



Welcome (Back) Dr. Sarah Baluta!

We are delighted to be able to welcome Dr. Sarah Baluta to our faculty. Many of you will remember Sarah as a resident (Class of 2021). She has now come back home. Sarah shares the following:

Hello! I am so happy to be back and be welcomed with open arms to the Upstate Family! As most of you know, I am a Syracuse native, growing up in Liverpool, this is my home. Go Cuse! A quick back story for those of you that I have not met since being away for the last 3 years: I was a pediatric resident here at Upstate, and I just completed pediatric rheumatology fellowship in Rochester. I am excited to finally start my first “real” adult job working in a field I find not only puzzling at times but rewarding. My career focus is improving outcomes and quality of life in patients with chronic diseases, working on implementing consensus treatment plans for patients with rheumatic conditions through the national childhood arthritis and rheumatology research alliance, and using musculoskeletal ultrasound in practice and research. I was able to become board certified for MSK ultrasound through the American College of Rheumatology during my fellowship. I am hopeful to integrate ultrasound in my rheumatology practice and help build ultrasound teaching and training among our medical students, residents, fellows, and faculty.

I like to spend most of my free time with my



newlywed husband and dog, Frankie, watching our reality tv shows or going on adventures (hikes/walks). During the summer months, you

can find up north on Lake Ontario enjoying the beauty of Upstate Summers. In the winter months, I am either inside by a cozy fire, on the slopes, or cheering on the Syracuse Orange. I am a big foodie, so when I am bored you can find me searching for new recipes or on google looking at the menus of local restaurants. I am looking forward to

meeting you all and seeing a lot of familiar faces around! I cannot wait to become more involved in the community again.

Welcoming Our New APD

We are excited to announce that our very own Dr. Jenica O’Malley has accepted the position of Associate Program Director to fill the spot that opened up after our beloved Heather Wasik stepped down. Dr. O’Malley completed her residency here (2015) and has been a faculty member since 2016. She completed her undergrad at Nazareth College in Rochester, NY and medical school at The University of New England College of Osteopathic Medicine in Maine. Dr. O’Malley lives in Tipperary Hill with her husband, three boys, and two cats. She looks forward to working to improve and support our residency program. And we all look forward to having her on the leadership team!



The 2024 Intern Retreat



At the end of the day on September 12th all 15 of the interns mysteriously disappeared for the next 24 hours or so. The 2024 intern retreat was held at the Doubletree Hotel in East Syracuse. The interns had Thursday night to themselves and then spent Friday morning enjoying time and having some teambuilding activities and discussions with the program directors.



We have always wondered what goes on at an intern retreat the night before the program directors arrive. This year, one of the interns sent us a “tell all” essay which we have reprinted with permission, at the end of this newsletter.

Recruitment Virtual Open House

On September 12th, the Pediatric residency program had its first ever pre-interview season virtual open house. It was a big success with over 100 interested applicants logging in to meet with the program leadership, chiefs, and residents. Some of the guests will no doubt be meeting us again soon for interviews.

Interview Season Begins

On September 25th the ERAS post office opened and programs began reviewing applications for the 2025. We received over 1200 applications on the first day. In just one month, interviews begin on November 1st and will run through mid-January!

MKY’s Exceptional Moments

Congratulations to our very own Michael Kennedy-Yoon for being the recipient of the Exceptional Moments in Teaching Award from the Medical School. He was selected from among all of the residents hospital-wide.

At the end of every course and clerkship, the medical students are surveyed and asked to report those teachers that resulted in an exceptional educational experience. Dean Chin wrote, “Thank you for your dedication to our educational program and for the real impact you have on individual students. What your students have described make you part of the heart and soul of effective teaching in the College of Medicine, and

I am very appreciative of your contributions.” The award includes the attached poster which will be displayed in the Weiskotten Hall display cabinet, Upstate scrolling TV display, and on the Exceptional Teacher website, and With Distinction website.

Bioethics Director-at-Large

Congratulations to our very own Dr. Amy Brown who was recently elected to the board of the American Society for Bioethics and Humanities as its director-at-large. Dr. Brown is currently the interim chair of the Center for Bioethics and Humanities and associate professor of Bioethics and Humanities and Pediatrics here at Upstate. You can read the full article at Upstate Online:

<https://www.upstate.edu/news/articles/2024/2024-09-05-ethics.php>

Dr. Andrea Shaw’s Top Honors

Upstate Online announced that our very own Dr. Andi Shaw won top honors for her team’s work in providing medical care for local refugee resettlement program. She was honored with the President’s Award by Catholic Charities of Onondaga County. She received the award at the agency’s House of Providence award celebration in September. Congratulations, Dr. Shaw! You can read the full article on Upstate Online.

