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GEORGIA OSTEOPATHIC
MEDICAL ASSOCIATION
— 1902 —

GOMA News & Updates

Volume 47, November 2025

GOMA Annual Business Meeting

Monday, Nov. 17 @ 7 pm ET

Slate of Nominees for the 2025-2026 GOMA Board of Directors

President: William Lagaly, DO

President-Elect: L. Michael Waters, DO

Vice President: Bridgett Bailey, DO

Secretary-Treasurer: Naveen Raj, DO

Immediate Past President: Gregory E. Harris, DO, FACOI

District I

President: Lucie Mitchell, DO

Secretary/Treasurer:

District II

President: Michael Mangonon, DO

Secretary/Treasurer: William Bostock, DO

District III

President: Matthew Shelnett, DO

Secretary/Treasurer: Robyn Long, DO

District IV

President: Karen Turner, DO

Secretary/Treasurer: Melissa Broadman, DO

**Georgia Delegates to the AOA House of Delegates
(One-Year Term)**

Christian Geltz, DO, Senior Delegate

Karen Turner, DO

Sonbol Shahid-Salles, DO, MPH

Gregory Harris, DO, FACOI

William Bostock, DO

Michael Waters, DO

[Click here to join Zoom Meeting](#)

at 7 pm on Monday, Nov. 17

Zoom Meeting ID: 863 7101 7780

Zoom Passcode: 997981





**GOMA 2025 Virtual Fall
CME Conference
On-Demand Through 12/31**

The image shows a close-up of a person's hands in a white lab coat, holding a stethoscope over a laptop keyboard. The background is slightly blurred, showing a desk and a window with light coming through.

GOMA Fall Virtual Conference is a Painless Way to Bring Pain into your CME

The Georgia Osteopathic Medical Association once again used the power of the internet to allow busy physicians to get quality continuing medical education on demand. Whether bingeing for 16 straight hours or doing one hour each night before bedtime, attendees find it a convenient option to get CME. The conference content remains available for on-demand viewing through the end of the year. There are a variety of subjects on the agenda, but many are themed around pain issues.

The first lecture was by Brandon Naylor, DO on “Modern Treatment Approaches for the Arthritic Hip and Knee”. Dr. Naylor works with Total Joint Specialists in Alpharetta, Georgia and serves as the program director for the Arthroplasty Atlanta Fellowship. Dr. Naylor started his talk off by saying, “Today, I’m going to be speaking about hip and knee arthritis and our current treatment approaches, which we really feel like we are in quite of a renaissance.”

“Peripheral Vascular Disease and Current Therapies” by Anu Whisenhunt, DO, MPH, FACOS who is a vascular surgeon at Northside Hospital Atlanta. Her lecture addressed four objectives: understanding atherosclerosis, the basic testing for vascular work up of leg pain, knowing when to consult a vascular surgeon and knowing treatment options for PAD to promote limb salvage.

William Lagaly, DO’s lecture was about “Hyperbarics – Appropriate Indications”. Dr. Lagaly is the Medical Director of Piedmont Athens Regional Hyperbaric Medicine and Wound Care Center. He reviewed the fifteen indications for Hyperbaric therapy, and warned against hyperbaric therapy being supplied at spas, wellness centers and freestanding facilities due to the risk of patient harm.

“Vulvovaginal Conditions for PCPs” by Matthew Shelnut, DO, FACOG, FACOOG. Dr. Shelnut is an Assistant Professor of Clinical Medicine at PCOM South Georgia. In this lecture, he addressed three objectives: recognizing the most common vulvovaginal

conditions and appropriate management, identifying red flags that should raise suspicion for something more serious and knowing when to biopsy or refer to gynecologist.

“Controlled Substances: What Every Prescriber Needs to Know” by Susan K. Blank, MD who is the current Medical Director of the Georgia Professional Health Program. Her lecture can satisfy 2 hours of the DEA’s 2023 requirement for 8 hours of training prior to renewal of DEA license.

