

2016 Edward Mott Moore Award
Layperson Recipients: BONNIE C. DEVINNEY & ROBERT H. THOMPSON

Bonnie C. DeVinney



Migrant farm workers have higher rates of work-related injuries, chronic conditions, acute illnesses and infectious diseases compared with other populations, largely due to the demands of their jobs and poor living conditions. Bonnie DeVinney, Chief Operating Officer for United Way of Greater Rochester, saw this first hand while she worked as a VISTA volunteer in Ontario and Yates Counties in 1974 – beginning a lifelong career dedicated to helping vulnerable populations.

Over time, Bonnie’s work evolved from driving migrant farm workers to health care clinics to running a clinic, to thinking about the broader system that could help address a variety of health issues. A graduate of Trinity College and later of RIT for her master’s degree in Health Systems Administration, Bonnie has spent her professional life leading community health change through the design and development of resources targeted to address health needs throughout the Rochester/Finger Lakes Region. With significant emphasis on services for vulnerable populations, such as the impoverished and migrant farm workers and their families of the region, she has successfully established long-lasting community partnerships between health systems, community-based providers, insurers, and public agencies.

From 1974 through 1980, Bonnie worked for the Rushville Health Center in Rushville, NY. She began her career there as a Migrant Health Project Director. In 1980, she became the Executive Director, and then the Primary Care Network Developer eight years later.

In 1990, Bonnie went to work for Finger Lakes Area Hospitals’ Corporation in Geneva, where she was the Director of Primary Care Development. When she became the Planning Director four years later, she conducted planning and research projects on behalf of local hospitals and developed hospital trustee education programs focused on community needs and the role of hospitals in addressing health issues.



Robert H. Thompson

Prior to ever arriving in Rochester over 20 years ago, Robert Thompson has made it his life’s mission to improve the circumstances of individuals and families in need. Friends and colleagues alike say that Bob is “Truly a one of a kind leader in Monroe County.”

Bob began his long life of service after earning a BA degree in Psychology and Sociology from Hope College and a Masters of Divinity in Urban Ministries from New York Theological Seminary. As an ordained minister, he served in ministries for seven years in the South Bronx, Muskegon, Michigan, and Scarsdale, New York.

He then went to New York City, where he spent 20 years in health care. Positions he held included Deputy Director of the Health Systems Agency, Executive Vice President of the Greater New York Hospital Association and Executive Director of the New York County Medical Society.

In 1989, Bob initiated the development of a medical managed care program. PrimeCare, sponsored by physicians in New York City. From 1992 until his relocation to Rochester, Bob worked in medical managed care, first as the President of Managed Care Administrators, and later as a regional Vice President for Wellcare of New York.

Bob has been deeply involved in the Rochester community since the day he relocated here in 1996. As President and CEO of Monroe Plan for Medical Care, the entire organization was dedicated to the holistic care of each patient under their coverage, paying special attention to improving the context of people’s lives, the social determinants of health, along with their health care. The Monroe Plan truly embodied “patient centered care.”

Bonnie C. DeVinney

A year later she helped to establish the Finger Lakes Family Medicine Residency Program for the University of Rochester/ Highland Hospital. As the Associate Residency Director, Bonnie obtained national Residency Review Committee accreditation and coordinated a clinical education curriculum and rotation experiences in collaboration with area physicians.

In 1999 she joined the Finger Lakes Health Systems Agency in Rochester as a Senior Planner for primary care. From 2001-2006, Bonnie served as its Executive Director, providing leadership to a 30-member regional Board of Directors in developing and implementing community health planning goals. By fostering collaboration among private and public providers, insurers and community-based organizations in a nine-county region, she successfully implemented health planning projects, while raising the funding necessary to support the Agency's \$1.2 million annual budget.

In 2006, Bonnie became the Vice President and Chief Program Officer for the Greater Rochester Health Foundation (GRHF), where she oversaw the research, planning and selection of the Foundation's area of program interest and program investment. Additionally, she managed a \$3 million investment focused on healthy weight for children.

Bonnie became an independent consultant for the GRHF's Children's Behavioral Health Commission in 2013. Additionally she consulted the Finger Lakes Health Systems Agency on their Population Health Improvement Plan, as well as the United Way of Greater Rochester with their strategic planning. She joined United Way of Greater Rochester in 2015 as its Chief Operating Officer to provide strategic planning for the organization, as well as for the Rochester-Monroe Anti-Poverty Initiative.

Bonnie says the biggest challenge facing the healthcare community today is understanding and embedding the social determinants of health into each prevention, diagnosis, and treatment plan. "That's what my whole career has been about. If we can stop and focus on the whole person, all the aspects of their life, that person could be better," says Bonnie. "The Rochester community gets it, and they understand it. There are many competing issues though, whether it's volume, or it's dollars, so it's a challenge."

Thinking nostalgically, Bonnie says her 43-year journey in healthcare has been very gratifying. If she could pinpoint a moment in time that sticks out the most, she goes back to the days of doing outreach to migrant farm workers. "Sometimes it was just sitting in the waiting room with them. Sometimes it was understanding the entire context of their lives and connecting them to health services to make a difference," says Bonnie. "I began my career helping the underserved and more than 35 years later I am doing strategic planning for these vulnerable populations. Every step of the way has been rewarding."

Robert H. Thompson

It was his leadership and philosophy which led him to his position as the Vice President for Safety Net Programs at Excellus Blue Cross Blue Shield. Under his astute leadership, the breadth and depth of care of those in Safety Net insurance programs grew to exemplary standards. Despite financial and programming challenges, he worked hard to maintain the integrity of Safety Net Care.

In 2013, Bob assumed the role of Vice President for Community Health Engagement, which afforded him the opportunity to create cutting edge programs and liaisons with a wide range of community partners.

Bob's efforts move well beyond the role of health insurance company leader. He is Board Chair of St. Joseph's Neighborhood Center and his volunteer work there has often found him painting rooms or bussing tables at fundraisers. He easily internalized the Center's mission, which provides health services to the underserved, because it has been his own mission for over 40 years.

Bob's civic and volunteer work has had an impact on our community that has been just as large as his professional contributions. He is an instrumental volunteer leader and board member of the Finger Lakes Health Systems Agency, where his vision and commitment and his passion for the health and well being of the people of our community were undying. In addition, he is a Chairman of the Board of The Children's Agenda, and is affiliated with the National Association for Community Affiliated Plans as their Immediate Past Board Chair.

Bob retired in 2015, and has continued to find new ways to serve the Rochester community. Using his expertise and connections in work addressing health and medical care for low-and moderate- income neighbors, he was a leader in our community's local efforts to address poverty through the newly formed Rochester Monroe Anti-Poverty Initiative (RMAPI).

His colleagues and friends add, "There is a lengthy list of things that Bob does quietly – personal donations that impact programs and individuals, gifts of time, gifts of presence and a listening ear. There is a grace about Mr. Robert Thompson that is focused on those around him. The Rochester community could not have a better advocate."

Through all of these efforts Bob has impacted the lives of thousands of people whose health and well-being have been improved through direct care and systemic change. Bob credits his grandmother for helping to make him the person he is today. "I spent every day after grammar school at her house learning life lessons. She taught me about the challenges of growing up poor, racial inequality, and how to lead with your heart."