

Award named for retired health officer

Posted: Monday, June 9, 2003 12:00 am | Updated: 3:51 am, Sun Jan 10, 2010.

By Maria Tsigas, Times Staff Writer |

Dr. Janet Neslen retired last year, leaving behind a 50-year career dedicated to public health.

In May, an award was named in her honor. The first recipient will be Lou Yeager, in recognition of the work he's done to facilitate access to health care in the community, an issue Neslen has made her lifelong mission.

Neslen, 78, of Westminster, retired in December from the county's Health Department, where earlier in her career she served 15 years as the health officer. Most recently she was the deputy health officer. She is also a pediatrician.

In addition to her service in the Health Department, Neslen's personal and professional passion has been working to relieve inequalities in health care.

Disparities in health care are part of the system, Neslen said.

"Our health-care system has the greatest technology and scientific backing, but it can't begin to take in basic health care for all," she added.

Furthermore, there are many people in the county without health-care benefits. The county and state provide services through programs, but it's just not enough to meet the needs, Neslen said.

In 1999, Neslen was instrumental in establishing the organization Partnership for a Healthier Carroll County, along with John Sernulka, president and chief executive officer of Carroll County General Hospital.

The organization's general goal is to expand the capacity of the community to improve health and quality of life, said Tricia Supik, the organization's executive director.

Supik said the award is to honor Neslen on her retirement, and it will be given annually by the organization.

Neslen said that it was when she spent several years in the Health Department practicing in the community health field and working with the hospital, which provides health care to individuals in a piecemeal fashion, that the idea to form a community partnership between the hospital and Health Department was formed.

The organization is a community partnership designed to connect personal health with community health, thereby improving both, she added.

Larry Leitch, the Health Department's current health officer, said that it was during Neslen's tenure as health officer that she made her impact on the community and then carried that work over into her five years as deputy health officer.

She is respected and admired in the community, primarily because of her interest to provide access to health care to the most needy. That is where she made her mark, he said.

Janet Neslen said she was surprised that an award was being named in her honor.

"It's overwhelming, and I'm certainly delighted," she said, "It feels good to know your work is appreciated."

Reach staff writer Maria Tsigas at 410-857-7886 or mtsigas@lcniofmd.com.

TOWNNEWS
Online. Community. News.

© Copyright 2010, Carroll County Times, Westminster, MD. Powered by BLOX Content Management System from TownNews.com. [Terms of Use | Privacy Policy]