

PRESS RELEASE

February 16, 2012

ESSEX COUNTY FREEHOLDERS HONOR DR. LEON G. SMITH, SR., OF ESSEX FELLS

World-Renowned Infectious Diseases Specialist is Lauded for his 50 Years of Exemplary Service to the Residents of Essex County, and Especially to the Urban Poor



Dr. Leon G. Smith, Sr. (right), of Essex Fells, was honored by the Essex County Board of Chosen Freeholders during its February 15, 2012, meeting held at the Hall of Records in Newark. The Board's Commendation was sponsored and presented to Dr. Smith by Freeholder Leonard M. Luciano (left) of West Caldwell. (Photo by Glen Frieson)

(Newark, NJ) – The Essex County Board of Chosen Freeholders honored Dr. Leon G. Smith, Sr., of Essex Fells, a world-renowned specialist in the field of infectious diseases and a pioneer in AIDS/HIV diagnosis and treatment, during its Wednesday, February 15, 2012, meeting held at the Hall of Records. The Board's Commendation was sponsored and presented by Freeholder Leonard M. Luciano of West Caldwell.

Dr. Smith has provided outstanding medical service to the residents of Newark, Essex County and beyond, and especially to the urban poor, for more than 50 years. Born in Yonkers, New York, he earned his B.A. from New York University, attended N.Y.U. Graduate School, and earned his M.D. (Magna Cum Laude) from Georgetown University Medical School in 1956. He was an Infectious Disease Fellow at the National Institutes of Health, and after completing a post-doctoral

Fellowship in Infectious Diseases with the Yale University School of Medicine, he came to work at Saint Michael's Medical Center in Newark in 1962, for what was intended to be one year, but became a permanent engagement, and where he stayed for the next 50 years.

"I fell in love with the City of Newark and its people", said Dr. Smith. "I figured the brainy guys back at Yale could get by without me, and that I could make a real difference by staying here in the city to work with infectious diseases." The first thing he did was to establish Newark's first free clinic at the Queen of Angels Church and a free clinic for the poor at Saint Michael's Medical Center.

During his 50 years with Saint Michael's, Dr. Smith served as Director of the Bacteriology Laboratory (1962-64), as Chief of Infectious Diseases (1962-2005), as Director of Medical Education (1964-71), Director of Medicine (1971-2004), and as Chairman of the Department of Medicine (2005-11). He also established the first viral lab and the first and largest HIV/AIDS clinic in New Jersey; established an HIV/AIDS inpatient floor at the hospital (the first in New Jersey and only the second in the nation); trained more than 8,000 doctors in the treatment of infectious diseases; established the only leprosy clinic in New Jersey and a Hepatitis, TB and Infectious Disease Clinic; and founded Intercity Rounds.

More than 20 years ago, Dr. Smith also established The Smith Infectious Diseases Foundation to support research initiatives that combat the spread of infectious diseases. And to this day, after his retirement from full-time work at Saint Michael's, Dr. Smith continues his private practice, part-time, at his offices located in Roseland.

Dr. Smith is a past president of the National Foundation of Infectious Diseases and has received numerous awards and distinctions, including the "Mastership Award" from the American College of Physicians and the "Mentor Award" from the Infectious Disease Society of America. He has published over 250 papers and articles on infectious diseases and written many chapters in highly-regarded books on the subject. He trained most of New Jersey's practicing infectious disease physicians and was voted by his peers as one of the "Best Doctors in America" for his diagnostic skills.

"Dr. Smith is as close as family to me", said Freeholder Leonard Luciano as he introduced his honoree. "About ten years ago I was diagnosed with Lyme Disease, and I was severely sick. He took care of me like a son, and I am truly thankful for everything he did."

One of the country's renowned infectious disease specialists, Dr. Smith has treated kings and governors and power brokers of all stripes, but has also committed much of his time to treating the homeless, the infected and the untouchable. He has dedicated his professional life to serving the health care needs of others while specializing in preventing the spread of deadly infectious diseases, and diagnosing and treating those who contract these diseases.

Dr. Smith resides in Essex Fells with his wife of 54 years, Peggy, and they are the proud parents of five and grandparents of fifteen.

For Additional Information:
Gary Kroessig, Public Information
Essex County Board of Chosen Freeholders
973-621-4452
Gkroessig@freeholders.essexcountynj.org