent most of my time down in the clinic overseeing the residents and seeing patients," Joe explained. "But I wanted to take on additional tasks. I had assumed so many significant responsibilities in the army, so I wrote a letter to Dr. Silvagni explaining how willing I was to do the same here at the college."

Dr. Silvagni immediately took Joe up on his offer, appointing him director of clinical curriculum in September 2000. In August 2001, the position was expanded to include oversight of the college's graduate medical education programs, and in 2005, Joe was elevated to his current position as assistant dean of clinical curriculum and graduate medical education and executive director of the Consortium for Excellence in Medical Education. "What I predominantly do now is continue to oversee the third- and fourth-year students, direct the OPTI and the GME programs that are affiliated with us, train the residents, and see patients in the Family Medicine Clinic in Davie."

While her husband was fast-tracking his way up the administrative ladder, Hilda was content to work part time as a clinical assistant professor of pediatrics and instructor in the Department of Osteopathic Principles and Practice, which allowed her to spend the bulk of her days with her two children. However, all that changed in September 2005 when Dr. Myint Myint Aye decided to retire from her position as director of systems. "When my kids got older, I always knew I wanted to pursue other professional opportunities, and I always said that when Dr. Aye retired, her position was the one I'd really like to take on at the college," she stated.

Now that her children are both attending elementary school, her full-time role as director of systems curriculum affords Hilda the opportunity to do something she truly loves while

also allowing her to be home at night with the kids. "This job provides me with the personal and professional balance I have always craved," she explained. "I love the environment at NSU because you can't become stale, and you always have to stay one step ahead of the students. I've been able to move in a direction I really enjoy, plus I still get to see pediatric patients and work with our medical students because I'm in the clinic 30 percent of the time."

Of course, with both Hilda and Joe now possessing high-powered careers, striking the right balance between familial demands and professional responsibilities can be difficult. So what is the secret to the De Gaetanos' success? "Working for NSU gives us the ability to make our lives work." Joe admitted. "If we were in private practice and on call all the time, our personal lives would definitely suffer. We've learned to maximize our time and divide and conquer when it comes to the kids and various household chores. We really don't have a lot of personal free time, so if we're not doing something work related, we're attending to our kids' needs."

Because they truly enjoy working at NSU-COM, neither Hilda nor Joe has any intention of seeking greener professional pastures any time soon. "I'm here because I thoroughly enjoy working with our medical students and residents," Joe stated. "In fact, that's the cornerstone of why we're both here. I'm a company guy, and I really enjoy sinking my teeth into a long-term commitment to one place. I'm very proud of being a physician, and I'm especially proud of being an osteopathic physician here at NSU's College of Osteopathic Medicine."



The De Gaetanos strike a pose at the college's 2006 graduation dinner banquet.

Sports Medicine Clinic Takes Cutting-Edge Approach to Care



The creation of an enhanced Sports Medicine Clinic at NSU's new University Center is taking the level of care that can be provided to NSU athletes and outside patients to fresh heights thanks to the acquisition of cutting-edge equipment and a significant upgrade in available services and treatments.

"The ultimate objective, as stated by NSU Executive Vice President Dr. George Hanbury, is to have our clinic become a sports medicine center of excellence," said Eric Shamus, Ph.D., assistant professor of osteopathic principles and practice and director of the Sports Medicine Clinic. "The next few years should prove to be exciting ones as we move toward this goal by providing an ever-increasing range of services."

To achieve that goal, the university has purchased and/or installed a range of equipment, including a portable X-ray machine, a HydroWorx pool, a VO₂max EKG machine, and a Biodex device, which measures the strength of different limbs, joints, and muscles. The enhanced clinic, which is open to the general public, will be especially beneficial to the numerous undergraduate athletes participating on the university's NCAA Division II teams. "Because of the equipment we now possess, we can evaluate an injury quickly and start the patient on a comprehensive rehabilitation program as soon as possible," said Andrew Kusienki, D.O., who serves as the clinic's primary sports medicine physician.

In his role as team physician for all NSU undergraduate athletic programs, Dr. Kusienki can now X ray a patient to check for fractures; however, if a ligament tear is suspected, the individual must be sent offsite to have an MRI taken to determine if surgery

is required. "Because we have the capacity to do our own X rays now, we can take the portable machine with us to NSU basketball games and X ray an injured player right there at the game," Dr. Kusienki explained.

"One of my goals is to see any acute injury within 24 to 48 hours," he added. "Our patient population is built-in with our undergraduate athletes, but I also want to reach out to the community and the high schools in the area. I'm currently the team physician for several area high schools, so I want to make sure our clinic services are available to them as well."

