



Med student to do residency locally

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Patty Brant

Immokaleeans continue to keep home in their hearts, even after their path takes them far away.

Kristen Dimas, 2008 I.H.S. valedictorian and a beneficiary of the Immokalee Foundation programs, is following her dream of becoming a doctor and was recently matched for her residency in family medicine with Lee Memorial Hospital.

Since 2007, Florida State University has partnered with Healthcare Network of Southwest Florida to provide medical education opportunities and healthcare services for the rural and underserved population in Immokalee, providing opportunities for medical students to receive some of their required and elective education right here in Immokalee. Forty-two medical students have completed one or more rotation here.

Dr. Elena Reyes, Associate Professor, Southwest Florida Regional Director at the FSU College of Medicine, said it is a community-based medical school with a legislative mandate to provide primary care in underserved areas.

After their first two years at Tallahassee FSU they can then work at one of six campuses in Florida, including Immokalee and continue with training in a rural situation at the Immokalee Health Education site.

Dr. Reyes commented that students like Kristen are very much appreciated because they tend to be very dedicated to the population from which they came. "We know they will probably stay in the area of their residency," she added, because they have roots here. Kristen is the first Southwest Florida student to return to her home area to practice, she added.

One summer, Kristen spent two weeks as a teaching assistant at the FSU facility here at a "mini medical school experience" for high schoolers -a true homegrown role model helping to give younger students a taste of what lies ahead for them.

These summer students are exposed to the medical field on campus and paired with a doctor for one-on-one experience. The SSTRIDE program, sponsored by FSU and the Collier County Public School District, will start at IHS in the fall. Eligible I.M.S, eighth graders interested in the medical field are being chosen to mentor with a professional through high school. Funding is from the Naples Children Foundation.

During the summer of 2013 Kristin was home assisting Dr. Reyes with curriculum design and implementation of this pioneer summer clinic project.

Dr. Reyes said she was "thrilled" that Kristen was matched with Lee Memorial, saying she hopes this will actually "start a pipeline" of gifted medical professionals coming to practice in Immokalee.

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