

Dr. Michael Karpf Announces Decision to Retire in 2017

Sept. 14, 2016

Dear Colleagues and Students,

For the last two years, it's in a spirit of partnership and shared ambition for our University and a deep friendship that Dr. Karpf has talked with me about his leadership goals and his professional timeline. I knew his decision to retire was coming, but it does not make it any easier to accept. (Dr. Karpf's message to the UK HealthCare family is below.)

Many dream big. Few can turn a big dream into reality.

But when President Lee Todd recruited Dr. Mike Karpf nearly 15 years ago, they shared a goal for the Commonwealth. Their far-reaching and ambitious vision was the provision of quality care so that no Kentuckian would have to leave their own backyard for the best health care, no matter the seriousness of your illness, your walk of life, where you live, or your financial circumstance.

Today, the numbers – relentlessly driven by Mike Karpf's compassion and vision – bear witness to our success.

During his tenure of 13 years:

- Discharges from the hospital doubled to 37,789, annually,
- Patient visits to our clinics grew to 1.5 million, annually,
- And transfer of patients from other hospitals for subspecialty care astoundingly grew from 1,000 to more than 18,000, annually.

But numbers only tell part of the story. They only paint a piece of the picture.

For Mike Karpf, these numbers can be gratifying, but he has never been satisfied. There has been – and still is – much work to do and so many to help and heal.

Dr. Mike Karpf understands, better than anyone, that behind each transfer to UKHC from hillside hamlet or small community, there were still so many patients who had to leave their communities and families and whose comfort and care would be lost in the distance between their home and Lexington.

Determined to keep loved ones and the sick as close together as possible, Dr. Mike Karpf grew partnerships with hospitals and physicians in 180 clinical locations across the state.

The Markey Cancer Center, the Gill Heart Institute, UK's Comprehensive Stroke Center, and the Sanders-Brown Center on Aging today have a presence in communities across the Commonwealth through 88 affiliations with partner health care providers.

With tireless effort, Dr. Karpf partnered with the state's providers to bring even better care to Kentucky's neighborhoods.

I am convinced that UK HealthCare is the greatest success story in modern academic health center history.

This is not grandiosity. The numbers show it. The faces and stories behind those numbers paint an undeniable picture of progress, compassion, and care.

Through sheer determination and a brilliance to see far ahead into the future, and, more so, to prepare for it, Mike Karpf has authored a remarkable chapter in the history of UK HealthCare, the University of Kentucky, and the Commonwealth. How did this happen?

So many of you have been with Mike along the way, providing support and assistance.

As always, it starts with talent and infrastructure.

To best care for Kentucky, Mike Karpf knew he needed even more of both.

Undaunted by the great recession, and with the support of President Todd and the Board of Trustees, UK HealthCare launched an ambitious capital plan, totally self-financed without any state funding, that today totals in excess of \$1 billion.

To meet a rapidly escalating demand for care, the workforce of physicians, nurses, other professional caregivers, staff, and researchers grew from 5,539 to 11,640. The payroll from 2004 to 2016 tripled to nearly \$1.05 billion. While never the purpose of this endeavor, one must not overlook the economic impact of the Mike-Karpf-era that produced thousands of construction jobs, new employment opportunities, and tens of millions of dollars in additional state and local taxes. Mike Karpf grew UK HealthCare. He also helped grow Lexington and our region.

Up close, I had the pleasure and honor of watching Mike Karpf work his magic, and I grew to see the “how” that he sustained even when the road got bumpy. It is often said you can endure anything if the “why” – your purpose – is paramount.

This purpose is revealed to me in nearly every meeting with Mike Karpf as his cellphone never stops ringing with calls from every corner of the Commonwealth from someone in desperate need of care for themselves or a loved one.

At these frightening and vulnerable times, Mike Karpf heroically and invisibly, quietly and without fanfare, ensures that someone receives the care they need.

He’s done this thousands of times – because that’s who Mike Karpf is. Those are his values. That is how much he cares.

Recently, in a national meeting in Atlanta, I met a hard-working young Kentuckian just beginning to make her way into the world. She shared that in recent months, her mother, battling a terminal disease, had traveled on what could be a final trip to Florida. Unfortunately, she cascaded into an acute medical crisis.

After frustrating and unsuccessful attempts to get her mother home to Lexington, someone got her Mike Karpf’s cell phone number. Taking the call from someone he barely knew, he arranged transport and hospital care where someone very sick was soon surrounded by loved ones.

This is the measure of this man – in quiet and profound moments, the moments that matter most to those in need, patients and their families come first.

That is the Mike Karpf I know about – far removed from the well-deserved headlines and notice regarding buildings, growth, numbers, and revenues.

He cares. He is a healer. And we, as a university family and community, are better because of Mike Karpf's presence with us.

I will have more to say in the coming days about the next steps in the leadership of UK HealthCare.

Eli Capilouto  
President