



NEWS RELEASE

ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

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Alabama to celebrate increased access to health care on Corps Community Day

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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People often ask Dr. Kitt Klaiss how a city girl from Orlando, Fla., ended up in the small, out-of-the-way community of West Blocton, and she lets them know her purpose there is to serve the medical needs of her small rural Alabama community.

A scholarship and loan repayment assistance from the National Health Service Corps, abbreviated as NHSC, brought her to West Blocton and enabled Dr. Klaiss to afford to do what she wanted: to make a difference in a place where she was really needed. With her NHSC scholarship, she managed to finish medical school without incurring tremendous student loan debts, and the loan repayment program allowed her to repay her medical school loans within eight years of beginning her practice.

Fourteen years later, she continues providing medical services in the Bibb County community, and she is grateful for the NHSC assistance. She said, "I am happy to work in a place where I am not only needed but appreciated."

Sixty of Alabama's 67 counties or portions of counties are designated as primary care physician shortage areas. This means residents go without essential health services or they have to travel long distances to see a primary health care provider.

By holding the first Corps Community Day on Oct. 13, supporters want Alabamians to be aware of and understand the importance of access to primary health care and the role NHSC providers and sites play. The theme of the celebration, which falls during the 13th annual National Primary Care Week, is "United to Increase Access to Health Care."

Carolyn Bern, Rural Health outreach coordinator with the Alabama Department of Public Health, said, "We have programs that support primary care providers such as Dr. Klaiss who work in underserved areas, and their scholarships and student loans are repaid tax free. On Corps Community Day we want to thank her and the many other NHSC providers for their significant contributions to the health of Alabamians."

The Corps is a network of more than 9,000 primary health care professionals practicing at more than 10,000 member sites that provide care to underserved rural, urban and frontier communities across the country. Leaders hope to recruit additional committed health care

professionals to serve communities in need and to strengthen the public's understanding of the importance of access to primary care.

Dr. Klaiss also volunteers as a National Health Service Ambassador. In this role, she helps educate and inform prospective students and providers about the opportunities and benefits available through the NHSC. Ambassadors inspire, prepare and mentor students and early-career providers to pursue their careers at NHSC-approved sites across the country.

More than 37,000 providers have been a part of the Corps throughout its nearly 40-year history, and these providers have helped many underserved Alabama communities. The NHSC offers financial, professional and educational resources to qualified providers who serve areas where they are needed most.

NHSC focuses on primary care providers. Their disciplines include medical doctors, doctors of osteopathy, general practice dentists, primary care physician assistants, primary care nurse practitioners, clinical social workers, clinical psychologists, psychiatric nurse specialists, licensed professional counselors and certified nurse midwives.

Additional information, including eligibility requirements, can be found at: <http://nhsc.hrsa.gov/>. If you have questions about this program in Alabama, visit www.adph.org/ruralhealth/ or call the Office of Primary Care and Rural Health at 800-255-1992.