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## County embraces significant medical opportunity with FSU

Local doctors host event to support partnership with Florida State

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From left, Lecanto dermatologist and state Rep. Ralph Massullo, FSU College of Medicine regional campus dean and associate dean for clinical research Dr. Michael J. Muszynski, Jaya and Parmanand Gurnani, and Bhadresh and Priti Patel talk Thursday evening at the Gurnanis' Lecanto home. The event was co-hosted by Gurnani and Patel in support of a partnership with Florida State University to bring a medical education program to Citrus County.

CARLY ZERVIS/Chronicle

Doctors and donors gathered at the home of Inverness psychiatrist Dr. Parmanand Gurnani on Thursday evening in pursuit of a lofty goal: To build a framework in Citrus County for clinical training of medical students through Florida State University.

Also in attendance were FSU College of Medicine personnel involved in the effort, including regional campus dean and associate dean for clinical research Dr. Michael J. Muszynski, assistant dean for development Jim McNeill, and director of campus clinical relations Cindy Tyler.

Citrus County Hospital Board member and Health and Wellcare Services of Florida Inc. CEO Mike Bays was enthusiastic about the prospect of a partnership.

"This is a happy opportunity to have physician training in our area, under a true, consistent program," Bays said. "It's a great opportunity for us to develop that relationship."

An aspect of that relationship, it is hoped: An affinity among students for life in Citrus County.

"I think everybody is very excited about the possibility of partnering to bring students here, to potentially (bring) their practices and families here," said Bays's wife and former county commissioner Rebecca Bays. "As a community, I think we're on a paradigm shift. If students finish their rotations here and decide they love it, they'll be in a position to be in Citrus County as it's really starting to take off."

Initially, the program in Citrus will serve four to six students each year, expanding to 10 or 12, said Lecanto internist Dr. Bhadresh Patel.

Funds raised at the event will go toward establishing an endowment through the FSU Foundation in support of the program, which will use "one-on-one, apprenticeship-style teaching," according to the college.

"Right now, the first step is to have the students come and do rotations with different physicians and specialties," said Dr. Gurnani.

Dr. Patel explained that those rotations could be anywhere from four weeks to a year in length, depending on the student's area of speciality and course of study. The program will include both medical students and those in the college's physician's assistant program.

"I think it was a great success," Gurnani said of the event. "To me, the turnout was more than we expected. It was really a success."

The event was co-hosted by Gurnani and Patel.

"It went wonderfully," Patel said Friday. "We had a lot of commitment to continuing support.

"The hospitals are also already committed," Patel continued. "This will open the gate for Citrus County to become a teaching hub ... This is just the beginning of embracing medical education and working with the universities. If everybody starts to do it in an organized way, it can be a significant force in medical education."

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Reporter