

Advocate Health Care Advocate Lutheran General Hospital Family Medicine Residency

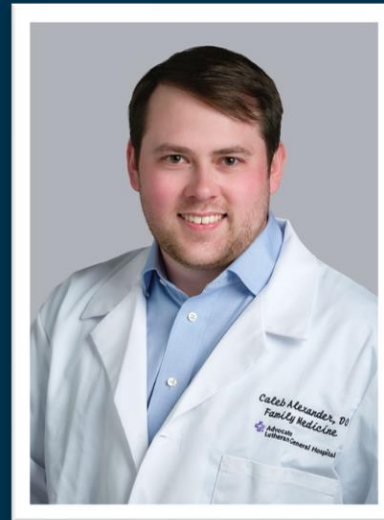
Meet the Residents

Class of 2027



Caleb Alexander, DO

- **Medical School:** Oklahoma State University College of Osteopathic Medicine
- **Undergraduate:** University of Oklahoma
- **Reason I chose Lutheran General Hospital Family Medicine:** Having completed most of my medical school rotations in rural clinics and small community hospitals, I knew I wanted to complete my residency in a larger and more diverse training center. I found that Lutheran General Family Medicine has everything I was hoping for in a residency program. Before, during and after my interview, it was evident that the faculty and residents cared about my interests and that I found the right fit for this next stage of training. Thinking back to my interview and communications afterward, I knew that Lutheran General was where I belonged.
- **Hobbies/Interests:** Traveling, trying new restaurants, watching tv/movies, and just resting at home with my wife
- **Favorite TV Shows:** Parks and Recreation, Community, Brooklyn Nine-Nine
- **Favorite Food:** Pizza, Chicken Fried Rice



Jared Bukowski, DO

- **Medical School:** Midwestern University Chicago College of Osteopathic Medicine
- **Undergraduate:** Tulane University
- **Reasons I chose Lutheran General:** Having grown up in the Chicagoland area, Lutheran General has always held a special place in my heart due to its reputation for excellent patient care. My mother and several friends were born at the hospital, and many of my family members received care there. During my interview day and second-look event at LGH, the sense of camaraderie among the residents, along with the hospital's dedication to providing comprehensive training, left me feeling confident that Lutheran General would set me up for a successful and impactful career in family medicine.
- **Interests:** I love the ability to help treat a wide variety of conditions across any age group! I also have a passion for sports medicine and specifically combat sports medicine. I have helped provide coverage for several pro and amateur MMA events.
- **Hobbies:** Biking, yoga, camping, live music
- **Favorite Book:** Can't Hurt Me by David Goggins.
- **Favorite Cuisine:** Mediterranean
- **Favorite TV Show:** House MD



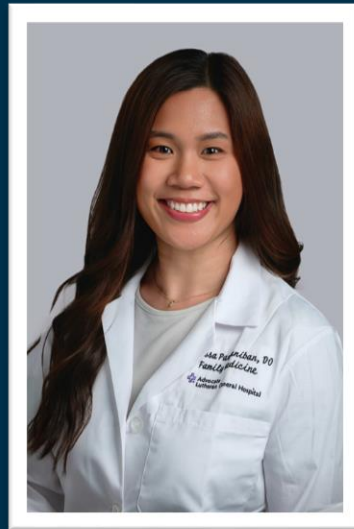
Meagan Cullen, DO

- **Medical School:** Midwestern University Chicago College of Osteopathic Medicine
- **Undergraduate:** Loyola University Chicago-Stritch School of Medicine
- **Reasons I chose Lutheran General:** Because I grew up in the Chicagoland area and have always wanted to train and eventually practice here. My interview revealed an incredibly supportive and friendly environment, and I was impressed by the hospital's long-standing and respected reputation.
- **Interests:** Geriatrics
- **Hobbies:** In my free time I'm exploring the city, trying new restaurants, and going to concerts. I also love spending time with my niece and nephew.
- **Favorite Book:** Thrillers and mystery books
- **Favorite TV Shows:** Severance, Succession



