



## SMALL TOWN RESILIENCE

*In a town of about 10,000, pediatrician Joseph Sadler, MD, is challenged by limited support, alternative medicine, and home remedies. And he wouldn't have it any other way.*

"I have always wanted to work in a small town," says Joseph M. Sadler, Jr., MD ('09). And it seems he's gotten his wish. In Lawrenceburg, TN, where he's a pediatrician, the nearest transport team is 90 minutes north, hospitals are the same distance, and any pediatric specialist is at least an hour's drive away. These are challenges that he expected to find in a small town. What he may not have expected was the unique variety of patients seeking—and sometimes resisting—conventional medical care.

One such group is the nearby Amish population, which presents benefits and challenges, says Dr. Sadler. "They try to treat everything at home, so if they show up to our clinic or hospital, the course of the illness is usually more advanced and requires more attention," he explains. "So, for example, if we have a child come in with pertussis, we usually have to treat the whole town. Or, even in cases when babies just need a little help in the form of deep suction and oxygen, since it takes the parents 30 minutes to get to me, it puts the child at risk and they are often worse off when I see them."

Complicating matters further is the fact that Dr. Sadler's office is the only one in town that will treat non-vaccinators like the Amish, despite the fact that he strongly encourages vaccination to his own patients.

### On "The Farm"

Sadler's office is also close to a place called The Farm, a renowned midwifery center that offers the complete home birth experience. Though he has no formal relationship with the center, Sadler works closely with one of the midwives there.

"The indirect relationship that we have, unfortunately, is when things go wrong and patients are transferred emergently to our local hospital nursery," he says.

And while most moms will break their birth plan to seek hospital treatment when absolutely needed, one instance comes to mind in which Dr. Sadler had to practically convince a mother to send her child to the hospital—"almost against her will," he remembers. "It's not necessarily a strained relationship with the mothers at The Farm; it's just that a woman's birth plan that she has been thinking and dreaming about for nine months or longer has come to a terrible result," he says. "They are usually thankful for the help we provide, but they never wanted to be in a hospital in the first place."

Ultimately, Dr. Sadler credits AUC with nurturing the resilience he puts to good use each day in Lawrenceburg. "AUC did not necessarily prepare me for small town medicine. I think the central greatest commodity for us who have graduated from AUC is the tendency toward having a resilient spirit," he says. "AUC was not our first choice, but it gave us our second chance. Even before AUC, I was never the guy who saw a closed door and moved on. I think that defines the AUC student—we don't take 'no' for an answer very easily." ●