“Wound Care” was discussed by Darren Dillard, DO, MS. Dr. Dillard is the Director of Osteopathic Medical Education at Northside Hospital’s Family Medicine Residency. He addressed his four objectives in this talk: learning how to accurately describe acute and chronic wounds, reviewing the process of wound healing, being aware of common treatments available to assist with wound care and becoming familiar with the management of both acute and chronic wounds.

“Introduction to Cryoneurolysis: A New Era of Pain Management for LBP and Beyond” by Clay Guynn, DO, FAAPM&R, CAQSM. Dr. Guynn introduced cryoneurolysis as well as discussed how cryoneurolysis can be used in the field of pain management and specifically low back pain management.

And lastly, the lecture on “Neuroplasticity as an Approach to Pain Management” by Marla D. Golden, DO, MS, FACEP gave a new perspective on an old dilemma. Dr. Golden is serving as the founding Dean of the Benedict College School of Osteopathic Medicine in Atchison, Kansas which will be accepting its first class in 2028. As she started her talk, Dr. Golden explained, “Neuroplasticity is really the underlying cause for a persistent pain process, but also a property that we possess that can be utilized to intervene and provide treatment options to interrupt that persistent pain process.”

[Click here to join us for the GOMA Virtual Fall CME Conference where you can earn up to 16 CME credits from the comfort of your own home! It is available On-Demand through December 31, 2025](#)



How a Teen Swimmer Turned his Pain into Purpose

A non-pharmacological approach to managing pain under mentorship of Miranda Cleaver, DO

Abridged from an article by Nancy Badertscher, Atlanta Journal Constitution

Ocean Gorecki had trained for years to become a top swimmer. But nothing could have prepared him for the challenge that began not in the water but in a hospital bed. Just days before he was to start classes at McCallie School — a top all-boys prep academy in Chattanooga, Tennessee, known for its academics and nationally ranked swim team — the 16-year-old from Gainesville was critically injured in a head-on car crash.

On the night of Aug. 5, 2023, Ocean and his father were picking up takeout. Driving home in a 1979 Mazda RX-7, Ocean saw headlights veer into their lane. A Honda Pilot, driven by a woman who authorities said had a blood alcohol level of .232, well above Georgia's .08 limit, veered across the center line and slammed into them.

Ocean slipped into unconsciousness. He woke up in the hospital, immobilized by a neck brace. His injuries were extensive: a traumatic brain injury, a broken ankle, a broken nose, torn biceps and deep lacerations. Ocean had one question: Would he ever swim again?

But eight days after the crash, Ocean arrived at McCallie for the first day of classes — on crutches, wrapped in bandages, determined to move forward. “I didn’t see not doing it as an option,” said Ocean, now 18. “I knew this wasn’t going to hold me back.” In those first weeks, Ocean couldn’t swim. But he showed up anyway — watching practices, cheering on teammates and finding ways to get in the water. “I would crutch over to the pool, kneel down and my coach would help lower me in,” he said.

Ocean said a big inspiration in his recovery was his father, Cumming neurosurgeon John P. Gorecki, who also had been severely injured in the accident and had a hard road back.

Physical therapy was brutal. One task — picking up 50 cold pebbles with his toes — was agonizing. One day, while studying for Chinese class, Ocean began counting the pebbles in Mandarin.

And something unexpected happened: The pain dulled. “I was so focused on the numbers and the mental process that the pain just ... faded,” Ocean said. “It was like I’d hacked my brain.”

What began as a coping strategy became a research project. Ocean started studying how cognitive redirection — primarily through language learning — might help others manage physical pain, even anxiety. He launched a platform called MindMend8, began volunteering at a local pain clinic and started applying his theory with real patients in his community.

Miranda Reed Cleaver, DO, an anesthesiologist and pain management specialist at Cleaver Medical Group in Cumming, allowed Ocean to shadow her. Several times a week, between swim practices and classes, Ocean was at the clinic, testing out his ideas.

“It’s kind of that ‘mind-over matter’ thing that we always hear,” Cleaver said. “And it works.” She describes Ocean as smart, driven, highly intelligent and kind.

