

Rural Health Champion Award Nominee 2017
Paul Taylor - Ozarks Community Hospital

It is my pleasure to nominate Paul G. Taylor for the 2017 Rural Health Champion Award. Paul has dedicated his life to improving healthcare throughout Southwest Missouri, with efforts in Northwest Arkansas and Oklahoma, as well. As CEO of the OCH Health System, his commitment to the most vulnerable in our communities is not simply a job. It is his calling, his passion and his mission. Paul leads the rural health system that encompasses 21 health clinics stretching across eight counties in three different states.

In 2000, Paul helped reopen a hospital in Southwest Missouri and ignited his passion for providing healthcare to those who need it most. He has since brought rapid and expansive growth in healthcare to the following counties: Greene, Jasper, Lawrence, Christian, Webster, McDonald, Delaware, and Benton. He successfully reopened a critical access hospital in rural Arkansas. Most importantly, he has provided countless Medicaid patients with a medical home in their community. Through his endless dedication, Paul has significantly changed the landscape for underserved access to care throughout Southwest Missouri.

Paul has been instrumental in expanding access to rural healthcare, with a particular emphasis on serving Medicaid families with children and those who are otherwise referred to as the 'working poor.' Specifically, Paul has donated time, resources, manpower and facility space to the underserved population. Through collaborations with many local organizations specifically serving children and working with agencies who share closely aligned missions, Paul's leadership has touched countless schools, state agencies, service organizations and other important groups within each of the communities that the health system serves.

Without a mission to truly meet the needs of the most underserved – children living in poverty in our communities – there is, quite frankly, little reason for a margin or purpose. A mission to help those in need and a passion to act on that mission is the reason he serves in leadership. The administrators, managers, nurses, front line staff and physicians working for this health system are routinely recognized for their kind, compassionate and dedicated efforts to serving an extremely vulnerable population because they believe it is their calling, their duty, their purpose and their personal mission. This organization has become a family, of sorts, with their leader living out the mission daily.

Finding leaders who impact their communities is not rare. Finding leaders who are mission-minded is commonplace. However, there are very few leaders in healthcare who personally embody the mission in their daily lives, embrace their mission as a business strategy, and singlehandedly impact the work of thousands of healthcare workers and physicians to join him in providing healthcare to a critical population. The passion and dedication that his employees carry out is a true testament to why this man deserves to be the Rural Health Champion for 2017.