

Meet . . . Keith Gates

Medical School Student Serving in Iraq Wins Award for Excellence

By Meredith Raine, Public Affairs

As seniors at The University of Texas Medical School at Houston celebrated commencement in the comfort of an air-conditioned convention center, one of their classmates, Keith Gates, was in Al Anbar Province, doing his part for Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Instead of a cap and gown, Gates, a father of two, was wearing combat gear. He could have graduated with the rest of his class but, earlier this year, he chose to put his medical education on hold so he could serve our country.

The U.S. Navy reservist, 37, signed up for a seven-month tour of duty as a special operations medic attached to a Marine unit. Gates, a former Army Ranger, has been in the military since 1987. He was a certified emergency medical technician and paramedic before enrolling in medical school.

Gates' decision was not at all surprising, said Brent King, M.D., chairman of the Department of Emergency Medicine. "A lesser person would have considered his own benefit first and the benefit of others after," King said. But it was fitting for Gates, whom King described as having an eagerness to learn, a calm demeanor and keen ability to focus on patients. "Keith felt a sense of loyalty to his team and duty to his country and elected to put himself in harm's way."

This is one of the many reasons King and others nominated Gates for the 2005 Walter G. Sterling Award for Excellence. Upon reviewing the nominations, the Student Evaluation and Promotions Committee selected Gates as the winner. The award recognizes a student who has exhibited scholastic superiority, outstanding interpersonal relations, energy and has earned the respect and affection of his or her patients and colleagues. The bronze medallion and check is traditionally given to a graduating senior.

"Keith is an exceptional person who defines honor and commitment," Kimberly Anderson, Ph.D., wrote in her nomination letter. "As a medical student, he is one of those rare individuals who takes everything in stride. He works diligently, has a positive attitude, always takes on more than is expected of

him and never complains."

Anderson, professor of surgery and director of surgical education, said Gates leads by example. "He is the embodiment of someone who sees duty as a privilege and an awesome responsibility," she said.

Col. John B. Holcomb, M.D., commander and chief of the trauma division at the U.S. Army Institute of Surgical Research at Fort Sam Houston, said civilians and soldiers are benefiting from Gates' decision to go to Iraq to care for patients. "I can think of no greater example of his desire and drive to translate his medical knowledge and expertise in a life-saving fashion," Holcomb said.



Clockwise from top left: Keith Gates in clinic in Iraq; geared up for a helicopter mission; a brief respite in the field; wife, Jeri, and daughter, Darby, Gates accepting Keith's award and children's teddy bears from Dean Stanley Schultz.

In an e-mail Gates sent from the Middle East to a mentor at the UT Medical School, he detailed some of his activities. As the senior medical department representative for about 200 Marines, he operates a daily clinic, treating soldiers with the "Iraq Hack," which is acute bronchitis and/or the flu, and other ailments.

He also wrote about going to a village on the Euphrates and passing out candy and soccer balls to children while soldiers searched for a target.

"So far it has been a great opportunity," Gates said. "I am continuing to learn . . . I have definitely changed in some ways and

confirmed other things I already knew."

Gates, who won an Alpha Omega Alpha Research Fellowship in 2004, was working with Rosemary Kozar, M.D., Ph.D., associate professor of surgery, on a research project in the lab when he was deployed.

E-mail has allowed them to stay in contact, and her daughter's third-grade class at T. H. Rogers Elementary School has adopted "Dr. Keith" as a pen pal.

"Keith has made an amazing transition from a medical student to a physician, and I'm very proud of his accomplishments," Kozar said. "Without much help or supervision, Keith has been the person taking care of the unit's medical needs, including combat and environmental injuries because the only M.D. in his unit was unable to go to Iraq at the last minute. One of his men has a closed-head injury and another has suffered a camel spider bite — not typical injuries most medical students are expected to manage," she said.

During commencement ceremonies May 28, the audience gave a standing ovation as Gates' wife, Jeri, and their 4-year-old daughter, Darby, accepted the award from Dean Stanley G. Schultz, M.D., on Keith Gates's behalf. "We're both soldiers," Jeri said. "He's trained for this for a very long time, and he felt very strongly about going."

The couple also has a 2-year-old son, Saxton. Dean Schultz also presented a certificate for Darby and teddy bears for the children.

Jeri Gates said her husband is expected to return home in September. He'll have two months' worth of medical school coursework to complete while he is reapplying to residency programs. He plans to specialize in emergency medicine, which his wife said is his calling.

"He was very surprised to receive this award, and he considers it a great honor," said Jeri, a social worker at Texas Children's Hospital. "It means a lot to our family." ★

Revised Policy Covers All Forms of Discrimination and Harassment

During a recent detailed analysis of the Title IX discrimination and sexual harassment policy and procedure of another UT System institution, the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Civil Rights (OCR) identified elements that it believed should be included in the Title IX grievance procedure, says Yolanda Davis, director of the Office of Diversity and Equal Employment Opportunity at the UT Health Science Center.

Based on the analysis, the Office of General Counsel requested that all UT System institutions review their current nondiscrimination policy and sexual harassment policy and address the concerns raised by the civil rights office.

This gave the health science center administration the opportunity to revise the Sexual Harassment policy (Handbook of Operating Procedures Policy 2.04) to include:

- all forms of discrimination and harassment and
- broaden the scope to include:
 - students,
 - residents,
 - fellows and
 - other trainees;
 - volunteers,
 - visitors,
 - vendors,
 - consultants,
 - observers,
 - as well as applicants for employment or admissions.

The revised policy requires supervisors to address discrimination or harassment at the departmental level and identifies time frames in which the grievance should be resolved.

Currently, the Office of Equal Opportunity and Diversity provides mandatory EEO refresher training for supervisors and managers every two years. This training will be modified to include training on the new Discrimination and Harassment policy.

Supervisors who will not be required to take the training for another two years should attend one of the scheduled sessions for training on the new policy. See EEO Training, page 4, for dates and times of next scheduled trainings for supervisors and managers.

As a result of the changes of the policy, the Sexual Harassment Board, which serves as resource persons to the university community, has begun training to expand the members' knowledge base to include all forms of discrimination and harassment.

Because of the change of policy, the name of the board was changed to the Discrimination and Harassment Board to reflect its new responsibilities. Board members have gone through three two-hour training sessions.

A few dedicated, experienced people have been on the board since its inception and are available to mentor the new members, says Davis.

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'Spirit of Texas' Food Drive: June 27-July 12

It's time again to think of those less fortunate in our community, and make your contribution (in dollars or products) to the annual Texas Medical Center Channel 11 "Spirit of Texas" Food Drive. The UT Health Science Center at Houston joins others in the Medical Center in this combined effort. The drive is June 27-July 12. The coming-together of TMC donors and volunteers, with coverage by KHOU-TV, will be Thursday, July 14.

This is your opportunity to help stock the Houston Food Bank's shelves in its ongoing effort to feed more than 200,000 hungry Houstonians, so many of them children. Donations to the Food Bank are typically down in the summer, yet at this time of year the need increases.

UT Health Science Center Food Drive coordinators and volunteers from all locations are needed. Please contact Elease.PJenkins@uth.tmc.edu, (713) 500-3035, in the Office of Public Affairs to let her know what you can and will do. The online virtual drive will be held again this year. You also can donate canned and non-perishable packaged foods via the traditional Food Drive boxes located throughout the health science center.