Fall 2002

COM Outlook Fall 2002

College of Osteopathic Medicine

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Com Outlook recently named “Best Newsletter” by the American Association of Colleges of Osteopathic Medicine.

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Dean's Message

Over the past few years a major crisis has been brewing that threatens to cripple the health care industry and forever change the way physicians practice medicine and patients receive treatment in the United States. Due to soaring malpractice/professional liability insurance (PLI) rates, many physicians are opting to retire early or relocate from areas where exorbitant premiums or low reimbursement scales make it financially unfeasible to continue practicing.

It's a widespread dilemma that has already reached catastrophic proportions throughout the United States, as the following two examples illustrate:

- In Mississippi, a rural town's only two OB/GYN physicians closed their practice when their premiums skyrocketed 500 percent, forcing patients to travel 40 miles to visit the nearest obstetrician.
- The University of Nevada Medical School came precipitously close to closing its doors in June 2002 when its insurer left the medical liability insurance market. A new insurer was found, although it cost the institution an additional $900,000 annually in premiums and required intervention by state legislators to make the money available.

Over the past year, the cost to cover NSU-COM's vast network of students, faculty, and residents has tripled even though the insurer has not had to pay out a single claim in a number of years. As this scenario continues across the nation, the impact will be dire because medical schools will have to significantly increase their tuitions to pay for these premiums. Consequently, students who are already incurring tremendous financial debt to attend medical school will be forced to seek secondary loans, which are traditionally more expensive and difficult to obtain. In fact, we're already seeing an increasing number of students who are maxing out their primary loans before they graduate.

Because the PLI crisis is so pervasive, no sector of the health care landscape will be unaffected. According to recent Florida Department of Insurance records, medical malpractice premiums over the past three years have soared approximately 50 percent. In some high-risk specialties—such as OB/GYN and surgery—PLI premiums have doubled in the span of less than one year.

The situation is particularly ominous for new physicians looking to establish solo practices in Florida. Even if a doctor can afford to open a private practice, no insurance company in Florida is currently accepting new clients. This means physicians that finish their residencies and don't join a company or large group practice will be unable to obtain malpractice insurance. It will have a significant effect on physicians desiring to practice in medically underserved rural or urban areas of Florida where the physician is solo or in a small group and traditionally has a lower income. How will they accomplish this with no insurance or expensive insurance and higher school debts?

Florida physicians have the ability to "go bare" under Florida law, which allows them to practice medicine without the benefit of PLI. However, they must post a $250,000 bond and potentially risk their personal assets in the event of a lawsuit. Additionally, many hospitals and health management insurance companies may not grant privileges to physicians lacking PLI.

Is it the litigious nature of our society or is it the judicial system that is to blame for the rash of medical lawsuits and multi-million dollar settlements? Regardless of the cause, the reality is that unless bold steps are taken to reverse the current trend, all health professionals—and more importantly, all patients—will end up suffering the most damage.

That's why it's imperative to educate the general population—our patients—about this health care crisis. Change will only occur if the public demands it, which is why we as a profession need to help everyone understand why the current health care malpractice climate cannot be allowed to continue unchecked. If Americans truly believe that the tort system is acting in their best interests, they will continue to perceive physicians as nothing more than opportunists whose only motivation is to make money rather than care for their patients.

The American Osteopathic Association is currently supporting congressional legislation in the House and Senate that includes a $250,000 cap on noneconomic damages. Several states, like California, Mississippi, and Nevada have already proactively addressed these concerns by adopting tort reform packages that protect the interests of consumers and health professionals. Leading the way is the California Medical Injury Compensation Reform Act, which amended the system by:

- Placing a general $250,000 cap on non-economic damages.
- Creating a shorter statute of limitations timeframe to file lawsuits.
- Imposing limits on attorney contingency fees.

If we as a profession take the time to educate our patients and encourage our students, faculty, and fellow physicians to become as civically active as the California, Mississippi, and Nevada physician network, malpractice insurance reform can and will become a reality nationwide. The future of the American health care system rests in our hands—and those are hands that can ill afford to remain idle any longer.
One of the most important activities of the academic year occurred on August 24 as the College of Osteopathic Medicine hosted the annual White Coat Ceremony. With their family members and friends looking on, 181 men and women from the Class of 2006 took the Oath of Commitment. Supporting NSU-COM in this milestone event were the Florida Society of American College of Osteopathic Family Physicians, the Florida Osteopathic Medical Association, the Broward County Osteopathic Medical Association, The Dade County Osteopathic Medical Association, the NSU-COM Alumni Association, and the Office of the Dean.

Expanding training programs for our medical students is always a priority. We are pleased to announce that Parkway Regional Medical Center and Kendall Regional Medical Center have signed affiliation agreements with the college and will be providing clinical rotations for our third and fourth-year students.

NSU-COM’s Area Health Education Center (AHEC) Program’s bioterrorism preparedness specialist is continuing to provide training to community-based providers in rural and safety net sites. Several programs took place recently, including a statewide workshop in St. Petersburg that involved collaboration with the Florida Association of Community Health Centers and a regional seminar for primary care providers/preceptors from over a dozen rural community health centers, as part of the NSU-COM/AHEC Rural Medicine Retreat in Stuart, Florida.

The Master of Public Health Program, now part of NSU-COM, is garnering a national reputation for leadership and outreach. Under the direction of Dean Anthony Silvagni and program director, Dr. Cyril Blavo, a few of the ongoing research projects conducted by the M.P.H. faculty include:

♦ Multiple Sclerosis Life Enrichment Project (Dr. Jennie Lou).
♦ Survey of attitudes and knowledge about bioterrorism among health professions’ students (Professor Charles Lewis).
♦ Development of a new database for data management at a migrant health clinic (Dr. Jon Dodds and Professor John Brusk).

M.P.H. students are increasingly participating in research with faculty and in the community (e.g., health departments and community health centers). We take pride in the efforts and successes of the M.P.H. team and look forward to an exciting agenda.

The first anniversary of September 11 reminded us of the great strength and courage that exists here at our university. We are changed forever, but we remain united with a new appreciation of each other and a determination to be the best we can be, whatever the challenges.
FEATURES

NSU-COM Establishes Bioterrorism Research Center - 10
In August, NSU-COM stepped boldly into the future when its Task Force on Bioterrorism and Weapons of Mass Destruction Preparedness was officially upgraded to become the Center for Education and Research in Bioterrorism and Weapons of Mass Destruction.

Diagnosis Success: Dr. Robert Oller - 18
In his new role as chief executive officer of all NSU health clinics, Dr. Robert Oller faces the daunting but undeniably bracing challenge of consolidating a diverse array of services under one umbrella.

Medical Mission to Africa Enriches Dr. Charlotte Paolini - 22
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Correctional Medicine Rotation Earns Kudos - 25
Since its inception several years ago, the college's correctional medicine program has become one of the most popular rotations in the NSU-COM curriculum.

Compelling Case Highlights 2002 Medical Mission to Jamaica - 27
During its 10-day medical mission to Jamaica last June, the interdisciplinary team comprising approximately 80 NSU-HPD faculty and students encountered a host of common ailments and some rare conditions like the connective skin disorder Ehlers Danlos Syndrome.

Department of Pediatrics Emphasizes Enhanced Patient Care - 29
Since taking over the reigns as chair of NSU-COM's Department of Pediatrics in May 2001, Dr. Edward Packer has worked tirelessly to construct a standout program that continues to evolve.

A Life in Alaska Beckons Recent Graduate Dr. Kathleen Pelkan - 32
After receiving her long-awaited degree in May 2002, Dr. Kathleen Pelkan headed to Anchorage, Alaska, to participate in a three-year family practice internship/residency and pursue a career in rural and wilderness medicine.

Guatemala Medical Missions Continue to Evolve - 34
In June, the College of Osteopathic Medicine made its fifth excursion to remote regions of Guatemala, treating an estimated 1,000 Mayan villagers. But while the primary focus continues to be providing health care to the indigent population, that focus is broadening to include many new facets.
NSU-COM extends its condolences to the family of Scott Christopher Bruno, D.O., a class of 2001 alumnus, who was killed in a car accident last June. Dr. Bruno was in the second year of his pediatrics residency at Wolfson Children’s Hospital in Jacksonville, Florida.

Although orientation week activities kept them perpetually busy, members of the class of 2006 had a chance to socialize with their classmates and indulge their passion for ice cream during a break in the schedule.

In September, the Department of Osteopathic Principles and Practice joined forces with NSU’s Office of Recreation and Wellness to coordinate a free eight-part lunch lecture series focusing on the basic concepts and techniques of osteopathic medicine. The seminars, which are open to all NSU students, faculty, and staff, also allow attendees to gain a basic understanding of basic manipulation treatment techniques.

M-2 student Tyese L. Gaines has been elected Region IV director of the Student National Medical Association (SNMA), which is the largest organization dedicated to the health concerns of underserved populations and increasing the numbers of underrepresented minorities into the health professions. Region IV consists of all medical and pre-medical student members in Florida, Georgia, Alabama, North Carolina, South Carolina, and the Caribbean.

In related news, the NSU-COM chapter of the Student National Medical Association will be hosting this year’s regional conference on November 15-17 at the Renaissance Marriott in downtown Miami. The conference’s theme will center on The Future of Medicine: Defining Our Place and include a keynote speech by Dr. Tony Beck of the National Institute of Health, who will discuss stem cell research as it relates to minority populations.

In July, M-4 students Kasey Nelson (left) and James Treadwell (right) met with AOA President Anthony A. Minissale, D.O., during the AOA House of Delegates Meeting. Nelson currently serves as national president of the Student Osteopathic Medical Association, while Treadwell acts as chair of the Council of Osteopathic Student Government Presidents.

The accreditation review site visit for the NSU-COM Master of Public Health Program is scheduled for November 18-19, 2002. The Council on Education for Public health (CEPH) will accept written third-party comments regarding the program until 30 days prior to the onsite visit. Comments should be sent to:

Council on Education for Public Health
800 Eye Street, NW, suite 202
Washington, DC 20001-3710

On September 11, a number of NSU-COM faculty members attended the Broward County Interfaith Breakfast, which was held at the Signature Grand in Davie to celebrate the cultural diversity of South Florida. The keynote address was presented by Edgar Mitchell, Sc.D., an Apollo XIV astronaut who was the sixth man to walk on the moon.

In July, Chad E. Frank, D.O., a resident in the NSU-COM/North Broward Hospital District Family Medicine Residency Program, was one of the recipients of a Resident of the Year Award at the Florida Society of American College of Osteopathic Family Physicians annual meeting.

M-2 student Alberto Caban recently had his manuscript entitled “Medical Informatics in an Ambulatory Pediatric Setting” accepted for publication by International Pediatrics. Caban, who served as the article’s primary author, will be published in the December 2002 issue.
During a recent plane trip to Jamaica, Annette Clarke, the college's faculty credentialing program specialist, was pleasantly surprised to see NSU-COM’s medical mission to Jamaica program featured during Air Jamaica’s in-flight movie about the country. A comprehensive look at the college’s most recent Jamaican expedition is featured in this issue on page 27.

In August, the 181 students comprising the class of 2006 took their first step toward medical achievement when they participated in the NSU-COM White Coat Ceremony, which was held at the Ralph R. Bailey Concert Hall in Davie. The Florida Society of the American College of Osteopathic Family Physicians, the Florida Osteopathic Medical Association, the Broward County Osteopathic Medical Association, the Dade County Osteopathic Medical Association, the NSU-COM Alumni Association, and the NSU-COM Office of the Dean sponsored the ceremony.

According to statistics compiled by the U.S. Department of Education from June 2000 through June 2002, Nova Southeastern University conferred more doctorate degrees on African Americans than any other college or university in the nation. NSU graduated 65 of the nation’s 2,093 African American students who received doctorate degrees, the highest degree a university offers for original research and coursework.

Based on survey results published in the June 20, 2002, edition of Black Issues in Higher Education Magazine, NSU also ranked No. 1 in African American doctorates in education, No. 1 in Hispanic first professional degrees, and No. 1 in African American doctorates in business (tied with Walden University in Minnesota). Following are the national rankings concerning the number of doctorate degrees received by African Americans in all disciplines at Florida universities:

1. Nova Southeastern University - 65
9. Argosy University Sarasota - 25
13. Florida State University - 22
37. University of Miami - 15
52. University of Florida - 13
52. University of South Florida - 13
57. Florida A&M University - 12
81. Florida International University - 8
91. University of Central Florida - 7

Graduating Residents Honored at Celebration Dinner

On June 21, NSU-COM coordinated its annual Family Medicine and Dermatology Residency Program Dinner Dance, which honored the accomplishments of 23 osteopathic physicians who successfully completed their residencies at Palmetto General Hospital and the North Broward Hospital District.

During the evening’s festivities, Erika Rae Devito, D.O., was presented with the Outstanding Resident of the Year Award for her work at the North Broward Hospital District.

