

FSU honors late Florida legislator for COM vision



Byron Dobson, Democrat senior writer 5:53 p.m. EDT October 6, 2015



(Photo: Tara-Lynne Pixley)

The late Florida Sen. Durell Peaden, who described himself as a “country doctor” and helped steer millions of dollars toward health care in Florida, was remembered Monday when the auditorium of Florida State’s College of Medicine was named in his honor.

Peaden, a Crestview physician, sponsored the legislation creating the medical school in 2000. He died in June at age 69 after suffering a heart attack.

The ceremony was attended by members of his family, current and former legislators, and university employees. Peaden served in the Senate from 2000 to 2010 and in the House from 1994 to 2000.

FSU President John Thrasher, the former House Speaker for whom the medical school’s administrative building is named, spoke of Peaden’s commitment to health care.

“I think it’s clear that we would not be standing here in the College of Medicine today if it were not for the vision and the passion and the tenacity of Durell Peaden,” Thrasher said. “As a country doctor who cared for the families in his hometown of Crestview, Durell was passionate about providing the kind of care where the patient comes first. But he knew that there were a lot of Floridians who were not getting any medical care because they were elderly or lived in rural or inner city areas. There simply were not enough primary care doctors to treat them.

In the 1990s, Peaden began conversations with FSU that led to establishing the College of Medicine.

The college broke ground Feb. 4, 2003, on its 300,000-square-foot complex of buildings to house the first- and second-year educational program, and moved into these buildings in October 2004. It graduated its first class in 2005. Of the 202 FSU College of Medicine alumni now practicing in Florida, 17 percent are in rural areas, Thrasher noted, and more than 50 alumni are practicing in the Panhandle.

Thrasher also announced that the college is naming its Rural Medical Educational Program in Peaden’s honor.

Peaden also was instrumental in securing millions of dollars to establish Florida A&M University’s Rural Diversity Healthcare Center in Crestview, where he grew up. He joined FAMU administrators and Crestview residents in a ribbon cutting in August 2012.

The center, a 40,000-square-foot former shirt factory that had been vacant for more than 25 years, serves as a satellite campus for FAMU’s College of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences.

FAMU officials are planning to hold a ceremony renaming the complex the Sen. Durell Peaden FAMU Crestview Education Center on Oct. 26, said Tola Thompson, FAMU’s director of governmental relations.

“Without Sen. Peaden there would be no FAMU Crestview Center,” Thompson said. “The FAMU Crestview Center is his vision.”

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