

# in our family

The alumni newsletter of the University of Wisconsin Department of Family Medicine | SPRING 2015

## The House of Hope



A young patient's cancer struggle inspired Fox Valley graduate Steven Hagen, MD, to give back. Read the full story on page 3.

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## Improving Hmong Health

**K**evin Thao, MD, MPH, (Madison '14) is on a quest to improve health outcomes for the Hmong people in his home city of Wausau, Wisconsin.

Dr. Thao, who is completing a UW Department of Family Medicine (DFM) primary care research fellowship, also practices and teaches at the DFM's Aspirus-affiliated residency clinic in Wausau.

Now, through partnerships with the Aspirus Health Foundation, the B.A. and Esther Greenheck Foundation, and other local organizations, he's planning to launch the Survey of the Health of the Wausau Area Hmong Population.

### Examining Disease Prevalence

Through that study, Dr. Thao aims to determine the extent to which diseases such as hypertension, diabetes, and heart disease, affect the Hmong.

"[For example], diabetes is a newly emergent disease in the Hmong population, and we don't really know its prevalence," he explains.



**Above:** Kevin Thao, MD, MPH

Dr. Thao's early research suggests that Hmong adults may be three times more likely to have diabetes than adults in the general population, but the reasons for this disparity are not yet clear.

A Hmong immigrant himself, Dr. Thao thinks that lifestyle changes brought on by Hmong migration to the U.S. may play a role, but more, deeper data is needed.

*Continues on page 6*



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Dear Friends,

**H**appy spring! Here in Wisconsin, we're excited for blue skies, leafy trees and blooming flowers—all welcome signs of growth after the long winter.

In this issue, we share stories of alumni who, though their professional experiences, have also grown as physicians and human beings.

We start with Kevin Thao, MD, MPH, a residency grad who is completing our primary care research fellowship. Dr. Thao is returning to Wausau to practice and to improve the health of the Hmong community in which he grew up.

We also share the story of Steven Hagen, MD, a grad whose relationship with a young patient and his family changed his life in rewarding new ways.

In addition, we bring you to up to date on Adam Rindfleisch, MD, another grad who, with his colleagues in our outstanding integrative medicine program, is transforming the health care culture at VA hospitals nationwide.

Spring is also bringing exciting new changes to the DFM. I'm proud to announce that on July 1, 2015, we will officially change our name to the UW Department of Family Medicine and Community Health.

In addition, we recently launched a comprehensive strategic planning initiative through which we will guide our growth, envision new opportunities for innovation and identify the best ways to make them reality.

It's an exciting time, and I look forward to sharing more of our successes with you in the future.

In the meantime, please get in touch and let us know how you are growing this spring. Here's to blue skies ahead!

### **Valerie Gilchrist, MD**

*Millard Professor in Community Health  
Chair, Department of Family Medicine,  
University of Wisconsin School of  
Medicine and Public Health*

## News Briefs

### **Haq Wins Humanism Award**

Cynthia Haq, MD, earned the 2014 Arnold P. Gold Foundation's Humanism in



Medicine Award. It recognized her for being a caring, compassionate medical student mentor who teaches ethics, empathy, and service by example.

### **Regents Honor Brodt**

The DFM's Erik Brodt, MD, who directs the Native American Center for Health



Professions at the UW School of Medicine and Public Health, received the University of Wisconsin System's 2015 Board of Regents Diversity Award for his service to Wisconsin Native American communities as an advocate, scholar and leader.



More news at:  
[fammed.wisc.edu](http://fammed.wisc.edu)

## Stay in Touch!

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We want to hear from you!



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# Building a House of Hope

A family's cancer struggle inspires Fox Valley grad's service work

Since 2005, Steven Hagen, MD, (Fox Valley '99) has been a family physician at Primary Care Associates of Appleton, one of the few remaining independent practices in Wisconsin's Fox Valley.

There, he enjoys caring for patients of all ages and supporting the preventive aspects of their health.

Through his practice, he also has deep relationships with many families in the area. "The last baby I delivered...I also take care of her parents and grandparents," he recalls. "It's not unusual here to take care of three or four generations of a family."

