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Phoebe Welcomes New Physician Residents

Albany, Ga. – Phoebe rolled out the red carpet for the newest members of the Phoebe Family Medicine Residency (PFMR) at an annual ceremony Wednesday morning. Phoebe and community leaders welcomed the PFMR Class of 2027 to Albany. The eight recent medical school graduates will spend the next three years training under a dedicated team of faculty members, complete various specialty rotations and care for patients in Phoebe hospitals and at Phoebe Primary Care at Northwest.

“This ceremony is an important annual event at Phoebe as we stress to our new residents how important they are to the Phoebe Family and our community. We also want people in the Albany area to appreciate the importance of this program to our healthcare workforce development strategy, and we want everyone to help us make these residents feel welcome here and get connected to our community,” said Scott Steiner, Phoebe Putney Health System President & CEO.

Since the program welcomed its first residents in 1993, the goal has been to keep a significant number of the graduates in southwest Georgia to begin their careers. “Currently, 20 Phoebe Family Medicine Residency graduates are employed by Phoebe. Seven others work at non-Phoebe clinics in Albany, and dozens of other graduates have served patients in southwest Georgia and throughout the state. That’s a history of success that we intend to continue and build on,” Steiner said.

The members of the PFMR Class of 2027 are:

- Carolyn Abuajah, MD – Ross University School of Medicine
- Sujal Desai, MD – American University of Antigua School of Medicine
- Daniel Einhorn, MD – American University of the Caribbean School of Medicine
- Aseem Parasher, MD – Ross University School of Medicine
- Sapna Patel, MD – Ross University School of Medicine
- Taylor Porter, MD – Ross University School of Medicine
- Victor Vladeanu, MD – Ross University School of Medicine
- Nadea White, MD – Ross University School of Medicine

PFMR Program Director Clifford Dunn – a 2007 graduate of the program – introduced the residents, and another program graduate, Dr. Derek Heard, delivered the keynote address. He treats patients at Phoebe Primary Care of Albany and serves as both the Medical Director for Primary Care and Chief Medical Information Officer for Phoebe Physicians.

Dr. Heard said to the residents, “Thank you for choosing to come to my home to practice medicine because, for me, this is more than just a job. It’s personal. The people you will be serving here, these are my people. This is my family.”

Dr. Heard recalled the pride, excitement and nervousness he felt when he attended his welcome ceremony as a new resident 25 years ago, and he encouraged these residents to get involved in the community.

“Immerse yourself in this community. Put down roots and get involved. Let this area become a part of your ‘why,’” he said. “This is a community that will welcome you with open arms, and this is a community that needs you.”

Dr. Dunn and Dr. Heard presented the residents with their traditional white coats, symbolizing their transition from medical students to practicing physicians. The Albany Area Chamber of Commerce also gave the residents welcome wagons filled with goodies donated by businesses and organizations throughout the area. The new physicians said they appreciated that gesture and found the welcome ceremony meaningful.

On Saturday, the PFMR Class of 2024 will graduate, bringing the total number of graduates in the history of the program to 169. Three of the graduates will remain in southwest Georgia, including two who will work as primary care physicians for Phoebe. The graduates and their new work destinations are:

- Irenna Agazie, MD – VA Clinic, Tampa, FL
- Uchechi Aguwa, MD – Phoebe Primary Care at Meredyth, Albany
- Xavier Capall, MD – Tift Regional Medical Center, Tifton
- Jithin George, MD – Mercy Health, Philadelphia, PA
- Shivan Patel, MD – Phoebe Worth Family Medicine, Sylvester
- Michael Sonntag, DO – AdventHealth Lake Wales & HCA Florida Lake City Hospital, Lake City, FL
- Michelle Wilson, MD – Associated Family Physicians, Boca Raton, FL

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