

2001 Public Service Award: David Satcher, MD, PhD

Presented by Dushanka V. Kleinman, DDS, MScD

The AAPHD Public Service Award is presented to individuals who have provided unique and outstanding public service that enhances the oral health of the nation. This year's recipient is Surgeon General David Satcher, in recognition of his leadership and support for oral health as reflected by his report "Oral Health in America: A Report of the Surgeon General" (the first such report) and by his workshop and conference on children and oral health, "The Face of a Child." In the world of public health and surgeon generals—where reports, workshops, and conferences are precious—this equates to the "Triple Crown" for horseracing.

Dr. David Satcher is the 16th Surgeon General of the United States. He was sworn in on February 13, 1998. Until February 2001, Dr. Satcher served simultaneously in the positions of Surgeon General and Assistant Secretary for Health, a dual position held only by Surgeon General Julius Richman. Prior to becoming Surgeon General, he held the posts of director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and administrator of the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry from 1993 to 1998.

David Satcher was born and raised in Anniston, Alabama, on a small farm of rock land, from which his father was able "to coax corn, okra, other vegetables, and even some cotton." It was on this farm and from his parents, five brothers, and two sisters, that he learned the value of hard work and determination. His parents did not finish elementary school, but dedicated themselves to their church, where his father became superintendent of the Sunday school. In one interview, Surgeon General Satcher recalls the clear

message his parents gave to their children: "If doors are closed to you, even as the result of injustice, you still work hard and put your efforts where they will make a difference, and education was the key."

He was inspired to become a physician by his parents and by a near-death experience when he was 2 years old. Suffering from fever and whooping cough, a condition that was often fatal prior to antibiotics and if you were poor, toddler David Satcher was cared for by Dr. Jackson, the only African American doctor around, who came and stayed to care for David and the family. Because of his miraculous recovery, that story then became part of the family lore and, when Dr. Jackson died prematurely, David Satcher decided that he wanted to be a doctor. His parents supported his dream and his mom assured him "that whatever I put my heart into, God would bless."

David Satcher pursued his dream and much more. He attended Morehouse College on a full scholarship, graduating Phi Beta Kappa. He received his MD and PhD degrees from Case Western Reserve University in 1970 with election to Alpha Omega Alpha Honor Society. He did residency/fellowship training at Strong Memorial Hospital, University of Rochester, UCLA, and King-Drew. He is a fellow of the American Academy of Family Physicians, the American College of Preventive Medicine, and the American College of Physicians. Before being recruited back east to his alma mater, Dr. Satcher developed and chaired the King-Drew Department of Family Medicine, directed the King-Drew Sickle Cell Research Center, and served as the interim dean of the Charles R. Drew Postgraduate

Medical School. Dr. Satcher returned to Morehouse University, where he served as professor and chairman of the Department of Community Medicine and Family Practice before becoming president of Meharry Medical College from 1982–93.

Dr. Satcher is a former Robert Wood Johnson Clinical Scholar and Macy Faculty Fellow. He is the recipient of 18 honorary degrees and numerous distinguished honors, including top awards from the American Medical Association, the American College of Physicians, the American Academy of Family Physicians, and *Ebony* magazine. In 1995, he received the Breslow Award in Public Health and, in 1997, the New York Academy of Medicine Lifetime Achievement Award. Earlier this year, he received the Bennie Mays Trailblazer Award and the Jimmy and Roslyn Carter Award for Humanitarian Contributions to the Health of Humankind from the National Foundation for Infectious Diseases.

Dr. Satcher is an avid jogger and enjoys tennis, gardening, and reading. He and his wife, Nola, a poet, have four grown children.

Dr. Satcher would most like to be known as the Surgeon General who listens to the American people and who responds with effective programs. His mission is to make public health work for all groups in this nation. He has articulated his belief about health on many occasions. He sees health as "a matter of wholeness—a wholeness of body, mind, spirit, and community—a wholeness that is rooted in family and faith and equality."

AAPHD is proud to present the 2001 Public Service Award to Surgeon General David Satcher.