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New award honors former Peoria doctor's humanitarian work

PEORIA – (June 25, 2014) After completing medical training in Peoria more than 33 years ago, Steven Befus, MD spent nearly two decades living in Liberia, West Africa providing care to some of the world's poorest – which he will be remembered for on Friday.



Dr. Befus is recognized as a bit of a legend among many local physicians for the dedication he held for his patients and the people of Liberia, despite being surrounded by civil war, being shot at and even having a knife put to his throat. He intermittently returned to Peoria during times of unrest but twice helped to reopen the hospital; he once narrowly escaped armed captors only to have to walk barefooted more than 11 miles to safety.

Dr. Befus died in 2003 from cancer, but he and his legacy will be remembered Friday with a new award presented by the University of Illinois College of Medicine at Peoria's Dept. of Family and Community Medicine and UnityPoint Health – Methodist|Proctor Foundation.

The Steven Befus, MD Humanitarianism Award will be presented posthumously during the Family Medicine Residency Training Program graduation, the same program Befus himself graduated from in 1981. Befus' widow, Sue Befus, will be present to accept the award.

In subsequent years, the Befus Humanitarianism Award will go to a faculty member or student of the family medicine program who promotes human welfare and the happiness of people. The award includes a plaque and \$1,000 monetary gift from the UnityPoint Health – Methodist|Proctor Foundation to be given to the charity of choice of the recipient.

What: Steven Befus, MD Award for Humanitarianism

When: 6 p.m. Friday, June 27 **** Interviews available beforehand with prior notice**

Where: East Peoria Holiday Inn & Suites, 101 Holiday Drive

Also: The award will be given during the Family Medicine Residency Program graduation

About the Family Medicine Residency Program: Established in 1973, the Family Medicine Residency Program, sponsored by the University of Illinois College of Medicine at Peoria with UnityPoint Health – Methodist, has graduated 320-plus physicians from the 3-year program. Of those, about 60 percent of physicians stayed to work in Illinois (20 percent in Peoria).

About the University of Illinois College of Medicine at Peoria: One of four campuses that make up one of the largest public medical schools in the U.S., the University of Illinois College of Medicine at Peoria educates more than 150 students annually and more than 270 residents and fellows within 18 graduate programs.