<https://www.upstate.edu/news/articles/2024/2024-09-26-shaw.php>

Thanks a Million!

The GCH’s namesake, Tom Golisano announced he is giving a \$10 million gift to the GCH as it celebrates its 15th anniversary this month.

<https://www.upstate.edu/news/articles/2024/2024-09-18-golisano-gift.php>

Sharing 15 Years

Upstate Online shared the story of one of the very first patients of the GCH who was only 16 days old at the time she was admitted. Today, she is a healthy high school sophomore. Read all about it at:

<https://www.upstate.edu/news/articles/2024/2024-09-19-ugch.php>

In Loving Memory–Dr. Herb Schneiderman

Steve Blatt

Editor’s Note: I remember Dr. Schneiderman as well. He was always very kind and helpful to the new coordinator who knew literally nothing about computers (and formatted my hard drive in the first few weeks of being here). Here is Dr. Blatt’s lovely tribute:

Herb Schneiderman MD passed away Augusts 24, 2024. He was a Pediatric Resident in our Department and was a faculty member here for many years. He was a “Medical Educator” before “Medical Education” was recognized as important. He was one of the first on campus to use computers before there were even desk top computers. He was a child advocate long before that term became a badge of honor. He founded the Spina Bifida clinic. He was an energetic, bright, and dedicated pediatrician. His patients and their families loved him. Although most of you do not know Herb, almost everyone working here benefits from something he had his hand in.

Dr. Schneiderman was my clerkship director when I was a medical student. He taught me Child Development when I was a resident. As a new faculty member, my office was next door to Herb’s. He taught me many important lessons as a pediatrician, a faculty member, a parent, and as a person. He was a Mensch, a wonderful person. I am thankful he was my friend.

<https://obits.syracuse.com/us/obituaries/syracuse/name/herbert-schneiderman-obituary?id=56206169>

Sept Issue: Pediatric Quality & Safety

In case you missed it, the Sept issue of Peds Quality & Safety is also available online. Thank you to Michelle Jeski for her outstanding work! Click below for the full interactive experience:

<https://secure.smore.com/n/sabfc>

Save the Date: Pediatric Fall Party

The Department of Pediatrics would like to cordially invite you and your family to attend a celebration for the pediatric residency program officially getting off probation. This event is scheduled to take place on Sunday, October 13th, from 3:00-7:00pm at Meier’s Creek Brewing Company at 33 Rippleton Road, Cazenovia, NY. Please RSVP below by October 1st at

<https://forms.office.com/r/rEdAWTwUhz>

Breaking Eggs and Building Bonds: A Residency Retreat Story

By Timi Raji

It was a warm, beautiful Thursday evening. We had just wrapped up the afternoon academic seminars, and every first-year resident eagerly anticipated the highlight of the week—the intern retreat. “Clear your schedules,” they told us. “This will be a pivotal moment in your residency journey.” There was definitely truth to that, and we were about to find out just how much.

The interns arrived at the venue: a lavish four-star hotel set in a sprawling green expanse in East Syracuse, just off the longest interstate in the U.S. This would be home for the next 18 hours or so. Some strolled into the lobby casually, hands in pockets, while others—looking as though we hadn’t all survived the same grueling Thursday—lugged enormous suitcases into the lobby, as though they were embarking on a two-week vacation. “I need options,” Leen declared. “We’re only here for less than a day,” I pointed out, half-amused, half-shocked. We walked over to the reception desk to check in and were greeted with a warm welcome, along with freshly made cookies from the hotel. Some of the interns had opted to join the virtual open house for new recruits, so we lingered in the lobby until the session ended. Manal, Lina, David, and Fatima represented us on screen, while the rest of us supported from behind the scenes.

Afterward, we quickly settled into our hotel rooms before heading back down for dinner. The table was piled high with an assortment of pizzas, cheeses, and chicken dishes, and we ate until we were stuffed. Then, we moved to the courtyard, where chaos ensued. We tried playing musical chairs, but that didn’t get much further than arranging the chairs. Karaoke was next, with unnamed participants confidently belting out songs they didn’t know the lyrics—or even the tune—to. Then there was an attempt at telling stories about our lives which somehow devolved into me sharing my personal traumas, which, unsurprisingly, no one wanted to reciprocate. The rest of the night was spent hopping through different music genres as several interns itched to take over as DJs. As the night wore on, we realised most people were tired and so, we called it a night.



The next morning kicked off with breakfast. The program directors arrived, and we said our hellos. Honestly, I was bracing myself for a four-hour lecture on the benefits of resident wellness, but to my surprise, they took a different



approach. Apparently, we needed just a little guidance from "the adults" on how to have fun—and fun we did have.