Following are the class of 2002 graduating residents:

**Dermatology Residents**
- Jay Stuart Gottlieb, D.O.
- Kellie Mosley-Mendez, D.O.
- Andres Tobon, D.O. (chief resident)

**Geriatric Fellowship**
- Renee Goosison-Oliliviere, D.O.

**Family Medicine Residents**
- Patricia Lucille Bierut-Daren, D.O.
- Felix N. Chien, D.O.
- Hernando Edwin Chong, D.O.
- Michael Robert Cohen, D.O.
- Cesar Robert De Leon, D.O.
- Erika Rae DeVito, D.O. (chief resident)
- William Frank DeVito, D.O. (chief resident)
- Jarrod Marc Frydman, D.O. (chief resident)
- F. Christopher Manlio, D.O.
- Thomas G. Moriarity III, D.O.
- Craig White, D.O.

**PGY-III Residents**
- Anaisys M. Ballesteros, D.O.
- Stephanie L. Duncan-Garcia, D.O.
- Troy Frazer, D.O.
- Sanjay Gogate, D.O.
- Todd Kazdan, D.O.
- Richard J. Mkvy, D.O.
- Elena M. Pernas-Waechter, D.O.
- Jacqueline N. Romero, D.O. (chief resident)
Osteopathic Clinical Research Meeting Set for March 2003

The fourth Osteopathic Collaborative Clinical Trials Initiatives Conference (OCCTIC IV) will be held March 23-24, 2003, at the Westin Hotel in Ottawa, Canada. The meeting will be held in conjunction with the American Academy of Osteopathy Convocation.

The Osteopathic Collaborative Clinical Trials Initiative was developed to help foster a culture of conducting clinical research in the osteopathic profession, particularly in the area of osteopathic manipulative medicine.

OCCTIC has been a collaborative venture among several osteopathic organizations including the American Association of Colleges of Osteopathic Medicine, the American Osteopathic Association, the American Academy of Osteopathy, the Association of Osteopathic Directors and Medical Educators, the American College of Osteopathic Family Physicians, and the former American Osteopathic Healthcare Association.

If you would like to receive more information about OCCTIC IV, visit the American Association of Colleges of Osteopathic Medicine's web site at http://www.aacom.org. Click on "Announcements and Events" and complete the form to receive updated information about the conference as it becomes available. You may also obtain more information by contacting Cathleen Kearns at ckearns@aacom.org.

Student Health Career Seminars Provide Valuable Insight

For students matriculating at medical school, the experience can often prove overwhelming, especially when it comes to making decisions about issues such as choosing a specialty or understanding the allopathic versus osteopathic residency match program. That's why Joseph DeGaetano, D.O., F.A.A.F.P., assistant professor of family medicine and director of clinical curriculum and graduate medical education, helped establish a health career seminar series to educate the M-2 students about the intricacies of everything from writing a CV to dressing for success.

"When I first arrived here in 1999, I took it upon myself to speak informally with the M-2 students about what they could expect in their third and fourth years of school, the process of applying for residency, and the ins and outs of what residency program directors look for in terms of applicants they accept," Dr. DeGaetano explained. "What has happened since that time is we have blossomed the program into a formal career seminar workshop series that we put on in conjunction with NSU Career Counseling Services."

Working in conjunction with Albert Whitehead, D.M.D., M.Ed., NSU-COM director of student and administrative services, and Anthony DeSantis, assistant director of NSU Career Services, Dr. DeGaetano has created a forum that allows the students to learn about diverse subjects such as finances for family and physician, balancing family and career, and how to interview for a residency position.

Attendance at the seminars, which also are open to spouses and significant others, is strictly voluntary. However, since their inception, student participation has been extremely enthusiastic. "The feedback has been tremendous," stated Dr. DeGaetano, who would like to offer the lecture series to third and fourth-year students.

"Dr. Whitehead and I would like to take the program on the road and offer the seminar series at our 14 core clinical campuses across the state, so we've identified that as a future goal," he added. "Students can really become disenfranchised with their medical school in the third and fourth years when they are rotating at different sites, so we want to do things that continue to make the students feel a part of the NSU family."

In October, COM Outlook received two prestigious honors in the American Association of Colleges of Osteopathic Medicine (AACOM) Communications Award Competition. The publication earned first-place honors among all nationwide osteopathic colleges in the Best Newsletter category and captured second place in the Best Article or Feature Story category. The essay, entitled "Motherhood and Medicine: An Emotional Juggling Act," was written by Scott Colton, the college's director of education communications. The winning COM Outlook issue was designed by Mr. Colton and Brandee Evans, who serves as the graphic artist for the Health Professions Division.
IGC Program Celebrates Significant Milestone

The NSU-COM Interdisciplinary Generalist Curriculum (IGC) Program recently achieved a significant milestone when class of 1999 alumnus Sanjay Gogate, D.O., who went through the IGC Physician Mentor Program, became the first graduate to become an IGC physician mentor. Dr. Gogate, who currently works in a Hialeah, Florida-based family medicine practice with his sister, Sangita Gogate, D.O., was one of the first group of students to participate in the IGC Program, which was established in 1996 to provide first and second-year students with vital clinical experience.

"Dr. Gogate told me that as a physician fresh out of residency, he would have declined this responsibility had he not previously known anything about the IGC Program," said Debbi Cohn Steinkohl, M.H.S.A., who serves as the program's administrative director. "However, he told me what a tremendous impact the IGC Program had on him as a student, and that he couldn't imagine what his M-3 and M-4 rotations would have been like without having received this training early on. He feels that his becoming a physician mentor to our M-1 and M-2 students is his way of giving something back to benefit future graduates."

In the IGC Physician Mentor Program, which is one of three components of the IGC curriculum, students accompany their assigned physician mentor and get to witness the day-to-day operations of a thriving practice. During their visits, students learn about patient care and the administrative aspects of managed care.

Camera in a Pill Technology Appeals to Glenn Englander, M.D.

Glenn H. Englander, M.D., P.A., who serves as a clinical assistant professor of internal medicine at Columbia Hospital in West Palm Beach, has branched out into the film business. And while the images he's capturing of the small bowel may not be as alluring as the iconic Hollywood faces of Julia Roberts or Tom Cruise, Dr. Englander is making a profound difference in his patients' lives by utilizing the revolutionary capsule endoscopy technology.

Dr. Englander is among the first physicians in the nation—and the only gastroenterologist in Palm Beach County—to incorporate into his practice a procedure that allows doctors to see the entire 21 feet of the human small intestine using the M2A™ Capsule Endoscope, or camera in a pill technology. Approximately 70 million Americans currently suffer from gastrointestinal troubles, including disorders such as obscure bleeding, Crohn's Disease, malabsorption or Celiac Disease, and intestinal tumors. Unfortunately, many of these conditions go undiagnosed due to the limited diagnostic options available for this region of the body—a problem rectified with the use of non-invasive capsule endoscopy.

The capsule, which is not much larger than a vitamin, is taken with a simple sip of water and then passes naturally through the digestive tract, recording video images that are transmitted to and then stored on a recorder belt throughout the day. Eight hours after swallowing the capsule, the patient returns the belt to Dr. Englander's office, where he downloads and then views some 50,000 images frame by frame.

Since Dr. Englander began using the expensive technology in October 2001, he has administered the procedure to 18 patients and had success in detecting internal bleeding in several cases where initial diagnostic tests failed to discern any abnormality. "At first I felt a little foolhardy when I decided to get involved with this technology," said Dr. Englander, who has been featured on the health news segments of several Palm Beach County TV stations. "But when I saw how well it detects problems that multiple other procedures fail to find, and how easy it is on the patient, I knew I had to offer it."

Although his patients must currently pay out of pocket for the capsule endoscopy, which is not yet recognized as a reimbursable procedure by insurance companies, Dr. Englander is providing documentation to Medicare in the hopes that it will soon be granted a CPT code. "The California Medicare system has already approved this procedure," he explained. "So I'm hoping that Florida will follow suit in the near future. Right now, the state wants to understand what the justification is for adding another code into the system."
In 1993, the deans of the state's four existing medical schools began to meet informally at least once a year to discuss medical education issues and identify mutual state and federal legislative priorities. By working collaboratively during the 1990's, the medical school deans were able to raise congressional and state legislative and executive branch awareness of a range of key issues affecting undergraduate and graduate medical education.

These included the need to train more generalist physicians, the importance of community-based clinical training, particularly in medically underserved rural and inner-city areas, and the negative impact of managed care and cuts in federal Medicare and Medicaid spending on funding available for medical education.

As a result of the deans' lobbying efforts, new annual funding was appropriated by the Florida Legislature to support medical school initiatives to expand the production of generalists and to offset the loss of federal funding for medical education.

Since becoming NSU-COM dean in 1998, Anthony J. Silvagni, D.O., Pharm.D., F.A.C.O.F.P., has played a pivotal role in the deans' meetings, representing the osteopathic medical profession's needs and priorities and speaking eloquently on both the commonalities and differences between osteopathic and allopathic medical education and training.

"Since I have served as a director of the medical school deans' organization, I have seen significant evolution in the deans' understanding of osteopathic medical education and practice," said Linda Rackleff, who serves as the current director of the Council of Florida Medical School Deans. "I have also witnessed a genuine appreciation of the resources and expertise that we bring to the table when working with Congress, state legislators, the governor, and the federal and state executive branches."

In 2000, with the abolition of the Florida Board of Regents—the governing board for the state's 10 public universities—and the creation of institutional boards of trustees for the state's public universities, the deans moved to formally establish their organization by creating the Council of Florida Medical School Deans, which expanded to five members in 2001 with the establishment of the Florida State University College of Medicine.

"I share my fellow medical school deans' concern that the creation of politically appointed boards of trustees for each state university is likely to increase competition for state funding among the public universities and between the public and private education sectors, which will most likely increase the cost of education," Dr. Silvagni stated.

"This increased competition can hurt all of the medical schools, not only because they are among the most expensive educational programs at any university, but also because medical education and training is a unique and complex process, which makes it difficult to understand," he added. "This makes it more important than ever that the medical school deans speak with a united voice to advocate for adequate funding for all of our programs."

During the coming year, the Council of Florida Medical School Deans has adopted an ambitious agenda, including:

- Creating a medical school consortium to plan a collaborative statewide geriatrics curriculum.
- Planning and designing the creation of a comprehensive, state-level physician health manpower forecasting and analysis unit.
- Increasing medical school funding through the Medicaid program and continuation of a multi-year effort to augment funding for graduate medical education.
Following the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks on the United States, the College of Osteopathic Medicine created the Task Force on Bioterrorism and Weapons of Mass Destruction (BWMD) Preparedness to focus on issues such as education, training, and research initiatives. Since its inception last October, the task force—which is comprised of NSU faculty as well as Southeast Florida public health leaders—has played a major role in educating both students and the medical community about the reality of chemical, biological, and radiological weapons of mass destruction.

On August 23, 2002, NSU-COM stepped boldly into the future when the task force was officially upgraded to become a center of excellence, earning a new designation as the Center for Education and Research in Bioterrorism and Weapons of Mass Destruction Preparedness. The center’s primary mission is to provide leadership as a vital education, training, and research resource for the health care community and the community at large. It also aims to provide a sense of calm that comes from knowing the needs and concerns associated with preparing for bioterrorism are being addressed in an ongoing way from the perspective of all community members.

The center will develop, accumulate, and maintain knowledge and databases on the most current information related to BWMD preparedness. Relevant data will be shared by the center with its members and the community on a regular basis. Organizational activities will include the identification of research needs, the design and performance of research—and when applicable—the application of research findings that will focus on issues regarding education and training as well as on various aspects of BWMD such as prevention, diagnosis, and treatment. In addition, the center will identify strategic partners on an ongoing basis and engage in the essential task of identifying and seeking funds from a range of sources, including federal, state, and local agencies.

**Center for Education and Research in Bioterrorism and Weapons of Mass Destruction Preparedness Goals**

- Play a leadership role as a vital education, training, and research resource for the local, state, and ultimately national health care community and the community at large.
- Assist in providing public and health care preparedness for rural, suburban, urban, and disadvantaged populations utilizing our extensive infrastructure and community linkages.
- Develop strategies and empower agencies, organizations, and individuals to be able to respond appropriately to all planned bioterrorism or weapons of mass destruction events.
- Facilitate appropriate public protective measures.
- Develop cooperative activities for the purpose of sharing information and providing education and training for physicians, other health professionals, health professionals in training, first responders, community and faith-based agencies, and the general public.
- Collaborate with federal, state, and local governmental authorities and agencies, share information, and provide recommendations on issues concerning bioterrorism and weapons of mass destruction preparedness.
- Engage in research activities to better understand health and social issues associated with bioterrorism, weapons of mass destruction, and mass casualty events to prevent or reduce physical and psychological injury and loss of life to victims and responders.

