

On Rounds

The University of Alabama
College of Community Health Sciences

Volume 13, Number 1

Spring 2003

Construction Underway for College's New Building

Many Supporters Help Celebrate 30th Anniversary and Groundbreaking



A groundbreaking ceremony on a warm and sunny Sunday afternoon, November 24, 2002, drew a large crowd of friends and supporters of the college as Dean Curry, elected leaders, and UA officials turned the first dirt at the site of building that will house CCHS when it is completed in 2004. The site is at the corner of University Boulevard and 5th Avenue across the street from the Stallings Building which houses the R.I.S.E. program. It is between the Student Recreation Center complex and University Blvd. It will also be close to the retirement community which will be located on land behind the current Capstone Medical Center and convenient to DCH. Football fans with RV's will recognize their former parking area in the field across from Arby's.



John England, UA Trustee; Senator Richard Shelby; UASOM Dean William Deal; Dr. Mack Portera, UA Chancellor; Dean Bill Curry; Interim UA President Barry Mason; contractor Gary Wyatt; and UA Provost Nancy Barrett begin construction for the new home of CCHS.



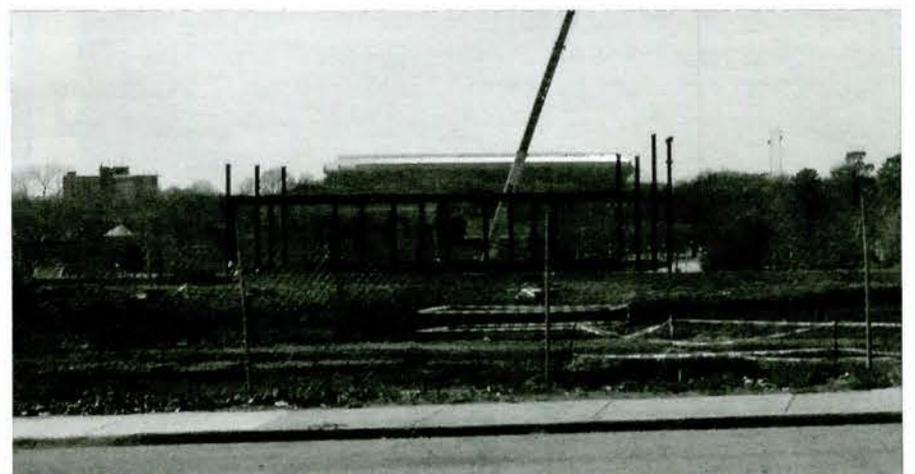
This crowd on site in November...



...has been replaced by a more active group!(more photos inside)

U.S. Senator Richard Shelby, who helped to establish the college thirty years ago while serving in the state legislature made special arrangements to be present, even though he was interviewed in a live TV broadcast (for "Face the Nation") in Washington on that Sunday morning.

Later, the Lister Hill Society sponsored the Thirtieth Anniversary celebration in conjunction with its annual reception for donors who support medical education at CCHS through the annual fund. Hosts for the event, held at the Chancellor's guest house in Pinehurst, were Tuscaloosa businessman and philanthropist **Jack Warner** and UA Systems Chancellor **Dr. Mack Portera**. The house, furnished with art and antiques from the Warner collection was a gift to The University from the Warner family.



The foundation was prepared and framework for the new building went up in February. The construction site is seen through the fence along 5th Avenue. Bryant Denny Stadium is in the background behind the crane, and the tall building behind on the left is Tutwiler Dormitory.

Dr. Hefelfinger Honored

David C. Hefelfinger, MD, (left) Professor Emeritus and former Chair of Pediatrics, was honored by the Alabama Chapter, American Academy of Pediatrics, at its Winter Symposium in January. He received the "Pediatrician of the Year Award, Child Life Advocate."



Dr. Hefelfinger was the first chair and faculty member in pediatrics at the newly founded CCHS when he came to Tuscaloosa in 1973 from Pensacola, where he was in private practice. He retired in 2000 after nearly thirty years of service.



Dr. Hefelfinger with his faculty in February, 2000, holding their parting gift. L-R: Drs. Ashley Evans, Hefelfinger, Elizabeth Cockrum, and Michael Taylor.

REFLECTIONS...

by William A. Curry, MD, FACP, Dean

University of Alabama College of Community Health Sciences
the University of Alabama School of Medicine, Tuscaloosa

WHAT WILL THAT NEW BUILDING MEAN FOR CCHS?