The first activity split the 15 interns into three groups of five, with each group tasked with identifying both the things they had in common and what made each member unique. My group got so caught up discussing our similarities that, when time ran out, we had to wing it through the uniqueness part. But overall, it was a great experience—discovering how much we all had in common while also learning to appreciate the things that made each of us stand out. In a surprising twist, it was revealed that all the program directors, who also joined the activity, were Taylor Swift fans. Soumya was practically beaming with joy—she had earlier asked if I was a fan and was not exactly thrilled with my answer.

Next up was the game “Two Truths and One Lie,” where everyone joined in to spot the lie. Rasika, however, missed the point of the game and gave us all truths. Some standout revelations included Dr. Suryadevara recently catching a huge fish, Siddharth hitchhiking multiple times in a single day in Syracuse last year, Soumya’s ownership of a wild hyena, and Sarah’s experience competing in swimming at a national level.

This was followed by a brief but packed session in which the program directors gave valuable recommendations and strategies for active and passing learning during residency.

The next activity was “Flipping the Mat.” The challenge was to flip a floor mat upside down while all 15 of us residents remained standing on it, without stepping outside the edges. The exercise was designed to promote teamwork among the residents to achieve a shared objective. I must admit, it was quite a challenge—at one point, we were packed together like sardines. But after three attempts, we finally found a strategy that worked.



Now for the highlight of the entire event—the “egg drop” challenge, a long-standing tradition for first years. We were split into groups of threes and given medical supplies along with an egg, tasked with wrapping it securely to survive a drop from a significant height. The program directors went first. After the drop, we didn’t hear a crack, so everyone assumed they’d succeeded. However, I insisted they unwrap it fully to be sure, and—lo and behold—it was intact!



I’ll be the first to admit that the universe has a remarkable sense of humor, and hubris often precedes a fall. I was so confident my team would win this game that I even suggested we throw the egg instead of just dropping it. We had crafted what I believed to be a remarkable contraption, surrounded by multiple cushions of air, and I was certain our egg was invincible. Somehow, I became the villain of the game, with everyone rooting for my egg to break. And, as fate would have it, though the egg survived the drop, it cracked while I was unwrapping it. There was no escaping it—photos of me, head hung in shame, now reside on several interns’ and program directors’ phones, capturing the moment I tried to hide from the judging stares of my teammates.



As the retreat came to a close, we gathered for group photos, smiles all around. I looked at my cracked egg—my unexpected memento—realizing it symbolized something meaningful. Vulnerability, mistakes, and learning go hand-in-hand, and in many ways, the egg was a perfect metaphor for the retreat. Many of us had broken out of our shells, away from the formality of residency to connect more personally. In the end, it wasn’t just about dropping eggs—it was about embracing vulnerability and forging genuine connections.

OCTOBER BIRTHDAYS

10/1 Stuart Trust
10/3 Areeb Mustansar
10/7 Pritha Adhikari
10/15 Alicia Pekarsky
10/18 Jennifer Myszewski
10/19 Kimberly Rush
10/22 Howard Weinberger
10/23 Frank Smith, Suzanne Addabbo
10/28 Michael Markel
10/31 Ibrahim Habib

RESIDENT EXCEPTIONAL MOMENTS IN TEACHING



Michael Kennedy-Yoon, MD, a resident in the Department of Pediatrics at Upstate Medical University, is the **September 2024** recipient of the **Resident Exceptional Moments in Teaching** recognition.

COMMENTS FROM DR. KENNEDY-YOON'S STUDENTS:

“Dr. Kennedy-Yoon has been one of the best residents I have worked with during my clerkship rotations. His constant enthusiasm, care for the patient, and passion for teaching were evident throughout the weeks we spent on service with him. He made the days go quicker and more productively because of his teaching. I aspire to have similar qualities as him when I become a physician.”

“Dr. Kennedy-Yoon was one of the most uplifting and positive residents I’ve worked with during third year. He provides unsolicited positive reinforcement and carries a positive attitude that lifts up the entire team. When he finds room for improvement in the medical students, he mentors. Whether it be a medical or team-building teaching point, he is able to give concrete and specific tips in a discrete manner to help that student improve. In addition to all of this, he personally bought Glazed and Confused donuts for the medical students on his team as well as the medical students on the other pediatrics inpatient team on the last day of service. This shows his commitment to being a genuinely nice leader who looks out for those around him.”

The Norton College of Medicine recognizes exceptional teachers with the monthly “Exceptional Moments in Teaching” program. Honorees are selected via student assessments from courses and clerkships. Recognized teachers—including medical faculty, residents, nurses and other educators—are those who challenge students and provide an exceptional learning experience.