



## Dr. William C. Mercer – *Public Service*

William C. Mercer, M.D., was born November 6, 1953, at Ohio Valley Medical Center in Wheeling, a son of Joseph Loran and Helen (Dauber) Mercer. He attended Warwood High School and graduated in 1975 from West Liberty State College. Dr. Mercer then pursued his medical degree at West Virginia University Medical School, where he graduated in 1979.

He completed a three-year family practice residency at Wheeling Hospital and was chief resident during his third year there. He then began private practice by taking over Dr. William J. Steger's practice. For 37 years, Dr. Mercer maintained a private practice until he joined Wheeling Hospital in 2018. He retired from private practice in 2021 but found he didn't enjoy retirement. He returned to practice and is seeing patients in the three local post-acute and long-term care facilities, where he has served as a certified medical director.

Dr. Mercer also sees patients through Project HOPE, a street medicine program he brought to Wheeling. He began working with the homeless in 2006, and this work eventually launched Project HOPE. A program of the Wheeling-Ohio County Health Department, Project HOPE has been one of the outstanding street medicine programs in the nation. The group was invited to the International Street Medicine Institute's Annual Symposium in Rotterdam, Netherlands, because of its first-rate reputation and its success in small communities.

As the 25th health officer of the Wheeling-Ohio County Health Department, Dr. Mercer was instrumental in achieving a new Clean Indoor Air Regulation in 2005, which was expanded to include bars and restaurants. It served as a model for other counties in West Virginia, and many adopted similar regulations. During his 22 years as health officer, he also developed a program called "Joe Too Cool to Smoke/Vape." With the blessing of the Charles M. Schulz family, he was able to take a larger-than-life-

sized 500-pound statue of Snoopy to the schools in Ohio County, using it as a fun way to teach students the hazards of tobacco and vaping.

In 1996, Pittsburgh Magazine named Dr. Mercer as one of the best physicians in the northeastern region of the United States, and in 2008, he was honored as the state of West Virginia's Family Physician of the Year. Youth Services System, Inc. named him Good Samaritan of the Year in 2016, citing his "virtues of the biblical Good Samaritan." He also is a member of the West Liberty State College Wall of Honor.

Dr. Mercer devoted his adult life to the health care and education of Wheeling's citizens of all ages and economic levels. As a shining beacon in both Wheeling and the state of West Virginia, it was fitting for him to serve as grand marshal of the 2018 Wheeling Christmas parade.

He was awarded the prestigious Milton and Ruth Roemer Prize for leading these programs and overcoming the adversity he faced with the implementation of the Clean Indoor Air Regulation. He received the prize in Boston in November 2022. As Jean Schulz said in her letter supporting his nomination for this award, "It has been my pleasure to have our dear Snoopy associated with Dr. Mercer's program, and all of us at 'Snoopy Center' have appreciated being associated with Dr. Mercer."

Dr. Mercer resides in Wheeling with his wife Gigi, children Chris (Teal), Steve (Bre), Andrew and Taylon and grandson Finn. He joins his father, J. Loran Mercer, and his brother, Dr. Donald Mercer, in the Wheeling Hall of Fame.