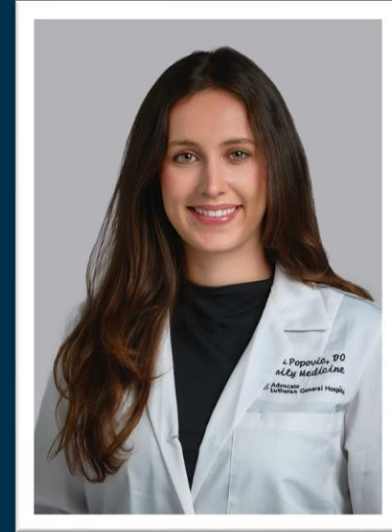
Alyssa Panganiban, DO

- **Medical School:** New York Institute of Technology College of Osteopathic Medicine
- **Undergraduate:** Loyola University Chicago
- **Reason I chose Lutheran General Family Medicine:** Lutheran General stood out to me in many ways as I was looking for a future residency program. I have done a Family Medicine sub-i here, and I was immediately welcomed and felt continually supported by the residents and attendings. While doing other electives at LGH, I loved the collaborative atmosphere among students, residents, and attendings. No matter where I was rotating in the hospital, everyone wanted to see one another succeed, and I admired that. I am interested in practicing full-spectrum Family Medicine, and I am confident that this program's robust curriculum will give me the training I need to provide the best care to my patients. I can't wait to start this next chapter of my career as a part of the LGH Family Medicine family!
- **Hobbies/Interests:** I enjoy doing hot yoga and pilates in my free time. I also appreciate spending quality time with my loved ones.
- **Favorite Movie:** Rocky III
- **Favorite Book:** When Breath Becomes Air
- **Favorite TV Show:** Friends
- **Favorite Quote:** "Yesterday was history, tomorrow is a mystery, but today is the present. That is why it is called a gift."



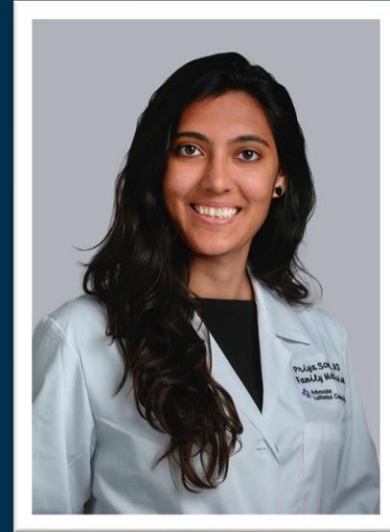
Maja Popovic, DO

- **Medical School:** Midwestern University Chicago College of Osteopathic Medicine
- **Undergraduate:** University of Wisconsin-Madison
- **Reason I chose Lutheran General Family Medicine:** I chose Lutheran General for the well-rounded training it provides and the culture! I wanted to find a program that has strong full spectrum FM training and LGH has just that. The residents and faculty were very genuine and easy to talk to on interview day and showed a sense of community (even over a virtual interview). It was easy to choose a program with a supportive culture that also provides great training!
- **Hobbies/Interests:** traveling, trying out new restaurants, spending time with friends & family, kickboxing, walking my dog along the lake
- **Favorite Song:** Dancing Queen



Priya Soni, MD

- **Medical School:** Indiana University School of Medicine
- **Undergraduate:** University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
- **Reason I chose Lutheran General Family Medicine:** Being born at Lutheran, it has been a part of my life since the very beginning - through ups and downs, many family births, and also a death. Through all of these experiences the one thing that stayed constant was the quality-of-care Lutheran provided. This made me apply to Lutheran, but what really sold me to the program was the people. Everyone I met was warm, welcoming, and supportive and the residents seemed genuinely happy. I am also passionate about lifestyle medicine (LM), and it was crucial for me to be in a program that offered training in LM. I didn't know if it would be possible to find everything I wanted in a program and stay close to my family and friends, but thankfully Lutheran has helped this dream come true!
- **Interests:** I like Baking, cooking, singing opera, knitting/crocheting, quilling/painting/all art, board games, hiking, traveling and playing with my cat
- **Favorite TV Show:** Avatar the Last Airbender
- **Favorite Ice Cream Flavor:** Mint Chocolate Chip



Nicholas Stallion, DO

- **Medical School:** Kansas City University
- **Undergraduate:** University of Iowa
- **Reason I chose Lutheran General Family Medicine:** I fell in love with Lutheran General during my interview day and knew that I would have the support and opportunities I would need to excel in Family Medicine. The location was also perfect because I got to stay close to friends and family.
- **Hobbies/Interests:** I enjoy skiing, weightlifting, disc golf, and spending time with my cat.
- **Favorite TV Show:** Breaking Bad



