

Dr. Vanessa Rogers' path to becoming a physician was a bit of a rocky ride.

The horse lover and competitive rider didn't find her stride until a few years into post-secondary training after considering veterinarian school, studying pharmacy and eventually realizing family medicine was her true calling.

It was an expensive journey for Dr. Rogers, who spent more than a decade in post-secondary school before accepting a position in the southwestern Alberta community of [Blairmore](#) within the Crowsnest Pass.

So, when she was able to take advantage of the RhPAP-sponsored Rural Education Supplement and Integrated Doctor Experience (RESIDE) Program, it was a huge relief.

"RESIDE's a great program," she said of the initiative designed to help offset some of the costs incurred as resident physicians settle into rural, unserved and remote areas of the province.

"When you're being recruited, there are a lot of expenses that come with moving and setting up in a new clinic," said Dr. Rogers.

"Obviously, it is a huge financial commitment when you have spent 10 years in school and you haven't worked yet."



Dr. Vanessa Rogers, centre right, and Dr. Kristy Penner, centre left, share their knowledge after hours with medical learners at the Crowsnest Medical Clinic on a monthly basis.

— Photo supplied by Dr. Vanessa Rogers

Funding to settle new physicians

Up to \$120,000 is available for eligible physicians to help with relocation expenses and clinic start-up costs as an incentive to encourage doctors to set up practices in rural communities.

“It’s easy in training to underestimate how long it’s going to take you to address some of those costs,” said Dr. Rogers.

“You’re just thinking things will get better, I just need to get a job and everything will be easier. Now being four years out, there’s a lot of things that I still haven’t paid off.”

“I think it’s given resident physicians a lot more faith to kind of take the leap and say, ‘I could live here for two or three years.’”

Dr. Rogers previously worked in Blairmore as a part-time locum so she had an idea the Crowsnest Pass area would be a good fit for her and her husband, Matt Herman, who teaches in the nearby hamlet of Lundbreck.

“I teach a lot of learners and I tell them to spend a lot of time in the places where they think they could end up,” she explained.

“Try to see all sides of what that looks like from a work experience perspective, from a colleague perspective, from an environment perspective, and what you would like to do with your spare time to make sure that it’s a good fit.”



Dr. Vanessa Rogers hikes with her dogs, Scout and Benny, in the mountains of the Crowsnest Pass during a day off.

— Photo supplied by Dr. Vanessa Rogers

Rural offers large scope of practice

Dr. Rogers encourages young people to take their time figuring out their career path. Originally, she didn't want to be a physician, and it took time for her to realize that was exactly the perfect place for her.

“I really love my job. There's always little things that you would want to tweak or change in an ideal world but I have grown to like it a lot more than I ever thought that I would.

“I like the variability of practice in a small town. I don’t like doing the same thing every day.”

Practising in the Crowsnest Pass gives her opportunities to hike, bike and run in the scenic mountain area and travel to nearby Fernie, B.C. where she grew up.

The location is also relatively close to her parent’s ranch in Montana where she can saddle up and practise reining, a competitive sport involving various maneuvers while galloping.

“Having time to do stuff outside of work has been really great here.”



It’s not all work for Blairmore-based family physician Dr. Vanessa Rogers. She makes

time in between her clinic and on-call schedule to compete with her horse, Ginger, in reining competitions.

— Photo supplied by Dr. Vanessa Rogers