

RURAL TRAINING WILL PROVIDE AREA WITH MORE DOCTORS

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Drs. Kelly Garcia and Paulette Doiron will stay on at the Haywood Health Center after completion of their fellowships.

Haywood—Drs. Paulette Doiron, MD, and Kelly Garcia, MD, began a year-long Maternal Child Health Fellowship through MAHEC in July at Haywood Health Center, where they plan to stay and practice upon completion.

They are both excited to serve a rural area and population and help fill the shortage of primary care physicians.

“It just seems unfair that people have to drive so far to see a doctor, can hardly afford to pay one when they get there, and not be able to find one closer that they trust,” said Garcia. “I hope that by going out there, I can make a difference.”

They both have a love for obstetrics and pediatrics, but ultimately decided they did not want to be limited in the patients they could serve.

Practicing family medicine in a rural area gives them the opportunity to treat the entire family, and the training they

received during their family medicine residency at MAHEC prepared them to do just that.

“I think there are definitely challenges in rural medicine, but I think there are rewards as well,” said Doiron. “You’re more connected with rural patients, at least from what I’ve seen. You’re their ‘family doctor.’”

Some of those challenges include being able to provide comprehensive care for everyone. That’s training they received during their family medicine residencies at MAHEC. The fellowship will also provide them with another level of support as they begin their new career.

Thanks to North Carolina state appropriation funding, MAHEC has expanded its Rural Health Initiative and is able to provide the Maternal Child Health Fellowships, as well as Rural Family Medicine Fellowships in Cherokee and Macon, Yancey and Mitchell counties.

“The fellowships offer additional training in rural medicine and helps these physicians get to know the community and people they will be serving for what we hope are years to come,” said Dr. Julia Oat-Judge, their Fellowship Advisor.

Both Doiron and Garcia say they feel prepared to practice in a rural area and look forward to serving the entire population. But what they most look forward to is building relationships with patients and families and providing the best care they can.

“I look forward to being the family doc where you know their grandma and their kids so you have more of a personal relationship with them,” said Garcia. “Maybe that makes your visits longer, but knowing more about someone really helps you take better care of them.”

Visit www.mahec.net/RHI for more information about MAHEC’s Rural Health Initiative.