



Journeys

THE SIENA COLLEGE / ALBANY MEDICAL COLLEGE PROGRAM

2022

Back In Action

– Ray Walsh’74, M.D.

A few years ago, I wrote a small piece for “Journeys” that consisted primarily of me introducing myself as I took over for Dr. LaRow. To say that a lot has happened since then is an understatement! In March of 2020, like many other schools, Siena closed down due to the COVID lockdown. It was so sad to see the campus empty during beautiful spring weather. The Siena / AMC students all adjusted quickly to this new form of education. The transition to remote learning was certainly not easy for anyone, but Siena faculty and tech services worked hard to make sure our students got the education they deserve. We discovered a lot about the advantages and limitations of remote learning. More importantly we all discovered some things about ourselves too and all those things we sometimes

take for granted: being with friends, walking to class, grabbing a coffee during a break, study groups, and all those daily interactions that make life routine-- and meaningful!

In 2020, there were really no service opportunities for the Summer of Service because of the lockdown, fears of disease transmission, and quarantines. In 2021, the Summer of Service returned, but this time all students had to find domestic programs. All of the Juniors arranged meaningful and valuable experiences within the borders of the US. For this summer of 2022, Child Family Health International (CFHI) is up and running again to provide our students with safe service activities in other nations. The first group of students, who used CFHI a few years back, all had wonderful experiences and I am happy and grateful that these

can be provided to the students once again. All expenses for the Summer of Service continue to be paid by a program endowment fund so there are no out-of-pocket expenses for any of the students whether they go abroad or stay in the US.

We are now facing COVID and its variants, war in Ukraine, rampant inflation, endless political rhetoric, mass shootings, climate change, excess screen time, and monkeypox. People seem to be increasingly angry and volatile, with very little patience and little respect for others. Our program students continue with sharing, compassion, kindness, and concern for others. All of you who are reading this should be proud and grateful for the values instilled in us by a Franciscan education at Siena. The world needs to change and, if we all work together, that can happen.

AMC Class of 2022 Match List

Greg Altman – Family Medicine, Martin Army Community Hospital

- Distinction in Service
- Gold Humanism Honor Society
- LT:TL Excellence
- Mankes Memorial Award
- Feldstein FM Award
- David Goodman Alumni Scholarship
- Commissioned at graduation (Army)

Katie Burke – Med-Peds, U Mass Chan

- Magna cum laude
- Alpha Omega Alpha Honor Society
- Gold Humanism Honor Society
- Harold Wiggers Award

Divya Dasani – Internal Medicine, U Miami Jackson Health System

- Distinction in Service

Tom Draper – Neurology, Montefiore

Samir El-Sawaf – Family Medicine, UPenn

- Gold Humanism Honor Society
- Edmonds Alumni prize
- Feldstein FM Award

Kathryn Fortune – Internal Medicine, UVA

- Lamb Foundation Prize
- Albert Yunich Prize

Kristiana Hanna – Med-Peds, Stony Brook

- Distinction in Service
- Distinction in Advocacy
- Gold Humanism Honor Society
- MSSNY Community Service Prize

Monica Hanna – Pediatrics, NYU-LI School of Medicine

- Distinction in Advocacy

Sharon Hsu – Physical Medicine & Rehabilitation, Rutgers University

Irene Joseph – Obstetrician/Gynecologist, Nassau University Medical Center

Katherine Lipinski – General Surgery, UMass Baystate

Jenn Park – General Surgery, Penn State Hershey

- Gold Humanism Honor Society
- Commissioned at graduation (Army)

Erik Reidel – Med-Peds, U Tennessee

- Gold Humanism Honor Society

Sam Sattler – Dermatology, Stony Brook

- Magna cum laude
- Distinction in Advocacy
- Alpha Omega Alpha Honor Society
- Richard Barnett Award