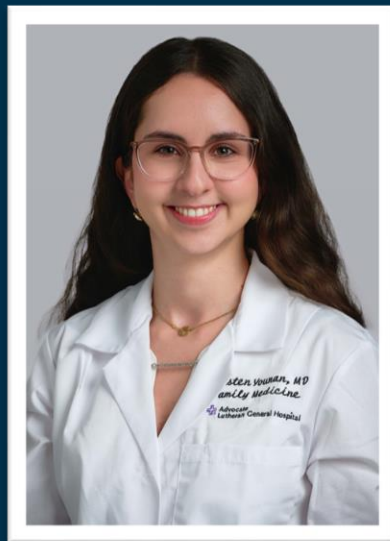
Joseph Younan, MD

- **Medical School:** Chicago Medical School
- **Undergraduate:** Loyola University Chicago
- **Reason I chose Lutheran General Family Medicine:** I was born at Lutheran General and enjoyed all the rotations I had at the hospital.
- **Hobbies/Interests:** Any kind of sport, lately I have been golfing more than anything else.
- **Favorite Team:** Chicago Bears
- **Favorite Movie:** Silence of the Lambs



Kristen Younan, MD

- **Medical School:** Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine
- **Undergraduate:** University of Wisconsin-Madison
- **Reasons I chose Lutheran General:** I chose Lutheran General because of the warm feel I got from the faculty and residents during my interview day and beyond. Additionally, Lutheran is known to have a great reputation within the community alongside a strong academic feel. This perfectly balanced exactly what I was looking for in a residency program. I also grew up in the Chicago suburbs, so I knew that I wanted to stay around and work in the community that I was raised in.
- **Interests:** Women's Health & Preventative Medicine
- **Hobbies:** trying new restaurants/cuisines, watching reality TV, & running
- **Favorite Cuisine:** Mexican
- **Favorite TV Show:** Love Island

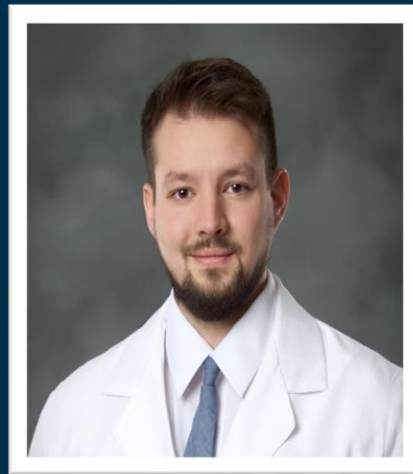


Class of 2026: PGY2



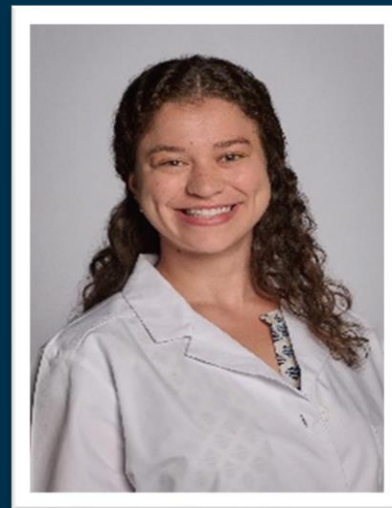
Bakir Dzananovic, DO

- **Medical School:** Idaho College of Osteopathic Medicine
- **Undergraduate:** University of Illinois-Chicago
- **Reason I chose Lutheran General Family Medicine:** Growing up in Skokie, I would remember driving past ALGH on Dempster and my parents would joke to me that I will be a doctor practicing there one day. 12 years later, I am so excited to be a part of this amazing residency program and community. When I interviewed at Lutheran General, I was blown away at how friendly everyone was and how well I was able to connect with faculty while interviewing. I wanted a residency program where I would get a great variety of exposure and real-life experience while maintaining an academic feel to it- Lutheran General fit perfectly. Every resident I talked with seemed happy and had a great work-life balance too
- **Hobbies/Interests:** Fishing, hiking, backyard chickening, competitive FIFA with the cousins, and bittersweetly watching my daughter grow up
- **Favorite TV Show:** The Office
- **Favorite Movie:** The Lion King (1994 version)
- **Favorite Quote:** "Wealth is not in having many possessions. Rather, true wealth is the richness of the soul." - Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.)



