November 2022 member spotlight

John A. Minielly, MD

President, Tulsa County Retired Physicians

Retired AMA member

Q: As president of the Retired Physician Organization of Tulsa County Medical Society, can you tell us how the group got started and how many members there are currently?

A: In 1998, the late physicians, Drs. Worth Gross and Hall Ketchum, with the support of the Tulsa County Medical Society (TCMS) began the Golden Oldies as a social group meeting twice a year so that retired physicians could continue to maintain relationships that had developed in the clinical setting over many years.

In 2000, Dr. Jerry Gustafson, a retired surgeon, became the program coordinator with four monthly social and informative meetings with presentations from various community organizations—Youth Services of Tulsa, Tulsa City County Health Department, programs of the TCMS Foundation and the OU-TU Medical School. All meetings are now in the C Wallace Hooser Conference Center in the
TCMS building.

In 2020, Dr. John Minielly, a retired pathologist, became the program coordinator and the Golden Oldies merged with the Tulsa County Retired Physicians Group that had met for several years at Ascension St. John Medical Center. The “Golden Oldies” name was discontinued and the combined group continues as the Tulsa County Retired Physicians. Currently, the Tulsa Retired Physicians group has 225 members.

**Q: How is your group governed and what types of activities does the group participate in?**

**A:** A committee of retired physicians meets to plan meetings and discuss topics that might be of interest to the group. We also have support from Mark McElreath, MPA, executive director of the Tulsa County Medical Society and TCMS Foundation, and Joetta Cunningham, director of operations, to accomplish the activities set forth by the group.

In addition to these gatherings, the retired physicians are involved in community service programs. In the late 1990s, Dr. Gustafson and the late Dr. George Prothro, the executive director of the Tulsa City-County Health Department, working with the Oklahoma State Board of Health and Pharmacy, state legislators and nursing homes, received approval for a recycling program of unopened drugs from local nursing homes and delivered to the City-County Pharmacy to be dispensed to indigent patients.

Prior to this unique program, these drugs were flushed down toilets and contaminated the water supply. The Drug Recycling Program became a model for similar programs now implemented nationwide. Tulsa Retired Physicians continue to be very active as "drug runners," to pick up and deliver these medications. To date, there has been a retail value of $28,163,890 distributed and the value of a single recent pickup was $84,000. The group also participates in the biannual Tulsa drug disposal program sponsored by the Oklahoma Board of Narcotics and local police.

**Q: How does the organization provide social and fellowship opportunities for senior physician members? Do you have committees and speakers planned for the coming year?**

**A:** The Tulsa Retired Physicians work to provide social and fellowship opportunities between 3-6 times per year. These range from lunches with speakers on topics that are relevant to our group including community non-profits, trends in medicine, emerging technologies and more. The group has also held social events at the Gilcrease Museum, Philbrook Museum and Tulsa Botanical Gardens. We have an annual Holiday Dinner each year and are in the process of planning for next year’s topics and events.

**Q: Does your group advocate at the federal and state levels on key health care issues impacting patients and physicians? Is your group affiliated with other educational institutions to advance its mission?**
A: Several of our retired physicians continue to advocate on the state level by attending Medicine Day at the state capitol and meeting with state representatives and senators. We have a strong relationship with both the OSU College of Osteopathic Medicine and OU-TU School of Community Medicine where members of our group were graduates and faculty.

Contact us

Have information about SPS members doing great work? Email us at sps@ama-assn.org.