



SEPTEMBER 28, 2011

Photo by Matt Durnan

IS THERE A DOCTOR IN THE HOUSE?

U of M family medicine residents circulate around the gymnasium at R.D. Parker Collegiate at the BRHA retreat.

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BY MATT DURMAN

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The Burntwood Regional Health Authority (BRHA) and the Dauphin-based Office of Rural and Northern Health (ORNH) partnered last weekend to host a retreat for University of Manitoba family medicine residents.

The Office of Rural and Northern Health opened in September 2002 and the Regional Health Authorities of Manitoba Inc. (RHAM) oversees the operation of the office.

The weekend kicked off with a meet-and-greet on Friday Sept. 23 at the Juniper Centre, where the residents and their family members were given a welcome to Thompson. Three physician heads greeted the residents on behalf of Dr. Hussam Azzam and gave them a run down on the weekend's itinerary.

Seventy-one students along with 60 of their family members attended a job fair on Saturday Sept. 24 at R.D. Parker Collegiate. The gymnasium was set up with tables for over 20 different pavilion representatives. Tables were set up for health authorities from different regions, as well as for local companies such as Vale.

Donelda Parenteau, medical resources co-ordinator with the BRHA, was an integral part in bringing this retreat to Thompson.

"This is a really important event that happens yearly in rural Manitoba and this year Thompson had the opportunity to step up and host it," said Parenteau. "A lot of work goes into this and we have to find partnerships and sponsors in order for this to run smoothly."

The retreat caters not only to the university residents, but to their family members as well.

"We have companies such as Vale here to provide information on employment opportunities that aren't just in the medical field," said Parenteau, "Some of these people are married and moving here is a big decision, so they want to know that there are jobs available for their spouses as well."

The residents in attendance were given a choice of seminars hosted by different physicians throughout the course of the day. Seminars included information on things such as general surgery techniques, women's health, the use of telehealth in the ER, and ultrasound in today's practice.

"We have a wide array of information available here, and the attendees are given the choice of what interests them and what they want to have a more in depth look at," said Parenteau.

The ORNH co-organized the event and had their own pavilion set up at the job fair.

Dr. Don Klassen and Wayne Heide of ORNH were present all day, providing information for those in attendance.

"What we do is provide a link between the university and the rural health authorities," said Klassen, "the university students finish their education and residencies, and often times they don't really know what's out there for them, so that's why we put on an event such as this."

The retreat has been in existence since 2004, and this year marked the first time Thompson has hosted it. Resident participation has increased yearly, as well as the percentage of participants,

"Right now we're at about 70 per cent participation from residents," said Heide, "and we have between 130 and 140 residents and family members attending."

Some residents will be ready to start in their field of family medicine as early as this coming June, and the retreat provides them with a gateway to their future careers. Klassen says that it's not just a benefit to the residents but the regional health associations as well.

"It's a two-way street really," said Klassen. "A lot of the regional health authorities don't know what's out there, and before this retreat was started they didn't have a way to reach out to residents and bring them in. From this event, I know for sure that to date, each region that's represented here has been able to recruit at least one resident."

The University of Manitoba will host a similar event in January to provide information to the residents who could not make the trip to Thompson. Next year's retreat will be held in Steinbach.