But one family has touched his life in ways he never expected.

## An Unmet Need for Cancer Support

In 2006, Dr. Hagen met Dan Kenneavy, a 17-year-old boy who came to him for a second opinion about a shoulder pain—which was found to be osteosarcoma.

As the family physician, Dr. Hagen helped Dan and his parents through an arduous, three-and-a-half-year battle with the cancer. Many treatments took place at cancer centers far from home, requiring extensive travel.

But when Dan turned 18, he was "too old" for support programs, such as Ronald McDonald Houses. Unfortunately, nothing similar existed for young adults and their families.

## From Vision to Reality

On December 12, 2009, Dan lost his fight with osteosarcoma.

The family's struggle touched Dr. Hagen, and also his teenaged son, who asked about how they could



**Left:** Fox Valley graduate Steven Hagen, MD

**Below:** Dan Kenneavy, the inspiration for Dan's House of Hope



PRIMARY CARE ASSOCIATES

KENNEAVY FAMILY

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**"I believe that a medical practice can be an opportunity to do something meaningful."**

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help other cancer patients cover treatment-related travel expenses.

At the same time, the Kenneavys were working to turn Dan's vision of a "home away from home" for young adult cancer patients into a reality. Dr. Hagen decided to join them as a co-founder of Dan's House of Hope (DHOH), a hospitality house for young adults fighting cancer.

In 2014, the first DHOH facility opened near Houston's Texas Medical Center, where Dan had received much of his care.

## Community Generosity

At home in Appleton, Dr. Hagen serves on the DHOH board of directors, and works with the local medical community on fundraising efforts.

The generosity goes both ways: DHOH also helps provide care packages and other support for young adults receiving cancer care at Appleton Medical Center.

"I couldn't have imagined four years ago when we started this process that we'd even be where we are today," notes Dr. Hagen.

"But I believe that a medical practice can be just a job, or it can be an opportunity to do something meaningful."

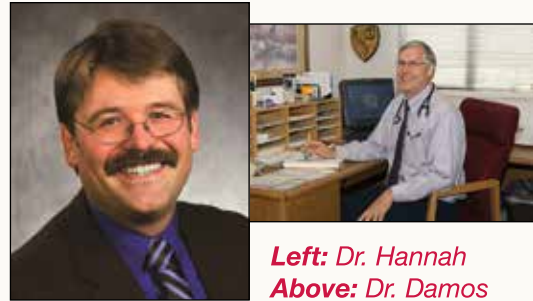


Learn more about Dan's House of Hope at: [danshouseofhope.org](http://danshouseofhope.org)

# Statewide Program Updates

## Baraboo Rural Training Track

**Stuart Hannah, MD**, Baraboo RTT director, and **James Damos, MD**, Baraboo RTT founder and retired director, will speak about the program's successes and challenges at the RTT Collaborative's annual meeting, held in Madison and Baraboo, Wisconsin, on May 27-29, 2015. The event brings together a national audience of federal, state and local GME stakeholders committed to strengthening rural medical education.



*Left: Dr. Hannah  
Above: Dr. Damos*

## Eau Claire



*Above: Dr. Clark-Forsting; a still from the Eau Claire program's 40th anniversary video*

Congratulations to Eau Claire resident **Michelle Clark-Forsting, MD, MPH**, who was one of 20 residents nationwide to receive the 2014 American Academy of Family Physicians' Award for Excellence in Graduate Medical Education.

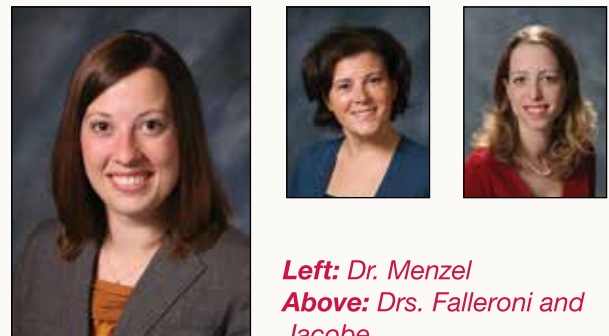
The Eau Claire program has also been celebrating its 40th anniversary and its 10th year partnering with Chippewa Valley Technical College. It held an alumni celebration, a community open house and released a video, "40 Years and Counting" ([fammed.wisc.edu/residency/eau-claire](http://fammed.wisc.edu/residency/eau-claire)).

