

**NSU**  
Florida

**HELPING OTHERS**  
Altruistic student  
believes in  
serving humanity.

**UKRAINE AID**  
Important initiative  
helps beleaguered  
Ukrainians.

**ALUMNI NEWS**  
Graduates share  
updates and  
achievements.

# LINK

KPCOM

Nova Southeastern University Dr. Kiran C. Patel College of Osteopathic Medicine



*the*  
**INAUGURAL**  
*issue*

SUMMER 2022

## ANEIL TAWAKALZADA DERIVES JOY FROM HELPING OTHERS

The past few years have been incredibly productive for fourth-year student Aneil Tawakalzada, who is the class of 2023 president and founder and president of the nonprofit organization OneAfghanistan, which provides relief for Afghan refugees within the United States, as well as for those who remain in Afghanistan.

According to Tawakalzada, it's the enriching environment provided by the Dr. Kiran C. Patel College of Osteopathic Medicine (KPCOM) that engenders his activism. "I constantly find myself surrounded by driven, passionate students who are willing to get involved to make the world a better place, and by KPCOM administrators and faculty and staff members who inspire us to become compassionate and knowledgeable future health care providers," he explained.

In 2022, Tawakalzada was named KPCOM Student D.O. of the Year by his peers and was nominated for the overall Student of the Year accolade at Nova Southeastern University's annual Student Life Achievement Awards. "I was incredibly humbled and honored to receive the recognition," he said. "I have worked hard



**Class of 2023 Class Board**

From left: Class of 2023 student leaders Aakangsha Jain, Alexandra (Lexi) Gabro, Ted Frederic, Aneil Tawakalzada, Harsh Patel, Ruth Antony, and Heather Silverstein

throughout my time here, but it truly takes a village. I owe it all to the unconditional love and support from my family and friends, and to the college's dean, Dr. Elaine Wallace, for challenging me to become a better leader each and every day."

Throughout his three years as a KPCOM student, Tawakalzada helped raise more than \$100,000 to provide relief for the people of Afghanistan, Florida, Lebanon, and Yemen. His reason for being so service oriented is rooted in his commitment to helping others. "I wholeheartedly believe that a life of service is a life well lived," he explained.

As he enters his fourth-year as a KPCOM student, Tawakalzada already has his future goals in focus once he graduates from the college in May 2023 and completes his residency. "I aim to provide health care for local communities while also giving back to global communities," he said. "My biggest dream is to visit Afghanistan, where I plan to build a hospital and school in honor of my grandparents."

Tawakalzada also believes that, "Through hard work, good intentions, and a desire to help others, there is no telling how far one can go," and concluded with, "I am incredibly thankful to the KPCOM—a place that reinforced these values and helped me find my purpose." ■



Tawakalzada and OneAfghanistan volunteers host a picnic for more than 400 Afghan refugees in South Florida to welcome them to their new lives in the United States.



## STUDENTS ESTABLISH UKRAINE INITIATIVE TO PROVIDE VITAL AID

Dr. Kiran C. Patel College of Osteopathic Medicine (KPCOM) students have a rich tradition of helping those in need. That ritual was in evidence earlier this year when a number of compassionate students joined forces to launch the Med Students Providing Aid for Ukraine Initiative, which ran from March 16 through April 11.

"As a future health care provider and member of the Ukrainian community, I felt it necessary to expand local efforts toward raising financial donations and gathering medical supplies to send to Ukraine," said second-year student Brigitte Wodrich. "In addition to collecting needed items, a large emphasis has been placed on educating the Nova Southeastern University (NSU) community about Ukraine through a social media awareness effort on Instagram (@sharks4ukraine). Each week, new posts highlighted Ukraine's rich history and culture to show the beauty behind the country that is currently in turmoil."

According to Wodrich, "The initiative was established to not only bring awareness of the ongoing crisis in Ukraine, but to utilize our unique position within our community as medical students. With the current statistics estimating 5.8 million refugees and more than 14,000 casualties, this is one of the worst humanitarian crises many of us have been exposed to in our lifetimes," she explained.

During the four-week initiative, a range of clothing and medical supplies was collected, including clothing that will help people in Ukraine, refugees in Europe, as well as families who are relocating to South Florida. The donated medical supplies, which included tourniquets, medicine, and individual first-aid kits, went toward the latest shipment from St. Nicholas Church to the Ukraine borders in Poland.

"The last shipment included 19 pallets of high-demand supplies," said Wodrich, who reported that more than \$300 was donated to Razom for Ukraine, which when translated means Together for Ukraine—an organization focused on providing critical humanitarian war relief and recovery efforts.

"Although the official initiative has ended, the need for discussion and updates about the situation will continue at the KPCOM," Wodrich emphasized. "I will be doing what I can to continue to educate others, and I implore the NSU community to continue to support Ukraine with the same amount of vigor and passion showcased at the beginning of this initiative." ■

## MYRIAD DEGREES CONFERRED AT COMMENCEMENT CEREMONY

During the KPCOM Commencement Ceremony held May 13 at NSU's Rick Case Arena at the Don Taft University Center, a number of degrees were conferred in a range of programmatic areas.

