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**AmyLeigh Overton-McCoy, Ph.D., APRN, Invested in
Murphy Endowed Chair for Rural Aging Leadership and Policy**

LITTLE ROCK — AmyLeigh Overton-McCoy, Ph.D., APRN, a leading geriatric nursing specialist with the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences (UAMS), was invested Jan. 16 in the Murphy Endowed Chair for Rural Aging Leadership and Policy.

“This is an extreme honor and privilege, and I will really treasure this opportunity to make a difference in so many lives,” said Overton-McCoy. “I grew up in rural Arkansas and I very much identify with rural health and the challenges we all face — the lack of access and the limitations. I will use these funds to ensure that we all have the equal opportunity to have a healthy life and do what we want to do in our own home.”

In April, Overton-McCoy was named director of the Centers on Aging, a program of the UAMS Donald W. Reynolds Institute on Aging. As director, she oversees diverse services for seniors at six locations across the state. The UAMS Centers on Aging seek to improve quality of life for older adults and their families by providing local access to specialized education and clinical care. Overton-McCoy is also an assistant professor in the UAMS College of Medicine Department of Geriatrics.

An endowed chair is among the highest academic honors a university can bestow on a faculty member. A chair is established with gifts of at least \$1 million, which are invested and the interest proceeds used to support the educational, research and clinical activities of the chair holder. Those named to a chair are among the most highly regarded scientists, physicians and professors in their fields.

“Dr. Overton-McCoy has been involved in nearly every aspect of geriatric care at UAMS since she arrived here more than two decades ago,” said UAMS Chancellor Cam Patterson, M.D., MBA. “Her expertise and her compassion, especially for rural Arkansas, exemplifies the work we want to be doing as a statewide health center.”

The endowment establishing the chair came from Martha W. Murphy, a member of the Society of the Double Helix and former member of the UAMS Board of Advisors and the Reynolds Institute on Aging Community Advisory Board. Murphy has worked tirelessly to help the elderly, particularly those who live far from the UAMS main campus in Little Rock. She was the driving force behind establishing a Center on Aging in El Dorado in 2001, which became the template for additional centers. The chair supports efforts to address the needs of an aging society and to influence policy so that the most appropriate system of care is available for Arkansans.

Mark Wren, M.D., medical director for Encompass Rehabilitation Hospital of Texarkana and associate medical director for CHRISTUS St. Michael's Wound Clinic in Texarkana, formerly directed UAMS Southwest — Texarkana. When Overton-McCoy became a member of the first UAMS MASH (Medical Applications of Science for Health) class from Texarkana, his father, the late Herb Wren, M.D., brought her to Little Rock and showed her around campus. Eventually they came to know each other well, and he cared for her father at the end of his life.

"I can't say enough about her diligence and how she impacts people in the positive way that she does," Wren said. "The feedback that you get from her colleagues and patients is unparalleled. Knowing that UAMS values her like this speaks volumes."

Overton-McCoy was presented with a commemorative medallion by Patterson and Christopher T. Westfall, M.D., executive vice chancellor and College of Medicine dean. She thanked the Murphy family for their generosity in creating the endowed chair, as well as a long list of people who had helped her along the way, including her mother, grade school teachers, friends, family and staff, and Jeanne Wei, M.D., Ph.D., director of the Reynolds Institute. She reserved special thanks for her patients.

"As a clinician, my patients are the ones that give me my drive," said Overton-McCoy. "They're the ones that push me to know more, challenge me — and I would like to thank them for trusting me and believing in me to do what's best for them. I want to continue to help others, and I want to ensure that we can make the end of life the best it can be."

Overton-McCoy's career has taken her from UAMS to across the state and back. She began at UAMS in 1996 as a research assistant in the College of Nursing before becoming an R.N. at Medical Park Hospital in Hope, Arkansas, later that year and director of compliance for Southwest Arkansas Development Council Home Health. She returned to UAMS a year later, leading multiple sleep studies on seniors at the Institute on Aging as a research project director while also a sleep lab tech at Baptist Medical Center in Little Rock. While at UAMS, she was an R.N. in the Recuperative Care Unit/Medical Oncology Unit and clinical instructor of nursing in the College of Nursing.

She has served as geriatric nurse practitioner at multiple locations throughout her career, including Baltimore, Maryland, but mostly in Texarkana, where she has worked at Spanish Trace nursing home groups, CHRISTUS St. Michael Health System and Wadley Regional Medical Center since 2002. That same year she began her long association with the UAMS Center on Aging in Texarkana, first as an education director and geriatric nurse practitioner, then clinic director and associate director.

Overton-McCoy received a Bachelor of Science in Nursing from UAMS in 1996 and a Master of Nursing Science in 2000. She received her doctorate in 2010 from Capella University.

Overton-McCoy has done medical mission work in Ecuador, Mexico and Nicaragua. She is a member of the American Nurses Association and a former board member for Alzheimer's Alliance and Four States Community Health Clinic. She continues to serve in southwest Arkansas as a member of the University of Arkansas Hope-Texarkana College Women's Guild and the Texarkana, Arkansas, Community Immersion Project.

Overton-McCoy has presented at more than two dozen conferences nationwide on multiple topics for seniors, including sleep studies, fall prevention, tai chi and physical activity, telemedicine and caregiver training. She has been instrumental in receiving more than \$20 million in grants. In 2016, she was voted Best Health Care Professional — Geriatrics by AY Magazine readers. In 2017, she was named to the Great Nurses Foundation's annual list of the state's superb nurses.

UAMS is the state's only health sciences university, with colleges of Medicine, Nursing, Pharmacy, Health Professions and Public Health; a graduate school; hospital; a main campus in Little Rock; a Northwest Arkansas regional campus in Fayetteville; a statewide network of regional campuses; and seven institutes: the Winthrop P. Rockefeller Cancer Institute, Jackson T. Stephens Spine & Neurosciences Institute, Harvey & Bernice Jones Eye Institute, Psychiatric Research Institute, Donald W. Reynolds Institute on Aging, Translational Research Institute and Institute for Digital Health & Innovation. UAMS includes UAMS Health, a statewide health system that encompasses all of UAMS' clinical enterprise including its hospital, regional clinics and clinics it operates or staffs in cooperation with other providers. UAMS is the only adult Level 1 trauma center in the state. *U.S. News & World Report* named UAMS Medical Center the state's Best Hospital; ranked its ear, nose and throat program among the top 50 nationwide; and named six areas as high performing — cancer, colon cancer surgery, heart failure, hip replacement, knee replacement and lung cancer surgery. UAMS has 2,727 students, 870 medical residents and five dental residents. It is the state's largest public employer with more than 10,000 employees, including 1,200 physicians who provide care to patients at UAMS, its regional campuses, Arkansas Children's Hospital, the VA Medical Center and Baptist Health. Visit www.uams.edu or www.uamshealth.com. Find us on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [YouTube](#) or [Instagram](#).

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