Dr. Curry

Throughout this issue of *OnRounds*, there are images of our new building – groundbreaking, initial construction, and fundraising. There can be no more powerful symbol of the energy and consequence of our programs than this beautiful structure. Why are we building it? Not for symbolism alone, but because it is essential to our future: for residency accreditation, for successful student and resident recruiting in a highly competitive environment, for adequate space and services for our patients, for the creative advantages of moving faculty and staff from five locations to one, for the efficiencies and cost savings that consolidation allows.

How are we doing it? Not without a struggle. Our “down payment” comes from the sale of our educational tower to DCH Regional Medical Center and from University funds. Long-term financing includes a UA bond issue and our very own mortgage. To repay the University for the bonds and to pay the mortgage, we have two sources: our own clinical practice income and fundraising.

How important is fundraising? Critical. Without it, our clinical practice is the only source for the mortgage, let alone for improving and expanding programs. The pressure for clinical income is no stranger to our faculty. Shrinking state support of higher education in Alabama is just one reason, one that is easy to see: in 1990, state support for higher education in our state was 92% of the Southeastern average; in 2002, it was about 60%. The costs of medical education and training have only increased in those twelve years, and tuition cannot close the gap. Nationally, other pressures have combined so that the portion of medical school budgets produced by clinical practice has risen from about 20% thirty years ago to 50% now (about the same as our own). The result is that our faculty have to make tough choices about how to spend their time, knowing that our reasons for being here are to teach, to keep ourselves educated to be the sharpest clinical teachers possible, and to address the challenges of rural health in Alabama.

How well are we doing at fundraising? For a relatively new college with little or no culture of fundraising, a small alumni base, and a limited corporate base – pretty well, actually. In 1997, total giving to CCHS was only about \$80,000, while that number for 2002 was about \$400,000. We have pledges from individuals and corporations of \$1,033,000 through 2005. Our donor base has increased significantly from 195 contributors to 432. Clearly the focus of the building has been a major help in bringing this kind of support, but the building alone could never have done it. We are blessed with dedicated volunteers like those of the Lister Hill Society, the members of the Capstone Health Services Foundation Board, and two outstanding fundraising committees. The latter are the volunteers of the project for The Betty Shirley Clinic for Psychiatry and Behavioral Medicine, and our general building campaign committee. With the help of our effective and hardworking advancement staff, these great people are helping us create a new vision of what is possible for CCHS/UA School of Medicine Tuscaloosa.

How can you help? Volunteer for committee work. Advise those on these committees. Encourage friends and colleagues. Pledge yourself. Tell me or a member of our faculty or staff if you have suggestions. You can take satisfaction in this fact: your gift, your support goes for something much greater than even the most elegant and inspiring building. Like any good symbol, the new CCHS building points beyond itself to something greater: to our medical students and residents, to their educations, to the practices they will establish and the tens of thousands of patients and hundreds of communities they will touch. Our rural mission extends our reach even further.

As this new building emerges from the red Alabama clay, so do the visibility, the credibility, and the opportunities for CCHS/ UASOM Tuscaloosa. If you are interested in knowing more, please give me a call, email me, or write me at the address below. It would be great to hear from you.

To contact Dr. Curry: William A. Curry, MD, FACP, Dean, College of Community Health Sciences, University of Alabama, Box 870326, Tuscaloosa AL 35487-0326

Phone: 205-348-1288 • Fax: 205-348-9417 • e-mail: wcurry@cchs.ua.edu



Residency Director
Dr. Sam Gaskins,
Dr. Russ Anderson
& Dr. Bill DeShazo
(both of whom are
former directors)



CCHS Residency Fills

Though details will not be available until later in March, the Family Practice Residency at CCHS has been notified that all twelve positions in the first year class matched with applicants' requests for admission. Over the 27 years of operation, the residency has graduated 282 family physicians, making this one of the most productive family practice training programs in the country. One in seven Alabama family physicians graduated from our program. Fifty-four percent of the family practice residency graduates are practicing in Alabama, half of these in towns of 25,000 or less.*

Dr. Hasik Returns to OB/GYN Faculty



Dr. Hasik

Karl J. Hasik, MD, Fellow of the American College of Obstetrics and Gynecology, has rejoined the OB/GYN Department's faculty. He first came to CCHS in 1998 from Quincy, Illinois, where he was in a multi-specialty clinic and also worked with family practice residents in training at the hospital where he was on staff. He was appointed Interim Chair of the department in 1999 when Dr. Paul Mozley announced his retirement after serving as Professor and Chair of the department since 1984. Dr. Hasik had spent fifteen years in private practice, including directing four rural clinics in Texas, working with rural and indigent patients in Nevada, and delivering OB/GYN care in small towns around St. Louis when he was recruited to CCHS by Dr. Mozley. He left CCHS for private practice in Sylacauga, Alabama, in 2001.

