

# BEST Program kicks off second summer institute

by Sarah Kinkade

**BJH** ■ Along with a nursing shortage, the United States is also suffering a shortage of pharmacists. People are living longer and requiring more medications, which is increasing demands on the pharmacy industry.

Steven Player, PharmD, MBA, and Isaac Butler, PharmD, MBA, are more aware of the problem than most because they're working to fix it. Both are pharmacists themselves — Player is inpatient pharmacy manager at Barnes-Jewish Hospital; Butler is a clinical program manager at Express Scripts.

Together, through the vision and leadership of their respective organizations, they started the Barnes-Jewish Hospital, Express Scripts and St. Louis College of Pharmacy (BEST) Summer Pharmacy Institute to increase multicultural high school student enrollment in pharmacy school in the St. Louis area. The BJH Foundation and the Express Scripts Foundation provided equal funding for the program, which began in 2008.

By educating young people about the pharmacy profession and the opportunities available, and equipping them with some of the knowledge and skills that are vital to pharmacists, the program hopes not only to help with the shortage of pharmacists locally and nationwide, but also to create greater diversity.

“Our goal is to foster the talent that lies within the diverse St. Louis high school community,” Player says. “Through the program, we hope to create a viable pipeline of diverse, talented health professionals and, ultimately, take a step toward eliminating health care disparities.”

At the 2009 kickoff event June 12, 33 students were welcomed to the summer institute by executives from all three partnering institutions, including Jim Gray, BJH pharmacy director, and Brenda Battle, BJH center for cultural competence director.



Standing outside the St. Louis College of Pharmacy student center are three students who plan to explore a career in pharmacy, thanks to the BEST Summer Pharmacy Institute. From left are Fatima Ahmed from Gateway High School, Rebekkah Johnson from Clayton High School and Breonna Hatley from Hazelwood Central High School. | Photo by Sarah Kinkade

Students were introduced to the pharmacy field through guest speakers and a tour of the St. Louis College of Pharmacy campus. Over six weeks, students will participate in hands-on activities such as writing and interpreting prescriptions, compounding medications, and

visiting various pharmacy practice sites — learning the many different roles pharmacists serve in and the wide range of services they provide within health care. ■

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