**Center activities will include a focus on:**

- Interns and residents in the NSU-COM Consortium for Excellence in Medical Education.
- NSU-COM medical and public health students.
- Students and faculty from other disciplines enrolled in NSU’s Health Professions Division and other colleges and programs of NSU.
- Health and social service professions students from other institutions in the center’s geographical area.
- Physicians, health, and human service professionals in urban, suburban, and rural community practice.
- Governmental agencies and first responders.
- Law enforcement agents, as well as mental health, social, and human service professionals.
- Members of the general public, educational institutions, community, and faith-based agencies.
Public Health Graduates Earn Accolades

On July 13, the NSU-COM Master of Public Health Program honored student excellence at its Senior Awards Dinner Dance held at the Hyatt Regency Pier Sixty-Six in Fort Lauderdale. During the festivities, the following awards were presented:

**Public Health Student Leadership Award**
Recipient: Chinh Truong Van, M.P.H.
Presenter: Charles Lewis, M.P.H.

**Dean's Award**
Recipient: Kristina Renee Ericsson, M.P.H.
Presenter: Anthony J. Silvagni, D.O., Pharm.D.

**Chancellor's Award**
Recipient: Chinh Truong Van, M.P.H.
Presenter: Fred Lippman, B.Sc., R.Ph.

(Public Health Student Service Award recipient Kimberly Trever, D.O., M.P.H., was not in attendance to receive her accolade.)

OSCE Implementation Runs Smoothly

In August, 18 fourth-year NSU-COM students and 20 physician assistant students from the College of Allied Health participated in the inaugural Objective Structured Clinical Examination (OSCE) pilot program, which was established to enhance the hands-on, clinical training of medical students.

Through the use of standardized patients, who have been trained by NSU-COM faculty members to carefully evaluate the clinical skill level of student physicians, the 38 participants received invaluable exposure to an educational module that places greater emphasis on improving the overall doctor-patient relationship.

The program was lauded by the students, who commented on the authenticity of the standardized patients, the realistic scenarios presented, and the latitude allowed for incorporating individual practice approaches. "From a logistics standpoint, the OSCE pilot program was a major success," said Loretta Graham, Ph.D., the college's medical education specialist who is overseeing all facets of the OSCE curriculum. "The patients did a reliable job of presenting the information, and the students really seemed to appreciate the opportunity to rotate through the 10 OSCE stations we set up in the college’s simulation lab.”

During the OSCE experience, which mimics the harried clinical environment traditionally found in medicine today, students were able to spend 20 minutes with each patient, perform a thorough examination, and discern the patient’s health problem. “For the students, it was just like being in a clinic full of sick people and seeing them for the first time,” Dr. Graham explained. “An instruction sheet was posted on the outside of each door that included some of the patient’s vitals. After performing their examinations, the students were given a few minutes to write up a differential diagnosis and order laboratory studies before moving on to the next patient.”

The students were exposed to 10 cases, which were developed by NSU-COM and physician assistant faculty members in the areas of rural medicine, preventive medicine, internal medicine, family medicine, pediatrics, surgery, geriatrics, psychiatry, obstetrics, and endocrinology. Prior to their implementation, the Council of Chairs reviewed all cases for content accuracy.

This new educational model has already been woven into the curriculum for the M-2 students, who now participate in monthly, one-station OSCEs that relate to material recently covered in the lecture hall. “These students are going to be well prepared clinically for their fourth-year OSCE experience should this become a reality because of this early exposure,” Dr. Graham said.
The College of Osteopathic Medicine showcased its abundant community spirit on July 20-21 by providing approximately 250 free health screenings to individuals attending the National Council of La Raza (NCLR) Health Fair at the Miami Beach Convention Center in Miami Beach, Florida.

"The NCLR contacted Debbi Steinkohl, administrator of the college’s Interdisciplinary Generalist Curriculum Program, 10 days prior to the event to see if we would participate and perform health screenings," said Camille Bentley, D.O., an assistant professor of family medicine who serves as medical coordinator of NSU-COM’s Florida Border Health Education and Training Center (HETC) Program. "Within a week’s time we were able to gather a mix of volunteers, including 15 students, 2 residents, and several faculty members."

During the two-day health fair, the medical team educated attendees about a range of health issues and performed numerous blood glucose, cholesterol, and blood pressure tests. "It’s highly commendable that our students are willing to give up a weekend at the last minute to go down and do these screenings," stated Dr. Bentley, who estimates the college provided over $25,000 worth of medical care to the Hispanic community. "It shows they truly care about other people and the health care of the community they’re living in."

Dr. Bentley singled out the efforts of two students—Ulyee Choe, NSU-COM president of DOCARE, and Ulisses Diaz, president of NSU-COM’s Hispanic Osteopathic Medical Student Association—for encouraging student participation and rounding up a volunteer contingent on such short notice. "I’m so proud of our students because other community organizations that had promised to do health screenings at the event backed out at the last minute," Dr. Bentley said. "We were the only ones at the entire convention center that provided blood sugar, blood pressure, and cholesterol screenings. We played a major part in the health fair’s success and provided a very needed service, which was evidenced by the line of patients we had waiting for us."

In addition to providing basic health screenings, the students showcased an interest in taking the process a step further and conducting a research study to track the future health of the at-risk patients they examined.

"The students have been motivated to continue doing further screenings and try doing some studies in relation to the patients, especially those who do not already have physicians," Dr. Bentley explained. "We did refer those without doctors to our NSU clinics. But there certainly is potential for us to conduct studies within the community through a survey to find out why even those who have doctors are not controlled or noncompliant if they are suffering from diabetes, high cholesterol, or hypertension.

"We have become well known for doing health fairs and being involved in the community," Dr. Bentley added. "And that’s a function of our students’ willingness to get involved. These health fairs provide a great opportunity for the students to work with actual patients and establish a rapport and a comfort level with them. For me, the reward is seeing how the students feel at the end of the day when they know they’ve really made a difference in someone’s life."

Participants
Analyses Ballesteros, D.O.
Camille Bentley, D.O. Felix Fernandez, D.O.
Debbi Cohn Steinkohl, M.H.S.A.
Carolyn Bondee Stacey Cheek Ulyee Choe
Marcela Diaz Ulisses Diaz Ilena Espinosa
Alex Garcia Dan Halpert Sarah Katta
Carmen Marrero Olga Martinez Courtney Merritt
Patricia Moran Jason Nydick Janet Ramos Liana Ruiz
Every day, thousands of humanistic individuals take the time to donate blood that could provide a lifesaving transfusion for a dying patient. And then there are others like M-1 student Kyle Caswell who take that altruism to an even higher level by participating in the National Marrow Donor Program (NMDP).

When the Community Blood Centers of South Florida coordinated a blood drive at NSU last October, Caswell—who watched helplessly as his brother died by inches as he waited for a heart-and-lung transplant several years ago—felt compelled to do his part. “That experience was the reason I signed up for the organ transplant list and the bone marrow donor list,” he explained. “I’ve been there, and I know the anguish and anxiety families experience when they are looking for some help for a loved one. It’s hard to just sit and wait for somebody to make a donation, to be totally dependent on other people.”

Several months after signing up as a bone marrow donor, Caswell, who is married to M-3 student Marin Dawson-Caswell, received a phone call informing him he was a potential match for a 21-year-old patient suffering from acute lymphocytic leukemia. Putting aside his own fears, Caswell agreed to participate in a clinical study that replaces the traditionally invasive bone marrow transplant with a less complicated Peripheral Blood Stem Cell (PBSC) donation.

After enduring a battery of tests to make sure he was fully fit, Caswell returned to the local community blood center office to receive injections of Filgrastim in each arm for five consecutive days. The drug, which has been approved by the Food and Drug Administration to elevate white blood cell counts in cancer patients undergoing chemotherapy or bone marrow transplantation, has not yet been approved for use in healthy donors to provide peripheral blood cells for transplant purposes.

“Before I donated my stem cells, the physicians I talked to said it would be a good experiment because I would get to experience the patient role, and that’s exactly what it felt like,” said Caswell, who earned a master’s in biomedical sciences from NSU. “They would be off in the corner talking about what they were going to do to me, and I felt like the guinea pig they were going to try it on.”

Over the next two days, Caswell spent eight hours (four each day) donating approximately 550 milliliters of blood utilizing an apheresis or blood separating machine. The relatively painless procedure of collecting stem cells involved removing blood from a vein in one arm, passing the blood through the apheresis device where stem cells are concentrated and removed, and returning the remainder of the blood and plasma through a vein in the other arm.

Although the procedure itself was relatively tame, Caswell did suffer some unpleasant side effects from the medication. “Because the Filgrastim increases your white blood cells by 10 or 12 times the normal amount that you have, it basically makes you feel like you’re sick,” he explained. “It made me feel like I had the flu for three or four days. But it was actually worse the second time I was asked to make a donation because I had back pain, headaches, and a general feeling of malaise.”

The “second” time Caswell referenced occurred this past July when he was asked to make another PBSC donation for the young man who has suffered an unfortunate recurrence of his leukemia. “When the man relapsed, they asked me to do the procedure again,” he said. “We’re still waiting to find out how it’s going to work out. If he relapses again they will not ask me to redo the procedure because it may just be that, for some unexplainable reason, there is something incompatible with our blood.”

Still, whatever the outcome, Caswell can bask in the knowledge that his selfless deeds prolonged and potentially saved another human life. “It’s a great feeling to know you’ve done something worthwhile for somebody,” he admitted. “I don’t actually know this person, but it’s nice to know I could help him in some way.”

Kyle Caswell endured the discomfort of donating stem cells twice in a six-month period in an attempt to save the life of a 21-year-old man afflicted with acute lymphocytic leukemia.
Charlotte Paolini, D.O., assistant professor and chair of the Division of Geriatrics, was prominently featured in the July 13 issue of The Pompano Pelican. The article highlighted the humanitarian spirit she and several NSU-COM students showcased during a 10-day medical mission to Cotonou, West Africa. Dr. Paolini utilized vacation time and spent $2,000 of her own money to participate in the mission. In October, she served as a featured speaker at the Caring for the Elderly Interfaith Multidisciplinary Conference in Fort Lauderdale, where she discussed DNR: Emotional and Legal Implications.

In July, Jean M. Malecki, M.D., M.P.H., clinical associate professor and chair of the Department of Preventive Medicine, received yet another prestigious national honor for the superlative efforts showcased by the Palm Beach County Health Department during last year's anthrax outbreaks. Dr. Malecki, who also serves as director of the Palm Beach County Health Department, proudly accepted the J. Howard Beard Award, which honored the health department's investigative work last October on the first case of inhalation anthrax and bioterrorism. The accolade, which was awarded by the National Association of County and City Health Officials during its annual meeting in New Orleans, Louisiana, recognizes the efforts of organizations that benefit others throughout the country.

Peter Cohen, D.O., assistant professor in the Department of Family Medicine, was recently named assistant medical director of NSU's Sanford L. Ziff Health Care Center. In this role, Dr. Cohen oversees the clinic's residency program as well as the day-to-day operations of the medical staff.

In August, Eric Shamus, Ph.D., assistant professor in the Department of Osteopathic Principles and Practice, presented a two-part lecture on “Core Strengthening: Taking the Athlete to the Next Level” at the Florida Physical Therapy Association Annual Conference and Assembly of Representatives in Ft. Myers, Florida. Dr. Shamus partnered with Miami Heat strength and conditioning coach Bill Foran to impart information on assessing the functional level of an athlete's performance and designing a return-to-sport program. He also appeared on the Cable-TAP Community Channel in Miami-Dade County to discuss Sport and Injury Prevention. Dr. Shamus' segment was one of a 12-part series called Physical Therapy and You that is being produced by the Southeast District of the Florida Physical Therapy Association.

In October, Joseph Stasio, D.O., assistant professor and director of the family medicine residency program at Palmetto General Hospital, received his American College of Osteopathic Family Physicians (ACOFP) Fellow Award during the American Osteopathic Association's 107th Annual Convention and Scientific Seminar in Las Vegas. The Award of Fellow is in recognition of outstanding statewide or national contributions through teaching, authorship, research, or professional leadership to the stated purposes of the ACOFP.

Edward Packer, D.O., F.A.A.P., F.A.C.O.P., associate professor and chair of the Department of Pediatrics, authored an insightful article entitled “The Department of Pediatrics at Nova Southeastern University” that was published in the August 2002 issue of The Florida Pediatrician. He also participated in the Broward County Boys and Girls Club health fairs and visited NSU's University School to discuss How Doctors See Inside Ears with the second-grade students.
The D.O. duo of Joseph and Hilda DeGaetano published an article on “Persistent Open Anterior Fontanelle in a Healthy 32-Month-Old” in the July issue of The Journal of the American Osteopathic Association (JAOA). Dr. Hilda DeGaetano, F.A.A.P., F.A.C.O.P., serves as a clinical assistant professor of pediatrics, while Dr. Joseph DeGaetano, F.A.A.P., acts as assistant professor of family medicine and director of clinical curriculum and graduate medical education.