Dr. Hasik earned a B.A. in psychology and his MD degree from the University of Missouri, Columbia. He won medical school departmental honors in human ecology and behavioral science, surgery, and obstetrics and gynecology. He also received a letter of commendation in psychiatry and was elected to Alpha Omega Alpha, the national honorary medical fraternity. He did residency training at East Carolina and completed his residency at St. Louis University. Dr. Hasik joins

Dwight E. Hooper, MD, (Univ. of Maryland School of Medicine) who is serving as interim chair of OB/GYN. Dr. Hooper completed internships in general surgery and internal medicine before he went into his OB/GYN residency at Baltimore's Harbor Hospital Center. He is a Diplomate, American Board of Obstetrics and Gynecology, and a Fellow, American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists. Dean Curry reports that he expects to have another OB/GYN faculty member on board soon and hopes to see the OB fellowship reinstated.



Dr. Hooper

College Co-Hosts Fourth Annual Alabama Rural Health Conference

Dr. Marcia Brand, who directs the U.S. Office of Rural Health Policy, was keynote speaker for the 4th Annual Rural Health Conference held April 3-4, 2003, at UA's Bryant Conference Center in Tuscaloosa.

Culturally Competent Health Care in Rural Alabama: Overcoming the Invisible Barriers

was the conference theme, and more than 200 people attended, bringing together voices of healthcare providers, state agencies, and rural communities, other professionals from a number of fields with an interest in rural health, and academic researchers.

The Annual Rural Health Conference, coordinated by the UA Institute for Rural Health Research, is a joint project of CCHS, Capstone College of Nursing, School of Social Work, College of Human Environmental Sciences, College of Commerce and Business Administration, and College of Arts & Sciences at UA and other supporters from throughout the state.

The 2002 University of Alabama Rural Medical Scholars were honored at the Seventh Annual Rural Medical Scholars Convocation on the evening of April 3. RAHA (Rural Alabama Health Alliance) scholarships were presented to **Clarissa Parker**, a Minority Rural Health Pipeline scholar, and **Arctie Patil**, a 1999 Rural Health Scholar. Dr. **Bill DeShazo**, one of the first CCHS faculty members and a lifelong advocate for rural physician education and placement, received special recognition at the event for his life's work as a family physician.

On April 2, The University of Alabama Institute for Rural Health Research hosted two pre-conference workshops:

“Grant Writing for Community-Based Organizations”

and

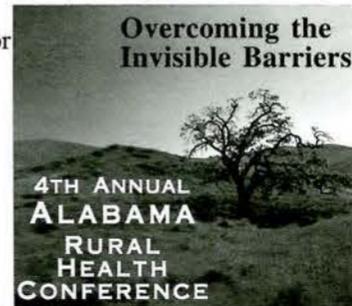
“Faith-Based Initiatives: Moving Beyond Separation of Church and State.”

The Grant Writing workshop was led by Dr. **Mark Dignan**.

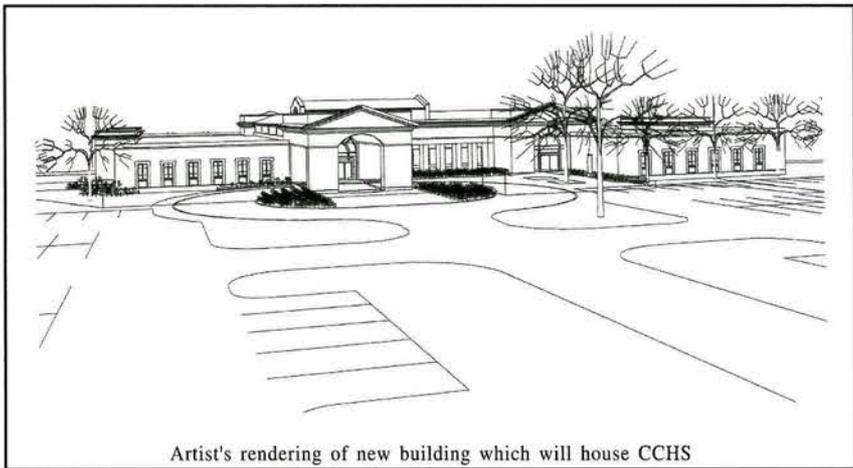
Dr. Warren McCord “Faith-Based Initiatives: Moving Beyond Separation of Church and State” was organized by Reverend **Joseph W. Davis** of the National Black Church Family Council in conjunction with multiple partners. Captain **James Gray** of the Center for Communities in Action, within HRSA's Bureau of Primary Health Care, was a workshop leader.

