Medical students volunteer, mix haircuts with health care

During her second week as a medical student, Whitney McNeil was performing a blood-sugar check when she got a shock. Instead of providing a numeric value, the glucose meter simply read “high.” She alerted her supervisor, who told the patient to go straight to the emergency room. “I was worried that he might not make it,” McNeil says. The procedure was unusual for another reason—it didn’t take place in a medical facility. McNeil’s patient was in a Birmingham barbershop.

This screening and others like it are part of a volunteer effort organized by UAB School of Medicine chapter of the Student National Medical Association (SNMA), an organization founded in 1964 to advocate for minorities in medicine. The chapter conducts community-based health screenings for hypertension and diabetes, and its members counsel the public about preventing and treating these common, sometimes avoidable conditions.

Hair treatment
SNMA members often seek locations like barbershops and beauty salons—places where people “just relax and hang out,” says McNeil, the SNMA chapter president. There the doctors-in-training also find a ready audience of mainly African-American patrons, owners and employees. And it provides a less intimidating experience for patients, who often feel more at ease with a doctor of their own race, says Anjanetta Foster, M.D., assistant dean for diversity and multicultural affairs, who also volunteers.

“At the barbershop screenings, most people have health insurance, “but they often have health concerns they just don’t want to think about,” McNeil says. “We help open their eyes and make them realize they need to see a doctor.”

The students point out opportunities for free and low-cost health care, such as the M-Power Clinic, which involves volunteers from the SOM’s Equal Access Health Equity in Selma and Montgomery.

Student outreach brings care to individuals who rarely, if ever, receive it. This past year, the group conducted screenings for the Labor Day weekend March for Health Equity in Selma and Montgomery. “We found people who hadn’t been to a doctor in 30 years. It’s not that they don’t want to; there’s just no access,” McNeil says.

Barbershops provide a relaxed atmosphere for health screenings. Assistant Dean Anjanetta Foster (middle) and medical student Whitney McNeil (right) attend to a patient in downtown Birmingham.

U.S. Open winner boosts UAB Golf program visibility

This past spring, Graeme McDowell was regarded by UAB fans as the biggest name in the history of the Blazers Golf program. Today, the sweet-swinging star from Northern Ireland is one of the biggest names in the sport.

On Father’s Day weekend, McDowell held off the likes of Phil Mickelson, Tiger Woods and Ernie Els to win the U.S. Open, one of golf’s four major championships, at Pebble Beach Golf Links, which is widely regarded as one of the most beautiful—and difficult—courses in the world.

Golf Coach Alan Kaufman, center, has watched former Blazers’ golfer Graeme McDowell rise to No. 11 in the Official World Golf Rankings after his U.S. Open championship and a 23rd-place finish at the 2010 British Open. McDowell is UAB’s first major champion in professional golf.

HIV research outpost uncovers shortcomings in treatment for African babies

Only about half of HIV-exposed infants in some African countries receive a minimal dose of the prevention drug nevirapine, say UAB researchers who also treat patients in Zambia.

The drug is prescribed to prevent mother-to-child transmission of human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), but a report in the July 21 issue of the Journal of the American Medical Association concludes that only 51 percent of HIV-exposed infants received the minimal regimen to protect them. The study also said no sign of the drug was evident in the umbilical cord samples from most of the women who had been prescribed nevirapine while pregnant.

“This study shows us there are programmatic failures and common problems that occur along the path to mother-to-child transmission prevention,” including testing inadequacies and the failure of patients to take the medications, says Elizabeth Stringer, M.D., UAB associate professor of obstetrics and gynecology and the lead author of the study. Stringer treats patients and conducts research full-time at the UAB-affiliated Center for Infectious Disease Research in Zambia with her husband Jeffrey Stringer, M.D., who directs the center. Both are members of UAB’s Center for AIDS Research.

Nevirapine is the backbone of anti-HIV therapy in the developing world, but its usefulness is limited by how many infected and at-risk persons receive the drug, researchers say. The UAB study underscores the need to expand programs that strive for global pediatric AIDS control.