In June, Ronnie Martin, D.O., F.A.C.O.F.P., professor and chair of the Department of Family Medicine, was named Outstanding Clinical Educator of The Year by the 2002 graduating residents. In October, Dr. Martin served as program chairman for the ACOFP national meeting, which was held during the AOA Convention and Scientific Seminar in Las Vegas. Throughout the summer, Dr. Martin also presented lectures at a number of statewide and national symposiums and appeared on the television program Dateline Health to discuss health policy issues with Executive Vice Chancellor and Provost Fred Lippman, who hosts the program.

Jennie Q. Lou, M.D., M.Sc., associate professor of public health, was featured in the summer 2002 issue of Multiple Sclerosis Outlook. Dr. Lou’s comments on the disease were quoted in the article titled “Breaking Information About Multiple Sclerosis” in the magazine’s news and views section. She also served on the Peer Review Panel for Prentice Hall Publisher and authored an article for MS Focus on wellness and rehabilitation programs for people living with multiple sclerosis. The article reports on the Life Enrichment Project that has been conducted at NSU’s Sanford L. Ziff Health Care Center.

In October, Stanley Cohen, Ed.D., vice provost of the Health Professions Division, presented a lecture at the Association for the Behavioral Sciences and Medical Education annual meeting held in Lake Tahoe, California. Dr. Cohen’s seminar centered on the topic “Addressing Access Issues for Underserved Minority Populations.”

Paula Anderson-Worts, D.O., M.P.H., assistant professor in the Department of Family Medicine, was profiled in the September 3, 2002, issue of Vital Signs Magazine. The story, entitled “Everyday Miracles,” chronicled Dr. Anderson-Worts’ frightening battle with preeclampsia and other complications that occurred prior to the birth of her son, Alexander Carlton, last year.

Cyril Blavo, D.O., M.P.H., F.A.C.O.F.P., professor and director of the Master of Public Health Program, recently visited the Republic of Ghana to meet with the nation’s regional director of health to discuss government participation and endorsement of an international health center in an underserved fishing village. The project, which is currently being established by Dr. Blavo, will consist of a comprehensive public health facility whose mission is to increase access to health care and carry out public health initiatives to enhance the well-being of underserved populations in Ghana. The Centre for Health, International, which is currently under construction, will utilize international volunteers and local health workers to provide primary care/public health services, health promotion/disease prevention programs, public health research, and continuing education workshops for health professionals.
In September, Alan Morrison, D.O., F.A.C.P., assistant professor in the Department of Internal Medicine, received the Outstanding Teacher of the Year Award from the American College of Physicians-American Society of Internal Medicine’s Florida Chapter at the organization’s annual scientific meeting in Palm Beach Gardens, Florida.

In August, Michael M. Patterson, Ph.D., professor and assistant chair of the Department of Osteopathic Principles and Practice, was appointed to serve on the American Osteopathic Association’s Committee on Osteopathic History. Earlier last summer, Dr. Patterson traveled to St. Petersburg, Russia, to present lectures at the Third International Symposium of the Russian School of Osteopathic Medicine, where he chaired one of the plenary sessions and presented two talks on various aspects of the underpinnings of osteopathic technique. Dr. Patterson, who was shown research work being conducted in the laboratories of the Russian Academy of Sciences on palpatory diagnosis and responses of brain rhythms to osteopathic treatment, has subsequently been asked to serve on the Scientific Council of the Russian School of Osteopathic Medicine and the Russian Academy of Sciences. In that post, he will visit St. Petersburg or Moscow at least once a year to consult in their research projects.

Class of 2002 M.P.H. Graduates

Master of Public Health
Timothy Michael Anderson
*Jaime LaTisca Barnes
Trevi A. Dell
Kristina Renee Ericsson
Kimberly Dawn Jefferson
Claude Leslie Jones
Pamela Lynn Maxie
Michael Mark May
Luis Enrique Sánchez
Chinh Truong Van
Nestor G. Via y Rada

Bachelor of Science in
Physician Assistant and
Master of Public Health
Michael Anthony Banuchi
*Jaime LaTisca Barnes
Brian W. Benson
Traciee Anne Block
Megan Nicole Bock
*Denyse Ann Boger
Joseph Brent Bragg
Soraya Antunes Breda
Damian Arnie Cabrera

*Beatriz Corrales
*Leigh Katherine
Christopher Leonard Culley
Lena Louise DeMarco
Kerry Theresa Digby
Albert Patrick Di Lureto
Mary Graham Done
Tammy Ann Durham
*Catherine Ann Dunton
*Lucas Jay Evans
Javalka Hanish Gaithia
Amy Lynn Geiger
Jaime Susan Gimpelson
*Amanda Maria Greco
*Kristin Marie Hainabet
Christina Elizabeth Hejia
David Powell Hendry, Jr.
*Yolanda Marie Huyghue
Brian Michael Janke
Christopher Brandt Kelley
Jeanne Kurtz
Brian Lambert
Uy Vu Huyn Le

Harris T. Leo
Paul Anthony Licata
Scott Alan Littlejohn
F. Jason McNew
*Joelle Lynne Macklin
Deborah Lynn Mangioficio
Jennifer Lynn Mahan
Ricardo Antonio Mangione
Patricia J. Marvin
Stephanie A. Mazzacca
Gilbert Figueras Medida
*Lauren H. Meth
Raisa Miller
Mariana Viera Navarro
*Emily Suzette Neel
Brian Keith Nordgren
Timothy William O’Brien
Brenda L. O’Hara
*Neeta Mohan Patel
Beth Marie Paulison
Christopher J. Prankun
Emily Adams Rhodes

*Cleveland Abbe Rickards
*John Thomas Riggs
*Ann Burdena Robbelle
Ramon Aurelio Rodriguez
Rosanna Rodriguez
Karen Elizabeth Roseadowicz
Luis Manuel Serrano
*Tanya R. Shreve
Jennifer Leann Smith
Carolyn Royce Snapp
*Scott David Talbert
Cheryl Noeclani Tengan
Brian Tesnar
Gerald Douglas Testerman, Jr.
Kristen Leigh Toth
Michael J. Veech
Edgardo A. Vega
Michael S. Walsh
Robert Patrick Weber
Kelly Carroll Wood
*Neeta Mohan Patel

*Graduated with honors

*Melissa Sue Zallman
The surreal events that transpired on September 11, 2001, have had a ripple effect on all sectors of society, including the members of the college's Emergency Medicine Society, who soon found themselves getting a crash course in the life-and-death issues of bioterrorism and medical toxicology.

"We've gotten very involved with the bioterrorism and weapons of mass destruction movements by working with Dr. Robin McFee," said Kevin Boehm, who serves as co-president of the 80-member Emergency Medicine Society.

"Last year we formed an alliance with the Miami-Dade Office of Emergency Management that included participating in a mock drill this March called Operation Railyard and are currently involved with the Center for Disease Control's teleconference for bioterrorism in school preparedness."

Although bioterrorism has been a new addition to the emergency medicine mix, the club's mission extends far beyond the parameters of toxicology and weapons of mass destruction. "The club's purpose has always been to expose medical students, and more recently, physician assistants, to the field of emergency medicine as a future specialty," explained Ben Lawner, Emergency Medicine Society co-president. "In that respect, the club's goals are fairly simple. We try to familiarize our members with necessary emergency medical skills such as chest-tube insertion, airway basics, and IV insertion to prepare them for their clinical rotations."

In addition to inviting local experts to speak to the members about what it's like to be an emergency room practitioner, the club officers place an emphasis on soliciting professionals from related areas to address the students. "We are very much involved in the pre-hospital area, which is actual emergency medical services, so we invite paramedics, EMTs, and others to come speak," explained Lawner, an M-2 student who spent several years working in emergency medical services prior to attending NSU-COM. "We also sponsor a shadowing program with the Plantation Fire and Rescue Department. And, like other student clubs here at college there's a distinct community service emphasis, which we accomplish by participating in health fairs and in NSU-COM's CPR Day."

The club also benefits from its close affiliation with NSU-COM's Department of Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Education and Training, which is responsible for providing emergency medicine instruction to all students who enter an NSU Health Professions Division college. "Kevin Nugent, who is director of the EMS department, has done a lot for us," Boehm explained. "We've been very fortunate to be able to use his EKGs and defibrillators to conduct our review sessions. He's been an invaluable source here on campus."

"He has really taken us under his wing," Lawner added. "Because we don't have an on-campus faculty advisor, we look to Kevin for leadership and resources. Also, since the EMS department trains virtually all the paramedic agencies here in Broward County, we are able to gain insight from many of Kevin's paramedic instructors. Dr. Maureen Campbell, who serves as the medical director of the EMS department, is another fantastic resource. Without question, the direct contacts on campus are invaluable to the Emergency Medicine Society."

The society, which cosponsors a joint meeting with the college's Pediatrics Club and a suturing clinic with the Student Osteopathic Surgical Association, is broadening its horizon to include a tour of Miami's Jackson Memorial Hospital, which is the largest level one trauma center in the southeastern United States. "One of the things that attracted me to this specialty was its really broad diversity and all-encompassing nature," explained Lawner, who is a certified EMT and medic. Our club's committees try to reflect that diversity. In addition to the usual student government committees like community service and fundraising, we also have committees that deal specifically with emergency medical services, skills clinics, bioterrorism, or wilderness medicine. We try to find an outlet for everybody's clinical and non-clinical interests."
Diagnosis Success:
Robert Oller, D.O.

By Scott Colton
Director of Education Communications
In his new role as chief executive officer of all NSU health clinics, Robert Oller, D.O., faces the daunting but undeniably bracing challenge of consolidating a diverse array of services under one umbrella—a transition that will create a greater synergy between all NSU clinics while improving overall service to those who use the community-based programs.

"It's a big challenge," admitted Dr. Oller, who joined the NSU-COM team full time in 1996 and served as CEO of the Health Professions Division's various clinics for the past five years. "We need to build an infrastructure of operations in order to oversee all the clinical areas, and that's what we're in the process of doing now while trying to fulfill the needs of running the various clinics."

In addition to the HPD clinics, Dr. Oller now administers all health facilities associated with NSU's Center for Psychological Studies, the Fischler Graduate School of Education and Human Services, and the Graduate School of Humanities and Social Sciences. However, long before he ever entertained the notion of becoming the principal administrator of NSU's vast clinical network, Dr. Oller was just like most angst-ridden adolescents, who frequently chafe at their parents' rules and ponder what life has in store for them.

**Osteopathic Inspiration Has Early Origins**

"As a teenager, I guess I had the same problems all teenagers do when it comes to adjusting to adolescence and dealing with parental problems," explained Dr. Oller, who was born and raised in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. "Luckily, our family doctor, David Collier, D.O., was a super guy who helped me through that difficult time. It's because of him that I was inspired to pursue some sort of health-related career."

After flirting with the idea of studying psychology, he decided to follow in Dr. Collier's footsteps and become an osteopathic physician while matriculating at the University of California in Berkeley, where he earned a bachelor of arts in microbiology. "My master plan was to become a physician; that's all I wanted to do," said Dr. Oller, who earned his D.O. degree in 1969 from Kirksville College of Osteopathic Medicine in Missouri.

Once he received his osteopathic degree (an event he calls "the proudest day of my life, along with the day I married my wife, Ronnie") Dr. Oller returned to Philadelphia to do his internship at Metropolitan Hospital. But after spending most of his life in the northeastern United States, the newly minted osteopathic graduate began considering a radical lifestyle change.

"During that period of time there were a number of individuals who were interested in coming to Florida because the state had just opened up its board examination process, so I decided to come here and take my boards," he explained. "When I made up my mind to relocate here in 1970, I wrote a letter to a person I was told was very influential in South Florida, a man named Dr. Morton Terry."

**Meeting with Dr. Terry Proves Fortuitous**

At the time, the inimitable chancellor of NSU's Health Professions Division was serving as chairman of the board of Osteopathic General Hospital in North Miami Beach, which would serve as the precursor to Southeastern College of Osteopathic Medicine (SECOM) and, inevitably, NSU's College of Osteopathic Medicine. "Dr. Terry graciously answered my letter and invited me to look him up when I got into town," Dr. Oller recalled. "So I made an appointment to meet him in the dining room at Osteopathic General Hospital when I came for a three-day weekend during my internship. I told Dr. Terry I was interested in getting into family medicine and wanted to work for another physician since I didn't really have the expertise to open a practice on my own yet."

Like so many other individuals who have ended up on the receiving end of Dr. Terry's generosity, Dr. Oller was overwhelmed with gratitude when Dr. Terry took an active interest in his career. "In addition to sitting with me and offering advice, Dr. Terry actually introduced me to a physician that I ended up working with for a year before I decided to go out on my own and open a family practice in North Miami Beach," he explained. "So since that time I have been under the arm of Dr. Terry."

