

CLASS NOTES

1954 Reunion

September 20•21, 2024

1959 Reunion

September 20•21, 2024

George (Sandy) A. Lamb, of Portland, OR, served after graduation with Alex Langmuir, MD, MPH, in the Public Health Service before returning to Syracuse to teach at Upstate in the 1960s and early 1970s. He later followed Julius Richmond, MD, from Syracuse to Boston, where he eventually became head of health and hospitals for the city of Boston, playing a key role in fighting the AIDS epidemic. In the early 1990s, Dr. Lamb retired, and he and his wife, Ruth, moved to a remote Adirondack valley where they lived off-grid for 15 years, growing much of their own food and observing nature. They then lived in Queensbury, NY, until March 2023, before moving into the house of their son and his wife, Glenn and Sue Knight of Portland, OR. They now appreciate visits from daughter Bonnie, son Bruce, and his wife, Samia Hasan, and grandkids Raza and Noura. Bruce leads the Stark Neuroscience Institute at Indiana University, where they are making important headway in understanding (and hopefully treating) Alzheimer's disease. Lamb sends his greetings to classmates and former students.

1960

Julian M. Aroesty, of Scituate, MA, has not yet retired. He enjoys cycling on nice days and continues to review cardiology malpractice cases for the Harvard self-insured program, and doing second-opinion consultations for Teladoc International, sometimes in Spanish when they recognize his Basque family name. "We have moved a few minutes away from grandchildren Hayden Julian (six) and Claire Everly (four)," he writes. "Helping them learn to read and do addition is a joy."

1961

Carlo R. deRosa, of Placida, FL, writes that he is "ungracefully getting older."

Howard R. Nankin, of Columbia, SC, shares that he and **Jack L. Cohen** were friends in Brooklyn, NY, until the end of sixth grade when one of them moved. They renewed their friendship on the first day of medical school at Upstate in 1957 and in February 2024, they met again in Delray, FL!



Jack L. Cohen '61 and Howard R. Nankin '61

1963

Malcolm E. Levine and his wife, Margie, continue to enjoy Palm Beach Gardens, FL, but return to the Hamptons each summer to enjoy their children and grandchildren. "Our grandson Ryan is now engaged to Lindsay and our granddaughter Maddie is engaged to Matt," he writes. "My interests continue to be golf, bridge, and photography, and recently, I have been exploring the use of AI. I hope my classmates are enjoying their retirement as much as Margie and I are."

1964 Reunion

September 20•21, 2024

Edward Burak, of Englewood Cliffs, NJ, sold his imaging center in Milburn in 2020 and now works remotely from his house for Radnet. "I still play tennis and exercise," he writes. "My son **Jarett Burak '02** is chief of MSK radiology for Radiology Partners and lives in Roslyn, NY. My daughter Sabrina is a special education teacher in Orangeburgh, NY, and lives in Piermont. I have four grandchildren and life is good. My brother **George Burak** retired from orthopedic practice in Tarrytown, NY, and lives in Edgemont, NY."

Stanley B. Burns, of New York, NY, holds a new position at the New York University Grossman School of Medicine. In addition to being research professor of medicine and psychiatry, professor of medical humanities and

adjunct professor of OB/GYN, he is now a lecturer in the Department of Bioethics. Dr. Burns is founder of the Burns Archive, a collection of more than one million historic photographs he has collected. He has written 50 books and more than 1,100 articles, curated more than 100 exhibitions, and consulted on dozens of documentaries and feature films. On February 2, Burns combined his interest in medical humanities, OB/GYN, and historic photography in a lecture on post-mortem photographic history and its use in medicine today. Postmortem memorial photography was a popular cultural tradition in the 19th and early 20th centuries. He has written three texts on the subject and created public awareness of the use of photography in bereavement. His work has influenced decades of artists, filmmakers, and curators. In this lecture, he presented the history of postmortem photography and explains how it has become popular in the obstetrics field, as photographs of stillborn infants has become routine in hospitals around the globe. To learn more watch "The Practice and Evolution of Postmortem-Memorial Photography" from the link at www.burnsarchive.com/historical-death-memorial.



