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## Cartersville's first pediatrician reflects on 35 years of practice

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This month, Richard Young, M.D., will have practiced pediatrics in the Cartersville area for exactly 35 years. And, in that time, he's blazed new trails, both locally and abroad.

"When I came here in 1980, there [were] no pediatricians in town," he said. "There [were] some general practitioners, some internists, an orthopedic surgeon and one general surgeon. That's really about it."

Young currently works out of the Acworth extension of Cartersville Pediatric Associates, which he co-owns with fellow pediatrician Dr. William Payne. But Young's route to what was essentially the founding of pediatrics in Cartersville began long before an extension office — or any other office — was being built to handle local children's health care.

In 1968, after obtaining his undergraduate degree, Young was drafted into the military. He spent two years in the United States Army before moving to Texas and deciding to attend medical school. After

completing the required entry courses, Young was accepted into Georgetown University School of Medicine in Washington, D.C., in 1973. Upon graduation in 1977, he moved to Atlanta for internships at Grady Memorial Hospital and Egleston Children’s Hospital and completed his pediatric residency at Emory University School of Medicine.

To help pay for medical school, Young received a United States Public Health Service scholarship. As part of the obligations to repay the scholarship, he was required to begin work in a physician shortage area. So, in 1980, he traveled to one such area just up the highway: Cartersville.

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replaced by Cartersville Medical Center just a few years later — on his first day of work, Young took note of what seemed to be a collective lack of general pediatric knowledge by staff members.

“They didn’t know the first thing about pediatrics [at the old hospital]. I walked in the newborn nursery, probably around the 14th of July, 1980, to see newborns, and I needed a blood sugar [reading] and they had no clue as even how to do that. So going from that ... I started pediatrics in this town, bottom line. There’s a bunch of pediatricians here now, bunch of pediatric nurse practitioners, bunch of family practitioners that do pediatrics — but 1980 was all on me.”

And so local pediatrics was the sole responsibility of Young for the next five to six years, at least, until Payne arrived in the mid-1980s to help shoulder the load. But there was still much to be done.

“We had to take care of a whole lot of things here, more so than what we do now simply because [of lack of] access down to Scottish Rite [and] Egleston [children’s hospitals] before the [1998 merger that created] Children’s Healthcare of Atlanta ..., ” Payne recalled.

From 1980 to 1985, Young worked out of the hospital and had an office in a shopping center on Tennessee Street. Around 1985, he moved into an office off Mockingbird Drive. From there, in 1992, he moved into an office across from the Cartersville Medical Center emergency room. In 1998, Young and Payne sold their individual



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practices to the newly-formed Children's Healthcare of Atlanta and began working for the company. But it wasn't long — two years, to be exact — before CHA left the outpatient business and both doctors reacquired their practices. At that point, the two decided to merge, forming Cartersville Pediatric Associates and setting up shop in the physician's center on CMC's campus.

It was around this time that Young began taking his medical expertise abroad.

“The way I got initially involved in [international travel] was back in 1998. The church I go to, Heritage Baptist Church, they had an alliance with a church in Holguin, Cuba, which is on the eastern end of the island,” he said. “And at that time, we did a mission trip, a church mission trip, with the blessings of the U.S. government. And I ... did some medicine down there for the week. Although the communist government at that time did not want us treating patients, they wanted us to go on a sightseeing tour of what they had. But we did some medicine in the back room one night — illegally,” he said with a grin.

Young valued the opportunity to extend medical care to those in foreign countries and looked for ways to continue the endeavors. In 2003, he went to the Ecuadorian rainforest with an organization called Medical Expeditions International. Though it is now defunct, MEI

“provide[d] medical attention to the people and animals of some of the poorest and/or remote regions ... of the world,” according to an

archived article from the Public Broadcasting Association. In total,

Young made about five trips into the Ecuadorian Amazon, deep into the jungle, flying into the country on planes that landed on dirt

airstrips. The areas near Ecuador's border with Peru were

inaccessible by any means except air and, once there, Young's team traveled down the Pastaza River to treat the native Achuar people.

In 2007, he traveled again with his church to Mexico City, treating

residents of a large slum. Upon return, Young and an associate nurse

formed an organization called Medical Missions Unlimited. From 2007

to 2013, the organization made nine trips to the mountains of southern

Mexico, treating the descendents of the Mayan people.

Most recently, Young took a trip with the church to the Dominican Republic last month and discovered there is a need for medical services that he can help to fulfill.

“There’s a really great opportunity down there to go back on medical missions, so that’s what I’m planning now, is to go back to the Dominican next year sometime,” he said.

For now, Young continues to practice pediatrics out of his Acworth office in the Lake Pointe Professional Center off U.S. Route 41. He noted that he is proud to have established the groundwork for local pediatrics and reflected fondly on his accomplishments. His best advice after three and a half decades of providing health care? Keep things personal.

“When I started medical school in ‘73, all this technology wasn’t around,” emphasizing the importance of face-to-face interaction with patients. “I learned how to practice medicine by listening to people, what their complaints were ... and learning not to rely on technology alone.”

And perhaps that is one of the reasons why Payne refers to Young as “the dean of pediatrics in Cartersville.”

“He’s seen about everything there is to see,” Payne said.

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