

# Robert Freelove, MD

By Marina Spexarth

## is Kansas Humanitarian Award winner

**CARING. COMPASSIONATE. SELFLESS. KIND.**

Kansas Academy of Family Physicians (KAFP) does not select a Kansas Humanitarian Award winner every year. This award honors extraordinary and enduring humanitarian efforts. This year, KAFP has a winner! KAFP proudly announces that Robert Freelove, MD of Salina has been selected as the 2017 Kansas Humanitarian Award winner.

A family physician. Chief Executive Officer and Chief Medical Officer of Salina Family Healthcare Center (SFHC). Residency Program Director of Smoky Hill Family Medicine Residency Program. Assistant Medical Director of Hospice of Salina. All of these titles belong to one extraordinary doc. Patients, colleagues, and community leaders shared their stories about Dr. Freelove. And they all include the same words to describe him: caring, compassionate, selfless, kind. And, if you know him, you cannot leave out a great sense of humor. He is known to many as the gold standard when it comes to family doctors.

Dr. Freelove's impact goes beyond providing excellent clinical care for his patients. His net reach encompasses the State of Kansas and beyond. As the CEO of a Federally Qualified Health Center (FQHC), Dr. Freelove makes daily decisions which impact thousands of patients and their families. Dr. Freelove says, "We take care of anyone and everyone regardless of ability to pay," with great pride and passion.

The safety net clinic that was inspired by his motivation has been an asset to the Salina community. With his leadership, the clinic has expanded from a typical medical clinic to one that includes dental care, integrated behavioral health services, and a pharmacy that provides both dispensing and clinical pharmacy services, as well as a safe house for abused women and children. Adding and growing the pharmacy services provides qualified patients the access to much needed medicine at discounted prices. The dental program has an outreach extending across north central Kansas, reach-



ing over 16,000 children each year. In partnering with Ashby House, the FQHC also serves abused women and children. Dr. Freelove's comprehensive approach to delivering family medicine has made the FQHC a true Patient Centered Medical Home (PCMH).

Under his leadership, the FQHC provided medical care to more than 10,000 of the most vulnerable Kansans last year. The services of his clinic improve the health of patients in the Salina area and give many patients access to healthcare who might otherwise go without, or end up seeking care in the emergency room. He is a leader in transforming an office into a PCMH. This is not an easy process for any family medicine office, much less a residency program and an FQHC. But Smoky Hill became an NCQA recognized Level 3 PCMH several years ago and

truly embodies the principles of the PCMH.

As program director of Smoky Hill, he oversees a residency program that provides family physicians who are the lifeblood to many small Kansas communities. Dr. Freelove has led the program assuring that residents receive the necessary experience and support from the hospital and local physicians in training to serve patients in rural Kansas. Through Dr. Freelove's leadership, the residency program has recently expanded, now supporting a total of 15 residents. The competency of the residency program was a critical element in the decision of the KU School of Medicine to add a 4-year medical school campus in Salina. "Patient advocate, physician and community leader define Dr. Freelove. However, the best description is that he is a 'difference maker,'" writes patient, Lee Young.

Dr. Freelove has been the Team Physician for Kansas Wesleyan University since 2004. His undergraduate degree in Exercise Science and Athletic Training is an asset in this position. He is also adept at building trust with the students and answering their questions on non-sports related issues, from depression to strep throat to contraception.

As a physician leader he is routinely called upon to present a physician's viewpoint on matters before the Board of Trustees of the Salina Regional Health Center. Perhaps even more significantly, he is sought out for his view of board decisions as they relate to patient care. Dr. Freelove is a guiding force to the board in directing policy to assure quality patient care, patient access to care and patient satisfaction. As a respected community/regional physician leader he has often become the "bridge" with the medical staff in support of patient care issues and at times when competing interests arise. He has served on the hospital board for six years and is on track to become Board President.

Dr. Freelove's advocacy for his patients does not stop in the clinic or hospital. He stands up for his patients, voicing his concerns at the Capitol in Topeka. Kansas Representative Diane Dierks applauds Dr. Freelove for his efforts to fight for those who fall in the insurance gap

and testify on Medicaid expansion. He spoke movingly at the Feb. 8 hearing with tears in his eyes, stating, "This is about people's lives!"

"My hope is that all of the people Dr. Freelove has come into contact with will realize how he has touched their lives and they will do the same for others. There is a saying, your career ends with your last paycheck, but your life's work can go on forever. I see Dr. Freelove's life's work continuing on after he is gone because of his dedication and compassion he puts in daily to make his patients, community, colleagues and students better," writes Lee Wolf, CEO Konza Prairie Community Health Center, Junction City, Kansas.

Dr. Freelove will be celebrated at the KAFP Annual Meeting during the President's Dinner. KAFP has submitted his name as a nominee for the AAFP Humanitarian Award which will be announced in the fall.

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## KAFP ADOPTS NEW HEALTHY FOOD POLICY

The KAFP adopted the policy below to do its best to influence healthy food decisions at various meetings. The Spring Board meeting April 8 included a "Salt Bucks" lunch in which board members learned about the amount of salt in sandwich ingredients and used "Salt Bucks" (monopoly-like money) to "buy" what they wanted to build their sandwich. You will see some healthy changes in upcoming activities and events including the 2017 Annual Meeting, June 8-10!

### *Policy Name: Healthy Event Food Policy*

*Source: Executive Committee*

*Text: KAFP is concerned about the health of our employees and members and we are interested in encouraging eating healthy and moving more. Heart disease, cancer and stroke are largely affected by what we eat and how active we are. Foods such as fruits, vegetables, whole grain breads and pastas, and low-fat dairy products are better choices for preventing many diseases.*

As of January 25, 2017 it is KAFP's policy that all activities and events including Board Meetings, Annual Meetings and hosted meals will always include opportunities for healthy foods and beverages by:

- Purchasing and serving one or more fruits and/or vegetables with each meal or snack. Examples include fresh, frozen, canned or dried fruits (such as oranges, apples, raisins or 100% fruit juices), and fresh, frozen, or canned vegetables.
- Providing water, unsweetened tea, or unsweetened coffee as the drink of choice at meals. Refrain from providing sugar-sweetened beverages, sodas, sports drinks, lemonades, etc. at meals.
- Providing encouragement from group leaders to enjoy healthy foods. Examples include community promotion of healthy lifestyles, group leadership being role models for healthy food choices.