Although he spent the next 23 years running his family practice, Dr. Oller maintained a symbiotic relationship with Dr. Terry and Osteopathic General Hospital, where he served as chief of staff in the late 1970s. A few years later, when Dr. Terry established SECOM, Dr. Oller played a pivotal role in the college's evolution by coordinating and presenting the first physical diagnosis course to the inaugural class.

As his medical career progressed, Dr. Oller began branching out into new areas while continuing to operate his North Miami Beach practice. In 1986, he utilized his business acumen to help establish a multi-product, for-profit HMO called Family Health Plan with a group of other physicians comprised mainly of D.O.s. The enterprise proved to
be an enormous triumph, eventually mushrooming to a membership of 80,000. But with success came additional demands.

"Since I was one of the cofounders and also served as a part-time medical director of Family Health Plan, as it grew, I was told I either had to accept the full-time medical director's position or give it up and go back to full-time practice," explained Dr. Oller, who has been appointed to a number of committees, including the Florida Board of Osteopathic Medical Examiners. "So I agreed to sell my practice and serve as vice president and chief medical officer of the plan's clinical affairs."

In 1993, when Physician Corporation of America (PCA) purchased Family Health Plan, Dr. Oller was tapped to serve as PCA's chief medical officer and director of medical operations of the South Florida region. In this role, he was responsible for overseeing the medical operations of the organization's various products, which included PCA, Century, Family Health Plan, and Champus. In 1995, he took on the additional role of vice president of quality improvement for Florida while PCA was preparing for its NCQA audit.

But after spending several years at PCA, Dr. Oller felt the time had come to try something new. "I basically became disenfranchised with the organization and decided it was time to move on at the urging of my wife, who felt I was overburdened," admitted Dr. Oller, who supervised four medical directors and oversaw a program comprising 200,000 members, 55 hospitals, 17 clinics, and 7,000 physicians.

Starting Anew at NSU-COM

When Dr. Oller opted to leave PCA in 1996 to pursue new professional opportunities, he once again turned to the person who helped launch his osteopathic career 25 years ago. "When I decided to leave PCA, I came to the man I started with, Dr. Morton Terry, who over the years had offered me a number of positions at the college," he explained. "I was initially offered a chance to be medical director of the clinics in 1996, but after looking at the operations and the individuals involved, I felt it wasn't really in my best interest at the time so I accepted a position as chairman of the Department of Family Medicine instead."

However, because of sweeping changes that were occurring at the time, Dr. Oller's stint as chair of family medicine would be extremely brief. "When I accepted the position, which was around the time the campus was moving from North Miami Beach to Davie after the merger with Nova University, they opened a clinic here (the Sanford L. Ziff Health Care Center). However, once the operation was up and running, they realized they were going to have a huge financial deficit due to lack of patients, revenue flow, and other issues."

Because Dr. Oller had demonstrated such innate fiscal shrewdness during his days at Family Health Plan and PCA, the powers that be—Dr. Terry, Dr. Morton Morris, and Dr. Arnold Melnick—asked him to step in and evaluate the situation. "Because of my administrative background, they asked me to take a look and see whether there was anything I could suggest to stop the financial hemorrhage," said Dr. Oller, who is a past president of the Dade County Osteopathic Medical Association. "In my estimation there was a lot to do because I didn't feel the clinical operations were being managed in the best way to assure financial stability."

After conducting an internal review, Dr. Oller presented his candid assessment of the clinic's deficiencies to the trio of Health Professions Division administrators. "I made some suggestions about what I felt needed to be done in order to improve the financial status, such as going out and securing some HMO contracts, recruiting patients, and ensuring that billing was being handled appropriately," he recalled. "I told them the key was to make sure the infrastructure of the clinical operations met the obligations of a business while also serving as an educational source for our students."

Insightful Input Leads to Lofty Promotion

In May 1997, after much deliberation, Dr. Oller accepted the position of chief executive officer of the NSU Health Professions Division health care system, which included overseeing 11 clinics located at four South Florida sites in Davie, Fort Lauderdale, North Miami Beach, and Opa Locka. "By the end of the following year we were able to reduce the anticipated deficit very close to budget for the Davie clinic," he stated. "And each year after that we came in way below budget by increasing contracts to third-party payers and beefing up the promotion and marketing of the clinic."

Over the next five years, Dr. Oller oversaw the operational aspects of the myriad health centers, dealing with the day-to-day operations of the HPD's medical clinics and rehab center while administering only the financial and reporting components of the other areas such as optometry, dentistry, and pharmacy. Still, even as he successfully ran the operational aspects of the HPD health care system, Dr. Oller knew a valuable opportunity was being wasted regarding the university's other clinical operations.

"I had made a proposal to Ovid Lewis, who was NSU's president in the mid 1990s, because I felt the clinical operations for the entire university should fall under one
New Opportunity Presents Inviting Challenge

In June 2002, Dr. Oller embarked on yet another challenging chapter in a career marked by achievement when he was named chief executive officer of all NSU clinics, encompassing those run through the Health Professions Division, the Center for Psychological Studies, the Fischler Graduate School of Education and Human Services, and the Graduate School of Humanities and Social Sciences. “One of the things I want to do is get out there and let the world know what we’re doing,” he stressed. “There are services available here, from psychology and audiology to osteopathic medicine and optometry, that are not available anywhere else in the community. The opportunity for us to present our services as one big picture is incredible because of the linkage capabilities we have. What we’re planning to do in our call center is train the receptionists so they are knowledgeable about all the university clinics and possess the ability to refer callers to the appropriate place.”

Another one of Dr. Oller’s long-range goals involves the formation of health centers that deal with specific population groups. “One of the areas I’m really looking forward to addressing once I get everything in place is establishing a center for children’s services, a center for geriatric services, and a center for whichever populations we provide services to,” he explained. “That way, when patients visit, for instance, our pediatric center, they’ll have a broad range of services available to them, including pediatric dentistry, pediatric medicine, pediatric optometry, and pediatric psychology.”

According to Dr. Oller, the major benefit of establishing population-themed centers is a more enhanced and efficient process of patient diagnosis and treatment. “One of the things I’ve learned in this particular area from my colleagues is that there may be issues with children due to the fact that their vision is poor. If kids can’t see or hear well, they could progress into sociopathic behavior to get attention because they are not doing well in school. So they become problem children. Consequently, what appears to be a psychological problem may actually be the result of a physical ailment that can be corrected. It’s just a matter of having the right people on board that can identify those areas.”

Of course, because NSU is an institution with a mission centered on “providing high-quality educational programs from preschool to the professional and doctoral levels, as well as service to the community,” Dr. Oller has the additional challenge of making sure the university’s clinical network succeeds on a range of levels. “Operating the clinics here at NSU is quite different than operating clinics in the ‘real world’ because our main mission is education,” he said. “All our clinics function strictly as educational laboratories to train our students, so our primary purpose is to provide the educational media for our students in the different disciplines. Our second responsibility is to provide the community with first-rate medical services. Our third goal is to ensure the financial stability of the clinics. In the ‘real world’ of medicine, financial concerns would be a clinic’s first order of business.”

The university’s commitment to community service is something that is evidenced frequently by the numerous outreach programs and health fairs that are coordinated on a continuum through the Health Professions Division and other NSU colleges. “We have a true commitment to serve the community wherever we can with our resources,” said Dr. Oller, who spends his weekends attending to his beloved trio of Tennessee Walker horses he keeps at his three-acre property in Sunshine Ranches. “President Ferrero continually speaks to NSU’s community focus at functions and programs, so it’s my job to see that we fulfill that mission. The key is to balance the mission of education and community service while ensuring the financial soundness of the university’s clinical operations.”

When asked to look back at all he’s accomplished during his rewarding affiliation with NSU’s Health Professions Division, Dr. Oller reflected back to a conversation he had in 1996 with Matthew Terry, D.O, who served as NSU-COM dean from 1991-1997. “I remember when he asked me to take over the position of chairman of the Department of Family Medicine,” he recalled. “At the time I really didn’t know what that entailed. After we talked about it I said, ‘Well, this is probably a good place for me to end my career—or begin a new one.’ And that’s what I’ve done. I’ve begun a new career here, and I welcome the opportunity to grow along with the university.”
Rewards of Medical Mission to Africa Outweigh Sacrifices for Charlotte Paolini, D.O.

By Scott Colton
Director of Education Communications

Humanitarianism. It's a recurring theme that seems to define the osteopathic profession and caring physicians like Charlotte Paolini, D.O., who think nothing of traveling across the globe to help those less fortunate than themselves.

In June, Dr. Paolini, who serves as assistant professor and chair of the Division of Geriatrics, willingly sacrificed two weeks of her summer vacation—and $2,000 from her personal bank account—to participate in a fulfilling medical mission to Cotonou, Benin, in West Africa. “I came back with an empty suitcase and a dollar bill in my wallet,” joked Dr. Paolini, who has spent three other so-called “vacations” volunteering her medical talents in impoverished regions of India and Siberia.

The medical mission—coordinated by the Riverside Christian Fellowship Church in North Lauderdale, Florida, through Fulness Ministries International—proved to be a true labor of love for the seven
participants, including M-4 student Mark Flanagan and M-2 student Burt Newman, who also sacrificed vacation time and out-of-pocket expenses to accompany Dr. Paolini on the altruistic expedition.

“Our base was a church-sponsored compound outside of Cotonou that consisted of a medical clinic, an orphanage, and a school,” explained Dr. Paolini, who was making her first visit to Africa. “It was a very primitive area, and the major modes of transportation were either bicycles or mopeds, although some of the natives drove European diesel vehicles. Gas stations are just tables set up on the side of the road by people who use a funnel to pour the diesel fuel from five-gallon glass jugs into the gas tank. We also saw a lot of banana-leaf thatched huts, naked kids running around the streets, and people relieving themselves on the side of the road.”

In addition to Dr. Paolini and the two NSU-COM students, the volunteer contingent comprised a nursing student from Liberty University, a pastor from Fulness Ministries International, a dental hygienist, and an interpreter to help to translate the needs of the French-speaking Beninese villagers who came to the clinic seeking medical attention.

“There was no lab, no radiology—just us with our knowledge and the medical supplies we brought with us, which included antibiotics and medicine for the illnesses we knew we would encounter,” Dr. Paolini said.

Like most indigent regions of the world, hygiene—or rather the lack thereof—was responsible for the epidemic of skin disorders afflicting the villagers. “They don’t seem to possess the education or wherewithal to keep things clean, so we really tried to teach the clinic nurses about the importance of washing the children appropriately,” she explained. “We knew this was going to be a problem, so we made sure we brought a lot of soap, baby shampoo, and bath gel.”

Because their focus was on helping the schoolchildren and orphans living in the church compound, Dr. Paolini and the other mission participants formed a special bond with many of the youngsters. “For me, the most memorable aspect of the trip was having the opportunity to work with the orphans,” she recalled. “They were so hungry for attention. You’d have these little kids trundle up to you and put their arms up wanting to be held. Any time we weren’t seeing patients we spent playing with the kids. We devoted three days exclusively to the children. We gave them physicals and did the best we could when it came to treating acute problems of the skin, respiratory system ailments, and intestinal parasitic conditions.”

Two additional days were spent examining patients from the surrounding community, which is when Dr. Paolini was exposed to the most horrific and heartrending cases. “Because of the prevalence of HIV, AIDS, tuberculosis, and other infectious diseases, people tend to die young in Africa,” she explained. “We had one woman from the village who had been very ill and had experienced a severe amount of weight loss. As she was being interviewed she suddenly began vomiting blood, so we cleared the room immediately to limit the exposure of the providers to possible disease.”

Many of the villagers, who waited for hours to see the medical team, exhibited a similar—but not unexpected—pattern of musculoskeletal strain, which Dr. Paolini attributed to their labor-intensive lifestyles. “Most were women and older children who complained of having headaches and neck pain,” she said. “I couldn’t help but think their pains related to the heavy burdens they carry on their heads. Their buckets and baskets usually hold over 20 pounds of products or water, and many of them add improvised hooks that hold items like sunglasses and other notions, which they sell as they walk along the streets.”

Although the medical mission team was able to successfully treat numerous patients and bring a smile to the faces of many orphaned children, Dr. Paolini acknowledged that ingrained religious attitudes have
doomed many Africans to a life replete with early death and pervasive disease. “Part of the reason the culture stays so primitive is because of religious beliefs,” she stated. “They believe in voodoo and black magic, and the witch doctor is the one person in the community who holds most of the power. So the people we saw with AIDS didn’t call it AIDS. They said, ‘Oh I’ve been cursed.’ Then they use local remedies or whatever the witch doctor recommends for them. Of course, nothing works.”

During their stay in Benin, Dr. Paolini and her other mission cohorts provided health care to the clinic and teaching staff as well as all 38 children living in the orphanage. They also spent some quality time with the schoolchildren from the surrounding village. “Because our main mission was to help the children, one of the women in our church took it upon herself to make up packets for all 275 schoolchildren consisting of zippered plastic envelopes that were filled with a coloring book, pencils, crayons, pencil sharpeners, composition book, erasers, and rulers, which we then distributed to the kids.”

