

# Physician Profile: Dr. Susan Weaver

by Christy Farrelly

Susan Weaver, a native of North Carolina, serves as Executive Director for the Alliance Medical Ministry, a 501(c)3 that provides medical care to the working uninsured of Wake County. Through her leadership and clinical guidance, this organization has become a national model for successful delivery of health services to the working uninsured.

Early in life, Susan Weaver made the decision to become a physician. As the daughter of a cardiologist, she was born in Durham and grew up in Greenville, North Carolina surrounded by medicine and patient care.

Young summers were spent in her father's practice, volunteering and assisting with the "business of medicine." She said, "I grew up watching him and learning. This experience gave me a solid foundation for what I do now with Alliance." Dr. Weaver followed in her father's footsteps, attending Duke University for undergraduate and medical school. Since 1990, after completing her medical training and residency at Massachusetts General Hospital, she has remained focused on a well-rounded path of discovery in delivering medicine and patient care.

As an instructor at Northwestern University Medical School and Assistant Professor then Medical Director at Vanderbilt University Medical Center, Dr. Weaver worked closely with interns and gained valuable experience in starting practices, quality assurance and medical management. It was during this time that she was able to build upon the business skill sets from her youth and become not only a strong

physician, but solidify a positive business philosophy.

In 1999, Dr. Weaver, her husband, Robert Brown Weaver, and their children moved back to North Carolina where she started a private practice, Harps Mill Internal Medicine. While she enjoyed her practice, success, and was truly happy in her life, she sensed she was meant for a different purpose. While the answer didn't come immediately, the drive to find that purpose became clear when her sister was diagnosed with breast cancer at the age of 34. Through their



Front left to right: Katie, Barbara Lynn, Second row left to right: Dr. Susan Weaver, Robert, Davis, Robert

philosophical discussions about life and meaning, Susan's sister encouraged her to look outside the box and stressed the importance of finding that purpose. On February 15, 2000, Susan's sister lost her battle with cancer. At that time, Dr. Weaver resigned from Harps Mill Internal Medicine without a clear vision of what the future would hold, except that she would find a path that would be personally meaningful. She spent the next year volunteering at a free clinic.

**Correction:** We regret the name of Christy Farrelly was omitted from the byline of the October issue Physician Profile. WCP deeply appreciates Ms. Farrelly's past contributions~Editor

"In November, 2001, the News and Observer ran an article about four men who had co-founded an organization. They were not physicians and did not have a medical background, but they had great heart and a great idea." Putting the article aside, Dr. Weaver made a decision to call after the first of the year. Over the course of the next few weeks, friends and family who had seen the piece sent it to Dr. Weaver with notes that they had thought of her as they read the article. It appeared that Dr. Weaver had found a direction in fulfilling her purpose.

On January 2, 2002 she made the call with the sole intention of volunteering. Dr. Weaver was made Medical Director and, prior to the official opening in January 2003, she became Executive Director of Alliance Medical Ministries. "When we started, we were leasing 2,800 square feet, had four exam rooms, and the equivalent of one physician. Today, we own an 18,000 square foot building, 10,000 square foot gym, have 6 fulltime equivalent doctors and serve over 6,200 patients."

That "lost sense of purpose" was gone from the moment Dr. Weaver started with Alliance. She has always had an appreciation for her blessed life and finds satisfaction, both personally and professionally, in helping so many people in our community become healthy. Dr. Susan Weaver has been consistent in extending the mission of Alliance and sharing its success as

a true community effort. "It's a solution that allows all members of Wake County to come together. There is a universal appeal and understanding of the need for quality healthcare for everyone. It wouldn't happen without the community." Support, both financial and volunteerism, comes from businesses, hospitals, medical societies, faith organizations, and individuals.

While Alliance Medical Ministries serves over 6,000 working uninsured in Wake County, it is estimated there are over 100,000 uninsured living here. There has been a 75% increase in requests for their services with the current economic turn. "I would love for us as a society to find a way to deliver at least some level of basic care to all Americans. It's a challenging proposition because of the changes in medicine, the complications of reimbursements, tort reforms and all the other branches that have grown out of our current health-care system. It's much easier to identify the problem than to come up with a solution."

