

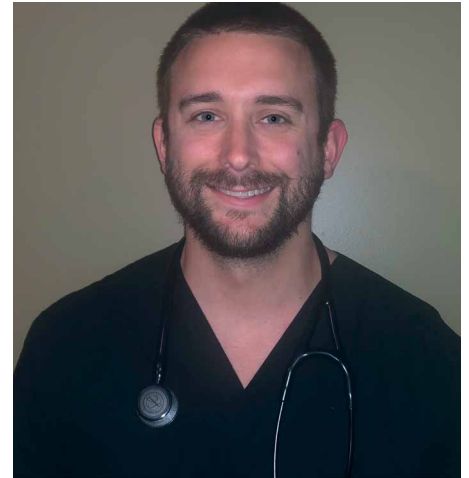
Educational Loan Repayment Provides Incentive for Physician Assistant to Return to Vermont

When **Ezra Bashaw, PA-C**, of St. Albans was eight years old, his father died of brain cancer and it changed his life. "I always knew, because of what my family went through with my dad, that I wanted to go into health care," he recalls. His family and friends formed the Jim Bashaw Cancer and Catastrophic Illness Fund to provide financial assistance to Franklin and Grand Isle County residents experiencing catastrophic illness from cancer or other causes. Fundraisers include an annual Bowlathon and the Run for Jim 5K race, as well as donations. To date, over \$550,000 has been raised in 17 years.

A self-confessed "math and science person," Ezra completed undergraduate studies in exercise science at the University of New Hampshire, where he decided in his sophomore year to become a physician assistant (PA). He graduated from the PA program at Northeastern University in Boston,

for which he completed a clinical rotation in primary care at the Community Health Centers of Burlington (CHCB). "Physician assistants can be very versatile, working in all aspects of medicine; they fill a void in health care," Ezra notes. "Forming relationships is very important in primary care where you're involved in all aspects of a patient's life," he continues.

An educational loan repayment award from the Vermont Educational Loan Repayment (ELR) Program, administered by AHEC and including employer matching funds, provided an incentive to return home to Vermont as a PA at the Northern Tier Center for Health (NOTCH). "My ELR award is a strong incentive to work in Vermont. I grew up here and knew about NOTCH's work with the underserved, which is rewarding work. But it's huge to receive Educational Loan Repayment, since education is more and more



Ezra Bashaw, PA-C

expensive and looking at my educational debt can be daunting. ELR is a good model to recruit and retain primary care providers throughout the state," he concludes. ■

FY18 Vermont Educational Loan Repayment

The University of Vermont and AHEC Program administered the Vermont Educational Loan Repayment Programs for physicians, advanced practice registered nurses, physician assistants, dentists, registered nurses, and licensed practical nurses. The majority of Educational Loan Repayment funds are provided by federal and state grant funds, and health care employers. All recipients enter into a contractual service obligation and are required to serve Medicaid patients.

In the FY18 cycle there were 141 new applications (16 recruitment, 119 retention, and 6 job seekers) and 67 new awards. Additionally, there were 37 awards as part of a Year 2 auto renewal for two-year service contracts.

Awards totaled \$1,867,657 of pooled

federal, state, employer/community, and private funds.

The average (mean) educational debt of applicants was \$136,464 for primary care practitioners; \$275,429 for dentists; and \$33,517 for nurses. Educational debt ranged from \$5,624 to \$816,522 and the total debt of all applicants combined was \$13,403,258.

"Increasing educational costs and the corresponding increasing educational debt are very concerning. In the context of the current educational financing system, the need for educational loan repayment assistance becomes more evident every year, and plays an important role in recruiting and retaining the health care professionals Vermont needs most," notes Elizabeth Cote, Director of the UVM Office of Primary Care and AHEC Program. ■

We are so lucky to have AHEC as a resource that provides such a breadth of services! Personally I have seen great rewards from AHEC's efforts. Their reach to potential candidates is extensive, and year after year results in a hire at CVMC. The programs run for youth, such as MedQuest are well put together and productive. It's a real gift to see the spark in a student who is finding their path!

Thank you AHEC staff!