As she spent more time with the villagers, Dr. Paolini was struck by the intrinsic closeness of the families and the well-mannered behavior of the children. “Even though there is poverty and the villagers don’t have much, that sense of family and unity is much more evident in Africa than what I see here in this country,” she added. “Another aspect that stood out to me was how well behaved the children were. The kids would sit quietly when they were on the examining table, which is so different from American children who seem to fidget all the time. Even when they were in school, the kids would sit quietly in class.”

Dr. Paolini, who plans to travel to the Republic of Ghana next year to provide medical care to disabled individuals living in a homeless shelter, credits her Christian faith for providing her with an inexhaustible desire to help others and alleviate suffering. “I’ve been given the privilege of becoming a physician, and I have found it to be totally rewarding,” she stated. “It’s a blessing to be able to go to other parts of the world where they have so much less than we have and share what I’ve been privileged to learn. It is an opportunity to bring hope to a very sick and impoverished world. I come back with so much more than I ever feel I give. It’s life changing because it makes me realize what’s really important.”
Correctional Medicine Rotation Earns Kudos

When the College of Osteopathic Medicine established a decidedly “unglamorous” elective rotation in correctional medicine several years ago, there were concerns that students would steer clear of a clinical opportunity that introduced them to what is widely perceived as an undesirable environment to practice medicine.

Fortunately, those initial worries were quickly laid to rest as uniformly positive student feedback helped turn the prison rotation into one of the most popular rotations in the NSU-COM curriculum. “Our students have been thrilled with this rotation because it provides them with an opportunity to do real hands-on work and look at extremely complex cases,” said James Howell, M.D., M.P.H., professor and chair of the Department of Rural Medicine. “It also provides them with an impressive breadth of knowledge that will serve them well in the future.”

The creation of a correctional medicine rotation was the brainchild of David Thomas, M.D., J.D., who serves as the director of health services for the Florida Department of Corrections and also acts as clinical professor and chair of NSU-COM’s Division of Correctional Medicine. “I always wanted to establish an affiliation with a university, and when I spoke with Fred Lippman (executive vice chancellor and provost of NSU’s Health Professions Division) he said he would love to get involved. So he and Dr. Silvagni came to see our reception center programs in Gainesville and Orlando and were quite impressed.”

Although there are 60 statewide prison institutions that house approximately 75,000 inmates, NSU-COM students rotate at two specific sites: the North Florida Reception Center in Gainesville and the Central Florida Reception Center in Orlando. “The medical students’ time is so limited and so valuable that we put them in what we call our centers of excellence,” Dr. Thomas explained. “We have several levels of medical care, but the students only go to the places that are equivalent to our tertiary care or level-four center of excellence, where patients are coping with multi-organ and multi-system disease.”

Because these reception locations serve as screening centers for new inmates who will be relocated once their medical conditions are ascertained, most prisoners pass through the Orlando and Gainesville sites within 48 to 72
hours. However, those diagnosed with chronic or life-threatening illnesses remain at these sites, thus affording medical students an invaluable opportunity to perform comprehensive physicals and follow an illness to its conclusion in many cases.

"During the month they are here, the students work extremely hard," Dr. Thomas stressed. "One requirement we have is that they become skilled in phlebotomy, which is a necessity because some of the students have not had that experience previously. So once they go into our hospital setting, they are certified phlebotomists. They also have patient care responsibility under the supervision of one of the attending physicians. Depending on their needs and their weaknesses, whatever they are, they will be strengthened as they learn to make decisions and evaluate patients."

"I loved my correctional medicine rotation in Orlando," said Earle Hayes, D.O., a class of 2002 graduate who recently began his primary care internal medicine residency at Yale University. "There are so many disease processes going on in there, and because the inmates are a captive audience, you can intimately follow their progression," he explained. "In the prison system you work one-on-one with the doctors, which is a major benefit. You can do whatever your level of training will allow with the doctor right there supervising, and you can see as many patients as you can handle. You also get to pick one case that stands out in your area of interest and present a comprehensive PowerPoint presentation on it at the end of your rotation."

Like many students, Dr. Hayes felt a certain sense of unease when he arrived to begin a rotation that involved working with convicted felons who had committed heinous crimes against society. But that soon dissolved once he established the appropriate doctor-patient parameters. "The inmates were always very respectful," he stressed. "But you kind of have to keep the upper hand in the relationship versus a traditional patient in the hospital. You also can't disclose certain things to them such as when they are going for surgery so they can't have somebody on the outside waiting to meet them. There are different parameters, but for the most part, it's just like seeing any patient at any clinic."

Programs like NSU-COM's correctional medicine rotation are helping to erase the longstanding stigma attached to the specialty, which is typically not held in high regard by other medical practitioners. "Correctional medicine is not recognized as a desirable specialty, and the way to change that philosophy is to introduce students to it and introduce them to it early," explained Dr. Thomas, a board certified ophthalmologist who also served in the Florida House of Representatives.

"In the past, correctional medicine was perceived as the last refuge of physicians and nurses who couldn't practice anywhere else. And in reality, that's not true," Dr. Thomas added. "You have to work a little harder, your life is more structured, your salary is probably lower, and you really have to be dedicated because you're taking care of society's castoffs. Our affiliation with the College of Osteopathic Medicine is helping to erase that stigma while also improving the knowledge base of the physicians in the Department of Corrections."

The NSU-COM correctional medicine program has proven so successful that one of the students has already obtained a commitment from Dr. Thomas to hire him once he finishes his residency in several years. "This is a unique population with real unique needs, and the students are seeing that there are many benefits to working in the correctional system," Dr. Howell concluded. "First off, patients really need the care because many of them haven't seen a physician or received any comprehensive care since they were children. So that is a tremendous need. We have a very unique opportunity to do a great deal of good for correctional medicine on an individual basis as well as developing it as a respected specialty."

**Florida Department of Corrections Fast Facts**

- Approximately 75,000 inmates are currently housed at 60 statewide prisons.
- 71,000 inmates are male; 4,000 are female.
- 6 percent of male prisoners are serving time for sex offenses.
- 5 percent of male prisoners are serving time for murder.
- 25 percent of female prisoners are serving time for murder.
- Inmates are the only people in this country with a constitutional right to health care.
During its 10-day medical mission to Jamaica last June, the interdisciplinary team comprising approximately 80 NSU-HPD faculty and students encountered a host of common ailments, ranging from Tinea and hepatitis to diabetes and hypertension.

However, no case was more noteworthy than the one involving a rare connective tissue disorder called Ehlers Danlos Syndrome (EDS) that was diagnosed by perceptive M-3 student Stanford Williamson, who had recently learned about the condition while studying for his board exams. The patient, an eight-year-old boy who was covered with contusions that never seemed to heal, seemed relatively healthy. That's when the astute M-2 administered a simple test to see if his initial diagnosis was indeed correct.

Although the skin of an EDS patient looks normal, it can be stretched like a piece of silly putty due to faulty collagen, which is a protein that acts as a glue in the body and adds strength and elasticity to connective tissue. Sure enough, when the student grabbed a section of the boy's skin and pulled, it stretched as easily as a moist wad of gum.

Like all medical missions, providing health care to as many individuals as possible was the overriding goal of the participants, who represented health professions disciplines such as osteopathic medicine, dentistry, optometry, pharmacy, occupational/physical therapy, and public health. "This year we saw over 1,800 patients at 15 sites," said Paula Anderson-Worts, no., an assistant professor in the Department of Family Medicine who serves as lead coordinator of NSU-COM's medical missions to Jamaica. "We extended our stay from a week last year to 10 days this time because we felt the demand for our services was so great," she explained. "Last year we had to leave without seeing everyone who wanted to be seen because of time constraints. We went back to some of the same places we visited last year; however, we also sent health care teams to several additional sites. This year we were able to send a dental team to several elementary schools in Cascade to teach oral hygiene techniques and provide cavity prevention treatment. We also sent an occupational therapy contingent to the Bellview Mental Health Institute to provide information to the staff on how to better utilize occupational therapy in helping the mentally ill."

The mission also featured a student-initiated research project to improve the patient-tracking system, which involved inputting all information into physician-friendly palm pilots. "It was a very challenging project because it was more time consuming than we had anticipated," Dr. Anderson-Worts explained. "However, in the long run, it's a good way to track the patients because there are so many who came back this year and said, 'Oh, the medication you gave us last time really helped.'"

"But unless you can pull that data up quickly and easily when you're seeing so many patients in such a brief time period, it's very difficult to figure out what you gave them on the previous trip by trying to access paper records," she added. "By implementing a patient tracking system, not only will we be able to download data easily for research, but we will also be able to pull up a patient's file quickly."

In addition to implementing the palm pilot program, Dr. Anderson-Worts and her medical mission peers hope to grow the program to the point where regular visits to Jamaica become a reality—and not just a dream. "I've made a lot of personal contacts in Jamaica, and they are very excited about expanding the missions so we can establish ongoing educational programs," she explained. "Our goal is to set up a system where the students go down there on a continual basis, which will allow us to provide better follow-up care."
Although the current Jamaican health care system does provide citizens with access to medical services, Dr. Anderson-Worts says most are unable to receive the help they need. "They do get care through local doctors and at the Kingston Public Hospital, which anyone can go to. But like any medical facility that deals with indigent patients, the waits are usually long and people have to travel quite a distance to get there. Our missions help remove those constraints by providing additional linkages to medical education, prevention, and treatment."

**Health Care Providers**

Sultan Ahmed, M.D.  
Robert Barr, O.D.  
Jeff Berman, M.D.  
Cindy Cork, O.D.  
Dawn Brown-Cross, P.A.  
Carmen Fox, PA-C  
Alice Gandell, O.T.  
Noel Henry, O.D.  
James Howell, M.D., M.P.H.  
Ruth Nemire, Pharm.D.  
Diane Nichols, D.M.D.  
Alexander Owens, D.O.  
Robert Perraud, D.O.  
Sherrol Reynolds, O.D.  
Denise Vedrenne, D.M.D.  
Ceressa Ward, Pharm.D.

**Volunteers**

Yolande Colson  
Marie Gottfried  
Lashonda Linton  
Ruth Perraud  
Luzan Phillpotts  
April Starker

**NSU-HPD Students**

Heather Brown  
Jessica Brown  
Randolph Brown  
Francoeur Cadet  
Andrew Cass  
Brett Chapman  
Jason Chung  
Joseph Cornatzer  
Joan Cross  
Jose Alix Daverman  
Nathan DeNell  
Jennifer Diamond  
Shereen Eoonous  
Immacula Hamilton  
Shonte Henderson  
Hema Jadooanan  
Matthew Jenson  
Linda John-Finn  
Barby Jones  
Sheeja Kanacheril  
Seung Shin Kang  
Marsha Mallet  
Ryan Mangrum  
Moya Martin  
George Meadows  
Jason Mensah  
Julie Mical  
Sara Morgan  
Helwey Mustafa  
Ashaw Natu  
Sherika Newman  
Anne Ngamsnga  
Deji Okubuye  
Layna Orise  
Richard Owen  
Seth Politano  
Bobby Raber  
Matthew Robertson  
Meredith Szpunar  
David Toppi  
Marielis Triana  
Malissa Vacharakliah  
Damion Williams  
Stanford Williamson  
Tae Yu  
Tirdad Zangeneh

A child suffering from a rare condition called Eiblers Danhos Syndrome demonstrates the elasticity of his skin.
One of the hallmarks of osteopathic medicine has always been its emphasis on the primary care disciplines of family medicine, internal medicine, and pediatrics. Therefore, it's not surprising to learn that Edward Packer, D.O., F.A.A.P., F.A.C.O.P., has worked tirelessly to construct a standout program since he took over the reigns as chair of NSU-COM's Department of Pediatrics in May 2001.

During the past 18 months, the department has blossomed from a one-person unit to a dedicated three-member team comprising Dr. Packer, Cyril Blavo, D.O., M.P.H., F.A.C.O.F.P., and the latest addition, Hilda DeGaetano, D.O., F.A.A.P., F.A.C.O.P., who came on board in July 2002. “Because we now have three pediatricians working together to build a group practice here at our Davie clinic, it will make it that much easier to achieve some of our goals,” explained Dr. Packer, who spent 20 years as chair of the Department of Pediatrics at Mesa General Hospital in Arizona before joining the NSU-COM faculty.

Educating Students Remains Primary Purpose

"Because we are an educational medical center, I feel it's very important that we set the standard for how children should be cared for because people in the community will be looking to us to serve as examples," he explained. "We should also serve as a source when it
comes to developing new methodologies for caring for children. That's why we’re looking to participate in research and studies. We’re currently looking into trying to develop some effective methodologies for managing obesity in children, which is an important public health issue. There’s been a lot written about it, but no one has really developed a satisfactory program that not only would be effective here in a teaching center but also in the hands of the general primary care physician.