Golf Coach Alan Kaufman, center, has watched former Blazers’ golfer Graeme McDowell rise to No. 11 in the Official World Golf Rankings after his U.S. Open championship and a 23rd-place finish at the 2010 British Open. McDowell is UAB’s first major champion in professional golf. See GOLF p4

HIV testing inadequacies and patients not taking their medications are some of the programmatic failures and common problems contributing to mother-to-child transmission of HIV in some African countries, according to UAB researchers. A recent UAB study underscores the need to expand programs that strive for global pediatric AIDS control. See HIV p3
Rankings confirm UAB provides the “best care anywhere”

UAB’s leading-edge medical care continues to garner national and international recognition. Recent U.S. News & World Report rankings are but the latest in a litany of distinctions reflecting UAB’s local and global impact on health care, as President Carol Garrison discusses in her latest post at www.uab.edu/president.

Call for submissions: Conner Prize in the History of Ideas

The Conner Prize is awarded for an essay in the history of ideas written by a member of the UAB faculty. The term “history of ideas” is to be interpreted liberally, as including a broad range of interdisciplinary concerns. The prize carries an award of $250. Details are online.

Contact Associate Provost Claire Pell, Ph.D., at 934-0513 or e-mail pecl@uab.edu or laptro@uab.edu for more information.

“Men at War, Women at Leisure” in gallery

The UAB Visual Arts Gallery is showing “Men at War, Women at Leisure,” a selection of works on paper from the university’s collection, through July 31. The gallery is located at 900 13th St. South. Admission is free. Hours are 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday. Call 934-0815 for more information.

Free blood-pressure screenings July 28

Hypertension, or high blood pressure, is one of the leading risk factors for stroke, and it can have no symptoms and go undiagnosed. The UAB Wellness Committee will be providing free screenings and take-home literature about signs and symptoms of stroke and hypertension from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. Wednesday, July 28 at Highlands near the cafeteria entrance. More information is online at www.uab.edu/wellness.

NEH chair to speak at BACHE event July 29

Jim Leach, chair of the National Endowment for the Humanities, will speak and lead a discussion on the critical need for greater civility in the nation’s political life at 6:30 p.m. Thursday, July 29 in Samford University Brock Recital Hall. Leach served 30 years in the United States Congress as a Republican representative from Iowa before his appointment to this independent federal agency that provides grant support for learning in history, literature, ethics and other areas of the humanities. There is no charge for this BACHE event. Reservations are required, as seating is limited. RSVP online at http://tinyurl.com/35fyy5m.

Read to chair AAO national committee

Russell W. Read, M.D., Ph.D., associate professor of ophthalmology and pathology, has been selected to chair the committee that oversees the American Academy of Ophthalmology’s Basic and Clinical Science Course on Intraocular Inflammation and Uveitis. Read is an internationally recognized leader in the treatment of U.S. disease thought to be responsible for 10 to 15 percent of all blindness in the United States.

Professional society names School of Engineering institution of excellence

The Society for Design and Process Science (SDPS) has granted the School of Engineering its Institutional Award of Excellence. Only four universities nationwide were recognized for institutional excellence by SDPS at its 15th anniversary celebration and international conference held in June. The school was recognized for its commitment to integrating arts and sciences, engineering and business principles to change academic understanding in the classroom and research lab.

CFAR seeking grant applicants for 2010

The UAB Center for AIDS Research (CFAR) invites all UAB, SRI and Hudson Alpha faculty to apply to the CFAR Developmental Grant Program. The program objective is to stimulate and nurture new and innovative HIV/AIDS-related research programs.

All applications to support new, currently unfunded research initiatives are welcome. Eligibility is open to all junior and senior investigators that wish to apply their systems to the study of any/all areas of HIV/AIDS research. The budgets available for these projects will be up to $40,000 each for one year only.

The deadline for submissions is Friday, July 30 at 5 p.m. Visit www.uab.edu/cfar for more information and direct questions to Casey Monroe at caseym@uab.edu or 934-5715.

Highlands/Spain shuttle times change

The UAB Highlands/Spain-Wallace shuttle is changing its schedule effective Monday, Aug. 2. The shuttle will begin operating at 7:30 a.m. at UAB Highlands. Pick-up times will alternate in 20-minute intervals with Spain-Wallace. The fixed-route shuttle operates 7:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday. Pick-up is in the front of the main building at Highlands and at the 19th Street South ramp for Spain-Wallace. A copy of the new schedule is online at www.uab.edu/parking.

Single-ticket sales for ASC begin soon

Single tickets will go on sale Monday, Aug. 9 for shows in UAB’s Alys Stephens Center new 2010-11 season. Patrons who purchase $50 of tickets Aug. 9 will receive a $10 Alys Stephens Center gift card to be used for future purchases.