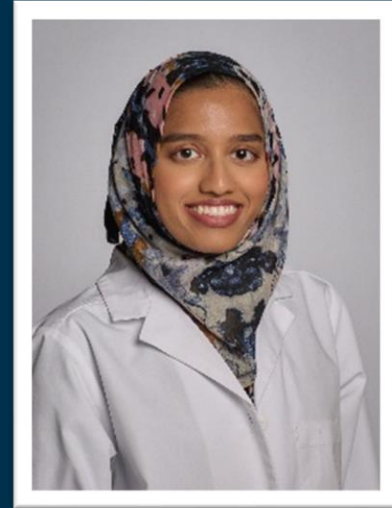
Arielle Fontheim, DO

- **Medical School:** Midwestern University Chicago College of Osteopathic Medicine
- **Undergraduate:** University of Michigan
- **Reason I chose Lutheran General Family Medicine:** I chose Lutheran General because of the strong reputation it has in the Chicago medical community. When I interviewed, I immediately felt a sense of community and home. Everyone was so genuine and seemed happy. I am also very interested in the pediatric population, so the robust training at Lutheran Children's Hospital was an important factor as well. I appreciate the strong education in behavioral health and the overall well-rounded training that residents receive as a part of the program.
- **Hobbies/Interests:** Sports, hiking, travelling, spending time with family/friends, true crime, being outside, cooking/eating
- **Favorite Place to Eat in Chicago:** Gaijin in West Loop!
- **Favorite TV Show:** Law and Order: SVU



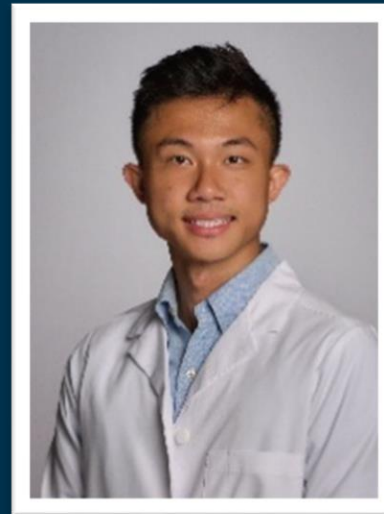
Zehra Hussain, DO

- **Medical School:** Midwestern University Chicago College of Osteopathic Medicine
- **Undergraduate:** Benedictine University
- **Reason I chose Lutheran General Family Medicine:** As someone who grew up in the Chicago suburbs, I knew I wanted to stay local so that I could be close to many of my friends and family members. ALGH was a top choice from the start, with its amazing learning opportunities and reputation, but my interview day felt surprisingly comfortable. Everyone I interacted with was friendly and helpful, during both my interview and the second look event. Overall, it's hard to explain but something just clicked and felt right about ALGH.
- **Hobbies/Interests:** baking, traveling, reading, cuddling and playing with my cat, Netflix
- **Favorite TV Shows:** The Office, Avatar the Last Airbender
- **Favorite Book:** A Place for Us



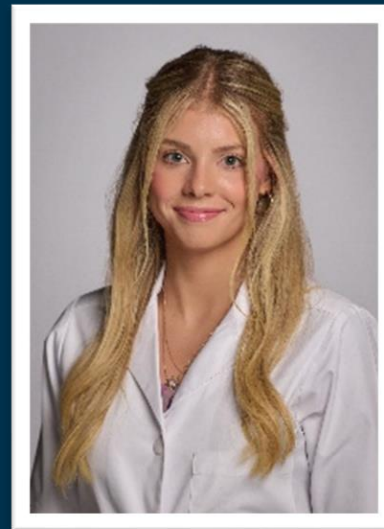
Mitchell Pei, MD

- **Medical School:** University of Toledo
- **Undergraduate:** Virginia Commonwealth University
- **Reason I chose Lutheran General Family Medicine:** I chose Lutheran General Family Medicine for a variety of reasons, but the strong inpatient training coupled with broad-spectrum family medicine really enticed me. Also, during the interview, there was one main thing that stood out above the rest and that was how genuinely happy and nice the residents appeared and realized how excited I would be if I had the opportunity to train there.
- **Hobbies/Interests:** Chess, cooking, true crime podcasts
- **Favorite Movie:** Bee Movie
- **Favorite TV Show:** The Office



