

## **Graduation 2007**

56 students who started their medical education on the Duluth Campus graduated from the University of Minnesota Medical School on May 4<sup>th</sup> at Northrup Auditorium on the University of Minnesota Minneapolis campus. They were among a total of 224 medical school graduates. Duluth students participated in a variety of events prior to the ceremony to celebrate their accomplishment and their new title: "Doctor."

Dr. Gary Davis hooded the graduates and Dr. Lillian Repesh was voted greeter from Duluth. Other Duluth campus deans were among the dignitaries on stage: Raymond D. Christensen, M.D., Assistant Dean for Rural Health, Richard G. Hoffman, Ph.D., Associate Dean for Curriculum and Education, George J. Trachte, Ph.D., Associate Dean for Research.

A celebration was held in downtown Minneapolis for all of the Duluth graduates and faculty the night before the graduation. In addition, the Center of American Indian and Minority Health hosted an Honoring Ceremony for the seven Native American graduates. That ceremony was attended by families, Indian community elders, faculty, staff and associate deans from the Medical School. David Perdue, M.D., M.S.P.H. (Chickasaw), Gastroenterology, Department of Medicine at the University of Minnesota delivered the keynote address at the ceremony. The following is a segment of Dr. Perdue's inspirational address entitled:

### **The Good Red Route**

Medicine is a mountain without a summit. The routes up the mountain are varied. Some people go straight up, extending their reach to holds only graspable with a lurch. Others find routes that meander. Still others start the climb after descending from other life paths.

None-the-less, you all started at the bottom looking up, wondering if you had what it takes to climb the good red road that disappears into the clouds. At the base are thousands of others looking up that mountain thinking the same things you are - do I have what it takes? Do I really want to do this? What are the risks? To my self esteem? To my personal time? To my friends and family? Are the benefits worth it? What are those benefits?

Many walk away from that mountain before taking the first ascending step. Some are frightened by self-doubt, other dissuaded by their fear of failure, maybe some are deterred by the words of others. Still others had tried on the idea like an overcoat but realized it just didn't fit right or was uncomfortable. Many hear a different drum beating for them.

But you, you conquered those fears and took that first step. You heard other drums but knew they were not calling out to you. Across the Nation thousands of high-school graduates, many the top of their high school classes, run amuck as freshman on college campuses telling everyone they are "pre-med." Thousands who have never stepped in a hospital are certain they are destined to be a neurosurgeon, or a cardiologist, or another of

the impressive sounding medical specialists. (For some reason gastroenterology does not usually rank high on the college freshman “impressivity” scale)

Then the reality of the journey sets in. Each year 50% of the Stanford University freshman class (about 800 individuals) declare themselves to be pre-med. At the end of four years, only 15% actually apply to medical school. Why?? The good red road up that mountain is not so much a road, but a route up a craggy rock face, with many headwalls- a climber’s term for steep faces requiring exceptional skill.

For more information: [http://www.med.umn.edu/duluth/NewsReleases/2007\\_graduation.html](http://www.med.umn.edu/duluth/NewsReleases/2007_graduation.html)

### **Charles (Chuck) Branch Receives Prestigious National Scholarship**

First year medical student, Chuck Branch has been awarded the American Medical Association Foundation's - 2007 Minority Scholars Award. Branch is one of eleven recipients selected from 113 students nominated by medical schools across the country. He is the only Native American to receive the award this year. Only one other Native American student has received the award since it was established in 2004. Branch will receive a \$10,000 scholarship and will attend the AMA national conference in June.

“Our Medical School seeks to attract and to support American Indian men and women as future physicians who will integrate traditional ways with Western medicine. We prepare them to serve the critical health needs of our communities in Minnesota and the region. Chuck Branch is a wonderful example; he carries a fire for American Indian culture and health in everything he does,” said Deborah Powell, M.D., Dean of the University of Minnesota Medical School.

The Minority Scholars Award was established in collaboration with the Minority Affairs Consortium (MAC), with support from the Pfizer Medical Humanities Initiative. Nominees must be a current first or second-year student and a permanent resident or citizen of the U.S. Eligible students of minority background include African American/Black, American Indian, Native Hawaiian, Alaska Native and Hispanic/Latino. Each medical school is invited to submit up to two nominees.

According to the AMA Foundation, the selection committee chose Branch because of his commitment to improving minority health status, community involvement, scholastic achievement and financial need.

Branch's goal as a Native American physician is to "advocate for Native American patients in regard to Health and Healing by acknowledging the value of both Western Medicine and Traditional Medicine in maintaining physical and spiritual well being." Aside from time with his family and studies, Branch is the Drum Keeper/Lead Singer of the Center of American Indian and Minority Health Drum, and he works with middle school Native American boys teaching Native culture, among other volunteer initiatives.

Born and raised in San Francisco, CA, Branch earned bachelor degrees in both anthropology and Native American Studies from the University of California at Berkeley and went on to earn his master's degree in anthropology at the University of Wisconsin, Madison. Between there and medical school, Branch was a paramedic/firefighter for ten years. He is married to Shannon Wesley, M.D. who is also Native American and has finished her first year at the family practice residency in Duluth. They have a 2-1/2 year old son Travis, with another son due in August.

## **Joycelyn Dorscher, M.D. To Receive University of Minnesota Outstanding Service Award**

The University of Minnesota President's office has announced that Joycelyn Dorscher, M.D., Director of the Center of American Indian and Minority Health, will receive a prestigious Outstanding Service Award for her local, state and national efforts at promoting diversity in medical education. She will be recognized for the award at the Board of Regents meeting on June 8, 2007 and will be honored at a reception at Eastcliff, the official residence of the University President, on Tuesday, June 26.

