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Friday, June 11, 2010

Dr. Kirsten B. Carter uses skills, faith to help community

Orlando Business Journal - by [Melinda Carstensen](#)

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Dr. Kirsten B. Carter is anything but typical.

She changed her medical specialty to accommodate her family.

She gave up going on her honeymoon because she had to complete her post-graduation medical residency.

She prays with her patients, regardless of their



Dr. Kirsten B. Carter
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spirituality.

And she has used her skills for several years for free, to help the medically needy.

Carter — Central Florida's 2010 Outstanding Female of the Year in Orlando Business Journal's 40 under 40 competition — enjoys helping others.

After toiling four years to get her medical degree, and another four years to complete her post-graduation residency, Carter undertook a string of volunteer efforts, including serving the homeless through Orange County's Primary Care Access Network.

And in April, that string got longer when she began volunteering at **Grace Medical Home**. The new Orlando-based center provides low-cost primary health care to the working poor — those who live at or below 200 percent of the federal poverty level — who don't qualify for Medicaid and can't afford private health insurance. The center charges a \$20 annual enrollment fee and \$20 per visit.

Carter decided to volunteer at Grace Medical because there's a huge need for health care — more than 300,000 workers without health insurance are in Orange County alone.

Carter, 39, whose grandfather was a general practice doctor, said she has always loved science, and knew she wanted to study medicine when she was 6 years old. She studied microbiology at Clemson University in South Carolina, then went to medical school at the University of South Florida, originally planning to specialize in obstetrics and gynecology.

In her third year of medical school, she began volunteering at the Judeo Christian Health Clinic, where she got a preview of the lack of health care among the poor.

After graduating medical school, she married husband Daryl Carter, who proposed to her in St. Peter's Basilica in the Vatican City — a trip both describe as their "engagement moon" because Kirsten's post-graduation residency prevented them from taking a real honeymoon.

When Carter became pregnant with her first son, Conrad, she decided to make a pivotal career change. Ten months into her OB/GYN residency at Orlando Regional Medical Center, Carter decided to switch her practice to internal medicine. "I really enjoyed the field of OB-GYN," Carter said, "but career-wise, it didn't blend with the family."

Carter, now a volunteer internal medicine physician at Grace Medical three days a week, said she has no regrets about the decision, and afterward she went into private practice for about six years. It was only after she heard of the widespread need for health care among the poor that she left the practice to fill that need, she said.

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Daryl Carter, president of Orlando-based real estate brokerage **Maury L. Carter & Associates Inc.**, describes his wife as "nuclear smart," and said after 13 years of marriage, he's still amazed by his wife's work ethic and who she is as a person.

"I don't know many doctors who have been working for seven or eight years for free. There aren't a lot of doctors lining up to do her job," he said. "She loves people. She's using her medical degree as a way to honor her faith in Christ and to take care of people who are less fortunate than herself."

Carter's co-workers agree.

Dianna Morgan, 58, vice chairwoman of Grace Medical's board of directors, said Carter's enthusiasm for helping people is contagious. "She's gifted with extraordinary clinical skills, but she also has a gift of relationship and puts people at ease immediately."

The center's medical director, Marvin Hardy, said bringing Carter on board the Grace Medical team was a "natural connection." "She had the same thoughts of opening something like [Grace Medical]," he said. "She's been serving the medically needy for longer than I have."

Carter, who turns 40 in November, credits her success to Jesus Christ. "God blessed me with being able to do well academically, and now I get to do what I always wanted to do — help people."

Dr. Kirsten B. Carter

Age: 39

Title: Internal medicine physician, Grace Medical Home

Community involvement: Orange County Primary Care Access

Network; Orange County planning and zoning board; American Cancer Society

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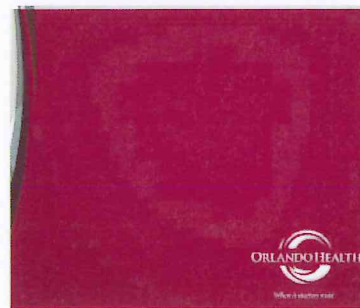
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