California Academy of Family Physicians Names Graduating Medical Students
April 2014 Members of the Month

Student leaders represent future of family medicine

San Francisco – The California Academy of Family Physicians has named two graduating medical students its “Members of the Month” for April 2014. Recognized for their leadership in helping address the statewide family physician shortage and efforts supporting key CAFP-backed legislation in Sacramento, Laura Doan and Matthew Varallo will graduate and begin their family medicine training programs this summer.

“Laura and Matt have shown what a difference young physicians can make in building interest in family medicine as a career, with the long-term goal of ending the family physician shortage,” said CAFP President Mark Dressner, MD. “They also have extended their care and concern for patients beyond the exam room all the way to the state Legislature by advocating for measures to improve health care in California.”

Ms. Doan will graduate from the University of California, Irvine School of Medicine in May and begin her family medicine training at the Kaiser Permanente Los Angeles Family Medicine Residency Program in June. Mr. Varallo will graduate from the Western University of Health Sciences College of Osteopathic Medicine in Pomona in May and begins his family medicine training at the Eisenhower Medical Center Family Medicine Residency Program in Rancho Mirage in June.

For the past year, while in their fourth and final year of medical school, Ms. Doan and Mr. Varallo have led CAFP’s Medical Student Council as co-chairs, advocating for family medicine and expanding leadership opportunities for students. The Council is a group of student leaders who coordinate statewide activities for those interested in family medicine and develop additional ways to promote and advocate for the specialty. They also serve as student co-directors on the CAFP Board of Directors and are founders of CAFP’s Building Bridges campaign,
which connects students, residents and physicians to encourage collaboration on projects and advocacy efforts.

“We hope that Building Bridges will be the first of many efforts to strengthen the family medicine pipeline by developing generations of motivated and enthusiastic leaders to drive the family medicine revolution forward,” said Ms. Doan.

The two student leaders also attended CAFP’s annual advocacy meeting in Sacramento in March, where they talked with legislators about the importance of ensuring all patients have access to family physicians, given the specialty’s focus on prevention and expert management of chronic illnesses. They encouraged lawmakers to consider physician workforce development and graduate medical education funding, both critical to ending the primary care physician shortage.

“I’ve come to realize that what I value most is promoting wellness in my community,” said Mr. Varallo. “I enjoy helping, supporting and advocating for people with medical needs, and developing long-lasting relationships with my patients. Even as a student, I’ve been able to live these values by developing trusting relationships with patients and being a patient advocate, both in the clinical setting and with legislators.”

“Family medicine is amazing,” said Ms. Doan. “Every day at work is exciting and mentally stimulating. I might see an obstetrics patient, then meet with another patient to remove a lipoma (a benign tumor usually found just below the skin), and then meet with and counsel a teenager. It’s great having knowledge in every discipline because I’m able to provide my patients with comprehensive care.”

“When the 2014 family medicine residency training year begins this summer, a few hundred bright and motivated new family physicians will begin serving patients in California,” said Dr. Dressner. “Laura and Matt are outstanding examples of the future of family medicine.”

**About the California Academy of Family Physicians:** With more than 8,700 members, including active practicing family physicians, residents in family medicine, and medical students interested in the specialty, CAFP is the largest primary care medical society in California. Family physicians are trained to treat an entire family’s medical needs, addressing the whole spectrum of life’s medical challenges. FPs serve a broad base of patients in urban, suburban and rural areas, often in California’s most underserved areas.