HONOLULU (KHON2) — Dr. Nash Witten has received The American Academy of Family Physicians Excellence in Graduate Medical Education Award.

He is a family medicine trainee in the University of Hawaii Family Medicine Residency Program,

The honor is reserved for only 12 of the 3,500 family medicine trainees in the United States.
Dr. Witten, a 2017 graduate of the UH John A. Burns School of Medicine (JABSOM) is a native of Oahu’s north shore.

He was born in Kahuku and grew up in Haleiwa.

He is in his final year of training in the family medicine program, which is based in Aiea at the Hawaii Pacific Health Pali Momi Medical Center through a partnership with UH JABSOM and The Hawaii Residency Programs, Inc., a nonprofit consortium of the major medical centers in Hawaii which support UH JABSOM’s clinical training.

“It was an honor to represent Hawai‘i at the national conference,” said Dr. Witten. “I am grateful for the support of Ernel Roque, Chapter Executive of the Hawai‘i Academy of Family Physicians (HAFP), Dr. Steven Hankins, UH Family Medicine Associate Program Director, and Dr. Seiji Yamada, mentor and faculty advisor, for encouraging me to apply for this award. I also want to thank the HAFP for supporting my attendance at hands-on simulations at the conference in Philadelphia.”

“The goal to return home as a Family Physician to provide primary care to my underserved community has always been at the forefront of my calling to be a physician.”

“After spending time during my undergraduate years shadowing physicians at a Federally Qualified Health Center in Kahuku and Hau‘ula O‘ahu, Hawai‘i, I decided to become a Family Physician,” Dr. Witten wrote in his application for the award. “Having been born in Kahuku and received healthcare from this health center as a child; the goal to return home as a Family Physician to provide primary care to my underserved community has always been at the forefront of my calling to be a physician.”

That goal led him to apply for and be accepted as a National Health Service Corps Scholar during his first year of medical school.
The scholarship freed him from the heavy financial burden of leaving medical training with more than $100,000 in tuition expenses.

Dr. Witten says that fact encourages him that he may be able to afford to practice primary care in his home community, his dream.

Dr. Witten was selected as co-chief resident of his Hawaii residency program in this year, something he considers one of his most important professional accomplishments to date.

Other professional goals he hopes to achieve include becoming a fellow of the Academy of Wilderness Medicine and earning a Master of Public Health (MPH) degree.

Backpacking the Pacific Crest Trail, learning to sail, and becoming scuba certified are among his personal pursuits. As a National Health Service Corps (NHSC) Scholarship recipient, Dr. Witten plans to work at a federally qualified health center (FQHC) following residency.

Dr. Witten has a number of other goals on his to-do list. Among them are to take on leadership positions at the Federally Qualified Health Center, to serve on a local Neighborhood Board, to serve as a clinical faculty member within the University of Hawaii Family Medicine Residency program based at community health center and to volunteer as a preceptor for medical students at UH JABSOM.

Also, having been a student and now a resident member of the Hawaii Academy of Family Physicians, he plans to continue his membership as an attending physician and hopes to participate in a leadership role in the chapter as a rural, community health center-based Family Physician advocate.

Dr. Witten entered JABSOM by completing the rigorous Imi
Hoola Post-Baccalaureate Program, an intensive year-long course of science and humanities aimed at giving aspiring medical students from underserved communities or disadvantaged backgrounds the opportunity to develop skills necessary to become a successful MD candidate.

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