

A special doctor visits patients in their homes

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Dr. Fred Richardson Jr. and his wife, office manager Julie Richardson, make a house call on Nov. 11, 2014, in Chicago's West Side. Photo: Chris Sweda/Chicago Tribune/TNS

CHICAGO — Dr. Fred Richardson Jr. was born on Chicago's South Side. He became a doctor in 1990. Since then, he has made house calls in Chicago's most dangerous neighborhoods. A house call is a home visit by a doctor. House calls help keep people out of hospitals, experts say.

Richardson did not know any black doctors when he was younger. He went to Rush Medical College in Chicago. His mother was a bookkeeper. His father was a construction worker. The family lived in a poor neighborhood. Richardson remembers spending a night in a homeless shelter.

Study And Be The Best In School

He became a doctor for many reasons. It all started with his mother.

"Her goal in life was to educate her children," Richardson said. She thought education was the only way to give them a better life.

His mother supported the family. Homework was taken seriously. She expected her kids to get straight A's.

Richardson's neighborhood friends "were into all sorts of bad things." But they protected him and his younger brother, Lendell. Their friends respected their dream of becoming doctors.

He was one of the best students in high school. In medical school, he was the only black man in his class. To get through medical school, he followed his mother's example. He studied hard.

He Helps People For Free

Now, Richardson works six days a week as a doctor. At night he makes house calls. His patients can call him 24 hours a day, seven days a week. He sleeps only four hours a night. He does not drink alcohol or coffee. He tries to eat healthy foods.

Richardson also helps poor students get through medical school. He helps them with their schoolwork. He does it for free.

Twenty years ago, Clyde Whiting was one of those students.

Without Richardson, he said, "I could have been lost." Today, Whiting is a doctor.

One night last fall, Richardson visited Louise Cannon.

He was there to give the 79-year-old woman a checkup. She smiled when she saw him.

Her 2-year-old great-great-granddaughter watched the exam. Then he helped the child listen to her own heartbeat.

"There you go," Richardson said. "You could be a doctor someday."

Quiz

- 1 Select the paragraph from the section "He Helps People For Free" that shows how serious Dr. Richardson is about his work.
- 2 Which sentence shows that Richardson thinks education is important, even as an adult?
- (A) In medical school, he was the only black man in his class.
 - (B) He was one of the best students in high school.
 - (C) To get through medical school, he followed his mother's example.
 - (D) Richardson also helps poor students get through medical school.

- 3 Read the sentence from the article.

Her 2-year-old great-great-granddaughter watched the exam.

Which sentence from the article has a word with the same meaning as "exam"?

- (A) To get through medical school, he followed his mother's example.
 - (B) He studied hard.
 - (C) His mother was a bookkeeper.
 - (D) He was there to give the 79-year-old woman a checkup.
- 4 Read the sentence from the article.

But they protected him and his younger brother, Lendell.

What does "protected" mean?

- (A) to keep warm
- (B) to keep safe
- (C) to keep learning
- (D) to keep trying