To learn more or get in touch, call Mona Mathews at (715) 855-2051.

## Fox Valley

Fox Valley grad and faculty member **Elizabeth Menzel, MD ('12)**, received the Society of Teachers of Family Medicine Foundation's New Faculty Scholar Award. Colleagues **Julianne Falleroni, DO, MPH**, and **Kathryn Jacobs, MD ('11)**, are past award recipients.

Big changes are also underway at the Fox Valley program. As of July 1, 2015, the program will no longer be administered by the DFM, but instead be part of a new organization in collaboration with ThedaCare, Ministry Health Care and the Medical College of Wisconsin.



*Left: Dr. Menzel  
Above: Drs. Falleroni and Jacobs*

## Madison

We are proud to introduce the new Jeff Patterson-Mary Doherty Award for Activism. It recognizes an individual or group in the Madison residency program whose accomplishments honor the legacy of activism embodied by the late **Jeff Patterson, DO**, and his partner, Mary Doherty.

The first winner will be announced at the Madison program's graduation ceremony. To learn more or to discuss supporting the award, please contact Linda Haskins at (608) 263-3402.



*Left: Dr. Patterson, one of the namesakes of the Jeff Patterson-Mary Doherty Award for Activism*

## Milwaukee



*Above, from left: Drs. Farrell, Getzin, Knox and Kotovicz*

The Milwaukee residency program recently welcomed four new faculty: **Michael Farrell, MD**; **Anne Getzin, MD ('14)**; **Kjersti Knox, MD ('14)**; and **Fabiana Kotovicz, MD**.

The program also partnered with the Wisconsin Department of Health Services Refugee Resettlement program to establish two clinics that provide newly arrived refugees with health screenings and primary care medical homes.

## Wausau

**John Wheat, DO**, a 2004 graduate of the Wausau residency program, recently became its associate director.

Aspirus, the program's health system partner, welcomed all five of its 2014 graduates as new providers.

**Patrick Allen, DO**; **Coy Johnston, MD**; **Jason Mack, DO**; **Ramses Masis, MD**; and **William Noble, MD**, serve north-central Wisconsin through practice in clinics, urgent care centers and hospitals.

*Right, clockwise: Drs. Wheat, Allen, Johnston, Mack, Masis and Noble*



## Statewide Osteopathic Program

Our statewide osteopathic program recently welcomed **Mark Robinson, DO**, as its new director. A graduate of our affiliated Milwaukee residency program, he also serves as vice chair of the HEARTland Network Osteopathic Postdoctoral Training Institute.



*Right: Dr. Robinson*

# ‘Whole-Person’ Medicine

Adam Rindfleisch, MD, teaches the integrative approach



**Above:** Adam Rindfleisch, MD, leads the DFM's integrative medicine fellowship and works to transform health care for veterans.

When Adam Rindfleisch, MD, (Madison '03) finished residency, the Department of Family Medicine (DFM) had a growing clinical program in integrative medicine, but no fellowship to speak of.

So, after completing the DFM's academic fellowship and the University of Arizona's integrative medicine fellowship, Dr. Rindfleisch, and

colleague David Rakel, MD, built one from the ground up. This summer, it will welcome three new fellows, for a total of 19 in 12 years.

## Worldwide Reach

The fellowship is one of just a few worldwide to combine academic and clinical integrative medicine into one experience.

It's part of the DFM's internationally recognized integrative medicine program, which reaches not just patients and learners, but also clinicians and health systems.

For example, the program's free online integrative medicine teaching tools are used as far away as Spain and Scotland.

## A National Initiative at the VA

Now, Dr. Rindfleisch and the integrative medicine team are partnering with the Veterans' Health Administration (VA) and the Pacific Institute for Research and Evaluation to transform

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**“Acknowledging the need for physician self-care is first and foremost to whole health.”**

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how clinicians care for veterans and themselves.

