

PEOPLE OF ACTION

Kevin Behl

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(Member since 2011)

You know your stars are aligned when you find success in your chosen profession, meet your spouse and spend nearly 30 years at an organization that feels like family. Kevin Behl achieved all three of those milestones in the course of his career with Ascension Health.

After graduating from the University of Wisconsin–Whitewater in 1991 with a degree in business administration (marketing), Kevin set his sights on getting his MBA. During his coursework, his mom, who was a registered nurse and nursing administrator, encouraged him to explore a career in health administration.

“It was her suggestion and encouragement that pushed me to focus my efforts on obtaining a second master’s degree in health administration,” said Kevin, who has worked in the healthcare industry ever since, building a career in which he has found both success and fulfillment.

“Knowing that I can positively impact my community’s health status and provide access to high-quality services by outstanding doctors is an inspiring and rewarding aspect of my job,” said Kevin, who was born in Milwaukee and raised in Reno, Nevada.

Along with helping the community, Kevin values the expansive career opportunities available within the healthcare industry—from medical to marketing to managerial.



Kevin's Family



“It’s been good for me—from my first job as a unit clerk to my administrative residency, progressing through management positions and finally, to my current role as executive director of Madison Medical Affiliates. Healthcare is a field where people can find their niche, which is beneficial not only from an industry standpoint but for self-satisfaction and personal growth,” he said.

And in Kevin’s case, it is also how he met his spouse. Kevin and Karen became friends back when Kevin was a unit clerk at Columbia Hospital while studying for his master’s degree and Karen was a

computer trainer. Karen's affiliation with Columbia began when she was 17 years old working in the hospital gift shop. After earning her nursing degree, she worked in the rehab unit and progressed to roles in the nursing education department and to her current position in occupational health services, reaching a 40-year milestone with the hospital now known as Ascension Columbia-St. Mary's. And between the two of them, the Behls have over 70 years with the organization.

"We both believe in the mission of Columbia—now Ascension—and really feel a sense of connection to the organization. It has always felt like family."

Their own family includes their son Nick and his wife, Lisa, and sons Mike and Robert. When Mike, who was 18, was killed in by a drunk driver in an automobile crash in 2009, the family found comfort and healing by holding a memorial walk. They established the annual Spread Your Wings 5K to raise awareness of the dangers of drinking and driving, to honor Mike's memory and to help create a community of support for Robert, who was a young boy at the time of his brother's death. Proceeds from the event benefitted programs at the local schools their three boys attended.

Along with his family's memorial walk, Kevin has been dedicated to organizations that provide necessary, meaningful services to individuals and the community as a whole. He is a past board president of the Cathedral Center (a shelter for homeless women); president of the East Town Association (Jazz in the Park, Bastille Days, the Cathedral Square Market and other events); and treasurer of the Milwaukee Downtown, BID #21, whose mission is to create a thriving, sustainable, innovative and vibrant downtown. Kevin and Karen are also committed to the philanthropic efforts of the Ascension Columbia St. Mary's Foundation.

"I like to support entities and organizations that make a last impact in the community and hold events that bring families and a diverse cross section of people together while building value for the downtown business community," said Kevin.

That's what drew him to Rotary.

"I really do think that the people who are members of Rotary are the people you most respect in the community. These are the people who are really committed to something other than just their work. I wanted to be involved in the community-oriented groups that benefit local initiatives and businesses in the city."

Editor's Note: Rotary People of Action is a bi-monthly series written by a group of Rotarians. This feature was written by Mary Bolich.

