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**SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENTS EXPLORE FAMILY MEDICINE
AT EXCELA HEALTH**

LATROBE, PA, July 23, 2012 ...Four medical students are gaining experience in family medicine at Excelsa Health Latrobe Hospital this summer as recipients of the Andrew D. Bagby Family Medicine Scholarship. **Kaitlin McGrogan**, Philadelphia College of Osteopathic Medicine; **Katelyn Shaffer** and **Douglas Opie**, Lake Erie College of Osteopathic Medicine; and **Margaret Florendo**, Seton Hill University Post-Baccalaureate-Pre-Med, are participating in a month-long program, training alongside doctors completing Excelsa Health's Family Medicine Residency Program.

The Bagby Scholarship was established by family and friends in memory of first-year resident Dr. Andrew Bagby, who died tragically in November 2001. The scholarship fund has increased substantially in the 10 years the scholarship has been awarded. It is supported by the Bagby family, as well as private donors, to give opportunities to aspiring family medicine physicians. The scholarship is administered by the Latrobe Area Hospital Charitable Foundation.

Kaitlin McGrogan spent most of her adolescent years in Latrobe preparing to become an anesthesiologist, but when she chose to attend an osteopathic school and learned more about primary care, her mind started to change. She joined different clubs and explored specialties outside of anesthesia. She heard many speakers tell stories of their work and relationships with patients; "As I listened to the pediatric, family practice and internal medicine residents talk about their day-to-day activities, I realized I wanted what they had - that constant

familiarity with their patients, knowing that they aren't just taking care of one person, but in some cases an entire family.”

She decided to reconsider her path and weighed her options. “Despite every positive aspect anesthesia brings to the table, I still find myself wanting more. I want to be a constant figure in my patients’ lives. I want to see their children and grandchildren grow up.”

In the end, McGrogan chose to pursue family medicine. As the first in her immediate family to become a doctor, she aspires to “Be a significant part of every stage in my patients’ lives.” The 23-year-old McGrogan graduated from Greater Latrobe Senior High School. During her senior year, she volunteered at Excelsa Latrobe Hospital and received a scholarship from the Latrobe Area Hospital Aid Society for logging more than 250 volunteer hours. She also participated in the Allied Health Internship Program at Eastern Westmoreland Career and Technology Center during that year.

McGrogan completed her undergraduate studies at Allegheny College. She is the newly elected National Liaison for PCOM’s Robert Berger, DO Pediatrics Society. She learned of the Bagby scholarship at a “hospital day” hosted by PCOM where students are able to learn more about hospitals interested in PCOM students. McGrogan visited the Latrobe Hospital booth where the residents told her of the scholarship and handed her an application. “I can’t imagine how horrible of an experience that had to be for the Bagbys, but it says so much about them that they were able to take such a terrible experience and turn it into something so beneficial for second-year medical students like me.”

When she was young, doctors diagnosed 23-year-old Katelyn Shaffer with three difficult medical conditions. She expected clear answers and cures; instead the doctors gave her confusing information and complicated treatments. “I laugh at this mindset now, but I remember thinking to myself, ‘this is it? This is all they can do?’” Several years later, while working at a free health clinic, Shaffer experienced the same “I can’t believe this is all that can be done” phenomenon

as she was forced to turn away patients when the clinic could not treat anymore people. This experience, combined with the challenges of her own diagnoses, led her to pursue a career in medicine.

Shaffer, a first-year LECOM student, decided to practice osteopathic medicine after shadowing a physician who “kept a photograph of every patient in the back of the chart, so she could immediately recall the individual before stepping into the room.” Shaffer recognized attending to patients’ whole bodies and all aspects of their lives allowed for more insightful treatments with better physician-patient relationships. After witnessing a family practitioner shortage in her hometown of Somerset, and the shortage of physicians while working at the clinic, she aspires to contribute to these areas and serve communities affected by these issues.

The Somerset Area High School graduate received her undergraduate degree from the University of Pittsburgh. Shaffer and her sister, a registered nurse, are part of the first generation in her family to attend college. Shaffer learned of the Bagby scholarship through an e-mail from LECOM regarding the program. “His story has such a sad ending; I am glad the Bagby scholarship is helping to write a happier ending and continue his legacy.”

Fellow LECOM student Douglas Opie began a career singing and performing before deciding to attend medical school. At the conclusion of his studies, he will be the first fully licensed doctor in his family, but not the first health care provider. Opie’s father and grandfather are both chiropractors along with “an aunt, a couple of uncles, and some cousins.” Opie spent many hours working in the office as an assistant for his father and grandfather. “I decided to become a doctor because I wanted to be a fully licensed physician who can help people with a much broader class of health issues and be more integrated in their care.”

Opie grew up in Mesa, Ariz., where he graduated from Mountain View High School. After high school, he spent two years in Spain as a missionary. Returning to the United States, Opie graduated from the University of Arizona

with an undergraduate degree in vocal performance. He worked as a semi-professional singer for four years before deciding to pursue a Master's in Business Administration at Grand Canyon University. During this time, he served as an assistant in his father and grandfather's office, and held many customer service and sales jobs. "The satisfaction that I received as I educated patients on proper care and nutrition is what prompted me to leave my previous career and pursue being a family doctor." The 31-year-old is the father of four children..

Opie learned of the Bagby scholarship through LECOM, and is "most excited about the training opportunities provided by the program. The four-week program exposing me to all aspects of family medicine genuinely fills me with excitement, and I cannot think of a better use of my summer."

Margaret Florendo also went down a different career path before choosing to pursue medicine. The 25-year-old studied "Media Arts: Television Production" at Robert Morris University and worked in the field after she graduated. Through her studies she aspired to "expand on my creative intellect" and developed "an ability to connect with different personalities." Florendo believes "the skills learned within my diverse fields of study will complement each other when approaching patients to care for them and not just treat their symptoms." She recently completed the Seton Hill Post-Baccalaureate Program receiving a certificate in Pre-Med.

Florendo is a graduate of Greater Latrobe Senior High School. Growing up in Latrobe, she experienced "an environment where service is a way of life and where giving back to the community was a key factor in my upbringing." She is the youngest daughter of Latrobe pediatrician **Christine C. Florendo, MD**. "Having a doctor in the family helped me to realize not only what it takes in hard work and education, but also the power you obtain to really impact people and empower them to take care of their own health and well being."

Like McGrogan, she also participated in the Allied Health Internship Program out of the Eastern Westmoreland Career and Technology Center. "The

internship program allowed us to shadow different departments of the hospitals as well as other practices.”

Florendo learned of the Bagby scholarship from **Mike Semelka, DO**, residency program director, after approaching him “for career and personal advice about how to approach my transition into the educational and professional field of medicine from my not-so-scientific background in art.” She looks forward to the “deeper, hands-on approach to the field of medicine” the scholarship will provide her, and hopes that the “experience gained will be the foundation of how I care for and treat families and patients in the future.”