Judy and Jack Egnatinsky '65 in Egypt

1965

Jack Egnatinsky, of Christiansted, VI, and his wife, Judy, had a wonderful trip to Egypt visiting amazing sites from Luxor to Alexandria. "The Egyptian people were friendly and very respectful and helpful to an old couple of Americans," he writes.

1966

Neal M. Friedberg, of New York, NY, has been retired for 17 years, married for 57 years, but is still in the fifth grade, per his wife.

A. Michael Kaplan, of Delray Beach, FL, is floating back and forth from Delray Beach, FL, to the Massachusetts Berkshires. "All is well," he writes. "Saw Upstate Medical University this past spring and can't believe the changes."

1967

Harold (Hal) C. Burchel, of Pickerington, OH, writes "I'm now 83 and many from my class have gone to their eternal rewards. My second wife, Mary Ellen, and I returned to Kenya for the month of February. We continue to be the stateside directors of our ministry there, called Touch a Life for His Kingdom. Our Kenyan directors are David and Vicky Bainito. We not only evangelize and disciple new converts, but we are



David and Vicky Bainito and Mary Ellen and Harold C. Burchel '67

involved in many humanitarian programs. We assist a number of high school students in the slum who could not continue their education because of lack of funds. We feed more than 100 men weekly who work at the dumpsites and listen to a stirring discipleship lesson before they are fed. Ten of these fellows, who were previously sleeping on the ground, have stopped drinking alcohol and using drugs and have been able to rent a room. When this happens, we give them a bed as a reward for their hard work. We were able to rent a lovely ministry center right in the middle of the slum. This is filled daily with young people who are being given a biblical world view and who are being developed into mature, confident, and competent young adults, and who will go out to change their world. I would love to hear from old classmates. My email is: hburchel@gmail.com."

Robert L. Bard '68, of New York, NY, presented "Bioenergy Treatment of Inflammation" at the UltraCon Symposium, a global conference held April 6–10 in Austin, TX.

1969 Reunion

September 20-21, 2024

Gary S. Luckman, of Oakland Park, FL, is a practicing gastroenterologist in Fort Lauderdale, where everybody else goes to retire. "Into my 50th year, I am founder and first president of DigestiveCare, a 50-person, 20-office practice in south Florida. I sold to GastroHealth over 300 GI's in 10 states. I am now just scoping and playing golf. I am happily married with three kids and four grandchildren. Life is good as long as you have your health."

John T. McCarthy and **Jane Lowinger Falkenstein**, of Troy, NY, celebrated two milestones during 2023—their 80th birthdays and their 16th wedding anniversary. "We are looking forward to attending our 55th class reunion in September. We hope **Bill Vacek**, **Jerry Selzer**, and **Joann Dale** will be among the attendees."

CLASS NOTES

1974 Reunion September 20-21, 2024

James H. Brodsky, of Potomac, MD, writes, "Looking forward to our 50th reunion."

Maria Shevchuk Chaban, of New York, NY, is very much looking forward to her 50th reunion and seeing College of Medicine classmates in September. In 2008, she organized the Urology/GU Surgical Pathology specialty sign-out division at Weil-Cornell Medical Center, with related resident training and research. She also became chair of the College of American Pathology Committee on in vivo microscopy. This group of technologies renders in vivo intra-procedural histology images comparable to light microscopy. One of these technologies is now widely used in ophthalmology: OCT. The timing of her retirement was fortunate, occurring during the pandemic. She keeps herself busy with art photography, poetry, and her family, which currently includes 11 members.



Charles F. Edwards '74 in the operating room on his last day after 45 years of practice

Charles (Fess) Edwards, of San Diego, CA, finally retired completely on December 29, 2023, at the age of 75, after doing surgery assists for the last five years or so. He is happily married to Noel from Syracuse who continues working for the City of San Diego paramedic service. One son is an anesthesiologist in Bethesda, MD, and

the other a lawyer in San Diego, defending wayward doctors in his administrative medical law practice. Edwards is still very active in his passion for skydiving with plans to attempt another world record in Arizona in March 2024 for skydivers over 70. "I'm also driving up to Los Angeles every once in a while to serve as a background actor/extra," he writes. "Look real hard for me in the third season of Hacks on MAX. Living life to the fullest and making every day count."