-**Naomi Clewett, Assistant Director for Editorial Services
Institute for Rural Health Research
The University of Alabama**

For more information or conference reports, contact: nclewett@cchs.ua.edu



Dr. Warren McCord at 2000 conference



Artist's rendering of new building which will house CCHS



Dean Emeritus Wil Coggins and CCHS Director of Advancement Vicki Johnson on the front porch of the Chancellor's guest house before the Lister Hill reception.



TV camera captures Dean Curry as he hands out shovels to dignitaries who will help turn ground for the new building for CCHS, the University of Alabama School of Medicine, Tuscaloosa.



Betty Shirley, for whom the psychiatry clinic is named, Dean William Curry, MD, and Anne Moman, who chaired the campaign to raise funds for completion of the Betty Shirley Clinic in the new building. Dr. William W. Winternitz (right) observes the presentation of a thank you gift to Moman. His wife, Madeline Hill will chair the committee raising funds for completing the new building.

CCHS donor Beverly Phifer greets UA Trustee, Judge John England before he takes his ceremonial shovel at the groundbreaking event.



Bob Shaw (right) snaps a picture of Dr. Barry Mason, legislator Robert Bentley, and Family Medicine faculty member Margaret Garner as the afternoon light faded.



Senator Richard Shelby (right) pauses for a picture with clinic administrator John Maxwell and his wife Alice, a Lister Hill Board member, in front of the tent before he helps break ground. Dr. Dick Rutland is seen behind John.



Anne Moman, chair of the Betty Shirley Clinic fund drive.



Karl Elebash (right) and Camille Elebash Mary and Tommy Hester are in the background.

Alice Maxwell, Tommy Hester



Dr. Mack Portera, UA Systems Chancellor, addressed the guests in the courtyard at the Lister Hill celebration of the college's thirty years of medical education.



Dean Curry greets Gordon and Ann Rosen.



Judy Suther, a member of the Betty Shirley Clinic campaign steering committee, with her husband, David.



Family Practice residents, Dr. Cathy Skinner (left) and Dr. Beverly Jordan, charm our host Jack Warner and guest Sam Jackson (right) at the Lister Hill reception.



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LISTER HILL SOCIETY

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My check is enclosed.

Bill me: Annually _____ Semi-Annually _____ Quarterly _____

Please make a payroll deduction of \$_____ per _____ from my UA salary.

Please call me to discuss financial options and tax advantages from a gift to the College of Community Health Sciences.

signature

date

e-mail

address

phone

**Please return to: Vicki Johnson
College of Community Health Sciences
The University of Alabama
Box 870326
Tuscaloosa, AL 35487-0326**

(205) 348-0093
vjohnson@cchs.ua.edu



Notes from Alums

This issue our note from an alum becomes our first *Alumni Editorial*. See Page 7.

Please send personal or professional news for "Notes from Alums":

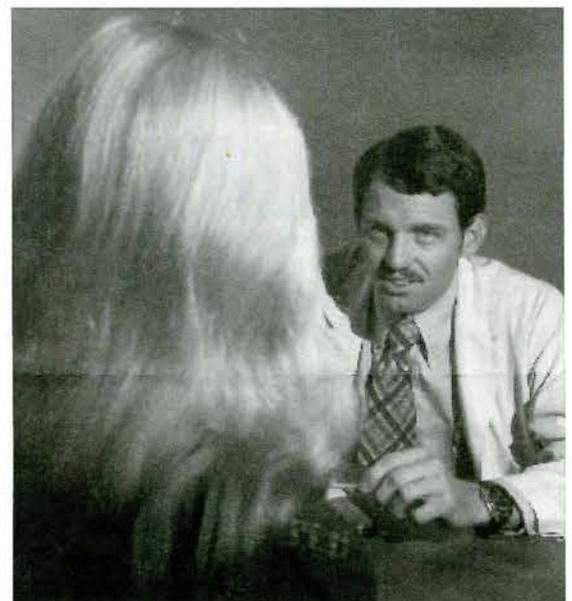
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or e-mail: ljackson@cchs.ua.edu

Include your graduation date (med school & residency) and your e-mail address and phone number so we can contact you with questions. Pictures would be especially welcome. Or we have plenty of these:



Please e-mail me if you know who this is with Dr. Hefelfinger.



Dr. McBrearty practices serious patient counseling techniques. (circa 1975?)



Sandra Hullett, MD, before she rose to national prominence.



Dr. Owings is still seeing patients in the family medicine clinic. Send your favorite Dr. Bill story!

College of Community Health Sciences • The University of Alabama

30th Anniversary Brochure Gives Glimpse into CCHS Tradition

Last year the University of Alabama's College of Community Health Sciences (CCHS) marked the 30th anniversary of its founding. As the college enters its fourth decade of addressing the unique problems associated with rural health care in Alabama, a history of the college is being completed under the direction of Dean Emeritus **Wilmer Coggins, MD**.