- 226** Doctor of Osteopathic Medicine
- 47** Master of Science in Couple and Family Therapy
- 47** Bachelor of Science in Public Health
- 21** Master of Science in Health Informatics
- 20** Master of Public Health
- 17** Master of Science in Nutrition
- 12** Master of Science in Medical Education
- 9** Master of Science in Disaster and Emergency Management
- 6** Doctor of Philosophy in Couple and Family Therapy
- 6** Bachelor of Science in Nutrition
- 5** Doctor of Marriage and Family Therapy



### COVER IMAGE

Tawakalzada treats a young Afghan refugee during a OneAfghanistan health fair.

# ALUMNI ACHIEVEMENTS

**Frishta Abawi, D.O. ('19)**, joined the primary care team at Niagara Falls Memorial Medical Center located at the Lewiston Primary Care Center in Niagara Falls, New York. Abawi, who received the 2019–2020 Cary F. Vastola D.O. Award for demonstrating medical excellence and dedication to the osteopathic profession as an intern, completed her family medicine residency at Sisters of Charity Hospital in Buffalo, New York, where she served as chief resident.



**Devin Collins, D.O. ('17)**, received the first-place award in the hand category from the American Osteopathic Academy of Orthopedics Editorial Subcommittee for his scientific paper “Single Antegrade Intramedullary Kirschner Wire Fixation for Transverse Metacarpal Shaft Fractures: A Retrospective Review.” Each year, the subcommittee reviews and scores scientific papers, case reports, and literature reviews submitted by osteopathic orthopedic residents.



**John Hatfield, D.O., D.C., M.P.H., M.O.H. ('08)**, a flight surgeon who is board certified in both aerospace and occupational medicine, was named chief of aerospace medicine at the Royal Air Force base in Lakenheath, England. He leads Europe’s largest operational medicine squadron, serving 27,000 beneficiaries. He is active with the F-35 flying squadron and supervises one of the busiest deployment missions in the U.S. Air Force.



**Vanessa Osting, D.O., M.P.H., FACR ('04)**, was promoted to assistant chief of ambulatory care at the James A. Haley Veterans’ Hospital in Tampa, Florida. She is also the chief medical officer of the Lakeland VA Community Based Outpatient Clinic, which broke ground on April 21 on a new, 100,000-square-foot outpatient clinic. The clinic will be expanding from its existing 20,000-square-foot building to the new building, which will house primary care, mental health, eye clinic, dispensing pharmacy, and radiologic services.



**Kayvan Amini, D.O., FACC ('01)**, was appointed to the UnitedHealthcare of Florida Administrative Advisory Council board. In this role, he will be providing ongoing medical practice staff input into UnitedHealthcare and its affiliated companies, which will provide meaningful and mutually beneficial enhancements in the company’s overall relationship and interactions with practice administrators, physicians, and clinical network partners.



**Bryan Cross, D.O. ('14)**, is the chief of specialty care at the Alexandria VA Healthcare System in Pineville, Louisiana. In this role, he oversees all surgical services, as well as cardio-respiratory, speech pathology, and audiology services.



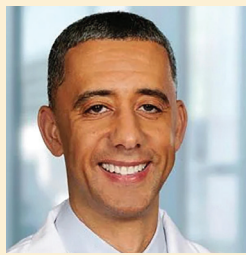
**Victor Jaffe, D.O. ('06)**, was named chief academic officer at Palmetto General Hospital in Hialeah, Florida. He previously served as the hospital’s vice president of graduate medical education.



**Sneha Pallegar, D.O. ('10)**, recently established Samsara Health, a practice focusing on culinary medicine in Sarasota, Florida. She plans to integrate evidence-based, traditional Western medicine with lifestyle and culinary medicine.



**Donnell K. Bowen, D.O., FACS ('07)**, a cardiothoracic surgeon, joined the medical staff at Houston Methodist Cardiovascular Surgery Associates at Houston Methodist Sugar Land Hospital. Bowen comes to Houston Methodist Sugar Land from Brooke Army Medical Center in San Antonio, Texas, where he served as a lieutenant colonel in the U.S. Army Medical Corps.



**Melinda Greenfield, D.O. ('94)**, appeared in an episode of *The Balancing Act*, which airs weekdays at 7:30 a.m. on Lifetime. The episode was titled “Groundbreaking Hope for Moderate-to-Severe Plaque Psoriasis Patients.”



**William Kirsh, D.O., M.P.H. ('85)**, chief medical officer for Sentry Data Systems in Deerfield Beach, Florida, was reappointed to the Florida Board of Osteopathic Medicine by Governor Ron DeSantis. Board members play a leading role in the ever-changing health care environment through dialogue with the public, the legislature, academia, and the community. The board consists of seven members appointed by the governor and confirmed by the Florida Senate.