The clinic, which houses a full-service physical therapy unit, is also the place where all patients will come to participate in assorted tests and conduct their rehabilitation programs. "We now have a VO₂max EKG machine, which measures a person's oxygen capacity as he or she exercises so you can get a better reading on that person's cardiovascular fitness," said Dr. Kusienki. "We're also capable of doing treadmill stress tests with the machine to check a person's heart function."

For patients who need to rehab an injury, the new HydroWorx pool serves as the perfect way for them to regain mobility and strength without placing too much pressure on the injured limb. The pool, which is equipped with an underwater treadmill that is fully integrated into the pool floor, allows the user to correctly simulate land-based walking, running, or sports-specific activities. "It is also equipped with cameras so our staff members can see how the patient is walking, which allows them to adjust the treadmill accordingly based on how much weight bearing you want the patient to have," said Dr. Kusienki. "The pool also is outfitted with water jets that can be targeted at a specific area to aid the healing process."

As the NSU Sports Medicine Clinic moves closer to its goal of becoming a center of excellence, the facility is hoping to incorporate other related services into the sports medicine mix. "We've already added sports psychology, nutrition, and acupuncture services to help us become a truly comprehensive sports medicine clinic," said Dr. Kusienki. "Now, our hope is to have some orthopedic coverage in the future so we can have surgeons from our clinical faculty come in and see patients a few days a week."



Dr. Eric Shamus demonstrates the VO₂max EKG machine.



Preventive Medicine/Public Health Residency Program Celebrates 50 Years of Public Health Training

By Timothy O'Connor

Public Information Director, Palm Beach County Health Department

Can a county health department remain innovative in its service to the community for 50 years? The answer is an overwhelming yes when it comes to the Preventive Medicine and Public Health Residency Program at the Palm Beach County Health Department.

In 1956, Carl L. Brumback, M.D., M.P.H., who served as director of the Palm Beach County Health Department at the time, wanted to continue creating an exceptional public health program for the county. Early in his career, while working at the University of Michigan, Dr. Brumback felt that adding an academic aspect to a health department would help attract quality physicians to a lesser-recognized field.

Shortly after arriving in Palm Beach County, Dr. Brumback wrote the American Medical Association, the National Hospital Association, and the Council of Medical Specialties requesting that physicians be trained in a residency program within the health department. "I felt the best way to attract quality public health physicians was through an accredited residency program that was unique in the country," he stated.

In spite of criticism from University Medical Schools, the Council of Medical Specialties sent a three-member team to

evaluate the need and feasibility of training doctors within a health department. The review was extremely positive, accreditation was granted, and the U.S. Public Health Service sent Loren Rosenbach, M.D., to be the first physician in the Palm Beach County Health Department Public Health Residency Program, under Dr. Brumback.

Since those humble beginnings, over 80 doctors have served their residency in public health at the Palm Beach County Health Department—many of who have gone on to gain local, national, and international acclaim.

Donald Logsdon, M.D., a resident in the 1960s, was recruited by the U.S. Public Health Service to follow up with his



CEME Profile: Palm Beach County Health Department



Jean Malecki, M.D., M.P.H., FACP, director of the Palm Beach County Health Department and chair of the NSU-COM Department of Preventive Medicine.

residency research project at Brook Haven Hospital in Brooklyn, New York, and ultimately worked with Met Life and other insurers, proving that paying for preventive practices reduces the need for medical care and saves money. James Howell, M.D., M.P.H., a resident in the 1970s, went on to become Florida's first secretary of health, and Jean Malecki, M.D., M.P.H., has been the Palm Beach

County Health Department director since 1991 after serving as a public health resident in the 1980s. In addition, 12 current physicians working within the Palm Beach County Health Department are graduates of the program.

Since June 2002, the Preventive Medicine and Public Health Residency Program has had a full affiliation with Nova Southeastern University College of Osteopathic Medicine. During that time, eight osteopathic residents have graduated from the program, and one other is now a practicing resident along with five allopathic residents.

With the addition of the NSU affiliation, a new dimension was added to the program. In 2002, the American Osteopathic Association accredited the Preventive Medicine and Public Health Residency Program. Since 2002, the AOA accreditation has been combined with the continuing parallel accreditation by the Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education.

Interesting research conducted by recent residents includes

■ *Connie Maggi, M.D.*, whose review of obesity rates among school-age children in Palm Beach County helped set a national benchmark.