There has been substantial change in the practice of medicine since Dr. Weaver first began her career. More reliance is placed on technology for making a diagnosis and there is a decrease in uninterrupted face-to-face time with patients. While Dr. Weaver recognizes this is not necessarily a bad thing, there is a sense that the practice of medicine is becoming a "lost art." "That is one of the beauties about indigent care medicine – It's not an option to go immediately to the most elaborate and expensive test because of cost. I have to think critically about a patient's situation and use all of my diagnostic skills. And, no matter how good of a diagnostician you are, if you don't listen to the patient, you cannot be accurate in improving health." In daily practice of this lost art,

Dr. Weaver finds great reward.

The patient population at Alliance Medical Ministries is a direct reflection of the growing diversity in Wake County. This diversity has forced Dr. Susan Weaver to organize medicine in a culturally sensitive way. She thinks of herself as having trained in "southern medicine," and in her previous professional experiences she drew on that training to make judgments about patient care. Alliance serves Wake County and its growing variety of cultures and people. Inside their new building, Alliance Medical Ministries has a map where patients can pinpoint their country of origin. This diversity has allowed Dr. Weaver to continue her medical education "in the field." She learns on the job by asking questions and listening. "You simply have to have an understanding of native cultures, customs and diets in order to present positive healthy change." This dimension requires flexibility in management and delivery of healthcare, something Dr. Weaver achieves as Executive Director of Alliance.

Alliance Medical Ministries is continuing to grow and provide a resource for Wake County residents under the leadership of Dr. Weaver. They are breaking ground on an un-gated, community meditation garden. "It is our goal that the garden be a place for peaceful reflection for not only our patients, but all members of the community." Alliance is working in collaboration with the Boys and Girls Club Teen Program on a community vegetable garden. The garden will be the source of foods for nutrition and cooking classes, and it will provide a first-look

for some at natural, growing, fresh foods. A proposed walking trail will encourage a departure from a sedentary lifestyle and encourage positive, healthy living.

Dr. Susan Weaver is humble and quiet about her achievements. Not only is she a successful and respected member of Wake County as Executive Director of Alliance, she serves as Medical Director of Community Access where she is coordinator of WakeMed's outreach programs. She is founder and president of CapitalCare Collaborative, a community-wide initiative striving to increase access to care for the uninsured. Her awards and recognition include, but are not limited to: Healthcare Heroes Award, Friend for Life Honoree – Speaking for Women's Health, and Church Women United Human Right Award.

"Susan is a wonderful life partner, mom, and physician," said Robert, her husband of 22 years. "She combines an amazing ability to work and interact with a wide variety of people who leave with an [Continued on page 25]

## Fast Facts:

### Professional Affiliations:

Member, North Carolina Institute of Medicine  
Member, American College of Physicians  
Member, American Medical Association  
Member, North Carolina Medical Society  
Member, Wake County Medical Society

### Family:

Husband: Robert Brown Weaver  
Robert, freshman at Duke University  
Katie, sophomore in high school  
Davis, freshman in high school  
Barbara Lynn, 5th grade

### When Asked:

Q: *What I like best about RTP?*

A: The divers and friendly nature of the people

Q: *What I like least in Raleigh?*

A: The humidity in the summer.

Q: *What is the last book you read?*

A: Same Kind of Different as Me, By Ron Hall and Denver Moore.

Q: *What is the last movie you saw?*

A: High School Musical 3



### Alliance Medical Ministry

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# A HISTORY OF PSYCHIATRIC PRIVATE PRACTICE IN RALEIGH, NORTH CAROLINA

by Wilmer C. Betts, MD

The first person in private psychiatric practice in Raleigh was Dr. J. F. Owen, who had been superintendent of Dorothea Dix Hospital (DDH) for several years in the 1940s and 1950s. Dr. Owen was a psychiatrist and a lawyer. He had an office in the Professional Building at the corner of Hargett and McDowell streets. He did a great deal of forensic psychiatry and initiated outpatient electroconvulsive therapy in the Rex Hospital emergency room.

Dr. Joseph Carpentieri was Director of the Wake County Mental Health Center during the 1950s. He had a part-time private practice in the Cameron Village office buildings along Clark Avenue.

