

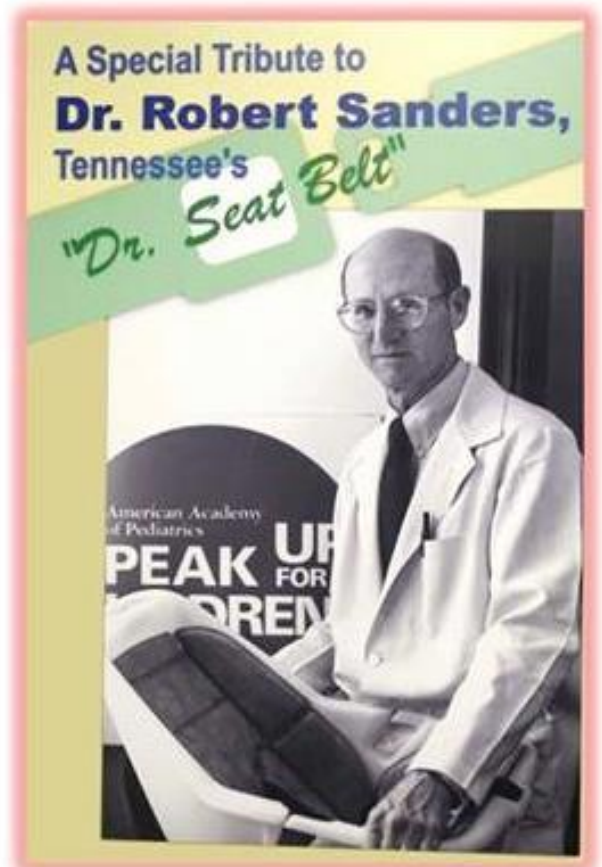


Dr. Robert Sanders
Director, Rutherford County Health
Department , Murfreesboro Tennessee

Dr. Sander's story starts as in his role as a soft spoken pediatrician and director of the Rutherford County Health Department and coroner in Murfreesboro Tennessee, he recognized that a child passenger protection law would help save lives.

Dr. Sanders educated his patients, spoke to the media, organized coalitions, influenced his friends, wrote letters to the editor, made countless phone calls, and contacted legislators again and again. He became a familiar figure in the Tennessee state capital. After an unsuccessful first attempt, the first child occupant protection law was enacted in 1977 in Tennessee. One legislator, Senator Douglas Henry, commented that Dr. Sanders deserved credit for the law's passage because of "his personal attendance, vigor of persuasion, and knowledge of the facts."

That first law, however, was a political compromise and a series of amendments and repeated trips to the state house were required before an acceptable version was passed. The "cause" as it was called in the Sanders family, was not without controversy. Inconvenience, excessive cost, and infringement on personal rights of parents were only a few of the barriers cited by opponents. The prevailing message expounded by Bob Sanders, however, was the need to protect the rights of the child. Dr. Sanders led the way. Through his leadership and persuaded by the success in Tennessee, by 1985 all 50 states had passed laws to protect children as passengers in motor vehicles. Passion, persuasion and perseverance were the keys to success. Dr. Sanders, though he has been described as "the last person you would think of a rabble rouse for controversial causes" is an excellent example of how one person can make a difference and even change the world. The results of the efforts of the quiet, unassuming pediatrician from Tennessee have been monumental for children and his public health approach to the problem of child passenger safety became a model for many additional causes.



Dr. Mark Widome, then chair of the Accident and Poison Prevention Committee of the American Academy of Pediatrics said, "Bob Sanders took the basic public health principle of immunization and applied it to injury - and he did it when no one else was talking about it." This is the test of a person with vision and insight. In addition to his tireless work toward improving the lives of children, Dr. Sanders was a mentor for many who followed in his steps.

The American Academy of Pediatrics in April of 2004 included Dr. Robert Sanders in their oral history project. Names very familiar to Child Passenger Safety are listed as the donors that made this possible, Dr. Phyllis Agran, Dr. Marilyn Bull and Dr. Scott Bruins, Dr. Dennis Durbin, Michael Finkelstein, Dr. Garry Gardner, Uwe Meissner, Annemarie Shelness, Dr. Gary Smith, Deborah D. Stewart, Dr. Robert Vinetz, Dr. Flaura Winston and Elaine Wodzin. This document is archived at the AAP and provides interesting reading about the details of development of that famous first law. The document records how a pediatrician who went to medical school at Vanderbilt, did pediatric training at UC San Francisco and Vanderbilt and then studied virology in Stockholm Sweden became involved in public health and the issue and cause that would save more lives in this country than any other in our lifetime.

Dr. Robert Sanders is a most worthy inductee of the MACPS Hall of Fame.



"The care of human life and happiness, and not their destruction, is the first and only legitimate object of good government."

Thomas Jefferson