

# UNCOMMON GOOD

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## African-American Physician is First Recipient of Unprecedented Award from LA Care Health Plan



Photo by Nancy Mintie

Dr. Temitope James Ajagbe, first recipient of an Elevating the Safety Net Physician Loan Repayment Program grant.

“What is it like for you,” I asked, “to be a member of a very prestigious profession, medicine, but also to be a member of two groups that often are treated harshly in this country – immigrants and African-American men?”

Dr. Temitope James Ajagbe (James) is a large man with an even bigger personality that fills up a room like sunshine. On a recent day this fall he was especially animated as he discussed his life, his medical practice at an Altamed community clinic, and his being the first recipient of a generous and visionary program launched by Los Angeles Care Health Plan, in partnership with Uncommon Good, to address the physician shortage for the poor in Los Angeles County.

But before we get to James’ answer, a little background: The United States has a doctor shortage problem. The Association of American Medical Colleges released a study this year that showed that in the next decade the country will be short 120,000 physicians. The problem could worsen because one third of all active doctors in the U.S. will be over 65 in the next decade and could retire. The problem is particularly severe if you are a poor person seeking care in California because this state ranks 47th in the nation in Medi-Cal reimbursement rates. A doctor’s visit is reimbursed for the equivalent of the cost of a large pizza. Accordingly, few doctors accept Medi-Cal patients, the primary health care plan for the poor. The state’s community clinics and county clinics are trying

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## The Julia Bourne Dance Scholarship

Sometimes when your heart breaks, it breaks wide open, expanding beyond time, space and loss. Although Ryan might not express it that way, it is palpable when you meet him. Ryan is a young father who just lost his beloved wife, Julia, who died of brain cancer this past September. Yet he speaks of his love as “unbreakable and eternal, a love that will never die.” He feels Julia living on inside himself and their four-year-old twins. And despite his crushing grief, he has reached out to create a dance scholarship in his wife’s honor, for a little girl in Uncommon Good’s program who, like Julia, lives to dance.

Ryan grew up a few blocks from Uncommon Good and went through the Claremont public schools. A born musician, he attended the famed Berklee College of Music in Boston and in the course of his career played with a series of world class musicians. He met Julia when both were employed as entertainers on Carnival Cruise Line, he making

music and she as a dancer. He remembers the first time he laid eyes on her. She had just walked in to the cruise ship mess hall with the other dancers and he was smitten by her old time movie star beauty and her adorable Newcastle-Under-Lyme British accent. Julia was 26-years-old and had been dancing since the age of six, performing in the U.S., Europe and Asia. Ryan, though still a bit wet behind the ears at age 22, lost no time making his move. He quickly borrowed a presentable pair of shoes and pants from the jazz band drummer and asked Julia out on a date. They had a magical dinner in the port of Cozumel, Mexico, and by their second day together, Ryan “knew it was forever.”

Eventually Ryan and Julia tired of the constant travel of the cruise ship jobs and settled down in Claremont. Julia began teaching pilates and eventually opened her own pilates studio, Bourne Pilates, which remains open and continues

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Photo by Nancy Mintie

Maddy, the recipient of the Julia Bourne Dance Scholarship.