33rd Annual OCMA Physician of the Year

Eric Handler, M.D.

The OCMA Physician of the Year Award is presented annually to a physician with the following outstanding qualities:

- Hardworking
- Extraordinary professional competence
- Educator and teacher (with associates, nurses, etc.)
- Strong motivator
- Good rapport with patients

Eric Handler, M.D. was selected as the 2015 recipient of the OCMA Physician of the Year Award because he exemplifies the qualities outlined above and evidenced below.

Dr. Handler is the most recognized leader in ending hunger and addressing homelessness in Orange County. While he serves as the Orange County Public Health Officer, Dr. Handler’s efforts go well beyond the job responsibilities associated with his role. He is passionate about caring for others and compassionate in his approach. This truly makes a difference.

He is the co-founder of the Illumination Foundation, the organization responsible for moving homeless families to permanent shelters where families experience the benefit of stable living situations. The organization supports families with housing, job training, parent education and social skills mentoring for children. In addition, he has been instrumental in creating Waste Not Orange County, an organization that facilitates getting potentially wasted leftovers/foods from restaurants and grocers to those suffering from food insecurity in Orange County.

Dr. Handler has long been an advocate for pediatric immunizations and served as the face of Orange County Public Health to the national media during the measles epidemic this spring. As a proponent of vaccines for our children, he predicted many years ago that Orange County was at risk due to the high decline in vaccination rates by parents in Orange County. He has been a voice for the scientific community, providing current evidence-based information to our community.

Dr. Handler speaks about these initiatives, spreads awareness, gets people involved and ensures that resources get to those who need them most. Dr. Handler is a single individual who has made such a tremendously positive impact. These efforts and methods can be replicated throughout the nation, and Dr. Handler continues spreading the word about the success.