



# Norfolk Public Schools

The cornerstone of a proudly diverse community

May 2, 2016

Sandra Gordon  
Association of American Medical Colleges  
655 K Street, NW, Suite 100  
Washington, DC 20001-2339

Dear Ms. Gordon and Award Selection Committee:

Children who live in poverty sometimes have health challenges most of us can't imagine. And children in poor health struggle to move forward in school.

Through the public-private partnership United for Children, Eastern Virginia Medical School has taken a lead role in fostering the educational success for children that can break the cycle of poverty. Working in one of Norfolk's most challenged neighborhoods, EVMS has begun addressing this community's lack of resources and the health disparities of its children.

EVMS' participation in United for Children launched at the start of the 2014-15 academic year with the first annual Community Impact Day. All incoming EVMS students — along with the institution's senior leaders — spend their second day of orientation cleaning and preparing Norfolk's P.B. Young Sr. Elementary School for the new school year.

The Master of Physician Assistant program students (who start their academic year in January) held an additional Community Impact Day in February. From hula hooping to the science behind why you shouldn't pick your nose, PA students provided a number of educational and fun stations for elementary school children and their families to visit. Not only do these activities assist the schools, EVMS leaders believe that this participation instills the spirit of community service in their students from the time they arrive on campus.

EVMS medical and health professions students have found their own unique ways to have a positive impact on our schoolchildren as well. Those who belong to the James Monroe Mentoring Society tutor students weekly at a Norfolk elementary school. The annual Community Impact Day inspired another group of 70 EVMS students to collaborate with school administrators on Young at Heart, a Saturday morning outreach program to help fourth- and fifth-graders improve their writing skills.

And every year, EVMS students offer a safe Halloween celebration by hosting children from three Norfolk elementary schools for the annual Haunted Hallway celebration. In 2015, attendance topped 500.

In fall 2015, EVMS' commitment to children's health extended into Norfolk's Booker T. Washington High School with the opening of a Student Care Center in the school. To support higher graduation rates, EVMS now helps keep high-school students healthy by offering the comprehensive services of a family physician's office within the school.

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But these efforts are far from the first collaborations between EVMS and Norfolk Public Schools. The Medical and Health Specialties Program at Maury High School celebrates its 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2016. Established as a three-year pilot program supported by the National Institutes of Health, it was designed to prepare high-school students — especially females and minorities — to pursue careers in medical and health professions. Today, Maury students take classes daily on the EVMS campus and interact extensively with EVMS faculty and students. Graduates serve in a wide range of health-care roles and at least two are now faculty members at EVMS.

And in March 2016, EVMS launched its first annual health careers exploration day for NPS high school students providing hands-on experiences and exposing them to a variety of options for their future. After his opportunity to speak with an African-American OBGYN doctor, Maury High School senior, Tyrique Sharpe saw new possibilities. “It was inspiring that regular people, people that grew up here ... can do this,” he said. Then, he added: “I can do things like that.”

For all of these reasons and more, we are proud to offer our support for EVMS’ application for the AAMC Spencer Foreman Award for Outstanding Community Service.

Sincerely,



Melinda Boone, Ed.D.  
Superintendent, Norfolk Public Schools



Rodney Jordan  
Board Chair, Norfolk Public Schools



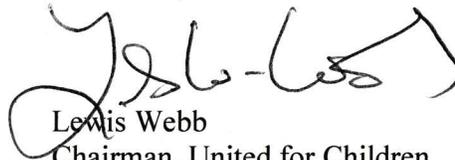
Karen Berg  
Principal, Maury High School



Dwana White, Ed.D.  
Principal, P.B. Young, Sr.  
Elementary School



Sharon Phillips, Ed.D.  
Principal, Tidewater Park  
Elementary School



Lewis Webb  
Chairman, United for Children  
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