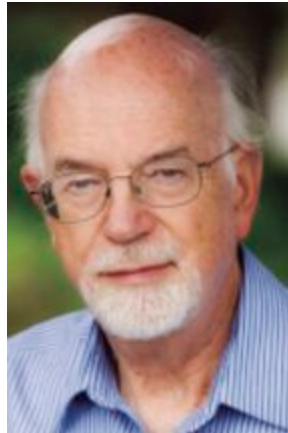


Del Norte County doctor receives prestigious award

October 29, 2022



Dr. Donald I. Baird has received the California Medical Association's (CMA) most prestigious award, the Frederick K.M. Plessner Memorial Award. The award, which honors the California physician who best exemplifies the ethics and practice of a rural country practitioner, was announced at the 2022 CMA House of Delegates in Los Angeles. Dr. Baird was nominated by his colleagues through Humboldt-Del Norte County Medical Society, which is the local professional association for physicians, chartered under the California Medical Association.

Dr. Baird has served the indigent and underserved patients in Humboldt and Del Norte counties for 46 years. He has enjoyed a full-time practice in primary care, which once included OB and pediatrics, now is primarily focused on adults with subspecialty interest in psychiatry including bipolar, schizophrenia, and autism.

"During multiple attempts at retirement I've done some volunteer work in the third world, which has been very rewarding but I also realized we have our own needs right here in this community," said Dr. Baird.

Dr. Baird also serves as medical director of hospitalist services at a critical access rural hospital in a far north coastal California community of Fortuna, surrounded by the natural beauty of 1,000-year-old redwood forests.

"In a community like we have right here, so many patients actually still don't even have physicians, so the willingness of a person who could easily have retired long ago to not only continue practicing but enjoy doing it. Staying late. Going in on his days off. Covering for physicians who are ill. Demonstrating a type of genuine regard for humanity means more to a community like this than I think most people could ever

know,” says colleague (and patient) Galen W. Pettey, P.T. “Because without people like him there are so many people who are underserved or unserved.”

Dr. Baird also became Humboldt County Public Health Officer in 2012. In that role, he worked closely with Humboldt County Public Health Department staff to obtain accreditation by the National Public Health Accreditation Board in 2016, making Humboldt the first California county of its size to achieve this status.

Dr. Baird has a reputation not only as a gifted clinician, but also as a team player and someone who truly cares about the health of his community.

“The way he talks about the community and the way we discuss things about our concerns for the community have always really shown me that he really does love where he lives and he really cares about this community,” Katie Hanson, from the Humboldt County Public Health Department.

He worked tirelessly alongside the Humboldt County Department of Health and Human Services staff and community partners and took an active role in disaster preparations for the county, including providing mutual aid to other counties during devastating fires. Most recently, he triaged patients to determine who couldn’t go without power during the countywide PG&E planned power outages.

Dr. Baird is a native of Portland, Maine, and a graduate of Dartmouth University and The Medical College of Virginia at Virginia Commonwealth University. He served his medical residency in family practice and community health at the University of Minnesota at Minneapolis, where he also received a master’s degree in health care education.

Learn more about Dr. Baird in our video profile: <https://youtu.be/pBB5csfKoVg>