RURAL HEALTH CHAMPIONS

As part of the National Rural Health Day Celebration we want to take time to recognize those folks across the state that are considered “Rural Health Champions”. These are people who have had a positive impact on rural health in their community. We asked our rural hospitals to describe in their own words those that have had a positive impact on their rural communities. These are the nominations we received from some of our rural hospitals who wanted to celebrate the meaningful work these people do.
Dr. William Daniel

The Medical Center of Franklin of Franklin, Kentucky wanted to recognize general surgeon Dr. William Daniel as a Rural Health Champion. Dr. Daniel has many positive attributes that bring a wealth of knowledge, determination and kindness to the Medical Center Franklin. He has led us to make great strides in the services offered here. Dr. Daniel is loved by patients and staff alike. Dr. Daniel is our rural health champion.

Dr. Daniel has been a general surgeon for 25 plus years. He has practiced in Dothan, Alabama, Bowling Green, Kentucky and since January of 2011 has been practicing in Franklin, Kentucky. Dr. Daniel brought with him years of experience, a desire to serve others and immeasurable compassion.

There are a multitude of reasons that we feel Dr. Daniel is a rural health champion. Not only do his patients love him but the staff in his office, and staff in the surgery department sings his praises as well.

Patients rave about Dr. Daniel and the bedside manner that he possesses. Dr. Daniel takes extra time with each patient before, during and after surgery. With the consent of the patient, Dr. Daniel says a prayer with the patient, for the patient and the surgical team prior to taking the patients for their procedures. He makes each patient feel as if they are his one and only priority during the time he is caring for them. Dr. Daniel has participated in many mission trips and his mission work is ongoing. He provides services to indigent patients without recognition of social or economic status. Dr. Daniel has led a bible study session held weekly for patients, employees and anyone from the community that wants to participate. Dr. Daniel participates in community health fairs and seminars. He has educated many in the community regarding colon cancer screening and breast cancer screening and awareness.

Dr. Daniel has given the Medical Center Franklin an opportunity to grow and offer services to the community that has not previously been offered. He provides patients and staff of the Medical Center Franklin with a relationship of kindness and trust. Dr. Daniel goes above and beyond the call of duty and we would like to recognize him as our Rural Health Champion.

Nominated by: Medical Center of Franklin
Dr. James Noble

Dr. James Noble from Beattyville should be recognized for his service to the community. Lee county is a community without a hospital – without his work and 25 years of dedication to the community the health of the community would be significantly impacted. Dr. Noble is willing to care for anyone in need. He supports the ems by being the Medical Director, and local nursing home. It is so difficult to have a physician who practice in small rural communities, but not only does he practice there, he lives there and is dedicated to his patients. He has surely impacted rural lives in Kentucky.

Nominated by: Marcum and Wallace
Janice Bush

Janice Bush has been active in the community all of her life and a huge supporter of our rural hospital - she recently became a Board Member and has been a strong voice for rural Kentucky and our Critical Access Hospital. During the past legislative session she contacted legislators, the governor, etc.. at the State level and Congressman and Senators at the federal level on issues that impacted our rural communities. Janice also had organized grassroots efforts to get others to participate in the calls by educating them on the important issues that impact rural Kentucky. She is a member of the Irvine City Council and has been supportive of our CAH through this position.

Nominated by: Marcum and Wallace
Dr. Andrew Bernard

UK trauma surgeon, Andrew Bernard, MD should be recognized for his work towards building a trauma network in rural Kentucky. It is through his hard work and dedication that this concept became reality. Dr Bernard is willing to talk with anyone, at any time to ensure the development of the trauma network. While I think there are many who have been active in getting this going, Dr Bernard has dedicated hours of his own time to travel across the Commonwealth to provide education to hospital staff and physicians. He also chaired the State Trauma committee, providing the needed leadership to develop a system that helps promote quality trauma care in rural Kentucky. Without his work, there would be no Level IV Trauma Centers and the trauma network. His dedication to this project should not go unnoticed.

Nominated by: Marcum and Wallace
Wallace Taylor

Estill County Judge Executive – Wallace Taylor was instrumental in getting a helipad built at our hospital – without the assistance of the Judge we would not have been able to accomplish this endeavor. Without his help, patient's outcomes would have been negatively impacted. Without a helipad, the helicopter would not have had a consistent place to land. Many times they would have to land in fairgrounds that would increase the transfer time by 20-30 minutes. We all know that how important the golden hours is to the outcome of the patient and with his assistance he is making a difference. Judge had opposition for this project from some of the Magistrates, but he did prevail.