John Stone – Internal Medicine, Boston University

- Magna cum laude
- Distinction in Service
- Alpha Omega Alpha Honor Society
- Gold Humanism Honor Society

Brian Talbot – Family Medicine, Lancaster General Hospital

- Gold Humanism Honor Society
- LT:TL Excellence
- Feldstein FM Award

Alexa Trovato – Internal Medicine, Boston University

- Cum laude
- Distinction in Research
- Alpha Omega Alpha Honor Society

Niki Wadhwa – Internal Medicine, Virginia Commonwealth University

Our Summer in Georgia

- Nathaniel Kim '22 & Annamaria Walden '22

For our Summer of Service, we spent the summer working at a summer camp in Fayetteville, Georgia. The camp had a special focus on kids with neurodiversity, kids from underserved communities, and promoting diversity and acceptance. Working as a staff coordinator (Nathaniel Kim) and a program coordinator on the ropes course (Annamaria Walden), we met a ton of great kids and made lifelong friends with fellow counselors.



During our time, we met many campers whose stories will stay with us forever. One story that particularly stuck with me (Annamaria), was one camper James. At only 10 years old, he was noticeably heavier than other campers. And while other campers and even counselors made fun of his weight while he struggled in some of the outdoor activities like the ropes course, I stayed

with him and encouraged him. From activity to activity, we stayed together, got closer, and had fun. Then, on our last night he shared with me at dinner that he hoped we would have ice cream for dessert because he had only ever seen ice cream on T.V. I was shocked. Not only because I thought ice cream was something that every child ate, but also here was this 10-year-old boy who had never even seen it in person.

Siena taught us about food deserts and how some communities don't have access to healthy foods. So while other campers and counselors scoffed at this camper and thought that he only ate ice cream and junk food because of his weight, I knew that he didn't have a choice and that he deserved to be treated just like everyone else.

Besides the campers, we also struggled a lot with upper management and how they treated their minority staff members, even though they preached a commitment to diversity. In particular, there was one staff member who was constantly treated with disrespect and brushed to the

side when she brought up instances where the upper management was being racist. I (Nate) was actually on the same staff level as her, so I began to speak up for her in order to make a change within the camp culture. In the end, we were able to have staff members who made racist comments receive disciplinary action, and we even helped form a diversity committee where staff members could freely talk to upper management about promoting diversity.



Through this experience, we grew a lot as individuals and gained a deeper understanding of service. First, always keep an open mind about others and their experiences. Second, advocacy is a huge part of serving others. And lastly, the service you thought you were going to do, might not be the only service you end up doing.

Creating New Traditions: The Senior Celebration

In the aftermath of the pandemic, the Siena/AMC family gets back together for a new tradition. We're all familiar with the classic picnic in the fall. But this spring, the Siena/AMC program got together and had the first ever Senior Celebration! The event was held at the Serra Manor where we had good food, good laughs and smiles all around.

This event was created to celebrate the graduating MS4's and Siena seniors. The MS4's were called up one by one to receive a gift and showcase their residency match results. They then bestowed onto the seniors little gifts that they thought would be helpful for medical school. These ranged from framed quotes, and anatomy textbooks, to candy and shirts. A Siena professor was also

nominated and voted for by the Siena seniors for who had the most impact on their year throughout their four years at Siena. This year, the award went to Dr. Rachel E. Sterne-Marr, Department Chair and Professor of Biochemistry or Genetics to many of the seniors and played a role in course advising.

The event was initiated by Dr. Kate Wagner and we can't thank her enough for bringing everyone together again after a few hard years. We had attendance from Dr. LaRow, Dr. Walsh, Mrs. Eileen Martino, Br. Brian, and students throughout all eight years of the program. We can't wait for the next one! After all, traditions are what makes a family a family.



