

# Med School Watercooler

NEWS FROM FREDERICK P. WHIDDON COLLEGE OF MEDICINE  
AT THE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH ALABAMA

Thursday, June 20, 2019

## Waldrops show support of USA Health's advanced practice providers



The Waldrops recently hosted a summer celebration at the Mitchell Center for USA Health's advanced practice providers. The event gave APPs across the health system the opportunity to come together, share information about the Advanced Practice Providers Council, and support one another.

About one-third of healthcare providers within USA Health are not doctors or registered nurses, but advanced practice providers (APPs), such as nurse practitioners, physician assistants and others.

To help support professional development and education within those professions, University of South Alabama President Tony Waldrop, Ph.D., and his wife, Julee Waldrop, DNP, have established the USA Advanced Practice Providers Fund.

USA Health is the first organization in the area to start such a fund, which is focused on the roughly 130 nurse practitioners, physician assistants, certified nurse anesthetists and certified nurse midwives within the health system. Unlike physicians and RNs, advanced practice providers do not have a line item in the health system's budget.

In 2017, the Waldrops helped create the Advanced Practice Provider Council, made up of at least one member from each of the APP disciplines. The council will administer the Advanced Practice Providers Fund, which can be used to bring in national speakers, develop training units, support new hires, and provide mentors for APPs in the USA Health system.

"Julee has been a phenomenal leader and mentor for APPs," said Noelle Davis, a nurse practitioner in trauma/critical care at USA Health University Hospital. "(The fund) will empower APPs to provide patient-centered and evidence-based care to our patients."

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Julee Waldrop, who practiced as a pediatric nurse practitioner for 25 years in five states, said APPs have to organize and support one another. She said the council is "working hard to make a better environment for advanced practice providers and support them in excellence in patient care."


Lisa Gore, a nurse practitioner in the neonatal intensive care unit at USA Health Children's & Women's Hospital, serves on the APP Council. "Dr. Julee Waldrop has been a key player in developing an organizational structure for APPs within USA Health," Gore said. "She worked with other nurse leaders Lisa Mestas, Valerie Heintz and Beth Anderson to reach out to practicing APPs in the system to identify growth opportunities. The Advanced Practice Provider Council was formed as a result of these efforts."

Even though the APPs are spread throughout the health system, many are isolated within their respective offices and often don't have contact with their colleagues. Through the council and the new fund, they will be given opportunities to network and enjoy fellowship with one another, Julee Waldrop said.

The eventual goal is for the APPs to be officially integrated into USA Health's administrative structure, like physicians and nurses already are. Julee Waldrop pointed to successful APP programs at Texas Children's Hospital and Boston Children's Hospital, which are fully integrated and all started with councils similar to USA's Advanced Practice Provider Council.

Integration at those institutions offer "opportunities for advancement based on education and clinical expertise and impacts on patient outcomes and quality improvement," she said. "Formal integration gives them more power to improve things for patients and families."

[View more photos from the Advanced Practice Providers Summer Celebration on Flickr.](#)

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## Choosing strength in the face of illness

For the first nine months of his life, Laventrice Ridgeway was a happy and laid-back baby. Then one day, he started crying and would not stop.

In search for answers, his grandmother took him to the emergency department where he received a diagnosis that would follow him for the rest of his life – sickle cell disease. "From that day forward, my grandmother made it her mission to learn the ins-and-outs of sickle cell disease," said Ridgeway, who is now in his thirties.

When both parents have the sickle cell trait, there is a one-in-four chance that each of their children will have sickle cell disease. The inherited



Nikki Chason, a nurse practitioner in neurosurgery, speaks at the event for advanced practice providers.

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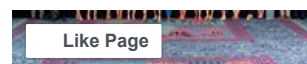
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red blood cell disorder – which causes cell destruction and anemia – can cause pain and other serious problems such as infection and stroke. His diagnosis came just a few years before the universal newborn screening for sickle cell disease became routine in 1988.

Ridgeway said the Pediatric to Adult Care Transition (PACT) Program at the USA Comprehensive Sickle Cell Center played a vital role his life – not only for his health, but also in all aspects of his life.

As a young child, Ridgeway vividly remembers crying as he watched a family member graduate from Loyola University – a notion he only dreamed of, as he thought it would never be possible for him due to his health.

