NSU-COM Reaches Out to Hurricane Ravaged Floridians
NSU-COM's attendance policy is an inescapable fact of life for all students. Although the college has always enforced an attendance policy, the new method of scanning ID cards before each class has been met with an understandable amount of angst and misunderstanding, even though its implementation will engender positive long-term benefits for both the students and their future patients.

Love it or loath it, the current attendance policy is something I strongly support for a number of reasons. While some may construe it as dictatorial and unnecessary, history has proven that attending daily classroom lectures provides students with invaluable learning that extends far beyond the information gleaned from textbooks and handouts. I speak from experience on this issue because the knowledge I obtained in my classroom lectures when I was a medical student commonly allowed me to practice better medicine.

One example of this profound effect on a patient’s quality and quantity of life that I will never forget occurred when I was practicing in South Dakota. A woman came to me after she had been to six other physicians who had been unable to diagnose the source of her escalating depression. For some unknown reason, despite liberal doses of antidepressant medication, her life was becoming less and less meaningful, which caused her to emotionally and physically separate from her husband and children. Since this was my initial interaction with the patient, I performed a routine physical and immediately noticed what seemed to be a rash or sunburn on her upper chest.

When I asked her about the rash, she explained that her mother had told her that when she was a baby she had taken her to the doctor to receive a number of x-rays. Forty or 50 years ago, the conventional thinking amongst the medical community was that shrinking the thymus helped protect a person’s immune system. Unfortunately, in addition to causing permanent skin damage in many of the patients, the treatment produced a high incidence of thyroid cancer and ancillary effects such as depression from the clinical or sub-clinical hypothyroidism.

After conducting a comprehensive evaluation, I found that she did indeed have thyroid cancer—even though she did have normal thyroid test results based on the testing methods available at that time. We removed the diseased organ, put her on thyroid replacement therapy—and her depression disappeared. The reason I diagnosed a condition the other physicians had missed was this: I remembered a group of slides I had seen during a classroom lecture showing patients with a red rash who had been irradiated to treat their thymus when they were children.

Had I missed this particular lecture, would I have had the foresight to reach the same conclusion? To further emphasize this point, I probably would not have learned from this experience if I had missed the connection because there would not have been a follow-up regarding the rash and its relationship to the irradiation and the cancer.

Classroom experiences such as the one I just referenced only serve to reinforce the need for mandatory attendance. In all likelihood, you can pass tests and board exams without ever attending lectures. But a course exam only encompasses a fraction of the material and testable key items covered throughout each semester. Similarly, if you only study lecture notes or outlines, you miss out on opportunities to interact with your peers and neglect to correlate what you’re seeing, hearing, and reading in the classroom setting. Much of what is learned in the lecture hall is the less obvious, non-testable type of information that will eventually distinguish an average physician from a great one.

Some students think that since they’re paying for their education, they have the right to decide which lectures are essential to attend. But it’s not like paying to see a movie or buying an ice cream cone—you’re paying for the opportunity to have an education. If you want to become a physician, you don’t have the right to not learn.

If you study to become a journalist and skip a number of classes, the worst outcome will probably be an article littered with poorly constructed sentences. However, if you study to become a physician and miss a large number of classes, the outcome could be a decidedly more grievous one for you and your patients.
Over the years, the osteopathic medical profession has endured more than its share of misguided bias when it comes to comparisons with its allopathic counterpart. We always stress the holistic nature of osteopathic medicine as being one of the profession’s defining tenets, but for some reason, both the media and many of our educational counterparts throughout the state seem to exclusively categorize osteopathic medicine as a primary care profession. While its true our history lies in the primary care disciplines of family medicine, general internal medicine, and general pediatrics, the osteopathic profession encompasses D.O.s who are serving in all facets and subspecialties of medicine, ranging from neurosurgery and psychology to orthopedics and radiology.

Over the past several months, a number of articles and editorials have appeared in local newspapers that discussed the need for establishing new medical schools in South Florida. Unfortunately, in addition to exploring the pros and cons of this heated issue, these articles have perpetuated long-held misconceptions about the osteopathic profession. For example, in a recent *Miami Herald* article regarding the attempted establishment of an allopathic medical school at Florida International University in Miami, the author stated that osteopathic medicine is “a practice linked with chiropractic treatment.” In a related story titled “FIU, UM Out to Stem Future Lack of M.D.s,” the “M.D.” designation was liberally used as an umbrella term to describe all licensed physicians.

Administrators from the College of Osteopathic Medicine, the Health Professions Division, and the university—including the president—responded swiftly to these and other articles by sending letters of enlightenment to the appropriate sources. However, because misinformation exists in the collective media, we all need to be diligent in our efforts to prevent or redress similar inaccuracies that do a disservice to the osteopathic profession.

Educating the media about the vast scope of osteopathic medicine, however, may not be our only concern. Recently, a very bright second-year medical student stopped in to see her faculty adviser, Dr. A. Alvin Greber, to discuss her future. During their chat, the student stunned Dr. Greber by expressing the following concern: How was she going to be able to attain subspecialty status when the osteopathic medical profession doesn’t offer any subspecialty training?

It’s worrisome enough when newspapers and other publications print misleading statements about our profession. But it also points to a much more pervasive problem if a top student who’s been here for a full year is similarly misguided in her thinking. If this misperception exists within our own borders, it’s an imperative issue we need to address before it becomes an even greater problem.
FEATURES

Forensic Pathology: Osteopathic Style - 9
In August 2004, NSU-COM launched the latest of its curricular enhancements when it added a forensic pathology component to the M2 clinical procedures course, which dovetails nicely with the college’s recently established forensic pathology osteopathic fellowship at the Broward County Medical Examiner’s Office in Fort Lauderdale.

Clinical Rotation at Yellowstone National Park Offers Adventure - 10
In July 2004, M4 student Fred Trayers had a tremendous opportunity to combine education with recreation during a clinical rotation at Yellowstone National Park. It was an incredible experience that gave Trayers the opportunity to explore a variety of aspects in emergency, rural, and wilderness medicine.

NSU-COM Reaches Out to Hurricane Ravaged Floridians - 14
During a meteorologically tumultuous summer that will best be remembered for the consequences created by a killer tropical quartet named Charley, Frances, Ivan, and Jeanne, disheartened Florida residents watched in horror as an unrelenting barrage of wind and rain destroyed their communities—and forever transformed their lives.

Scholarship Allows Shaw-Berrocal to Continue Osteopathic Education - 18
When M2 student ShaRonda Shaw-Berrocal applied for a disadvantaged student scholarship through the college’s Department of Student and Administrative Services, she did so knowing just how crucial an impact the verdict would have on her future.

Trip to Prison Highlights Medical Mission 2004 to Jamaica - 20
Going to prison is not something most people aspire to in their lifetime, but that certainly didn’t dissuade this year’s Medical Mission to Jamaica contingent from bringing its compassionate brand of heart and health care to hundreds of incarcerated individuals in Kingston, Spanish Town, and St. Mary.

Dr. Brenda Sowter Trades Big City Living for Small Town Charm - 31
In 1996, Dr. Brenda Sowter—a 1988 alumnus—made a life-altering decision when she decided to abandon her California lifestyle and relocate to a rural area several thousand miles east in Tennessee.

DEPARTMENTS
Dean’s Message — 2
HPD Executive Administration Communiqué — 3
News Briefs — 5
Faculty Focus — 11
Staff Snapshot — 23
Student Organization of the Month — 24
Alumni Corner — 26
The American Osteopathic Foundation recently awarded a $2,000 Welch Scholars Grant to M4 student John Coppola. The grant was originally established in 2001 to provide monetary aid to students entering their second, third or fourth year of studies at an accredited college/school of osteopathic medicine. Special emphasis is placed on the financial need and academic achievement of the student. Grants are awarded to students from each of the nation’s colleges/schools of osteopathic medicine.

A number of students are currently benefiting from a trio of loans and scholarships that were awarded to the College of Osteopathic Medicine by the U.S. Health Resources and Services Administration in the following categories:

- $108,116 - Primary Care Loan (PCL)
- 108,949 - Loan for Disadvantaged Students (LDS)
- $51,538 - Scholarship/Disadvantaged Students (SDS)

M4 student Chelsea Jerry was recently named the recipient of the AOA Presidential Memorial Leadership Award from the American Osteopathic Foundation (AOF). The award, which includes a cash prize of $3,000, honors and recognizes an osteopathic student entering his/her second, third, or fourth year of studies who has demonstrated outstanding character, service, and leadership potential in the osteopathic profession. Jerry will receive the award during the November 2004 AOF Honors Ceremony, which is being held in conjunction with the AOA Annual Convention and Scientific Seminar in San Francisco, California.

