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## County, FSU eye community medical partnership

Program would match med students with local doctors

Michael D. Bates Oct 22, 2017 Updated 15 hrs ago

Citrus County is poised to become only one of four communities that would be part of Florida State University's (FSU) new community-based medical program.

Much will depend on what county commissioners do at their Tuesday meeting.

The board will consider allowing FSU students to live in a Citrus Springs home while continuing to hone their medical skills from local participating physicians.

The county owns the home at 1248 Bridge St. and would pay for its maintenance, utilities and upkeep. The students include third- and fourth-year students enrolled in FSU's medical and physicians' assistant schools based in Orlando.

FSU's mission is for these students to diversify their training and leave urban areas for more rural counties with specific needs. It's too long a commute from Orlando, so these students need a place to live closer to the community they will be studying. That's why it was critical to find a place for them to stay in Citrus County.

If commissioners approve this agenda item, Citrus would become the fourth participating community in the program. The others include Marianna, Immokalee and Thomasville, Georgia (just over the Florida line).

All those communities have something in common: they are rural, the population is underserved by physicians and there's a large number of seniors and geriatric patients.

County Commissioner Jeff Kinnard is an enthusiastic supporter of the program, which he said will eventually pay dividends for Citrus County because these medical students will develop community ties and perhaps eventually return from their residencies and start their own practice here. It will also build up a needed supply of doctors in Citrus, he said.

"I'm very, very excited about this," Kinnard said.

Michael Muszynski, dean of the Orlando regional campus of the FSU College of Medicine, was ecstatic about the news that a home may be available. He recently visited Citrus County and explained the program and the need for housing.

He's surprised the county is acting so fast.

"That would be the seed to start the thing going," Muszynski said. "Without it, (the program) is going to be delayed."

FSU had already identified Citrus County as a location-in-need because of the demographics. This community-based model provides a one-on-one mentor/apprentice model and the training is done locally. Muszynski said he already has seven local physicians enrolled in the program.

Muszynski said he wants to start with at least eight students and build it up to 12 or more beginning with the third year of the program's operation. Of course, that would take additional homes for students in Citrus County. The 2,026-square-foot home under consideration Tuesday is part of the county's Neighborhood Stabilization Program. It has three bedrooms and two baths.

FSU doesn't have the budget to pay for those homes, he said.

Citrus County, he said, will provide a fertile training ground, not only for students, but for the physicians who will be exposed almost daily to medical students who bring with them the most up-to-date academic guidelines and boundless enthusiasm.

"I have no reason to believe that the experience in Citrus County will be nothing but wonderful," Muszynski said.

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