■ *Melissa Overman, O.D.*, who developed and conducted a behavioral health study on the aftereffects of

hurricanes among public health workers, including family conflicts, injuries, and depression. This study is serving as the first of its kind in the nation and will lead to best-practice methods on the mental health treatment of individuals assigned to long-term duty in highly stressful situations.

Other programs initiated by residents included the first comprehensive health program for seasonal farm workers and the ability to offer primary care under the administration of a public health department.

The Nova Southeastern University affiliation has taken the program to higher levels because residents train in every aspect of public health within the department, do a one-year rotation at the West Palm Beach Veterans Affairs Medical Center, and complete a master of public health degree.

Following any disaster, residents are assigned to wherever they are most needed. After Hurricane Katrina devastated New Orleans, Louisiana, and surrounding areas in 2005, the residents assisted evacuees housed at Palm Meadows—a horse-training facility in Palm Beach County. They also staffed the Special Care Unit—a 500-bed unit for Palm Beach County citizens requiring oxygen and other specialty care—following hurricanes Frances, Jean, and Wilma.

“You can do a better job if you develop partnerships with others in the area,” concluded Dr. Brumback. “It’s gratifying to know that others contributing to the residency program have helped to make the Palm Beach County Health Department a major force within health departments throughout the country.”



Current residents taking time out from their busy schedules are (from left) Tammy Thaggert, M.D., Joey de la Llana, M.D., Kathy Le, M.D., M.P.H., and Hossein Farsad, M.D. Not pictured but also in the program this year are Sherman Jew, D.O., and Mary Ann Cabrera, M.D.

Getting to Know... M4 Student Dana Block

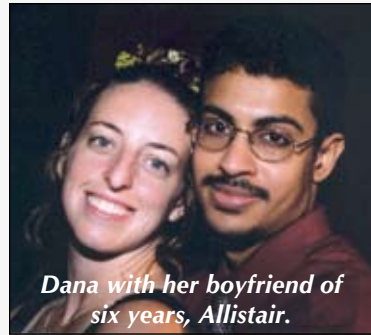


Why did you decide to matriculate at NSU-COM?

Put simply: NSU-COM had everything I was looking for in a program. Of course, the process was much more involved than that. I made a list of different things I was considering when selecting a medical school, including support networks, location, facilities, reputation, my impression of the school, attitudes of faculty/staff, etc. After I completed all of my med school interviews, I drew a diagram with columns for each school and rows for each “quality” I wanted in a program. I did not place any more emphasis on one quality than the next; I simply went through and checked the square under each school that had the particular quality I was considering. In the end, NSU-COM came out ahead by a couple of points. I am completely satisfied with my decision.

Had you ever heard of osteopathic medicine before applying to medical school?

My family’s physician in Missouri was a D.O. I did not really know what that meant, however, until I contemplated applying to osteopathic medical schools and began researching the osteopathic profession online. As I became more acquainted with osteopathic medicine, I recognized that the ideals at its foundation fit my personality hand-in-hand. I will admit that I was initially somewhat concerned about the supposed “inferiority”



Dana with her boyfriend of six years, Allistair.

associated with the osteopathic profession when compared to our allopathic counterparts. I did not want to have to prove myself any more than an allopathic student. However, now that I’m in my fourth year of medical school, I have come to realize we osteopathic medical students are just as

competent, if not more so, than our allopathic counterparts when it comes to performing outstanding clinical medicine. The supposed “inferiority” of D.O.s, while it may be encountered to some extent during osteopathic medical training, is not founded in fact and continues to diminish. I am proud to become a D.O., and I believe it is my job—and the job of my peers—to become an outstanding physician. In doing so, I will be a positive reflection of our profession and will help diminish the illusion of “inferiority” even more.

Why did you decide to pursue a career as a physician?

A feeling of absolute helplessness pushed me to pursue a career as a physician. The feeling stemmed from me sitting beside a hospital bed watching my mom’s condition deteriorate before my eyes. I was 19 years old, and she had been diagnosed with small-cell lung cancer only nine months earlier. In those nine months, my mom, who was a smoker, received chemotherapy, radiation, and even underwent experimental stem-cell transplantation. At one point, she had reached “remission” and was healthy enough for us all to take what ended up being our last family vacation—a trip to Disney World on the way down to Miami for my sophomore year of college. When my family returned to Missouri, however, my mom’s cancer recurred, mutated, and was no longer responsive to chemotherapy. I will never forget the day I received the phone call in the dorm—November 7, 1996—and all my dad said was, “It’s time.” I was on a plane home the following day. Over the weekend, I spent countless hours at the hospital, surrounded by family and friends. My mom was a fighter; she had a very strong personality and maintained her sense of humor up until she could no longer speak. The cancer and medications had morphed her body into someone I barely recognized as my mom. Eventually, I found myself hanging on to hear her next breath, afraid it would never come. She passed away on Monday, November 11, 1996, while my dad and I were out to dinner. I have no doubt that she intentionally timed it that way to protect us. She was 44 years old. My sister was 12. I felt many emotions throughout those few days, but the one that resonated was helplessness. Always a self-starter, I decided I would tackle that emotion head-on by becoming a physician and at least having a professional understanding of what happened to my mom.