“Of course,” he added, “our primary goal is to teach our residents and students the proper way to care for children. We currently have two family practice residents with us from the North Broward Hospital District, and they get the opportunity to examine children, work up differentials, learn about anticipatory guidance, gain knowledge of periodic developmental screenings, and administer immunizations.”

One of the most significant enhancements Dr. Packer has added to the department is the inclusion of weekly pediatric rounds at NSU-COM's Sanford L. Ziff Health Care Center, during which the residents and students present a case of interest.

“We recently had a child come in who was suffering from the sudden onset of a limp, and the next week my resident spoke about the patient and then discussed the proper way to work up a child like this by presenting a comprehensive differential diagnosis,” Dr. Packer explained. “By doing this on a weekly basis, we’ve helped to make our students and residents much more aware of how the things that they’ve learned and studied in their pediatric courses apply when they’re actually working in real patient care scenarios.”

Primary Care Principle Pervades Pediatrics Curriculum

As soon as students begin their matriculation at NSU-COM, they are exposed to a diverse and continuous array of pediatric-related material that is woven throughout the first and second-year curriculum. “Pediatrics is incorporated into every aspect of the education of our students from the beginning of the first year,” Dr. Packer stated.

“As students study anatomy and biochemistry, they are also being taught skills in physical diagnosis as they relate to infants and children,” he added. “When they take their courses in preventive medicine, clinical correlation, and medical procedures, they are taught how these subjects affect the care of children. Our goals are to teach students how to approach a child, how to make the child and parent feel comfortable, how to evaluate the physical findings on the child, and how to do these maneuvers without injuring the child,” he continued.

“One area of pediatrics that is core and central is the fact that we are doing preventive medicine. Children come to us on a periodic basis because their parents want to make sure they’re developing normally. That’s why we stress anticipatory guidance such as teaching and training parents about issues like rest, diet, exercise, avoidance of smoke exposure, and prevention of accidental poisonings. Educating parents to do these types of things does more for a child’s health than practically anything else we do as a physician.”

Unlike most adult patients, who can rely on themselves to seek standard medical care and follow a treatment regimen prescribed by a physician, children are dependent on their parents or other family members when illness strikes.

“We need to remember that we’re not just treating the child, but we’re also caring for the family,” he stressed. “Family members are going to serve as our nurses, as our caregivers. Therefore, we need to get them to understand, to buy into our logic system so they will be as active and informed a participant as we are. That’s
the type of concept we need to get our students and residents to understand. Because in reality, if they establish a sophisticated rapport with the family, if there’s a positive relationship, the likelihood is much better that the child will be treated, the therapies will be completed, and if a problem occurs, the physician will hear about it.

**Converting Learning from Classroom to Clinic**
Translating the information students learn from the lecture hall to the clinical environment is yet another crucial element Dr. Packer emphasizes as the student doctors progress through their first two years at NSU-COM. “First we play the educator role in the lecture hall, and then we train the students to apply those concepts formally here in the clinic,” he stated. “Take for instance the subject of lead screening. It’s interesting how you’ll discuss the topic in a lecture hall, and they’ll learn about it and answer correctly on exams and seemingly understand the concept thoroughly.

“But then when they come to the clinic and see a child, they don’t always apply the preventive techniques they’ve learned,” added Dr. Packer, who makes rounds at the Chris Evert Women and Children’s Center at Broward General Medical Center along with Dr. DeGaetano. “They forget to tell themselves things like, ‘Oh yes, we need to check to see if this child’s at risk for lead exposure. We need to see if this child lives in an area where he or she’s at risk for lead exposure. Do I need to test this child for lead exposure?’ That’s when we as educators need to re-reinforce that issue with them and say, ‘Okay, you learned about this is preventive medicine, you know you need to do this. So now you need to think about it.’”

Once students enter their third year, they must complete two mandatory pediatrics rotations. In the first rotation, which is a four-week traditional hospital pediatrics program, students are assigned patients and track them on a daily basis. During this rotation, the students are responsible for making an initial physical and history evaluation, composing daily notes, and making rounds with the attending physician. The second rotation, which takes place at ambulatory pediatric clinics throughout Florida where primary care is emphasized, allows students to experience the outpatient spectrum of pediatric care.

**Progressive Plans Loom on Pediatric Horizon**
Now that he’s entrenched in his second year as chair of the Department of Pediatrics, Dr. Packer is looking to build on the achievements the department has already crafted by focusing on issues like publicizing the Davie clinic’s pediatric services to the community, broadcasting noontime pediatric lectures to other NSU-COM teaching sites, and enhancing postgraduate training opportunities. “I want to expand and develop our clinic and make certain the community knows we’re here,” he explained. “A lot of people still are unaware that we have this large pediatric group here, and that includes the NSU campus community.

“I would also like to see us create an interaction with physicians skilled in sub specialties like pediatric cardiology or pediatric neurology who would be willing to come here and do consultations with our patients and provide our residents and students an opportunity to see that kind of evaluation done,” he added. “And with the enriching relationship we’re developing with the North Broward Hospital District, this is something I envision that can become a reality at some point in the future.”

Dr. Packer also is adamant about increasing postgraduate opportunities for physicians looking to specialize in pediatrics. “I’d definitely like to see our department become much more involved with postgraduate training in the hospitals,” he admitted. “Ultimately, we have a number of students here who are interested in pediatrics, but at the present time we only offer six positions at Miami Children’s Hospital, two each year. Our pediatric residency is the only one in Florida that is accredited by both the AOA and the ACGME, so I’m hoping that with our relationships with the hospital districts here in the area we will be able to develop another quality postgraduate program for our students.”

Like all great administrators, Dr. Packer thrives on the challenges that come with building a thriving department and relishes the opportunity to continue adding to NSU-COM’s already rich legacy.

“I was excited about coming here initially, and I have found that all my beliefs about what being here would mean have come true,” he stated. “The faculty and administration are supportive and actually encourage you to try new things. The way our department and myself as a newcomer have been made to feel a part of the family so quickly has been an extremely rewarding experience that encourages me to accomplish great things for the college and the university.”
A Life in Alaska Beckons Class of 2002 Graduate Kathleen Pelkan, D.O.

By Scott Colton
Director of Education Communications

As a child growing up in the Napa Valley region of California, Kathleen Pelkan, D.O., had absolutely no interest in emulating her father and grandfather, who were both respected M.D.s. In fact, as she approached her late teens and college loomed on the horizon, the self-professed “black sheep of my family” was surprisingly ambivalent about her career goals.

“I didn’t know what I wanted to do,” admitted Dr. Pelkan, who had the added pressure of watching her three siblings launch successful careers in engineering and law. “And there I was, the black sheep in the family, who was going out, traveling, and not really knowing what I wanted to do with my life.”

Despite coming from a family defined by professional success, Dr. Pelkan’s laissez-faire attitude continued once she earned a bachelor’s degree in business from the University of the Pacific in Stockton, California. After working in the banking industry for several years, Dr. Pelkan switched gears and tried her hand at working in sports marketing and scholarship fundraising at UC/Berkeley and Stanford University.

Although she was fairly content at Stanford, where she promoted the university’s football and basketball programs, her adventurous spirit still yearned to be unleashed. “I actually wanted to live the National Geographic life and climb mountains,” explained Dr. Pelkan, who was toying with the idea of becoming a mountaineering guide in British Columbia.

Because training for the guide position was to take place in Seattle, Washington, Dr. Pelkan debated over whether to make such a risky career change. But when a friend who lived in Seattle called and offered her a place to stay, Dr. Pelkan decided to take full advantage of the happy coincidence. So for the next three years, Dr. Pelkan indulged her wilderness leanings, which soon led to her epiphany about pursuing a career in medicine.

“As part of our training, we had to become certified in mountain rescue and wilderness medicine,” she explained. However, just as she was about to forge ahead, her wanderlust won out once again thanks to a suggestion passed on to her from a fellow guide. “During this time I became friends with someone who also worked up in Alaska on tour boats,” she explained. “I needed to make a little extra money in the summertime, so she urged me to apply for a similar job. I initially signed as a deckhand, but then I was asked to become a narrator, to get on the mike and actually talk about what the passengers were seeing. I said no at first, but they kept pursuing me and I eventually agreed to become a naturalist on board these boats. And I loved it because I was giving lectures about glaciers, whales, and native culture.”

That “summer job” eventually turned into a full-time, six-year stint that delayed—but did not dissuade—her from her ultimate ambition, which was becoming a physician. “I finally decided I couldn’t do this for the rest of my life, mainly because I didn’t want to be a naturalist on board tour boats when I was 50,” Dr. Pelkan admitted. “But I loved Alaska and still wanted to pursue medicine. I knew there was a reason why I ended up doing all of this work up in Alaska, because I’m meant to be there.”

Although her father and grandfather were M.D.s, when it came time to actually apply to medical schools once she
completed her premed coursework, Dr. Pelkan opted to consider only osteopathic colleges. "Through all my journeys on the boats up in Alaska, I ended up meeting a number of osteopathic physicians. I had never heard of D.O.s before, and having grown up in a M.D. world, that’s what I thought medicine was," she said. "The D.O.s I met loved what they did and gave me an eye-opening explanation of what osteopathic physicians can do in terms of their approach to patients and how they use manipulation. And I thought, ‘Hmm, if I’m out here in the middle of Alaska in these tiny little towns and have limited resources, using my hands as a healing tool is a great thing.’"

Like most prospective medical students, Dr. Pelkan applied to a number of colleges. But when she arrived at NSU-COM for her interview and met with Chancellor Morton Terry, Dr. Stanley Simpson, and Marla Frohlinger, she knew she had found her niche. "I had never been to the East Coast before, and I wasn’t really expecting that much," she admitted. "But it was the first interview where I really felt connected with the people who were interviewing me. In fact, I knew I had gotten in when I walked out of the interview because one of the questions they asked me was where did I see myself practicing when I graduated. I said I planned to return to the Pacific Northwest and probably Alaska, and they said, ‘Well we need good D.O.s there, too.’"

Making the transition from tour boat narrator to medical student proved to be an effortless enterprise for Dr. Pelkan, who had been discouraged from even applying to medical schools by various university counselors in Seattle, who felt she was too old and lacked the stellar grades needed to even gain an interview. "It never occurred to me that I wasn’t going to make it or that I wasn’t going to do well," stressed Dr. Pelkan, who graduated with honors and earned several awards at NSU-COM's pre-graduation dinner ceremony last spring.

"My experience here was great because my approach to it was like a job," she added. "When I worked on the tour boats, I was up at 6:00 every morning and wasn’t in bed until 11:00 at night, and I thought that’s the way medical school was going to be. I didn’t have a husband or kids and had no responsibility to anybody else, so my whole focus was on medical school. I chose being here as opposed to anywhere else because I had nothing to distract me. If I had been back in Seattle, I would have wanted to go mountain climbing and skiing on the weekends. Here my whole focus was school. I also think my being older was an advantage because my mind was set on earning my degree and then going back to Alaska.”

Although her medical school experience was relatively stress free, Dr. Pelkan’s colorful past did catch up with her in a humorous way immediately after she began matriculating at NSU-COM in 1998. "The day of our White Coat Ceremony, they held a reception for us afterward," she recalled. "Dr. Howard Neer (associate dean of alumni affairs) walked up to me and asked, ‘Are you from Alaska?’ When I told him yes, that I had worked up there for the past six years, he laughed and said, ‘You were the tour director on the cruise I went on in Prince William Sound.’ So I guess it’s true when they say you can’t escape your past.”

Once she received her long-awaited degree in May 2002, Dr. Pelkan returned to Anchorage, Alaska, to participate in a three-year family practice internship/residency that is affiliated with the University of Washington Family Medicine Program. "I only applied for the University of Washington program because I knew I wanted to be back in that area," said Dr. Pelkan, who served as NSU-COM student chapter president of the ACOFP as well as vice president of the organization’s national student chapter.

“One of my criteria was that it had to have an emphasis on wilderness medicine and be within 30 minutes of a ski slope in the wintertime, so when I had time off I wouldn’t have to drive far,” she pragmatically explained. “My ultimate goal is to practice in a rural Alaskan town. I’ll also be eligible for loan repayment, which is nice because I wasn’t aware that these types of extra benefits even existed for physicians that wanted to work in small rural towns in Alaska. The bonus for me is that I’m doing what I want to do and living exactly where I want to live.”
Guatemala Medical Missions Continue to Evolve

In June, the College of Osteopathic Medicine made its fifth excursion to remote regions of Guatemala, treating an estimated 1,000 Mayan villagers. However, while the primary focus continues to be providing health care to the indigent population, that focus is broadening to include many new facets, including a heightened emphasis on preventive medicine, the inclusion of continuing education sessions, and symbiotic interaction with Guatemalan public health entities.

