Saturday Academy is named in honor of Charles R. Drew, MD. Dr. Drew was an African American surgeon and medical researcher who pioneered improved techniques for blood storage

Thirty-one area high school students who aspire to be dentists, physicians, scientists and other healthcare professionals graduated recently from Cleveland Clinic’s Charles R. Drew Saturday Academy.

In collaboration with Health Legacy of Cleveland, Incorporated, Saturday Academy was founded five years ago as an educational enrichment program designed to increase underrepresented high school students’ interest in a career in healthcare. Health Legacy is an organization that works to increase the number of underrepresented minority physicians, researchers and dentists in northeast Ohio.

A 12-week program, Saturday Academy provides students with career information and skills to prepare for professional education. Students learn from experienced healthcare professionals through hands-on learning and individualized mentorship. Upon successful completion of the program, participating students receive a stipend.

The Saturday Academy program has graduated 147 students.

On one Saturday, the students visited Case Western Reserve University School of Dental Medicine for the Student National Dental Association’s (SNDA) Impressions Program. Students participated in hands-on simulations, practiced applying sealants to teeth, learned to identify teeth visually and by name and toured parts of the dental labs and clinics.

Health Legacy board member, National Dental Association (NDA) Secretary and Cleveland Dentist, Madge Potts-Williams, DDS, organized the Inaugural Dentistry Day Program. “We planned this day with the help of the school’s Chapter of the Student National Dental Association (SNDA), chaired by rising senior Ashlee Goodman. The SNDA’s Impressions Program is presented at Dental Schools across the country where there is an SNDA Chapter,” said Dr. Potts-Williams. “In addition to the experiential activities conducted by the SNDA students, and lectures by Dr. Mickel and myself, the high school students interacted with our Case students and learned how they prepared for college and dental school.”

NDA members and Health Legacy Board Members, Roderick H. Adams, Jr., DDS, James H. Houston, DDS, and Andre Mickel, DDS, Chairman of the Department of Endodontics at Case Dental, and the President of Health Legacy’s Executive Committee also mentored the students. Eugene Jordan, DDS, President of Forest City Dental Society and Past President of the NDA, lent his support during the program.

Four students, as a result of this program, expressed a desire to pursue dentistry as a career. High school senior Brandon Smith noted he was inspired to pursue his early childhood dream of becoming a dentist. Brandon said he applied to Saturday Academy because peers who participated in the program before him, said, “It is a great experience for someone adamant about going into the medical field.”

Saturday Academy is named in honor of Charles R. Drew, MD. Dr. Drew was an African American surgeon and medical researcher who pioneered improved techniques for blood storage, which he used to help develop large-scale blood banks during World War II. To learn more about student education programs offered by the Cleveland Clinic Office of Civic Education Initiatives, visit www.clevelandclinic.org/civiceducation .