The college’s Department of Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Education and Training is now the second-largest training site in Florida for courses such as advanced cardiac life support (ACLS), pediatric advanced life support (PALS), and cardio pulmonary resuscitation (CPR). St. Joseph’s Hospital in Tampa is currently the largest training site in the state.

M1 student Alberto Caban, Jr., M.P.H., recently presented his research project titled “Body Mass Index in Occupational Groups of Greater than 100,000 U.S. Workers: The National Health Interview Survey (NHIS) 1986-1994” at the Florida Public Health Association (FPHA) Meeting in Orlando, Florida. Caban was also elected secretary of the FPHA’s newly formed Section of Minority Health, which was created by the organization’s executive board.

The NSU-COM Poster Session for Students and Residents will be held Saturday, February 10, 2005, in conjunction with the Ninth Annual NSU-COM Alumni Reunion and Continuing Medical Education Program. For further information, please reference: http://medicine.nova.edu/~danshaw/poster or email danshaw@nsu.nova.edu.

Enrollment in the Master of Public Health (M.P.H.) Program, which was established in 1995, recently reached a record high. Approximately 35 new M.P.H. students are matriculating through the program; however, that figure does not include those osteopathic medical students who are currently pursuing a dual D.O./M.P.H. degree.

Dateline Health, NSU’s public service show hosted by HPD Chancellor Dr. Fred Lippman, recently reached a significant milestone when it taped its 150th show. Airing on Comcast and BECON cable channels five days a week throughout Broward County, the 30-minute show is produced by the Health Professions Division and features up-to-date health care news and interviews with guests who discuss a variety of health-related issues. The program is taped on the main campus under the production and technical expertise of the Office of Media Technology.

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COM Outlook • Fall 2004
News Briefs...News Briefs

On August 10, the class of 2008 was welcomed into the osteopathic fold at the annual White Coat Ceremony, which was held at the Signature Grand in Davie and on the Health Professions Division campus. For the 222 students comprising the class of 2008, the White Coat Ceremony served as an auspicious experience that officially marked their entry into the medical profession. In the presence of family, guests, and faculty members, the students were welcomed into the medical community by leaders of the osteopathic profession and ceremonially "cloaked" with their white coat. By establishing this meaningful ritual at the beginning of medical school, the intent is to make students aware of their responsibilities from the first day of training and convey the message that doctors should "care" as well as "cure."

When it came time to pose in his white coat with Dr. Silvagni, incoming student Scott Branch expressed his gratitude in a distinctly comical way.

M1 student Christian Setzer, M.P.H., who earned his public health degree from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, had his master's thesis accepted for publication in the September/October issue of Public Health Reports, which is the official journal of the U.S. Public Health Service. The article is titled "Medicaid Outpatient Utilization for Waterborne Pathogenic Illness Following Hurricane Floyd."

On August 6, NSU-COM kicked off the new school year in fun-filled fashion at its annual Osteoblast on Dania Beach, which is coordinated by the Student Osteopathic Medical Association to welcome the entering M1 class. The event, which featured a festive mix of music, food, and surfside games, serves as a lighthearted way for the newcomers to get acquainted with the M2s, faculty, and administration.

NSU Tops in Hispanic, African American Doctorates

For the first time in its 40-year history, NSU topped the U.S. Department of Education rankings for producing more Hispanic and African American doctorate degrees than any other U.S. college or university. According to 2002-2003 academic statistics, NSU awarded 115 doctorates to African Americans and 57 doctorates to Hispanics.

Although this marked the first time NSU ever ranked No. 1 for awarding doctorates to Hispanics, it's the seventh consecutive year the university has placed first in the number of African American doctorate holders. Black Issues in Higher Education magazine analyzed the Department of Education numbers and published a special report on doctorate degrees in its July 2004 issue.
Mullins Displays OPP Techniques at Military Hospital

On June 16-17, third-year student Lynita Mullins, who serves as an ensign in the U.S. Navy, was invited to promote the osteopathic philosophy and provide a demonstration of osteopathic manipulative medicine for the residents and nurses in the critical care unit at Walter Reed Army Medical Center in Washington, D.C. Thanks to the input she received from Drs. Mark Sandhouse and Michael Patterson from the NSU-COM Department of Osteopathic Principles and Practice, Mullins was able to prepare a well-rounded presentation on osteopathic manipulative therapy.

"The objective of the lecture was to introduce manipulation therapy as an adjunct to pharmacological and surgical regimens to in-house patients," Mullins explained. "The topics ranged from simple counterstrain techniques to neuromodulation of the sympathetics and parasympathetics, and the nurses and allopathic residents were thoroughly impressed with how much osteopathic medicine has to offer in the overall care of the patient."

During her visit to Walter Reed Army Medical Center, Mullins also provided medical care to some of the soldiers and sailors who were injured while on active duty in Iraq and the Middle East. Through the Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation Program, she worked with the D.O. residents to help them incorporate many of the OPP techniques she discussed during her lecture. "The overall trip was quite a success because our profession's principles were promoted and put into practice," she said. "However, the true success lies with our nation's military forces, whose valor and courage should be admired and respected."

Did You Know?

According to the AOA 2004 Fact Sheet, there are currently 54,078 living D.O.s. In terms of those in active practice, 72.1 percent are male and 27.9 percent are female.

SGA Launches Sponsor-a-Student Program

Each year, NSU-COM encourages medical students to participate in the D.O. Day on the Hill event sponsored by the AOA and the AACOM. In fact, over the past several years, the number of students interested in legislative issues regarding osteopathic medicine has grown tremendously.

However, because of the increased number of students who are highly involved in this process, the college has limited funds to pay for all those interested in traveling to Washington, D.C., to attend D.O. Day on the Hill. Recognizing the importance of this event—and the restrictions that frequently prevent physicians from closing their practices to attend it—the NSU-COM Student Government Association (SGA) has initiated a program that aims to help students and osteopathic physicians gain a voice on Capitol Hill. The program, called Sponsor a Student, has been developed for physicians who would like to get involved in the lobbying process but cannot personally attend.

The program enables NSU-COM alumni to send any type of monetary contribution to support a student wishing to travel to D.O. Day On The Hill. The sponsored student would represent the profession and identify the sponsoring physician at the event during his/her visits with the various legislators. Recognition will also be given to the sponsoring physician from the college's SGA in the form of a certificate and within the pages of COM Outlook. Contributions should be sent to: Office for Student and Administrative Services, 3200 S. University Drive, Fort Lauderdale, FL 33328, Attention: Sponsor a Student Program. For further information, please contact Dr. Bart Whitehead, director of student and administrative services, at (954) 262-1495.

Pediatrics Club Makes Poster Presentation at Annual Meeting

In June, NSU-COM Pediatrics Club members made a poster presentation concerning the club's recent accomplishments at the Florida Pediatric Society annual meeting held at the Boca Raton Resort and Club. The poster, which was presented by faculty adviser Dr. Edward Packer, past and current Pediatrics Club presidents Erin Gerhart and Theresa Hess, and Webmaster Rebecca Begtrup, focused on topics such as rural outreach programs, holiday drives, and health fair participation.
Following are informational snapshots of what occurred during the August 2004 Council of Osteopathic Student Government Presidents (COSGP) meeting in Chicago, Illinois:

**AOA House of Delegates**

- Students representing COSGP and SOMA met at a student caucus run by COSGP and formed a unified student voice on 20 of the over 100 resolutions before the House of Delegates. The student representatives then took the student caucus recommendations to their respective delegation meetings. Several resolutions were amended or withdrawn upon student recommendation.

- Dr. Daryl Beehler, the outgoing AOA president, gave a report summarizing his term in office. He encouraged all medical students to use the designation OMS (osteopathic medical student) instead of MS when signing correspondence and medical records to help increase osteopathic awareness. Dr. Beehler also updated the congregation on the international endeavors of the AOA. American-trained osteopathic physicians now have full practicing rights in Canada. Also, for the first time, the World Health Organization has approved and established guidelines for osteopathic medicine.

**COSGP Meeting**

- The TOUCH initiative (Translating Osteopathic Understanding into Community Health) is a new program from COSGP designed to earn more credit for what all our member schools are doing around their communities. The idea is to have organizations record their community service events on a form, including the number of students participating, total man hours, number of community members benefiting from the experience, and a brief description of the activity. The program has already been implemented at NSU-COM and can be tailored to individual schools, but it will also include national initiatives. At the local level, special pins will be awarded to each student upon completion of 50 personal community service hours. Nationally, one school will be chosen annually for its outstanding service to the community.

