

Pioneer Hall of Fame: Dr. Chris J. Wiant, class of 1968



For the past twenty-eight years, Chris has devoted his attention to public health, working for state and local government agencies. Upon graduation from U-High, Chris majored in chemistry at Illinois State University where he earned his Bachelor of Science degree in 1972. In 1978 he earned a Master of Arts in Health Services Administration from the University of Illinois-Springfield and in 1979 a Master of Public Health from the University of Illinois at the Medical Center, School of Public Health, with occupational and environmental medicine his area of concentration. Sixteen years later, in 1995, he earned his Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) degree in Public Administration from the University of Colorado at Denver, the Graduate School of Public Affairs.

Chris' career began with the Illinois Department of Public Health in 1972 and in 1981 he was promoted to Chief of the Environmental Chemistry Section within the Office of Health Regulation. In 1984 he became the Director of the Division of Environmental Health Services for the Tri-County Health Department at Englewood, Colorado, followed by assuming the responsibilities of Deputy Director in 1989, a position he held for 8 years. In 1997 he was promoted to become Executive Director of the Tri-County Health Department, a position he held until October, 2000 when he assumed his current position as President and Chief Executive Officer of Caring for Colorado Foundation. In this role he is responsible for the start-up and ongoing operation of a new health care conversation foundation. The Foundation manages assets of \$150 million and funds health care projects throughout Colorado. Over the past 4 years, he has implemented strategic planning and a grant-making process that has resulted in the award of \$24 million in grants.

Over the period of his career, Chris' responsibilities have ranged from the design and implementation of new programs to local health agency executive director with the responsibility for 260+ staff and \$14 million budget. His experience includes the full range of public health issues such as medical care, prevention programs, environmental health, nutrition, planning information, education and dental. He has had progressive decision making responsibility in managing response to public health emergencies, identifying solutions to complex technical problems, handling fiscal and budget matters, and resolving personnel and other agency management issues. Among his talents has been extensive experience working with state and local elected officials, community groups and citizens in facilitating solutions to community public health problems.

In addition, Chris has held official appointments to city and state-wide boards in Illinois and Colorado, such as his current appointments as Chair of the Colorado Health Institute Board of Directors, and Vice-chair of the Denver Environmental Health Board. He is also current Chair of the Colorado Water Quality Control Commission, having been appointed to his third term on the Commission by 2 different Governors! He has

also served on a number of national and industry-related councils. Chris was the President of the National Environmental Health Association from 1992-1993, and of the Colorado Public Health Association from 1988-1989.

Already during this prestigious career, Chris has numerous awards, such as the Walter F. Snyder Award for Achieving Environmental Quality from the National Environmental Health Association, the Commander's Medal for Public Service from the Assistant Secretary of the U.S. Army, the City of Aurora-Colorado Annual Environmental Action Award, and the National Association of County Health Officials-Award for Excellence in Environmental Health.

Chris is married to Cynthia Ferrell Wiant, who graduated from U-High in 1971. They have two children: Jennifer and Jeffrey.