A brochure, written by **Patricia West** and published for the groundbreaking and the Lister Hill Society's anniversary celebration last November, is available from the Dean's office. It previews the information that will be included in the book, which Dr. Coggins is putting the final touches on now.

Here are some excerpts:

"By training skilled practitioners of medicine for careers in primary care, the College is helping make health care accessible throughout the state. ...in rural communities across Alabama, students and graduates of the college are touching the lives of hundreds of thousands of Alabama's residents."

"In the late 1960s a public outcry arose in response to the country's acute need for more physicians. The College of Community Health Sciences was established in response to that demand. Many areas of Alabama, particularly small towns and rural communities, suffered from a serious lack of health care. Turning to the University of Alabama for a comprehensive solution to the need for improved health care delivery in these areas, the Alabama Legislature funded the Tuscaloosa program and a similar program in Huntsville. With a mandate to improve rural health care in Alabama, CCHS turned to family medicine to achieve its goals. The College was committed not just to training more physicians but also to cultivating health care professionals with the desire to serve these smaller, underserved communities."

"The College became official with the arrival of Dr. **William R. Willard**, a nationally recognized leader in community and family medicine, who came from the University of Kentucky in 1972 as its first dean." To get a brochure or learn more about the book, contact Vicki Johnson, at 205/348-0093 or vjohnson@cchs.ua.edu.

RMS Students Go with MASA Physicians to Washington, D.C.

Rural Medical Scholars Meet Congressional Delegation

The trip to Washington allowed us to see a different side of medicine and health care. We were introduced to the policy and decision-making aspects of medicine and learned a great deal about the most pressing issues facing health care in our state.

-Ray Stewart, Phenix City
2002 Rural Medical Scholar



Rural Medical Scholars Ray Stewart, Tatum McArthur, and Brad Guy at the capitol between meetings with members of the Congressional delegation from Alabama and MASA members who briefed them on legislation and medical issues.



Rural Medical Scholars Ray Stewart and Deanah Maxwell (front left) with Congressman Mike Rogers (center) and MASA members (L-R): Randall Jones, MD, Opelika; Allen Meadows, MD, Montgomery; Bill Golden, MD, Opelika; Panjkaj Kashyap, MD, Anniston; and Jeff Collins, MD, Anniston; and Richard Freeman, MD, Opelika.



Michael Luther, Anna Allen, and Justin Hughes interrupted their classes at UA to join members of the Medical Assoc. of the State of Alabama during their discussions with elected officials on how legislation and policy impact health problems in Alabama.

The 2002 class of UA's Rural Medical Scholars Program (RMSP) joined more than eighty physician leaders from Alabama including the MASA Board of Censors in Washington, D.C., on February 9-11 for the 26th Annual Governmental Affairs Conference. The students -- in their premed year of study at CCHS before they enter medical school in Birmingham this summer -- were accompanied by RMSP Medical Director **John Brandon, MD**, a family physician in Gordo and MASA member.

Students attended a forum on proposed Alabama office-based surgery guidelines, loss of medical liability coverage for many Alabama physicians and hospitals, the Medicaid funding crisis, and state legislative issues; AMA briefings; and a reception and dinner with members of the Alabama delegation and their staff. They participated in the Congressional office visits with MASA members who were explaining the impact of federal policy on Alabama's medical care to senators and representatives from the state.

Tatum McArthur, RMS from Greeneville, said the trip allowed her to better understand the overall picture of how policy and politics affect the medical care she and her classmates will be providing. **Ashley Coleman** from Jackson was also impressed with how much Washington politics affects a physician's practice and said he and the others were fortunate to have gotten a better understanding of some very critical problems facing the medical profession. **Jon Binkerd** of Shelby was glad for the chance to see the political process in action and the effect that informed citizens can have. **Carrie Freeman**, a Tuscaloosa County RMS from Samantha, who was in the group who met with her district's representative, **Spencer Bacchus**, said that he understood the very complicated issues related to Medicaid and Medicare funding, and she found that very encouraging. Tatum McArthur added that she was very impressed with how attentive Senator **Jeff Sessions** was to concerns being expressed. He really listened, she said, especially when Wilcox County physician **Sumpter Blackmon** explained how malpractice insurance loss could force doctors out of medicine and cause hospitals to close.

Dr. Brandon commented that the Rural Medical Scholars are always popular with Alabama's elected officials when they visit Washington. Prior RMS classes have had the same warm reception. "Meeting constituents who will be Alabama's doctors and community health leaders in the future is a very positive experience for both elected leaders and students," he said.