- The COMLEX-PE (Performance Evaluation) is being instated as part of COMLEX Level 2. The inaugural implementation of COMLEX-PE occurred on September 11, and the only testing center currently available for students taking the exam is located in Conshohocken, Pennsylvania. Eventually, the exam will be offered at additional sites. Registration and written orientation guides are available online at www.nbome.org. In other COMLEX news, the National Board of Osteopathic Medical Examiners (NBOME) will be computerizing the written portion of the exam. The final pen-and-paper administration of the Level I exam will take place in June 2005. The computerized exam will be given in one day instead of two and will consist of 400 questions instead of the current 800. The NBOME is also aiming to have the COMLEX Level 2 exam computerized for this year's graduates.

- The Electronic Residency Application Service (ERAS) is now reporting double-digit scores for the COMLEX as well as the traditional three-digit score. This reporting is done to spare residency directors the hassle of applying COMLEX scores to a conversion equation in order to determine the rough USMLE comparison score. It was stressed that the two exams cannot adequately be compared because there is a different (osteopathic) emphasis on the COMLEX. The osteopathic medical schools have been asked to assist in researching and comparing USMLE and COMLEX scores of those students who have taken both exams.

- Traditionally, the Student D.O. of the Year Award has involved each COM campus honoring its most outstanding student. However, the hope is to take the award to a national level this year and select one of the individual campus winners as the nationwide Student D.O. of the Year.

M2 student Matt Sarb, who serves as SGA vice president, and Dana Block soak in the scenery at Millennium Park in Chicago.
In August 2004, NSU-COM launched the latest of its curricular enhancements when it added a forensic pathology component to the M2 clinical procedures course, which dovetails nicely with the college’s recently established forensic pathology osteopathic fellowship at the Broward County Medical Examiner’s Office in Fort Lauderdale.

NSU-COM, which continues to push the educational envelope, now offers two postgraduate programs that cannot be found at any other U.S. osteopathic medical school—the new forensic pathology fellowship and its much-lauded preventive medicine residency program at the Palm Beach County Health Department.

“Pathology has traditionally been one of those areas that the osteopathic profession did not really look at as an area of specialty simply because it is so highly specialized,” said Camille Bentley, D.O., who serves as assistant professor of family medicine. “In addition, since we are a more primary care, people-oriented, preventive medicine-based profession, many D.O.s feel that forensic pathology has no place in osteopathic medicine since there’s no prevention involved.”

However, based on the initial responses from students who attended the forensic pathology portion of their clinical procedures course, which was conducted by Michael Bell, M.D., from the Broward County Medical Examiner’s Office, interest does indeed exist. “This is the first time we’ve ever exposed our students to forensic pathology, so it is something some of them may consider as a future career path.” Dr. Bentley explained. “We are also providing the students with an opportunity to visit the Broward County Medical Examiner’s Office to witness an actual autopsy.”

Response has been tremendous; however, only 50 percent of the M2 class will be able to participate in the optional autopsy portion of the course, which allows no more than five students to attend each session at the medical examiner’s office. “Due to scheduling conflicts, the students can only view the autopsies on Saturday and Sunday mornings this year,” Dr. Bentley said. “Ninety percent of the students want to participate, so my hope is to arrange it so by next year the majority of students will have a chance to rotate through the autopsy experience.”

One person who is not surprised by the outpouring of interest is Dr. Anthony J. Silvagni, who recalled his own academic experience with forensic pathology. “When I went to medical school, the most-attended lecture always occurred when the forensic pathologist came to speak.” he stated. “In fact, the students would often bring their friends and spouses to the lecture. It’s an exciting field, which is why I feel it’s important to provide our students with some exposure to the specialty.”

As for the forensic pathology fellowship, which is the only AOA-approved program of its type in the country, Dr. Silvagni says the objective is not to create a pool of forensically trained D.O.s but rather to provide students with additional postgraduate choices. “It’s not a matter of how many people will take advantage of the program, which provides one osteopathic post-residency fellowship slot per year at the Broward County Medical Examiner’s Office,” he explained. “It’s a matter of providing the opportunity because you’re never going to get anyone to even consider forensic pathology as a career option unless you have a functioning program in place.”
In July of 2004, I had a tremendous opportunity to combine education with recreation during a fourth-year clinical rotation at Yellowstone National Park. It was an incredible experience that gave me the opportunity to explore a variety of aspects in emergency, rural, and wilderness medicine.

With a visitation of over three million people per year and 4,200 seasonal employees, it should come as no surprise that Yellowstone has the medical needs of a small rural town or city. Yellowstone was the last national park to staff its own hospital, which included x-ray, laboratory, and pharmacy services. The hospital is no longer fully operational and now serves as a medical clinic operated by Medcor, an occupational and emergency medicine health management organization.

There are actually three clinics operated by Medcor inside Yellowstone National Park, which are located at the Mammoth Hot Springs, Old Faithful, and Yellowstone Lake areas of the park. A primary provider who is a physician, physician's assistant, or nurse practitioner staffs each clinic. A nursing staff supports each facility, with at least two nurses assigned to each shift. With the closing of the Yellowstone hospital, the clinics' capabilities are now quite modest. Plain film x-rays are possible, along with elementary lab capabilities such as urinalysis, hematocrit measurements, strep tests, and similar "out-of-the-box" type of lab studies.

The patient population is as diverse as the park itself. The clinics see patients with all types of injuries and illnesses and tend to the preventative medicine needs of both visitor and employee alike. The clinics operate much like acute care facilities one would find in any small town. Illnesses, work-related injuries, and other typical emergent conditions like chest pain and dizziness make up the bison's share of the presenting complaints. Patient care is complicated, however, by two important factors:

- the average elevation of the most populated areas of the park is 7,000 feet.
- the average transit time to a major hospital is between two and three hours.

These factors manifest themselves as challenging issues for the providers and nurses. Relatively simple conditions may be exacerbated by high altitude, while more serious conditions may be harder to diagnose when an altitude-related illness is added to the differential. Furthermore, with the limited capabilities of the Medcor clinics, and significant transit time to more comprehensive facilities, an expeditious decision must be made whether or not to release, treat, evacuate, or helivac the patient.

My month at Yellowstone was an opportunity for me to gain valuable experience in wilderness medicine. Although it is not yet a formally recognized subspecialty, wilderness medicine involves the features of many fields, including emergency medicine, rural medicine, and family practice to name just a few. I quickly learned that the core of the challenge in wilderness medicine is not strictly from the mastery of clinical skills, but instead from the mastery of improvisation. This doesn't imply only the ability to improvise a splint or wound dressing. The necessity of improvisation is essential to many aspects of wilderness medicine: diagnosis and treatment with limited resources; working under extreme environmental conditions; and devising imaginative solutions to unique medical problems under unique circumstances.

The chance to incorporate Yellowstone National Park into my medical education was an incredible adventure. Beyond the spectacular setting and the unique challenges afforded by the practice of wilderness medicine, I had the opportunity to work with some of the most remarkable and wonderful people I have ever met. Without a doubt, I know that I will be a better physician when I draw upon my experiences from Yellowstone. The motto of the Wilderness Medical Society is "combining your profession with your passion." I can think of no better place to do so than under the golden stone, emerald forests, and deep blue skies of Yellowstone National Park.
Cyril Blavo, D.O., M.P.H. & T.M., FACOP, professor and director of the Master of Public Health Program, had his abstract accepted for roundtable presentation in the American Public Health Association’s 131st Annual Meeting and Exposition, which will be held November 6-10 in Washington, D.C. Dr. Blavo’s abstract is titled "A Two-year Pilot Dental Sealant Program in an Underserved Community: A School-based Dental Prevention Program in Monroe County." He was also selected to serve as an inaugural member of The Blue Foundation for a Healthy Florida Community Health Award Selection Committee, which is a component of Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Florida.

On September 1, Jeffrey M. Bleicher, D.O., joined the NSU-COM faculty as an associate professor in the Department of Internal Medicine. Dr. Bleicher, who earned his D.O. degree from Des Moines University College of Osteopathic Medicine in 1976, previously served as principal of Fort Worth Dialysis Associates and as clinical associate professor of internal medicine at the University of North Texas Health Science Center/Texas College of Osteopathic Medicine.

