

The Inter-Mountain

Dr. High retiring after 40 years of service to Elkins area



The Inter-Mountain photo by Edgar Kelley Dr. C. Stephen High recently announced that he will be retiring after 41 years as a doctor in Elkins at the end of 2023. High is pictured with his office manager April Bodkin, who has been with his practice for 20 years.

ELKINS — After serving patients in Elkins for 41 years, Dr. C. Stephen High has announced that he will be retiring at the end of this year.

High, who graduated from Penn State Medical School in 1979, arrived in Elkins in 1982 and was first employed with the Memorial General Hospital Association. After the hospital's closure, he opened his own private practice on Gorman Avenue in Elkins and has been there ever since.

“Being your own boss is the way to go if you can do it,” High told The Inter-Mountain Thursday.

“It’s becoming increasingly difficult in medical affairs to be able to take care of all the regulations and all the stuff you have to get done to run an office as a sole practitioner, but with my office manager April Bodkin we’ve managed to keep it going up to the end of my career, so I’m very proud of that.”

High announced that a new provider will be taking over his practice and that all of his employees will be retained. Most of his employees have been with him for many years, including Bodkin, who has worked with High the past 20 years.

His other full-time employees include receptionist Sandy Lanham (26 years) and LPN Bobbie Friedline (24 years). Part-time employees receptionist Melody Morici (16 years), LPN/allergy manager Kim Snyder (10 years), and LPN Nan Pritt (7 years) will also continue to work with the new provider after High's departure.

"My employees have been with me for years and they were wondering what was going to happen when I retired," said High. "So they reached out and identified a gentleman from over in Hampshire County named Chad Hott. He's a businessman and entrepreneur who has set up several clinics around the state, and he indicated interest in coming to Elkins and having a practice here."

High said all of his staff plan to continue their employment with Higher Ground Health Care, the provider taking over for High.

Along with the change, the office will be moving from its current location at the Physicians Building across from the Davis Medical Center, to its new location on Harrison Avenue, where Dr. Phil Chua's office was once located. The new provider at Higher Ground will be Family Nurse Practitioner Wendy Gerard and is scheduled to open in mid December.

"The guy that will be running the new practice is a real compassionate man and his heart is in the right place," said High. "So I know he will do a good job in keeping this place run for the right reasons, which is to provide medical treatment, to take care of people, and to enjoy the human companionship of having that therapeutic relationship. I'm really pleased

that it is going to transition this way and they will continue to be an independent practice option in Elkins.”

High, who is originally from Pennsylvania, said he hopes that since he’s been in Elkins so long, he can now be considered a true West Virginian.

“During my time at Penn State, we started making trips down to West Virginia,” High said. *“Pretty soon I started to realize that this is where I wanted to settle. I wound up in Elkins because of the Memorial General Hospital Association hiring me as a new doctor.*

“I’m happy to say that I’ve managed to stick it out the entire time in this beautiful town, and I’m hoping after 40 years, I can be accepted as a true West Virginian...I think I’ve earned enough stripes to qualify as one and I can honestly say that there is no place on the planet I’d rather be.”

High says he is staying in the area and will still run into his patients from time-to-time when he’s out and about. As far as taking it easy when he retires, he plans on doing some things he has put on the back burner for many years.

“I have things that I’ve been putting off for 42 years that I’m going to get started on full-time now,” he said. *“Hopefully I have a few years left to get this stuff accomplished.*

“Checkerboard Sky is the name of a rock band that I’m in and it’s a group of folks that I write songs with and perform. We have a great time and when I retire we are going to get this thing rolling. Hopefully the folks that have been keeping an eye on me all these years in Elkins will come out and see us sometime when we are playing.”

High has always had a love for music, and has been playing the guitar and writing songs since he was 14 years old.

“I always thought that it would be great to be a musician, but I told myself that I better be a doctor first,” said High. *“And then that got into 41 years of being a doctor. I’m happy that my health is still pretty intact and now it’s time to do something different, so I’m excited.”*