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EDITORIAL

Cosgrove left legacy in medicine

People who arrive in Hendersonville from elsewhere are often amazed at the quality and breadth of medical care.

Pardee Hospital was recently recognized in a Dartmouth study for the quality and cost effectiveness of its treatment of Medicare patients. Four Seasons, our hospice and palliative care center, won a prestigious award as one of the top organizations in the country for end-of-life care.

Blue Ridge Community Health Services, which started as a small clinic to care for migrant workers, has grown to fill a critical need for pediatrics, primary care and dental care for insured and uninsured families.

Carolina Village has been a hugely popular and successful life-care residential community since it started 35 years ago.

The story of Hendersonville's astonishing record in all those areas is a story of people and the vision and energy they brought to get things done. They saw a need and set out to fill it. A giant among them died on Friday at age 89.

Dr. Kenneth Cosgrove was instrumental in the founding of Carolina Village and Four Seasons hospice, was a longtime leader of the Blue Ridge health clinic and helped Pardee improve and expand throughout his life.

A native of New Jersey, Dr. Cosgrove earned his medical degree from New York University in 1946, and married his wife, Eleanor, and joined the Navy the same year.

It is our good fortune that seven years later he would pack his young family into a truck and move from Montana to Hendersonville, a few weeks before Pardee Hospital opened.

"We had a panel truck loaded with all our possessions," said Tim Cosgrove, one of Dr. Cosgrove's five sons. "We looked kind of like a family of vagabonds when we arrived."

Like the cohort of others from the World War II generation, Dr. Cosgrove tackled projects for the betterment of the community. He helped start the intensive care unit at Pardee, one of the first in Western North Carolina.

In the 1960s, he first suggested the idea of a retirement community with medical facilities.

Paul Kintner, a Carolina Village resident who has compiled a history of the community, told us that Cosgrove had given him a box of records that showed he did much more than "help found" Carolina Village.

"Actually, that material shows unmistakably it was much more than that and he can be said to be the founder, the first one who thought of the idea and provided the spark to begin to find a way to build it," he said. The box contained his letter to the chamber of commerce in 1964 suggesting the idea.

Dr. Cosgrove continued working well into his 80s, serving as medical director of Four Seasons Compassion for Life from 2003 to 2005.

"He was just a great guy," said Four Seasons CEO Chris Comeaux. "He represented so much on health care issues in our area."

Besides five sons and their wives and 16 grandchildren, he leaves a legacy of community service and health care innovation that has made Hendersonville a better place.