Elisa Ginter, D.O., associate professor of family medicine, received the Outstanding Attending Physician of the Year Award from the graduating family practice residents who worked with her at NSU’s Sanford L. Ziff Health Care Center. In her role as faculty adviser to the college’s Student Osteopathic Medical Association, Dr. Ginter worked closely with the M2 students to bring in guest speakers and coordinate the annual Osteoblast event. She also serves on the NSU Academic Review Committee, which evaluates, reviews, and makes recommendations to President Ray Ferrero, Jr., J.D., on all university-wide master’s and Ph.D. programs.

When Joseph DeGaetano, D.O., FAAFP, associate professor and director of clinical curriculum and graduate medical education, completed the Harvard Macy Institute Leaders in Medical Education Program at Harvard Medical School last June, he joined NSU-COM peers Elaine Wallace, D.O., and Anthony J. Silvagni, D.O., Pharm.D., FACOFP, in an elite group of educators known as Harvard Macy Scholars. There are currently over 1,000 Harvard Macy Scholars from 271 institutions and 42 countries representing a powerful network of energy and knowledge. To become a Harvard Macy Scholar, individuals accepted into the program must participate in a formal curriculum designed to assist them in developing their own strategies for leading change in their institutions. Using classic management studies and case studies of health care education reform, participants analyze the interlocking elements of change strategies, including defining and balancing educational and other school missions, assessing an institution’s structure, culture and readiness for change, and responding to changes in health care delivery systems. The program is designed for leaders with major responsibilities for health care education, especially those introducing or managing significant interdepartmental changes or innovations in their institutions.

In October, Jay Fleisher, Ph.D., associate professor of public health, made a presentation on "Risk Perception Bias and Self-reported Symptoms" at the National Beaches Conference in San Diego, California. The symposium, which is coordinated by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, is designed to help all levels of beach water quality managers and public health officials share information and provide input on implementing a successful recreational beach program. Dr. Fleisher was also awarded a $170,000 National Institute of Health grant to provide biostatistical and epidemiological support for “Treatment of Endometriosis with NA vs. GnRH Antagonist.” He also received a $2,464 Health Professions Division grant to pursue research related to substance abuse.
Naushira Pandya, M.D., C.M.D., associate professor of internal medicine and chair of the Division of Geriatrics, was the worthy recipient of an appreciation award from the Emergency Medicine Residency Program at Mount Sinai Medical Center in Miami for organizing and conducting educational morning symposia at NSU-COM for emergency medicine residents. In August, Dr. Pandya chaired a two-day Clinical Practice Guideline Consensus Conference for the American Medical Directors Association in Baltimore, Maryland.

In August, Stanley L. Simpson, D.O., associate professor of family medicine, was certified and made a diplomate in ringside medicine by the medical board of the American Association of Professional Ringside Physicians (AAPRP). Dr. Simpson, who has been a ringside physician with the Florida Boxing Commission for more than 20 years, has the distinction of being only the 14th U.S. physician to be certified in this capacity by the AAPRP since the group’s inception in 1997.

The summer months proved to be action-packed for Edward Packer, D.O., FAAP, FACOP, associate professor and chair of the Department of Pediatrics. In addition to welcoming the inaugural group of three physicians into the new pediatric residency program at Palms West Hospital in Loxahatchee, Florida, Dr. Packer presented several lectures, included an insightful one for Palm Beach County school teachers on “Psychosocial Considerations with School-aged Children During Disasters.” Under his direction, the annual NSU Back-to-School Physicals Kickoff Event was an unqualified success. The NSU-COM Pediatrics Club provided about 50 volunteers for the event, which was held Saturday, August 7 at the Sanford L. Ziff Health Care Center and allowed for participation from the NSU-HPD pediatric divisions of osteopathic medicine, dentistry, optometry, audiology, physical therapy, and occupational therapy.

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In July, Morton Morris, D.O., J.D., FAOAO, and Howard Neer, D.O., FACOFP, were honored by the AOA House of Delegates for their longtime service to the organization. Dr. Neer, professor and associate dean of alumni affairs, was recognized for his 34 years of outstanding service. Dr. Morris, who serves as vice chancellor for professional affairs in the Health Professions Division, was feted for his 28 years of unwavering commitment to the House of Delegates.

In July, Stanley Skopit, D.O., clinical associate professor of internal medicine, was appointed chair of the Division of Dermatology.

In September, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention re-funded the Media-based Motivational Intervention to Reduce Alcohol Exposed Pregancies project for an additional three-year period. Kenneth Johnson, D.O., who serves as assistant professor of obstetrics and gynecology and director of NSU's Women's Health Center, acts as co-investigator of the project, which evaluates the effectiveness of a media-based, self-guided motivational intervention to reduce alcohol-exposed pregnancies (AEP). The primary community targeted is Broward County, Florida, which has previously demonstrated a higher-than-expected rate of risk for AEP, particularly for women recruited by media solicitation. To assure an adequate sample, at-risk women will be recruited from neighboring Palm Beach and Miami-Dade counties. The intervention will be based on the investigators' previous experience in promoting self-change of drinking behavior at a community level and in promoting reduced risk for AEP through the use of a motivational intervention. Using a randomized group design, the self-guided motivational intervention will be compared to an intervention directed at preventing fetal alcohol syndrome.

In June 2004, Jennie Q. Lou, M.D., M.Sc., associate professor of public health, received the Best Platform Presentation Research Award at the Consortium of Multiple Sclerosis Centers Annual Meeting in Toronto, Canada. Dr. Lou and her research team were recognized for their Multiple Sclerosis Life Enrichment Project (MSLEP), which involves controlled trials to study the short- and long-term effectiveness of wellness and rehabilitation programs for people living with multiple sclerosis since 1999. In addition to receiving the prestigious award, the first phase of the MSLEP study was published in the May 2004 issue of the International Journal of MS Care.

When Sheri Ornitz, M.P.H., began working as a senior research consultant in the Clinical Innovations department of Horizon Blue Cross Blue Shield of New Jersey (Horizon-BCBSNJ) in May 2003, she quickly learned the value of the public health education she received at NSU-COM. Her well-rounded training has been put to good use in her position at Horizon Blue Cross Blue Shield, where Ornitz, a 2003 M.P.H. graduate, plays a rewarding role in researching and developing programs that benefit the community and Horizon-BCBSNJ policyholders.

“In an immunization program that Horizon-BCBSNJ is sponsoring, I was fortunate enough to be asked to attend a kickoff meeting where employees got to see what this program was about. We were able to ask questions about the preliminary steps for this program, and in a flash everything I had learned at NSU came back to me,” said Ornitz, who implemented a family asthma awareness program in Belle Glade, Florida, as part of her practicum at the American Lung Association/Glades Asthma Project in conjunction with the Palm Beach County Health Department.

As a result of her comprehensive M.P.H. education and her enriching exposure to the Palm Beach County Health Department, Ornitz was able to provide valuable input regarding proposed improvements. “I’m eternally grateful I received my education from NSU because it was a lot more comprehensive than the other programs I had looked at,” said Ornitz, who credits the M.P.H. faculty for being unflaggingly supportive throughout her matriculation. “The curriculum didn’t just focus on one particular aspect. If you wanted to do an epidemiology track, you could. If you wanted to focus on community health, you could do that, too.

“When I was doing my research about public health schools, I noticed that many of them either focused on biostatistics or epidemiology,” she added. “You couldn’t experience the variability of choosing what you wanted to do. Don’t get me wrong—every public health student needs significant exposure to biostatistics and epidemiology—but many of us don’t want to focus on just that.

“That’s why I was happy NSU allowed us to pursue tracks where our individual interests lay and did not stress them to the degree that other M.P.H. colleges do. The exposure I had to so many aspects of public health at NSU prepared me to see the obvious flaws and potential rewards of the programs I am currently involved with here at Horizon Blue Cross Blue Shield of New Jersey.”
NSU-COM Reaches Out to Hurricane Ravaged Floridians

By Scott Colton
Director of Education Communications

(Editor's note: Due to deadline constraints, this article focuses on the humanitarian and medical relief efforts provided in the stricken region of Southwest Florida in the aftermath of Hurricane Charley.)

During a meteorologically tumultuous summer that will best be remembered for the consequences created by a killer tropical quartet named Charley, Frances, Ivan, and Jeanne, disheartened Florida residents watched in horror as an unrelenting barrage of wind and rain destroyed their communities—and forever transformed their lives.

