Dr. Kristen Dimas Returns to Serve Immokalee - Florida Hospital News and Healthcare Report
November 10, 2023 – This year, Dr. Kristen Dimas saw an opportunity at Healthcare Network to serve the community where she grew up. As founding Program Director for Healthcare Network’s new Family Medicine Residency Program, she will teach others how to reach underserved populations.

Dimas did not think she wanted to become a doctor when she was growing up in Immokalee and graduated as valedictorian of her class at Immokalee High School
in 2008. But her mother, who completed her college degree when Dimas was 14, made sure her daughter also planned to go to college.

One summer, Dimas worked as a tutor at Guadalupe Center for elementary school children who score below grade-level, often due to language barriers or challenges from a migrant lifestyle. There she saw her hometown in a different light, realizing the negative impact of access to resources.

“I started to think about what I could do to impact the community,” she said. “The community gave me a lot, including perspective and a sense of belonging.”

Good at biology, she thought about becoming a pediatrician and serving the underserved, like many in the community where she grew up. She attended Florida State University College of Medicine (FSU COM).

At the end of her first year of medical school, she worked at the Science Students Together Reaching Instructional Diversity and Excellence (SSTRIDE) Program for FSU COM in Immokalee and helped develop the curriculum for what was then a two-week summer program. The program identifies and provides support to students who are interested in careers in science, engineering, math, health or medicine.

In medical school, Dimas also found that she enjoyed working with all ages, so she decided to focus on family medicine. “I saw myself going back into the community,” she said.

She graduated in 2019 from the FSU COM Family Medicine Residency Program. The residency program, based at Lee Memorial Hospital, was created to address a national shortage of primary care physicians.

She joined the FSU Family Medicine Residency Faculty in Fort Myers to help advance their curriculum on health
disparities. While there, she served as co-chair for health disparities sub-committee. The committee’s work resulted in a $3.2 million grant to support community outreach efforts and partners to impact obesity, diabetes, hypertension depression, anxiety, substance abuse and more.

This year, she saw an opportunity at Healthcare Network to serve her community in another way. She will be responsible for developing, directing and managing the new Family Medicine Residency Program.

Healthcare Network was awarded $500,000 in grant funding for the Teaching Health Center Graduate Medical Education (THCGME) program from the Health Resources & Services Administration (HRSA). The funding will support Healthcare Network’s implementation of a family medicine residency program in collaboration with Lee Health and NCH hospitals as well as FSU COM who will serve as the sponsoring institution.

For Dimas, the new role she began in October is bringing her career plans full circle.

“I love being able to go to my hometown and help increase access to care,” she said. “We’ll be trying to bring more doctors into Immokalee and getting them to stay in our community. We can show them the heart of the community and that we are people caring for people.”

Coming home is important to Dimas for other reasons. Her family still lives in Immokalee. Friends from high school are working at Healthcare Network now. She missed the food.

“I love the small-town feel, being a small-town doctor,” she said. “I love the sense of community. I’m super thankful for this opportunity. It’s the right thing for me to do.”