Since this is the season of charity and self-reflection, we’d like to highlight a few of the many ways our faculty, residents, and staff have contributed their time and talents to the local community in this special issue of The COMmunicator.

They remind us of the opportunities we have, working in the health care field, to make a real difference in the lives of the people we serve throughout the year.

You will also find an announcement of the 2007 Erlanger House Staff Association Faculty Awards on page 2. Congratulations to these outstanding faculty.

Thank you for welcoming me into the College of Medicine. I feel that we’ve gotten off to a genuinely productive start, and I look forward to great things to come in the new year.

Warmest wishes for a happy holiday.

David Seaberg, MD, CPE, FACEP
Dean and Professor
and
The College of Medicine Chattanooga Administrative Staff
2007 Erlanger House Staff Association Awards

Awards for Outstanding Teaching

Stephen Adams, MD
Family Medicine

Michael Breen, MD
Obstetrics/Gynecology

Mark Brzezienki, MD
Plastic Surgery

Mark Freeman, MD
Orthopaedic Surgery

Matthew W. Good, MD
Pediatrics

Roger Jones, MD
Internal Medicine

Vincente Mejia, MD
General Surgery

Mukta Panda, MD
Transitional Year

Adam Soufleris, MD
Internal Medicine Subspeciality

Harold D. Head Award for Surgical Specialties
Daniel Fisher, MD

Baroness Award for Teaching Excellence Faculty
Michael Greer, MD

Baroness Award for Teaching Excellence Resident
Umesh Yalavarthy, MD

The Augustus McCravey, MD Award
Jackson J. Yium, MD
Colleen Schmitt, MD
Volunteers in Medicine Clinic

In the fall of 2003, Dr. Colleen Schmitt came on board during the early stages of the Volunteers in Medicine Clinic for Chattanooga. Since the concept originated at her church, Dr. Schmitt helped plan the medical section of the VIM clinic and continued to see it through to completion. She served on the founding committee by co-chairing the medical committee, and currently serves as a Board member. In addition, she also works as a monthly volunteer physician seeing patients with gastroenterology issues at the VIM clinic.

It has been the strong leadership of Dr. Schmitt, Dr. Bob Myers, Dr. Doyce Payne, and Dr. Robert Bowers that has enabled the VIM clinic to be a leader in providing excellent medical care at no cost to qualifying friends and neighbors who live in our community. Along with all the volunteers, Dr. Schmitt practices this medical care in a loving Christian faith based environment. It is a privilege to work with such a fine physician and individual.

Nancy P. Franks
President, Volunteers in Medicine, Chattanooga, Inc.

If you are interested in more information about the VIM Clinic you can contact Ms. Franks at 855-8220.

Jeannette Martin, MD
Reach Out and Read

Reach Out and Read (ROR) is a national, non-profit children’s literacy program that works with medical providers to reach the children at greatest risk—children aged six months to five years living at or near poverty level. This month ROR announced the opening of their first program in Chattanooga at T.C. Thompson Children’s Hospital.

Dr. Jeannette Martin, director of pediatric ambulatory care at T.C. Thompson Children’s Hospital, is the hospital medical champion for ROR and is eager to begin giving new books and advice about reading to her patients. “The Vance/Stafford General Pediatric Center at Children’s Hospital is honored to participate in this nation-wide program,” says Dr. Martin. “To teach another person to read is a gift; to teach a child the love of books is a gift beyond measure.”

ROR operates nationwide at more than 3,500 hospitals and health centers in all 50 states. The program has a unique low-cost approach that trains pediatricians and family physicians to provide information to parents about the importance of reading to their children every day and gives them age-appropriate books at each of the ten well-child visits between six months and five years. This program is working to make literacy promotion a standard part of pediatric primary care.

Dr. Martin can provide additional information, Jeannette.Martin@erlanger.org.
Transitional Year and Internal Medicine Residents Share Their Care

The COMC transitional year residency program has a great history of community service and philanthropy; this year was no exception.