Nominated by: Marcum and Wallace
Dr. Chandra Varia

In 1979, Dr. Chandra Varia (Dr. Chandra) left New York and a lucrative offer to practice in an area of plenty to make her way to Martin, Kentucky, a town with a population just over 600 and in the heart of Appalachia. She began her OB/GYN practice and delivered 3,400 babies before she decided to completely concentrate on gynecology in December 1993.

Dr. Chandra has been asked many times why she came to the “hills” and stayed. She always answers that she came because the area needed her professionally, but stayed because she fell in love with the “hills” and the people she affectionately calls her friends.

Dr. Chandra and her husband, Dr. Mahendra Varia, have taken what was instilled in them as children and given back to the community. Dr. Chandra often speaks of her father teaching her to give back to the community in which she makes her money and that she has done.

In 1982, Dr. Chandra donated $25,000 to Prestonsburg Community College to help fund single parents’ education. In 1989, the Varias donated $20,000 to Prestonsburg Community College for a science building. In 1990, Dr. Chandra made a $100,000 endowment to Prestonsburg Community College for no-interest student loans, particularly to help battered women go to college - to become independent and break the cycle of domestic abuse. As Dr. Chandra retired from obstetrics in December 1993, she wanted to do something for the 3,400 babies that she had delivered and the Varias established a $25,000 scholarship fund at Prestonsburg Community College for the children. In 2000, the Varias wanted to do even more for the children she had delivered and established a $1.6 million scholarship program. Five schools administer the fund: Alice Lloyd College, Eastern Kentucky University, Morehead State University, Big Sandy Community and Technical College, Hazard Community and Technical College. Dr. Chandra has also given generous donations to the Education Pays Career Development program at Prestonsburg Community College.

In the fall of 2011, Saint Joseph Martin began a capital campaign to purchase a digital mammography machine. Not only because of her interest in women’s health, but also because of her long term commitment to Saint Joseph Martin, Dr. Chandra Varia was the first donor and committed $125 thousand.

Dr. Chandra is also very generous with her time. In November 1997, she began a free clinic once a month for any patient who could not afford to pay. In 2001, she was chosen to fill a seat on the Floyd County Board of Education and continues today in that role. She also sits on the city of Martin’s Scholarship board.

Dr. Chandra’s commitment to her profession and community has been recognized through numerous awards including: American Red Cross; Floyd County Chamber of Commerce Hall of Fame; Prestonsburg Community College Faculty Assembly Service Award; Floyd County Chamber of Commerce (Community Service); American Medical Association (AMA) Pride in the Profession; and, Kentucky Medical Association (KMA) Community Service Award.

In reference to her contributions, Dr. Chandra has been quoted saying, “Having money is a pleasure, but to use that good fortune for a better cause is a blessing.”

Dr. Chandra has not only given her money to the community, but she has also given herself to make her community a better place for all to live. She has touched the lives of many and has improved the quality of life for scores of young people.

Dr. Chandra has achieved much with great humility. She has made a real difference in our community.

Nominated by: St. Joseph Martin
Dr. Paul Schaper

Dr. Paul Schaper was reared as one of three children in rural Lincoln County, Missouri. He went to Medical school at the University of Missouri-Columbia, and completed his surgery residency at St. Louis County Hospital, in St. Louis, Missouri. His plan was to go into family medicine but after internship changed his course to general surgery.

Dr. Schaper trained at the same hospital as did Dr. H W Ford, from Benton, Kentucky. Dr. H W Ford wanted to go back home to practice family medicine and a new hospital had just been built there. As luck would have it, they also needed a general surgeon. The rest is history. Dr. Ford asked Dr. Schaper to go with him to look at the hospital and see if he might be interested. At this time, Dr. Schaper and his wife Evangeline, had two young children and they both wanted to raise them in a rural setting as opposed to a larger city. The thought of a rural practice appealed to his desire to get to know his patients better too. Both physicians relocated, in 1964, to practice in Benton.

One major change Dr. Schaper experienced in healthcare occurred when Medicare was introduced, almost immediately, following his move to Benton. His office staff consisted of one employee to complete all the paperwork necessary to run his office, including patient's insurance. He stated the regulations have changed so that paperwork has astronomically increased and now is a time consuming system where several employees are now needed to do the job that one did years ago. Specialization in today's healthcare market is also a change that he notes. Rural hospitals can't provide all the specialists that the larger cities have and this makes it harder to compete as a rural provider.

Dr. Paul Schaper is proud of his family and all are in the healthcare field. He and Evangeline, who is a RN, have three children. Larry, is an orthopedic surgeon, and daughters, Diane & Julie, are both RN's.

Dr. Schaper retired from private practice in November, 2004 and became chairman of the Marshall County Hospital Board of Trustees in June 2005. Today, nearly 50 years later, he continues to spend countless hours to maintain a standard of excellence in healthcare for our rural community.

Nominated by: Marshall County Hospital