J. Peter Gregoire, of Romulus, NY, had the wonderful experience of taking four of his five grandchildren and two daughters, on a trip to travel the circumference of Iceland. "We went in June 2023, and experienced nearly 24 hours of daylight," he writes. "If you can make the trip, we highly recommend it."



J. Peter Gregoire '74 with his family in Iceland

1975

Joseph W. Helak, of Wilmington, NC, officially retired. He enjoys spending time with his five grandchildren, playing piano, singing in a choir and "trying to play" golf.

MD, are riding their bicycles from Cairo to Cape Town. "After working in Africa for many years, I am now able to visit many of the countries that I could never afford to or had time to visit," he writes.

Mark W. Zilkoski, of Wolf Point, MT, didn't like retirement so continues to work a little. "We celebrated my 73rd and Myrle's 70th birthdays (we share the same birthday) in February. Eight of our nine kids, 11 of the 23 grandkids, and a few

1977

Vincent M. Waite, of Chelmsford, MA, and his partner, Sheila Morehouse,



Marie Shevchuk Chaban '74 and family



Mark W. Zilkoski '77 and family

spouses attended," he writes. "It was my best birthday ever!"

1979 Reunion

September 20•21, 2024

1980

Ruth H. Hart, of Manlius, NY, brought her credentialed therapy dog, Monty, a wirehaired dachshund, regularly to her Literature in Medicine class during fall semester 2023. "Having never had a dog myself, being able to absorb his moments of joyfulness as he wagged his tail or snug-



Christine E. Zhang '25 with Monty

gled into me made me feel an added sense of companionship," shared medical student Christine E. Zhang.

Gerald B. Rakos, of Stamford, CT, has officially retired after 38-plus years at Stamford Health, including 34 as director of neonatology and the last 20 as chair of pediatrics. "Looking forward to golfing, travel, and time with family," he writes.

1981

Diane M. Cavallaro Castellano, of Clinton, NY, returned from a Viking Ocean Cruise with dear friends in January that traveled from Athens to Istanbul. "I've always loved to travel," she writes. "I have been fortunate to see many interesting places all



Diane Cavallaro Castellano '81

over the world in my life. Both of my husbands had loved to travel too when they were alive. I've continued, even though I use a cane now."

1982

Alan J. Goodman, of New York, NY, and **Catherine M. Vernon '87** met up at Lake George during summer 2023.



Alan J. Goodman '82 and Catherine M. Vernon '87

Stephen M. Kinne, of Chittenango, NY, and three classmates got together in October 2023 as part of a volunteer crew building a new section of the North Country Trail near Boonville, NY. Kinne has been the head of trail construction/maintenance for the CNY Chapter of the North Country Trail Association for about 15

years. **Dave Fay**, his 45-year backpacking partner, came from Leesburg, VA, and has volunteered previously. **Brad Mersereau** of Clarence, NY, and **Larry Stewart** of Fayetteville, NY, also joined the crew. All the trail work was done with hand tools and involved excavating, shoveling, raking, building steps, and rock turnpikes. "What better way to spend your free time than doing manual labor with old friends?" he writes. "We plan to be back together next season to help complete the three-year trail project. Anyone wishing to join the fun can contact me at AT2hike@yahoo.com."



Larry Stewart '82, Brad Mersereau '82, Dave Fay '82, and Steve Kinne '82

Alexander E. Weingarten '80, of Holliswood, NY, shares, "My son **Michael J. Weingarten '21** welcomed our fifth grandchild, a girl. He is currently a dermatology resident at Case Western Hospital in Cleveland, OH. I continue to practice anesthesia and pain management on Long Island."

CLASS NOTES

Mark A. Rothschild, of Lady Lake, FL, is a semi-retired cardiologist with an active office practice in The Villages. "We built a second home in Plymouth, MA, in a large development called Pine Hills about 25 minutes away from where my daughter and her family live," he writes. "We now have two grandchildren. I will be giving a presentation of my travels in 44 countries to the art society there in May, my website is: markrothschildphoto.com."



