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Surprise delivery

By Michael French

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MARIETTA - A man who has helped bring more than 5,000 children into the world is Marietta's Citizen of the Year for 2006.

The Cobb Chamber of Commerce on Wednesday bestowed the honor on Marietta's Dr. Dan Stephens during an early-morning breakfast ceremony.

Stephens, an obstetrician who has been in private practice in Marietta since moving from Alabama in 1966, has served as chairman of the Cobb County Board of Health since 1992 and has been a member of the board since 1988.

He also has served as chairman of the Cobb County Community Services Board since 1994 and has delivered more than 5,000 babies in his career.

Stephens was honored with a trophy and applause for his dedication to the Marietta community.

"This is a complete surprise," he said. "I had no idea this was going to happen."

Stephens said he hopes becoming Marietta's Citizen of the Year would bring more attention to the needs of the Cobb County Board of Health.

"I'm hoping we can improve and get more money," he said. "This is a constant fight."

Gov. Sonny Perdue said he was honored to be among Stephens and others who work to improve their communities.

"Think about how much better Georgia would be if we had more Dr. Dan Stephens," he said. "Dr. Dan Stephens does deliver. His commitment to those children didn't stop with birthing them."

Mayor Bill Dunaway said the Cobb County Board of Health is the most under funded of its kind of any county.

"We're the lowest funded per capita of any health board in the state," he said.

Dunaway added that Stephens' recognition is well earned and well deserved.

"He's put in a lot of hours," Dunaway said.

Stephens has been an active resident in Marietta since the mid-70s.

Since 1978, he has been a member of The Walker School's Board of Trustees and was chairman of the board from 1981 to 1984.

He served as deacon of First Presbyterian Church of Marietta from 1976 to 1993. He now serves on the First United Methodist Church of Marietta council.

In 2002, the Atlanta Business Chronicle named Stephens one of Atlanta's Healthcare Heroes.

"He has been a stalwart member of this community," said Cobb Chamber chairman-elect Fred Bentley Jr. "He has a passion for health and wellness and looking after those who are less fortunate."

State Sen. John Wiles (R-Kennesaw) said he couldn't think of a better candidate for Citizen of the Year.

State Rep. Steve "Thunder" Tumlin (R-Marietta) said Stephens brings enthusiasm and compassion for health care and children to the city.

"Dan's a hard worker," he said. "He does it without notoriety. He brings 110 percent to it."

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