Since 2013, they've traveled to 29 VHA hospitals nationwide to teach over 1300 clinicians how to shift the culture of health care towards a “whole health” approach—one that promotes self-care and self-healing in addition to other types of treatment.

The approach can instill hope, cultivate resilience and motivate change—but it all starts with oneself.

“Acknowledging the need for physician self-care is first and foremost to whole health,” explains Dr. Rindfleisch. “Only then can you be fully present and help another person be well.”



View integrative medicine teaching tools at: [fammed.wisc.edu/integrative](http://fammed.wisc.edu/integrative)

## Improving Hmong Health (continued from cover)

In addition to his research, patient care, and teaching commitments, Dr. Thao is building a coalition of organizations who aim to improve Hmong health in Wausau.

“By connecting these networks, we can address some of the health disparities we've found,” he says.

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**“By connecting these networks, we can address some of the health disparities we've found.”**

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For Dr. Thao, it's the next phase of his life's work—a journey that began as a medical student in Madison leading health education workshops for local Hmong, and continues as he returns home to Wausau.



Read more about Dr. Thao at: [fammed.wisc.edu/our-department/newsletter/spring-2014/hmong-health-champion](http://fammed.wisc.edu/our-department/newsletter/spring-2014/hmong-health-champion)

# Catch Up With Fellow Grads

## Baraboo

**Jill Kruse, DO ('08)**, is a family physician at Avera Medical Group in Brookings, South Dakota, and is also the medical director for the Avera LIGHT program for physician and advanced-practice provider burnout prevention and treatment. She is married with two young children.



**David Jarvis, MD ('01)**, is now practicing as a hospitalist at St. Clare Hospital in Baraboo, Wisconsin.



## Madison

**Mark Huth, MD ('06)**, became the chief medical officer for Group Health Cooperative of South Central Wisconsin in 2013, and is completing the AHIP Foundation's executive leadership program.



## Eau Claire

**Wael Mourad, MD ('07)**, is the associate program director for women's health at the University of Missouri Kansas City School of Medicine's family medicine residency program; he received the program's Jack L. Mulligan Teacher of the Year award in 2014. This summer, he will begin a master's degree program in health care management at the Harvard University T.H. Chan School of Public Health.



**John Porter, DO ('06)**, practices full-spectrum family medicine with osteopathic manipulation, medical acupuncture and prolotherapy at Gundersen Health System in Viroqua, Wisconsin.



**Jodi Ritsch, MD ('98)**, recently opened The Joyful Doc Clinic, a direct-pay family medicine clinic in Menomonie, Wisconsin.



**John Ray, MD ('12)**, works at Big Bend Regional Medical Center, a 24-bed frontier hospital in rural Texas, where he practices family medicine with obstetrics, conducts home visits, and assists in surgery.



## Fox Valley

**Christina Huckabay, MD ('10)**, is a family physician at The Children's Clinic of Long Beach, a community clinic that serves medically underserved children and their families in Southern California.



**Joe Skariah, DO, MPH ('09)**, practices full-spectrum family medicine and is currently serving as a medical director and associate residency director of the Oregon Health and Science University's family medicine residency program.



## Milwaukee

**Sarah Pierce, MD ('10)**, is entering her fifth year of practice doing outpatient-only family medicine. She especially enjoys preventive medicine and having the opportunity to take care of three generations of the same family. She soon will be starting the University of Arizona's fellowship in integrative medicine.



**Stephanie Mehl, DO ('13)**, practices outpatient family medicine at Aurora Health Care in Racine, Wisconsin. She enjoys caring for people of all ages and has special interests in women's health, integrative medicine and osteopathic manipulation.



## Wausau

**Kristen Rahn, MD ('98)**, practices family medicine with obstetrics at the Aspirus Weston Clinic in Weston, Wisconsin. She is also the medical director for the Aspirus business health service line, and is the outreach director for the DFM's Wausau family medicine residency program.



**Nicole (Eisenhardt) Wade, DO ('06)**, practices family medicine at Aultman Medical Group in Carrollton, Ohio, and is the proud mother of a two-year-old daughter.



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