Ephesus, Turkey. Photo by Mark A. Rothschild '82

1983

Joseph H. Keogh, of Boston, MA, missed his 40th class reunion last year, so organized one with some local classmates



Joe Keogh '83, Zack Spigelman '83, Liz Blatt, Jerry Murphy '83, Andrea Spigelman, Tracy Keogh, and Steve Blatt '83

Zack Spigelman, Steve Blatt and **Jerry Murphy** in Boston in January 2024. "It was great to see everyone and we had a wonderful weekend catching up, dining out, and even went curling. The wives (Tracy Keogh, Liz Blatt, and Andrea Spigelman) won the competition! You can see in the photo that Joe designed special reunion jackets for the outdoor event."

Joseph P. Laukaitis, of Bethesda, MD, retired at the end of March after 35 years of private practice in rheumatology in downtown Washington, DC. He is looking forward to spending more time with his wife and classmate, **Lya Karm**, playing golf, cycling, reading, visiting their twin daughters, Kristina and Maria, and exploring the world. Lya retired in 2017, after 30 years practicing internal medicine with Kaiser Permanente. She is still working part-time, two days per week. They plan to be back in Upstate New York to see the total eclipse of the sun in April.



Joseph P. Laukaitis '83 with daughters Maria and Kristina and his wife, Lya Karm '83

1984 Reunion

September 20-21, 2024

1985

Edward (Drew) Malloy, of Santa Cruz, CA, is enjoying semi-retirement working two days per week at University of California Santa Cruz. "My daughter, Maggie, graduated from UC Davis and is working at Genentech. We are healthy and happy."

1986

Georgianne Arnold, of Pittsburgh, PA, retired as professor of pediatrics at the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center in January and will be working for Virtual Medical Practice doing remote consultation management for patients with inborn errors of metabolism.

1987

Robert E. Lubanski, of Wilmington, NC, is working in a busy anesthesiology practice with a part-time job as vice president of medical affairs. "I work with **John S. O'Malley** quite often. Hopefully, retirement in the next year or so," he writes.

1988

Regina Torelli, of Natick, MA, says "Hello, from icy Massachusetts! I celebrated 30 years of marriage during COVID and this year I am semi-retired as an anesthesiologist at Mass General Brigham. I have three wonderful grown children: a cybersecurity specialist, a PhD candidate, and an aspiring oncologist. We have been blessed to have Aunt **Anne Mirth** and Uncle **Johnny Manis** in our lives," she writes.

1989 Reunion

September 20-21, 2024

R. Eugene Bailey, of Manlius, NY, practices full-scope family medicine including obstetrics and sees patients at the Upstate Community Campus site. He has clinical interests in family-centered maternity care, and travels to Central America yearly for global health. He is team physician for the Syracuse Crunch, AHL affiliate to the NHL Tampa Bay Lightning, and has a special interest in evidence-based medicine. He is currently the program director for the family med-

DONNA-ANN THOMAS, MD '99

A Dream Achieved

Donna-Ann Thomas, MD '99, knows she's a role model. "To be able to tell a kid that looks like me that if I was able to go to medical school, they can too; to instill hope and the desire to strive toward something, that's what makes me successful, not money or a title," she says.

But Dr. Thomas has the titles to back her up: she's associate professor of anesthesiology, division chief of pain medicine and regional anesthesiology, and vice chair of diversity, equity, and inclusion in the Department of Anesthesiology at the Yale School of Medicine.

It's a long way from her upbringing in Jamaica. Although Thomas was interested in the idea of medicine and helping people, it didn't seem a likely path. There were no science teachers at her school. Her grandfather was a pastor, and having attended many funerals, she was terrified of dead bodies. And her father expected her to stay in Jamaica.

Undeterred, Thomas came to the United States after high school, following her mother who had migrated to Queens, New York, to work as a nanny. Thomas worked full-time to help her family and attended college part-time at night. After a serious fall took her out of work, she was able to enroll in school full time, excelling in her science courses. Her professors urged her to consider medical school. Believing she couldn't handle working with a cadaver, she enrolled in a master's program in biochemistry instead.

Nonetheless, the desire to help people persisted. After a friend was admitted to medical school, Thomas asked if she could get permission to visit the anatomy lab. "I really expected I would pass out," she recalls. Instead, the lab visit made her realize she'd been scared all those years for nothing. "I literally did a touchdown dance and said, 'I'm going to medical school.'"

