

When Dr. E. Dan DeLoach ('73) was sworn in as president of the Medical Association of Georgia in October, it was just the latest achievement in a decades-long career marked by service to the profession.



Partners in Service

Dr. and Mrs. E. Dan DeLoach

The plastic surgeon has been involved in health care policy and management since he was bitten by the leadership bug more than two decades ago, when he agreed to become Chief of Staff at Memorial Medical Center in Savannah.

"Before that, I had never given much thought to playing a leadership role," DeLoach said. "Like most physicians, I was very content to go to my office and see patients and go to the operating room and solve their problems. It wasn't until later that I began to realize that as a physician, we can impact only so many people in a day.

"However, if you're in a leadership role, you have an impact that's multiplied hundreds or thousands of times by the impact that you can have on other physicians. That's what has stimulated me to become more active in the leadership role of medicine."

His role as president of the Medical Association of Georgia, the 162-year-old advocacy organization known as MAG, has him overseeing the strategic health care vision for the group's 6,000 physician members and 9 million Georgians. The group works closely with 58 county medical societies as well as other state medical associations and the American Medical Association.

The south Georgia native said the primary goal during his one-year term with MAG is to educate physicians on the

new national health care law, which he believes is neither financially sustainable nor improves the patient-physician relationship.

"It will literally take years to fully understand the effects of this 2,500-page law," he said.

His work with MAG and the Savannah-based Georgia Medical Society led to the creation of the Growing Healthy program used to teach children in 23 Savannah-Chatham County public schools healthier lifestyles. DeLoach, a co-founder of the Southeastern Cleft Lip and Palate Clinic, regularly travels to Guatemala and Nicaragua with his wife, Cam, a 1972 College of Nursing graduate, to perform charity surgeries and educate Central American surgeons through their faith-based, non-profit organization John 3:16 Medical Ministries.

"You would never know how involved they are or what they do because they never talk about it," said Mary Hussey, an employee at Savannah Plastic Surgery, the practice DeLoach and a colleague founded in 1980. "We have only found out by the grateful people they have helped."

The DeLoaches generosity has also been extended to their alma mater. The couple has opened their home to facilitate class reunion events and the "Dinner with 12 Strangers" alumni mentoring program. Cam, a member of the "shining stars" of 1972, the last group of nursing

students hand-picked by former Dean E. Louise Grant before her retirement, was instrumental in starting the first class endowment in the College of Nursing.

Additionally, Dr. DeLoach has served as president of the Medical College of Georgia Alumni Association, chairman of the MCG Foundation and current trustee for the Georgia Health Sciences Foundation. Physician education remains an important part of his life; he is an assistant clinical professor of surgery for both his alma mater and Mercer University School of Medicine.

Reflecting on his own education, DeLoach volunteered to be part of the "Sweet 16" group of students to undergo an experimental curriculum when MCG increased the class size from 120 to 136 in 1970.

"After a great deal of soul-searching and consternation, I said, 'What do physicians do if we don't experiment and expand our horizons and our thoughts?' " he said.

He and the other 15 students spent two years under mentorship by Dr. William H. Chew Jr. before rejoining the main group for third-year clinical rotations.

"I had surgery as my first rotation, and it was like, this is it. This is for me. This is where the action is," he said. "This is where you cure people and heal people. I never wanted to deviate from that experience."

"This is where the action is."