High school girls explore medical school with Dr. Seema Sachdeva

Special to the News-Express

Dr. Seema Sachdeva, founding vice-chair of the Division of Pediatrics, University of Pikeville Kentucky College of Osteopathic Medicine, provided a shadowing experience to four ninth-grade high school girls as a part of the Empowering Girls of Appalachia experience on June 11, 2025, at KYCOM.

Empowering Girls of Appalachia is a one-day symposium offered to all the ninth-grade girls of Pike County and is sponsored by the Pikeville Rotary Club, Rotary District 6740, Community Trust Bank, Pikeville Medical Center and University of Pikeville.

The professional women members of the club offer a vocational day of shadowing experience as a part of this program. The participants were Riley Johnson and Bella Olegario from Pikeville High School, Kaitlyn Brocal from Belfry High School and Courtney Fleming from Shelby Valley High School.

The girls, according to a statement from Rotary, spent one hour in the Gross Anatomy lab exploring the human thoracic cavity, followed by one hour at the Functional Osteopathic Manipulative lab, where they learned about various manipulative techniques used to treat various body ailments.

After that, they spent two hours at the state-of-the-art high-fidelity simulation lab with Danny Driskill, learning about various real-life scenarios and how to provide lifesaving Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation and other essential skills.

Rotary expressed gratitude in the statement to Dr. Julia Smith, professor of anatomy at UPike-KY-COM, who helped facilitate the experience.

"Touring U-Pike with Dr. Sachdeva was an incredible experience," Fleming said. "I got to see firsthand what medical school is like and ask questions about the path to becoming a doctor. It made the idea of going into the medical field feel real and exciting. Learning from people actually working in the field helped me understand both the challenges.

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and the rewards of a career in health care, and it inspired me to keep working hard toward my goals."

Olegario was very excited and said, "I was very grateful to experience all these new things, even though I was nervous at first to see the cadaver. Once I got used to it, I really learned so much about the anatomy of the body and how different parts of the body work. It was such an educational experience, and I was glad to get exposure to things like this at a young age because it is definitely going to benefit me in the future. I also liked the simulations that we did because I learned so many new things, like I finally know how to do CPR and I know what to do when I encounter people who are hurt and need assistance. Today has really pushed me out of my comfort zone, and I saw and learned new things, and it was overall a great experience, and I am so glad that you gave me the opportunity for this".

Brocal said she was very inspired.

"I had an incredible opportunity to expose myself to the medical world," she said. "On the day of the shadowing, we first participated in a hands-on examination of a cadaver, which allowed us to hold and observe real human organs such as the heart and lungs. I realized that I'm blessed to experience this as a 14-year-old, whereas most medical professionals don't get to see a cadaver until later in medical school. Nothing could indeed have prepared me for that, but I'm glad that I was able to expose myself to it. Then, we had an osteopathic crash course about BLT. Where I discovered it doesn't just stand for a yummy lunch sandwich but is also an abbreviation of Balanced Ligamentous Tension. We spent time practicing different techniques on one another, gaining a tangible understanding of how those same techniques can be applied. But the highlight of the day was undoubtedly the different simulations. I was able to learn and practice essential skills like bleeding control, CPR, and triage. UPIKE provided mannequins and tools so we could be taught step-by-step procedures-



Submitted photo

Riley Johnson and Bella Olegario from Pikeville High School, Kaitlyn Brocal from Belfry High School and Courtney Fleming from Shelby Valley High School were recently offered the opportunity to shadow Dr. Seema Sachdeva as part of the Empowering Girls of Appalachia event on June 11.

ing the victim- and then applying that knowledge to diagnose and prioritize treatments was an invaluable experience. This experience has furthered my aspirations to become a future medical professional. I highly encourage future young women to do this same thing."

Riley Johnson said, "This has been an amazing experience for those who are interested in learning more about the medical profession. We were able to see what a typical day for medical school students was like. We got some hands-on experience and learned how to apply some of the techniques to real-world scenarios. I truly appreciate the opportunity to participate in this and hope that other young ladies who are interested in the medical field will take advantage of this opportunity if presented with it. Thank you to everyone involved for their time, kindness, and willingness to teach others who will hopefully make a difference in the lives of others one day."

Dr Seema Sachdeva found-

ed this program as Rotary District Governor for District 6740 in 2022. She has been practicing pediatrics in Pikeville since 1994 and currently serves the medical needs of children of Eastern Kentucky along with her husband, Dr. Rakesh Sachdeva, founding chair of Pediatrics at UPike-KYCOM and at HomePlace Clinic for Children and Families.

She said in the statement she immensely enjoys teaching medical students and inspiring high school students to explore medical careers.



Dr. Sahasi, DMD

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