Fortunately, in the days and weeks following Hurricane Charley's destructive landfall in areas such as Port Charlotte, Punta Gorda, and Pine Island, weary and wounded residents found solace in the outpouring of assistance that came flooding into their storm-ravaged communities. Within hours of the hurricane's passing, action plans of every variety were swiftly implemented to provide much-needed outreach to the affected areas.

Not surprisingly, the altruistic individuals who comprise NSU's College of Osteopathic Medicine played a major role in the hurricane relief efforts, which included everything from providing critical medical care and assisting with the cleanup effort to raising money and collecting clothes for the hapless citizenry.

Dr. Malecki Mobilizes Medical Outreach

It should have been a relaxing time for Jean Malecki, M.D., M.P.H., FACPM, who was enjoying a rare vacation in Massachusetts when Hurricane Charley stormed ashore in Southwest Florida. Instead, Dr. Malecki, who serves as clinical professor and chair of the Department of Preventive Medicine and director of the Palm Beach County Health Department, soon found herself back in Florida to set up a primary medical relief team near a clinic site in Punta Gorda, which had borne the brunt of Charley's fury.

Dr. Malecki quickly mobilized a top-notch medical outreach team comprising a nurse practitioner specializing in public health, two third-year preventive medicine residents, and Robert Trenschel, D.O., M.P.H., who serves as clinical assistant professor and program director of the NSU-COM Preventive Medicine Residency Program. "Because I was the first person to arrive, my initial order of business was to perform an assessment of the damage to the clinic site and what we needed to do," said Dr. Malecki, who was...
understandably overwhelmed by the massive devastation that greeted her as she drove through the surrounding cities.

"When I first got there, it was a feeling of total emptiness," she explained. "None of the typical sensory cues were visible due to the absence of people, street signs, trees, and lights. You could immediately tell that this was a traumatic event and not just a minor disruption of human life. The enormity of the situation really hit home to me when I turned the corner in a totally devastated area and saw a high school that had its bricks totally torn off. When I turned another corner, I suddenly saw a home where the whole front of the house had been ripped off. What you saw from the street was a bedroom with a bed stand and clothes still neatly hanging in the closet. It was like visiting a war zone."

Once she arrived at the designated medical facility, a surreal scene better suited for a disaster movie than a real-life experience greeted Dr. Malecki, who ended up spending 10 days in the decimated area. "There was glass everywhere, the ceilings had caved in, and there was sewage all over the floor," she stated. "I salvaged as much equipment, medication, and supplies as I could and brought them outside. I also contacted other sources to obtain mobile health care units and additional supplies. But you can't always depend on the outside world for immediate help, so you have to make do with what you have."

Providentially, help soon arrived in the form of one private van that was converted into a clinic and a mobile health care unit from Manatee County. Once the medical relief effort was up and running, Dr. Malecki then relied on her ad-hoc staff to treat the patients while she set out to alert the community of their presence. "Part of my job was to let the people know we were there," she explained. "Public health is all about partnerships and relationships, so I went over to the DMAT (Disaster Medical Assistance Team) that was located at the local hospital four blocks away. Then I went to the Salvation Army and other staging sites where they were giving out food, clothing, water, and ice."

Her efforts immediately paid off because within 24 hours, the trickle of patients had increased to a steady stream. However, unlike the nearby DMAT, which took care of major medical emergencies, Dr. Malecki's health care team dealt with less severe situations such as allergic reactions, minor injuries, rabies cases, suture removal, and the dissemination of medication to people suffering from chronic diseases.

In addition to providing medical care, Dr. Malecki made sure the community had access to mental health counselors who could help people deal with the emotional repercussions resulting from the hurricane's devastating assault. "When I arrived in Punta Gorda, I immediately asked for mental health assistance from Miami," said Dr. Malecki, who also paid a public health visit to a hurricane shelter in Sarasota. "The people were in a haze from going through such trauma and thinking they're going to die—and then seeing everything they've achieved in their lives from a materialistic standpoint destroyed. It's a devastating feeling, and no pill is going to make it better."

**Dr. Spalter Springs into Action**

While Dr. Malecki was coordinating medical matters four blocks away, Joel Spalter, M.D., who serves as an assistant professor of internal medicine and chair of the Division of Infectious Disease, was showcasing his selfless side at the aforementioned DMAT—officially known as the FL-5DMAT.

"It's just like being in the military reserve," said Dr. Spalter of the volunteer-driven...
DMATs, which consist of medical personnel ranging from physicians and medics to physician assistants and registered nurses who come together to deliver vital medical service in times of disaster. "We are a totally self-sustaining DMAT, which means we can be inserted into a location and do all the necessary setup ourselves," he said. "We do it all, from setting up a treatment tent and sleeping facilities to providing MREs (meals ready to eat) and a satellite tower for communications."

During his 11-day deployment, Dr. Spalter and the FL5-DMAT set up a complete field hospital emergency department across the street from the main hospital, which had been badly damaged during the storm. During their stay in Punta Gorda, the DMAT members treated over 1,000 patients for a variety of ailments, including acute respiratory failure that required the patients to be intubated and sent to a distant hospital. "Some of these cases were extremely serious because the patients would have died within minutes to hours if they hadn't been seen by us," he explained. "We were basically the only functioning emergency room in town since the nearest operational hospital was located many miles away. Thankfully, we had great ambulance backup, so whenever we needed to transport a patient somewhere, they were right there."

**Students Lend Helping Hand**

Because of the widespread health crisis posed in areas such as Punta Gorda and Pine Island, the college solicited the help of a number of residents and third-year students to aid many of the now-homeless victims of Hurricane Charley.

M3 student Olga Martinez, who was part of the initial volunteer group, was certainly no stranger to hardship since she had participated in numerous health fairs and international medical missions over the past several years. However, none of her prior training could have prepared her for what she witnessed during her three-day stay in the storm-shattered community.

"When we drove into the area, it literally looked like some giant had placed all the houses, stores, and businesses into a blender, set it on full speed, and let everything fly out," said Martinez, who worked out of several fully mobile medical units. "Most, if not all, of the patients we saw at the different locations were homeless and staying at area shelters."

During her volunteer stint, Martinez assisted with a range of medically oriented tasks, including giving tetanus shots, treating various types of dermatitis, and bandaging assorted cuts and bruises. However, the most common complaint was an all-too-expected mix of anxiety and depression. One particularly gruesome incident encapsulated the sort of emotional trauma suffered by many of Charley's unfortunate victims.

"One of the patients told us she had decided to remain in her trailer during the hurricane," said Martinez, who was housed at Family Health Centers of Southwest Florida in Fort Myers, which is one of the college's clinical rotation sites. "When the storm's eye was passing over, she looked out a window and saw her next-door neighbor run outside to retrieve one of his shutters that had flown off. She watched as he went to pick it up across the street, but when he was bringing it back toward his trailer, the wind started picking up. He stayed outside to try and reattach it, but as the wind intensified, she suddenly saw this huge sheet of metal fly across the air and decapitate him. For obvious reasons, it was an image she couldn't shake from her mind."

"It was heartbreaking to see the anguish and apprehension in people's faces, because you knew they were fearful of what to expect next," she added. "They had just lost their homes and probably everything they've worked for in life. Before the hurricane hit, these people had normal lives, and now many of them are homeless and jobless."

Ronnie Martin, D.O., FACOFP, who serves as professor and chair of the
Department of Family Medicine and associate dean for academic affairs, credits the humanistic NSU-COM spirit for explaining the outpouring of outreach. “We were supported greatly by our AHEC Program in providing funding, housing, and support, which enabled us to send residents, students, and practicing physicians to aid in the relief effort.”

Because of unforeseen circumstances, several other endeavors—including providing temporary medical personnel at a displaced critical needs nursing home in Venice—were cancelled at the last minute. “But what’s important to note,” stressed Dr. Martin, “is that we had made arrangements with the state to help the Sarasota County Health Department.”

Clothes, Cash, and Cleanup
Dispensing lifesaving medical care to the storm-torn victims was certainly a major priority. However, NSU-COM students and faculty also showcased their altruism in other thoughtful ways. After witnessing the horrifying images of destruction on television, the college’s Rural Medicine Club responded by coordinating a clothing drive throughout the Health Professions Division. By the end of August, hundreds of clothing items had been collected, bagged, and transported to the Palm Beach County Health Department for distribution. The student chapter of the Florida Society of the American College of Osteopathic Family Physicians also did its part by raising a significant amount of money to donate to the victims of Hurricane Charley.