"PACT not only cared for my physical health, they also equipped me with the resources and support outside of medicine that is necessary to succeed in life," he said. "As a first-generation college student, PACT played an integral role in my pursuit to higher education, as they guided me through the college admissions process at the University of South Alabama."

With the guidance provided by the PACT program and the support of his grandmother, Ridgeway entered his freshman year at USA in 2006. He went on to earn his bachelor's degree, master's degree and is now working on his doctorate at USA.

The PACT program also introduced Ridgeway to the Office of Student Disability Services at USA, a much needed resource for students experiencing a range of disabilities. He utilized these resources throughout his undergraduate career, as he often missed class due to his health.

Now, Ridgeway laughs as his life has come "full circle." Currently, he serves as a coordinator for the Office of Student Disability Services at USA – working with students from all walks of life, including those with sickle cell disease.

"I serve as the initial point of contact for students with disabilities that are looking for accommodations from the University," he said. "I see students with a range of disabilities – from learning disorders to cancer and everything in between."


He attributes his grandmother's unwavering pursuit to educate herself about the disease coupled with the top-notch care provided by the USA Health Comprehensive Sickle Cell Center for molding him into the person he is today.

Throughout his childhood, Ridgeway remembers experiencing frequent pain crises that would often result in long hospital stays at USA Health Children's & Women's Hospital. There, he would be confined to a hospital bed as he received intravenous fluids and pain medications.

The pain crisis – triggered by extreme changes in temperature, stressful situations and even dehydration – posed many challenges during his childhood.

According to Ridgeway, the key to living with sickle cell is to have a positive attitude and to become an expert on your specific type of disease. There are six different types of sickle cell disease, and Ridgeway made it his mission to learn everything about HbS beta thalassemia – the type he has.

Though he has experienced trying times, Ridgeway vowed to never let sickle cell define him. "I have to be strong and embrace what makes me unique," he said. "I am just a regular person who happens to have sickle cell. Sickle cell is just one of the many components that make me who I am, and I've grown to love that!"

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**Tuesday, June 18, 2019**

## Future doctor gets interest in medicine, white coat from dad





Dr. Daniel Matthews helps his daughter, Jordan Matthews Smith, into her white coat.

As a youngster, Jordan Matthews Smith followed her father, an orthopedic surgeon, on rounds to see his patients. In high school and college, she followed him farther, on medical mission trips to Kenya and Ecuador where she even scrubbed in and assisted on surgical cases.

Naturally, Smith chose medicine as a career, enrolling at the USA Health College of Medicine after graduating from the University of Virginia in human biology in 2016.




Smith continued in her father's footsteps this past Saturday as the pair stood onstage at the College of Medicine White Coat Ceremony at the Mitchell Center. Dressed in his physician's coat, Dr. Daniel Matthews helped his daughter into her first white coat as a rising third-year medical student. The two shared a long embrace, capturing a special moment during Father's Day weekend.

"It is truly priceless to have someone who really can understand what becoming a doctor involves and who also exemplifies the kind of doctor I want to be," said Smith, who was raised in Fairhope and graduated from Bayside Academy in 2012. "The way he has incorporated faith and prioritized family while being a fantastic physician inspires me."

Smith shares her father's love of the operating room and is considering several surgical specialties including OB/GYN. Later this month, she begins the second half of medical school, where she will trade the classroom for the clinic, where she will rotate through seven clerkships starting with neurology this summer.

"I am really looking forward to exploring all my interests in the upcoming months as a third year," she said.

[View more photos from White Coat Ceremony on Flickr.](#)

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**Monday, June 17, 2019**

## Class of '22 leads service project for National Children's Day



In honor of National Children's Day on June 9, the University of South Alabama College of Medicine Class of 2022 led a service project in which 40 classmates came together to make more than 100 goody bags to donate to USA Health Children's & Women's Hospital.

The goody bags were filled with items to promote health during the summer, including sunglasses, hand sanitizer, toothbrushes, and a summer health bingo game encouraging the children to take charge of their own health and become more involved in their health care.

"We also put fun things in the goody bags like toys and animal masks, as well as notes of love, encouragement and healthy tips from each of our classmates," said Anna Robinson, rising second-year medical student who led the community service event with co-chair Zachary Lazzari.

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