Siena Seniors (Siena '22 / AMC '26) & Dr. Walsh



MS4's (Siena '18 / AMC '22) & Dr. LaRow

Freshmen Insights: Siena Class of '25

Erin McCabe:

My freshman year has been amazing! The campus is beautiful and the teachers are constantly supportive. I was very worried about being away from home, but the community at Siena made my homesickness go away almost instantly. Being part of this special program has provided me with additional support among the members. Even though I know the next few years will be rigorous, I am looking forward to the challenge knowing that I have such a solid support system in the program and at Siena in general!

Grace Dobrzynski:

My freshman year experience at Siena was so special. As a member of the women's lacrosse team and the AMC program, I found that I had a really unique and diverse support system. I was surrounded by a network of 8 years of Siena and AMC students who immediately made me feel like I was part of a greater community. Having so much support around me made Siena feel like home, and I

can't imagine myself going to school anywhere else.

Dani Ghanem:

When I was accepted into the Siena/AMC program I was thrilled and thankful to be a part of a program that prioritizes service. Although I was still hesitant at first to come all the way from California, that quickly changed when I met the students at Siena and especially the students in the program. They are all so helpful and everyone wants to see you succeed. The upperclassmen helped with classes and always asked if we needed any help in classes. I also enjoyed not having to deal with extreme academic stress like a traditional undergraduate. I couldn't have asked for a better freshman year and I hope to start getting more involved in some clubs on campus. There are so many clubs that have piqued my interest like best buddies, EMT club, and habitat for humanity. I look forward to another great year next year.



Skyler Han:

From the minute I knew I was coming to Siena, I remember my feelings of excitement and anticipation being equally met with nervousness and anxiousness. Moving across the country would be an entirely different experience in itself, but so was this new learning environment that based its education on diversity, optimism, respect, and service above all. I know it's what made my first year at Siena something I'd never forget. From having extremely caring professors who would send personalized emails calming students' anxieties before an exam, to being able to find endless service opportunities on and off campus, and to having a built in friend group of 15 to share both successes and struggles with, I know my experience has been like no other. As this year has come to a close, I've realized that time on campus as a student is short-lived (as cliché as it may seem), and in the coming years, I want to continue to strive to make each year more memorable, exciting, and endearing as the last, constantly exploring all that Siena has to offer! I know it's what I look forward to doing as I continue my Siena journey this coming fall :)

Asavari Gowda:

My freshman year at Siena went by in a flash. I feel like it was just last week when my parents dropped me off at Plassmann Hall and I got lost trying to find the laundry room. Being a Saint and a part of the Siena/AMC program has allowed me to engage in my community in meaningful ways while pursuing my pre-medical education. Whether it's packing meals in the dining hall kitchen, spending time with the kids in San Damiano Refugee partnership, or planning Relay for Life, I've been able to build strong relationships within the

community. The people I have met through service, particularly through SDRP, keep me grounded and remind me of the importance behind understanding and caring for a community. Outside of service, I also enjoy running around Loudonville with the running club and writing for our newspaper, The Promethean. The professors at Siena are extremely supportive and go out of their way to get to know students and help them succeed. This past year, I have met some of my best friends and made many unforgettable memories. The Siena family is helping me become the person I want to be.

Thea Akhrass:

I am so grateful for my first-year experience at the Siena College /Albany Medical College Program. It is a blessing to be surrounded by supportive, kind, and positive-spirited peers, upperclassmen, professors, and advisors! Siena's identity as a Franciscan school has allowed me to grow compassionately and be mindful of my service to others. I have had the opportunity to be involved with campus ministry and Psalm 150, the music group that performs at Mass, as well as some community service organizations like the San Damiano Refugee Partnership. In addition, getting to take seminar-style humanities classes, such as First Year Seminar, while on the pre-med track has been an enriching addition to my education as a future medical student. This program has put me on the path to my goals of becoming a selfless, empathetic physician who can understand a patient's suffering and communicate successfully. Thanks to everyone who makes the program possible, and I look forward to continue growing in my future years at Siena/AMC!!