What has been the most enjoyable aspect of your NSU-COM matriculation so far?

That’s easy—the people. I have had the awesome opportunity to

Student Snapshot: Dana Block

meet and work with so many different personalities in the past several years. I knew from my NSU-COM interview that I would feel at home on the campus because of the handful of people I met that day. I have been pleasantly surprised ever since. I am fortunate to have wonderful, interesting, and supportive classmates, and we have worked together really well throughout medical school. Additionally, faculty and staff members go out of their way to ensure the student experience is a positive one. Administration truly has the best interests of the students at heart, and students are supported and cultivated at NSU-COM. I have made friends and professional relationships at NSU-COM that will persist for my lifetime—that is something I definitely cherish.

Please list significant club activities and leadership positions you have held during your NSU-COM matriculation:

- SOMA National Director of Political Affairs
- Delegate to the AOA House of Delegates
- President of the Student Government Association
- Co-Coordinator of Sigma Sigma Phi's COM-PALS Program
- Council of Osteopathic Student Government Presidents (COSGP) Member
- Class of 2007 President in Freshman Year
- Creator of NSU-COM/Broward County Public Schools' "Be Smart, Don't Start" Annual Antismoking Poster Contest

What advice would you give to future NSU-COM students about coping with the stresses and challenges that come with attending medical school?

One of the most important things you can do is maintain your premed school identity. Make the time to do the things that you enjoy doing the most—take time out for yourself. Also, take advantage of the opportunities the school offers all students as far as becoming involved in extracurricular activities, completing fellowships, attending mission trips, etc. Respect the advice and experience of upperclassmen—they've recently been through everything you're going through. Work as a team with your classmates—you will all end up better for it. Remember to openly appreciate those around you who make sacrifices so you can attain a medical education, including your family, friends, peers, faculty, staff, and administrators.



My peers would be surprised to know this about me:

Several things come to mind: I am a master procrastinator and a hopeless romantic. I have a women's volleyball NCAA Division II National Championship ring from playing for Barry University.

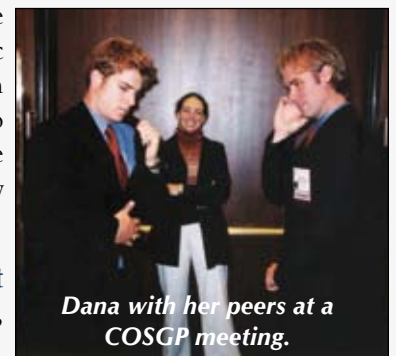
The funniest thing that ever happened to me:

The funniest thing that ever happened to me actually occurred three times within the span of a couple of weeks, which makes it even funnier. My sister and I went on a three-week European vacation during the summer between my first and second years of medical school, and it was awesome. As we were pulling our luggage along the sidewalk toward the train station in Rome, Italy, I felt something drop onto the top of my head. I reached up to wipe off whatever it was—and my fingers ended up covered in bird poop. Megan and I had a good laugh about it, and I got cleaned up in the bathroom at the train station before we left for Florence. A few days later, Megan and I were admiring the swans and the view of Lac Laman in Geneva, Switzerland. We were standing at the guardrail along one of the lake edges, and I was looking down when another "splat" of fresh bird poop miraculously landed in the center of my forehead! I have no idea how the bird accomplished nailing my forehead from that angle. Megan and I laughed hysterically and took a picture to commemorate it. The third time I was struck with bird poop was while we were waiting for a train in Nice, France. We were sitting on a bench, actually discussing the fact that I had evaded a bird bomb while in Nice, when a pigeon from above us kicked some bird poop onto my jeans. Thankfully it was dry! I laughingly surrendered at that point and escaped any further episodes the rest of our trip. I have heard people say that a bird pooping on you somehow signifies good luck. If that's the case, I must have been the luckiest person in Europe at that time.