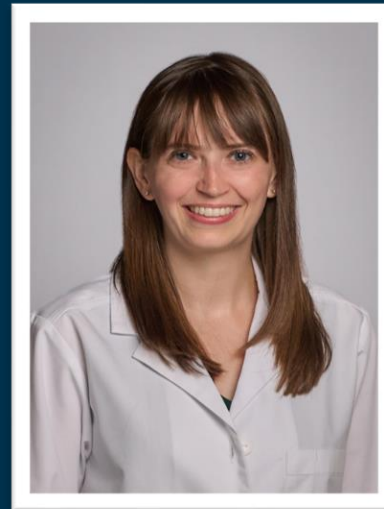
Kayla Reyes, DO

- **Medical School:** A.T. Still University, Kirksville College of Osteopathic Medicine
- **Undergraduate:** North Central College
- **Reason I chose Lutheran General Family Medicine:** I am from the Chicago suburbs, and it was very important to me to stay close to family. I had worked at Lutheran General as a hospitalist scribe before medical school and had a great experience. I also worked with various doctors during my clinical rotations who had trained at Lutheran General and had nothing but good things to say! At my second look during interview season, everyone was very friendly and positive about their experience at the program. I strongly believe that this specific community program will offer me a well-rounded educational experience to serve my future patient community.
- **Hobbies/Interests:** Yoga! I am a Yoga instructor and have been practicing for years. One of my favorite studios is down the street from the hospital.
- **Favorite TV Shows:** I love reality TV, and BRAVO is my go-to channel! A few of my favorite shows are Below Deck, The Real Housewives, and Vanderpump.
- **Favorite Food:** Tacos
- **Favorite Movies:** Step-Brothers, The Notebook, All the Star Wars films



Caitlin Schorsch, DO

- **Medical School:** Des Moines University
- **Undergraduate:** Loyola University Chicago-Stritch School of Medicine
- **Reason I chose Lutheran General Family Medicine:** From my rotation at Nesset to my interview day, I was completely blown away by how warm and welcoming the community was at Lutheran. It was important to me to not only train at an institution where I knew I would receive a good education, but to be in a place where I felt like I was part of a family. My experiences with Lutheran faculty and residents, who are some of the most upbeat and positive people I met on the interview trail, showed me that this dream could become a reality for me.
- **Hobbies/Interests:** playing violin, partner dancing (swing), baking, Peloton, reading, binging tv shows
- **Favorite Snack:** chocolate covered raisins
- **Favorite Romcom:** Always Be My Maybe



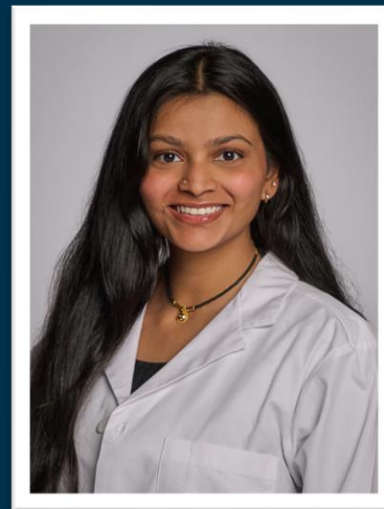
Savannah Soik, DO

- **Medical School:** Midwestern University Chicago College of Osteopathic Medicine
- **Undergraduate:** Loyola University Chicago-Stritch School of Medicine
- **Reason I chose Lutheran General Family Medicine:** I was initially drawn to Lutheran General's program due to its longstanding reputation as a Top 100 hospital, and location as I wanted to stay in Chicago close to friends and family. I was thrilled to find it offers full-spectrum personalized training for each resident including a specialized track in Sports Medicine which has always intrigued me. Through the virtual interview process I was able to speak with multiple faculty members with a variety of interests within the specialty and a group of close-knit residents who bonded outside of medicine. Immediately after the interview, I knew this was the place I not only wanted to train for the next three years but would best prepare me to become a successful family physician.
- **Hobbies/Interests:** watching sports, golfing, reading, board games, puzzles, playing with my dog
- **Favorite Candy:** Lindor Milk Chocolate Truffles
- **Favorite Teams:** Green Bay Packers, Chicago Cubs, Dallas Stars



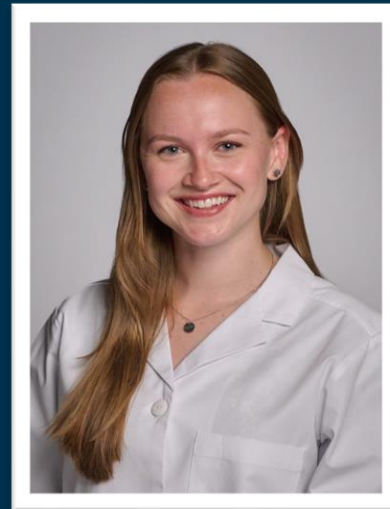
Vishnu Velupula, DO

- **Medical School:** Kansas City University
- **Undergraduate:** Illinois Wesleyan
- **Reason I chose Lutheran General Family Medicine:** When I did my sub-I on the family medicine service (inpatient), I realized ALGH ticked all the boxes for me in terms of what I was looking for in a residency program. I loved that teaching was prioritized, table rounds were collaborative, residents got a lot of autonomy, and everyone was kind and encouraging. Also, Chicago is not far from where my family members live, so I have easy access to my support system. I am beyond excited to begin this new journey, and I look forward to the personal and professional growth to come.
- **Hobbies/Interests:** Dancing, reading, trying new restaurants, watching K-dramas
- **Favorite Quote:** "You are your only limit."
- **Favorite TV Shows:** Ozark, The Penthouse, Stranger