And then there was the labor-intensive contribution of Lauritz “Larry” Jensen, D.A., who serves as the college’s director of preclinical education. Working through his church in conjunction with the American Red Cross, Dr. Jensen participated in the relief effort by joining some 2,000 people to do whatever was necessary to aid the victims. “Our mission was to specifically clean up houses owned by firefighters, police, medical personnel, and other first responders so they could stay on their jobs and assist other hurricane victims,” he explained. “My primary task was to cut up downed trees and remove other hazards from the area. We also checked in on elderly people in the neighborhood who may have needed help.”

During the exhausting daylong effort, Dr. Jensen pushed his body to the extreme. “I grew up in the desert and spent a lot of my time in the Rocky Mountain region where it gets extremely hot. But I had never done this sort of grueling work in the tropics, and I certainly had no idea how debilitating it could be on your body.”

The compassionate deeds performed by Dr. Jensen and numerous other NSU-COM students and faculty exemplified the human spirit at its best, for they were carried out with one selfless purpose in mind: to aid mankind.
Scholarship Allows Shaw-Berrocal to Continue Osteopathic Education

By Scott Colton
Director of Education Communications

When M2 student ShaRonda Shaw-Berrocal applied for a disadvantaged student scholarship through the college's Department of Student and Administrative Services, she did so knowing just how crucial an impact the verdict would have on her future: If she received the vital funding, her dream of becoming an osteopathic physician would continue; if she was rejected, dropping out or making emotional familial decisions would become a dreaded consequence.

Thankfully, the outcome proved to be a happy one for Shaw-Berrocal and several other students who received the U.S. Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) Scholarships for Disadvantaged Students. "Without that scholarship, I wouldn't be here right now because all my loan money had run out," admitted the divorced mother of two young sons. "I came here with the attitude that I will survive no matter what. But when Dr. Bart Whitehead announced I had received the scholarship, it was my saving grace because I was broke."

Handling hardship is something Shaw-Berrocal has become quite adept at ever since her parents divorced when she was just an infant. As a child growing up in the south suburbs of Chicago, Shaw-Berrocal channeled her energy into positive pursuits such as visiting the Museum of Science and Industry with her father every weekend and participating in the Women in Science and Engineering Program for high school students at the Illinois Institute of Technology. "That sparked my interest even more, to see women who were actually doing the things I wanted to do," she explained.

Because she was an academically gifted student, Shaw-Berrocal graduated from high school at the tender age of
When the time finally came in 2002 to start researching and applying to medical schools, NSU-COM was not even on her initial list of choices—not even after her divorce and beginning working in a variety of jobs, including toiling as a restaurant and nightclub manager, and working as a professional model.

Although she achieved a significant degree of success during her various occupational stints, Shaw-Berrocal yearned to complete her bachelor’s degree and pursue her dream of a fulfilling medical career. “I had been coming to Florida on vacation for 10 years and always loved it,” she said. “I had wanted to move down here a number of years ago when I was offered a Ford modeling contract in Miami, but my husband didn’t want to leave Chicago.”

When the time finally came in 2002 to start researching and applying to medical schools, NSU-COM was not even on her initial list of choices—mainly because she didn’t even know it existed. However, once she garnered some information via the Internet and visited the campus, she was hooked. “I applied to about 15 medical schools and got into many of them, including Midwestern University’s Chicago College of Osteopathic Medicine (CCOM), which was located about 10 minutes from my home.”

Choosing CCOM would have seemed the most prudent option for Shaw-Berrocal, who could have remained in close proximity to her sons, parents, and ex-husband. But once Shaw-Berrocal scrutinized the various pros and cons, she decided to accept NSU-COM’s offer. “I examined how I felt when I interviewed at CCOM and compared it with my NSU experience,” said Shaw-Berrocal, who credits Lynne Cawley, the college’s associate director of interprofessional alumni affairs, for helping make her decision. “I thought the facilities at NSU were incredible, and the people on campus were so friendly and helpful.”

Making the transition from Chicago to South Florida, however, was anything but seamless as she and her ex-husband worked out the painful custody details, which revolved around Efrain remaining in Chicago and Alex relocating to South Florida with his mom. “I’ve only seen my oldest son twice this year because I didn’t have the money to buy plane tickets for myself and Alex to fly to Chicago,” stated Shaw-Berrocal, who spent much of the past summer working in the college’s AHEC Health Careers Camp in Central Florida. “It’s a difficult situation, but I knew what I had to do and the sacrifices I would have to make to be here.”

In between shuttling Alex to and from school, studying for exams, and attending classes, Shaw-Berrocal also finds time to remain active in extracurricular college activities, including serving as co-vice president of the Student National Medical Association and coordinating the annual medical missions to Jamaica. “If my family had it their way, I would come back home because it would make everyone’s life, including mine, so much easier,” added Shaw-Berrocal, who is also pursuing a concurrent M.P.H. degree. “I’d be living in my own house and spending more time with my children. But I try not to focus on that.”

Despite the numerous personal sacrifices she’s endured to pursue her osteopathic aspirations, Shaw-Berrocal harbors no regret regarding her decision to matriculate at NSU-COM. “I feel that many of today’s physicians rely too heavily on medication instead of trying to treat the patient with alternative actions first,” said Shaw-Berrocal, whose ultimate goal is to develop policy and programs to improve the way people in the inner city are treated when they visit a physician. “I am very much into the ‘treating the whole person’ philosophy, and that is why I chose to become a D.O. Osteopathic manipulative medicine is amazing, and the benefit of utilizing it properly never ceases to fascinate me.”

Fortunately, thanks to the HRSA scholarship she received, her hope of becoming a compassionate osteopathic physician remains very much alive—which is indeed good news for Shaw-Berrocal and all her future patients.
Going to prison is not something most people aspire to in their lifetime, but that certainly didn't dissuade this year's Medical Mission to Jamaica contingent from bringing its compassionate brand of heart and health care to hundreds of incarcerated individuals in Kingston, Spanish Town, and St. Mary.

NSU-COM's fourth Medical Mission to Jamaica, which took place June 16-25, 2004, allowed the participants to visit an array of regular sites, earn continuing medical education credits, and provide medical outreach to area prisons as well as a local orphanage. "The interesting thing to me was how many students and physicians were initially reluctant to go to the prisons," said Paula Anderson-Worts, D.O., who serves as assistant professor of family medicine and coordinator of the Jamaica missions. "But once they got inside, they realized the prisoners were just people in need and found the experience to be quite rewarding."

One of the more memorable aspects of their prison experience occurred when Dr. Anderson-Worts and her cohorts visited a minimum-security facility in Richmond that featured no concrete restrictions of any kind to keep the prisoners from escaping. "Although there were unarmed guards roaming outside, there were no walls or barbed-wire fences," Dr. Anderson-Worts said. "The prison officials explained that since these are prisoners that have been designated to be on good behavior, very few ever try to escape; in fact, if one person escapes every three years, that's considered a lot. It was also interesting because the prisoners are provided with opportunities to develop a skill, such as farming or tailoring, to help them become productive citizens once they leave prison."

The societal importance of these humanitarian missions was vividly underscored by several incidents, including one that occurred in the minimum-security prison. "We dealt with
After returning from the latest humanitarian mission, a number of students immediately began fundraising preparations for next year’s trip by coordinating the Fairway 5K and Fun Walk, which was held in early July at Orangebrook Golf & Country Club in Hollywood, Florida. "Thanks to students like Ann Duskin and Donnell Bowen, who are so concerned about the plight of others, the success of next year’s Jamaica mission already seems assured," Dr. Anderson-Worts said. "Their commitment to these annual missions never ceases to amaze me."

### Inspirational Incidents Hearten Health Care Providers

During their visits to various regional sites, the health care cadre dealt with its fair share of heartrending cases. But there were a number of patient encounters that brought smiles to everyone involved. Because of their diligent preparations, NSU’s occupational and physical therapy program participants had shipped down a supply of walkers, crutches, and wheelchairs. The decision proved to be a wise one, especially when a young amputee just happened to hobble by on a dilapidated pair of crutches.

"When they noticed this young man walking with wooden crutches that had no rubber tips and no arm padding, they ran up to him and gave him a brand new pair of crutches," Dr. Anderson-Worts recalled. "He threw down the old crutches, put the new ones under his arms, and continued up the street as if he had been given wings. That made everyone involved feel really good about what they’re doing."

On another occasion, while they were providing patient care in a Kingston church, a woman came in complaining of severe shoulder pain. To ameliorate the condition, Joan Cross D.O., and M-2 student Mani Batchu administered a restorative dose of osteopathic manipulative treatment, which elicited an unexpected paroxysm of delight from the patient. "The woman went from being almost totally restricted in shoulder movement to being able to raise her arm over her head," Dr. Anderson-Worts stated. "She proclaimed it to be a miracle and praised God and the physician because it had occurred in a church."