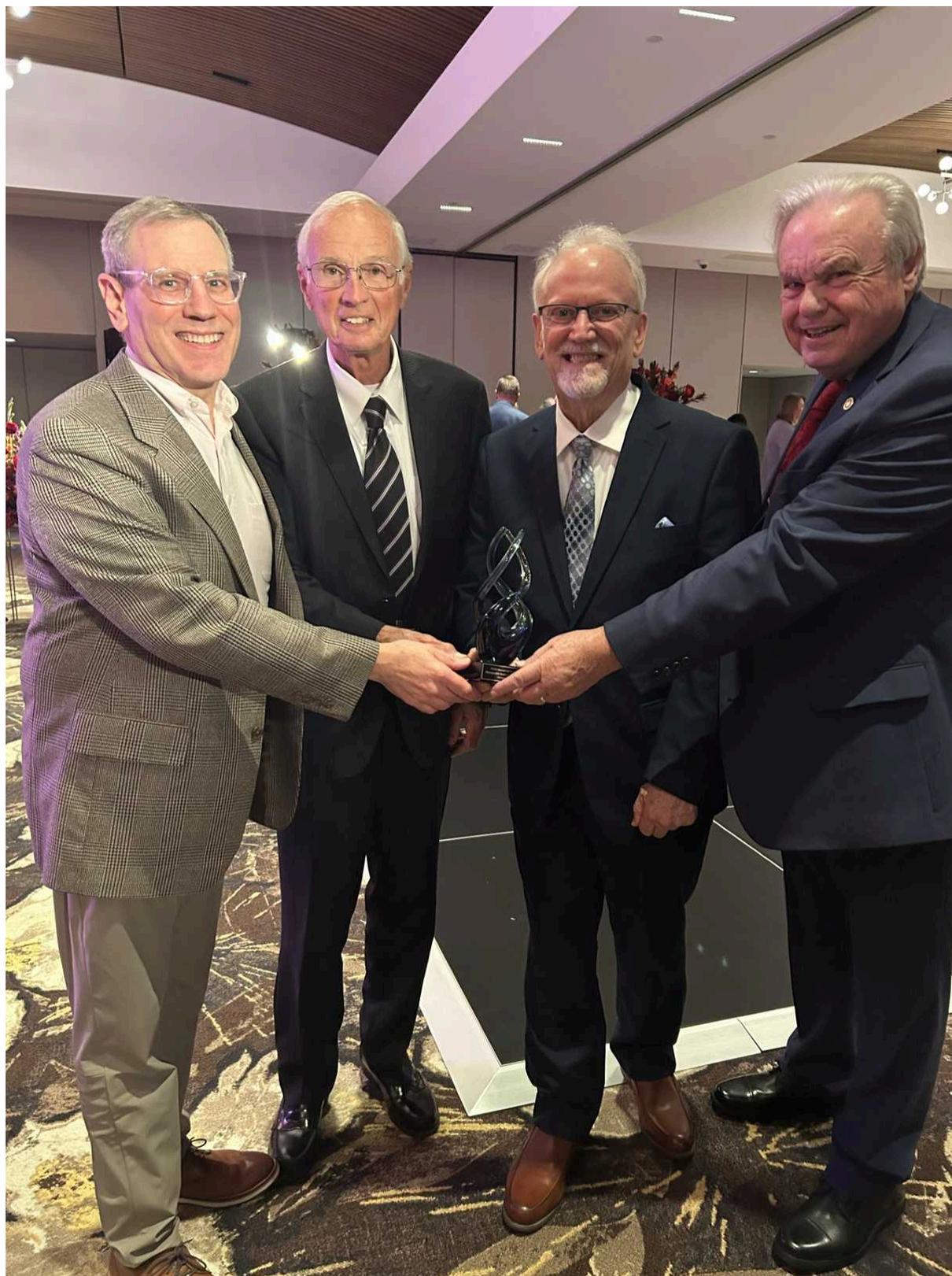
“I have two younger sons, and I can only hope they become someone as wonderful as he is,” Cleaver said. “He’s phenomenal.”

Ocean’s research recently was accepted by the Curieux Academic Journal, which publishes exceptional research by high school and middle school students.

