

## GIVING

# Ambitious Immokalee students get a glimpse of medical school

SPECIAL TO FLORIDA WEEKLY

Three Immokalee High School students had the unique opportunity to experience what it's like to attend medical school, thanks to The Immokalee Foundation and the Florida State University College of Medicine Summer Institute, a highly competitive program managed by FSU College of Medicine Outreach and Advising Office.



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education. empowerment. hope.

The students — Luis Parra, Stephanie Alcime and Chedeline Fredrick — were among more than 50 selected from throughout the state based on grades, leadership, volunteerism and a passion for science and medicine. After submitting applications and receiving a visit from Elizabeth Foster, the college's assistant director of research and graduate programs (who traveled around the state to meet with students interested in medicine and the Summer Institute), the three Immokalee students were accepted into the program.

To help make their dreams a reality, The Immokalee Foundation awarded each of them a Pathways to Success scholarship that enabled their attendance at the weeklong program in Tallahassee.

"The selection process is competitive," Ms. Foster says. "We sought the best and brightest at their schools. They should feel proud about being selected. We were certainly proud to have them here."

Noemi Perez, student advocate for TIF's Take Stock in Children program, says the Summer Institute, known as a "mini-med school," provides a tremendous opportunity for students to further their academic and career goals.

"The institute shows them the possibilities of what they can do with their lives and how they can do it," she says. "It encourages them to look beyond Immokalee."

Students are recruited from rural, underserved and minority backgrounds who have an interest in medical knowledge and a desire to serve those in need. This focus on minority recruitment stems from the college's founding mission to help train physicians for Florida's tradi-

tionally underserved populations.

The program consisted of sessions designed to provide an inside look at what it means to be both a doctor and medical student. Perhaps most importantly, it encouraged the junior and senior students to consider a career in medicine — something they might not have thought possible.

Stephanie Alcime, a junior at Immokalee High school, wants to be a surgeon and recognizes that opportunities like this don't come around often in her small community.

"When you have a chance to go somewhere and do something important, you have to do it," she says. "Don't just sit around and let it pass you by."

The students stayed on the campus of FSU. Throughout the week, they shadowed physicians and medical students, visited rural health centers and received college testing and application advice. They also attended faculty lectures on topics such as medical ethics, migrant health care and doctor-patient relations. In several activities, they went through training similar to what real medical students face and received hands-on experience in things like taking blood pressure and performing CPR.

Luis Parra, an Immokalee senior, loved the program.

"We got to witness a lot of things that medical students don't get to see until their third year of medical school, and we're in high school," he says. Mr. Parra plans to attend FSU after graduation and pursue his dream of becoming a surgeon. He would then like to return to his hometown of Immokalee.

"It's important to remember where you came from and all the people that helped you along the way," he says, "It's not just about me. I want to give back." ■

— *The Immokalee Foundation has a range of programs that focus on building pathways to success through college and vocational school, mentoring and tutoring, and opportunities for broadening experiences and life skills development. To learn more about the foundation, including how to volunteer as a Take Stock In Children student mentor, call 430-9122 or visit [www.immokaleefoundation.org](http://www.immokaleefoundation.org).*