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Area medical schools collaborate to host "Changing the Face of Medicine"

UMKC School of Medicine partners with KU and KCUMB to bring prestigious exhibit to Kansas City.

KANSAS CITY, Mo. -- Women doctors are the focus of a national traveling exhibition at the University of Kansas Medical Center’s Dykes Library from October 3 to November 11, 2009. “Changing the Face of Medicine: Celebrating America’s Women Physicians” tells the extraordinary story of how women in America have struggled over the past two centuries to gain access to medical education and to work in the medical specialty of their choice.

Kansas City is one of only 61 sites across the United States chosen to host this traveling exhibit. It is a unique collaboration of the libraries of the three medical schools in the metropolitan area, Dykes Library and the Clendening History of Medicine Library at the University of Missouri-Kansas City Health Sciences Library and the Kansas City University of Medicine and Biosciences (KCUMB) Library all were involved in obtaining the exhibit and planning the associated events.

Since Elizabeth Blackwell received a medical degree in 1849, many women have contributed to medical care, education and research, and have achieved astounding accomplishments once considered “unsuitable” for women. Today, women physicians are researchers on the cutting edge of new medical discoveries, educators, surgeons, family practitioners, specialists, and government officials. “Changing the Face of Medicine” features the life stories of a rich diversity of women physicians from around the nation and highlights the broad range of their medical specialties.

Marjorie Sirridge, M.D., who served as mentor and role model for many local women physicians, will be the keynote speaker at the opening event at KU on October 3. Dr. Sirridge — a hematologist, humanist, and former dean of the UMKC School of Medicine — is featured prominently in the exhibit as well. Guests at this opening event will be welcomed with music by the Kansas City Women’s Chorus, and following the lecture all are invited to an elegant reception sponsored by KCUMB.

Current dean of the UMKC School of Medicine, Betty M. Drees, M.D., will be one of the featured speakers at an event on Friday, October 9, at the UMKC Health Sciences Campus at Hospital Hill. Dr. Drees, along with other speakers, will discuss fostering diversity and helping women reach their full potential, breaking glass ceilings, and bringing new perspectives and opportunities to medicine.

During the exhibit, there will be speaker presentations each week, and related events are being offered throughout the city. Events are free and open to the public.

Contributions of other Kansas City women physicians are explored at a Web site sponsored by the Metropolitan Medical Society to help young people learn what it takes to become a doctor. These short vignettes are hosted at http://www.metromedkc.org/.

The National Library of Medicine (NLM), Bethesda, Md., and the American Library Association, Chicago, Ill., organized the traveling exhibition with support from the National Library of Medicine, the National Institutes of Health Office of Research on Women’s Health, and the American Medical Women’s Association. The traveling exhibition is based on a larger exhibition that was displayed at the NLM from 2003 to 2005. The local exhibit received additional support through grants from the National Network of Libraries of Medicine and the Health Sciences Library Network of Kansas City.

Two interactive kiosks traveling with the exhibition offer access to the NLM’s “Local Legends” Web site (www.nlm.nih.gov/locallegends), which features outstanding women physicians from every state, and to a Web site created for the larger exhibition at the NLM (www.nlm.nih.gov/changingthefaceofmedicine).

There also are a series of two-hour experiential classes for middle and high school youth, and classes for Girl Scouts. These workshops will offer five to six different stations where students will have a chance to take vital signs, extract DNA from fruit or wheat germ, create slides of bacteria, and explore electronic medical resources.

For more information, visit the exhibit’s Web site at http://library.kumc.edu/womeninmedicine

About UMKC

The University of Missouri-Kansas City (UMKC), one of four University of Missouri campuses, is a public university serving more than 14,000 undergraduate, graduate and professional students. UMKC engages with the community and economy based on a four-part mission: life and health sciences; visual and performing arts; urban issues and education; and a vibrant learning and campus life experience.

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