



NEWS RELEASE

Media Contact: Kathi M. Petersen
Communications Manager
Kathi.Petersen@MAHEC.net
828-257-4445

19 Physicians in Various Specialties to Call Western North Carolina Home After Completing Residency and Fellowship Programs Through MAHEC

Among those are four psychiatrists who have joined Mission Hospital's new mental health facility, slated to open to patients this summer

Asheville, NC, July 17, 2023— Nineteen new physicians who completed their medical residency or fellowship training in June through graduate medical education programs of Mountain Area Health Education Center (MAHEC) will remain in Western North Carolina.

“It is with great happiness and pride that we send our residents and fellows off into the world where we hope they’ll find personal fulfillment and take the spirit of MAHEC with them, striving to make a difference in their new communities. We’re even more excited when this next generation of healthcare professionals chooses to remain in Western North Carolina to care for the people of our mountain region,” said MAHEC CEO William Hathaway, MD.

With MAHEC’s mission to recruit, train and—notably—to retain the workforce needed to create a healthy community, all four psychiatrists who completed their four-year residency in June have chosen to stay in Asheville. Luke Johnson, DO, Audrey Martinez, MD, Joseph Maxwell, MD, and Danielle Meola, MD, PhD, have all joined the staff at the new Mission Behavioral Health - Sweeten Creek Mental Health and Wellness Center, slated to open later this summer.

Two previous MAHEC physicians are already on staff at the facility, which will accommodate pediatric, adolescent, low- and high-acuity adults, and geriatric patient groups: Ronald Magee, MD (graduated from MAHEC Psychiatry Residency in June 2021 and MAHEC Consult-Liaison Fellowship in July 2022), and Hunter Edwards, DO (graduated from MAHEC Psychiatry Residency in June 2022).

“We are thrilled that these four doctors, and the two before them, chose to stay here in WNC after finishing their training,” said Hathaway. “It’s exactly what MAHEC is here for: to ensure that our region has the well-trained, highly qualified workforce to serve the healthcare needs of our community. Even more, our goal is not simply to provide our learners with the skills they need to be competent healthcare professionals, but also to instill in them the MAHEC values of service to community and the promotion of health equity. This is what makes MAHEC such a special place.”

In total, nearly 50 physicians completed their medical residency or fellowship training in June in a variety of specialties, including family medicine, obstetrics/gynecology, general surgery, sports medicine, and addiction medicine, in addition to psychiatry. Including the four psychiatrists, 37 have accepted

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121 Hendersonville Road • Asheville, NC 28803 • Phone (828) 257-4400 • www.mahec.net

employment; the others are continuing their training. An additional 12 dentists and pharmacists also graduated from MAHEC residency programs last month.

As of July 1, a total of 217 physicians, dentists, and pharmacists are participating in MAHEC residency and fellowship programs, training for up to five years in more than 240 clinical sites across the region in a variety of settings, including Mission Health, UNC Health Pardee in Hendersonville, Appalachian Regional Healthcare System in Boone, Charles George VA Hospital in Asheville, and Broughton Hospital in Morganton.

Programs like those offered by MAHEC provide exposure to practicing in rural communities and are essential for ensuring there is an adequate workforce to meet current and future healthcare needs. More than half of the residents and fellows who have graduated from MAHEC's programs since 1978 have stayed in North Carolina—the vast majority in Western North Carolina.

In addition to improving healthcare, retaining physicians has an economic impact on the community. According to an economic impact study conducted by the American Medical Association in 2018, retaining one physician creates 13 jobs with salaries and benefits exceeding \$981,300, with state and local tax revenue of more than \$83,000 and a total economic output of \$2.1 million.

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About MAHEC

Established nearly five decades ago, MAHEC – Mountain Area Health Education Center – is a leader in healthcare, education, and innovation. Headquartered in Asheville with satellite offices in [various locations](#) across its 16-county Western North Carolina service area, MAHEC is the largest of nine [Area Health Education Centers](#) in North Carolina. With more than 1,000 employees, MAHEC's mission is to recruit, train and retain the workforce needed to create a healthy North Carolina, with a focus on primary care in rural communities and those with less access to resources.

MAHEC's 14-acre Biltmore campus is also home to [UNC Health Sciences at MAHEC](#), an academic health center in partnership with UNC-Chapel Hill that includes programs from the UNC School of Medicine, UNC Gillings School of Global Public Health, UNC Eshelman School of Pharmacy, and UNC Adams School of Dentistry. A private, [501\(c\)3 nonprofit organization](#), MAHEC will celebrate its 50th anniversary in 2024. For more information, visit [mahec.net](#) and follow MAHEC on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [LinkedIn](#), and [Twitter](#).