

'Doc McStuffins' and Dr. Leah Backhus Provide Critical Role Models



"In March 2012, Disney launched a cartoon about an African-American girl who repairs toys in her backyard playhouse with the help of her stuffed animal friends. The girl, Dottie "Doc" McStuffins wants to be a doctor like her mother. When she puts on her stethoscope, toys come to life and she can communicate with them.

"Doc McStuffins" was created and produced by Humanitas Prize and Emmy Award-winning filmmaker Chris Nee, whose inspiration came from her experience as a mother whose son developed severe asthma when he was 2-years old. Nee developed the idea for the program as a way to help make the process of going to the doctor less frightening for children.

Soon after the show launched, a group of women physicians of color created a thank you card for Disney and later founded a movement, "We are Doc McStuffins," that over time became the group [Artemis Medical Society](#). [Leah Backhus](#), UW Assistant Professor of Surgery in the Division of Cardiothoracic Surgery and chief of thoracic surgery at the VA Puget Sound, is a founding member of the Artemis Medical Society. This group promotes women of color in STEM careers, mostly medical, and now has 4,400 members worldwide.

During Black History Month celebrated throughout February, Backhus will be one of three members of Artemis Medical Society showcased in short video clips on the Disney Channel. "As a mom of two children, I know how important it is for them to see positive images that can serve as role models for their future," said Backhus.

One of the most pressing healthcare challenges facing the nation is the critical need for more minority physicians. By 2050, racial and ethnic minorities are projected to account for more than half of the U.S population. And while African Americans and Hispanics

are among the fastest growing segments of the population, they are also the most underrepresented minorities in medicine. Today, only 6 percent of practicing doctors come from these groups, according to the [Association of American Medical Colleges](#).

UW Medicine will continue to make major investments into promoting diversity at faculty, fellow, resident and student levels. The UW School of Medicine [Center for Equity, Diversity and Inclusion \(CEDI\)](#) was founded in 2012 to advance diversity and



inclusion in all our settings. Leo Morales, chief diversity officer, provides outstanding leadership for CEDI and all ongoing efforts throughout UW Medicine to promote diversity and inclusion. These efforts, for example, have been instrumental in bringing 80 undergraduate students each year from low-income and underrepresented communities from around the country to the UW for an eight-week summer program in medical and dental careers.

Thank you "Doc McStuffins" and Leah Backhus for being wonderful role models."

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