

Herrmann Spetzler

Herrmann Spetzler became Chief Executive Officer of what is now Open Door Community Health Centers (ODCHC) in 1977. The early Arcata store-front, Humboldt Open Door Clinic, relied on volunteers and youthful optimism and gradually became a network of 13 clinic sites and three mobile vans, serving the needs of more than 50,000 individuals in Del Norte and Humboldt Counties, one-third of the region's population. ODCHC is the area's largest provider of primary medical, dental, and behavioral health care and a significant contributor to the regional economy. Deemed a Federally Qualified Health Center in 1999, ODCHC has also become the provider of choice for many privately insured residents.

Herrmann remained committed to transformations in health care delivery, including construction of new state-of-the-art centers to support the evolving team-based model of care. Burre Dental Center consolidated three dental sites in 2002 and expanded in 2009; Del Norte Community Health and Wellness Center was completed in 2007; Eureka Community Health and Wellness Center in 2013; Fortuna Community Health and Wellness Center in 2018; and plans are in progress for the Arcata Community Health and Wellness Center for 2020.

Herrmann was a tireless advocate for healthcare development for rural areas, and his service on a long list of Boards and committees demonstrated his commitment to collaboration at all levels. The Northern Rural Roundtable emerged from a meeting of rural clinic leaders at Herrmann's home in 1984 and has remained a valued forum for the exchange of information among clinics and government officials. Early advocacy efforts also helped to launch the California State Rural Health Association, Clinics Mutual Insurance Company, Statewide Primary Care Advisory Group, Rural Care Forum Advisory Group, California Primary Care Association, and North Coast Clinics Network.

Following a long-held vision that remote rural sites can be linked with technology, Herrmann created ODCHC's Telehealth & Visiting Specialist Center, which served as a model for providing care to patients in 21 sites across California. With the arrival of managed care in the rural North, Herrmann joined with other leaders to advocate for Partnership Health of California (PHC). As a PHC Board Member, he represented rural perspectives and was also the only rural representative on California's 1115 Medicaid Waiver Renewal Committee.

Herrmann enthusiastically encouraged all who showed promise, and he supported the Clinic Leadership Institute in identifying and training future healthcare leaders. He will be remembered for his strong voice in the development of rural healthcare delivery across the state and the nation as well as for his ability to create opportunities for dialogue that transcended single issues in order to examine the multiple causes of health disparities, access, and resources.