Danielle Wales, MD

- **Medical School:** Chicago Medical School
- **Undergraduate:** University of Notre Dame
- **Reason I chose Lutheran General Family Medicine:** I was interested in the program after completing many third-year rotations at Lutheran General, and my Family Medicine Sub-I there really sealed the deal. I could say so many positive things about my experience, but I will narrow it down to a few highlights. Everyone on the team worked hard for their patients while also incorporating teaching and (at least) a little fun each day. The faculty encouraged a holistic approach and ensured we were caring for the whole person. Wellness was a genuine priority, and it seemed like residents were well-supported in and out of the hospital. After four weeks, I found myself wanting to continue learning in this environment, and I am so lucky to do so for the next three years!
- **Hobbies/Interests:** Traveling, spending time outdoors, trying new foods (always followed by dessert), watching college football (Go Irish!) as well as the Chicago Bulls and White Sox
- **Favorite Ice Cream Flavor:** Ben and Jerry's Half Baked or anything at Jeni's
- **Favorite Movie:** School of Rock

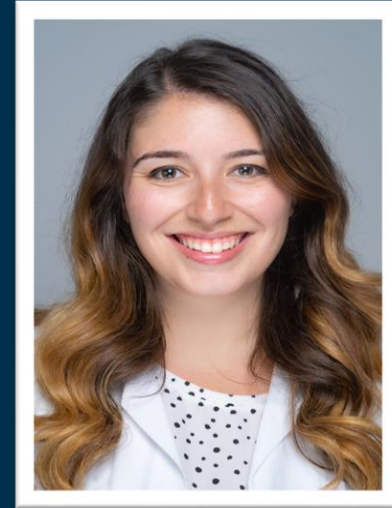


Class of 2025: PGY3



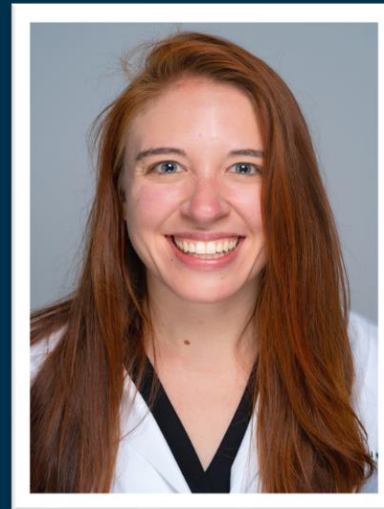
Ariana Heiger, DO

- **Medical School:** Midwestern University, Chicago College of Osteopathic Medicine
- **Undergraduate:** University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign
- **Reason I chose Lutheran General Family Medicine:** I grew up in the Chicago suburbs, so the hospital's location allowed me to stay near my support system. Lutheran General has a fantastic reputation; many of my classmates rotated here and had nothing but positive things to say about it! During my interview day, I felt very comfortable talking to everyone. It was obvious that this program has a great culture and supports its residents while providing excellent, well-rounded training.
- **Hobbies/Interests:** Cuddling with my dogs, tap dancing, cooking/baking, watching TV and movies, spending time with family and friends
- **Favorite TV Shows:** Outlander, The Walking Dead, This is Us
- **Favorite Food:** Sushi
- **Favorite Movies:** The Harry Potter Series, Ever After, Interstellar



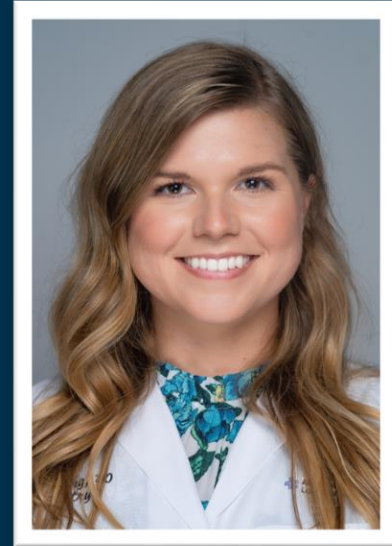
Jessica Hyla, MD

- **Medical School:** Zucker School of Medicine at Hofstra/Northwell
- **Undergraduate:** Illinois Wesleyan University
- **Reason I chose Lutheran General Family Medicine:** My goal had always been to come back home to Chicago, and I was looking for a well-rounded program in the area that has a reputation of producing strong family doctors. That is exactly what I found at LGH! Furthermore, during my interviews, I got a great "vibe" from both the residents and faculty during the interview day. Their friendly banter and laughter really showed that this program cultivated a family-like atmosphere and from that moment, I knew I would be happy here!
- **Hobbies/Interests:** Hiking, Traveling (especially to a mountain range), Board Game Nights, Exploring the Chicago food scene, Experimenting with new Vegan recipes
- **Favorite Movie Series:** Lord of the Rings



