



Illinois Academy of Family Physicians

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December 8, 2008
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**WILLIAM F. HAYS, MD OF HERRIN IS 2008
IAFP FAMILY PHYSICIAN OF THE YEAR**

ST. LOUIS – William F. Hays, MD of Logan Primary Care in Herrin was honored with the Illinois Academy of Family Physicians' highest honor, the Family Physician of the Year award. Despite his own serious illness, Dr. Hays accepted the honor in person at the IAFP Annual Awards banquet on December 6th in St. Louis.

Dr. Hays has been practicing in Southern Illinois since opening his private practice in 1980. He later joined Logan Primary Care in 1997. Over the past three decades, he has emerged as the consummate leader in his health care community, having served in numerous leadership posts at Herrin Hospital, including two terms as president of the medical staff. He has also been a delegate to IAFP and served on various committees with the Illinois State Medical Society and the Southern Illinois Medical Association. He is a community leader who helped pioneer a minor league baseball team for nearby Marion, while also providing a new clubhouse for the high school baseball team and coaching a summer league team himself. Above all, he has been the life-changing family physician for an endless supply of grateful patients.

In recent months, Dr. Hays' own health has become his greatest challenge. He was diagnosed with idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis in January. The disease causes the air sacs in the lungs to be replaced by scar tissue, leaving the lung unable to deliver oxygen to the bloodstream. Dr. Hays continued to care for patients while undergoing treatment, taking his own oxygen along as his condition worsened. Since October 1, he has not been able to see patients, due to his weakening condition as he awaits a lung transplant. With the love and support of his family, friends, colleagues and community, Dr. Hays hopes to return to practice about six months after his successful lung transplant surgery.

"Personally, I pray that I will return in good health to full practice as my first priority. I hope to continue to contribute to patient care and to hopefully upgrade and improve the quality of care around me to the best I am able," says Hays. "As for family medicine, I see a bright future with some bumps in the road ahead. Someday, the government and insurers will learn that the best weapon in the health care field is the primary care physician."

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The Family Physician of the Year was chosen from candidates nominated directly by patients and colleagues earlier this year. The award is presented annually to an outstanding family physician that best illustrates the values and vision of the family doctor. He or she is a role model for the community and sets the standard for health care delivery. The IAFP Public Relations Task Force and Board of Directors selected the recipient over the summer from an amazing pool of eight finalist family physicians. Dr. Hays was nominated by Michael Glasser, PhD, Associate Dean of the National Center for Rural Health Professions at the University of Illinois College of Medicine in Rockford.

In addition to providing outstanding care to patients, Dr. Hays is also a firm believer in his responsibility to attract and train quality primary care physicians for the future of his community. In that role, he is a faculty preceptor for the University of Illinois Rockford Rural Medical Education Program. Throughout his career he has volunteered to teach medical students at his practices. In fact, three of his practice partners were once his students.

With the respect of his peers and a rewarding professional medical career, the IAFP Family Physician of the Year Award is recognition of the many ways he has served the specialty of family medicine and the many patients who count on him for their care.

The award was presented by IAFP president Javette C. Orgain, M.D. of Chicago. Dr. Hays was able to attend and accept the award in person. He gave the honor of reading his acceptance speech to Jeffrey Parks, M.D. one of his practice partners.

“Never compromise on patient care. Always remember we are in the practice of medicine and not the business of healthcare, but must be competent in both,” says Dr. Hays. “We are more than simple providers of healthcare; we are teachers, healers, friends, confidants, and sources of compassion for our patients and their families. We are the first resource for them, the interface between the individual and the system. Never let us relinquish our role.”

The letters IAFP received about Dr. Hays gave many testaments to his high quality and high-touch care. Below is just a sampling of what his patients had to say.

Patient Tricia Conley wrote: “I have never met a doctor as compassionate or caring as him. I know there are good doctors everywhere. But in all my years, I have had many problems and surgeries, but no doctor has been as caring as Dr. Hays... He believed me when no one else did, and keep on helping me until he found the problem.”

Other awards presented:

Family Medicine Full-time Teacher of the Year – Robert Ewart, MD of Southern Illinois University School of Medicine in Springfield

Family Medicine Part-time Teacher of the Year – Michael Mendoza, MD, MPH of the University of Chicago – Pritzker School of Medicine

President's Award (3)

Margaret A. Kirkegaard, MD, MPH – Medical Director, Illinois Health Connect

Susan L. Nagele, MD – Mary Knoll Lay Missioners – Kiminini, Kenya

Kelly Carroll, MD – Genesis Health Group, Silvis

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EDITOR'S NOTE: If you would like to request a digital photo or set up an interview, please contact Ginnie Flynn at gflynn@iafp.com.

For more information on the Illinois Academy of Family Physicians, www.iafp.com.