Ocean said he believes his idea could be a promising non-pharmacological approach to managing pain — especially for patients hesitant about using opioids. “This all started with me just trying to get through therapy,” he said. “Now I see it might actually help people in a much bigger way.” Still, he’s quick to say he has much more research to do.

To learn more about Ocean’s research, go to MindMend8 at mindmend8.com.

[Read the entire article here.](#)

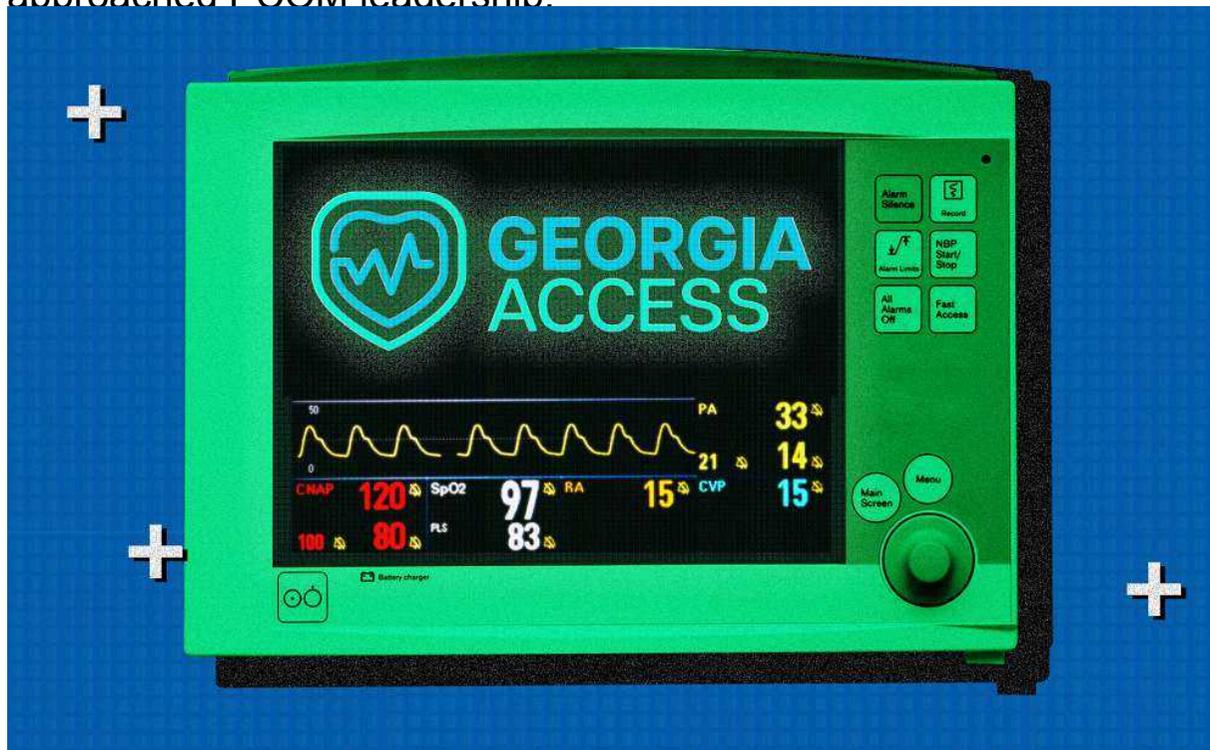


Dissolved OIS Recognized for its Work & Endowment with an Ignite Award

While the Osteopathic Institute of the South (OIS) has ceased to exist since 2022, its work on promoting osteopathic medicine in the Southeastern United States continues to be recognized. On October

24th, PCOM Georgia's annual fund-raising gala was concluded with the presentation of the Ignite Awards. OIS won the Ignite Award for its trail blazing work in starting an osteopathic medical school in Georgia as well as its establishment of an endowment that helps students that have unforeseen financial challenges. In the above picture, OIS Executive Board members at the event were Michael Baron, DO; Neil Nickelson, DO; Barry Doublestein, PhD; Donnie Houston, CPA.