In his congratulatory letter to Dorscher, University President Bruininks wrote, "I am delighted to give you this well-deserved recognition for your remarkable work. With this award you become a member of an elite group of faculty and staff members of the University community." The President's award recognizes exceptional service to the University, its schools, colleges, departments and service units that must have gone well beyond the regular duties of a faculty or a staff member, and demonstrate unusual commitment to the University community.

Announcing the award on the Medical School Duluth campus, Gary Davis, Ph.D., interim Senior Associate Dean of the Duluth medical school campus invited students and staff to "join me in congratulating Dr. Dorscher on this wonderful achievement. Her work as the director of the Center of American Indian and Minority Health has established a world-class academic center of excellence for Native American Medical students."

Dorscher, Turtle Mountain Band, has been a faculty member at the University since 1997. She is the Director of the Center of American Indian and Minority Health at the University of Minnesota Medical School, an educator in the Department of Family Medicine on the Duluth campus. She is also the immediate past president of the Association of American Indian Physicians and the Co-Chair of the American Indian Commission, an advisory board to the City of Duluth.

In his letter of nomination, George Trachte, Ph.D., associate dean of research and faculty affairs at the Medical School, Duluth Campus wrote, "Her contributions to the development of programs to attract and retain Native American minorities in medical school represents her greatest achievement and is the chief rationale for this nomination letter. The best indicator of success of her mission is that the University of Minnesota Medical Schools now has the second largest contingent of Native American Medical Students in the entire nation. This is a remarkable achievement considering that Minnesota's population is only 1.2 % Native American."

Other letters of support for the Dorscher nomination came from: Susan Sloan, M.D., president of the Association of American Indian Physicians and a graduate of the CAIMH programs; Lawrence Wittmers, Ph.D., Associate Professor and Head of the Department of Physiology and Pharmacology at the University of Minnesota Medical School -- Duluth Campus and among the medical school leaders who, 35 years ago, created programs that would educate Native Americans. Robert Powless, Ph.D., Professor Emeritus of Indian Studies at the University of Minnesota Duluth, and Gary Davis, Ph.D., interim senior associate dean of the University of Minnesota Medical School – Duluth campus.

## **Raymond Christensen, M.D., Assistant Dean for Rural Health - Duluth Campus, Elevated and Honored**

### **Named Grand Master of Masons in Minnesota**

Dr. Raymond Christensen has been elected the Grand Master of Masons in Minnesota. The Grand Lodge of Minnesota is a 154-year-old fraternal organization with more than 16,000 members in Minnesota and part of the world-wide Masonic fraternity. There are

more than 1.5 million Masons in the United States. Dr. Christensen has been an active Mason since 1982.

The Freemasons, an international organization with roots dating back to the middle ages, are known for educational initiatives and service to the communities in which they have lodges. Minnesota Masonic Charities provides matching funds grants principally in support of general public welfare in the widest sense, especially for the elderly and young people. Areas of support are broadly based and include social services, health care, medical research, and education.

The Masonic Cancer Center Fund, Inc. is now working in collaboration with the University of Minnesota, as it has since 1955, to pursue cancer research and treatment, including the latest effort, the Partners for Life fund-raising campaign to build a new Masonic Cancer Center at the University in Minneapolis.

### **Named Rural Health Hero**

This June Dr. Ray Christensen will be named Minnesota's Rural Health Hero at the Rural Health Conference in Duluth, MN. Every year the Minnesota Rural Health Conference honors an outstanding individual or team in the field of rural health. Last year Gary Davis, Ph.D., Interim Senior Associate Dean, received the honor for his work in telemedicine.

Christensen will receive the award on June 19 at the conference held at the Duluth Entertainment and Convention Center. The conference is cosponsored by the Minnesota Department of Health - Office of Rural Health & Primary Care, the Minnesota Rural Health Association and the Rural Health Resource Center - Minnesota Center for Rural Health, along with the assistance of many other organizations concerned with rural health issues. This year's conference theme: Growing Rural Healthy Communities.

### **Duluth Family Medicine Poet Laureate**

At the beginning of the school year, students in FMed 6101 elected first year medical student, Mary Bassing their class Poet Laureate. Mary's assignment was to read a poem at the start of each class. FMed 6101 covers a number of topics, including compassion, gender issues in medicine, socialization into medicine, the cultures of western medical and rural medical culture, shared and non shared culture, diverse disease causation and healing beliefs, physician-patient power differences and the medical humanities.

What the class discovered during the year is that Mary also wrote some of the poems. At the end of the year, she received a standing ovation and a plaque from her classmates with the inscription: Mary Bassing, Poet Laureate, University of Minnesota Medical School Duluth, Class of 2010. Here is one of Mary's poems.

Truth

Maybe truth is like light striking a prism-  
what at first may appear to be one beam of light  
a moment later diverges into many  
Surely my truth is different from your truth?  
but couldn't our divergent paths  
lead backward through time and space  
and converge as one

such that your truth and my truth are  
simply different faces of the same ultimate reality  
which if we could come together  
would shine so brightly that they would  
burn holes through hatred  
and leave humanity standing stronger  
and side by side with something never felt before-  
a sense of coming home  
and perhaps if memories could extend back  
before the violence and suffering and hardship  
that is what may have been found there  
and could be found again-  
after our stumblings in the dark one day  
give way to a dawn of deeper understanding and clarity  
and with the light of a new day  
we will find our way back to that place.