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What's up, doc?

By SARA K. TAYLOR Staff writer Aug 31, 2012

A handful of Thomas Stone High School students returned to school with a little more medical knowledge than their peers. Members of the Young Researchers Community Project, a club that focuses on health and environmental issues, took part in health care-related internships this summer, shadowing local doctors and they who work in the field.

“This is a real-world introduction into the medical field,” said Dainty J. Jackson, a doctor of osteopathic medicine, who practices in Waldorf. Health care is a vast profession and one that is in need of people with varying skill sets. There is a misconception that health care providers are super intellectuals, said Shaheer Yousaf, an orthopedic surgeon based in Waldorf, who helped Stone teacher and club adviser Bonnetta Adeeb launch the young researchers program.

While providers must be knowledgeable and work hard, most are also in direct contact with the public and keep in mind they serve humanity. “The area of health is a big public service,” he said. The internships fit into the club’s health initiative to address health issues. By exposing students to health care jobs, program organizers hope to spark interest in the field.

Program objectives include introducing the teens to the disparities of health care in the country



Staff photos by SARA K. TAYLOR Thomas Stone High School junior Lacy Johnson, left, goes over office procedures with Dainty J. Jackson, a Waldorf doctor. Lacy interned with Jackson as part of the Young Researchers Community Project's intern program. Lacy and Jackson worked together in Jackson's Waldorf office over the summer.

when it comes to reaching out to minority populations, exposing students to various health care careers and giving them job-shadowing opportunities. The club focuses on minority health issues, and its mission is to increase the number of minority and underserved youth interested in health and medical careers, according to Adeeb.

With the support of Civista Medical Center, through which the students were briefed on the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act, which safeguards patients’ privacy and medical training, the program took off, Adeeb said. “Without their support, we wouldn’t have been able

to do this,” she added. “Health care is a very large and growing sector of the total economy. As such, it also offers a variety of good, well-paying jobs.

Many of these careers may not be well known to young, healthy, people who are less frequent consumers of health care services,” said Mark Dumais, Civista's chief medical officer in an email. “Thus, it is important to expose young people planning their futures to the wide variety of opportunities in healthcare to help others.” The teens were given opportunities to shadow surgeons, oncologists and a number of other medical professionals, Adeeb said. “We had more doctors [volunteering] than kids,” she continued. “We had a full range of opportunities for the kids,”.

Stone graduate Lantrese Young shadowed Yousaf earlier this year. “Doctors are really busy,” she said. She should know. Her mother, Alesia Lantrese Madden-Young, is a podiatrist in Waldorf. But spending a couple of months learning the ins and outs of Yousaf’s practice opened her eyes to just how much work goes into being a physician. “It is a lot of responsibility to juggle,” Young said. She said that to be in the medical field, workers should be loving, kind and compassionate and go into the field for “the right reasons.”

One of the main things Young learned from Yousaf was having a kind bedside manner. “A lot of doctors get you in and get you out,” Young said. “[Yousaf] is really genuinely caring. I know that’s how I want to be.” The internships also introduce the teens to the behind-the-scenes goings-on at doctor’s offices.

Lacy spent time working in the reception area of Jackson’s office, where she learned to file,

welcome patients to the office and helped out where she was needed. Lacy is more of an entertainer, she said. She is a dancer and a member of Stone’s band, but she jumped at the chance to be part of the intern program. “I wanted to learn about working with patients and what doctors do,” Lacy said.

Jackson believes in the intern program. It makes little sense for a person to go to college with no idea what they want to do in life, she said. In the vast medical field, a person can find employment and earn a decent wage. “You are paid for your worth,” Jackson said. By interning, students can determine what path they want their life to take, she added. “‘Wow, this is a lot of work’ or ‘Wow, this is exciting and interesting’,” said Jackson about potential reactions students in the program might discover. staylor@somdnews.com

To learn more about the Young Researchers Community Project, go to www.steamonward.org.