— Sarah Child, FASPR, Physician Services Manager, Central Vermont Medical Center, University of Vermont Health Network

Mallory Stultz, PEP Enthusiast

Mallory Stultz hopes to attend the University of Vermont (UVM) Larner College of Medicine where her great-grandfather, **Walter Stultz, PhD**, was a Professor of Anatomy in Dewey Hall.

She didn't always know she wanted to be a physician. Mallory, who grew up in Essex, has many interests, such as gymnastics, stem cells, math, genetics, singing, guitar, research, and spending time with her younger brother.

Following a gymnastics fall in high school that gave her a concussion, she became interested in neurology. As a UVM freshman, she job-shadowed **Kalev Freeman, MD**, in the Emergency Department and also talked with Dr. Freeman about an interest in Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) research. During this job-shadow experience, Mallory realized she wanted to become a physician because it combines everything she likes: people, problem-solving, science, and helping others. "Another aspect of becoming a physician that I'm excited about is the eventual possibility that I'll be able to teach," remarks Mallory.

Now a UVM Honors College senior neuroscience major with a minor in math, Mallory credits the Premedical Enhancement Program (PEP) with focusing her attention on becoming a physician. "The fact that it gave me the opportunity to shadow physicians in different specialties gave me a look ahead, to be sure I'm on the path that I want to be on," she comments. Currently in her third and final year of PEP, she has job shadowed in neurology, surgery, and family medicine.

Her focus on medicine has resulted in a fall 2018 interview for admission to the UVM Larner College of Medicine. Reflecting on her PEP experience, Mallory enthuses about the AHEC staff who guided her through the program and notes, "All the doctors are such great teachers, and I was able to get another chance to look ahead by sitting in on classes with my medical student PEP mentor. I've loved getting to be a part of a community of students with similar goals." Eager to begin medical school, she declares no interest in taking a gap year after she graduates from UVM in May 2019: "I'm way too excited to get started," she explains, adding "The best thing that's happened to me is getting into PEP." ■



Mallory Stultz



Jennifer Savage, Physician Placement Professional, discusses career opportunities with a UVM medical student at the Larner College of Medicine.

Physician Placement Program

The UVM OPC and AHEC Physician Placement Program recruits physicians to workforce shortage areas of Vermont, with an emphasis on rural and disadvantaged populations. The program works with UVM Larner College of Medicine graduates and UVM Medical Center residents and fellows to match them to physician vacancies in Vermont.

During FY18, AHEC placed 19 physicians, of which 10 were in primary care, and nine in specialty care. Six physicians were placed in rural counties/underserved areas, one placement was made to a Federally Qualified Health Center (FQHC) practice, and two at Critical Access Hospitals (CAH). One of the specialty care placements was in psychiatry. Currently there are 99 physician vacancies in Vermont listed with the UVM AHEC Program: 46 in primary care and 53 in specialty care. ■

About PEP

The Premedical Enhancement Program (PEP) is a formalized three-year mentoring program co-sponsored by the Larner College of Medicine Office of Primary Care and the UVM Honors College. The intent of the program is to provide academically qualified students with the opportunity to experience the complex realities of patient care and practice management while also witnessing the tremendous responsibility entrusted to physicians. Ideally, students will also begin to appreciate the important role physicians have in contributing to and advocating for the care of underserved Vermonters. Participants gain insight into the medical school process by being matched with a Larner medical student throughout their time in the program.

To learn more about PEP, visit www.uvm.edu/~career/pre_health/?Page=pep.html

New School Nurse Training

Fifty new school nurses participated in the fourth annual AHEC-sponsored New School Nurse Training (NSNT) that took place in August 2018 at the University of Vermont. The training was planned in collaboration with the Vermont Department of Health and school nurses.

During the training, new school nurses engaged with veteran school nurses to:

- Identify public health competencies of the school nursing role;
- Learn about licensure, delegation, and creation of health care plans;
- Acquire current information on health issues confronting school nurses;
- Leave with contacts of experienced school nurses and important organizations.

Topics included: The Role of EMS, Immunizations, Delegation, Oral Health, Addressing Anxiety in School, Opioids, Lice, and more.

