

the News-Record

News

Osborn awarded national honor

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Miami News-Record

Published: Thursday, November 4, 2010 11:15 AM CDT

Willie Osborn of Osborn Drugs in Miami is the National Community Pharmacists Association's 2010 Willard B. Simmons Independent Pharmacist of the Year.

While he was surprised at receiving the award, Osborn said, "It is an affirmation of what we're doing and the people I work with. I have some wonderful partners. It is quite an honor since there are 23,000 pharmacies in the NCPA."

He was presented the award, which is sponsored by the Upsher-Smith Laboratories, at the first general session of the association's 112th annual convention in Philadelphia, Pa. in October.

A native of Commerce and graduate of Miami High School, Osborn began work at Wiley Drug, which eventually became Osborn Drugs, as a soda jerk in 1950. He also delivered prescriptions on a bicycle and eventually worked his way up to working in the pharmacy.

He worked his way through the University of Kansas City School of Pharmacy by working at various pharmacies in the Kansas City area and each summer at Wiley's

After graduating "cum laude" in 1956 with a bachelor of science in pharmacy, Osborn worked a year for Haslett Drug in Vinita and a year for Jameson Drugs in Joplin. Then, he returned to Miami and went to work as a pharmacist at Wiley-Cole Drugs.

Osborn said he never dreamed that one day he would be a partner in 24 drugstores in the four-state area. "My goal out of college was to make \$10,000 a year," he said. Nor did he dream he would be working for the same business, just a different name, he started out with while in high school.

When John Wiley retired in 1968, Osborn bought an interest in the store and it became Cole-Osborn Drugs. In 1971, the business' name changed to Osborn Drugs, Inc. And four short years later he moved the store to its present location. Initially, it was one of the businesses in the old building where Security Bank is today.

Thirty years ago, he and his partners put a pharmacist into a pharmacy in Sand Springs. That was the beginning of Osborn's successful program of putting young pharmacists in towns needing one as a partner in a business.

"The cost of going into business is almost prohibitive, so we provide it for them," he said.

And this program is why he was named NCPA's Pharmacist of the Year.

Mark Evenstad, president of Upsher-Smith Laboratories, Inc., said, "Willie Osborn's effort working with others to build independent pharmacies in his home town and across four states exemplifies the entrepreneurial spirit and commitment of community pharmacists today."

"As a pharmaceutical company owned by a pharmacist, we understand the importance that community pharmacy plays in providing patients with accessible health care. It is with great regard that we congratulate Willie on earning NCPA's 2010 Willard B. Simmons Independent Pharmacist of the Year Award for his contributions to community pharmacy over the past four decades," Evenstad said.

Joseph H. Harmison, NCPA president and an Arlington, Texas pharmacy owner, said, "Willie Osborn is a very



NATIONAL AWARD, Willie Osborn of Osborn Drugs in Miami holds the National Community Pharmacists Association's 2010 Willard B. Simmons Independent Pharmacist of the Year he received recently. Jerry J. Herrmann/News-Record

deserving recipient of the Willard B. Simmons Independent Pharmacist of the Year because of the quality of services he provides patients, the impact he has on the community he lives in, and his long-standing efforts to grow the ranks of independent community pharmacy owners by partnering with young entrepreneurs looking to break into the business."

Osborn said they continue to help young pharmacists because it provides a service that other people won't provide. In many small towns we have the only pharmacist, he said. The pharmacist not only provides a needed service, but also becomes a vital part of the community they live and work in, he said.

Under Osborn's leadership, Harmison said, Osborn Drugs has been an integral strand of Miami's social fabric, supporting schools, civic clubs, downtown revitalization, and industrial development.

He added, "Osborn is best known in pharmacy circles as an 'enabler' in the best sense of the word. Through his financial leadership, business advice, and overall support he has helped 13 pharmacists partner with him to become independent store owners."

Osborn has been active in the community during his career. He has served as president of the Jaycees, Miami Rotary Club, and Miami Area Chamber of Commerce.

He also is chairman of the Miami Downtown Redevelopment Authority, served as co-chairman of Miami's 75th and 100th anniversary committees, chairman of the committee to organize an ambulance service for Miami, served on the Miami Housing Authority which built the 9 Tribes Tower, was a board member of the First National Bank of Miami for 20-plus years, board member of the Miami Baptist Hospital, several committees to help pass bond issues for the school system and the city, and advisory board for Northeastern Oklahoma A&M College .

Osborn also served as president of the Oklahoma Pharmacy Association, Oklahoma State Board of Pharmacy, four terms less than three different Oklahoma governors; Pharmacy Providers of Oklahoma and American College of Apothecaries.

He was treasurer of the American College of Apothecaries, steering committee member for the National Association of Retail Druggists, member of National Association of Chain Drugstores, board of directors for the National Institute for Pharmacist Care Outcomes, and adjunct instructor for the University of Oklahoma School of Pharmacy.

Osborn has been so active in trade organizations because he believes everyone needs to participate in their profession. Also, it lets you understand what changes are coming and the changes that need to be made to meet them, he said.

Osborn also is active in his church, the First United Methodist Church of Miami. There, he has served as chairman of the board of trustees, finance committee, Family Life Committee, and committee to purchase a new pipe organ. He has been on the building committee for a new sanctuary and member of the Sanctuary Choir for 50 years.

Osborn has picked up several awards over the years. They include: Miami's Distinguished Service Award from the Jaycees twice and the Jaycee Spoke Award; Kiwanis 1990 Citizen of the Year; a Rotary Paul Harris Fellow; the American College of Apothecaries' Albert E. Rosica Jr. Memorial Award; Oklahoma University's J. Bienfang Award, which is presented to an outstanding pharmacy practitioner in Oklahoma; Oklahoma Pharmacy Association's Bowl of Hygeia Award; and the 2000 Outstanding Alumni Award of Miami High School.

The 76-year-old Miamian continues to keep the Coleman Theatre restoration project going.

His latest project is a community effort to rejuvenate the Ottawa County Historical Society to maintain the Dobson Museum and its historical collections.

Osborn said the next big change coming for pharmacists is the management of medications for the patients.

"We are participating in a residence program with the University of Oklahoma to enable us to expand our service so medications are taken properly in cooperation with doctors and other health providers," he said.

Computerization makes that all possible, Osborn said. Osborn Drugs has been computerized since 1980.

In trying to keep up with new technology, he said the group's stores have seven robots working to fill prescriptions, etc.

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