

WEST VIRGINIA MEDICAL FOUNDATION

*An educational and charitable foundation of the
West Virginia State medical Association*

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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FOUNDATION ANNOUNCES FIRST EXCELLENCE IN MEDICINE AWARD RECIPIENTS

Charleston, WV--The West Virginia Medical Foundation today announced the inaugural recipients of the Foundation's prestigious Excellence in Medicine Awards. The awards will be presented during a black tie optional gala at the West Virginia State Medical Association's Healthcare Summit at The Greenbrier on Friday, August 27 according to Foundation CEO Helen Matheny. This year's recipients are James L. Comerchi, MD of Wheeling, Wayne C. Spiggle, MD of Short Gap and Robert J. Marshall, MD of Huntington. Robert L. Ghiz, MD, of Charleston also will be recognized for his outstanding service to the West Virginia physician community.

Matheny said the awards program was established to recognize outstanding efforts by members of the West Virginia State Medical Association who help the Foundation fulfill its mission: *To improve the health of all West Virginians by promoting health education, leadership and research; encouraging healthy lifestyles and enhancing access to quality healthcare.*



Sponsors of the awards program include the West Virginia Mutual Insurance Company, Chesapeake Energy and the Kanawha Medical Society. For information about tickets, call 304-925-0342 or visit www.wvsma.com.

"Each year the Foundation will honor a select group of physicians who exemplify the medical profession's highest values: commitment to service, community involvement, altruism and leadership in the medical profession," Matheny said. "We have a very dedicated and accomplished group of West Virginia physicians that we will recognize through this program."

The Excellence in Medicine Award for Enhancing Access to Quality Healthcare will be presented to the physician who has demonstrated extraordinary interest and efforts toward improving access to healthcare or reducing health care disparities in West Virginia. This award will be presented to James L. Comerchi, MD of Wheeling, WV.

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Matheny said Dr. Comerci has been a leader in providing access to care for the low income, uninsured and working poor in West Virginia for more than twenty years. He has been a volunteer physician at Wheeling Health Right since its inception in 1985, served six years on the Board of Directors and has been volunteer Medical Director since 1994. Board certified in Internal Medicine, Dr. Comerci has championed access to health care for the low income uninsured with his peers and has encouraged more than 120 physicians in the upper Ohio Valley to volunteer their services for the patients of Wheeling Health Right.

Not only is Dr. Comerci the Volunteer Medical Director, but he continues to see patients in his office daily and every other week at the clinic. Dr. Comerci is a graduate of the West Virginia University School of Medicine. He completed a Family Medicine residency at Wheeling Hospital. Dr. Comerci is in the private practice of family medicine since 1983 on a continuous basis. In addition, Dr. Comerci has had significant experience in medical management working as a Medical Director for Third Party Payer's and a large IPA in the Northern Panhandle of West Virginia.

The Excellence in Medicine for Leadership in Public Health will be presented to the physician who has made a real difference in creating and nurturing a caring health promotion and disease prevention environment. The recipient of this award is Wayne C. Spiggle, MD of Short Gap, WV.

A native of Davis, WV, after residency Dr. Spiggle co-founded the Braddock Medical Group in Cumberland, MD., a practice serving patients (regardless of ability to pay) within Maryland, Pennsylvania and West Virginia.

He was a founder of Alleghany Health Right (AHR), a "clinic without walls" collaborative effort of physicians, hospital representatives, pharmacists, dentists and community leaders to serve the uninsured of Alleghany and Mineral counties.

After leaving full-time practice after 40 years, Dr. Spiggle became even more active in efforts to improve delivery of preventive and primary care services to populations in need, including continuing to see patients at the Tri-State Community Health Center in Cumberland and Preston-Taylor Community Health Centers in Mount Storm and Newburg, WV. He also was a member of Governor Manchin's Affordable Insurance Taskforce (AIW). As a Mineral County Commissioner, Dr. Spiggle organized and facilitated that county's community-based wellness program, Healthy Mineral County Coalition.

Dr. Spiggle served on the West Virginia Pharmaceutical Cost Management Council and West Virginia Medical Foundation's Board of Trustees, convening multiple stakeholders to establish a subcommittee to explore establishing a central fill pharmacy. His dedication and perseverance was instrumental in assisting the establishment of WVRX, an automated, central fill pharmacy model that has been actively assisting patients throughout the State for the last few years.

Dr. Spiggle earned an agriculture degree from Berea College. He was in the last two-year class at West Virginia University School of Medicine and completed medical school at the Medical College of Virginia. He completed a rotating internship at Memorial Hospital in Charleston, WV. In addition, he completed a residency in Internal Medicine at West Virginia University.

