

News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

November 1, 2020

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TTUHSC Medical Student Organization to Take Annual Banquet Online

Event Will Focus on Cultural Diversity; Proceeds to Benefit Three Local Organizations

To meet the unique challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, the Student National Medical Association (SNMA) chapter from the Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center (TTUHSC) School of Medicine will go online to host its annual scholarship banquet, “A Cultural Affair: Scholarship Gala.”

The event is scheduled from 3 to 4:30 p.m. Dec. 4. In addition, a 24-hour online silent auction will begin at noon on Dec. 3. Student tickets are \$10 each and will include a Zoom link to the event and the chance to win a raffle basket. Tickets can be purchased via Venmo at @Freedom-Ha. SNMA Vice President Kwame Opoku said the Zoom link could accommodate up to 500 people.

The gala will feature cultural dance performances from several groups, including Dances with Soul from Texas Tech University (TTU), the TTU Alphas and third-year medical student Marilyn Matthew. Event information also will be posted to various TTUHSC and medical student social media accounts.

SNMA President Emily Sargent, said the event has raised more than \$300,000 since 2012.

“Last year the gala brought in more than \$40,000 in proceeds that were used for scholarships and to build an endowment,” Sargent said. “This year SNMA will use event proceeds to help three local organizations.”

Kwame Opoku, SNMA vice president, a video presentation from each of the groups SNMA is supporting this year will be included in the Dec. 4 banquet program.

“Because of all the issues that have arisen this year concerning racial injustice, instead of having this year’s proceeds go towards scholarships, we, the SNMA officers, saw it as beneficial to have the proceeds go toward three Lubbock organizations who are addressing racial barriers by providing assistance to underserved and underrepresented communities in our area,” Opoku explained. “However, money from our endowment will still go towards need-based scholarships for medical students this year.”

The local organizations SNMA will support in 2020-2021 include the Young Women’s Christian Organization (YWCA). SNMA’s donation to the YWCA will go toward the organization’s Women’s Health Initiative, which provides financial assistance for breast and cervical cancer screenings to uninsured and underinsured women and men.

SNMA also will donate to the 100 Black Men of West Texas, a male mentoring program that provides services in education, health and wellness, economic empowerment and leadership development for underrepresented and disenfranchised youth in the community.

The East Lubbock Community Alliance, a program that collaborates with community partners for the betterment of East Lubbock, is the third organization SNMA is supporting through its 2020 gala. Opoku said SNMA's donation would support the alliance's Poverty Project, which provides books for students, job information for community residents and various other services.

Steven Berk, M.D., TTUHSC executive vice president and School of Medicine dean, said the SNMA and its annual banquet have always been a celebration of diversity.

"SNMA has supported our underrepresented minority students, helped us to develop the best possible learning environment for all of our students, raised hundreds of thousands of dollars for minority scholarships and worked to address the needs of our underserved communities," Berk said. "This virtual fund raiser will support organizations dedicated to the underserved and our SNMA officers have spent many hours planning this event despite their very rigorous academic schedule. We are proud of their efforts and commitment."

In addition to Sargent and Opoku, other SNMA officers for 2020-2021 include Giovanna Ababioh (secretary), Freedom Ha (treasurer), Joy Josephs (historian) and Alfred Kankam, Jr. and Feh Soetan (community outreach). Joseph Oti-Nemoh and Tochi Eboh serve as liaisons to the Minority Association of Pre-Medical Students, also known as MAPS.

Sargent said the TTUHSC SNMA chapter participates in various projects throughout the year including mentoring undergraduate students, promoting health care fields to elementary students through its Doctors for a Day program, organizing community health fairs, working with the undergraduate community and helping improve medical school curriculum and admissions.

"As one of the nation's oldest and largest independent, student-run organizations, SNMA focuses on the needs and concerns of culturally diverse medical students," she added.