When I graduate I plan to pursue a career in:

I plan to pursue a career in obstetrics and gynecology. I love that OB/GYN is a synergy of primary care medicine, obstetrics, and surgery. I also enjoy the academia of the field; there is some very interesting pathology to diagnose and treat. Overall it is a "happy" field, I enjoy the patients, and I am interested in improving general women's health. I may eventually decide to pursue a career in academic medicine, be it teaching or on the administrative side. I also plan to stay active within the AOA and my state and specialty osteopathic societies.

Three words that best describe me: Professional, dynamic, and real.



Dana with her peers at a COSGP meeting.

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 John Geake, D.O. ('93)
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2002 – Mary Allegro
 2003 - Arthur Snyder, D.O.
 2004 - Lori Dribin, Ph.D.
 2005 - Edye Groseclose, Ph.D.
 2006 – Howard Hada, Ph.D.

Celebration of Excellence Distinguished Alumni

1999 - Archie McLean, D.O. ('88)
 2000 - James Turner, D.O. ('88)
 2001 - Daniel McBath, D.O. ('90)
 2003 - Joel Rush, D.O. ('85)
 2004 - Jeffrey Grove, D.O. ('90)
 2005 - Gregory James, D.O. ('88)
 2006 - Glenn Moran, D.O. ('88)

Alumni in the News



Bret T. Ackermann, D.O. ('92) is currently serving as a lieutenant colonel and emergency medicine physician on active duty with the U.S. Army Medical Corps at Fort Bragg, North Carolina. His military service includes deployments with U.S. Special Operations Command to Afghanistan in support of Operation Enduring Freedom and Iraq in support of

Operation Iraqi Freedom. Dr. Ackermann also serves as the current president of the Association of Military Osteopathic Physicians and Surgeons (AMOPS), which was established in 1977 to serve and represent osteopathic physicians in the uniformed services.



Steve Cimerberg, D.O. ('87) was appointed as a national speaker for Palomar Medical Technologies, a Boston-based market leader in laser and IPL devices for skin photo-rejuvenation and fraxel laser technology. His procedure seminars and workshops are designed to advance and motivate physicians as well as enhance their enjoyment of the practice of

medicine. For more information regarding Dr. Cimerberg's seminars, please visit his Web site at advancedmedicalspa.com/seminars.

Seth Politano, D.O. ('05) has been named chief resident for 2007-2008 by the Department of Internal Medicine at the University of Texas Medical School at Houston.

Thomas Green, D.O., M.P.H. ('98) was recently appointed associate director of the Emergency Medicine Residency Program at Chicago College of Osteopathic Medicine of Midwestern University. In addition, Dr. Green was recently named a fellow of the American College of Osteopathic Emergency Physicians in Las Vegas, Nevada. He is currently a staff physician at St. Margaret Mercy Healthcare Centers in Hammond, Indiana.

Alumni Events at AOA Convention

In October 2006, approximately 175 alumni, faculty, and friends of NSU-COM had a chance to rekindle old relationships during a luncheon held at the American Osteopathic Association Convention and Scientific Seminar in Las Vegas, Nevada. During the luncheon, Dr. Anthony J. Silvagni conducted a comprehensive slide presentation to update the alumni on accomplishments relating to both the college and the university. That same evening, alumni were invited to a casual reception that allowed them to mingle in a more relaxed setting.



Scott Colton

As *COM Outlook's* editor-in-chief, I am always seeking ways to enhance the publication's content. One of the ways I hope to accomplish this is by providing expanded coverage of the college's alumni base. If you have published a book, received an award, or been promoted or elected to a lofty professional position, please contact me at (954) 262-5147 or submit the information and/or photos via email to scottc@nsu.nova.edu.

Alumni Association Fund Honor Roll

In the spring of 1999, NSU-COM launched an alumni-based fundraising effort to generate dollars that would be used to create an endowment fund to reduce future tuition costs for NSU-COM students and produce a funding pool that would be utilized for discretionary purposes as determined by the Alumni Association Executive Committee. Every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of the following list of donors; however, if you notice an error or omission, please contact Lynne Cawley in the Office of Alumni Affairs at (954) 262-1029 to rectify the matter. For example, the college has received a number of donation cards with credit-card pledges where no name is listed. The Office of Alumni Affairs cannot process the credit-card donation without a name indicated, so if you have not received a letter of thanks from NSU-COM but know you have made a credit-card contribution, please contact Ms. Cawley at the aforementioned phone number.

