

Tar Heel Footprints in Health Care

*A periodic feature that recognizes individuals whose efforts—
often unsung—enhance the health of North Carolinians*

John Price, MPA



John Price, MPA, retired director of the North Carolina Office of Rural Health and Community Care (ORHCC), has dedicated his life to promoting the health and well-being of the state's rural population. A native of the town of Jackson, in Northampton County, Price graduated from North Carolina State University with a bachelor of arts degree in politics in 1975, and he then received a master of public affairs degree in 1976. Upon graduating, Price started his career at ORHCC, and he quickly learned about North Carolina's rural population and the state's health care system. Through his 36-year career at ORHCC, Price advanced from being a primary care systems specialist and a budget and contracts assistant in 1977 to being named the director of ORHCC in February 2008; he remained in this leadership position until February 2013.

During Price's tenure as director, he led ORHCC to many accomplishments. Ms. Chris Collins, the current director of ORHCC commented, "John truly understands that community development requires strong working relationships. Over his 30 years of public service, John personally [knew and was trusted by] countless rural partners from the eastern to the western parts of our great state." In addition, Price navigated ORHCC through the recession that started in the late 2000s. Through his leadership, ORHCC was able to keep rural health centers open and to maintain core services despite annual budget cuts of 10% or more. In addition, ORHCC

obtained foundation and state funding to expand medication assistance and to develop resources to assist the safety-net system. When asked about his favorite part of working at ORHCC, Price stated, "What I enjoyed most was the opportunity to work with rural people in their communities and to help them accomplish what *they* want to accomplish."

In October 2013, Price was awarded the Jim Bernstein Community Health Career Achievement Award presented by the North Carolina Foundation for Advanced Health Programs. Even in retirement, Price continues to promote rural health by collaborating on community projects with the Kate B. Reynolds Charitable Trust. He enjoys developing innovative solutions alongside individuals who live and work in rural communities, and his work will continue to benefit the North Carolina community for years to come. Mr. Tork Wade, executive vice president of Community Care of North Carolina states, "Over the 30 years that I worked with John, I never knew anyone who captured the traditional values of dedication, hard work, persistence, and doing the best job possible as well as him. John was one person you could always count on to handle any responsibility with great skill, thoroughness, and good humor." **NCMJ**

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