"Jamaica showed me what I always believed—that if you really have faith you can make a difference. The mission trip for me was a necessity of my medical school training and showed me the true reason for medicine. I have been pursuing the goal of having the skills to help those in need for so long. My reason for trying so hard for so long is that I can remember is to take that step forward with the hope of contributing something to those that have no voice. I gained so much from this experience, and the people I saw and the time I shared with them gave me so much energy. Having the opportunity to help people in some small way—by holding a hand, listening, or having the medicine they needed—made me realize that we can truly change the world."

Paul Smith, M2 student

"The differences between the Jamaicans and Americans are remarkable. Throughout our medical mission in Jamaica, I have come to know its people as individuals who are extremely patient and kind to physicians. There were so many people to see each day that many had to sit and wait the entire day to see one of us. Many had to return the next day because we were unable to help them that day. Never did I hear one person complain or quarrel, which is something I have experienced frequently in American hospitals and clinics. I found myself endlessly apologizing to them for the..."
After palpating her abdomen and finding no tenderness, Dr. Anderson-Worts and I decided to do a digital rectal exam to determine if there was any occult blood in her stool. Upon performing the exam, we noticed a softball-size mass just below her buttocks, which we determined to be a prolapsed uterus. Upon questioning, the woman told us that it had been present since 1964, and since it did not give her any pain, she did not think it was a problem. We did not find anything abnormal upon examination, so we eventually advised her to see her local doctor for additional testing.

Even after going through an uncomfortable exam and having to wait a long time to see me, the woman gently stroked under my chin and told me that I would be a wonderful doctor. With those simple words, she made everything I am working toward worth all the sacrifice and hard work. I will always remember her and think very fondly of the Jamaican people."

Paula Zozzaro-Smith, M2 student
Family Facts: I've been married to my wife Angela for 14 years. She is a linguistics teacher at Florida International University and Miami-Dade College, where she teaches courses in Italian, Spanish, and English as a second language.

Official NSU-COM responsibilities: As the assistant director of programs and services, I am involved in almost every aspect of the college's AHEC and HETC programs. Some of my responsibilities include the coordination of the tobacco cessation course for medical and pharmacy students and the HIV/AIDS course for medical students. I am also responsible for the collection and analysis of AHEC and HETC data and grant application preparation.

What is your fondest memory of being an NSU-COM staff member? Meeting and talking to Governor Jeb Bush in May 2004 about the important work the NSU-COM AHEC is doing in the state of Florida.

What did you do professionally before joining NSU-COM? I was involved in several careers, including working as a nutrition counselor for the Florida Department of Health and as a professional chef at an exclusive country club in Naples, Florida. I also taught courses in management, nutrition, sanitation, and safety for the American Culinary Federation in Florida and assisted my parents for many years in the running of a nursing registry and home health agency.

Greatest achievement in life: I don’t have any one achievement that I call the greatest, but the following are some achievements that I am most proud of. The first is supporting my wife during the time she had breast cancer. I took it upon myself to never let her feel down and developed a nutrition and supplement program for her to follow. We (Angela, her doctor, and I) believe that this was an important reason why she recuperated so quickly. This inspired me to produce an informative presentation on breast cancer and nutrition. I did many of these presentations for several years for breast cancer support groups, the Department of Health, and AHEC. On another level, I would say that completing a master's degree in health services administration and a master's degree in management information systems were proud achievements as well.

Favorite way to unwind when not at work: Crazy as it sounds, working on my Ph.D. in information systems relaxes me as well as builds a sense of accomplishment.

My coworkers would be surprised to know this about me: I was a bodybuilder and power lifter from my mid teens to my mid 20s and have been inducted into two honor societies—Phi Kappa Phi and Upsilon Pi Epsilon.

The funniest thing that ever happened to me: Being asked to be "Mr. Staff Snapshot" in this issue of COM Outlook.

The most frightening thing that ever happened to me: Due to sports-related injuries, I was almost paralyzed from the neck down once and from the waist down on another occasion. Fortunately, I was back playing sports again in a couple of days after both incidents.

What makes you happiest in life? Spending time with my wife and accomplishing personal goals that I set for myself.

When I retire I plan to: I do not plan to retire at all, but if forced, I will start a new career or perhaps open a business.

Three words that best describe me: Assertive, inquisitive, and organized.
In 2002, an intrepid group of NSU-COM students decided to establish a student organization that would provide ample opportunity for interested classmates to gain hands-on experience with serving underserved populations and expose them to the rigors and rewards unique to serving both rural and inner-city communities.

"Over the years, the students have had a chance to participate in annual medical missions to Guatemala or Jamaica, which is great, but it's not the same as working in rural medicine," said M2 student Stephen Turner, who serves as co president of the Rural Medicine Club. "Because the college has such a strong relationship with its Area Health Education Center (AHEC) Program and such a strong focus on rural medicine, it just seemed the perfect time to create a club that focused on rural skills and provided additional opportunities to serve in a rural environment."

According to the club's constitution and bylaws, the purposes of the organization are to

- facilitate rural and underserved medical community exposure and promote medically oriented experiences for its members
- provide support and guidance for those seeking placement in rural or underserved osteopathic residencies
- serve as a resource and give guidance to National Health Service Corps Scholarship Program applicants
- provide social/academic activities and support for all club members
- increase knowledge of health information among members and the general public

Since its inception, the Rural Medicine Club has offered its members a kaleidoscope of activities that includes the opportunity to shadow physicians in diverse communities, volunteer in migrant health clinics, and attend enriching lectures and panel discussions. "One of the most exciting things we did last year was visit the Big Cypress Seminole Indian Reservation on the outskirts of the Everglades," said Leyda Su Ham, who serves as the club's co president. "We were able to tour the reservation and learn more about their culture, which was so interesting. As a result, one of the things we really want to do with the club this year is expose our members to other rural communities since that is what we are going to have to deal with when we go out and practice in underserved areas comprised of so many diverse cultures."

In addition to providing members with enhanced opportunities to visit rural and underserved areas of South Florida, the club is planning to expand its educational outreach efforts. "One of the things we plan on doing in regard to the National Health Service Corps is alerting our medical students and the other eligible health professions disciplines about the opportunities the organization provides, such as its loan repayment and scholarship programs," Turner said. Leyda Su Ham and Stephen Turner serve as co presidents of the Rural Medicine Club.
explained. "Since the paperwork process can be arduous, our goal is to help make everyone's life easier."

For students looking to carve a career niche in rural and underserved areas, the National Health Service Corps offers a competitive scholarship program designed for individuals committed to providing primary health care in communities of greatest need. The program provides a number of benefits for up to four years of education, including payment of tuition and fees, 12 monthly stipend payments per year of scholarship support, and payment of other reasonable educational expenses, such as books, supplies, and equipment.

"We are really organized this year," said Ham of the club's multifaceted and action-packed 2004-05 agenda. "We met several times during the summer to get our calendars set, coordinate our events, and make the necessary contacts. As the year progresses, we will be volunteering our services to a number of health fairs and working with AHEC on a slew of activities in underserved areas. We are also developing a strong relationship with the National Rural Health Association and utilizing the organization as a resource for what's happening on the political side of rural medicine."

Devoting copious amounts of time to extracurricular pursuits like the Rural Medicine Club may place an additional burden on their already overtaxed psyches, but Ham and Turner wouldn't have it any other way. "For me personally it's very rewarding because I have a great passion for volunteering in underserved areas," Ham stated. "School shouldn't just be about books. We need these outside experiences to make us whole and well rounded. I love working in a rural or underserved area because you have the opportunity to build strong relationships with your patients."

For Turner, who is married and has a young daughter, getting involved in organizations such as the Rural Medicine Club helps deflect the pressure of exams and the monotony of classroom study by allowing him to interact with a range of interesting issues and patient populations. "I always remember what my undergraduate adviser said once I was accepted into medical school, which was, 'Don't forget your humanity.' In the first two years of medical school, there is so much emphasis on science, anatomy, biochemistry, and pathology, so it's easy to forget that your goal as a physician is relating to and helping people.

"For me, getting involved in a club allows you opportunities to connect with people," he added. "It allows us to remember why we're here. It's rewarding to see patients in a rural or underserved area because there is an absolute need. As a general rule, the lack of resources is staggering. Secondly, and I hate to put it this way, when compared to more affluent individuals, the level of appreciation is so much greater. When patients in these underserved communities say thank you and express their gratitude, it is so heartfelt. And to me that makes all the difference in the world."

