



Wizards fall to Magic

Beal's 42 points not enough

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Dec. 4
21 shopping
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WEATHER



Partly cloudy

High 49 Low 37

Partly cloudy tonight

Full Weather Page A11



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Neurosurgery team members from left to right: Surgical Nurse Thomas Busch, RN, Surgical First Assistant Wendy Towers, CRNP, Dr. Khalid Kurtom, Neurosurgical Team Lead Tyler Gogoll, RN, and Surgical Equipment Specialist Steve Lykudis.

Easton neurosurgery team heads to Honduras

By **CANDICE SPECTOR**
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EASTON — Access to some of the best neurosurgical specialists in the world is a privilege many Americans take for granted — but Dr. Khalid Kurtom, an Easton-based neurosurgeon, said he always knew he would deploy his neurosurgical expertise overseas.

Kurtom, alongside his neuro-

surgery team, is heading on his second mission trip abroad, in January 2020, to serve people in the Central American country of Honduras, where resources for neurological medicine are scarce.

“Here, we are all fortunate to have the health care resources we do, and sometimes it is easy to take that for granted,” Kurtom said. “(Most) places in the world have limited access to advanced health care, and most have no ac-

cess to neurosurgical care.

“Traveling on a mission to one of those places in dire need and providing neurosurgical care is considered a miracle for the people we help,” he said.

Kurtom’s team, which is comprised of Surgical First Assistant Wendy Towers, CRNP; Neurosurgical Team Lead Tyler Gogoll, RN; Surgical Nurse Thomas Busch, RN; Surgical Technologist Robert Brault; and Surgical

Equipment Specialist Steve Lykudis, will treat a variety of spinal conditions through minimally invasive procedures during the one-week trip.

Among the neurosurgical cases the crew will tackle are degenerative or herniated disc disorders, lumbar spinal stenosis, instability of the spine and compression

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fractures of the spine, Kurtom said.

The team's trip to Honduras comes more than two years after its inaugural mission trip to Amman, Jordan, where the group performed life-changing surgeries on Syrian refugees — some of whom were suffering from injuries related to the conflict in Syria — at the Istishari Hospital.

Kurtom said that without his team, which is the same team that operates with him in Easton and traveled with him to Jordan, “quite frankly, this can't be done.”

“As with our prior mission trip where we helped Syrian refugees in Jordan, our trip to Honduras will be life altering to those we help — and to our team it will be spiritually rewarding,” Kurtom said.

Across the world in 2018, approximately 50,000 neurosurgeons treated more than 13.5 million essential neurosurgical cases — leaving roughly 5 million

cases untreated for lack of surgeons, according to an April 2019 report by the Journal of Neurosurgery.

The Journal reported that in India nearly 3,500 neurosurgeons were responsible for the country's population of 1.2 billion, and in Latin America, including Honduras, 4,216 neurosurgeons were available to treat more than 1.1 million cases.

The United States and Canada, by comparison, had the capacity to treat nearly 2 million cases in 2018 with a neurosurgical force of more than 5,000 surgeons, according to the report.

Kurtom said he anticipates his team's trip to Honduras will cost \$40,000, of which he's already raised \$20,000. His team is seeking to raise the remaining amount through crowdsourcing to “help defray the costs.”

“So far people have been generous and we've received a lot of support, but we still have a gap to make up,” he said. “Typically, whatever amount is not raised, I usually make up for it myself.”

He said his team will continue to travel to other countries in the future, looking to serve underserved populations in a world where the number of neurosurgeons is far fewer than the demand for neurosurgical procedures.

“Nothing can describe the sense of personal reward that I and my team members gain by doing these mission trips,” Kurtom said. “We hope our mission will inspire all to give of themselves for the benefit of others.”

Kurtom and his team will operate at the Holy Family Surgery Center, which is funded and operated by One World Surgery, and is on the property of the children's home Nuestros Pequeños Hermanos (NPH) in Honduras.

The 2,000-acre NPH ranch is approximately one hour northeast of Tegucigalpa, the capital of Honduras.

Those who wish to donate to Kurtom and his team for their upcoming mission trip can make a non-tax deductible donation to Chesapeake Neurological Surgery, Inc., 4346 Southside Lane, Trappe.