CCHS Dean **William Curry**, a past MASA President, is pleased that the Rural Medical Scholars could go. "It's important for our students and residents to understand that effective professional societies serve an essential role in supporting our care of patients. Our state medical association is one of the best run and most productive in the nation, and it's great to see our rural scholars participating in such events as the MASA annual Washington trip," said Dr. Curry.



2002 Rural Medical Scholars, shown here with Senator Jeff Sessions in Washington in February. Front: Carrie Freeman, Deanah Maxwell, Sessions, Tatum McArthur, David Corbett. Back row: Jeb Hornsby, Ray Stewart, Jon Binkerd, Ashley Coleman, Justin Hughes, Michael Luther, Brad Guy.



On a 2001 RMS trip to Washington, Lee Carter, Autauga County; Tara Goodson, Covington County; and Daniel Jones (right), Dale County; met with Congressman Terry Everett (second from right).

Not Enough...

Melissa Behringer, MD, a 1994 CCHS residency graduate and President-Elect of the Alabama Academy of Family Practice, wrote this article which has been in newspapers across the state.

I am a family doctor.

I tell my patients that I take care of people 6 months before they are born to 2 minutes after they die, and everything in between.

I have been privileged to share a family's joy as they first hear their baby's heartbeat (or newborn's cry), to share a father's anxiety while I take care of his child's asthma attack, and to share a wife's grief as we sit at the bedside of her husband, holding hands with each other and with him, and telling stories about their life together as he passes on.

Yes, there are still doctors out there like me. But there are not enough.

Alabama is privileged to have UAB, one of the world's leading medical centers. The *US News and World Report* lists UAB year after year in their "Best Hospitals" and "Best Medical Schools" issues. But it is not enough.

In Alabama, 62 of our 67 counties are listed as "Health Professional Shortage Areas" (PCHPSA). 28 of those counties are designated as "whole county PCHPSAs." That means that the people living in those counties have no nearby doctor to take care of their pregnancy, their children, their parents, or themselves. If all of the family doctors left Alabama (and many doctors in these underserved areas are older and close to retirement), that number would jump from 28 to 44 counties out of 67 that would not have enough doctors. Some people can afford to travel 20, 50, or 100 miles to get medical care, but many cannot. All of these counties need more doctors, and there are not enough doctors like me.

UAB's media rankings are not enough because Alabama continues to rank near the bottom in deaths from preventable causes and infant mortality. The people in underserved areas need a nearby doctor who can provide the initial, early, and rapid care that could make the difference between life, disability, and death.

They need someone in their area who can take care of basic health needs before they are harmed or killed by medical problems. Studies show that the farther people have to travel for medical care, the worse they do. More mothers and babies become sick and die during pregnancy, more children die of asthma, poisonings, or injuries, more adults die of strokes, heart attacks, or cancer. They need someone like me.

Unfortunately UAB is not producing people like me. Our other medical school at the University of South Alabama (USA) is doing only slightly better. Even if UAB's graduating medical students select training in other primary care fields (Internal Medicine, Pediatrics, or Obstetrics & Gynecology), most will go on to fellowship training in a specialized field, such as cardiology or neonatology. In general, these sub specialists don't go to underserved counties and provide basic medical care. They won't be there to take care of these patients. They won't be like me.

There are lots of reasons for this, but certainly one reason is that our medical students are spending most of their training seeing and working with sub specialists. They only spend 1-2 months with family doctors out of 48 months of school. Therefore students don't get a sense of what we primary care doctors can do. They don't think anyone can do what we do on a daily basis. And teaching is a lot like parenting-you secretly want your students to grow up to be just like you. If medical students' teachers are sub specialists, they are going to be encouraged to become sub specialists, too. At UAB, they are becoming sub specialists, not family physicians.

I do what I can to change this. I have worked in a rural area and routinely hosted medical students in my practice so they could see what I did. Now I teach at UAB's Regional Medical Campus in Huntsville, passing on my skills, knowledge, and love of my calling to medical students and residents. I encourage them to go back to these underserved areas to provide good quality basic health care (and over 70% of those leaving training here go to towns of less than 20,000 people). But it is not enough.

UAB cannot correct many of the issues discouraging family doctors, such as low payments from insurance companies or the



Dr. Behringer (below with her class) receives OB/GYN award from Dr. Dedmon(I). Behringer completed an OB fellowship and went to Bibb County to practice for several years before joining the UASOM faculty at Huntsville.

Always active in supporting medical education, Dr. Behringer, a RAHA Board member, presents a scholarship award to Rural Health Scholar/Rural Medical Scholar Joseph Walker of Marion County, who plans to be a rural family physician.

medical liability crisis. However, it can affect the way medical students are selected and trained. For example, UAB has a special program for students who want to get a PhD as well as an MD, who want to be researchers at major medical centers – and that program is highly competitive. These are usually the top students from outside Alabama, and their tuition, books & fees, and living expenses are paid for them.