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The Excellence in Medicine for a Lifetime of Distinguished Service recognizes a West Virginia physician who throughout his or her career has exemplified the medical profession's highest values: commitment to service, community involvement, altruism and leadership in the medical profession. The individual must have practiced medicine for at least 25 years. The recipient of this award is Robert J. Marshall, MD of Huntington, WV.

Dr. Robert Marshall is entering his 50th year of medical practice since moving to West Virginia. In 1960 he was recruited from the Mayo Clinic as one of the initial clinical faculty of the then newly established four year School of Medicine of West Virginia University, in the role of Professor of Medicine and Chairman of Cardiology. He was responsible for developing a clinical practice; for teaching internal medicine and cardiology to medical students and house staff; for planning and developing (in cooperation with colleagues in pediatric cardiology and cardio-thoracic surgery) West Virginia's first custom-built facilities for cardiac catheterization and open heart surgery; for obtaining financial support from the (then) National Heart Institute (NIH) and the American Heart Association to develop a program of cardiovascular research and to help fund future colleagues in cardiology; and for providing continuing education for physicians, nurses and allied health professionals from across the State of West Virginia.

His service to the state was exemplified by his key role in the development of the West Virginia Regional Medical Program during the presidency of Lyndon Johnson in the 1960s. In 1976, Dr. Marshall changed his direction, leaving academia for the private practice of internal medicine and cardiology. He joined several of his former students in the Huntington Internal Medicine Group and helped start the cardiac catheterization and cardiac surgery programs in Huntington. As a Clinical Professor, he helped in early development of Marshall University School of Medicine.

Dr. Marshall, a native of Northern Ireland, graduated from the Faculty of Medicine of Queen's University, Belfast, in 1948. Following internship he served for three years as Instructor in the Department of Physiology and Anatomical Pathology at Queen's, before completing residency and fellowship in internal medicine and cardiology. He was admitted to membership and subsequently fellowship of the Royal College of Physicians (London) and the Royal College of Physicians of Ireland. In 1957 he was a Research Fellow at the Baker Institute and Melbourne University, Australia, where he published some of the earliest studies of vascular reactivity in hypertension.

Dr. Marshall, in receipt of a Fulbright Fellowship, spent three years at the Mayo Clinic as Research Associate in the section of Physiology and Biophysics. His work included studies of the cardiovascular response to exercise in man and animals and of the pulmonary circulation in health and disease, in addition to performing diagnostic cardiac catheterization in the earliest days of open heart surgery at Mayo. In 1961 he moved to West Virginia as one of the founding faculty of the WVU School of Medicine, serving as Professor and Chair of Cardiology and as Professor of Physiology. He spent a sabbatical year as Visiting Professor of Cardiovascular Medicine at Oxford University. In 1976 he moved to Huntington to join the Internal Medicine Group, and helped to develop the initial facilities for cardiac catheterization and open heart surgery at St. Mary's Hospital. At the time, he served as a Clinical Professor of Medicine for WVU.

In 1994 he retired from full time private practice, but not from work. Ever since then he has conducted the cardiac clinic at the Ebenezer Centre. He also works as a cardiology consultant for Office of Disability Adjudication and Review of the Social Security Administration. His commitment to these two organizations occupies some 40 hours per week. Dr. Marshall is now entering his 62nd year of medical practice.

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Dr. Marshall completed a four-year term as Governor of the West Virginia Region of the American College of Physicians (ACP). During his tenure his region won the Evergreen Award in two successive years. In 1996 he received the ACP-WV Laureate Award. In 1998 he became a master of the American College of Physicians, an award previously bestowed on two other distinguished West Virginia physician educators. Dr. Marshall served as Governor of the American College of Cardiology, President of the West Virginia Heart Association, Vice-President of American Heart, Chairman of the Middle-Atlantic Region of American Heart, and Region Advisor for the Royal College of Physicians of Ireland. He coauthored three textbooks and has published more than 80 papers in peer-reviewed journals concerning cardiac function in health and disease.

Also during the awards program the West Virginia Mutual Insurance Company will present the first **“Robert L. Ghiz Award for Outstanding Service to the Physician Community of West Virginia”** to Robert L. Ghiz, MD.

Dr. Ghiz is an Orthopedic Surgeon and the retired president of Bone and Joint Surgeons, Inc. located in Charleston, WV. He is a member of the American Medical Association, the West Virginia State Medical Association and the American Academy of Orthopedic Surgery. He holds a medical license from the West Virginia Board of Medicine.

Dr. Ghiz completed his undergraduate work at West Virginia University and then attended Northwestern University for his medical degree. He studied orthopedic surgery while at Northwestern University at the Cook County Hospital.

Dr. Ghiz has been an active member of the medical community in West Virginia, serving most recently as the founding Chairman of the West Virginia Mutual Insurance Company, a professional liability insurance carrier established in 2004 to meet the crisis needs of West Virginia's physicians for affordable medical malpractice insurance.

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For more information:

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