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Rural Family Physician named 2020 Kansas Family Physician of the Year

WICHITA, Kan. – The Kansas Academy of Family Physicians (KAFFP) has selected **STACY DASHIELL**, MD, FAAFP of Sterling, Kan. as its 2020 Kansas Family Physician of the Year. Dashiell has served the community of Sterling since 2010 as a full-scope rural family physician at Sterling Medical Center and Rice County District Hospital. Dashiell is also the medical director of Rice County Emergency Medical Services, Lyons, Kan. In addition, Dashiell is an associate hospice physician at Kindred Hospice, Hutchinson, Kan. Dashiell grew up in Cottonwood Falls, Kan. and completed medical school at the University of Kansas School of Medicine in Kansas City, Kan. and her residency at Research Family Medicine Residency, Kansas City, Mo.

Patient advocate

Patients of Dashiell describe her as a compassionate physician who provides comprehensive care in a calming and reassuring manner. She uses a team approach when interacting with her patients, giving each patient ownership over their own health. “Her patients leave feeling in charge of their health – I know because I have been a patient for five years. I know I am not alone because I have also watched her as a medical student empower countless patients,” writes a patient who was also a former medical student. Her sense of humor and ability to communicate with all generations (infant, child, young adult, adult senior) is a gift treasured by her patients. “She listened, she cared and she responded. Never did I think we would be lucky enough to have such a fantastic physician in a rural community. I don’t know where I would be without her,” writes another patient.

Dashiell's reputation for compassionate OB care has drawn patients to her who drive 30-45 minutes from Ellinwood, Great Bend and Yoder. Her philosophy of working with mothers to develop a plan for a safe yet natural birth has been particularly respected by the Amish-Mennonite community who have developed a trusting relationship with her. Dashiell has visited their community on her own to better understand their way of life so that she might improve their healthcare experience in her clinic. Dashiell has also practiced a policy of rounding on her own inpatients and caring for her OB patients when she is in the county, even when that means going to the hospital on days she does not have clinic scheduled.

Leadership

Rice County District Hospital CEO George Stover write, "Under her leadership (Chief of Staff 2013-15), the hospital has improved its delivery of quality care by ensuring that each physician and care team member is held accountable for the care they provide. In addition, Dr. Dashiell led the transition to a new clinic EMR (electronic medical record). She was fully responsible for the development and implementation of the new platform. All the while, maintaining the level of care that her patients have come to expect of her." He also mentions that her role as medical director for the Rice County EMS has significantly strengthened the relationship between the hospital and EMS.

Dashiell leads committees at her clinic and hospital to find solutions for a more efficient and effective workplace with the unique ability to not lose sight of the real goal of physicians — to help people. She aims to remove any barriers to achieving the goal of helping patients.

As a rural family physician, Dashiell has seen and done many things outside the scope of anything in her training. She tells the story of when their rural county experience an officer-involved shooting followed by a homicide-suicide by the gunman and as the Rice County EMS Medical Director, she coordinated care and transportation for the injured officers and helped lead preparations for a possible mass casualty event while the gunman was at large. The evening stretched into the next day when she was required to perform her duties as the deputy county coroner.

"The crime scene was surreal and the magnitude of it all is forever etched into my memory. But I found my purpose and meaning when I was able to communicate details to the loved ones of the deceased in a personal and compassionate way bringing them comfort in a time of unimaginable pain," writes Dashiell.

Passion for helping others, volunteer work

"Stacy is passionate about doing what is right and improving the world around her; she is constantly finding ways to speak for the voiceless," writes colleague, friend and patient, Kristina R. Darnauer, MD. Dashiell and her husband have adopted children and even started their own adoption and foster care ministry to support other parents. It isn't uncommon for her and her family to welcome others into their home for stability until they can make it on their own. Dashiell has also testified on behalf of women in abusive relationships. "She does not shy away from obstacles when she sees that good can be accomplished," writes Darnauer.

Dashiell volunteers her time as a member of the school district's wellness committee. "By having a physician on our committee, we have been able to make some important changes. She has taken the time to write a grant for the grade school to acquire a water bottle fill station. I was able to acquire vision screening equipment through a grant as well, and her letter of support was vital. She has also been involved in snack policies at the school," writes Kristi Wilson, RN, BSN.

As the volunteer medical director for student health at Sterling College she is at times the first to help a college student through their first illness away from home, has cared for many student athletes for concussions and ensured that students traveling internationally use best health practices for their safety.

Dashiell enjoys having high school, college and medical students observe and shadow her throughout the year. A former medical student chose family medicine as a specialty after her shadow experience with Dr. Dashiell, "I watched her be both a friend and doctor to her patients; witnessed her care for her patient's emotional, mental and physical health. That experience alone (Scholars in Rural Health program shadowing Dr. Dashiell.) sold me on family medicine."

Family life

Dashiell lives with her husband, Christian, in Sterling where they met while students at Sterling College. They have four children ages 3, 8, 10 and 14. Dashiell writes, "The flexibility of small town medicine in combination with an incredibly supportive husband allow me to remain active in my family's life while still caring for others professionally. Although it often requires planning and a bit of a juggling act, I rarely feel like I miss out on the important milestones in my children's lives. For this opportunity to be a physician, wife and involved mother, I am very grateful.

Recognition and honor

Stacy Dashiell, MD, FAFAP will be honored at KAFP's annual conference *Fam Med Forward* in Manhattan, Kan. on Friday, June 5, 2020. KAFP has presented the Kansas Family Physician of the Year award since 1990. Past recipients are listed on the KAFP website at: <https://www.kafponline.org/FPOYrecipients>

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About the Kansas Academy of Family Physicians

Founded in 1948, the KAFP represents nearly 2,000 practicing physicians, resident physicians and medical students statewide. It is the only medical society in Kansas devoted solely to primary care. A family physician takes care of the whole family -- all ages, both sexes, each organ system and every disease entity. Research has proven that people with access to primary care have better health outcomes than those who do not. In Kansas, approximately one-half of family physicians practice in non-metropolitan areas. Over 25 percent treat uninsured patients, especially children and families receiving public assistance. The mission of the KAFP is to support and serve family physicians of Kansas as they advance the health of Kansans. For more information visit the KAFP website at www.kafponline.org.