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Dr. John ('93) and Ellen Geake
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*in honor of 2006 Living Tribute Award
honoree Dr. Howard Hada

Alumni Association Fund Honor Roll

Cumulative List (1999-2006)

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Represents donors that have made a significant deferred gift via life insurance policies, insurances, or trusts.

Dr. and Mrs. Jeffrey Grove ('90)
(Gift: \$500,000 life insurance policy)

Dr. Albert Whitehead
(Gift: \$250,000 life insurance policy)

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Dr. George Linsey

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Dr. Donald C. Howard ('85)

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Dr. Mary Jo Villar ('94)
Dr. Ira Weiner
Dr. Richard Wolonick ('91)

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Dr. Barnet Alpert
Dr. Richard Appleby ('93)
Dr. Thomas Anderson ('98)
Dr. Barbara Arcos ('94)

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Dr. Peggy Benzing ('87)
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Dr. Gary Gary
Dr. Diana Johnstone Graves ('86)
Ms. Marcia Groverman
Dr. Elizabeth Pepe Hancock ('86)
Dr. Heidi Handman ('90)
Dr. Jimmy Hankins ('88)
Dr. Nancy Harpold ('96)
Dr. Edward Hartwig
Dr. William Hayes ('89)
Dr. Eric Hegybeli ('95)
Dr. David C. Hellman ('88)
Dr. Richard Herman ('89)
Dr. Marc Herschelman ('91)
Dr. Leslie Herzog ('87)
Dr. Myron Howell
Dr. Nabil Itani ('00)
Dr. Lawrence Jacobson

Dr. Thelma Jamison
Dr. Andrew Kahn ('91)
Drs. Kurt Kantzler ('93) and
Yoyen Lau ('93)
Donna Kaplan
Dr. Barry Karpel ('89)
Dr. Julie Katz-Gerrish ('93)
Dr. Claude Kassim ('97)
Dr. Cecylia Kelley ('02)
Dr. and Mrs. Rubin Kesner ('89)
Dr. Robin Kesselman ('85)
Dr. Youssef Khodor ('95)
Dr. Frank Kiick ('88)
Dr. Mi Kim ('90)
Dr. Laura Kimbro ('90)
Dr. Mark Khirsandi ('99)
Dr. Stephen Krathen
Dr. Mark A. Kucker ('89)
Dr. Christopher P. Lampson ('85)
Dr. Michael Landman ('88)
Dr. Kim Lark ('94)
Dr. Tracie Leonhardt ('92)
Dr. Andrew Lepoff ('86)
Dr. Soling Li ('00)
Dr. Lily Limsuvanrot ('02)
Dr. Deborah Longwill-Fox ('88)
Dr. Albert Lopez ('92)
Dr. Leonardo Lopez ('99)
Dr. Jason Lue ('99)
Dr. Sonal Majmundar ('94)
Dr. Frances Martinez-Mally ('93)
Dr. Cindy Marika ('87)
Dr. Clyde Meckstroth ('85)
Dr. Arnold Melnick
Dr. Michelle Mendez ('96)
Dr. Patricia J. Moore ('89)
Dr. Joseph Morelos ('97)
Dr. Brian C. Moraes ('92)
Dr. Laila Mozdab ('92)
Dr. Jeffrey Newfield ('91)
Dr. Robert Nisenbaum ('90)
Dr. Merideth Norris
Dr. Nelson Olaguibel ('87)
Dr. William E. Osborn, III ('96)
Dr. Aeyal Oren ('99)
Mr. Alexander Packman
Dr. Greta Amy Peck ('86)
Dr. Jorge Perez ('90)
Dr. Ramsey Pevsner ('03)
Dr. David Rabaja ('94)

