

2008 Louis Gorin Award for Outstanding Achievement in Rural Health Care

Baretta Casey

Dr. Baretta Casey demonstrates her “creativity, unselfishness, compassion and cooperative attitude” every day in her tireless work for the health of rural America.

During her 34-year career, all of it spent in rural Kentucky, Dr. Casey has been a devoted advocate for numerous causes. First and foremost has been improving the health status of rural residents, but she also works tirelessly for the advancement of the health care profession, rural medical education, diabetes research and women’s health. All along the way, she has proven herself a worthy role model for other physicians in the communities she has served. Currently, Dr. Casey serves as director of the University of Kentucky Center for Excellence in Rural Health, which works to improve the health of rural Kentuckians through health professions education, research, health care service and community engagement initiatives. She also serves as program director for the rural-based family medicine programs at the University of Kentucky Department of Family and Community Medicine, and is a professor and vice-chair of the department. In these roles, she has fostered positive community relations and been an effective negotiator with the area’s largest health care provider, Appalachian Regional Healthcare. Perhaps her most important attribute, however has been an assertion that the education of family medicine residents is foremost among her responsibilities, and she also encourages other physicians to make the education of residents an important part of their professional development. Dr. Casey has also demonstrated an extraordinary commitment to women’s health. For instance, she was a galvanizing force in the development of Safe Place, a domestic violence shelter in Pikeville, Kentucky, and spearheaded the fundraising campaign that kept the facility open when it was overcrowded and in need of repair. She is also one of only nine physicians in Kentucky’s 51-county Appalachian region who routinely examines children for signs of abuse, despite the time-consuming nature of the cases with the possibility of testifying in court.

Dr. Casey’s dedication to rural health includes extensive research and policy efforts at the state and national levels. Her numerous honors, awards, appointments and grants serve as further proof of Dr. Casey’s excellent work, as does the glowing testimony of her peers. Whether in her professional career in private practice, her academic work with the university, or in her leadership positions, Dr. Casey has always provided a quiet and dedicated focus for those around her and the effect her passion has had on the lives of rural individuals is unparalleled.