

Losing a "Community Father"

As a sheriff on rare occasions I hear the term "city father" used by others when they are referring to someone of extreme local importance, be it a government official who has decision authority, or someone else who has a major impact or influence within their community. When I hear this term it certainly relates to a person who positively impacts their community and the citizens within that community.

Recently our Richland County community lost such a "father", Dr. Richard Edwards. During his lifetime in addition to his immediate family, Dr. Edwards impacted so many different lives in so many different ways that he certainly can be called an "iconic father" to us all. Many of us can easily recall a story in which he has helped our families. I know I can. Reading the long list of community boards he served on in his obituary is only a partial part of the work and commitment he gave to benefit our community and its citizens.

Dr. Edwards had touched many of us in the courthouse also. He willingly served as a bailiff in our court and he was our voluntary jail doctor helping us develop our new jail inmate health care program.

I can recall when I first approached Dr. Edwards with this new inmate care program. The idea was to help us control our inmate medical costs by funneling inmate health care complaints through one physician, rather than the jail staff dealing with a long list of physicians to match the number of inmates in custody. I didn't hear any negative reasons why the concept wouldn't work- I heard from him, "let's see what we can do" and he went to work on helping implement the concept.

I heard he was retired but I wouldn't have known it by his involvement with us at the courthouse or in the community with his work with the "free medical" clinic. In addition to his personalized sense of humor, when working with Dr. Edwards you always knew you were going to walk away with a sense of calm, confidence and reassurance. I know I did!

Dr. Edwards will be missed. He was more than "volunteer" even though he volunteered in so many ways of himself. He was a friend and someone who

made a difference in my life and in many lives. He truly was a “**community father**” that we will all miss. May God Bless his memory.