the Seventh Annual
John Whitty
Award Celebration
Friday, September 11, 2015
Schedule of Events

6:00 Hors d’oeuvres and Beverages

7:00 Program
   Welcome
   Barbara Bauder
   Paul Janke
   Dr. Tom McAndrew

Friends and Family

Presentation of Award
   John Whitty and Dr. Tom McAndrew

Wayne Murray, MD

7:30 Dinner

8:30 Entertainment

As Bay Area Hospital plans for the future, we reflect on how far we have come and acknowledge those who are an integral part of this worthwhile journey. The annual John Whitty Award for Excellence was established in 2009 to recognize individuals dedicated to improving the health and the well-being of our community. Many people can share a vision—John Whitty Award winners roll up their sleeves and do the hard work to make the vision a reality.
Healer, leader, fighter…

*Doctor helped give local healthcare a secure future.*

Young people and Coos Bay newcomers know Wayne Murray as the energetic and efficient counter man at City Subs. They may not know about his previous life as a respected internist and South Coast healthcare pioneer.

They probably don’t know that Wayne Murray, MD, established and led Coos Bay’s first Intensive Care Unit, that he was the first local physician to implant a pacemaker, and that he performed the area’s first cardioversion to restore a patient’s heart rhythm. They almost certainly haven’t heard how he organized local physicians to resist the onslaught of managed care and corporate medicine or how those efforts spawned an organization now providing medical coverage to more than 20,000 local patients.

“He’s just one of those folks who is a real treasure in the community,” says Dan Smith, retired chief executive officer of Bay Area Hospital.

Until 1974 local physicians were divided between North Bend’s Keizer Memorial Hospital and Coos Bay’s McAuley Hospital. As Bay Area Hospital’s first chief of staff, Dr. Murray was tasked with the politics of unification. He remembers “a lot of give and take” about the new hospital’s design and facilities as well as physician privileges. But the transition was mostly smooth, he says: “Everybody wanted the hospital and wanted it to succeed.”

A tougher challenge came later, from outside the community. The rise of HMOs (health maintenance organizations) in the late 1970s and 1980s threatened the independence of physicians everywhere. Coos Bay faced pressure from a
Eugene company that proposed to absorb local practices. The HMO would outsource surgery and other lucrative services to a Eugene hospital, leaving local practitioners to handle mundane caseloads—and uninsured patients.

Dr. Murray remembers telling his colleagues, “We need to do something, or we are going to get squashed.” After many meetings and much persuasion, they formed an independent practice association. “Basically, we became a union,” he says. They called themselves DOCS—Doctors of the Oregon Coast South. Dr. Murray says joining forces let local physicians tell the HMOs, “We are not going to be your scut boys.”

South Coast healthcare today is more robust and diverse than ever, and DOCS has evolved into Western Oregon Advanced Health. It’s the Coordinated Care Organization managing Medicaid for about 21,000 patients in Coos and Curry Counties.

“It did what we wanted it to do and has gradually increased in importance to the doctors.”

–Dr. Murray

But Dr. Murray’s proudest memories don’t involve medical economics. They involve medicine itself. He chokes up when he tells the story of a local girl who wrecked her car after a graduation party. She was discovered 12 or 14 hours later, hanging from her seat belt in the overturned car.
When the girl’s injuries sent her into kidney failure, Dr. Murray performed Coos Bay’s first peritoneal dialysis, flooding the patient’s abdominal blood vessels with a cleansing agent to mimic kidney function. Today that patient lives in California and has three children.

Dr. Murray enthusiastically shares credit for his achievements. “I didn’t do this stuff alone,” he says. “I have been blessed with a wonderful wife who has put up with me through a lot.” Noting that medicine is a team activity, he also praises the nurses, lab technicians, and fellow physicians who worked alongside him. “I have to be grateful for my association with them,” he says. “They had my back.”

Wayne Murray was born and reared on an apple ranch in Wenatchee, Washington. He graduated from Oregon’s Linfield College in 1955, the same year he and Carol Murray were married. The union has lasted six decades and produced four children. Son William and daughters Barbara and Kathleen live in Portland. Son Stuart is a biology teacher in Peru.
After graduating from the University of Oregon Medical School in 1959, Dr. Murray served his internship and residency in the US Navy, ultimately staying 10 years. Then a former navy pediatrician who had moved to the Oregon Coast persuaded the Murrays to visit Coos Bay. They liked it and stayed.

“'It was a fantastic place to raise our kids.'”

–Dr. Murray

Small-town medical practice in those days was exciting. With no subspecialists to take over complex cases, a primary care doctor could be a jack-of-all-trades. Dr. Murray treated heart failure and heart attacks, and when the AIDS epidemic struck, he treated those patients, as well.

John Whitty, a founding member of Bay Area Hospital’s Board, says Dr. Murray was well respected among local physicians. He was Whitty’s own doctor, and Whitty testifies to his hands-on style. “When he gave you a physical, you’d had a physical,” Whitty says. “He’s a firm believer that you can’t diagnose a patient’s problems unless you put your hands on the patient.”
Dr. Murray affirms Whitty’s impression. As an internist, he habitually listened to hearts, tapped chests, felt abdomens, and peered into eyes and ears. Conversation was important, too. “Patients will tell you a lot if you let them,” he says.

Though he appreciates today’s diagnostic technology, Dr. Murray still prefers personal observation. He tells of discovering a potentially lethal aortic aneurism in a seemingly healthy patient—just by feeling the man’s abdomen. He laments the time today’s physicians spend gazing at computer monitors. Medical practice in the twenty-first century is not for him. “I could not do it the way you have to do it now,” he says. “I would be in hot water from day one.”

Indeed, changes in medical care nudged him into retirement in 1996. He was only 62, but the job he loved was fading away. “I got tired of getting on the telephone to an insurance company and talking to someone who may or may not have had a high school education, who would tell me how to practice medicine.”

His retirement, however, would not occur in a rocking chair. Recalling his childhood among Wenatchee’s apple orchards, he decided to try raspberry farming. He enjoyed it for several years, but a berry patch can be a lonely place. A help-wanted ad drew him to City Subs, and 10 years later, at age 82, he’s the restaurant’s manager. He loves the job and has no plans to stop. “I enjoy being around people,” he explains. “It’s really an upper.”

Nevertheless, he sounds a little wistful when he talks about doctoring.

“I think the practice of medicine is the greatest thing I ever could have done, I loved it. I wish I could keep doing it.”

—Dr. Murray
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