

Cabarrus Health Alliance honors Henry for service

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KANNAPOLIS, N.C. --

Local urologist and city council member Dr. Hector Henry was recognized last week by the Cabarrus Health Alliance board for his service to the community, specifically with a prostate health program.

The program he was being honored for was eliminated at the end of the fiscal year due to funding cuts.

“Unfortunately the state chose to discontinue that funding, and there was no other funding available,” Dr. William F. Pilkington CEO and public health director for the Cabarrus Health Alliance, said. “It was wonderful work that we were able to bring him in to do, and in addition to all the other things he does, he did a great job. Unfortunately we had to discontinue doing it.”

Although Henry felt incredibly honored to be recognized by the CHA, the loss of the program is a real concern to the physician who has spent most of his adult life giving back to the community.

“It was a real joint effort,” Henry said. “The churches helped. Prostate cancer support groups helped.”

The prostate program was run by Henry and CHA program coordinator, Virginia Hunter. CMC-NorthEast processed the test results at no cost to the program.

Hunter and Henry especially reached out to the African-American community, a high risk group for prostate cancer.

“We considered it a very important part of the work we did with our African-American community, where it was concentrated,” Pilkington said. “We had a lot of success in finding cases of prostate cancer and treating them that would not have occurred otherwise.”

What was important, Henry felt, was that the patients who were identified were in an age group – their 50s and 60s – when treatment would be more successful.

Successful treatment often comes from early detection, an important weapon in any cancer.

“We were able to help some people who probably wouldn’t have gone in for a test,” Henry said.

“We are hoping that, as things get better economically, some of the grant money will be reinitiated.” Henry said.

His obligation to community service goes well beyond Cabarrus County. Henry holds the rank of colonel, and is one of the oldest men ever deployed by the United States Army Reserves, according to city officials. Most recently he

served with the 30th Heavy Brigade Combat Team of the N.C. Army National Guard in a makeshift base at an old truck manufacturing plant just outside of Baghdad.

An advocate for a healthy lifestyle, Henry has also been involved in ACHIEVE, a program focused on policy change within the community. CHA also recognized his efforts with the task force.

"I have been very vocal with the city council about complete streets, no smoking in the park and supporting efforts to have healthy diets for children," Henry said.

An unstable economy could cause budget cuts that impact ACHIEVE and the work it does within the community to promote a healthy lifestyle, Henry said.

"You have to hope there is enough community interest and support and community advocacy to make the council continue to keep the program going in some way," he said. "To put in a bike lane, how much does it cost to put a stripe down the road? It's a question of getting the people in charge to understand that you can do little things without a lot of money."

Henry believes the community may not be aware of how these budget cuts actually affect the public.

Henry has always believed in promoting the greater good of those in the community, especially to those who are less fortunate. His father, also a physician, worked in public health, and instilled in his son the importance of community service.

"There is an obligation," Henry explained. "It's an obligation to help people. I would do it for free. I really felt I was doing a community service that had rewards and was helping people. We were making a difference helping people that otherwise would not have been helped."

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