

J. Nick Baird, M.D., Director Ohio Department of Health

J. Nick Baird, M.D., was appointed Director of the Ohio Department of Health (ODH) on June 1, 1999. In his role as Ohio's State Health Officer, Dr. Baird guides the agency in its mission to protect and improve the health of all Ohioans through partnerships with 137 local health departments and the members of our medical and health communities. Under his leadership, ODH has established strategic priorities - encourage healthy choices; prevent chronic, environmental, genetic, and infectious diseases; eliminate health disparities; assure public health preparedness and security; assure quality and safety of health care services; improve organizational performance - that are guided by core values: leadership, excellence, accountability, and partnerships. Each of these goals is measurable and can be tracked.

Dr. Baird's leadership has resulted in increased health care coverage for low-income mothers and children, rapid and effective response to disease outbreaks such as meningitis, a strong program to deliver parent education services called "Help Me Grow", increased minimum requirements for nursing homes and small residential facilities, expanded tests to prevent life threatening or life compromising disease in newborns, establishment of the infrastructure necessary for bioterrorism preparedness to assure the capacity to respond to threats when they occur, and the creation of the first Comprehensive Cancer Program at ODH. Dr. Baird believes if Ohioans practice good health habits, they are less likely to fall prey to chronic diseases, and he has work under way to encourage Ohioans to increase exercise and improve eating habits called, "Healthy Ohioans."

On June 20, 2002, President George W. Bush appointed Dr. Baird to serve on the President's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports. The Council advises the President and the Secretary of Health and Human Services about issues related to physical activity, fitness, and sports, and recommends programs to promote regular physical activity for the health of the nation.

Prior to joining ODH, Dr. Baird served for 13 years with OhioHealth, most recently as Senior Vice President and Chief Medical Officer. He was a private practice physician in obstetrics and gynecology for 27 years and is an Associate Clinical Professor in the Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology at the Ohio State University College of Medicine. A former member of the Board of Trustees for U.S. Health Corporation, Dr. Baird formerly served as President of the Medical and Dental staff at Riverside Methodist Hospital, and as Chairman of the hospital's Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology. He is a diplomat of the American Board of Obstetrics and Gynecology, and a member of the Ohio State Medical Association and the Columbus Medical Association.

Dr. Baird holds a B.S. from The Ohio State University, and graduated cum laude from the OSU School of Medicine in 1966. Dr. Baird is past chairman of the Board of Trustees for the Columbus Zoo and is currently President of the Board of The Wilds (International Center for the Preservation of Wild Animals, Inc.) He has two children, both of Columbus, and four grandchildren.