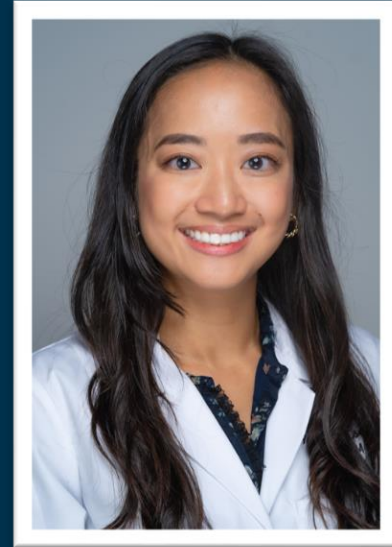
Rebecca Kasa, DO

- **Medical School:** Midwestern University Chicago College of Osteopathic Medicine
- **Undergraduate:** Augustana College
- **Reason I chose Lutheran General Family Medicine:** Lutheran General is an established and respected hospital in the area. This strong reputation was the reason why I was initially interested. While looking more into the family medicine program, the curriculum and opportunities aligned with my future goals. On interview day, I felt welcomed by the residents and faculty. Everyone seemed to have an open, honest, and positive attitude that made me excited for the possibility of continuing my training with them.
- **Hobbies/Interests:** Musical theater, baking cookies, dancing (clogging, tap, and swing), coffee
- **Favorite 90's Movie:** 10 Things I Hate About You
- **Favorite Cookie:** Lemon white chocolate chip
- **Favorite Video Game:** The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time



Lauren Le, MD

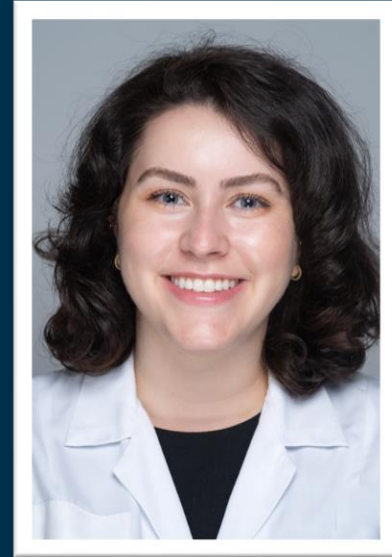
- **Medical School:** Texas A&M College of Medicine
- **Undergraduate:** UCLA
- **Reason I chose Lutheran General Family Medicine:** I chose Lutheran General because of its commitment to providing high-quality, robust training and for the incredible network of supportive mentors. After my interview, I felt confident that I would have access to the best resources to achieve my academic goals here and to make meaningful contributions to the care of my community. I was also impressed by the faculty who are passionate about teaching and who are genuinely invested in my professional and personal development. I am very excited to be joining the Lutheran General family and look forward to growing with my amazing co-residents!
- **Hobbies/Interests:** Social media in medicine, mogul skiing, tennis, traveling, eating spicy food
- **Favorite Foods:** fried pickles, ramen



Brooke Matz, DO

Chief Resident

- **Medical School:** Marian University College of Osteopathic Medicine
- **Undergraduate:** Elmhurst University
- **Reason I chose Lutheran General Family Medicine:** The reason I chose Lutheran General Family Medicine for my residency was due to the people. My interactions on interview day with the program director, faculty members, and current residents were genuine and made me feel “at home,” which was most important to me when choosing a residency program.
- **Hobbies/Interests:** bingeing TV series and movies, spending time with family and my dogs
- **Favorite TV Shows:** The Office, Parks and Recreation



