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**2009 COUNTRY DOCTOR OF THE YEAR DRIVEN TO PROVIDE  
SURGICAL AND PRIMARY CARE**

**Devoted Physician “Drives to Save Lives” Throughout the Florida Keys**

**IRVING, TEXAS** – For most of the last 30 years, a 90-mile strip of the Florida Keys was covered by one surgeon and one surgeon alone, Dr. Steven J. Smith, of Marathon, Florida. For two and a half decades, Dr. Smith covered two hospitals located over 40 miles apart, often making the drive between facilities three times daily, while being on call around the clock, 365 days a year.

Still the mainstay of surgery in the central Keys, Dr. Smith also maintains a robust general practice with some 4,000 active patients, proving his worth time and again as both an accomplished surgeon and a superb diagnostician.

For his extraordinary devotion to his patients and his community, Dr. Smith has been named the 2009 Country Doctor of the Year. Presented by Staff Care, the leading temporary physician staffing firm in the United States and a company of AMN Healthcare, the Country Doctor of the Year Award recognizes the spirit, skill, and dedication of America’s rural medical practitioners. Staff Care has presented the national award since 1992 to exemplary physicians practicing in communities of 20,000 or less.

“Dr. Smith is literally two doctors in one,” notes Kurt Mosley, Vice President of Strategic Alliances for Staff Care and AMN Healthcare. “Whether as a surgeon or a general practitioner, he has been a lifesaver for patients throughout the Florida Keys.”

Dr. Smith represents a unique departure for the award, according to Mosley. All previous recipients of the award have been family physicians. Dr. Smith is the first Country Doctor of the Year who is board certified in general surgery. Rural hospitals rely on general surgeons to remain viable, and general surgeons are in increasingly short supply in rural areas, Mosley observes. Dr. Smith has been instrumental in keeping open not one hospital but two: Fishermen’s Hospital in Marathon and Mariners Hospital in Tavernier.

Mosley also notes that, though a vacation destination, the Keys are typical of rural communities from a medical standpoint, experiencing physician shortages, isolation, economic challenges, and a high percentage of Medicare and Medicaid patients.

Like country doctors of old, Dr. Smith still makes house calls. Indeed, he estimates that he logs six weeks of the year in his car driving to perform surgery at two hospitals, making rounds and personally visiting patients. He spends mornings in surgery and afternoons at his office practice, seeing an average of 25 to 50 patients a day. Nights often find him back at the hospital where he still covers the emergency department. Twelve hour days are not unusual for a physician who also is involved in the community. Dr. Smith, whose father helped liberate Dachau, lectures on the Holocaust and performs services at the local Jewish temple, as the community is without a rabbi.

As the 2009 Country Doctor of the Year, Dr. Smith will be able to enjoy two weeks of time off, as Staff Care will provide a temporary physician to fill in for him at no charge, a service valued at approximately \$10,000. He also will receive the award's signature plaque featuring a country doctor making his rounds on a horse and buggy, an engraved stethoscope, and a monogrammed lab coat. Additional information about the Country Doctor of the Year Award can be found at [www.countrydoctoraward.com](http://www.countrydoctoraward.com).

### **About Staff Care**

Staff Care is the largest temporary physician staffing firm in the United States and a company of AMN Healthcare, the nation's largest health care staffing organization.

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