

Peach State Health Plan and the Medical College of Georgia at Augusta University Announce 2023 Peach State Scholars - Aug. 07, 2023

Scholars will practice in underserved or rural communities statewide, helping to close gaps in access to quality care

ATLANTA, Aug. 7, 2023 /PRNewswire/ -- Last week, leaders from [Peach State Health Plan](#), a care management organization that serves the needs of Georgians through a range of health insurance solutions and wholly owned subsidiary of Centene Corporation, and the Medical College of Georgia at Augusta University, announced the 2023 "Peach State Scholars." The nine medical students were announced during an official pinning ceremony held at Augusta University. The students are the third class of Peach State Scholars participating in the Medical College of Georgia's 3+ Primary Care Pathway Program, a program established in 2021 that focuses on alleviating Georgia's physician shortage.

According to the 2022 Georgia Board of Health Care Workforce Report, nine counties in Georgia have no physicians, 18 counties have no family medicine physicians, 40 counties have no internists, 65 counties have no pediatricians, 82 counties have no OB/GYNs, 80 counties have no general surgeons, 90 counties have no psychiatrists, and 73 counties have no emergency medicine physicians. These ongoing shortages have resulted in serious gaps in access to quality health care in many areas of rural and underserved Georgia.

The MCG3+ Primary Care Pathway Program allows students to finish their medical school training in three, rather than four years, before directly entering a primary care residency in Georgia. In exchange for their commitment to serve in a rural or underserved area of the state, these students will receive a scholarship for tuition.

"Our partnership with Peach State Health Plan has been critical to getting the MCG3+ Primary Care Pathway Program off the ground to address Georgia's doctor shortages," said Augusta University President Brooks A. Keel, PhD. "Georgia is losing doctors in many of its underserved areas for a variety of reasons, including retirement of aging doctors and the desire of young doctors to open practices in more populated areas. These Peach State Scholars will help address these shortages for years to come."

"We have been proud to support the MCG3+ Primary Care Pathway program since its inception and are excited to see it expand into its third year with the 2023 Peach State Scholars," said Peach State Health Plan CEO, Wade Rakes. "These medical students will soon be on the front line of medical care in Georgia's underserved communities. As this innovative program continues, together, we'll help develop more doctors and create more sustainable access to quality medical care in rural communities across Georgia."

The scholarship fund and ongoing support for the MCG3+ Primary Care Pathway Program were made possible by a \$5.2 million donation from Peach State Health Plan in 2021. In 2021, Governor Brian Kemp and the Georgia General Assembly matched Peach State Health Plan's initial \$5.2 million in funding help to kickstart the program. In 2022, Governor Kemp and the Georgia General Assembly added an additional \$8.7 million to the program, which was matched by the Medical College of Georgia Foundation.

The 2023 Peach State Scholars, their hometowns and intended specialty are as follows:

- Jordan Bothwell of Roswell, GA, Emergency Medicine
- Madison Chimenti of Canton, GA, Emergency Medicine
- Christopher "Chris" Dick of Dunwoody, GA, Internal Medicine
- Samantha Feinstein of Hartsfield, GA, Pediatrics
- Jessica McElrath of Woodstock, GA, Pediatrics
- Brianna "Taylor" Nicholson of Suwanee, GA, Psychiatry
- Caleb Padgett of Langley, SC, Internal Medicine
- Blayne Thomason of Dalton, GA, OB/GYN
- Peter-Jon Williams of Douglasville, GA, Internal Medicine

About Medical College of Georgia

The Medical College of Georgia at Augusta University is one of the nation's largest medical schools by class size, with 264 students per class. The educational experience is anchored by the main campus in Augusta, regional clinical campuses for third- and fourth-year students across the state and a second four-year campus in Athens in partnership with the University of Georgia. MCG's expanding partnerships with physicians and hospitals across Georgia currently provides about 350 sites where students can experience the full spectrum of medicine, from complex care hospitals to small-town solo practices. MCG and its teaching hospitals also provide postgraduate education to more than 500 residents and fellows in more than 50 different Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education-approved programs.

About Peach State Health Plan

Peach State Health Plan is a Care Management Organization that serves the needs of Georgians through a range of health insurance solutions. Peach State Health Plan serves the Medicaid and PeachCare for Kids® population in partnership with Georgia Families. The organization also focuses on under-insured and uninsured individuals through its federal insurance marketplace plan, Ambetter, and its Medicare Advantage Special Needs Plan. Peach State Health Plan is a wholly owned subsidiary of Centene Corporation. For more information visit www.pshp.com.

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