Dr. Wilmer Betts was the only psychiatrist in private practice in Raleigh from March until August of 1955. He began in an office in the Cameron Village office apartments on Clark Avenue and continued at Glenwood Professional Village and later at Graystone Offices until his retirement in 1994. Dr. Douglas McRee joined him in 1956. Dr. Barbara Moore Jordan joined him for a year in 1957. Dr. Robert Harper, Sr. joined him in 1957 and continued until 1980. Mrs. Jacqueline Bello Harper became secretary and office manager in 1956 and continued until 1980. She was also Executive Secretary of the NC Psychiatric Association. Drs. Betts, McRee and Harper moved from Cameron Village to Glenwood Professional Village in 1965. Dr. McRee left for solo practice in 1967 and was replaced by Dr. Clifton Lee Quinn.

During the 1950s, Raleigh Psychiatric Associates was formed by Dr. Thad Barringer, Sr. and Dr. Fred Thompson. Dr. Thompson joined in 1962 and remained until 1965. Dr. Bobbie Sellers joined the group in 1968. In 1970 they moved to Browning Place and have remained there. Dr. Nicholas Stratas joined them in 1978 after practicing for four years with Drs. Betts, Harper, and Quinn. Dr. N. P. Zarzar joined the latter group in 1978. Dr. Thad Barringer, Jr. and Dr. Barry Ostrow joined Raleigh Psychiatric Associates in 1984.

Dr. William Burke practiced for a short period in the 1970s until his death.

Dr. John Howie practiced from about 1967 until his recent death. He also remained as Director of the Wake Alcoholism Treatment Center.

Dr. Ralph Massingill practiced with Raleigh Psychiatric Association and later in solo practice until his death.

During the late 1950s Raleigh psychiatrists formed The Raleigh Academy of Psychiatry. They functioned as supervisors for the residents at DDH. Also, they continued with a monthly social meeting until about 1988.

Dr. Patricia Pearce began practice in the 1970s.

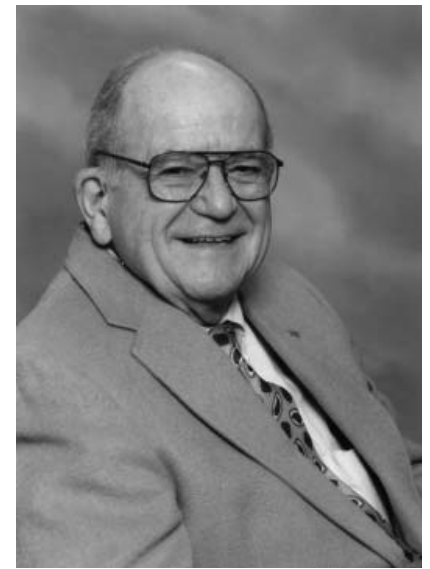
The first inpatient psychiatric beds were opened in 1963 at Wake Medical Center and remained open with twenty-three beds until 1978. This unit was named Ashby Hall, after Dr. Julian Ashby, a staff psychiatrist at DDH, who was the first board certified psychiatrist in NC.

Drs. Barringer, Sr., Massengill, Quinn, Stratas, and Charles Johnson formed a corporation. This corporation bought land and built Holly Hill Hospital. The hospital opened in 1978 and remains in operation.

Raleigh private psychiatrists have continued to grow until there are now one hundred and one listed in the Directory of the NC Psychiatric Association and ninety-five in the yellow pages of the telephone directory.

Dr. Walter Sikes left DDH and was in practice from 1972 until his death in 1979.

Dr. Ben Britt joined him for a period of time. Later Dr. Britt began sole practice. He sold his practice to Dr. Gray McAllister. Dr. Britt died shortly thereafter. §



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overwhelming positive feeling. Alliance has afforded her the opportunity to use both her clinical and leadership skills. She is inspiring.”

Together, Susan and Robert have four children ranging in age from 5 to 19. One of the personal milestones in Susan’s life is seeing the growth of her children. Dr. Weaver said, “My kids have been actively involved in community service, not because they have to, but because they want to. They have grown up with an appreciation of what they have and how important it is to give back.” The family spends time together traveling, gardening and cooking.

Dr. Susan Weaver learned from a very young age the importance of giving, listening, and providing quality care and has pursued her passion with great success. She said, “I don’t think of my career in terms of me and my achievements. I feel lucky to be able to work everyday doing something that I love. I would say the crowning achievement so far in my career is every patient that comes through the door because when they leave, they are grateful, they are appreciative, and their lives are made better.”

It is nice to see that passion can be found, and lives in Wake County through Dr. Susan Weaver and all of her endeavors. §