In a small room on the second floor of City Heights Family Health Center, six recent medical school graduates hover over their respective keyboards, carefully typing up patient notes. Though they come from different backgrounds, they share the same passion and determination for this next chapter in their professional lives: being part of Family Health Centers of San Diego’s (FHCSD) Family Medicine Residency Training Program.

It is estimated that the U.S. will need 45,000 primary care physicians by 2020 to meet the growing demand for health care services. Though the number of medical school graduates continues to increase, there are not enough residency positions available to ensure these recent graduates are fully trained and able to enter the health care workforce. Recognizing this nationwide issue, FHCSD took the initiative to create its own Teaching Health Center program, known as the Family Medicine Residency Training Program, which addresses the local need for securing a pipeline of professionally trained and culturally competent medical providers.

“Community-based ambulatory health care is the future of medicine and FHCSD is leading the way,” said Dr. Chris Gordon, Family Medicine Residency Training Program Director. “Our rigorous medical residency program provides high-quality education in a real world setting. Every day, our resident physicians help improve the health disparities of San Diego’s most vulnerable patients.”

These six recent medical school graduates join our current second-year residents in the three-year residency program, which includes rotations at all FHCSD clinics across San Diego County as well as Scripps Mercy Hospital and Rady Children’s Hospital in order to gain inpatient medicine and surgical experience.

Please join us in welcoming the 2015 class of residents!

• Brandon Brown, M.D. (University of Texas)
• Stephanie Constantino, M.D. (University of Washington)
• Jie Liu, M.D. (UC San Diego)
• Achiel Nateras Arreola, M.D. (Universidad Autonoma de Baja California)
• Harris Niazi, M.D. (Howard University)
• Amber Ortega, M.D. (University of New Mexico)

As the federal government continues to limit its funding for these invaluable medical training programs, we must turn to generous donors to help bridge the gap. Please consider donating to our Family Medicine Residency Training Program. We have set a goal of raising $150,000 to fund the equivalent of one year of training for one resident. Inside, you will find a pledge card with additional information on how to make your tax-deductible donation.

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New FHCSD Medical Residents Add Dedication, Determination and Diversity

Even though it was established only last year, Family Health Centers of San Diego’s (FHCSD) Family Medicine Residency Training Program has received almost 1,000 applications for the six available slots. This overwhelmingly positive response is a testament to the reputation FHCSD has earned for providing high-quality health care to residents across San Diego County and a desire of young physicians to commit to more meaningful work, such as the care of underserved and uninsured individuals.

It has also allowed Family Medicine Residency Training Program faculty to select the most qualified medical school graduates from a competitive applicant pool to participate in the training program. For the first time in our country, most citizens now have comprehensive health care coverage. Millions of people are entering the health care system as brand-new patients, unfortunately with years of deferred maintenance. It is both gratifying, and shocking, to find so many new patients who have not seen a doctor in years. Family Health Centers of San Diego (FHCSD) has spent the last five years building capacity through new clinics and new programs. What we lack are the physicians to see all those new patients. The Affordable Care Act (ACA) was an industrious undertaking, which brought unprecedented opportunities to primary health care organizations, such as community health centers. However, the ACA did not make provisions for increasing the numbers of physicians. Capped residency training programs, coupled with an aging physician workforce have strained the care delivery system.

But the Teaching Health Center program promises relief to low-income communities hit hardest by physician shortages. 34.4% of Hispanics and 17.6% of African Americans are uninsured, compared to the 11.3% of uninsured in the white population. It would seem there is still a long way to go. Physicians must reflect the faces of diverse communities, and the Teaching Health Center residency programs across America are the best resource we have of training culturally, linguistically competent physicians who choose to practice in underserved communities.

Not only do we need Congress to re-allocate funding to support the national Teaching Health Center residency program, but stop for a moment and look at what New Mexico is doing.

The New Mexico legislature used a Section 1115 waiver in 2014 to help the state’s four family medicine residencies join together as the New Mexico Primary Care Training Consortium. The program provides increased funding for clinics that successfully apply for an expanded scope of service with the intent of creating or expanding an existing primary care residency program or establishing resident rotation sites. The first group of residents funded through the initiative will begin in fall 2016. Simply put: smart, innovative, forward-thinking.

Arthur Kaufman, M.D., Vice Chancellor for Community Health and distinguished Professor of Family Medicine at the University of New Mexico Health Sciences Center says, “Every state can do this.”

The time is now, California. We need our legislators to create smart, innovative, forward-thinking solutions to ensure our state has sufficient primary care physicians to care for our residents.

The impact each resident has on patients, and FHCSD, is invaluable. Collectively, the residents of FHCSD’s Family Medicine Residency Training Program have logged over 15,680 hours and assisted in the treatment of more than 1,688 patients. Federal funding for the residency program does not completely cover the high cost of training. Our organization must subsidize the graduate education costs. Please help us fund the equivalent of one year of training for one resident by contributing to this program. Big or small, every donation is tax-deductible. Learn more on the next page or contact Chris Larkin, Director of Development, at christopherl@fhcsd.org or (619) 515-2315.

Help us reach our goal of raising $150,000!

Please make check payable to Family Health Centers of San Diego and mail it to: FAMILY HEALTH CENTERS OF SAN DIEGO, 823 Gateway Center Way, San Diego CA 92102 (619) 515-2315 • www.fhcsd.org • Taxpayer ID 95-2833205

You can also make a secure donation online by visiting https://donation.fhcsd.org and selecting “Family Medicine Residency Training Program” from the drop-down menu.

All donations are tax-deductible as allowed by law.

Statistics courtesy of Cost Savings Associated with the Use of Community Health Centers and American Association of Teaching Health Centers.