



Residency Faculty

Dr. Tina Stanco

Recent geriatric fellowship graduate and former Navy corpsman accepts role as Casper residency faculty member

BY GAYLE M. IRWIN

PHOTOS COURTESY OF DR. TINA STANCO



Dr. Tina Stanco celebrates her geriatric fellowship graduation with her brothers, father, and husband.

Tina Stanco, MD, spent more than two decades in the military striving toward her dream career – to become a doctor. In July she completed her geriatric fellowship at the University of Wyoming Family Medicine Residency Program in Casper and this fall she will serve as a new faculty member for the program.

Dr. Stanco began her Casper residency in 2020, after completing a rotation in Wyoming five months before. She selected the state's residency program as her first choice after that month-long stay in Wyoming.

"I absolutely fell in love with the program and family medicine," she said. "I fell in love with the state and people in Casper as well. It was an 'aha moment' for me."

She wanted to pursue rural family medicine.

"I thought I was going to be a full-spectrum, rural medicine doc, which was the original dream when I started, but ... my husband, unfortunately, had to have some medical stenting, and that kind of changed how rural I thought we could be," Dr. Stanco said.

A new opportunity arose – the geriatric fellowship program. She applied and was accepted.

"They [program leaders and faculty] will probably say they knew I was a geriatrician before I knew I was a geriatrician, and they are probably right," she said. "It's the best decision I ever made. It's the exact right population for me, and I couldn't be happier."

Her rotations focused on older adults in Casper and Laramie as well as out-of-state. She spent time at the Alzheimer's

Institute in Arizona and at a palliative care center in Salt Lake City.

"I've had the opportunity to get exposure to things that we don't necessarily have in town," she said. "That's a great thing to bring back to offer our population here."

Dr. Stanco credits the program faculty with "helping me grow into a geriatrician that I want to be."

She added, "I think I connected here for the same reasons I connected with residency – I very much like the population [and] the faculty that I have the amazing opportunity to work with."

Originally from New Jersey, Dr. Stanco entered military service to help pursue her dream of becoming a doctor and to ensure medicine was the right career path.

"The only thing I wanted to do in the military was be a hospital corpsman," she said. "I wanted to make sure that's where I really wanted to be."

She spent 21 years as a hospital corpsman in the Navy. She learned vital lessons as she served aboard the USS Enterprise, was deployed twice, and spent time in various foreign ports. Three of those lessons were; take advantage of every opportunity to learn, teamwork, and leadership. However, one lesson eclipsed all others.

"To be forever grateful and thankful for the opportunities that I had because lots of folks I met through my travels had much less opportunity in the world than I did," she said.

She spent nine months in Sierra Leone and time in Zambia. Both countries were "eye-opening," she said.

“Those were truly opportunities to know just how incredibly blessed and lucky I am to have all that I did have,” Dr. Stanco said. “It was incredible to see the lack of facilities in those countries while I was there. Unfortunately, folks not having the services they need for things that we would consider very basic in a healthcare setting.”

While serving aboard ship, she assisted her fellow sailors.

“I got to see the differences in coordinating care for our service members when there were instances,” she said. “That gave me a good look at some of the different experiences that people have trying to coordinate care back at stateside facilities, because they didn’t have some of the specialties we needed when we were overseas.”

Those experiences led her to consider rural medicine in the United States.

“I think that may have given me a better understanding of rural medicine here in the states because you have to do a lot of the coordination of care – you don’t have every subspecialty that you need everywhere that you go,” Dr. Stanco said.

She received her bachelor’s and master’s degrees while on active duty, and she retired as a senior chief petty officer. Also while serving, she met her husband, a retired British Army official. The pair enjoy residing in Wyoming after having lived throughout the world.

“We’re both very outdoorsy,” Dr. Stanco said. “We love hiking, we both love fishing – we’re figuring out the flyfishing thing. Mostly we enjoy being in nature.”

After retiring from the Navy, Dr. Stanco continued to pursue her dream. She attended medical school on the island of St. Vincent in the Caribbean, at St. James School of Medicine. She described that experience as “incredibly formative” in shaping her career.

“I was a very non-traditional student,” she said. “The island was beautiful, the people were fantastic! I very much enjoyed my time there.”

She conducted her clinicals primarily in Chicago, at which point she knew the big city was not the place for her. Visiting Wyoming and experiencing a smaller, rural area with warm and welcoming faculty and residents drew her to apply for the University of Wyoming Family Medicine Residency Program in Casper. After acceptance, one of the physicians she met was Michael Jording, MD, a family practice physician in Newcastle, who serves as a guest attending physician at the Casper residency program.

“I’ve known him for a few years now,” Dr. Stanco said. “I’ve had interactions with him both as a resident and as a fellow. He’s just a fantastic teacher, very patient, always helping you to think and to grow. He brings different insight and experiences.”



Dr. Stanco and her husband, Mark Gurney, on Laramie Peak.

Dr. Jording expressed admiration for her as well.

“I had opportunity to visit with Dr. Stanco when she was interned and the last two years of the family medicine residency. She would present patients to me and I would judge her abilities. She was always very strong in knowledge, and I thought her care plans were well developed and showed a lot of insight,” he said.

Dr. Jording has served as a guest attending physician at the Casper program for 30 years. He travels from Newcastle once a month. He said he considered her above average in skill and knowledge, that she was mature and stood out from the rest of the residents. He attributes all that to her time as a corpsman in the military.

“She developed a great skill ... and a great knowledge base for medicine. Her experience in the military gave her a wonderful foundation for family medicine,” Dr. Jording said.

As she steps into her new role as faculty member at the Casper residency program, Dr. Stanco said she feels grateful for all of her experiences and for this new opportunity.

“It was always my dream to be a doctor. I could not be more grateful and thankful for this opportunity ... it’s been just the right fit,” she said. “Geriatrics is awesome, and the perfect fit for me. I love the population and I love to serve the underserved.”

Dr. Stanco offered encouraging words for those who also dream about their future.

“You’re never too old [to learn],” she said. “Never give up on your dream.” 