

DAILY POINT OF LIGHT AWARD PAST WINNER



TULSA COUNTY MEDICAL SOCIETY – COOTS

Tulsa, OK

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In Tulsa County, Oklahoma, they have created a very simple program using existing resources, including retired volunteer physicians, to address a huge national concern. After seven years of advocating with the Oklahoma Legislature, enabling language was signed into law that allows us to recycle all unused, non-narcotic medications, from nursing homes. As a result of this innovative program, what was once discarded as unusable waste is now providing tangible medical benefit, free of charge, to thousands of people in need.

The Director of Nursing (DON) at one of the 33 donating nursing homes boxes up the unit-dosed medications and creates a manifest. The DON then calls to have the medications transported. One of the 22 retired, volunteer physicians safely transports the medication to the Tulsa County Pharmacy for redistribution at no charge to indigent citizens of Tulsa County. In 2005, these physicians transported 156 donations of medications. As of the end of September, 2006, these same dedicated volunteers have transported medications 178 times. These physicians receive no compensation or expense reimbursements for this service.

It is certainly doubtful whether Oklahoma Governor Brad Henry and the Oklahoma Legislature would have been willing to pass enabling language to create this program had it not been for the critical involvement of these physicians. Safety, security and accountability for the donated medications were paramount to lawmakers and these volunteer physicians gave the program measurable credibility.

In 2005, they were able to fill 6,114 prescriptions for indigent members of the community with this recycled medication. The Average Wholesale Value (AWP) of this medication was 1.3 million dollars. By the end of September, 2006, they were able to fill 8,274 additional prescriptions with an AWP of \$645,122. Not only have they been able to fill prescriptions for individuals, but they have also been able to fill prescriptions for clients of many of the local nonprofits, thus having a positive impact on these agencies' limited budgets. They have also supplied over-the-counter (OTC) medications to all indigent health care clinics, homeless shelters and to many local nonprofits in the county. Boxes of OTCs have been provided to survivors of Hurricane Katrina in Louisiana and Mississippi, sent on mission trips to Mexico and Russia and eye care products have been routed to Iraq and Afghanistan to benefit the United States Armed Forces.

These physicians have spent a lifetime in the field of health care, healing one patient after another, and some might suggest they have given enough. These incredible volunteers actually complain because we do not have more opportunities for them to pick up the medications. The program has had meritorious accomplishments, there is no doubt that it would not be functioning without these volunteer physicians.

The *Daily Point of Light Award* honors individuals and volunteer groups that have made a commitment to connect Americans through service to help meet critical needs in their communities. It focuses on the goals for children and youth set by the President's Summit for America's Future. Each weekday, one volunteer or volunteer effort in the country receives a Daily Point of Light Award.