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VIM Clinic creates legacy as teaching facility

Debi Pelletier, a member of the Treasure Coast community. This story is neither endorsed by nor affiliated with this site.

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STUART — The Volunteers in Medicine Clinic has taken on an increasingly important role as a teaching facility for students pursuing health care careers.

The student program at VIM Clinic has been an unmitigated success, said Medical Director, Dr. Howard Voss. “It makes me very hopeful about the future of health care.”

VIM Clinic is participating in a community-based teaching model with the Florida State University College of Medicine. Third-year medical students are mentored one day a week in a health care facility and over the course of a year, get to know their patients.

“The students have a unique opportunity at VIM to do initial evaluations and follow-ups on new patients,” Dr. Voss said. “They see the fruits of their medical practices as the patients heal and improve.”

Dr. Voss hopes VIM Clinic’s student program perpetuate excellence in primary care. He’s heartened by students such as Brandon Mauldin, who just completed his year-long rotation at VIM. Mauldin scored in the 93rd percentile nationally on his internal medicine exam, one of the so-called “shelf exams” that third-year medical students must take.

Mauldin, 27, who has a Master’s degree in epidemiology and infectious diseases from Johns Hopkins University, jumped at the chance to get clinical experience under the mentorship of Dr. Voss.

“I was just totally floored at the opportunity,” Mauldin said. “Dr. Voss spent so much time with me. The really neat thing about Volunteers in Medicine is we do get to spend a lot of time with patients. I’ve learned a lot being immersed in that environment and from the lifetime of knowledge Dr. Voss has.”

Dr. Voss said Mauldin’s academic and clinical growth “was remarkable” at VIM Clinic. “He became a valuable asset in helping me with patients as his abilities grew over the course of the year.”

After 50 years of practice, Dr. Voss has been impressed by the caliber of the FSU medical students, and is looking forward to welcoming his third this summer. Meantime, it appears the word is getting out about VIM as a teaching facility.

Four pre-med students from Indian River State College, the University of Florida and Florida Institute of Technology are volunteering for the summer.

Two nurse-practitioner students travelled from Indiana Wesleyan University to do rotations at VIM, as did a pharmacy student finishing her doctoral program at Palm Beach Atlantic University. Also, a Ph.D. candidate in nursing from the University of Central Florida will conduct her dissertation research on Advanced Care Planning in partnership with VIM.

Medical assisting students frequently rotate through VIM Clinic from the Lincoln School of Technology, Keiser University and IRSC.

FIT pre-med student Matt McCord, 21, said he decided to spend his summer volunteering at VIM Clinic to verify if he really wants to become a physician. "It's certainly a good cause, and it's an excellent opportunity for patient interaction," he said.

In addition to taking patients' vital signs and doing paperwork, McCord gets valuable learning experience from shadowing seasoned health care professionals. "Oh, absolutely," he said "This has let me know I certainly do want to be a physician."

For Dr. Voss, "it's a joy and a privilege," to participate in the medical training of these outstanding students.

"What's most gratifying is the fact that they see and experience medicine as it should be, where patient care comes first, and every person is treated with compassion and dignity."

Visit VIM Clinic at www.vimclinic.net

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