

TO MEDIA

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENTS EXPLORE FAMILY MEDICINE AT INDEPENDENCE HEALTH SYSTEM

LATROBE, PA, July 12, 2023... Four aspiring family physicians are the recipients of this year's Andrew D. Bagby Family Medicine Scholarship. Each participated in a month-long program this summer through Independence Health System and the Latrobe Hospital Family Medicine Residency Program in which they gained inpatient and outpatient experience, in addition to exploring career options in primary care.

The Bagby Scholarship was established by family and friends in memory of first-year resident Dr. Andrew Bagby, who died tragically in November 2001. The scholarship fund has increased substantially over the 20 years the scholarship has been awarded. It is supported by the Bagby family, as well as private donors, to give opportunities to aspiring family medicine physicians. The scholarship is administered by the Latrobe Area Hospital Charitable Foundation.

Participants include **Tessa Brown** and **Ashley Hebenstreit Nichols** who are enrolled at Lake Erie College of Osteopathic Medicine (LECOM) at Seton Hill University, **Julianna Capo** from LECOM-Erie and **Kyeunghyeun Park**, who completed medical school at Ewha Womans University College of Medicine.

At age 7, **Tessa Brown** was so excited by the birth of her sister that she decided she wanted to be a midwife. As a teenager, she thought becoming a teacher would be a good idea. Then a college friend at Houghton University suggested Brown should consider applying for early acceptance to LECOM. Family medicine may be the ideal blend of both childhood interests.

Brown is a participant in the National Health Service Corps Scholarship Program, which offers full tuition and a stipend in exchange for a commitment to provide primary care health services in an underserved area after graduation. The daughter of Brenda and Kurt Brown of Orwigsburg in Schuylkill County has a particular interest in the impact of family medicine on prenatal and post-partum maternal-child care and believes long-term relationships allow for such continuity. “Every day there are different aspects of health to address, the 23-year-old noted. “Understanding how they all work together forms a patient’s medical history, which is more than an illness or a disease. I am enthusiastic about building physician-patient trust and being part of their story over a lifetime.”

Ashley Hebenstreit Nichols has had excellent role models in the primary care physicians she has known as providers and mentors. The daughter of Erin and Kurt Hebenstreit of St. Louis also has heard the stories from her mother, a pediatric triage nurse, and experienced her care and compassion firsthand. All point to a career in family medicine and relationships she hopes to emulate.

A biochemistry major at the University of Mississippi, she completed a master’s in integrative physiology at Benedictine University. It was while serving as a scribe for a family physician prior to grad school that she could see her career path unfolding as she witnessed the deep personal connections that were fostered with each patient. In researching the Bagby Scholarship, the 27-year-old saw similar traits in the scholarship’s namesake.

“With the right training and practice, I will have the tools to treat my patients that same way.” Her recent participation in the American Academy of Osteopathy’s Convocation also served to deepen her appreciation for seeing the patient as a union of mind, body and spirit and will help to inform her own care practices.

When **Julianna Capo** was 21, she suffered an injury that caused extreme low back pain and made it difficult for her to remain upright. A series of assessments made from imaging and laboratory studies led several providers to conclude her pain was the result of a deformity and recommended physical therapy.

Two years later, still suffering from daily pain and limited mobility, Capo's new physical therapist determined she had been misdiagnosed as she exhibited pelvic instability. The spinal deformity was an incidental finding on imaging studies years before she was symptomatic. Referred to a pelvic specialist, she learned the original injury was psoas syndrome that had gone untreated and caused the pelvic dysfunction.

Had physicians engaged in conversation with Capo sooner, rather than rely solely on test results, her condition might have been treated effectively. The 24-year-old sees family medicine as the place she can build relationships, seeing patients as people, not medical files. And should she choose to pursue a fellowship in neuromusculoskeletal medicine, she will have her own experience to remind her of the importance of empathy in caregiving.

The daughter of Marlene and Robert Capo Jr. of Beaver County graduated from Blackhawk School District and pursued a pre-med track at Westminster College which has a bridge program with LECOM-Erie campus.

Of all the recipients of the Bagby Scholarship, **Kyeunghyeun Park** has traveled the farthest to share in an experience intended to prepare her for a family medicine residency in the United States. Having studied nursing at Yonsei University, the 32-year-old daughter of Kinam Park and Yeonmi Sung gained a deeper understanding of how integral communication between various disciplines is to patient care as well as the competency required of other team members to be successful. Her desire to treat patients medically started coming into focus. Throughout her time at Ewha Womans University College of Medicine in the Republic of Korea, she gravitated to professors and experiences that focused on primary care, disease prevention and management. She was particularly drawn to classes that keyed on the value of patient communication and the doctor-patient relationship as tools that would be as effective in promoting lifestyle improvements as any pharmacological remedies. During her time as a resident intern in a general hospital and as an on-duty doctor at a hospital for the elderly, Park

frequently was confronted by various ailments that could have been prevented or at the very least managed better to forestall hospitalization and physical decline. When opportunities arose, she found counseling those with high blood pressure or weight management struggles particularly rewarding as she made a personal connection that might lead to the adoption of healthier habits.

As part of her month-long experience with the Latrobe Hospital Family Medicine Residency program, she also spent time in the nephrology practice of her great uncle, Dr. Lee Sung, who shared the news of the scholarship with her.

Nationally recognized for quality care, Independence Health System comprises Butler Memorial, Clarion, Frick, Latrobe and Westmoreland Hospitals with a combined bed count of 925. With more than 1,000 physicians and advanced practice providers and 7,300 employees, the System is now the third largest in western Pennsylvania serving a population base of 750,000 in a footprint spanning more than 10 counties.

The System includes tertiary programs that are rated among America's best for cardiac care and surgery by Healthgrades in its Top 100 and Top 50 designations, and one of only five in Pennsylvania to achieve a five-star rating in cardiac surgery. In similar fashion, the prestigious Society of Thoracic Surgeons (STS) bestowed its top three-star rating. Historically, less than 10 percent of programs within the STS data base achieve this elite standing. The hospitals of Independence Health System also have earned a host of accolades from such prestigious outlets and sources as US News and World Report, Newsweek Magazine, the American College of Radiology, the American College of Cardiology, the American College of Surgeons, the Joint Commission, Leapfrog and the American Heart/Stroke Association.

Locally owned and locally controlled, Independence Health System offers its patients low-cost, high-quality care across the care spectrum in such specialties as cardiology, cardiovascular and thoracic surgery, orthopedics and sports medicine, minimally invasive and robotic surgery, women's health and obstetrics, emergency medicine, behavioral health and primary care. Its network of outpatient centers sees more than 1.2 million visits annually. The homecare division further supports patients at all stages of life with home health and hospice services.

Independence Health System continues to change the healthcare landscape in western Pennsylvania by meeting patient needs through superb physician expertise, outstanding nursing, the latest in technology and programmatic depth.

PHOTOS:

Kyeunghyeun Park

Julianna Capo

Ashley Hebenstreit Nichols

Tessa Brown

