

# Rural Scholars Programs Help Meet Need for More Rural Doctors

**Alabama has a critical shortage of rural primary care physicians.**

**Rural students are more likely to live and practice in rural areas.**

- Programs to recruit rural students into medical and health careers and other rural health initiatives have been developed at The University of Alabama to help rural students become physicians.
- The **Rural Health Leaders Pipeline** is a series of programs created at UA whose goal is finding and nurturing capable rural students who are interested in becoming physicians and practicing in their hometowns or similar rural areas of our state.
- These programs are conducted by UA's College of Community Health Sciences (CCHS) and the University of Alabama School of Medicine as part of the "Pipeline" to identify, nurture, and assist rural students who can return to rural Alabama as primary care physicians and health practitioners.
- The "pipeline" includes the programs for high school, minority, premed, and medical students. The "pipeline" also incorporates summer field work and rural research options for students at all levels including rural rotations for medical students and physicians in the CCHS family practice residency.

**HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS:** The *Rural Health Scholars Program*, a 5-week summer program for 11th graders, was set up in 1993 to encourage rural high school students to consider careers in medicine and health professions and let them experience college first-hand. As of October 1, 2007, 391 Rural Health Scholars from 62 counties in Alabama have attended along with 151 *Rural Science Scholars* in a similar UA program for 11th graders that ended in 2006.

**MINORITY STUDENTS:** The *Minority Rural Health Pipeline Program* (MRHPP) was initiated in 2001 in an effort to increase the number of minority students from rural Alabama who qualify for admission to medical school, especially through admission to The University of Alabama Rural Medical Scholars Program (RMSP). 69 minority scholars from 27 counties have participated. These students are finding medical school slots in RMSP at the UA School of Medicine and in the BEAR program (Biomedical Enrichment and Recruitment) at the Univ. of South Alabama College of Medicine. One of these students will enter medical school out of state next summer.

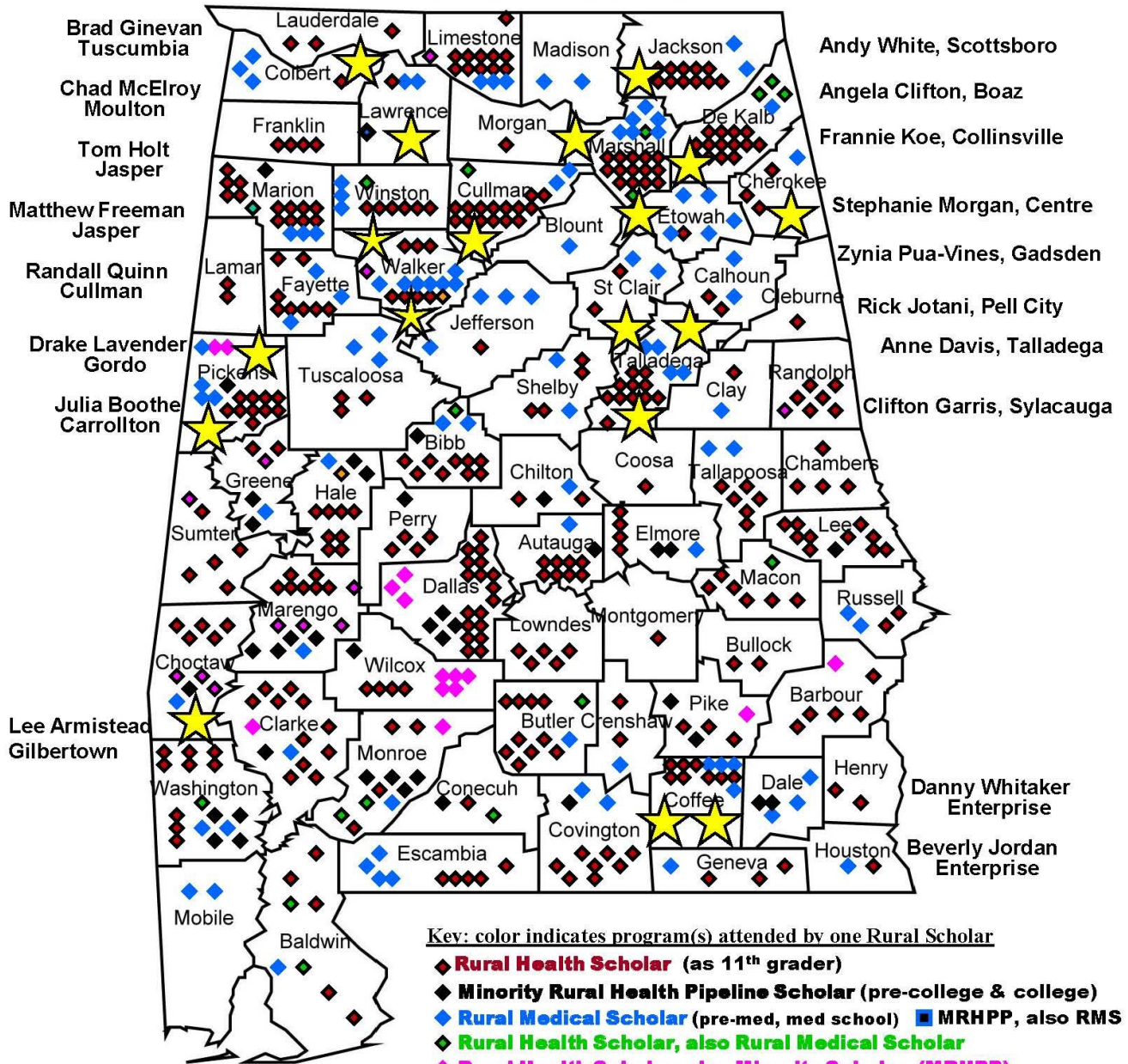
**PREMED COLLEGE & GRADUATES STUDENTS:** The *Rural Medical Scholars Program* accepts ten college seniors and graduate students in the year before they start medical school and they begin the program with a premed year at The University of Alabama studying rural community health and issues in primary care, interacting with rural preceptors, and making farm field trips to learn first hand the problems faced by rural patient populations. To date (October 1, 2007) 127 rural students have entered the RMSP. The first classes to start as Rural Medical Scholars have now finished their training, and eleven have established rural practices in family medicine, pediatrics, or internal medicine. This year's RMS class, the 2007-2008 Rural Medical Scholars, are part of the second decade of RMSP. Rural Medical Scholars now comprise an identifiable portion of every class in medical school and in residency training. Rural Medical Scholars are successful academically and have been chosen for leadership roles by their classmates every year.

