

SIU Family Residency Program Kicks Off At Alton Memorial Hospital

by Chris Rhodes, Reporter
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ALTON - Alton Memorial Hospital has welcomed the first residents of the SIU School of Medicine Alton Family Medicine Residency Program for their three-year training at AMH on July 1.

A ribbon-cutting event was held Friday morning at Alton Memorial.

"We are excited to be partnering with Alton Memorial Hospital and Southern Illinois Healthcare Foundation (SIHF) in this program," said Rebecca Hoffman, MD, MSPH, of the School of Medicine, who will be the director of the residency program.

"These organizations have a long and rich history of providing education, care, and service to the populations of the area. Our shared vision for education and patient and community care allows for many opportunities throughout our service areas."

After a rigorous recruitment and interview season last fall and winter, the program learned the names of their six residents on March 19.

The Class of 2024 includes:

Christina Govas, MD - Dr. Govas is a Greek-Canadian who completed her clinical rotations in Chicago after earning her medical degree from Saint James School of

Medicine. She is a civil engineer who pursued medicine after volunteering in a mobile medical clinic in South Africa. She is very passionate about patient advocacy and health care access, especially in underserved communities. She loves rollerblading, animals, architecture, and spending time outdoors. Christina is excited to bring her rollerblades and glide along the waterfront trails in Alton.

Nazanin Kheirkhahan, MD - Dr. Kheirkhahan was raised in Toronto and earned her medical degree from the Windsor School of Medicine. Her family and family traditions are important to her. Fun fact: She loves the TV show "Friends" and has watched the full series more than 20 times. She loves animals, especially her big dog, Coco, the outdoors, cooking and baking.

Jonathan Klarich, MD - Dr. Klarich, a St. Louis native, comes from a family of seven, including a twin, and earned his medical degree from the Ross University School of Medicine. He loves outdoor activities and taking animal selfies. Dr. Klarich has lived in many Caribbean countries and met his fiancée, Mariana, on the island of Curacao. His favorite dinner is pizza and beer, and Dr. Klarich says, "Coffee is life."

Torry Pledger, MD - Dr. Pledger was born in Europe, where he lived for a number of years during his youth, before returning to the United States with his family. He completed his Bachelor's degree in Kinesiology at the University of Maryland and received a Master's degree in Exercise Physiology from Life University. Prior to attending medical school at Saint James School of Medicine, Dr. Pledger was an Exercise Physiologist with a focus on cardiac rehab. He has interests spanning a wide range of topics, including sports medicine and urgent care. In his free time, some activities he enjoys are fishing, playing sports, and kayaking. Dr. Pledger was a walk-on to the University of Maryland football team and was part of a Division I National Championship rugby team at Life University.

Andrea Ramos Richards, MD, MPH - Dr. Richards was born in Lima, Peru, and lived there until she was 7. She earned her medical degree at the Tulane University School of Medicine. She's been in the St. Louis area for most of her life and lives there with her husband, three children (Daniel, Christina, and Sofia), and two cats (Ralph and Oreó). Dr. Richards is an exercise enthusiast and has completed two marathons and multiple half marathons. She loves to bake, play piano, and sing. She was in an a capella group and a rock band during medical school. As a member of the Peruvian American Medical Society, Dr. Richards has gone to Peru for medical mission trips to underserved areas of her home country. Dr. Richards says, "I am beyond excited to start this new chapter of my life at SIUE - Alton and cannot wait to get to know everyone."

Tyler Wright, MD - Dr. Wright was raised in Northern California, majored in Biology /Pre-Med at California State Monterey Bay, and went to the University of Medicine and

Health Sciences for medical school. He's worked in the California county jail system providing mental health and medical services to inmates. Dr. Wright enjoys being in water and nature, so it's no surprise that outdoor sports are his favorites. He loves to read, collect orchids, garden, stargaze, travel, and spending quality time with his family. Dr. Wright's father is an anesthesiologist, so he grew up seeing how compassionate medical care makes a difference in patients' lives. From a young age, Dr. Wright has participated in medical mission trips with his father and his colleagues. Dr. Wright says, "I'm passionate about Family Medicine and I look forward to working and living in Alton. I'm excited to jump in with both feet and be of service through quality medical care and volunteering/community service opportunities."