Post-conference evaluations were positive and attendees offered comments such as:

- I found the program to be informative and helpful in so many ways. It was great to connect with nursing colleagues. It was a day full of resources!
- I appreciated everyone taking the time to come out today to share with us their knowledge in their specialty/expertise. Overwhelmed a little with the information but comforted to know that if I have a question the resources are there.
- Amazing conference! So much appreciation! Thank you! ■



Lillian Rogers, Director of Public Health Nursing in 1902 in New York City (NYC), left, hired Lina Rogers, right, in 1902 who became the first school nurse in the U.S. to address population-based health issues in children so they could return to school to learn. The school nurse pilot program was so successful, improving school attendance by 90%, that the NYC Public Health Department hired more school nurses.

In real life, Sophia Hall, left, President of the Vermont State School Nurses Association, and Sharonlee Trefry, right, State School Nurse Consultant at the Vermont Department of Health, appeared as these characters to teach the new school nurses about the history of school nursing in the U.S.

VT AHEC Health Care Workforce Recruitment & Networking Day

In September 2018, the 25th annual fall Health Care Workforce Networking and Recruitment Day sponsored by Vermont AHEC attracted nearly 200 medical, nursing, and other health professions students as well as medical residents who visited with representatives from 25 Vermont and northern New York hospitals and health care organizations. Post-event evaluations indicated attendees and exhibitors appreciated the connections made during the day.

Comments included:

- "Everyone was so friendly and open to questions."
- "This event has produced the largest networking opportunity to our team. Our team was able to reach our target market on a face-to-face platform in an open and relaxed forum."
- "Connected with a social work student and discussed internship options."
- "Introduced through AHEC to an MD interested in delivering care in nursing homes. Wonderful!"
- "Spoke with an ortho doc who may fill a potential need in our area."



The 2019 event will take place on Wednesday, September 25, 2019 at the UVM Larner College of Medicine.

- "We always meet well-prepared candidates in all disciplines."
- "Great connections with recruiters, and the AHEC loan repayment process and its requirements." ■

Vermont Area Health Education Centers (AHEC)

Vermont AHEC is a network of academic and community partners working together to improve the distribution, diversity, supply, and education of the health workforce in Vermont. Established in 1996, Vermont AHEC has a statewide infrastructure with a program office at the University of Vermont, Larner College of Medicine, and two regional centers. Vermont AHEC focuses on achieving a well-trained workforce so that all Vermonters have access to quality care, especially those who live in Vermont's most rural and underserved areas.



During FY18, the UVM Office of Primary Care and the Vermont AHEC Network

Provided 1,244 Vermont youth with health careers experiences,

Supported 607 health professions students' clinical rotations,

Delivered continuing education to 2,579 health professionals, and

Placed 19 physicians in Vermont communities.



AHEC News From Around the State

For news from the Vermont Area Health Education Centers Network, check out their community-based web sites:

- **Northern Vermont AHEC:**
www.nvtahec.org
St. Johnsbury
(802) 748-2506
- **Southern Vermont AHEC:**
www.svtahec.org
Springfield
(802) 885-2126
- **UVM AHEC Program:**
www.vtahec.org
Burlington
(802) 656-2179

The University of Vermont Office of Primary Care and Area Health Education Centers Program gratefully acknowledges its core funders:

Thank you!

- Brattleboro Memorial Hospital
- Central Vermont Medical Center
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- Federal Health Resources & Services Administration
- Grace Cottage Hospital
- Gifford Medical Center
- Mount Ascutney Hospital and Health Care
- North Country Hospital
- Northeastern Vermont Regional Hospital
- Northwestern Medical Center
- Porter Medical Center
- Rutland Regional Medical Center

- Southwestern Vermont Medical Center
- State of Vermont
- University of Vermont Larner College of Medicine
- University of Vermont Medical Center



Thank you to AHEC Supporters and Collaborators:

The Vermont AHEC Network offers sincere thanks to the hospitals, health care practices, community-based organizations, state agencies, colleges and universities, and many professionals throughout Vermont for their generous contributions of time and resources in support of AHEC's health workforce development programs (e.g., MedTrek, MedQuest, job-shadowing

experiences, PEP, clinical preceptors, student projects, and community-based housing hosts). These caring and committed organizations and individuals each contribute as we work together to inspire, motivate, teach, cultivate, and nurture the future generations of health care professionals for Vermont. ■