“When we first started going to Guatemala several years ago, our original contacts were with the church,” explained Camille Bentley, D.O., an assistant professor in the Department of Family Medicine who has been coordinating the Guatemalan missions since their inception in January 2000. “Now we’re actually working with local clinics, local community medical workers, volunteers, and—in some cases—primitive clinical sites as we try to get more involved. We have worked very hard over the years to not become solely affiliated with any political or religious group because we want to control our destiny and not be at the whim of outside individuals. We want to keep our focus on the type of mission work we want to provide.”

During the weeklong mission, the NSU-COM contingent—which consisted of 35 health care professionals and medical students—returned to the areas of Santa Catarina Palopó and San Antonio Palopó while expanding its scope to include new sites outside of Antigua called Pastores and San Baríholomé Milpas Altas.

“Even though we were only able to spend one day in each of the two towns we usually visit, we had about a 40 percent patient return rate, which is excellent,” Dr. Bentley stated. “There is no question in my mind that we have established a genuine rapport with these patients and the local community that makes it even more important for us to return to these sites in the future. We can continue to assist in diagnosing and treating the various acute and chronic infections found in these populations, but we need to take it a step further and assist the local leaders with education related to good hygiene, safe food handling, and transmission of infectious disease.”

The humanitarian significance of the medical missions to Guatemala was clearly illustrated by a haunting incident involving two brothers afflicted with an incurable ailment called ichthyosis, a genetically recessive sex-linked skin disorder that transforms flesh into hard, fish-like scales.

“Apparently our contact in Santa Catarina had seen a segment on Guatemalan television two weeks prior to our arrival about these two brothers who lived in an underserved section on the outskirts of Guatemala City,” Dr. Bentley explained. “These two children needed medical attention and their mother was desperate because no one would help. The family traveled four hours just to be examined by our physicians. Of course we did all we could and provided the mother with lotions and emollients and instructed her on the theory of peeling therapy. Unfortunately, there is little more that could be offered at the time, but even so it was a unique opportunity for our students to see firsthand a rare sex-linked genetic condition they may never see again.”

Because issues such as cultural and geographic isolation are so common within the Mayan villages, these genetic disorders appear to be perpetuated generation to generation. That’s why Dr. Bentley and Lauritz (Larry)
Jensen, D.A., director of pre-clinical education and chair of NSU-COM's International Medicine Committee, are determined to study and promote health education and prevention among the Mayan people of the Lake Atitlan region of Guatemala while also providing enriched educational opportunities for NSU-HPD students. One significant problem they seek to address is the rampant malnutrition of children, which is complicated by the heavy parasite burdens and enteric bacterial infections endured by these children. Sadly, marasmus and similar illnesses are responsible for thousands of deaths among the Mayans who live in the highland areas of Guatemala.

To help ameliorate situations like these and provide assistance to those who are unable to visit the NSU-COM medical contingent during its semiannual visits to Guatemala, Drs. Bentley and Jensen are considering proposing a more extensive study of childhood illnesses common to Latin America in the future. "It is our aim to work hand in hand with Guatemalan health professionals from the College of Medicine/Public Health in Guatemala City," stated Dr. Jensen, who recently concluded a stint as president of DOCARE International.

"Malnutrition is a major problem in third-world countries," added Dr. Bentley. "And many of the children suffer from kwashiorkor and marasmus, which is a specific form of malnutrition that is both a caloric and a protein deficiency. Essentially, the children waste away to nothing. We've reached the stage in our efforts where we can now have one group work at a clinical site for a few days and then establish a system where we can have other groups go out into the communities and into the homes to identify those that are medically needy.

"By going into the villagers' homes, we will also be able to identify a wealth of other genetic and environmental problems," she continued. "Often, we are not seeing the real serious cases or reaching the individuals who can most benefit from our help, especially when it comes to malnutrition. If we can identify those at risk and provide them with needed supplements as well as education on basic nutrition and how to avoid parasites, we can save lives."

In addition to providing vital medical care at the aforementioned Guatemalan sites, the NSU-COM team invited doctors from the University of San Carlos Medical School in Guatemala City to a CME activity specifically designed to promote the osteopathic profession to an enthusiastic audience. "For this purpose, we brought a portable OMM table with us, and Dr. Elisa Ginter detailed and demonstrated osteopathic manipulative techniques," Dr. Jensen stated. "Manipulation practices are readily accepted by the Guatemalans, and it also offered us an opportunity to explain what NSU-COM was all about."

From an educational standpoint, the health care practitioners who participated in the multidimensional mission also benefited by earning six hours of ACCME and AOA continuing medical education credits for attending incisive sessions on gastrointestinal diseases and the sequelae of reflux, as well as a lecture on parasitic infections presented by Dr. Bentley and Joel Spalter, M.D.

When the NSU-COM medical team returns to Guatemala in late February and early March 2003 for a two-week mission, the participants will have a rare opportunity to commune with nature and indigenous inhabitants of Guatemala's rainforest region. According to Dr. Jensen, "This will provide our students with an incredible chance to see tropical diseases common to this sector of Guatemala."
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You may also access Listserv at the alumni Web page by clicking on the “Join Our Listserv” link.

Upcoming Events

For additional NSU-COM related information regarding the following events, please call (954) 262-1029 or email immacula@nova.edu.

NSU-COM Alumni Reunion and Seventh Annual CME Program
February 7-9, 2003
The annual alumni weekend extravaganza will commence with a reception on Friday, February 7 from 7:00 to 9:00 p.m. CME sessions will be presented on Saturday and Sunday. On Saturday, February 8, the social events will begin with a 6:30 p.m. reception followed by a gala banquet at 7:30 p.m. The hotel: Hyatt Regency Pier Sixty Six in Fort Lauderdale, Florida. For reservation information, please contact the hotel at (954) 525-6666.

NSU-COM Alumni Seminar at Sea
February 9-16, 2003
Caribbean cruise aboard the luxurious Costa Atlantica, which will visit the regions of San Juan, St. Thomas, St. John, Catalina Island, Casa de Campos, and Nassau and feature CME lectures at sea. $790 per person for outside cabin; $1,000 per person for cabin with outside balcony.

Florida Osteopathic Medical Association (FOMA) Annual Convention
February 20-23, 2003
The 2003 FOMA Convention will be held at the Hyatt Regency Pier Sixty Six in Fort Lauderdale, Florida. An NSU-COM alumni reception will be held at this event. Please refer to the program for specific time and place.

American College of Osteopathic Family Physicians (ACOFP) Annual Convention and Exhibition
March 19-23, 2003
The 40th Annual ACOFP Convention and Exhibition will be held at The Opryland Hotel in Nashville, Tennessee. An alumni reception will be held at this event, so please refer to the program for specific time and place. To obtain hotel and convention information, please contact the ACOFP.
### 2002 Donors

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A $500,000 life insurance policy donated by Dr. Jeffrey Grove (1990) and his wife, Karen.

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Alumni Spotlight
Gregory James, D.O. - Class of 1988

Measuring professional success is something that can be done in a number of ways. For some, accomplishment comes in the form of a glittery and accolade-laden résumé. For others, achievement is defined by the lives they've touched and the positive contributions they've made to society and their chosen profession.

And then there are those like Gregory James, D.O., M.P.H., F.A.C.O.F.P., who become superstars in their field without sacrificing humility or their ability to give back to their profession. Since graduating from NSU-COM in 1988, Dr. James has established himself as a true leader in the osteopathic profession—a fact illustrated by his recent election as president of the Florida Society of the American College of Osteopathic Family Physicians (ACOFP).

Because his father is a professor at Manatee Community College in Bradenton, Florida, Dr. James was introduced to the numerous rewards of professional education at an early age. So once he decided to pursue a medical career, Dr. James enrolled at Manatee Community College and earned his associate of arts degree in pre-medical sciences in 1981. His educational odyssey continued at the University of South Florida, where he earned a bachelor of arts in chemistry in 1983, and at Southeastern College of Osteopathic Medicine (the precursor to NSU-COM), where he earned his D.O. degree in 1988. After completing his internship and family practice residency at Sun Coast Hospital in Largo, Florida, Dr. James opened a private general and family medicine practice at the Bay Medical Center in Dunedin, Florida.

Three years later, in 1994, Dr. James left his practice to become associate director of Sun Coast Health Care’s family practice residency program and director of the facility’s family practice residency clinics. With his career on the upswing, Dr. James felt the time was right to add another acronym to his name and earn a master of public health (M.P.H.) degree from NSU’s College of Allied Health in 1997.

Dr. James, who was promoted to director of Sun Coast Health Care’s family practice residency program in 1998, is board certified in family practice and holds a Certificate of Added Qualifications in geriatrics as well as certification with the American Board of Quality Assurance and Utilization Review. In addition to serving as medical director at several long-term care facilities, Dr. James also finds the time to impart his knowledge as a clinical faculty member for NSU-COM, Kirksville College of Osteopathic Medicine, and the University of Osteopathic Medicine and Health Sciences in Des Moines, Iowa. He also serves as an author of questions for the National Board of Osteopathic Medical Examiners.

Additional accomplishments include:
- Becoming an ACOFP fellow in 1999.
- Acting as chief of staff at Sun Coast Hospital.
- Serving on the NSU-COM Dean’s Alumni Advisory Council.
- Earning two Outstanding Lecturer of the Year accolades from Sun Coast Hospital.
- Functioning as vice president of the Pinellas County Osteopathic Medical Society.
- Receiving Sun Coast Hospital Foundation Distinguished Member of the Board Award in 2001.

Although his professional commitments leave him little free time to enjoy life’s finer pleasures like playing golf or relaxing at the beach, Dr. James is a devoted family man to his wife, Holly, and their two sons, Will (age 11) and Nick (age 9).

“Dr. James’ pleasant, easygoing demeanor belies his intense loyalty and dedication to the osteopathic profession and the education of its students,” said Howard Neer, D.O., F.A.C.O.F.P., professor and associate dean of alumni affairs. “He is held in high esteem by his colleagues and is well recognized as a leader today and of the future.”

A James family portrait featuring Will, Holly, Gregory, and Nick.
Family Facts: I am married to Tom and have raised or partially raised five kids. Wendy (30) and Matt (27) are presently located in Syracuse, New York; Jason (28) lives wherever his life leads him, although at the moment he’s landed in Syracuse before moving on again; Travis (17) and Katey (13) live with us in Davie.

Date of Hire: November 1998

Official NSU-COM Responsibilities: My main job is supporting Dr. Lawrence Jacobson. I type various correspondence, schedule meetings, set up appointments, and answer phones. I am always prepared for anything that happens to be in Dr. Jacobson’s focus while also serving as a backup for Dr. Silvagni and Johneta Goodwin.

Reasons I enjoy working at NSU-COM: To put it simply, I enjoy people. I believe that what we do to support the educators of NSU-COM is very important because it helps to provide the medical field with good, caring, reputable physicians. As support staff, we are in a position to assist in providing future quality health care for our family and other families, which is something we should not take lightly.

What did you do professionally before joining NSU-COM? I have been a mother for over 28 years and still have a young teen in the house. You can’t get more professional than that. Oh, you mean outside the home? I spent three years as a secretary for a professional ballet company that was affiliated with a school. Then came seven years as a secretary in a diocesan (bishop’s) office, followed by three years as a girl Friday for the highway/water/sewer department in the Village of Baldwinsville, New York. I also had my own home business on the side doing bookkeeping and selling homemade items like macramé chairs.

My greatest achievement in life: Coming into my own, accepting who I am, and learning to like myself. Life is very harsh, but it can be softened with a sense of humor, laughter, and good people around you.

My coworkers would be surprised to know this about me: The girls in the dean’s office pretty much know it all, but other coworkers would be very much surprised to know that I am a free spirit from the late 1960s and early 1970s. I was a hippy who traveled the country, hitched rides, lived in California for a short time, and participated in a few Vietnam War rallies—the against side. That free spirit still comes out from time to time and even surprises me. I am very environmentally conscious, and when I worked for the municipality in New York, I was the recycling queen for the village. I am also a very good cook, although I cannot fry eggs or make grilled cheese sandwiches.

If I won the lottery I would: You mean after I buy a red convertible? I do have a dream, which is getting all our kids down here at the same time. I would rent a helicopter to bring us to Key West for a few days of skydiving and deep-sea fishing. We would get a luxurious suite and watch the sunrise and sunset as we sipped margaritas.

The most frightening thing that ever happened to me: The worst is when one of your kids is in the hospital and you have been pacing for hours up and down the hallway—and you see the physician coming toward you with a look on his face that cannot even be explained. You take a hard swallow and pray to God to give you the strength for whatever you are about to be told.

What makes you happiest in life? Watching my kids laugh and sleep in that angelic way they have even when they are well into their 20s.

When I retire I plan to: I have no plans right now, just threats to the kids that they’d better have good jobs when the time comes or I will be taking turns living in their driveways in an RV.

Three words that best describe me: Different, lighthearted, and assertive.