Dr. Antonio Ramirez ('90)
Dr. Ravinder Randhawa ('92)
Dr. Michael Rasansky ('06)
Dr. David Ratcliffe ('92)
Dr. Marcos Rejtman ('94)
Dr. Jeffrey Rich ('92)
Dr. Saul Rigau ('89)
Dr. Mark Ritch ('88)
Dr. Gary N. Rosenberg ('90)
Dr. Allan Rubin
Dr. Robert Ruffolo ('88)
Dr. David Saltzman
Dr. Stuart A. Sandler ('86)
Dr. David D. Sarkarati ('00)
Dr. Melvin Sarnow
Dr. Theodore Schock ('87)
Dr. Sandra Schwemmer
Dr. Robert Sculthorpe
Dr. Stuart Shalit ('90)
Dr. John Yozen Shih ('91)
Dr. John Shover
Dr. and Mrs. Anthony J. Silvagni
Mr. Stanley Silverman
Dr. Rita Sivils ('92)
Dr. Scott W. Smith ('94)
Dr. and Mrs. Arthur Snyder
Dr. Margaret Starr
Dr. Mark Stich ('87)
Dr. Colene Stout
Dr. James Sullivan ('87)
Dr. Joseph W. Sullivan ('88)
Dr. Richard J. Susi
Dr. James H. Taylor
Dr. Donald Teplitz ('85)
Dr. Richard Thacker ('92)
Dr. David Thomas
Dr. Dafna Trites ('94)
Dr. JoAnna VanVleet ('04)
Dr. Claudine Ward ('02)
Dr. Douglas P. Webster
Dr. Richard Weisberg ('93)
Dr. Michael Weiss ('86)
Dr. Sharon White-Findley ('86)
Dr. Margaret Wilkinson
Dr. John E. Williams ('96)
Dr. Michael Williams ('00)
Dr. Charles A. Wilson ('96)
Dr. Paul Winner
Dr. Scott Yagger ('89)
Dr. Stephen Yandel ('89)
Dr. Ross Zafonte ('85)

Dr. Richard Thacker Finds Fulfillment as Osteopathic Practitioner



After winning a tri-county science fair during his senior year in high school, Richard Thacker, D.O., FACOI, was asked a generic question that is frequently posed to students about to embark on the next phase of their lives.

“The superintendent of our school district asked me what I wanted to do when I graduated, but I honestly didn’t know,” said Dr. Thacker, who graduated from Southeastern College of Osteopathic Medicine (SECOM) in 1992 and serves as the current president of the Florida Osteopathic Medical Association (FOMA). “I hadn’t thought that much about it. So when I was put on the spot like that, I said I wanted to be a doctor. And that basically turned out to be a self-fulfilling prophecy.”

Dr. Thacker, who was born in Detroit, Michigan, but moved to a small northern Florida town near Jacksonville called Green Cove Springs in his teens, came from a proud blue-

collar family where long hours and backbreaking labor defined his ancestors’ days. Consequently, goals like pursuing a college degree and becoming a physician were not obvious career choices during his childhood. “I like to say I’m the son of a coalminer’s daughter and the son of a coalminer’s son,” said Dr. Thacker, whose father drove a sanitation truck for the City of Detroit while both grandfathers shoveled coal in Pike County, Kentucky.

When the Thacker family relocated to Florida, his father realized a longstanding dream by going into business for himself and opening a small country store. “My mother, myself, and my three younger brothers all worked in the store,” said Dr. Thacker, who credits the experience for teaching him how to deal with the public. However, at the time, he still hadn’t entertained any thoughts of pursuing a lofty career or even attending college.

“My highest aspiration at the time was to become an x-ray technician because I had an aunt who was working in the field,” he explained. But all that changed once he won the tri-county science fair. “Winning it put me on the right path toward higher education because it gave me a jolt of confidence I didn’t necessarily have beforehand.”

The next few years would prove to be challenging ones for Dr. Thacker, who worked full time during the day, took classes at St. John’s River Community College at night, and married his high school sweetheart at the tender age of 18. After earning his A.A. degree in 1983, Dr. Thacker began pursuing a psychology degree at the University of Florida in Gainesville. Unfortunately, the stress of attending classes, earning a living, and dealing with the demands of a young marriage eventually took their toll.

“I received a D in my genetics course and thought my career was ruined,” he explained. “I knew my GPA was going to drop significantly, which was only going to make it harder for



Dr. Thacker deep in discussion with attendees at the September 2006 FOMA Mid-Year Seminar in Tampa.

Alumni Spotlight: Dr. Richard Thacker

me to compete with all the other top-notch students. To say it shook my confidence was an understatement. So I decided to try and get into university's physician assistant program even though I didn't really know much about it. I got placed on an alternate list but missed the cut by one. I was pretty upset about that, so I left the University of Florida, went back to work in the family market, and decided I would simply give up on the college thing."

During this time of reflection, Dr. Thacker decided to open up another family store and make it a chain. Thankfully, his father wisely intervened before that could occur. "My dad sat me down one day and said, 'You're just running away from school. You got a little shook up, but what you need to do is go back and get your degree, even if it's in basket weaving, because it's worth a lot—and nobody can ever take it away from you.'"

