



## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **Phoebe Names Physicians and APP of the Year**

**Albany, Ga.** – Two Phoebe physicians who have played vital roles during the COVID-19 pandemic are being honored for their service to southwest Georgia. James E. “Eddie” Black, MD, and Kristin Collier, MD, share the 2020 Phoebe Physician of the Year Award. “I cannot think of two more deserving physicians,” said Suresh Lakhanpal, MD, Phoebe Physicians CEO. “Dr. Black and Dr. Collier are southwest Georgia natives whose commitment to and compassion for the people of their respective communities are unparalleled. They certainly represent all that we want our physicians to strive to be. I thank them for their service and congratulate them on earning this honor.”

As an emergency physician and Phoebe Putney Health System’s Medical Director for Emergency Services, Dr. Black has been on the frontlines of the COVID-19 fight from the beginning. In the early days of the pandemic, he worked tirelessly leading the team in Phoebe’s main emergency center as they treated an overwhelming number of COVID-19 patients. While compassionately caring for emergency patients, Dr. Black has also served as a vital member of Phoebe’s Incident Command Center staff, offering wise counsel from a clinical perspective as important decisions are made about how to provide the best care to patients. He has also been a calm, reasoned and expert voice throughout the pandemic, giving interviews to numerous national and international media outlets, speaking at community news conferences and leading online town halls to give lifesaving information and advice.

“I love Albany, and while it has been painful to see our community – and all of southwest Georgia – deal with the awful impacts of this virus, I am proud of the resilience we have shown. I consider it a privilege to work alongside our great emergency room team, and I am honored to represent them in accepting this award,” Dr. Black said.

One of the many people who nominated Dr. Black for the award wrote, "His response during the height of the COVID pandemic was world class. His ongoing willingness to lead and educate those around him and the community, all while maintaining such an upbeat attitude, is amazing." Another said, "Dr. Black exemplifies everything Phoebe stands for. We are lucky to have such a caring, loving physician in our community."

Dr. Kristin Collier is also proud to work in the community where she was raised. Dr. Collier is a general surgeon and Medical Director for Outpatient Practices at Phoebe Sumter in her hometown of Americus. When hospital visitation was suspended in the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic, she organized an effort to collect electronic tablets so patients would have a way to communicate with their loved ones outside the hospital, and she volunteered to go into COVID patients' rooms with the tablets to personally connect them with their families.

Numerous patients and co-workers nominated Dr. Collier for the award. One nominee focused on another way she went the extra mile during the pandemic. "During the beginning of the COVID crisis, she allowed her breast cancer patients to see her at times that were not her regular office hours. This way they could avoid contact with other patients. She would personally remove their drains and check their wounds," the nominator wrote.

Another said, "Dr. Collier has wonderful surgical hands to match her amazing heart. I am thankful to call her my doctor." Someone else wrote, "She is the prime example of what a doctor needs to be. Phoebe Sumter is extremely lucky to have this physician on their campus."

Dr. Collier said she was humbled to receive this honor and grateful for the opportunity to care for her friends and neighbors. "Americus is an amazing place to live and raise a family, and Phoebe Sumter is a great place to work. I know I'm fortunate to be so connected to the community where I work and to serve people I care so much about," she said.

Phoebe's advanced practice provider of the year also received multiple nominations from patients and staff members impressed by his work ethic and concern for patients. Dan West is a physician assistant with the surgical department at Phoebe's main hospital. In his nomination, one physician wrote, "During the COVID pandemic, his assistance with the sickest patients made a considerable impact. He always puts patients first and is always available to assist his surgeons any time of the day or week."

Others praised West's invaluable assistance with Phoebe's journey to become a state-designated trauma center. One person wrote, "Every time a general trauma patient comes to the OR, Dan is there first, briefing everyone and making sure that patient gets the best care. He goes out of his way to do the right thing every time."

Other nominators highlighted West's overall concern for patients. "He takes fantastic care of the patients that he deals with and is a provider that Phoebe can be proud to call their own."

COVID-19 prevented Phoebe from honoring the winners at a typical banquet. Dr. Lakhanpal and other Phoebe leaders surprised each winner this week in their departments, delivering the awards as well as cookies for the winners and their co-workers.

“It’s so important for us to recognize true excellence. I am grateful for the outstanding service the Phoebe Physicians team has provided southwest Georgia over this last difficult year, and I know they all deserve an award. Eddie, Kristin and Dan represent truly are among the best of the best, and they represent our entire Phoebe Family exceedingly well,” Dr. Lakhanpal said.

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**EDITOR’S NOTE: Attached photos show award winners James E. Black, MD; Kristin Collier, MD and Dan West, PA; in addition to a photo of Phoebe Physicians CEO Suresh Lakhanpal, MD, surprising West with his award, surrounded by members of his team at Phoebe General Surgery.**