In contrast, there is a small program in Tuscaloosa that looks for people (as early as high school) willing to go into primary care and practice in a rural area. Each year it has to lobby the legislature to get a meager amount of funding (not through UAB) just to find and recruit these students – not to provide student financial support. Each year the physicians who run that program hold their breath, hoping some hero in the Legislature will fight to continue their funding. We may or may not need more researchers, but we know we need more family physicians. UAB could secure and expand the funding for primary care and rural training in the same way it has shown a commitment to the MD/PhD program.

It also makes much more sense to have the majority of medical students' patient care training take place outside the academic medical centers and in physicians' offices. Most of a physician's work these days is done in the office, not in the hospital. Why should 90% of medical training take place where doctors will be spending only 10% of their practice time? Many studies show that medical students who do more training in a community (instead of a university) are more likely to choose to practice in rural and other medically underserved areas.

All of these changes require a commitment to the health of the people of Alabama – one that needs to start at the leadership of the medical schools. If UAB decides to focus more attention on Alabama's health problems, it may slip a bit in the US News and World Report rankings. But if more UAB and USA medical students go into family medicine, stay in the state, and go to underserved areas, maybe Alabama won't score so poorly on basic health issues, such as infant mortality, asthma, heart disease, diabetes, and cancer. Perhaps, at least in health issues, Alabama can move up the state rankings lists and provide the badly needed basic care that its citizens deserve.

I am proud to be a family doctor, but I am only one.

And one is not enough.

-Melissa Behringer, MD



Seated: Drs. Penny Mediate, Craig Buettner, Behringer, Chris McGhee. Standing: Drs. William St. Martin, Terry Kurtts, Florencia Patterson, Randall Weaver, and Tim Lovely.

RAHA and Rural Alabama AHEC Host Legislative Discussion on Rural Health Needs

The Rural Alabama Area Health Education Center (RAAHEC) and its parent organization, the Rural Alabama Health Alliance (RAHA), held a joint meeting at DCH on February 20, 2003 to address the need for better healthcare in rural Alabama. **Curtis Travis**, RAAHEC chairman, and **Willie Dunn**, RAHA President, hosted the meeting. Neither is a healthcare professional, but both Travis, who is an education advocate, and Dunn, who is a bank president, emphasized the importance of healthcare services to rural residents and to the local economy.



Artur Davis

“There are people in rural communities who have to decide whether to buy their heart medicine or pay to heat their home, and there is something terribly wrong with that,” said Congressman **Artur Davis**, who was keynote speaker at the meeting. Davis also stressed the importance of making rural healthcare equal to that of urban areas. “Where you are born should not affect how healthy you will be,” he added.

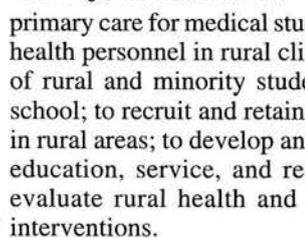
Addressing health professionals in the room, Congressman Davis said, “With exception of the clergy, your profession is the only one that believes people deserve service even if they can’t pay for it. And for that ethic to sustain itself, Medicaid has got to work.” He stressed that reimbursements for doctors in low-income areas should be comparable to those in high-income areas in order to make rural medicine an attractive profession, saying “A two-tier health care system of funding is wrong.”



Robert Beard, Sumter County, applauds along with other listeners.



Rural Medical Scholars hear needs.



Don Pugh, Will Denton of DPH

State representatives **Gerald Allen**, **Robert Bentley**, and **Allen Layson**, several community leaders and physicians from West Alabama, and Rural Medical Scholars at the meeting shared their perspectives. Representative **Robert Bentley** pointed out that 40 percent of Alabama’s residents live in rural areas and said that keeping Alabama students in Alabama’s medical schools was essential. He also said that medical schools should make sure that the rural students they admit understand the demand for healthcare in rural areas.

CCHS Dean **William Curry**, MD, reiterated the importance of reaching out to students in rural communities with programs like the Rural Health Scholars (RHSP) and Rural Medical Scholars programs (RMSP). He said there is a void in rural Alabama’s healthcare system that the rural scholar programs, RAHA, and RAAHEC can fill.

RAHA President **Willie Dunn** spoke with pride about his county’s efforts to insure all children. He also reviewed the mission of RAHA, quoting from a 1992 letter by Dr. **William Curry**, the first chairman of RAHA: to provide clinical medical education in

primary care for medical students, residents, and other health personnel in rural clinics; to increase numbers of rural and minority students applying to medical school; to recruit and retain health care professionals in rural areas; to develop an agrimedical program of education, service, and research; and to study and evaluate rural health and development needs and interventions.