UAB faculty and staff receive 10 percent off the regular price of single-ticket purchases and their season-ticket packages are now discounted 15 percent.

This season includes Pat Metheny, Rosanne Cash, Joan Rivers, Joshua Bell, Ira Glass, David Sedaris and the legendary Liza Minnelli. For a brochure or to purchase tickets, visit www.AlysStephens.org, call 975-2787 or go to the Alys Stephens Center Box.

Blues guitarist Jonny Lang coming to ASC

Grammy Award-winning guitarist Jonny Lang will perform at 8 p.m. Saturday, Aug. 28 in the Alys Stephens Center’s new, casual Summer Concerts Series. Come early for summer tunes from The Goodfells, drinks and barbecue from Jim ‘N’ Nick’s in the courtyard beginning at 6:30 p.m. Tickets are $57, $47, $37; student tickets are $20, and $10 student rush tickets will be available on the day of the show. Call 975-2787 or go to www.AlysStephens.org.

High-school seniors with disabilities toured UAB Hospital’s Dietary and Environmental Services departments on June 29 and July 22 as part of the 2010 session of Career Prep, an annual program sponsored by the Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services (ADRS). Career Prep includes two one-week training sessions with a focus on improving job-readiness skills and exploring various careers. Topics of discussion were participants’ work skills, including customer service, money management, interviewing techniques and resume preparation.

Distribution: The UAB Reporter is distributed free to UAB employees. Office manager imprt@uab.edu changes in the number of copies needed by calling 934-2408. Reprints permitted with prior approval.

Online: The UAB Reporter can be found online at www.uab.edu/ud COMMANDER 1530 Administration Building 701 20th Street South Birmingham, AL 35294-0113 PHONE 205/934-2040 FAX 205/934-7911 E-MAIL reporter@uab.edu WEB www.uab.edu/reporter
The UAB PD wants you to help S.W.E.E.P. up campus crime

Any one of us could be the victim of a crime at any time and in any place.

We also can be the best crime-preventers, says UAB Police Department Capt. Roderick Wilkins. That’s the central message of the new UAB Police program S.W.E.E.P. — Security, Watchfulness, Education, Encouragement and Preparation. Wilkins says statistics show that UAB is one of the safest campuses in the state and the country, and that is due in large part to the employees and students who take precautionary steps and watch out for one another. “Our campus community does an excellent job,” he says. “We want them to know we’re here for them.

“We’re reaching out to faculty, staff and students to remind them to be vigilant,” Wilkins says. “We want to reduce the easily preventable thefts that take place in the medical center and on campus. S.W.E.E.P is a reminder to take responsibility for our areas, watch for any unusual or suspicious activity and report it to 934-4434.”

The department encourages the campus community especially to be mindful of personal belongings in high-traffic areas. The current economic climate will make some more desperate than they normally might be, Wilkins says.

“The opportunity for theft increases as we become complacent in our environments,” Wilkins says. “We want to get out and be proactive in our community-policing efforts and make people aware these types of incidents are possible if they aren’t mindful of their surroundings.

Security
What can you do to secure your work and school areas?
• Lock office doors when exiting
• Place personal items in a hidden or secure location
• Secure laptops, cell phones, iPods and money before leaving
• Keep an inventory of office equipment assigned to you and ensure it is properly marked.

“Unlocked doors create an opportunity for people to take something when they’re passing by,” Wilkins says. “Thieves wait for us to become complacent and not practice safety by locking doors and securing personal items.”

Watchfulness
Be aware of unauthorized or unfamiliar people in your work area. If you work in a customer-service area, take a visual inventory of the person. If you see something suspicious, report it.

“If someone without an ID is in an unauthorized area, the police department needs to know so we can check them out,” Wilkins says. “It could be an employee who forgot their ID, but it lets us know people are being vigilant.”

Education
Learn the safest route to your destinations and be aware of your surroundings.

If you see suspicious people or cars, contact the police at 934-4434.

“Know what to do should an incident occur,” Wilkins says, “and look for the emergency Help phones located along the routes you travel.”

Encouragement
Promote accountability in your work area and remind co-workers to practice preventive measures to safeguard personal and business property.

Preparation
Keep a short list of numbers to call in case of an on campus or hospital emergency near your office phone. Consider programming the UAB police phone number, 934-4434, and emergency number, 934-3535, in your cell phone.