Mini Medical School
Targets Senior Community

In October, the college launched the latest of its community-based initiatives with the implementation of the Mini Medical School project, which aims to educate various segments of the public about the medical school environment and provide information about timely health topics.

The eight-week pilot program, which is initially being marketed to senior citizens free of charge, features afternoon lectures from various NSU-COM faculty members on topics ranging from sexuality and sleep disorders to skin cancer.

"Our goal is to make this lecture series informative as well as entertaining and provide a real service to the community," said David Thomas, M.D., J.D., who serves as professor and chair of the Department of Surgery. "Hopefully, after attending these seminars, people will better understand the decision making process physicians go through."

Lecture Topics

Becoming a Physician: The Long Road to Practice
The Epidemic of Skin Cancer
Bedroom Stories
Looking After the Grandkids
Tales of the Heart/A Breath of Fresh Air
We All Have Some Nerve/Bioterrorism Issues
Feeling Out of Joint
Ask the Doctor: What Every Senior Needs to Know
Alumni Corner

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Alumni in the News
Jim Hardigan, D.O., Pharm.D., class of 1999, and other military soldiers from Task Force 1-37 Armor, 1st Armored Division conducted a medical treatment program for more than 100 Iraqi police service officers and Iraqi Civil Defense Corps soldiers during a joint Medical Civil Action Program (MEDCAP) in Karbala, Iraq.

Stuart Shalit, D.O., class of 1990, was recently appointed section chief of gynecology at Virtua Memorial Hospital Burlington County in Mount Holly, New Jersey. In this role, Dr. Shalit will be responsible for developing departmental policies and procedures to ensure quality, evaluating new equipment, and serving as a liaison between nursing and medical staff.

Shoib Myint, D.O., class of 1991, will have a featured role in an independent film called The Advent that was filmed on the streets of Michigan last summer.

Solving Li, D.O., M.P.H., class of 2000, who recently completed her residency training, received the Resident of the Year Award from Miami Beach's Mount Sinai Medical Center. Dr Li was also selected as the winner of the case vignette oral presentation competition at the Florida Chapter American College of Physician Associates' Meeting.

Octavia M. Cannon, D.O., FACOOG, class of 1995, who serves as director of women's health for the Gaston County Health Department in Gastonia, North Carolina, was elected to serve as the chair of the OB/GYN department at Gaston Memorial Hospital/Caromont Health Center in Gastonia. Dr. Cannon will begin serving as chair in January 2005.

Have you published a paper, received an award, or been promoted or elected to a lofty professional position? If so, COM Outlook wants to know. If you have alumni news of note to report, please submit the information via email to scottc@nsu.nova.edu.

Mark Your Calendars!
November 7-11, 2004
109th Annual AOA Convention/Scientific Seminar
San Francisco Marriott Hotel
San Francisco, California

February 11-13, 2005
NSU-COM 9th Annual Alumni Reunion and Continuing Medical Education Program
Hyatt Regency Pier 66/NSU Campus
Fort Lauderdale, Florida

Alumni Reunion Update
The weekend will begin with a family and friends' reception on Friday, February 11, 2005, from 7:30-9:30 p.m. at Pier 66.

Continuing medical education sessions will be presented on Saturday and Sunday, February 12 and 13 at NSU's Health Professions Division.

Saturday evening social event will commence at Pier 66 with a 6:30 p.m. reception and a gala banquet and dancing to follow at 7:30 p.m.

Attendees wishing to book reservations at the Hyatt Regency Pier 66 in Fort Lauderdale must contact the hotel directly at (954) 525-6666.

Please RSVP your attendance for the alumni reunion at (954) 262-1029 or email cawley@nsu.nova.edu.

Alumni Web Page: http://medicine.nova.edu

Join our Listserv! (listserv@list.nova.edu or nsucom_alumni@list.nova.edu).
Alumni Association Fund Honor Roll

In the spring of 1999, NSU-COM launched an alumni-based fundraising effort to generate dollars that would be used to create an endowed fund to reduce future tuition costs for NSU-COM students and produce a funding pool that would be utilized for discretionary purposes as determined by the Alumni Association Executive Committee. If you would like to learn more about the Alumni Association Fund, please contact the Office of Alumni Affairs at (954) 262-1029. Following are the altruistic individuals who have contributed to NSU-COM's Alumni Association Fund since its inception:

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(Gift: $500,000 life insurance policy)

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Wyeth Pharmaceuticals

COM Outlook • Fall 2004
In 1996, Brenda K. Sowter, D.O., FACOFP, seemingly had it all—a thriving medical career in California, a loving husband, and an adorable young daughter named Andrea who brought much joy to her life. So why did Dr. Sowter, a 1988 NSU-COM alumnae, willingly relinquish her chief of staff position at Orange County Community Hospital in Buena Park, California, to relocate to a rural area several thousand miles east in Tennessee?

Despite her California successes, which included operating a solo practice specializing in family medicine, osteopathic manipulative treatment, and chemical addiction, Dr. Sowter yearned for a less frenzied, more relaxed lifestyle for herself and her family. She also harbored a strong desire to bring up her then three-year-old daughter Andrea in a small community comprised of people who treated each other with civility and respect and exhibited an attitude of friendliness and helpfulness toward each other.

During a cross-country trek in 1996, she and her husband Andrew found exactly what they were looking for in a small town called Kimball, Tennessee, located about 90 minutes outside of Nashville. Fortuitously, the city was in the midst of building a modern, well-equipped hospital and was looking to hire qualified physicians. After conducting a thorough study of the community and visiting with its leaders, Dr. Sowter was convinced that Kimball was where she wanted to live, practice, and raise her daughter.

Once the move to Tennessee was complete, Dr. Sowter, who is board certified in family practice, set up a solo practice and was warmly welcomed by the townspeople of Kimball, who treated her with a welcome mix of graciousness and reverence. In fact, she felt as if she had stepped back in time to a bygone era where physicians were respected and given the authority to make sound decisions for their patients without interference from health care industry management corporations.

In addition to running her practice, Dr. Sowter quickly became an active and respected leader in the medical community. This included assuming challenging positions such as serving as chief of staff and a board of trustees' member at Grandview Medical Center, acting as medical director of the Mountain View Psychiatric Treatment Center, and serving as medical examiner and medical director of Marion County Emergency Medical Services.

As she became more involved, Dr. Sowter decided to assume a greater advocacy role once she realized the political strength of the osteopathic profession in Tennessee was significantly different from California and other states with significant D.O. populations. Once she became aware that D.O.s in Tennessee did not have parity with M.D.s and were discriminated against in matters concerning Medicare, insurance payment, and health care matters in general, she immediately took action by becoming actively involved with the Tennessee Osteopathic Medical Association (TOMA) and the Tennessee division of the ACOFP.

Over the next few years, she served on numerous TOMA committees, eventually earning a two-year term as the organization's president from 2001 through 2003. During this time, she also worked tirelessly to ensure that quality patient care and the autonomy of the physician would be protected. However, Dr. Sowter's greatest success may be the way she seamlessly combines her professional and personal pursuits, which allows her to spend quality time with her family and serve as a loving, guiding force in her young daughter's development.

“Brenda Sowter is a perfect example of the type of physician the late HPD chancellor, Morton Terry, D.O., wanted to create,” said Howard Neer, D.O., FACOFP, professor and associate dean of alumni affairs. “She is the quintessential osteopathic family physician who serves the people of a small community in need.”
Dr. Silvagni Inducted as FSACOFP President

The month of July proved to be a memorable one for Anthony J. Silvagni, D.O., Pharm.D., FACOFP, who received several prestigious accolades. Early in the month, he was accorded the American Osteopathic Association’s Mentor Hall of Fame Award. The accolade was bestowed upon Dr. Silvagni “for excellence in mentoring and in appreciation of his understanding of the importance of mentorship for the development of osteopathic medical students, interns, and residents and in acknowledgement of his motivation and support of the educational and clinical pursuits of young osteopathic colleagues.” On July 31, Dr. Silvagni was installed as president of the Florida Society of the American College of Osteopathic Family Physicians (ACOFP). Dr. Silvagni, who has served as NSU-COM dean since 1998, was officially inducted at a special ceremony held in conjunction with the Florida Society ACOFP’s 34th Annual Convention that took place July 27-August 1 at the Hyatt Regency Grand Cypress Resort in Orlando.