



For Immediate Release
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Vermont Medical Society Honors 2023 Leadership Award Winners

*VMS Honors Those who Have Demonstrated Outstanding Service
to Health Care and Community*

Stowe, Vt. (Nov. 7, 2023) – During the 210th VMS Annual Meeting this past weekend, the Vermont Medical Society (VMS) recognized six individuals and one organization who have made outstanding contributions to the health and well-being of Vermonters and the nation during the past year.

Norman Ward, M.D., family medicine physician and American Medical Association (AMA) Delegate for Vermont, received the **Vermont Medical Society's 2023 Distinguished Service Award**. The Distinguished Service Award is the highest award VMS can bestow upon one of its members and is given on the basis of meritorious service in the science and art of medicine and for outstanding contributions to the medical profession, its organizations, and the welfare of the public.

Dr. Ward was nominated for his demonstrated dedication to medicine and innovations in care delivery, service to others, leadership, and lifelong learning. Beyond Vermont, he has served as the President of the New England Council of State Medical Societies and the Chair of the New England Delegation to the AMA.

He has been a family physician for thirty-five years and continues to practice primary care at South Burlington Family Practice. Over the past years, he held several medical leadership roles dedicated to advancing primary care through innovative care delivery models and population health management. He

completed a Master of Health Care Delivery Science degree at Dartmouth College. This undoubtedly contributed to his work developing Accountable Care at Fletcher Allen and then as the Chief Medical Officer of the OneCare Vermont ACO, which has served as a national model for payment in primary care.

Both **Lauren MacAfee, M.D.**, Director of the Division of General Obstetrics and Gynecology at the University of Vermont Medical Center, and **Denise Paasche, M.D.**, family medicine physician at the Brattleboro Memorial Hospital, received the **Vermont Medical Society's 2023 Physician of the Year Award**. The Physician of the Year Award is granted annually to a physician licensed in the state of Vermont who has demonstrated outstanding performance in the quality of care given to patients; demonstrated skillful and compassionate patient care; and demonstrated dedication to the welfare of patients in accordance with accepted principles of good medical practice.

Dr. MacAfee was nominated for her unwavering commitment to providing access to reproductive services of the highest quality and in removing the political mystique of abortion care, rather to maintain it is essential healthcare based on each individual patient's needs.

Dr. MacAfee, a reproductive health expert, has been on the front lines of reproductive health care in Vermont, as a provider, educator, policy advocate, and trusted source of information. Whether it's educating Vermonters on the Reproductive Liberty Amendment, discussing the implications of mifepristone access, or educating the next generation of abortion providers, Dr. MacAfee provides much needed expertise to ensure Vermonters get the compassionate reproductive care they deserve.

Dr. Paasche was nominated for her dedication to the welfare of her patients and her thoughtful approach to her medical practice. For many years she has been an outstanding leader in implementing Vermont Blueprint for Health initiatives in the Brattleboro Memorial Hospital (BMH) community. Additionally, she served as

a Medical Staff President at BMH during the first two years of Covid-19 pandemic and provided steady and compassionate leadership to a group of clinicians and community in a very uncertain and difficult time. Dr. Paasche embodies the best qualities of a physician dedicated to care and wellbeing of her patients and community and is being recognized for her outstanding clinical care and medical leadership.

Robert Hilo, D.O., emergency medicine physician and site director for the Brattleboro Memorial Hospital Emergency Department, received the **Vermont Medical Society's 2023 Physician Award for Community Service**. The Physician Award for Community Service is granted annually to a physician licensed in the state of Vermont who has compiled an outstanding record of community service, which reflects well on the profession.

Dr. Hilo is being nominated for his work to advocate for the best care for the most vulnerable patients including those with substance use disorder, as well as mental health issues. Dr. Hilo also works with local law enforcement and Groundworks, the Brattleboro area shelter, to ensure patients have housing and other necessary wrap-around services.

Let's Grow Kids, was awarded the **Vermont Medical Society's 2023 Citizen of the Year Award**. The Citizen of the Year Award is given to a non-physician who in the past and presently has made a significant contribution to the health of the people of Vermont.

Let's Grow Kids (LGK) is a Vermont-based organization dedicated to ensuring that every Vermont child will have high-quality, affordable childcare by 2025. In 2023, after years of work by Let's Grow Kids, Vermont passed significant childcare legislation to improve access, quality, and affordability of childcare for Vermont families. VMS has supported LGK policy priorities, which promote child health and development, family wellness, and community connectedness. In addition, VMS members have identified childcare as a major barrier in recruiting

and retaining a robust health care workforce in Vermont. The work that the LGK team has done and will continue to do improves the health of Vermont communities and supports our health care workforce.

Rebecca Bell, M.D., pediatric intensivist at University of Vermont Medical Center (UVMMC) and newly-named President of the Vermont Medical Society, received the **Vermont Medical Society's 2023 Founder's Award**. The Founders' Award is presented to individuals who have demonstrated outstanding leadership, vision, and achievement in improving the health of Vermonters and all Americans.

Dr. Bell was nominated for her ability to step up and speak with eloquence and understanding to move the needle for children and families on both the state and national level. Dr. Bell has been a staunch advocate for vaccines, youth tobacco prevention and most recently firearm safety – working on videos to help practitioners speak to their patients about safe storage of firearms and working with the US Attorney for Vermont on GunSafe VT.

During her tenure as the President of the American Academy of Pediatrics Vermont Chapter for four years, Dr. Bell was a collaborative leader and cognizant of the role family physicians as well as pediatricians play in taking care of Vermont children and families. She reached out often to make joint policy and media statements, and truly understood the power of collective voices of those that take care of children.

The VMS Leadership Awards for 2023 were presented during the 210th VMS Collaborative Meeting awards ceremony on Friday, November 3rd, 2023, at Topnotch Resort in Stowe, Vermont. Please join us in celebrating these true Vermont leaders.

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About the Vermont Medical Society: The Vermont Medical Society is the leading voice of physicians in the state and is dedicated to optimizing the health of all Vermonters and the health care environment in which Vermont physicians and physician assistants practice medicine. The Society serves its 2,900 members through public policy advocacy on the state and federal levels, as well as by providing legal, administrative and educational support, producing a rich flow of news and information and offering member benefits that increase medical practice effectiveness and efficiency. For more information, visit www.VTMD.org.