Thomas landed at Upstate, where, inspired by Patricia Numann, MD '65, she decided to pursue surgery. She went to Graduate Hospital in Philadelphia for surgical residency but hit a roadblock in her third year when she couldn't pass the Step 2 exam. "It really had more to do with my personal life at the time and the fact that I didn't see myself doing surgery," say Thomas.

Not letting a failure define her, Thomas reached out to the Upstate Department of Anesthesiology. Robustly endorsed by Dr. Numann, Thomas joined the Upstate anesthesiology residency program, ultimately becoming chief resident. (And to prove to herself she could do it, she enrolled in a study program and passed both Step 2 and Step 3 in surgery before beginning anesthesiology residency.)

Because of her surgical experience, Thomas was frequently asked to assist in the operating room during closures for pain procedures, leading her to pursue a fellowship in pain medicine at Upstate. "I went into medicine to help people who are suffering and managing pain is a big part of that," she says. "Pain management combined the procedural aspect of anesthesiology, which I liked, with continuity of care and patient relationships, giving me the best of both worlds," she says.

After completing her fellowship, Thomas joined the Upstate Department of Anesthesiology, where she became the inaugural Director of Acute Pain. "We built a program to coordinate care, policy, and protocols for management of patients in acute pain," she says. "Protocols regarding the use of regional anesthesia and nerve blocks for perioperative pain, for patients in sickle cell crisis, to help manage the patient's pain around surgery and interventions for trauma patients coming in."

In 2013, Thomas was recruited to Yale School of Medicine. During her tenure, she has served as program director for both the pain fellowship and acute pain regional fellowship, but currently is focused on patient care and her vice chair of DEI role. "We want to make sure our residency class is fully diverse, our faculty is fully diverse and that we provide the resources needed for everyone to get to the same level," she says. "We're also working on programs to address needs outside the academic portion, such as mentoring, lectures and workshops."

A woman of deep faith, Thomas spends nearly all her free time volunteering with her church or on medical missions that have taken her to Zimbabwe, Kenya, Mozambique, Honduras, Guyana, St. Lucia, Trinidad and Jamaica. "It's been one of the great joys of my life," she says.

—Renée Gearhart Levy

©ROBERT ALISK, 2017



Donna-Ann Thomas, MD '99, leads pain management and DEI efforts in the Department of Anesthesiology at the Yale School of Medicine.

CLASS NOTES

icine residency program and precepts both residents and medical students. He is guest lecturer for the LeMoyne physician assistant program, advisory faculty for ALSO (Advanced Life Support in Obstetrics), and adjunct faculty for the Medical Care for the Entire Family program, Keiju Medical Center, Nanao, Japan. He has three children: Joanna, **Frank J. '20**, and Zoe. Joanna works for the Syracuse mayor, Frank will complete anesthesia residency at University of Chicago and do a fellowship in critical care at Vanderbilt, and Zoe is an ICU trauma nurse at Upstate. His wife, Karen, is an assistant social worker for the Syracuse City School district.

Ronald C. Samuels, of Eastchester, NY, is sad to miss Reunion due to family events scheduled the same weekend. His eldest daughter, Rachel, was married in November and his middle child, Julie, entered medical school at Albert Einstein College of Medicine. "We get to see Julie rather frequently, sometimes after she's done with clinical experiences she will let us take her out to dinner before bringing her back to her apartment," he writes.



George N. Verne '89

George N. Verne, of Memphis, TN, has been appointed the Robert Kaplan Executive Dean and vice chancellor for clinical affairs at the University of Tennessee Health Science Center College of Medicine, effective August 1, 2023. He previously served as senior associate dean for statewide operations and strategy, chair of the department of medicine in the College of Medicine, and chief of medicine at Regional One Health.

1991

Denise C. Monte, of East Setauket, NY, and her husband, Anthony M. Szema, MD, recently celebrated their 25th wedding anniversary.



