

February 2013

Ask a Leader

John Price

Director, NC Office of Rural Health and Community Care (ORHCC)

John Price, who has been with ORHCC since 1977 and has served as its director since 2008, is set to retire next month. (See Comings and Goings for more).

In your 36+ years with the ORHCC, what are some of your proudest accomplishments?

I grew up in a rural county, so this has been an opportunity to give back to rural people. North Carolina had the first Office of Rural Health in the country (it's celebrating its 40th anniversary this year). The philosophy of our office came down from Jim Bernstein, which was about empowering communities to help themselves, to work collaboratively with them, through public/private partnerships. Every effort the Office makes is to bring about health care quality and access in rural communities, and to work with them to get health care there in a lasting way. To be innovative, you have to not be afraid to test new ideas to see if we can bring about change. Community Care of North Carolina started with rural physicians coming to us saying, "What are we going to do in this new Medicaid managed care environment that is focused on metropolitan areas?" They organized networks of physicians to care for the Medicaid recipients in their communities utilizing standardize protocols for diabetics, asthmatics, and patients with hypertension. The idea was to treat all the patients the same and make sure they are getting the highest quality of care. By doing so you could improve quality, avoid expensive care such as in the ER, and save money. Case management and care coordination assure continuity of care while avoiding unnecessary duplication. It saves Medicaid money. Now it's a national model. It's completely outside the ORH now—it's its own nonprofit. That has been our legacy—testing innovative strategies.