The Villages

Professor ‘a star among even the best educators’

Villager to receive USF medical school’s inaugural lifetime achievement award

By DAVID R. CORDER
DAILY SUN

THE VILLAGES – Never could university medical professor and researcher Duane “Dewey” Eichler imagine the good fortune that awaited him and wife Sandy upon their move almost two years ago to The Villages.

Thrilled with being part of the community’s active adult lifestyle, the Village of Hemingway couple enthusiastically applauded the recent announcement of the first-of-its-kind health care partnership between The Villages, The Villages Health System and the University of South Florida College of Medicine – especially in light of Dewey’s anticipated retirement next year as vice chairman of education in the college’s Department of Molecular Medicine.

Soon afterward, however, the couple learned that his college associates had chosen him on merit to receive the school’s inaugural Outstanding Lifetime Educational...
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Excellence Award on May 4 during the 2011 physician graduating class awards dinner at the Hyatt Regency Hotel in Tampa.

"I was very surprised," Dewey said about the chain of events. "It's a great time in my career. We just feel we've lucked out. It's been a dream come true in every way."

"We're still in shock," Sandy, a retired nurse and medical coding specialist, added. "We didn't anticipate this whatsoever. But opportunity abounds."

The decision to honor Dewey elicited strong accolades from his peers.

"I write to convey my heartfelt congratulations on being selected," Alicia Monroe, the USF medical school vice dean of educational affairs, wrote in an email to Dewey. "The (college) interdisciplinary and inter-professional committee that reviewed your application was impressed and humbled by your achievements and dedication to the field.

"Congratulations again. You, indeed, (are) a star among even the best educators in the College of Medicine."

**Outstanding career**

What a career, too.

Following undergraduate work at San Jose State University in California, Dewey earned a doctorate in biological chemistry at the University of California-Los Angeles.

Then Dewey completed two post-doctorates in the Department of Biochemistry and the Laboratory of Experimental Oncology at the Stanford University Medical Center.

Once finished with his educational career, Dewey pursued an opportunity in 1977 to teach and conduct research at USF, then a small but growing university with great potential.

Since then, Dewey has taught first-year medical students and advised master’s and doctorate-level students.

"I came here because of the potential," Dewey said. "I was given the wonderful opportunity to do research and teach."

Over the years, Dewey even served appointments to the National Board of Medical Examiners, the testing authority for the country’s health care professionals.

Even now, Dewey provides professional support as a member of the H. Lee Moffitt Cancer Center & Research Institute and as the basic science director of the interdisciplinary USF Cardiovascular Signature Research Program.

"That’s where my research has been focused the past 10 to 15 years," Dewey said.

**'Pearls of Wisdom’**

While he focused on teaching and research, Dewey found time to publish a student review workbook, "Medical Biochemistry: Pearls of Wisdom," a royalties-producing book that he dedicated not only to his wife, but also his father, Arthur Eichler.

Such devotion to one another helps explains the couple’s mutual enthusiasm about The Villages upon discovering the community during a visit about six years ago.

"We fell in love with the place one weekend," Sandy said.

When he’s not teaching now, Dewey loves to golf. Sandy enjoys dancing on the town squares, sunny drives in the golf cart and quiet times reading.

Their mutual desire for living the active adult lifestyle helps explain why each is so enthusiastic about the partnership between The Villages and USF Health to build a national model of optimal health care practice.

"I told Dewey, ‘What a wonderful opportunity not only for him but all Villagers,’" Sandy said.

Only good can come from this partnership, Dewey added.

"I couldn't be more enthusiastic about it," Dewey said. "It's truly going to change the way we practice medicine going forward. I really do believe it has the potential for setting precedent in how medicine should be done down the road."

**Sandy Eichler, wife of Duane, said the couple are ‘still in shock’ about Duane being honored with the Outstanding Lifetime National Excellence Award on May 4.**

George Horsford / Daily Sun