Anthony M. Szema and Denise C. Monte '91



Dino A. Messina '92

1992

Dino A. Messina, of North Kingstown, RI, writes, "One of the benefits of living in the Ocean State is all the great shoreline access. I caught this 41-inch striped bass on my kayak last summer. Wishing everyone a Happy New Year!"

Mark E. Ohl, of Hamilton, NY, writes "Wanna Feel Old? I want to remind my classmates about our daughter, Jennifer, who became known to most of you when we brought her to class parties. Well, this will be shocking news: Jennifer is 40 years-old! She sends her best wishes to you all, especially, **Frank X. Ratchford**, who she had a crush on."

1994 ReUnion

September 20•21, 2024

1996

Gregory G. Carnevale, of Canandaigua, NY, completed his second marathon 33 years after the first—losing three minutes from his original time! He has worked for United Healthcare since 2023 as commercial CMO for Delaware, New Jersey, New York, and Pennsylvania.

1997

Jeannie Tam, of New York, NY, shared she and **Shani L. Lipset** recently celebrated

30 years of friendship, reminiscing about Upstate and forming new memories.



Jeannie Tam '97 and Shani L. Lipset '97

1999 ReUnion

September 20•21, 2024

2002

Rebecca L. Bagdonas, of New York, NY, writes, "**Cindy Bodkin** and I finally saw each other in person after five years! We brought our children (without husbands, lol) to Universal Orlando in July 2023. My daughters are Victoria (10), Annabelle (eight) and



Gregory G. Carnevale '96



Cindy Bodkin '02, Rebecca Bagdonas '02, and children Victoria, Annabelle, Felicity, and Owen

Felicity (5) Budhraj. Cindy's son is Owen Edwards (10). We had an awesome time. Hope everyone at Upstate is braving the snow!"

Matthew "Casey" Becker, of Erie, PA, has assumed the role of chairman of cardiovascular medicine and interventional cardiology at the Lake Erie College of Medicine (LECOM) in Erie, which is opening Pennsylvania's largest ambulatory surgery center to provide state-of-the-art outpatient services for all cardiac and vascular procedures.

2004 ReUnion

September 20•21, 2024

2009 ReUnion

September 20•21, 2024

Kelly Billig, of Little Falls, NJ, has moved back to her home state and is practicing as a primary care med-peds physician with Village MD/Summit Medical Group. "I am looking forward to seeing folks at our reunion," she writes.

Dodji V. Modjinou, of Las Vegas, NV, is the founder and owner of Advanced Rheumatology Associates of Nevada, in Henderson, NV. He began seeing patients in his new practice on October 10, 2023.

2014 ReUnion

September 20•21, 2024

2016
Arthur Zak, of Hillsborough, NC, and his wife, Christie Ton, DO, welcomed their third son, Alexander, in August 2023, joining four-year old twins. "We are always tired, but one baby is still better than newborn twins," he writes.



Arthur Zak '16, his wife, Christie Ton, and their children

2019 ReUnion

September 20•21, 2024

2020

Hannah M. Root, of Bethesda, MD, welcomed baby Elsa in October 2023 and started as a family medicine primary care provider with OneMedical in Chevy Chase, MD, in January.



Elsa, daughter of Hannah M. Root '20

2021

Zachary R. Visco, of Chapel Hill, NC, married Carina, his college sweetheart from Duke University, in January.

We're on the lookout for feature ideas.

Is there a topic or current issue that you think alumni would be interested in reading about?

Do you know of an alumnus/a with an interesting or inspiring story to share?

We welcome your suggestions! Please email your ideas to medalum@upstate.edu or submit online at medalum.upstate.edu/story-ideas.



CLASS NOTES

2023

Jack L. Carey, of New York, NY, and **Fanny F. Chen '23** were married on April 29, 2023.



Shannon M. Baron, Meeta Shrivastava, Alice G. Wang, Natalie E. Burlant, Fanny F. Chen, Shruti D. Ramachandra, all class of 2023 (left to right)



Jack L. Carey '23 and Fanny F. Chen '23

Residents

George Ellis, of Longwood, FL, shares his corrected contact information www.filmfreeway.com/georgeellis.

Padala PJ Reddy, of Wichita, KS, recently went to India and gave a lecture to medical students and post-graduate students in his hometown about heart attack prevention. "To my surprise, the principal gave me an award for the presentation," he writes.