UAB also can prepare you as an individual to protect yourself several ways. UAB Police offers a Rape Aggression Defense program for women — a self-defense and awareness-training program — as a free service to female population of the UAB community.

The Campus Watch program provides the latest safety literature available through police department.

For more on UAB Police Department programs, visit www.uab.edu/police. The site also contains a link to the annual UAB Crime Report and Statistics.

HIV

Continued from page 1

More than 30 million people globally are infected with HIV; it leads to more than 2 million AIDS-related deaths each year. The World Health Organization has revised its international guidelines to standardize drug regimens to prevent mother-to-child HIV transmission.

“We know that true mother-to-child transmission prevention begins with HIV testing — finding those who are infected and getting them into a program helps them adhere to the single-dose nevirapine and other care guidelines,” Stringer says.

The research is a collaboration among many partners: UAB; the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Division of HIV/AIDS Prevention and Global AIDS Program; Centers for Infectious Disease Research in Lusaka, Zambia; Cameroon Baptist Convention Health Board; Elizabeth Glaser Pediatric AIDS Foundation; Centre Hospitalier Universitaire de Tervuille, Abidjan, Ivory Coast; University of Bordeaux; and University of Cape Town. Funding support for the study is provided by the CDC.

The study is based on cord samples from 27,893 mother-infant pairs treated at clinics in the African countries of Cameroon, Cote d’Ivoire, South Africa and Zambie. The samples are from 43 separate clinics where single-dose nevirapine is used.

MED STUDENTS

Continued from page 1

Birmingham group. They also steer high-risk patients to the emergency room as Foster did at a recent screening where two women were found to have near stroke-level blood pressure.

Encouraging diversity
The SNMA also organizes the annual Teen Summit for more than 100 Birmingham-area high-school students. The one-day event includes preparation assistance for the ACT college entrance exam, meetings with college representatives and a forum with doctors, lawyers and other professionals.

The summit’s broad goal is to prepare teens for college, but it also helps dispel any doubts about pursuing a health-care career. “We’ve had teens say, ‘I was told by a counselor that I should become an engineer, but I’ve always wanted to be a doctor,’” says Foster, who works to identify, recruit and retain minority medical students. Without this experience, a potential physician could have been lost, she says.

McNeil, who grew up in Birmingham, says these activities have “changed how I think about medicine.” And she feels that the group is making a definite difference in the city: “We’re the ones who need to make people aware of what’s going on in these communities,” she says. “If we don’t do it, who will!” Foster agrees: “If the students go out and affect one person’s life, they can say, ‘I’ve accomplished something today.’”

July 26, 2010 UAB Reporter 3
Sanders gives all at work and at home

Mark Prichard, Ph.D., hired Shalisa Sanders seven years ago as a researcher in Infectious Diseases to help identify new therapies for viral diseases. Sanders has been everything Prichard hoped she would be: she’s organized, performs her duties at a high standard and is dedicated to her work. There are key reasons she was a worthy selection as July’s Employee of the Month.

Prichard said he could cite many significant, specific examples of his colleague’s technical proficiency, efficiency and personal qualities. Instead, he marvels at Sanders’ character and the significant events in her life that have proven her courage and generosity.

Several years ago, Shalisa’s mother Rosa Sanders was diagnosed with the same kidney disease that had claimed the life of her grandmother years earlier. Rosa would be able to undergo dialysis, but eventually she would need a new kidney. Shalisa didn’t hesitate.

“I wanted to give her one of my kidneys,” she says. “I knew I could have a perfectly normal life with just one kidney. My mom couldn’t live without one.”

So Shalisa and Rosa began going through type-testing to see if they matched. At first, all signs pointed to the mother and daughter matching perfectly. Then Rosa’s body began to form antibodies against Shalisa’s blood.

A promising opportunity appeared lost.

Then UAB doctors told the Sanders they could participate in the donor-swap program and be matched with other donors and recipients. Soon, a match was found. In February, Rosa received a kidney from a Florida woman, and Shalisa donated a kidney to a man from North Carolina.

“All four of us were here at UAB,” Sanders says. “The surgery was done on a Thursday morning, and we all got to meet each other on Friday. We talked for a long time, and we’ve kept in touch since. We’ve become a family, really. We’re planning vacations together, and we call each other often. It was just a good experience.”

Prichard says Sanders’ dedication to UAB is reciprocated by the dedication of the university to improve the health of Alabama’s citizens.