Realizing his father's astuteness, Dr. Thacker chose to heed the advice. "I worked in the family store for awhile to save up some money and then decided it was time to go back to school full time and do it the right way by focusing on my studies and not working," he said. "I still had about five or six semesters to go, so when I made that recommitment, I knew I wasn't going to reapply to the physician assistant program; I was going to apply to medical school."

Because he wanted to remain in Florida, Dr. Thacker applied to all the medical schools located in the state. The first to invite him for an interview was SECOM. As it turned out, it would be the only interview he would need. "I'll never forget the feelings of pride and excitement I experienced when I received my acceptance letter from SECOM," he explained. "I was certainly not the traditional student that gets into medical school, so it meant a lot to me."

His entry into SECOM also coincided with his first brush with politics, which would eventually lead to his becoming FOMA president more than a decade later. "What made me really ignite in terms of politics was the fact that my peers elected me freshman class president," he said. "Up until that point, politics was not something I thought too much about."

After graduating from SECOM in 1992, Dr. Thacker did his internal medicine internship and residency training at an osteopathic facility called Delaware Valley Medical Center in Langhorne, Pennsylvania, where he was named chief medical resident and earned Resident of the Year honors. Unfortunately, his career success came at the price of his nearly 15-year marriage. "We simply grew apart," he admitted. "She was never comfortable with all the things I was doing and how much time I spent away from home. But we remain good friends to this day."

Dr. Thacker, who was a National Health Service Corps scholar, worked at Tri-County Family Health Care in Madison, Florida, from 1995 to 1997 before accepting a full-time position at the Medical Group of North Florida in Tallahassee—a multi-specialty group with primary emphasis in internal medicine that he became a partner in seven years ago. "When I started doing my rotations, I realized I enjoyed the hospital aspect of care the best," said Dr. Thacker, who met his future wife, Sherry, an ICU nurse and case manager, in a hospital setting. "I enjoyed the intensive management aspect of patient care, so internal medicine turned out to be a natural fit for me."

His long-term involvement with the Florida Osteopathic Medical Association also brings him a profound sense of satisfaction. "I always wanted to give something back to my profession, and particularly to the state that gave me the opportunity to build a fantastic career," said Dr. Thacker, who along with wife Sherry is the proud parent of six-year-old son Blake and five-year-old daughter Allison. "Getting involved with the FOMA was one way for me to do that."

When he reflects back on the path he took to reach his current life destination, a wellspring of emotions ranging from wonderment to disbelief frequently cross his mind. "I think it's amazing that I've come as far as I have given where I came



Thacker family portrait: Clockwise (from left) are Sherry, Richard, Blake, and Allison.

from," he admitted. "I was a small-town country boy who took a lot of turns in the course of getting his education. I wasn't a traditional student, but I certainly had all the building blocks that would make a great D.O. SECOM and its administrators recognized that in me, and I am grateful to them for that. As you can imagine, I'm extremely proud of the education I received at SECOM, and I seize every opportunity to be an advocate for osteopathic medicine and an ambassador for NSU-COM."

HPD Huddles with Miami Dolphins' Alumni to Raise Money for United Way Campaign



Event attendees included (from left): Andrés Malavé, Ph.D., M.S., dean, College of Pharmacy; Nat Moore; Sean Hill; Ben Mack Moore; Irv Rosenbaum, D.P.A., Ed.D., HPD provost and executive dean for administration; Johneta Goodwin, NSU-COM director of administrative operations; Ken Basilio, United Way representative; Woody Bennett; John Bock; and Troy Drayton.

On December 7, NSU's Health Professions Division (HPD) joined forces with six former Miami Dolphins' players to raise over \$4,700 for the United Way—and increase awareness of United Way's efforts to make our community a better place—by coordinating a holiday fundraiser in the HPD Café. During the event, attendees were able to make contributions, win door prizes, solicit autographs, and have photos taken with such former standout Dolphins' players as Woody Bennett (running back), John Bock (lineman/center guard), Troy Drayton (tight end), Sean Hill (cornerback), Ben Mack Moore (defensive



NSU-COM faculty and staff members showed their support for the United Way fundraiser by donating money and soliciting autographs from the Dolphins' alumni in attendance. Pictured (from left) are: Johneta Goodwin; Lynne Cawley, M.S., director of alumni affairs; Nat Moore; Hilda De Gaetano, D.O., director of systems curriculum; John Bock; and Mirlyn Hurry, assistant to the dean.

lineman), and Nat Moore (wide receiver). Employees who agreed to pledge at least \$5 per week or \$250 for the year through payroll deductions were entered into a drawing to win a 2007 Mercury Milan donated through the United Way.



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