Dr. **Judy Taylor** outlined RAAHEC’s goals: plan health programs, build coalitions, encourage students to pursue health careers, and facilitate collaborations with educational partners. “Alabama’s rural districts need 300 more physicians than they have today, and we can help change that,” she said. Dr. **John Wheat** enumerated three vital strategies in addressing Alabama’s rural health care needs: economic support for new physicians starting rural practices; community outreach to more students who can become rural doctors; and RMSP increasing its capacity to produce rural doctors.



Dr. Clyde Barganier, Director, state Office of Rural Health, and UA researcher Dr. Bronwen Lichtenstein share thoughts after the meeting.

Taylor Appointed Director of Rural Alabama AHEC

Judy Taylor, EdD, has been appointed Executive Director of Rural Alabama AHEC (Area Health Education Center), which has offices in the Department of Community & Rural Medicine at Nott Hall. RAAHEC works closely with the Rural Health Programs in the CRM department and with health-related training programs at CCHS and in other UA colleges to recruit and retain doctors and other health care providers in rural West Alabama counties. RAAHEC, organized and incorporated in 1998 by the Rural Alabama Health Alliance, is an independent agency governed by a Board of Directors from ten member counties. AEA area director **Curtis Travis** (who is married to CCHS graduate Dr. **Jimmie Clark**) is chairman of the Rural Alabama AHEC Board of Directors.



Dr. Taylor

Dr. Taylor most recently held the Pohl Endowed Chair for Health Education at Mississippi University for Women. She has previously served as Assistant Director of the Russell Student Health Center at UA, and was on the faculty at UAB for six years, holding a joint appointment in the School of Public Health, School of Education, and the Division of Preventive Medicine as Assistant Professor and Health Education Program Coordinator. She also taught in the Hertford County (North Carolina) school system and coached three sports. Her girls’ basketball team won three consecutive championships in the Coastal Athletic Conference. She has worked as an emergency medical tech and EKG specialist with the Code Blue Team and the Neonatal Transport Team for a hospital trauma center, was EMS instructor at East Carolina School of Medicine, and served as instructor/clinical coordinator for EMS Services for a N.C. community college.

Dr. Taylor double-majored in biology and community and school health, earning both her B.S. degree and a Master’s degree in health education at East Carolina University. She completed her doctorate in health studies with a minor in community and rural medicine at The University of Alabama. She is a member of the American Public Health Association, National Stroke Association, and the Southern Academy of Women in Health, Sport, and Physical Activity. She just completed her term as vice president of the Southern Academy during which she chaired the organization’s annual conference held in Biloxi. She was named Southern Academy’s 1996 Outstanding Young Scholar in the 13 member states. She is the author or coauthor of more than 25 articles in research publications and professional journals.

She is Vice President of the Delta Chapter of the Society of Public Health Educators. The Delta chapter includes Alabama, Mississippi, and Louisiana. At her invitation, this group will meet at The University of Alabama for the first time in April when it convenes for its quarterly meeting.

Willie Dunn, President of United Security Bank in Bibb County, serves on the Board of Directors of RAAHEC and is Chairman of the Board of the Rural Alabama Health Alliance. He is pleased to have Dr. Taylor to give direction to RAAHEC and RAHA activities that will improve health care in the rural counties we serve.

“Dr. Taylor is well-qualified for her leadership role,” said Dunn. “She has excellent credentials and the experience we need in initiating community activities.”

“Dr. Taylor brings valuable experience to this leadership position, especially her work in North Carolina,” said RAAHEC board member and former chair **Garry Magouirk**, MD, of Fayette. North Carolina is recognized as the national model for AHEC programs.”

Dr. Taylor, a North Carolina native, lives in Pickens County near Reform.



Dr. Taylor with state legislators Robert Bentley, MD, and Allen Layson



Curtis Travis, Dean Curry, Dr. John Brandon discuss next steps after the meeting adjourned. Davis has requested a follow-up forum, which RAHA and RAAHEC will host in early April.

**For more information:
contact Dr. Taylor at
(205) 348-1017**



The University of Alabama
College of Community Health Sciences

The College of Community Health Sciences is a clinical branch campus of the University of Alabama School of Medicine. Established in 1972, CCHS emphasizes family practice and the other primary care disciplines and provides a sound basic medical education for all medical students assigned to this campus. CCHS also trains family doctors through a three-year family practice residency program to meet the urgent need for family physicians. A primary focus of the CCHS mission is seeking solutions for rural health care problems in Alabama.

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