



DR. HAK LEE TEACHING STUDENT MARK BEARDEN
ABOUT THE DA VINCI SURGICAL SYSTEM

Investing in Tomorrow's Healthcare Leaders Today

THE GORDON HOSPITAL ROBOTIC SURGERY TEAM is giving back to the community by investing in the lives of the healthcare professionals of the future. Sixteen students were selected from Calhoun High School, Sonorville High School, Gordon Central High School, and Georgia-Cumberland Academy to attend the Gordon Hospital Surgical Outreach Program for students interested in pursuing a career in healthcare.

The Surgical Outreach Program, conducted by Gordon Hospital's Urologic Oncologist and Director of Robotic Surgery Hak Lee, MD; Director of Surgical Services Vernon Gipson, RN; and Robotic Clinical Coordinator Sharon Bass, RN, devoted an entire day to teaching students surgical skills and giving them hands-on experience with some of the most advanced medical equipment in the industry, including the *da Vinci* robot.

The *da Vinci* surgical system allows surgeons to operate through a few small incisions using a 3D high-definition vision system and wristed instruments that act more effectively than human hands. The *da Vinci* creates more possibilities for minimally invasive surgery and has many medical benefits such as quicker healing, reduced blood loss, and reduced post-procedure pain.

"I wanted to provide a service to students that opens their eyes to what career paths are out there and expose them to things that they don't normally see," said Dr. Lee. "This program is meant to get students interested and involved in the surgical or medical field and to give them a foundation to start their educational careers."



“Seeing and using the *da Vinci* surgical system has given me a new perspective on what medicine has for us... technology used to better the lives of patients.”

—Mark Bearden, student at Calhoun High School



Gordon Hospital's *da Vinci* surgical system was featured at the Tellus Science Museum during their Spring Break Science Escape week on Monday, April 3. Attendees enjoyed a live demonstration of the *da Vinci* robot and learned about the robotics program at Gordon Hospital. Attendees also had the opportunity to test-drive the robot with guidance from Director of Robotics Hak Lee, MD.

Students engaged in activities similar to the experiences medical students have during their residencies. The program trained the students to develop basic suturing skills, laparoscopic surgical skills, *da Vinci* robotic skills, and endoscopic urological techniques. The students gained additional insight on urology because of Dr. Lee's specialization and passion for the subject.

As the region's only urologic oncologist fellowship-trained in robotics, Dr. Lee is well aware of how uncommon urology is as a field of study. "I wanted to teach the students about urology because it isn't an area that most people think about when choosing their medical career path," said Dr. Lee. "I wanted to open the door to show them what this area of medicine is all about."

The Surgical Outreach Program benefits the students in multiple ways. Not only does each student gain surgical knowledge, skills, and techniques, but they are also exposed to new possibilities that they may have never considered before.

"This program gives students the opportunity to be exposed to something new," said Dr. Lee. "We want to show students what steps they need to take to have a career in this field, so they can make plans with their guidance counselors and make decisions about college."

Beyond the educational purposes of the program, the main objective was for the students to enjoy themselves. "My priority was for the students to have fun," said Dr. Lee. "When students have fun and get interested in something, that is when the passion grows."

That passion has been growing in Calhoun High School student Mark Bearden since his freshman year. Now a junior, Mark is narrowing down which schools he will be applying to with his goal of becoming a medical doctor.

"I took the healthcare pathway during my freshman year," said Mark. "I did it as sort of a backup plan. I didn't realize that I would become so inspired by medicine."

When Mark settled on medicine as a career path, surgery was the first field he looked into. His main career goal is to become a surgical oncologist, and the knowledge and skills gained from the Surgical Outreach Program will help guide him in that direction.

"Seeing and using the *da Vinci* surgical system has given me a new perspective on what medicine has for us," said Mark. "It's not just drugs and pharmaceuticals, but the technology used to better the lives of patients."

The Surgical Outreach Program is also something students will be able to use on their college applications. The magnitude of the program and the opportunities it could create are not lost on Mark. "Not many people get to do this type of program, especially at my age," said Mark. "Even medical students don't get this type of opportunity."

Mark believes simply spending time with Gordon Hospital's robotic surgical team was equally as important and beneficial as the skillset he learned during the program. "Dr. Lee and his team are great," said Mark. "They care a lot about their patients. To work with him and the *da Vinci* surgical system has been amazing."



HALEY LAWSON, PA, WORKS WITH STUDENTS ON BASIC SUTURING SKILLS