

## FAFP SEPTEMBER MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

**Pamela Knickerbocker, DO**

*Sebring, FL*



On a plane, the safety presentation will always include the instruction to secure your own face mask before assisting others. It makes a lot of sense, since you aren't going to be of much use to anyone else if you aren't taking care of your own safety. I think this holds true for the patients that we are trying to care for as well. If the physician is impaired by fear, hurt, low confidence, and lack of knowledge, it's not likely they will perform from a place of excellence. It is my goal to help young doctors realize they are the ones that can be secure, rested, healthy, and able to help others. I have a passion for medical education that was born of an experience that wasn't positive, but resulted in an epiphany about who I wanted to be to other resident and student learners. We all have a defining moment, and mine was the second day as a "real doctor" when the senior resident, who was supposed to be my mentor for my first 24+ hour shift, just wasn't. I was in a large hospital as the intern "house officer" with pediatric, adult medicine, and ICU patients, without a senior resident; who had disappeared for the night. I could have used many things that evening including support, learning, the call room door code, and the location of the restrooms, but it was not to be. I realized that I never wanted to put someone else in that situation. I wanted to provide a psychologically safe place for learners to ask questions, to make

mistakes, to be vulnerable without fear, and to become doctors that we could trust to care for our family members.

Every day, I intentionally infuse "family" into family medicine and "health" back into healthcare, by helping to develop physicians that are cared for and have their needs supported. Through rigorous education, delivered during reasonable hours with time for medical appointments, CME, and vacation, I feel that we are helping to answer the need in the looming shortage of primary care doctors. I am also promoting a culture in which we are not just speaking of wellness, but we are actively seeking rest, celebration, and joy in what we do. In my years as a family medicine physician, I have been blessed with many opportunities to learn, lead, and teach. I have been active in medical education almost every year since graduating from residency. I currently serve as the Program Director for the Advent Health Family Medicine Residency in Sebring. It is a wonderful privilege to give and invest in these young physicians and their careers. I have tried to utilize my experiences in private practice by serving as medical director for a drug and alcohol rehabilitation program and multiple state level committees. Previously, as a hospital chief of staff and executive board member, I was also a founding director of a fellowship program and medical director of a FM residen-

cy, to better mentor my residents. I truly believe that every ER shift, every hour providing inpatient care, every nursing home encounter, and every clinic day has brought me to this moment in time where I can share what I have learned for the betterment of their educational experience.

When I am not working with my faculty team and residents, I love to spend time with my husband, adult children, and new granddaughter. We enjoy exploring Florida, the ocean, and finding so many fun activities. We have a great time at Disney and visit often. We are animal lovers with many dogs, cats, and horses. We have livestock, such as pigs, chickens, ducks, rabbits, and goats, to keep us busy as well. We enjoy open water diving, game nights, and great meals. We like to travel and seek out escape rooms and unusual tours any place we can. We enjoy any new adventures together. My heart is full both personally and professionally. It is my goal to contribute to the growth of physicians that will not replicate me, but greatly exceed me in all areas. If you are not currently teaching and mentoring those physicians coming up behind you, I would encourage you to consider doing so. Not only do they need you as a mentor, you will also receive the excitement and fulfillment of seeing medicine anew in the eyes of a student or resident physician.