

# Health

## MAHEC welcomes new medical school grads to WNC

Beginning in July, nearly 70 medical school graduates from across the United States will locate to Western North Carolina to participate in graduate medical education (GME) training programs through Mountain Area Health Education Center (MAHEC).

Announced on “Match Day,” March 17, as part of the National Resident Matching Program, the cohort of new physicians were selected for residencies or fellowships in family medicine, internal medicine, obstetrics/gynecology, surgery, maternal-fetal medicine, sports medicine, addiction medicine, addiction psychiatry, general psychiatry, and child and adolescent psychiatry.

“Match Day is one of the most anticipated days of the year for us at MAHEC—as well as for medical school graduates across the country—as we collectively find out who will join our training programs over the next three to seven years,” said MAHEC CEO William Hathaway. “Through residencies and fellowships under the tutelage of our stellar faculty here at MAHEC and across Western North Carolina, these learners will develop the skills necessary to become the next generation of caretakers for our mountain region.”

MAHEC has expanded its GME program offerings for the third consecutive year with additional residency slots and new fellowships. Over the next year, 217 physicians, dentists, and pharmacists will train in more than 240 clinical sites across the region in a variety of settings, including



*Photo submitted*

Dr. William Hathaway, CEO of MAHEC (center), spoke at the Rotary Club of Franklin meeting on March 15. He is pictured with Rotary Club member Mike Norris (left) and club President Paul Garner.

Mission Health, Pardee UNC Health Care in Hendersonville, Appalachian Regional Healthcare System in Boone, Charles George VA Hospital in Asheville, and Broughton Hospital in Morganton.

“Mission Health is excited to continue to partner with MAHEC as a major participating clinical site in support of graduate medical education,” said Francis Maness, vice president of GME, HCA Healthcare North Carolina Division. “Our partnership is unique in that it provides our learners access to state-of-the-art hospital facilities along with compassionate rural care that results in a

more well-rounded resident learning environment. Creating a culture where residents feel that they matter, their work matters, and they are growing and capable is a top priority of both organizations.”

The need is growing for quality, well-trained physicians. According to a study published by the Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC), a shortage of up to 124,000 physicians is projected in the United States over the next decade, with rural areas experiencing an even greater lack of healthcare professionals than those in urban parts of the country.

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. Historically, the majority of physicians trained in WNC establish permanent practices in the region.

“MAHEC Boone is so excited for our next (and largest) class of six residents. As a group, our next class comes from diverse backgrounds, many from rural areas. They all share a commitment to training rural to practice in rural and underserved areas,” said Dr. Molly Benedum, founding program director of the MAHEC Boone Family Medicine Residency. “Several have particular interests that align with the strengths of our program: full-spectrum family medicine, LGBTQ care, wilderness medicine, and addiction medicine.”

“Pardee is honored to continue our tradition of training the next generation of healthcare providers,” said Jay Kirby, president and CEO, Pardee UNC Health Care. “Our partnership with MAHEC enables new medical school graduates the chance to train with and learn from our exceptional clinical team, giving them first-hand experience and a unique understanding of what high-quality and compassionate care looks like.

“It is our hope that these providers will choose to remain in our region, which will ultimately benefit patient care for generations to come.”