

## Black Belt Health Scholars Program

The **Black Belt Health Scholars Program** is a weeklong health-oriented enrichment program for ninth and tenth graders in Black Belt counties. BBHS began as a pilot program in 2007 with Hale, Marengo, and Perry Counties. Participants were students in the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grades who were interested in health careers. Student who participate in this on-going summer program are chosen by officials of their local school systems the three counties.

Students traveled daily to Judson College where they attended classes in creative writing, math, and science; participated in scholastic exercises and group activities; and explored health careers. They also took field trips to local health care facilities and attended seminars with local health care professionals.

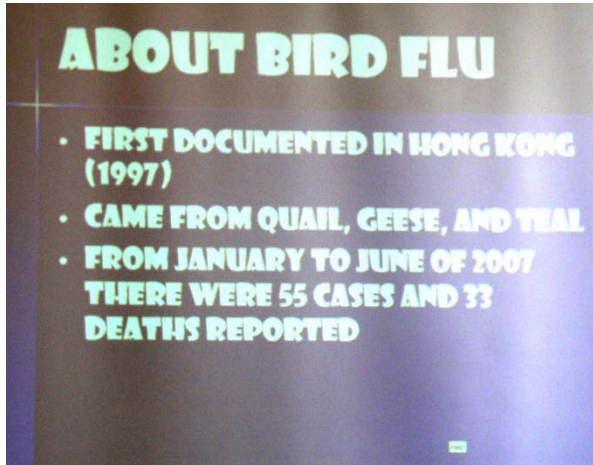
The goal of this program is to nurture and promote the health care aspirations of Black Belt students through partnerships involving local schools, health care facilities, health professionals, and regional colleges and universities. The plan employs summer program experiences to prepare students to compete for the Rural Health Scholars program when they reach 11<sup>th</sup> grade. The expected outcome is an increased number of black belt students entering health care career training and taking positions in the local health care industry.

Program co-directors are **Cynthia Moore** and **Melissa Cox** in The University of Alabama Rural Health Programs Offices.

For more information, contact: [mcox@cchs.ua.edu](mailto:mcox@cchs.ua.edu) or [cmoore@cchs.ua.edu](mailto:cmoore@cchs.ua.edu) or (205) 348-3116.



**Black Belt Health Scholars worked in the computer lab, visited Hale County Hospital and learned about emergency equipment and procedures, researched information on a possible bird flu pandemic and how it would affect their communities, and created presentations to inform the public about bird flu.**



**Black Belt Health Scholars tried on scrubs during a field trip to the hospital in Demopolis.**

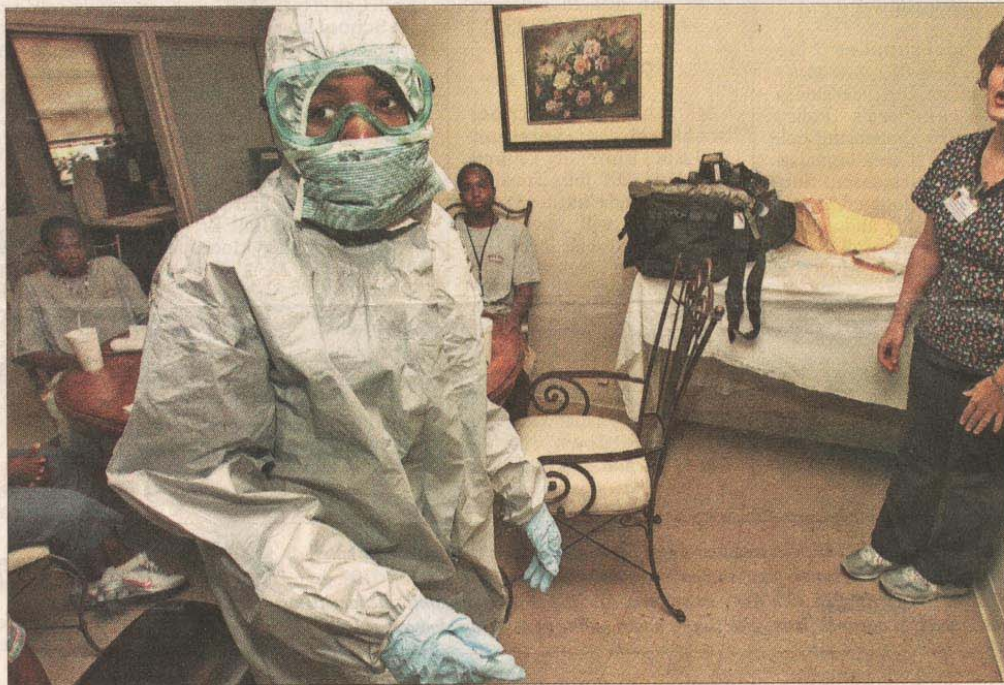
# The Tuscaloosa News

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## Rural health care's future



STAFF PHOTO | MICHAEL E. PALMER

Brittny Brown, 15, a 10th-grader from Demopolis, tries on a haz-mat suit at Hale County Hospital in Greensboro on July 13.

## Medical careers shown to Black Belt students

By Sarah Bruyn Jones  
Staff Writer

### GREENSBORO

**B**rittny Brown wants to be a pediatrician.

Rural health advocates want the 15-year-old to consider practicing medicine in her hometown rather than a larger, urban setting.

Brittny, a rising 10th-grader at John Essex High School in Demopolis, lives in Marengo County.

On Wednesday she was in Greensboro, touring Hale County Hospital as part of a five-day rural scholars program. Held primarily at Judson College in Marion, it is a pilot program developed by the Black Belt



To see a video of students learning about rural health care at Hale County Hospital go to [www.tuscaloosaneews.com](http://www.tuscaloosaneews.com).

Action Commission.

Last week, Brittny spent five days of her summer break learning about the demand for health-care providers in rural communities like hers.

"It's made me think about staying in Marengo and working," she said. "I'm sure there is a need."

Although the possibility of Brittny becoming a doctor is more than a decade away, experts say it's important to plant the needs of rural communities in young scholarly

minds early.

"It is up to each community to find its children with aptitude and the commitment to taking care of folks at home and to nurture them into this pathway of study," said Dr. John Wheat. As vice co-chairman of the Black Belt Action Commission's health committee, he helped organize the program.

"This Black Belt health scholars program is a way that communities in this region of the state may begin to support their own local students in choosing health care careers."

This isn't the first time Wheat has been involved in an effort to attract young rural students into health care

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