“This story illustrates the caring and good works performed by the UAB Health System, but it would not have been possible without the kidney donation by Shalisa Sanders,” Prichard says. “The magnanimous gestures of these selfless donors managed to change the lives of others on one spring morning.”

Commitment to her work

Prichard and other colleagues say Sanders’ story is important also because it illustrates the commitment she brings to her job as a research assistant.

Sanders evaluates more than 1,500 experimental compounds against the ortho- polxovirus each year, and she helps prepare reports for the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases. She performs in vitro antiviral efficacy studies, and Deb Quensel, Ph.D., an associate professor in pediatrics, says Sanders pays strict attention to the many details in the work.

“She’s extremely knowledgeable in her work, unfailingly pleasant and very dependable. She’s just an amazing person.”

Shalisa has seen firsthand how research has helped her family and saved lives. She says her experience validates the work she is doing.

“Research led to my mom and our new friends having a chance to live longer and live productive lives,” she says. “It gives me hope that the work we do here will have the same kind of affect on many others in the future.”

GOLF

CONTINUED from page 1
champion.

“The only thing I can think to compare it to would be when [UAB alumnus] Yovetta Flowers won a gold medal at the Winter Olympics,” Kaufman says. “But as far as golf is concerned, we’ve never had anything like this. The times we’ve made the NCAA Tournament have been exciting, but the rea- son is we’ve never had the kind of interna- tional exposure that we’re getting this sum- mer because of Graeme.”

Diamond in the rough

In an interview with ESPN shortly after the U.S. Open, McDowell described himself as merely a “pretty good amateur golfer” before he enrolled at UAB in 1998. Though it sounds like false modesty now, Kaufman says that description fits with his memory of the young golfer who found his way to Birmingham through a series of lucky coincidences.

Chris Devlin, a native of Northern Ireland who was playing collegiate at UAB, recom- mended that Kaufman take a look at his countryman McDowell, who was then a little-known junior player in the seaside resort village of Portrush. When the scholar- ship money for McDowell fell a little short, Devlin gave up part of his own scholarship to help get McDowell onto the team.

Despite his small-town background, McDowell adjusted quickly to life in Birmingham. “He seemed to fit in here pretty much from the start,” Kaufman says. McDowell’s golf game, by contrast, “took a little longer” to develop, Kaufman says. “When he got here, he couldn’t hit the ball as far as he does now, but he hit it straight and had a good short game. He was a solid player, and you could tell he had potential. But none of us had any idea he was going to be as good as he turned out to be.”

Turning point

After a fairly uninteresting freshman season, McDowell won the last tournament of the year in what Kaufman called a turning point for the program. He produced a solid sophomore campaign, then made a big leap forward as a junior, earning All-American honors and helping UAB advance to the NCAA finals for the first time in school history. A year later, he again earned All-American honors after winning six of 12 tournaments and garnering the Fred Haskins Award, given annually to the nation’s top collegiate golfer.

McDowell turned pro in 2002, winning the Volvo Scandinavian Masters in just his fourth start on the European Tour. He added four more wins in the ensuing years, including a victory at the Wales Open this past spring. But nothing in his career could rival the Father’s Day triumph at Pebble Beach.

While the course took its toll on the rest of the field, McDowell managed to shoot an even par the first day, followed by six birdies in the second round to take the lead.

The tricky course was a natural fit for McDowell, Kaufman says. “Pebble Beach is a links-style course, similar to the course Graeme grew up on in Portrush,” says Kaufman, who traveled to California to watch the first three rounds in person.

“You’re rewarded for hitting the ball straight, and the greens there are very small, so you want to place the ball right in front of the green where you can chip or putt up onto it.”

That suits Graeme’s game pretty well. He’s always been able to hit the ball straight, and now he can hit it plenty far. Also, since he left UAB, he has developed into an out- standing putter. He was second in putting at Pebble Beach, which was one of the main reasons he was able to win.”

Opening doors

In the days after McDowell’s big win, UAB’s logo appeared often on national news broadcasts as casual fans began to learn more about the U.S. Open champion. That kind of exposure, Kaufman says, is invaluable to a program like UAB. “People in the state and in the Southeast know about UAB, but when you recruit outside the region outside the country, people aren’t as familiar,” he says. “When I mentioned Graeme’s name in the past, some people knew who he was and some didn’t. Today, everyone knows.”