Winter Park – Three and a half years ago, 100 frustrated independent doctors and two certified public accountants got together in the lobby of a cardiology practice in Winter Park, Fla., and formed an association to help doctors nationwide fend off the advances of hospitals looking to acquire them.

Since that night in April 2013, the Association of Independent Doctors has grown rapidly, and it has now added its 26th member state with the addition of Ohio, announced Marni Jameson Carey, AID executive director.

“We are officially in over half the country,” said Carey. “Word is getting out.” The national nonprofit now has 1,000 members coast to coast, with chapters in four states: Florida, California, Maine and South Carolina.

“Independent doctors are telling others about the association, which is devoted to helping doctors stay independent, and they are joining the cause,” said Carey.
This month the association saw its biggest surge of members in new states since AID began, with the addition of seven states: Michigan, Missouri, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, Virginia and Utah, she said.

In the past 10 years, hospitals have been aggressively buying up independent doctors and turning them into employed physicians. In 2000, 57 percent of the nation's doctors were independent; today only one in three are, or 33 percent, according the Accenture.

"That trend is not good for patients, doctors or communities," said AID co-founder Tom Thomas, CPA. "We founded the Association of Independent Doctors because we recognized that as the number of independent doctors shrinks, unfavorable market dynamics, including higher health-care costs and less competition, grow."

In the past three years, the association has landed a role on the national stage providing a collective voice for independent doctors who, before AID was formed, had little to no voice.

AID representatives have spoken on Capitol Hill in Washington four times, addressed national health-care associations, partnered with the Federal Trade Commission to fight hospital consolidations, and has been a resource to many media outlets.

Meanwhile, the association's goals – to stop the trend of hospitals buying up medical practices, to educate consumers about how this consolidation increases costs and lowers quality and access, to increase price transparency so consumers can know what health-care costs before they get their bills, to expose and stop nonprofit hospitals' abuse of their tax-exempt status, and to inform lawmakers about why independent doctors are critical to America's health – have not wavered.

Marking another milestone, the association is hosting its first conference for independent doctors, Independence in Action 2016, on Nov. 5, in Orlando.

For more information about the conference or AID go to www.aid-us.org