

TMH doctors offer wise words to PACE girls



TaMaryn Waters, Democrat staff writer 9:05 p.m. EDT April 1, 2016



(Photo: TaMaryn Waters/Democrat)

Friday was a rare occasion for most of the PACE Center for Girls students seated at a large oval table within Tallahassee Memorial HealthCare's board room. Sure, they'd seen doctors when they were sick or ailing. But this was different.

Drs. Andrea Friall, Alma Littles and Temple Robinson, three black female doctors who are leaders in their respective fields, were seated among the at-promise girls who may have struggled in traditional schools.

Littles, chief academic officer for the College of Medicine at Florida State University, said she wanted to be a doctor ever since her second-grade teacher encouraged her to pursue the challenging field.

"Clearly, she saw something in me so I kind of grabbed a hold of that and made it my goal," Littles said. "As I got older, I realized it's hard work."

Friall is an obstetrician at North Florida Women's Care at Tallahassee Memorial HealthCare. She serves as chair-elect for the TMH medical staff, which represents more than 600 doctors. Robinson is the president and CEO of Bond Community Health Center.

Each physician shared insight on what they've learned on the road to becoming a doctor. They encouraged the girls to take advantage of opportunities and do little yet powerful things, such as state their names with clear confidence. They were told to be proud of themselves and foster a tenacious spirit.

PACE, located on Apalachee Parkway, serves middle- and high-schoolers. A lot of them are curious about entering some form of the medical field. Those dreams may seem farfetched, though.

But, Friday they saw real women. Real doctors. Real leaders who were likable, humorous and eager to share how they made it this far in their fields. Instantly, the idea of being a doctor, or anything they wanted to be, seemed a little closer.

They interacted with the featured guests for a rare private luncheon that may linger in their memories.

"I think just finishing women's history month and when you think of women's history month, a lot of girls don't see women who look like them," said Lashawn Gordan, program director at PACE. "So I think this was a very powerful opportunity. They get a chance to see that the limits people put on them, they don't have to stop there."

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