

VIM Clinic medical director honored for humanistic approach to medicine

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Posted June 6, 2012 at 10:51 a.m., updated June 6, 2012 at 2:54 p.m.

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From left, at the FSU College of Medicine in Tallahassee, Dr. Daniel J. Van Durme, chairman, Department of Family Medicine and Rural Health; Dr. Brandon Mauldin, former student, and Dr. Ken Brummel-Smith, chairman, Department of Geriatrics, congratulate Dr. Howard E. Voss, second from left, on his induction into the Gold Humanism Honor Society.

STUART — After more than 50 years of practicing medicine, Dr. Howard E. Voss, medical director of the Volunteers in Medicine Clinic, has a wall full of honors and accolades. But the one he cherishes most is the Gold Humanism Honor Society he recently received for “exemplary service, integrity, clinical excellence and compassion.”

What makes this award so special is the fact he was nominated by his student, a 2012 graduate of the Florida State University College of Medicine.

“To be nominated by your student is really a great honor,” said Dr. Voss. “I think it’s more

important to me than many of the other honors I have accumulated on the wall.”

The student, Brandon Mauldin, is a newly minted MD who did his third-year longitudinal rotation at VIM Clinic. He said Dr. Voss “was very important and very special to me,” during the third and fourth years of medical school.

“Not only is he my mentor, but he’s also my friend,” Dr. Mauldin said. “I couldn’t think of anybody else who better deserved to be nominated for the Gold Humanism Honor Society.”

The induction ceremony was May 18 in Tallahassee, in conjunction with the graduation ceremonies for 117 new physicians — the largest graduating class in the college’s 11-year history. Coincidentally, the college opened in 2001, the same year Dr. Voss took over as VIM Clinic’s volunteer Medical Director.

Not so coincidentally, Dr. Mauldin is going to Tulane University in New Orleans to do his residency in internal medicine, which is one of Dr. Voss’s specialties, along with allergy/immunology. He’s long advocated for the need for more primary care physicians and encouraged Dr. Mauldin down that path.

The Gold Humanism Honor Society, or GHHS as it’s known, is a lifetime honor into a society described as the “humanism and professional equivalent” to the Alpha Omega Alpha national medical honor society. Members of the GHHS pledge to advocate, promote and nurture humanism in medicine. They also promise to be a force for improving healthcare for everyone.

Dr. Mauldin saw those pledges in action during his year at VIM Clinic. “It’s very inspiring to see people who are very busy give their time to do free work here at the clinic. And the caliber of the doctors who volunteer here is amazing,” he said. “I think that’s probably one of the most inspiring things I take away as I head off to residency.”

After retiring from a very successful private practice in Connecticut, Dr. Voss says his work at VIM Clinic is “the most important thing I’ve ever done in my life.” Everything before VIM Clinic, he added, “has been a prologue.”

Since 1997, he has logged nearly 7,000 volunteer hours, which earned him the President’s Volunteer Service Award for Lifetime Achievement in 2010. In 2008, he became a Clinical Associate Professor in Clinical Sciences at FSU College of Medicine, which launched VIM Clinic’s role as a hands-on teaching facility for third-year

medical students.

"I love teaching," said Dr. Voss. "The first part of the Hippocratic Oath has nothing to do with patient care," he pointed out. "It has to do with the obligation to teach those who come after you."

As a graduate of New York University School of Medicine, Dr. Voss was inculcated with the principle that physicians should treat people equally and to the best of their ability, regardless of payment. "I guess that's probably why I ended up here," he said.

He points out that while the United States has the greatest medical care in the world, "if you can't afford it, you're not getting any."

"People are literally dying of diseases that are eminently treatable because they can't even access a doctor," he said. "If I can do something about that in one county in this country, then I've done something with my life."

For more information about VIM Clinic, please visit www.vimclinic.net. For more information about GHHS, please visit www.humanism-in-medicine.org.

The GHHS Pledge:

As a member of the Gold Humanism Honor Society, I pledge to:

1. Be a role model and mentor for humanism in medicine
2. Champion the proper balance between scientific and humanistic patient care
3. Inspire colleagues to promote humanism throughout the healthcare system
4. Advocate humanistic patient care locally, regionally, and nationally
5. Nurture fellowship in membership
6. Help those struggling to overcome the barriers to humanism in medicine
7. Be a force for improving healthcare for everyone