As the result of the sale of Doctors' Hospital in Tucker, OIS was created (originally known as the Georgia Osteopathic Institute) to promote osteopathic medicine. Barry Doublestein was the executive director and was instrumental to creating a valuable network of third- and fourth-year clinical rotations, internships, residencies and postgraduate training programs. Unfortunately, the closest osteopathic medical school was 350 miles away. Seeking to open an osteopathic medical school with the mission of recruitment and retention of medical students from the South for the South, the OIS approached PCOM leadership.



as an endowment, will support future generations of students.

ACA Enrollment Opens in Georgia as Questions about Subsidies Remain

[Donations to the OIS Endowed Student Emergency Fund can be made here](#) -- scroll down to PCOM Student Emergency Fund and in

By Ariel Hart, Atlanta Journal Constitution

the comments note "OIS Endowed Student Emergency Fund."

On Saturday, Nov. 1, Georgia Access, the state's program for Affordable Care Act health insurance plans, opened the door to enroll in 2026 policies. Open enrollment for 2026 plans will last until Jan. 15 in Georgia. The time to shop is now. After open enrollment closes, no one can sign up for a 2026 plan unless they have a legally approved reason, like moving to a new state or getting divorced.

The higher price tags for ACA premiums and deductibles next year have made national news. Some pandemic-era extra federal subsidies are scheduled to expire, and Congress is currently shut down in a fight over whether to extend them. For the moment, premium prices are expected to more than double nationwide, on average.

But there are still good options for many, state Insurance Commissioner John King said in a written statement. He urged people to check out the Georgia Access website and other resources. "Georgia Access remains dedicated to our core mission to expand access to affordable health insurance for Georgians," said Georgia Access Executive Director Cheryl Gardner.

The "enhanced" subsidies that are about to expire, and the Congressional shutdown are blanketing the airwaves. Less well known is that there will also be fewer "navigators" who offer unbiased assistance. Nationwide, funding for navigators has plummeted under the Trump administration.

In Georgia, King's office said navigator funding didn't yield results; navigator organizations disagree, providing data that differed from the state's. King's office said it is putting \$800,000 toward outreach organizations that will publicize Georgia Access, and is also helping privately-funded assisters get up to speed. Georgia Legal Services Program used to run a navigator assistant for its clients, but this year the state gutted its funding so it gave up. "We do not have other appropriate funding available to further support the program," said a spokeswoman, Mitzy Sharp Futro.

The nonprofit Georgians For a Healthy Future also lost its state funding but is going to keep assisting sign-ups with private donations. They said other funding does not fill the gap for Georgians in services left from the navigator cuts. “That almost eliminates local, free, unbiased assistance for Georgians across the state,” said Laura Colbert, director of GHF. “We are maintaining our (customer assistant) program with private philanthropic grants, but most other programs have closed up shop.”

There are also private insurance agents, but they’re not bound to be neutral when advising which plan to choose, since they get rewarded by commissions. How many people give up and how many people sign up remains to be seen. There are still options that meet many Georgians’ needs. Last year, 1.5 million Georgians signed up for a 2025 plan, and about 1.35 million of them remain enrolled.



Urge Congress to End the Shutdown and Protect Patient Access to Care

Even as the federal government shutdown disrupts key operations, the AOA continues to stand firm in its mission to advocate for osteopathic physicians and the patients they serve. From protecting access to care and defending physician-led practice to elevating osteopathic voices in Washington and across the states, this edition

highlights how physician leaders and advocates are continuing to make progress even in challenging times.

As the federal government shutdown continues, critical healthcare programs and services remain at risk. The prolonged stalemate has delayed key federal operations, including Medicare payment system updates, and created uncertainty for physicians and patients alike. Now is the time for Congress to act. Urge your lawmakers to fund the government and support permanent telehealth flexibilities by advancing the CONNECT for Health Act (H.R. 4206). This bipartisan legislation would ensure patients, especially those in rural and underserved areas, continue to benefit from the accessibility and convenience of telehealth services.

