



Atrium  
Medical Center

F O U N D A T I O N

# LEGENDS

**FROM THE HILL TO THE ATRIUM**

*A Tribute to the Men and Women  
Who Made It Happen*

ISSUE 14

*Richard “Dick” Slagle*

Family, friends and colleagues remember Richard “Dick” Slagle not only as a visionary, super achiever and the proverbial “go-to guy,” but also as a wise, gracious and generous man. Dick passed away in February 2016, but not before he had left an indelible mark on the City of Middletown – and particularly on Atrium Medical Center Foundation.

## **From the Chamber to Armco – and Beyond**

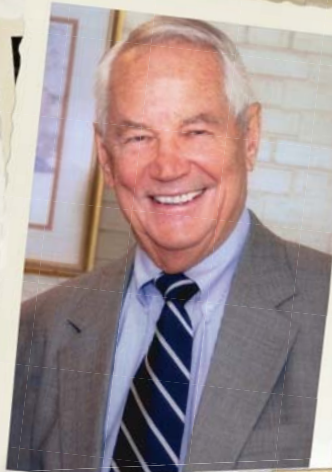
Both Dick and his wife, Patricia, were born in Sidney, Ohio. Upon graduating from public high school in 1943, Dick enlisted in the Army Air Force, where he trained as a cryptographer. He was briefly recalled to action when the Korean War broke out in 1950 and was discharged as a staff sergeant in 1954. Dick began his career at the Chamber of Commerce in Marshall, Michigan, and later moved to Findlay, Ohio.

In 1958, C. William Verity, Armco chief executive and later U.S. Secretary of Commerce (1987-1989), invited 32-year-old Dick Slagle, then an executive with the Findlay Chamber of Commerce, to make a presentation to Middletown community leaders. Dick’s stellar reputation preceded him, and he did not disappoint.

Not long after Dick’s visit, Verity asked him to take over leadership of Middletown’s chamber. And so it began. Dick, Pat and their children, Richard Jr. and Susan, pulled up stakes and moved. After 10 years at the Middletown chamber, Dick moved to Armco as director of public affairs. Eventually, Dick would step in to lead the chamber four times (three as interim head), a service he was still performing at age 87.

At Armco, Dick's responsibilities included coaching senior executives in public speaking and presentation skills. After retiring from Armco in 1985 as vice president of administrative services, Dick joined EEG (Executive Communications Group) and conducted hundreds of seminars on corporate and political presentations skills nationally and internationally. In 1987, he and Pat organized ULTIMATE Concepts, a partnership for communications consulting. It quickly became a family business with Pat as business manager and daughter Susan Cole and granddaughter Kari Cole working on company seminars.

An avid golfer, Dick played a crucial role in rebuilding Middletown's Weatherwax Municipal Golf Course. In addition, AK Steel tapped him to oversee construction of Shaker Run Golf Course in Warren County. *Golf Digest* has recognized both courses as among the top 100 in the country. Dick was also instrumental in bringing the Miami University and Cincinnati State Technical and Community College campuses to Middletown. It's no surprise that at





its annual luncheon in 2014, The Chamber of Commerce Serving Middletown, Monroe and Trenton surprised Dick with the inaugural Richard W. Slagle Lifetime Achievement Award. Mayor Lawrence Mulligan declared it “Dick Slagle Day” in the city.

## **The Beginnings of a Strong Foundation**

Dick not only devoted himself to the betterment of his adopted home town, he also built a strong legacy at Atrium Medical Center. In the early 1980s, James Flynn, Middletown Regional Hospital’s president and CEO; Wilbur Cohen, the hospital’s board chair; and James Elder, its executive vice president, asked Dick to help them launch a foundation to raise funds for new services and technology. They knew he was up to the job; it was a task he had already accomplished for the Chamber of Commerce.



In 1984, Dick became the Foundation's first board chair, a position he held for five years.

