

In Memory of Gary Hart, PhD

who passed away Monday April 13, 2020

Edited excerpt from *Four Decades in the Desert: The University of Arizona's Center for Rural Health 1970-2015*. By Michael Joe Dupont. 2015

Gary Hart... became the new director of the Rural Health Office in 2007. Hart had more than 20 years of rural health experience at the University of Washington, where he directed the Rural Health Research Center in the country's top-ranked rural program, and he had his reasons for relocating to Tucson. "I

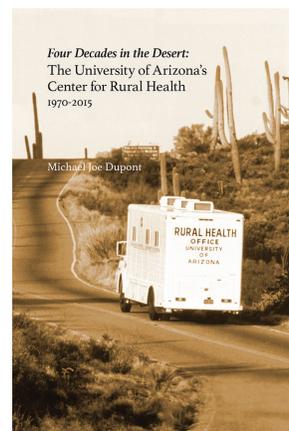


wanted to do something different at a place that provided a lot of opportunities," Gary Hart explained during a 2015 interview, "...it seemed like that was the place to be to make some changes."

"It was an opportunity to right the ship and get things rolling again. I thought it was a challenge. I had a lot of experience with Arizona's Rural Health Office.

I knew Andy [Nichols] really well, and I'd been down to visit him a bunch of times. I wrote Andy's obituary that appeared in the Journal of Rural Health. He was into many, many, many causes, and he was more than just the person who ran the Rural [Health] Office... Andy basically had his own thing and he ran with it. The only way you could stop him was to throw yourself on the railroad track, and if you weren't big enough, he would run right over you. He was very persuasive and I was his biggest fan."

The University of North Dakota School of Medicine came calling in 2010, and they offered Gary Hart the director's job at their Center for Rural Health, the position that HRSA's Mary Wakefield previously held. "I wouldn't have gone just anywhere," Gary Hart commented. "It had to be someplace I really wanted to be, and North Dakota is a Top Three rural program. When Mary left we had 45 employees, and now we have 65, and our budget has gone up 40 percent across the time I've been here."



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