[Make your voice heard by contacting your members of Congress today to protect patient access and preserve stability for the](#)



AOA Joins Coalition to Defend Public Service Loan Forgiveness

The AOA joined five leading physician organizations, known as the Group of Six, in opposing the U.S. Department of Education's new rule restricting eligibility for the Public Service Loan Forgiveness (PSLF) program. The change limits participation for physicians employed under contracts with hospitals and health systems, jeopardizing access to care in rural and underserved areas.

In a joint statement representing over 600,000 physicians, the Group of Six emphasized that PSLF is more than a loan program; it's a lifeline that enables medical graduates to serve in high-need specialties like primary care and psychiatry without overwhelming debt. The organizations urge the Department to reconsider the rule,

recognizing that a healthy America depends on a strong and sustainable physician workforce.



PCOM South Georgia Brings Health to the Farm at the 2025 Sunbelt Ag Expo

By Akilah C. Clarke, Moultrie Observer

The Philadelphia College of Osteopathic Medicine South Georgia brought healthcare straight to the heart of farm country Oct. 14-16, expanding its Rural Health Initiative at the 2025 Sunbelt Ag Expo.

Inside the dedicated PCOM South Georgia Rural Health Initiative Building, the college and its partners offered free screenings, education, and wellness resources aimed at strengthening the health of the region's agricultural communities.

Now in its second year at the Expo, the Rural Health Initiative drew steady crowds from across South Georgia. What began as a partially filled exhibit space in 2024 has grown into a bustling hub representing hospitals, mental health programs, and community organizations from across the region. The expansion reflects PCOM's commitment to connecting rural residents with both preventive and mental health care — areas where access and awareness remain limited.

Dillon Presley, PCOM's community outreach coordinator, said that goal came from a simple idea: bring healthcare to the people rather than waiting for them to seek it.

“There’s a huge disconnect in rural and agricultural communities when it comes to healthcare — especially mental health,” he explained. “Farmers don’t like to go to the doctor, and there’s still a stigma around talking about mental health. So, we’re bringing those services to them, right here where they already feel comfortable.”

Throughout the three-day event, more than 60 PCOM students volunteered alongside partner organizations to provide screenings and demonstrations. Presley said that effort isn’t just about immediate results, but about building familiarity between future healthcare providers and the people they’ll eventually serve. “When folks see our students now — and later see them again as physicians — that connection can make all the difference in how comfortable they feel seeking care.”

The Rural Health Initiative’s impact has already been measurable. Presley noted that the team performed more than 250 health screenings in a single day, from blood pressure checks to glucose tests. Beyond the numbers, the initiative’s education focus has proven life changing. “Last year, a dermatologist giving a talk on skin cancer was approached by someone in the crowd who asked them to look at a spot on their back,” Presley recalled. “It turned out to be skin cancer. The doctor told them that if they had waited six or eight more months, it could have been much worse. That one moment alone made all the work worth it.” PCOM’s ongoing speaker series, Roots to Wellness, ran continuously throughout the Expo, featuring physicians and behavioral health experts discussing issues that matter most to the region — topics like safe lifting practices, organophosphate exposure, and stress management for farmers. Each session underscored PCOM’s holistic approach to health, blending practical medical advice with the osteopathic philosophy of treating the whole person.

Above Photo: First-year Doctor of Osteopathic Medicine students

Xandria Parker, MaKayla Wright and Akosua Crumbsy from PCOM South Georgia stand beside the college's "Simbulance" at the 2025 Sunbelt Ag Expo in Moultrie



PCOM South Georgia Community Wore Pink to Recognize Cancer Awareness Month

This month, the PCOM South Georgia community wore pink and teal to recognize Cancer Awareness Month and to honor those whose lives have been touched by breast and ovarian cancer.

This observance carried special meaning as we remembered Dr. Savita Arya, a beloved professor of pathology whose kindness, patience and belief in her students shaped so many lives. Her legacy continues through a new endowed scholarship created in her name, which will help future physicians carry forward her compassion and dedication to learning.

[Contributions to the Dr. Savita Arya Memorial Endowed Scholarship can be made by giving online here.](#)

**“If you want to go fast, go alone.
If you want to go far, go together.”**

– African Proverb