Buoyed by Dick's creativity and dynamic personality, he and a volunteer board began soliciting donations. Early fundraising projects included placing donation envelopes at area funeral homes and making presentations to business and professional groups to explain the advantages of giving to the Foundation. Area EMS squads received some of the Foundation's first grants for training.

Thirty three years later, Atrium Medical Center Foundation continues to touch lives and improve health in southwest Ohio, far surpassing its founders' expectations. Among other successes, the Foundation's first capital campaign, 2005-2008, raised \$5.1 million to bring open heart surgery, stent placement and valve replacement to the new Atrium



Medical Center. Today, the Foundation's assets stand at more than \$21 million. In Dick's own words: "We thought if we ever reached \$1 million, we'd be successful. Just look at where the Foundation is today!"

In 2004, when, after 58 years of marriage, Pat Slagle passed away, Dick and his family wanted to do something special to express their love and show their gratitude for the quality of care she received at Middletown Regional Hospital, especially from her nurses. They decided that a scholarship to help a nurse move forward in his or her career would be a fitting memorial.

Dick established the Patricia Ann Slagle Nursing Scholarship in 2005 in memory of his wife and later enhanced it with a charitable gift annuity. The scholarship, which was first awarded in 2010, is given yearly to help a deserving nurse pursue a bachelor's or master's degree in nursing. Both Dick and Pat are also members of the Heritage Society for those who have included Atrium Medical Center Foundation in their will or estate plans.

Upon Dick's death, John Boehner, former U.S. Speaker of the House, had this to say:\*

*"Dick Slagle was a giant of a man. His spirit was as strong as the wood of the gavel he fashioned for me as I prepared to become House Speaker. That gavel was by my side through my speakership as a source of confidence and strength – the gift of a teacher, a mentor, and a true friend. He was all these things to me, and to many others who were blessed to know him.*

*Dick was a major force in my career, teaching me how to sharpen my communications skills when I was a young salesman and state legislator, and helping to persuade me to leave my small business and commit myself to public service as a candidate for the U.S. House. Dick believed I could do it before anybody else did. He believed in me before I believed it myself.*

*He was one of the greatest men I ever knew."*

Richard Slagle led a long and remarkable life. He was an "icon" of the Middletown community – a representative of all that is best in an executive, civic leader, philanthropist, husband, father and friend. He never stopped believing in the city's future. Dick made a vast and remarkable impact in Middletown – an impact that will be felt for generations to come.

\* Adapted from John Boehner's eulogy for Dick Slagle



This article is the 14th in a series of profiles celebrating the 2017 centennial anniversary of Atrium Medical Center (formerly Middletown Hospital and Middletown Regional Hospital). The series honors the men and women whose civic-mindedness and genuine caring for others helped Greater Middletown grow and contributed to the first-class medical center the region boasts today.

Past Legends focused on:

Paul Galeese, *Issue 1*; E.O. Bauer, MD, and John L. Bauer, MD, *Issue 2*; Educating Our Caregivers, *Issue 3*; Russell L. "Rusty" Malcolm, MD, and Albert S. Malcolm, MD, *Issue 4*; Ann and Arthur Bidwell, *Issue 5*; Atrium Auxiliary Middletown, *Issue 6*; Dr. Dick and Charlotte Nisbet, *Issue 7*; The Wilbur Cohen Family, *Issue 8*; Middletown Area Federation of Women's Clubs, *Issue 9*; Dolly Frieman Casper, *Issue 10*; The Sawyer Family, *Issue 11*; Southwest Ohio Businesses, *Issue 12*; Dr. Raymond and Jean Anne Kiefhaber, *Issue 13*.

Special thanks to the W.E. Smith Charitable Trust for partial funding to produce Legends.



One Medical Center Drive | Middletown, Ohio 45005 | 513-974-5144  
Foundation@AtriumMedCenter.org | AtriumMedCenter.org/Foundation