- Each year approximately 25 high school Rural Health Scholars, 15 college-level Minority Rural Health Scholars, and 10 Rural Medical Scholars are added to the pipeline. Together these three programs create a pipeline which is full from the eleventh grade through residency training. Students growing up in any of the rural areas of the state are eligible to apply to these programs.
- **The data show that these programs are working.** Family physicians are the doctors most likely to choose rural practice, according to data compiled on rural physician distribution. Of Rural Medical Scholars (RMSs) who have graduated from medical school and have chosen specialty training, about 40% of RMSs have chosen Family Medicine training compared to 6% of their classmates at the University of Alabama School of Medicine.
- The **University of Alabama School of Medicine** is now in the **Top Twenty Rural Medicine programs** in *U.S. News and World Report* listing of "**America's Best Graduate Schools, 2007.**" The only Department of Rural Medicine in UASOM is in CCHS, where Rural Scholars Programs are making an impact.
- RMSP founder and director **John Wheat**, MD, MPH, Professor of Community & Rural Medicine at The University of Alabama, was chosen as **2007 Rural Medical Educator of the Year** by the National Rural Health Association in May. His selection was based primarily on his success in building the Rural Health Leaders Pipeline, which recruits rural students to return to rural areas as health and medical professionals.

# THE UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA

## Rural Scholars Home Counties

### 1993-2008



Brad Ginevan  
Tuscumbia

Chad McElroy  
Moulton

Tom Holt  
Jasper

Matthew Freeman  
Jasper

Randall Quinn  
Cullman

Drake Lavender  
Gordo

Julia Boothe  
Carrollton

Lee Armistead  
Gilbertown

Andy White, Scottsboro

Angela Clifton, Boaz

Frannie Koe, Collinsville

Stephanie Morgan, Centre

Zynia Pua-Vines, Gadsden

Rick Jotani, Pell City

Anne Davis, Talladega

Clifton Garris, Sylacauga

Danny Whitaker  
Enterprise

Beverly Jordan  
Enterprise

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Barbour County, RHS 03, MRHPP 04

UA Rural Scholars Programs: LJ: 11-07

*\*Twelve classes of Rural Medical Scholars are shown on map. Only the first four RMS classes have completed residency training.\**