

Coble tells Rotarians America's health care system has good prognosis



Dr. Yank Coble, professor and director of the Center for Global Health and Medical Diplomacy at the University of North Florida, and Rotary Club of Jacksonville member Fred Schultz.

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by Max Marbut
Staff Writer

The Rotary Club of Jacksonville invited one of its own to its meeting Monday for a presentation about the state of health care in America and what he thinks the future will bring.

Dr. Yank Coble is a professor at the University of North Florida, director of UNF's Center for Global Health and Medical Diplomacy and a professor of medicine and family medicine at the University of Florida. He is also a past president of the American Medical Association and the World Medical Association.

While Coble didn't address specifics of proposed changes in how America provides health care for its citizens and residents or any of the politics involved, he made it clear he has confidence in the United States' health care industry. Coble said since he first traveled to Egypt in his capacity as a physician and educator in 1964, he has since visited more than 60 foreign countries. That experience has led him to an important conclusion

"American medical education and research is valued all over the world because of our traditions in medicine," he said.

Coble said he believes one of the concepts that makes America's health care the best in the world is what he called, "The aspect of caring. It's knowing that your doctor worries about you in the middle of the night." The second most important ingredient, he said, is ethics and "putting the patient first. It's important that physicians not be intimidated by government or insurance companies when it comes to patient care."

Coble also spoke of the value of old-fashioned ideas when it comes to modern health care. He recalled his grandmother who, although she had only a sixth-grade education, knew quite a lot about health care.

“The best health care giver I ever met was my grandmother,” declared Coble. “She made us a good breakfast and we ate it.”

Grandmother also knew about the value of exercise, he added, not the gym-membership type but one more basic.

“Children were sent out to exercise every day. How many of you have ever pushed a lawnmower? One without a motor?” asked Coble.

He also pointed out that some traditions that have been lost also had an impact on people’s health and asked, “Do you remember when Christmas stockings were stuffed with fruit and nuts instead of candy and chewing gum?”

On the local level, Coble said the health care industry not only contributes to an exceptional quality of life through access to some of the finest medical facilities in the country, it also makes a significant contribution to the economy. One of out every six jobs in North Florida is related to health care. The medical research performed in North Florida has resulted in Jacksonville’s per capita income being \$4,000 per year greater than that in Orlando and Tampa, whose economies are based more on service jobs.

He also said while America has been the world leader in health care and research, that trend will not continue without education.

“We must educate students in science beginning in kindergarten. We have to have scientists in order to remain competitive,” said Coble.

The club also heard from Kellie Ring, a senior at Bartram Trail High School who earned the 2009 Rotary Youth Leadership Award. She recently returned from a conference at Stetson University attended by RYLA nominees from all Rotary districts in Florida.

In addition to learning leadership skills, interview skills, social skills and performing community service, Ring said she learned a lot about herself.

“I have always thought of myself as a good example for my peers. Now I have learned what it takes to be a leader. The skills I learned are ones I will take with me to college,” she said.

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