The transitional year residents supported the Susan G. Komen Foundation which focuses on breast cancer awareness and early screening. The residents raised money to fight breast cancer and ran in the Race for the Cure. Thanksgiving brought another opportunity to give back to the community. The residents provided a family in economic hardship a wonderful Thanksgiving dinner. Over the past few weeks they have been collecting canned food for the Chattanooga Second Harvest food bank. They have also adopted a family this holiday season

Transitional year residents teamed up with the internal medicine residents for their biggest event of the year, the annual domestic violence fundraiser and awareness bench press competition. The somewhat humorous interdepartmental competition, “Press Out Domestic Violence,” donated all proceeds to the Partnership for Families.

Internal medicine residents were involved in other various community activities. Dr. Mandy Cincere participated in the Susan G. Komen Race for the Cure, raising $500. Dr. Cooley organized a ‘Thank-A-Thon’ to all the donors for the Erlanger Baroness Foundation. She also joined cardiologist Dr. Mitch Mutter on a medical mission trip to Haiti and is hoping to participate in a larger scale childhood nutrition project there later in the year. Residents also participated in this year’s Minority Health Fair.

If you would like to contribute to any of these events in the future, please feel free to contact Joyce Poke, the transitional year program coordinator or Deborah Fuller, the internal medicine program coordinator.

The organizers of the Komen Race for the Cure wish to thank Dr. James Creel for volunteering as the Emergency Services Coordinator for the event.

A Holiday Reception
Hosted by the UT College of Medicine Chattanooga

Monday, December 17th
2:00 - 4:00 pm
in the Medical Mall Atrium

Please join us as we say thank you and happy holidays to the employees of the Erlanger Health System and to our faculty, residents and staff.
Project Access--Giving Back at Home

Joseph Cofer, MD is the co-founder of Project Access, a community health partnership that makes health care more available to low-income, uninsured residents of Hamilton County. It is coordinated by the Medical Society of Chattanooga and Hamilton County and the Medical Foundation. The following is an excerpt of an article that will be published in the ACS Bulletin next month.

As I read the plea for a surgeon to accompany a medical mission to Honduras in the August 10 edition of the ACS Newscope, I was reminded of a surgical mission trip I made to Haiti where I performed many inguinal hernia operations on several young men, most of whom probably had had hernias since infancy. The trip was significant to me in many important ways and I honor the work of selfless physicians who perform medical mission work overseas. At the same time, I was struck by the large amount of resources expended to provide a relatively small amount of medical care. There are many opportunities for surgeons to perform meaningful charity work right here at home in programs that are vastly more cost-effective than overseas medical efforts.

The Project Access model was initially developed in 1995 by the Buncombe County (North Carolina) Medical Society under the leadership of Dr. Susan Landis. In 2002, the leadership of the Chattanooga-Hamilton County Medical Society (CHCMS) decided to create a similar program to serve Hamilton County residents. CHCMS brokered a meeting between the CEO’s of the three major hospitals in Chattanooga and the Medical Society. At that meeting we decided to create our own version of the Project Access (PA) model in Chattanooga.

When PA began in 2004, we quickly had over 350 physicians volunteer their services. And to date over 580 physicians in Hamilton County have agreed to see PA patients free of charge. Since the program’s inception we have screened over 4,600 patients. Of these patients, 2,540 individuals have received care through PA. One of the beauties of this program is that although frequently people have a medical condition that makes them unemployable, they can join PA, have their condition treated, such as an inguinal hernia, and then six weeks later return to the work force where they can often obtain health insurance. At this point they drop out of PA. Approximately 20% of patients who received PA care now have health insurance. Another benefit of this program is that many of the patients initially screened do not truly need PA help, but need referral to some other agency that can solve their problem. Of the 4,661 patients we have screened, 1,980 were not eligible for our program but were directed to other resources to receive help. In essence, PA serves as an umbrella organization to provide resources to the uninsured people in our community who need medical care or some other type of resource to sustain them.

Our program has truly made an impact in our community. It has been widely accepted by the physicians because it is our program, run by us, and not some government mandate. Although it is not as dramatic as going to a foreign country and providing medical care under adverse circumstances, I believe it performs a vital function in providing medical care for a segment of the uninsured in our community.

Additional Project Access information is available by calling 423-826-0269 or at the CHCMS website, www.chattmedsoc.org.