Jeffrey S. Sneider, of Jamesville, NY, finished his last remaining clinical gig working as an attending for the elderly residents of Menorah Park Nursing Home—50 years after medical school graduation and 46 years after completing residency at Upstate Medical University. "Retirement beckons and is welcome," he writes. "It has been a great ride."

Stuart Trust, of Syracuse, NY, recently received one of the 2022-2023 Excellence in Teaching Awards for Foundations of Reasoning in Medicine. He was selected by students, who evaluated his teaching as exceptional.



Jeffrey S. Sneider



AMY SUE BIONDICH, MD '09, F '15

From Emergency to Prevention

After completing her first year of medical school, Amy Sue Biondich, MD '09, F '15, returned to her home state of Wisconsin and spent her summer earning her pilot's license. She bought a small propeller plane that would serve her well flying home for visits and in her future career as a locums tenens emergency medicine physician.

Over her decade working in emergency departments from Florida and Wisconsin to Minnesota and Arizona, Biondich realized how many of her patients' ailments could be impacted by their habits and lifestyle choices. "There are so many chronic diseases that are preventable or reversible that people don't have to be living with," she says. "I wanted to address that."



Amy Sue Biondich, MD '09, F '15, earned her pilot's license while an Upstate medical student, allowing her to fly herself to her locums tenens jobs.

Living in Boise, Idaho, since 2020, Biondich continues doing critical access work in small rural hospitals in Idaho and Wisconsin. But in March 2023, bolstered with a fellowship and board certification in anti-aging and regenerative medicine, she launched a virtual functional medicine practice. "I love emergency medicine and don't know that I would ever step away from it completely, but I want to empower people to take control of their health."

Many of her patients come to her feeling not quite right, but without anything obviously wrong. "In modern healthcare, your doc-

tor visit is a seven- to 10- minute conversation with a blood pressure check and maybe some bloodwork. And when the basic bloodwork comes back normal, the patient is told they're fine," says Biondich, who earned a bachelor's degree in anthropology and marine biology from University of California, Santa Cruz and a master's in evaluative clinical sciences from Dartmouth College.

"I do longer visits to try to understand more about the patient, not only as a person, but all of their health frustrations and fears and what their health goals are. I'm a big fan of test and treat not guess and treat, so I perform a lot of functional medicine labs to come up with a personalized plan for each patient. Many of my recommendations are lifestyle changes, stress management, diet, and supplements."

As a medical student, Biondich set out to be a general surgeon, focusing almost all her elective rotations on surgery. But after her first year of residency, she left her program, turned off by the misogyny she encountered and a future of long hours on call. A year later she re-matched into emergency medicine, completing her residency at Orlando Regional Medical Center, then returned to Upstate for a fellowship in wilderness and expedition medicine.

Working with then-program director Jeremy Joslin, MD, HS '10, F '11, Biondich began providing medical support to marathons and endurance competitions. In 2014, she established a concierge travel medicine company to serve as medical director for international ultra-endurance races, most of them held in remote far-flung locales, including Cambodia, Albania, Sri Lanka, and Bhutan.

Working three or four competitions a year put Biondich out of the country for eight to 10 weeks annually. "Trying to find a medical group accepting of that was going to be challenging so I gravitated to locums work so I could control my own schedule," she says.

Biondich has always loved travel and enjoys an active lifestyle, including mountain biking, rock climbing, snowboarding, skiing, backpacking, and hiking, pursuits that helped prepare her for race medicine. "You have to be physically fit to do this work," she says. "Many of the courses are not accessible by vehicle."

At Jungle Marathon Brazil, for example, a competitor suffered a cardiac event and collapsed deep in the jungle. "We had to get in there with dirt bikes and pull him out on a handmade stretcher made from tree limbs," says Biondich. "That's a dramatic example. A lot of the time we're dealing with blisters, dehydration, and heat illness."

Although she's had less hands-on wilderness medicine experience since the pandemic, Biondich loves the variety her career provides. "I like to do different things, to learn something new, to try something new," she says. "I'm just excited to see what this new chapter brings."

—Renée Gearhart Levy