

NEWS RELEASE

GADSDEN COUNTY BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

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Gadsden Showcases Mural of Historic Community Medical Doctors

Gadsden, Fla. – On Friday, June 2 at 10 a.m., The Gadsden County Board of County Commissioners showcased the community’s newest mural at the corner of Jefferson Street and Adams Street in Quincy entitled, “Keepers of the Hippocratic Oath.” The mural, designed and painted by Charles Johnston of Winnipeg, Manitoba Canada, is located on the side of the Edward J. Butler Governmental Complex, the site of operations for the Gadsden County Board of County Commissioners and the State Attorney’s Office.

The mural artistically portrays Gadsden’s first African American physician, Dr. William S. Stevens (deceased), longtime community physician Dr. Jessie Furlow (deceased), and Quincy native, Dr. LaSalle D. Leffall, Jr. Along with the portraits of each physician, the mural displays background images that depict personal stories about each of the doctors and their desire to work in medicine, as well as excerpts of the Hippocratic Oath that characterizes the demeanor and passion of each physician.

“The goal of the mural is to commemorate the life and noble works of both Dr. Stevens and Dr. Furlow, to pay homage to the continued excellence of Gadsden’s native son, Dr. Leffall, and to inspire our community’s youth by showing them limitless possibilities of what they can be. This mural is the start of many more to come honoring others who have made significant contributions to Gadsden County,” said Gadsden County Commission Chairperson Sherrie Taylor.

Dr. William Spencer Stevens graduated from Florida State Normal and Industrial College, and received his M.D. from Meharry Medical College in Nashville, Tennessee. Stevens became the first African American to open a medical practice in Quincy. In 1906, he opened Stevens' Drug Store in downtown Quincy, and in the 1930s built a two-story building that served as a community hospital for the black community. In 1914, Stevens was named supervisor of the Quincy City Schools, and in 1925 he began a four-year process to expand Dunbar School. The new school building was renamed in his honor, and Dr. Stevens continued to serve the city of Quincy as Supervisor of City Schools until his death in 1949. This past March, the historic Stevens School was the victim of a fire, leaving only the cafeteria unaffected.

Dr. Jessie Furlow graduated from Lane College in 1971, and received her M.D. from the University of Rochester in 1975. Dr. Furlow practiced medicine in Gadsden County for 24 years. Amongst her many contributions, Dr. Furlow served as the vice-chair of the Florida Commission on Minority Health, was on the board for Shanks High School's health clinic, and as a member of Florida State University’s Board of Trustees, she provided early assistance in launching Florida State University’s College of Medicine.

The North Florida Medical Center Campus in Gadsden County bears her name for her dedication to serving the citizens of Gadsden.

Dr. LaSalle D. Leffall, Jr., a native of Quincy, Florida, graduated from Florida A&M College and received his M.D. from Howard University College of Medicine. Leffall served as the Charles R. Drew professor and former chairman of the Department of Surgery at Howard University, and in 1979 he became the first African American to serve as national president of the American Cancer Society. Dr. Leffall resides in Washington D.C.

“We felt it appropriate, after receiving feedback from many in the community, to memorialize these three African-American physicians who served and/or represented Gadsden County with their achievements in the field of medicine,” said Gadsden County Commissioner Brenda Holt who spearheaded the effort on behalf of the Board. “While the mural is very artistic, it also serves to remind us of the history of this particular street being Dr. Stevens had an office on this very block. Their contributions to the community are now displayed artistically by the excellent work of Mr. Johnston.”

A formal recognition for the families of the physicians will be set at a later date. For additional information about the “Keepers of the Hippocratic Oath” mural in Quincy, call Gadsden County government administration at 850-875-8650.

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