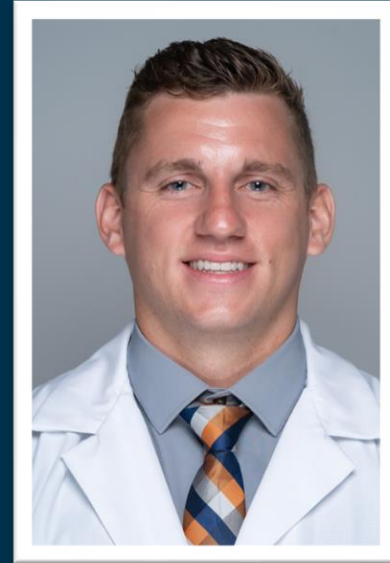
Lindsay Merlotti, MD

- **Medical School:** Boston University School of Medicine
- **Undergraduate:** University of Michigan
- **Reason I chose Lutheran General Family Medicine:** I knew I wanted to train in Chicago to be close to family and friend's so I was so thankful to find a program like Lutheran General that offered full-spectrum training at a community hospital with an academic feel. Even with virtual interviews and virtual social hours, I really felt the support and the community between the residents and the faculty at Lutheran General and can't wait to continue my training here!
- **Hobbies/Interests:** Cooking (excited for my new homemade pasta maker!), reading, crocheting, spending time with my fiancé and family usually playing board games or cards
- **Favorite Book Series(s):** Throne of Glass, Harry Potter (too hard to pick just one)
- **Favorite Vacation Spot:** Sanibel Island



Greg Ruzich, MD

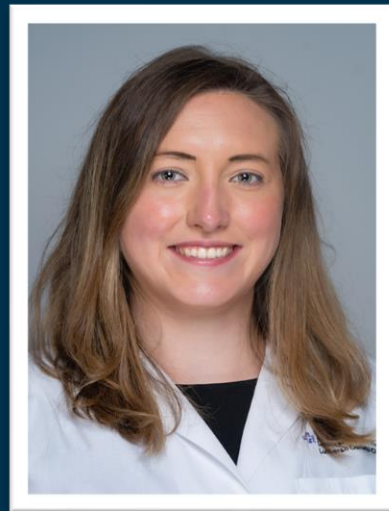
- **Medical School:** Rush Medical School-Chicago
- **Undergraduate:** Grinnell College-Iowa
- **Reason I chose Lutheran General Family Medicine:** During and after each of my residency interviews, I would take notes and write some reflective statements about the program. There were two points that really stood out in my notes about Lutheran General: the first was "learn by doing (A LOT of numbers and patients)". Caring for so many patients at such a large and well-renowned hospital will provide me the opportunity to really develop and hone my skills in family medicine. The second was "residents and faculty are very cordial but also joke around with each other". Everyone I interacted with was warm and the laughs that were shared during my interview ensured Lutheran General would be a fun and rewarding place to train for the next few years!
- **Hobbies/Interests:** Sports medicine, Procedures (especially injections, dermatologic, and women's health procedures); playing sports (especially basketball, softball, golf, and bowling), following Chicago sports teams (Go Bears, Bulls, Blackhawks, and CUBBIES!), listening to and finding new music, spending time with my family, friends, and their dogs
- **Favorite Comedy Movie:** Big Daddy



Ashley Schaefer, MD

Chief Resident

- **Medical School:** Rosalind Franklin University, Chicago Medical School
- **Undergraduate:** Loyola University Chicago-Stritch School of Medicine
- **Reason I chose Lutheran General Family Medicine:** I knew Lutheran General Family Medicine was for me after my rotations here as a third- and fourth-year medical student. The residents and faculty supported my education, and my medical knowledge developed significantly during my time with the program. I was excited by the environment I saw at Lutheran General Family Medicine and knew it was an environment I could grow in as a resident. This program established my expectations for my educational experience and career goals. While every program has a unique method for training its family medicine residents, Lutheran General Family Medicine was unparalleled in its commitment to resident education, wellness, and individualized the learning experience.
- **Hobbies/Interests:** I enjoy running, yoga, hiking, traveling and spending time with friends and family
- **Favorite Quote:** "If you want to be a true professional, do something outside yourself." - Ruth Bader Ginsburg
- **Favorite Movie:** Catch Me if You Can
- **Favorite Cookie:** Lemon white chocolate chip
- **Favorite Video Game:** The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time



Hafsa Sirajuddin, DO

- **Medical School:** Kansas City University College of Osteopathic Medicine
- **Undergraduate:** Benedictine University
- **Reason I chose Lutheran General Family Medicine:** My first rotation as a fourth-year medical student was at the Nessel Family Medicine Clinic. I remember feeling so supported and encouraged during my four weeks, so much so that I kept thinking back to my time at Lutheran during all my other rotations fourth year. Also, all of the residents I met both virtually and in-person at Lutheran seemed genuinely happy, showing me that I could achieve excellent training without having to sacrifice my work-life balance. I knew that this combination of training, positive environment, and team camaraderie would be the perfect place for residency.
- **Hobbies/Interests:** Spending time with my nieces and nephew, baking, re-watching episodes of The Office, and reading
- **Favorite Movie:** The Pursuit of Happiness
- **Favorite Quote:** "The secret of life, though, is to fall seven times and to get up eight times."- Paulo Coelho, The Alchemist

