

Bonnie Templeton

A Good and Faithful Steward

“Motto?”—“We care!”

“Slogan?”—“Because we care, we serve!”

“Pledge?”—“To be faithful stewards of our time, talents and money.”

My hand is firmly planted on top of the powder blue sash that covers my heart as I enthusiastically recite the response. I stand in a line with other little girls, identical in our matching sashes, skirts and embroidered patches. Although this ritual is religiously repeated weekly as I grow up, I do not truly comprehend the meaning of the words, let alone their application to my young life. A decade or so later, I reflect on these phrases, aware that the motto and slogan helped guide me towards my choice to care for others as a servant physician. Only recently has the pledge found its purpose in my life and future decisions. This process began with an epiphany.

Reflecting one afternoon on my medical school journey, I realized I had utilized a lot of time as well as money in order to become a doctor. Add the ongoing application of my intellect, stamina and passion along the way and one can see that much has been invested toward my career as a physician. With the consumption of these precious resources, I concluded that I should use my career to serve where I am needed the most—to be a good steward of my time, talents and money. Instead of competing with my colleagues for their patients, I feel a calling to practice medicine where there is a shortage and need for doctors.

My resolve is reinforced by a promise I made to my husband; “If you wait to fulfill my dream to become a physician, I will fulfill your dream and move to the mountains.” James’ dream now has become mine as well, knowing that the Western United States is desperate for talented physicians. I am excited about my upcoming elective clerkship with the Indian Health Services. As part of this rural Montana experience, I will be providing much needed healthcare to the Blackfeet Indian Tribe, allowing me to discover the West while partaking in underserved medicine.

Naturally stemming from my desire to practice medicine in a rural, underserved area is the necessity to pick the residency profession that will best train me to serve in this capacity. Presented with important choices this last year, I began to see that the versatility of the family physician is a Godsend to the underserved. Drawn to the quality, personal care given by a lifelong relationship with patients, I feel I am using my skills of compassion the most when I act as a patient educator, advocate and confidant.

Furthermore, my respect for psychiatry will drive me to address the patient’s emotional and mental health concerns as their primary care physician. Every experience of my life thus far, on every clerkship, on mission trips and even my pathology fellowship can and

will be utilized in my future as a family physician. Additionally, I discovered a passion for palliative and end-of-life care. I realize that family medicine would allow me to remain involved in this area, and perhaps serve as a hospice medical director sometime in my career.

The blue skirt and sash of my youth are replaced by a white coat and stethoscope. Nevertheless, my desire and commitment to be a good and faithful steward remain as clear as ever. Time, talents and money have been given to me in order to become a physician. Moreover, they will be required in the future so that I may provide quality patient care. I believe that the most responsible management and future utilization of these gifts would be to become a rural family physician, a steward who serves because she cares.