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LOCAL LEGENDS

Celebrating America's Local Women Physicians

MEET LOCAL LEGEND: **Patricia A. Thomas, M.D.**



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Patricia A. Thomas, M.D.

"I was the middle child of five and then lost a brother and a sister. I felt helpless but came to see that medicine could give me the information and power to battle illness."

NOMINATING CONGRESSIONAL REPRESENTATIVE

Dennis Moore

"RENOWNED PATHOLOGIST, RESEARCHER AND LEADER IN DIVERSITY"

BIOGRAPHY

A one-line "personal mission statement" accompanying her professional resume neatly characterizes Patricia Thomas' caring attitude and lifelong ambition: "I will inspire and empower others, and myself, to make a real difference in the world we share."

Thomas has been guided by this commitment since her earliest days in her home town of Leavenworth, where she and her four siblings grew up, a brother and sister died, and a serendipitous encounter in high school with a college recruiter set her on the path to becoming the first member of her family to graduate from college.

An honors student in high school, she was spotted by a representative from Harvard University who was interested in attracting gifted black students to the university. Thomas seized the opportunity, eventually graduating from Harvard with a degree in biochemistry and, later, from the University of Kansas with a master's degree in biology and biochemistry.

Despite these accomplishments, Thomas felt her real calling was as a physician. Inspired in part by the loss of her siblings years earlier, she began to study medicine, eventually earning her M.D. from New York University Medical Center.

Today she is a nationally known expert on pathology and cytopathology, with special interest and training in fine needle aspiration and breast pathology. Her current research focuses on early detection of benign

MILESTONES

1997

Appointed Professor, Department of Pathology and Laboratory Medicine, University of Kansas School of Medicine, Kansas City

1998

Appointed Executive Co-Director, Greater Kansas City Health Professions Pipeway Initiative (GKC HPPI)

1998

Appointed Director, Center for the Study of Race and Ethnicity in Medicine (now known as the Program on Diversity and Disparities in Health), and Appointed Co-Director, Center of Excellence for Minority Medical Faculty Development and Cultural Competency Education, University of Kansas School of Medicine

breast lesions that might predict a woman's risk of developing breast cancer, as well as any racial or ethnic variations in breast cancer survival.

Nominated as a Local Legend of Medicine by Rep. Dennis Moore (D-KS-3), she is Chair of the Department of Pathology and Laboratory Medicine at the University of Kansas and an Associate Dean heading the university's Office of Cultural Enhancement and Diversity (OCED), which addresses issues relating to the art, science, learning and "humanness" of medicine. As well, she strives to foster diversity in the School of Medicine.

Thomas also directs both the Center for the Study of Race and Ethnicity in Medicine and the Minority Resource Center at the university. As a respected teacher and campus leader, she co-directs an initiative to increase the number of underrepresented students in health professions. Thanks to her efforts, the School of Medicine received a \$5.5 million endowment grant from the National Institutes of Health National Center for Minority Health and Health Disparities for merit-based scholarships for minority students in the Greater Kansas City area.

A prolific researcher, Thomas has published more than 110 articles and abstracts and made numerous presentations. Recipient of the University of Kansas Student Voice Award for Excellence in Teaching (2002-2003), she has many other awards and citations to her credit.

"Medicine is the perfect combination of the things I like to do: study science, make a difference and make decisions that help people," she says. "The most important thing to me though, is my family. That I can have a family and be a doctor is what inspires me."

1999

Appointed Associate Dean, Office of Cultural Enhancement and Diversity, University of Kansas School of Medicine

2001-2002

Selected for Hedwig Van Ameringen Executive Leadership in Academic Medicine Program for Women, Bryn Mawr, PA

2003

Appointed Chair, Department of Pathology and Laboratory Medicine, University of Kansas School of Medicine

2005

Selected as Fellow, Harvard School of Public Health, Clinical Chief of Service Training Program, Boston

BORN

1956

MEDICAL SCHOOL

New York University School of Medicine, New York, NY

SPECIALTY

Anatomic Pathology

Sub Specialty

Cytopathology

LOCATION

Kansas

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