**Bruce G. Rankin, D.O., CPI, FACOFP ('85)**, received the Florida Osteopathic Medical Association (FOMA) Physician of the Year Award during the organization’s annual convention held February 25–27 in Fort Lauderdale, Florida. The award is accorded to an osteopathic physician who, during the past year, has made significant and considerable contributions not only to the osteopathic profession, but also to the community on both a local and statewide level.



*Rankin (right) receives the FOMA Physician of the Year Award from FOMA president and 2001 KPCOM alum Marc G. Kaprow, D.O., M.H.A., FACOI.*

**Anna Cabeca, D.O., FACOG ('95)**, who is triple board certified and a fellow of gynecology and obstetrics, integrative medicine, and antiaging and regenerative medicine, published a new book titled *MenuPause: Five Unique Eating Plans to Break Through Your Weight Loss Plateau and Improve Mood, Sleep, and Hot Flashes*, which focuses on quickly reducing hormone-related symptoms with targeted eating plans.



**Jeffrey S. Grove, D.O., FACOFP dist. ('90)**, was the recipient of the Florida Osteopathic Medical Association (FOMA) Presidential Achievement Award during the organization’s annual convention held February 25–27 in Fort Lauderdale, Florida.



*Grove (left) receives his award from FOMA president and 2001 KPCOM alum Marc G. Kaprow, D.O., M.H.A., FACOI.*

**Benjamin E. Lippmann, D.O., P.A. ('12)**, established a private psychiatry practice for adults in Lakeland, Florida, in January 2022. The practice features in-person as well as telepsychiatry services.



**Aaron Mickelson, D.O., M.P.H., M.H.M. ('11)**, was named chief medical officer at Arizona General Hospital. In this role, Mickelson will help lead efforts surrounding quality care, patient safety, patient experience, and resource utilization.



**Matthew Slane, D.O., FACEP, FAAEM ('05)**, is the program director for the new, accredited emergency medicine residency at HCA Florida Westside Hospital in Plantation, Florida, which will welcome its first class in July.



**Steven Vanni, D.O. ('95),** was named chief of medical staff of HCA Florida University Hospital, a 165-bed facility in Davie, Florida. Vanni, who is a board-certified and fellowship-trained neurosurgeon, served as the chief of spine surgery at Jackson Memorial Hospital and the University of Miami prior to joining HCA Florida University Hospital. He also served as a professor in the departments of neurosurgery, orthopedics, and rehabilitation at the University of Miami. Additionally, he co-founded the Mystic Force Foundation—a nonprofit that raises awareness of childhood cancer and funds clinical research to bring less toxic, more effective treatments for children.



**Margit Walker, D.O. ('04),** joined the medical team at University Health Services at the University of Massachusetts Amherst, where she is providing care in the health center's acute care, general medicine, and respiratory clinics. Walker, who is board certified by the American Osteopathic Board of Family Physicians, previously served as medical director for the Bement School in Deerfield, Massachusetts, and Camp Emerson in Hinsdale, Massachusetts. Previously, she practiced at Westside Family Healthcare in Wilmington, Delaware, and at the Seldovia Village Tribe in Homer, Alaska.



**Todd Zusmer, D.O. ('96),** was named division chief for Prisma Health Urgent Care in Greenville, South Carolina.



## FOUR KPCOM ALUMNI NAMED TO ACOFP RESIDENT COUNCIL



Four Dr. Kiran C. Patel College of Osteopathic Medicine (KPCOM) alumni were named to the 2022-2023 American College of Osteopathic Family Physicians (ACOFP) Resident Council. There are only 12 positions available nationwide, so it's a significant feat that NSU graduates comprise one-third of these positions. In addition to the four KPCOM alumni listed to the right, **Ian D. Singer, D.O., J.D. ('19),** (pictured above) is in the midst of completing his two-year term on the ACOFP Resident Council. He served as 2021-2022 chair of the council. ■

**Asma Ghafoor, D.O. ('21),** is a first-year family medicine resident at the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center in Lititz, Pennsylvania.



**Shona Joseph, D.O. ('21),** is a first-year family medicine resident at Palmetto General Hospital in Hialeah, Florida.



**Ravin Patel, D.O. ('20),** a second-year family medicine resident at Inspira Health in Vineland, New Jersey, was named vice chair of the 2022-2023 council and was selected as the 2021 ACOFP National Resident of the Year.



**Sergio Tierrablanca, D.O. ('20),** is a second-year family medicine resident at Broward Health in Fort Lauderdale, Florida.





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## KPCOM Alumni Connect

### CONNECT

Find and reminisce with fellow graduates, see what they have been up to, and stay in touch.

### GIVE BACK

Introduce, employ, and offer to act as a mentor to our graduating students.

### EXPAND

Leverage your professional network to be introduced to people you should know.



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